

Cornerstone

Newsletter & Magazine June 2021

A Family of Friends - Developing the Cornerstones of Africa's Next Generation

THE GREATEST COMMANDMENTS

Jesus taught us "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind," and "Love your neighbor as yourself." Then he added that, "All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments" (Mt.22:37-40).

On that last phrase, the well-loved classic Bible guide, "The Pulpit Commentary," has this to say: "It signifies that on love of God and love of man - depend all the moral and religious, ceremonial and judicial precepts contained in the Law, all the utterances of the prophets, all the voices of history."

Well, you can hardly get anything more weightier and more essential than that statement! Clearly, it all points to something extremely important for us to understand and apply to our lives.

The widely-admired American president Abraham Lincoln attended church regularly - but he never joined any church. This created a lot of debate about his faith at the time. However, Henry Deming, the US Congressman and presidential biographer, said that during an excursion on the Potomac River, President Lincoln told him: "When any church will inscribe over its altar, as its sole qualification for membership the Savior's condensed statement, of the substance of both law and Gospel - 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself' - that church, will I join with all my heart and all my soul."

I think what he was pointing out, is that as followers of Christ, we have often diverted from finding common ground and fellowship around the most important aspects of our faith. This happens the more we stray from the key precept: "Unity on the essentials, tolerance on the non-essentials, and love overall."

So, what does it really mean to love God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind and to love our neighbor as our self? That is what we are exploring in this newsletter.



Inside



and...

- * Alumni Initiative Spotlight
- * Centerfold Pictorial
- * Thoughts from Tim



Allan facilitates a AYLIF workshop with university student leaders



Cornerstone Development Africa

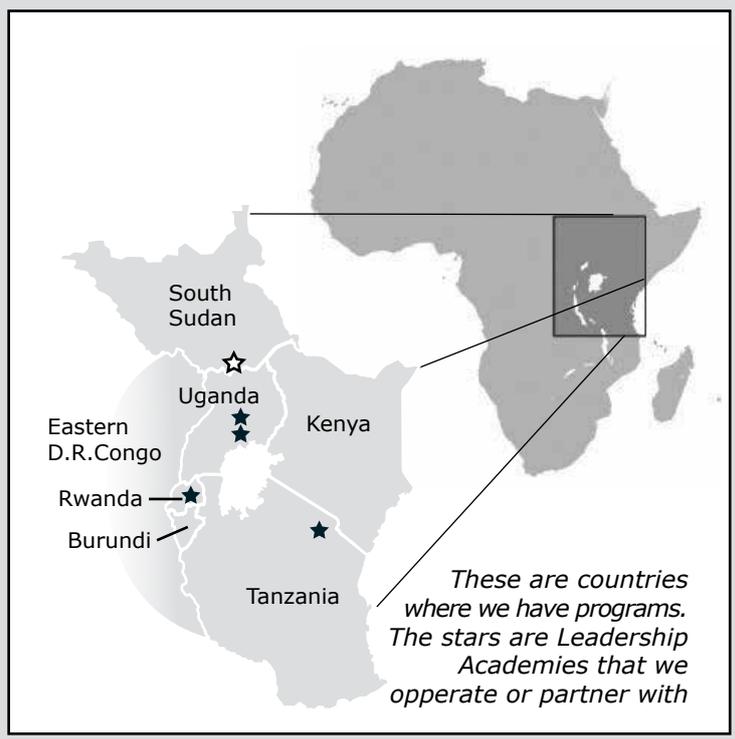
Our Vision: *An ever-expanding movement of transformational servant leaders in Africa, building a better world.*

Our Mission: *To be a family of friends in the Spirit of Jesus working together to develop generations of young leaders with vision and purpose, personal integrity, and committed to unity, reconciliation, and long-term relationships.*

Cornerstone Development was established in Uganda in 1988 to help in the rebuilding and development of the nation as it was emerging from a turbulent past. In recent years we have expanded to Rwanda, Tanzania, Burundi and Southern Sudan. All our programs are directed towards helping under-privileged children, with a special emphasis on youth leadership development. Since its inception the work has steadily expanded to include over 2,000 young people today- in a variety of programs including five schools, five homes for homeless kids, three hostels for university students and sports programs - all designed for providing love, education and character formation.

Our core focus is on “Developing the Cornerstones of Africa’s Next Generation”. That is, to raise up future leaders with a shared vision of positively transforming their communities and nations, as an outgrowth of their own personal transformation. Our approach involves creating loving, family-like environments in our schools and other programs for under-privileged young people, while empowering them with education and character formation in order for them to become leaders. Furthermore, the young people coming through our programs are forming a movement that seeks to make a contribution to the betterment of society while promoting reconciliation across

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all that is dividing humanity. We as a community are a living model of this kind of unity in diversity, in that we are composed of all the different tribes, nationalities, cultures and religious backgrounds found in this part of the world.

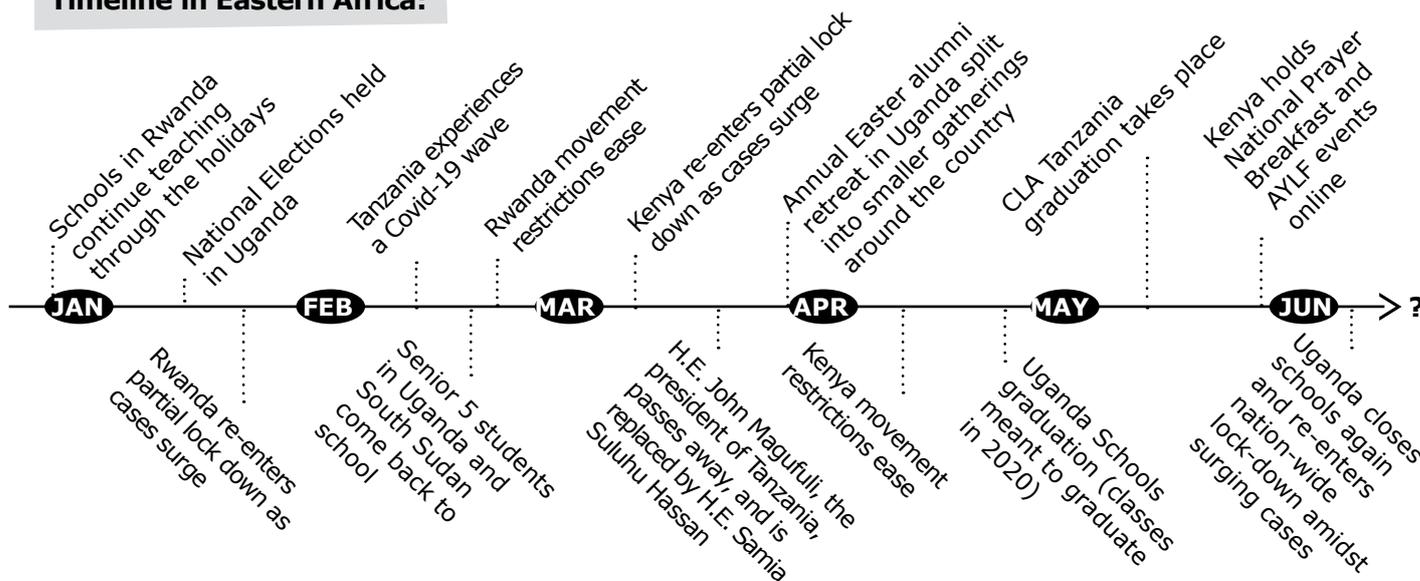
In our character development curriculum we teach the timeless, universal principles of forgiveness, honesty, integrity, compassion, kindness, hard work, humility, and of service to the less fortunate, as exemplified in the teachings of Jesus and the perennial wisdom of all traditions, but without affiliation to any one institutional religious group.

See more online: www.CDAfrica.org

Our core focus is 'youth leadership development' after the model of Jesus. So, in addition to our schools, all the various programs we run serve this focus by providing a practical "training ground" where graduates of our schools can learn to serve and pass on what they have received. Each year we put out two magazine's like this one. At the end of last year, we highlighted our work and PROGRAMS in general, and now in this current edition, we turn to highlighting several of the PEOPLE in our community.

What have we been up to?

Brief Covid-19 Pandemic Timeline in Eastern Africa:

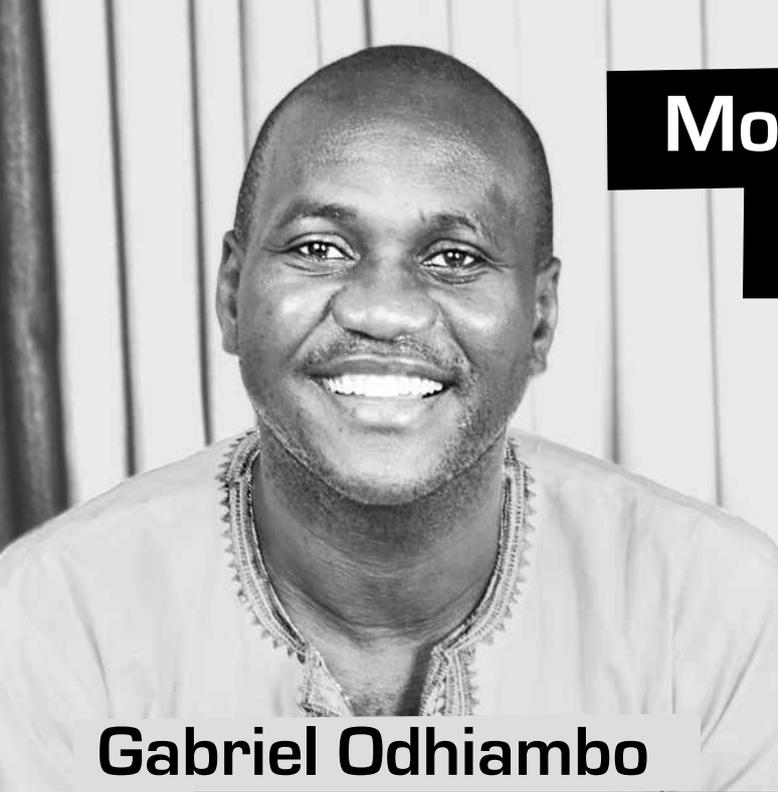


Welcome to our latest newsletter containing thoughts and stories from our work, and our broad "family of friends" around seven countries of East Africa. In our work together, we seek to influence the hearts and minds of emerging leaders in this part of the world with the divine values and principles given to humanity through Jesus of Nazareth. And, in this spirit, in this newsletter we are focusing on what he called the Greatest Commandments.

Thus far, 2021 has been a year of gradual reopening and recovering from the lockdowns subsequent work-flow changes that we experienced in 2020. We are gradually getting back to how we have been operating in recent years - with our schools mostly open and with many more physical meetings taking place. We have been able to have conferences and gatherings of up to 100 people for various trainings, workshops and fellowships. However, as various waves of the pandemic wash through particular countries at different times, this has prompted authorities to either increase or relax Covid-19 preventative measures, so we have to keep adjusting accordingly. Thus, the situation changes monthly in each of the different countries we work in, and many times it feels like we take two steps forward and then one step back.

As we write this, Uganda has just closed schools once again and re-entered a nation-wide lockdown to mitigate a new Covid-19 wave spreading. Over the last couple of weeks a new wave of Covid-19 is hitting Uganda and new infections are at an all-time high. Apparently, this is due to the arrival of the new South Africa and Indian variants that are more contagious. A similar wave went through Kenya in April - May lasting about 2 months. So, we expect something similar in Uganda.

In response to these challenges, we have adapted most aspects of our programming around the various restrictions that have come up, doing as much as we can either in smaller cell-type groups or online. Regional travel is still quite difficult, so our staff are not crossing borders right now, and activities have largely been localized to reduce on movement. Nonetheless, our work and our teams in East Africa are resilient and going strong, dedicated to continuing the work despite the challenges of the moment!



Gabriel Odhiambo

Africa Youth Leadership Forum - Kenya

*“Greater love has no one than this,
than to lay down one’s life for his friends.”
-Jesus of Nazareth*

I believe we don’t need more love but more lovers. Having worked with people from diverse backgrounds, I have come to notice that love is the most misused and misunderstood word in the world. I see and hear people use it any and everywhere without much thought to what it means.

Whenever I tell someone “God Loves You,” I sometimes catch myself wondering what I really mean, and what it means for someone who’s never encountered the love of God?

I firmly believe love has to be understood in the context of a relationship, otherwise it’ll just be another tool of manipulation. Many people, myself included, talk about love, but shy away from the practice of it. If only we understood what it means, the world would be a lot better than it is today. The world needs more tangible love than the conceptual one, a love lived out rather than one that is discussed or reflected upon.

For instance, no amount of good intentioned love for my wife, family or colleagues is profitable to the people I intend to love, until it actually materializes into practical love. My intentions to love are a waste to those I care about if they never journey from being intentions to being actions.

A world full of real lovers is all that the world hungers for today. A lot of unfortunate incidences not worthy of recording have made their way
4 into the annals of human history only because

More “Lovers”!

Not Just More Love

humanity was void of love. Humans have done unthinkable things like murders, genocides, robberies, etc, to fellow human beings without remorse.

But how did we get to that point? How could people be so hateful that the existence of others becomes a burden to them? Is it possible that by the same breadth, we hate, we can emit the love energy to the world around us so as to make it a better place?

These and more questions linger in my mind.

In his book *Long Walk to Freedom*, Nelson Mandela writes; “No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.”

In my work with AYLEF, one of the main things we focus on is to help the young people we work with to appreciate the idea of loving one another as we love ourselves. We know that love can be taught and so we are championing a love revolution throughout our programs one student leader at a time.

God is love, and he who lives in love lives in God. Living in something means you become it. You demonstrate it. You are known for it and by it. You embody it. The understanding that God is love is very vital in shifting our paradigms in the way we deal with people diverse from us. The person struggling to work with another on the basis of diversity is only a mental shift away from being a resource to their immediate civilization.

Once a people believe the radical thought that “God is Love,” their lives soon begin to become a wonder because they start to live out what they believe. Life no longer is about them anymore, diversity is no longer seen as a threat but as a gift. They soon become a gift to those around them because of the richness of their mindsets.

My challenge to you reading this, is to contend and sustain a higher mental model that subscribes to love as a way of living. That way, the world will get to experience a lot more love even accidentally than it used to previously. This will call for our commitment to see to it that the world becomes a much better home for every last one of us.



Nuru Mapunda

Cornerstone Leadership Academy, Tanzania

The soul is the spiritual nature of humankind, the mind is our faculty of thinking, reasoning and applying knowledge, and the heart is the ruling center of our life and spring of all desires. In Matthew 22:36 after being questioned on what the greatest commandment is, Jesus responded, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind this is the first and greatest commandment and the second is like this, love your neighbor as yourself."

Jesus explicitly gave this as the first and greatest commandment because God is the first cause of all that is good and right in the world and wherever and whenever love exists on earth, it only exists because it is a reflection of God's perfect love that created us and sustains us. In my life, I have had many encounters that have shown me that reflecting God's love to others is a great act of simply loving others and doing what Jesus has asked us to do.

After completing my O-level studies in 2010, I spent the 7-month break with friends and family at home. In this time, my cousin in Songea was blessed with a baby girl, but she was having a difficult time balancing her responsibilities and taking care of her baby. Seeing the need she had, I offered to come and help her babysitting during my time off from school. After about a month, she had stabilized and was able to get more house help, so I began planning my return home.

However, a day before my departure I met a distant relative whose daughter in Iringa had a child while still in University. She was frustrated with how her daughter was going to do as she had end-of-year exams only a couple of weeks away. She asked if I could be of help, but I was already set to leave on

A Miracle...

Built with Bricks of Self-less Love

the next day. After some prayer and reflection, I cancelled my trip home so I could help yet another young mother in need.

Three months later, my Senior Four results were out and I learned that I passed! I began thinking about continuing my education with 'A' levels, but didn't know how it would be possible financially.

At this time, my cousin was on holiday and could help with the baby, so I shifted my free time towards volunteering at the local church. By being readily available for any duties that popped up, I became very active in the community and grew closer to the Pastor and many of the church members. One night, this Pastor called me saying that he was asked to recommend two girls to interview for a two-year scholarship for A-Level studies at the Cornerstone Leadership Academy in Arusha, and because he was so impressed with my service in their community, I was the first who he thought of!

My whole journey was a miracle built by God with the bricks of selfless love towards others.

This particular experience has taught me the following lessons:

- First, showing love is not about giving material possession or wealth only, we begin to love where we are with what we have. We are therefore not to compare ourselves with others and be content with what we have and begin pouring out God's love unto others.
- Second, loving one's neighbor is something we do best without expectations of something in return. We are to do unto others that which is in line with God's principles.
- Third, loving God and others is not as easy as we anticipate it to be but where we fail we must never stop learning from the mistakes we make.
- Lastly, a question I always ask myself is, "if I were a housemaid, a child, a team leader, a team member or a friend how would I like to be treated without compromising or violating God's principles?"

In this world, loving God and others is something that is tested and must be learned in our daily lives, the opportunities are all around us!

Learning to Love

As Jesus Loves



Keith Florian

AYLF, Burundi

As followers of Jesus we are challenged daily to love God with all our heart, mind, and soul, and to love our neighbors as ourselves. It is a simple statement, but profound in that it helps us focus on the essential purpose of our life!

Loving God with our heart is the foundation to our relationship with our Creator, and it helps us love the people he created because we are all created in God's image and we are truly Godly when we love each other. Understanding this precept has helped me grow spiritually and be able to contribute positively to my work with Cornerstone in Burundi.

This greatest commandment from Jesus shows us that we cannot pretend we love God without demonstrating it in the love we have for other people especially considering that our work is people-centered.

It is hard to love people who aren't similar to us, yet somehow, God's love compels us to be drawn to the very people we are tempted to ignore. It is His love, which is the very ingredient that enables us to attempt this seemingly impossible feat.

Our task therefore is to constantly draw on God's love to be able to be effective leaders in our day to day lives. Apostle John said it beautifully when he penned the words that, "We love because He first loved us."

Back in 2014, I invited a friend to join AYLF who wasn't really committed to participating in what we did because he thought we were novices. He thought we stumbled into what we were doing

and he didn't see AYLF surviving for the long haul. He could not fathom the idea that people could be lifelong friends without doing a common economic activity together.

So, I invited him to come to one of our summer AYLF gatherings in the DRC, to which he declined, citing cost issues as a barrier. But I was determined to have him come with me, so I offered to cover half the costs he would incur. The gesture that I was willing to go this far for him caught him by surprise, and he decided to come with me to the gathering. My friend would meet some of the most kind, friendly and generous people anyone could meet. His heart would be so softened after that experience that he wanted to be a part of everything we did going forwards.

To this day, this friend of mine is one of the most committed, generous and influential people we have in AYLF Burundi. He carries around a conviction that doing things with love for people is the most powerful force in the universe that can attract and influence others for good.

I can tell stories upon stories of how this sort of familial love we have in AYLF has unlocked possibilities amongst individuals in our contexts.

I remember in one of the times Uncle Tim was with us he challenged us to "make our lives something beautiful for God." This became the backdrop to which I'd rally our small groups to bring change and impact to our communities through revealing God's love for the poor. As a result, we gathered resources and did some of the most memorable outreaches to orphanages, schools and hospitals.

More than just impacting the needy in our communities, these outreaches have had a far reaching impact on our own lives. Through these experiences we have all grown more kind, generous, empathetic and loving than we were before. Our small groups have become platforms upon which we share, challenge, and inspire one another to know this love of God more and share it with others in new ways. And as the national coordinator, my work is to try and check that the conditions that facilitate this are in place. I do this by constantly drawing on God's love myself, and renewing my mind in meditations such as those in 1 John 4:8 which says, "Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love."

Doing Small Things With Great Love



Modeste Ntaganda

Kigali Office, Rwanda

Jesus teaches us two paramount tasks that are critical for our success in life. First, it is the practice of loving God with all our heart, soul, and mind; and secondly it is the practice of loving our neighbors as we do to ourselves. In my life and work in Rwanda, there isn't a day that goes by when these are not necessary, and I believe the same is true for every last one of us.

What does this look like? Well, I believe that when we love God in this way, we become the best versions of ourselves: surrendered to our higher purpose, and living in alignment with the moving force of the universe - love.

Living out this commandment has helped me serve God and people around me cheerfully even in the midst of various physical, emotional and psychological tensions that characterize the world we live in today. Part of the temptation of 'sin' is in losing sight of our true purpose, and getting so stuck in the busyness of our lives, and overwhelmed by our problems, that we lose contact with the love of God and do harmful things to ourselves and others. Reflecting on this great commandment makes us go beyond our emotions and tensions we face in our daily lives, it puts us on greater heights to best serve him and those around us.

Until you study Jesus' commandment to love others 'as' we love ourselves, you may miss the essence of the whole of it. The conjunction 'as' in the text gives a whole lot of meaning to the command if you critically look at it. Any way you look at it, love starts with who we are, and extends outwards in relationship with others. When we fail to love ourselves, we disconnect ourselves from the ability of loving

anyone, everyone, everything fully, and joyfully. To love yourself is not a selfish thing, it is simply to accept yourself as God has created you, and to selflessly love what God has created you for.

It is true that we all go through phases of difficulty, and doubt, that make our work seem meaningless. In this dark place, you may feel like giving up and doing things for your own selfish motivations, and I think this is because we get disconnected from our sense of purpose in life.

For example, in the season last year when the world went into a lockdown, I was in the midst of overseeing the construction of our students' hostel in Kigali. There were all kinds of new logistical challenges and movement restrictions that came up, and a project which was already difficult became absolutely exhausting for me. I was over-worked and highly stressed trying to sort things out and keep the project moving forwards. The only thing that kept me focused and moving forwards was how much of a blessing the hostel was going to be for our students in the end. I knew that it was so important to many people who I loved, and they were looking at me to make it happen. Yes, it was challenging, but now it is finished, and when I reflect on what my inconveniences back then were, they fade in the joy of seeing new residents enter our magnificent complete hostel structure!

You could be at a place right now feeling like giving up on your assignments, I have good news for you - reflect on this idea of love that Jesus talks about, and it will make all the difference for you. You'll look back and be thankful that you did whatever you did for others if you do it with love. And on the other side, don't feel you need to do anything for anyone if you don't sense that you are doing it with or for love. Mother Teresa said it well: "In this life we cannot always do great things. But we can do small things with great love."

Focus on love. Focus on the small things in front of you each day...do them with love. Even when you stray, or tire, love will keep you coming back, for "love covers over a multitude of wrongs." One day you will reflect on the big things that have come about in your life from simply loving God, and loving others.



Faizah Noordin

Salaam Mentoring / AYLF / HLD, Uganda

I greet you all in the name of Allah (God) the most gracious, most merciful. Prayers and blessings be upon the prophet Mohammed (Peace be upon him).

Growing up in an Islamic community, I didn't really comprehend many of the teachings and hadith's (stories from the time of the prophet) which I was taught. But the older I got, the more I gained interest and put into practice what I learned. I transitioned from simple religious curiosity to having my whole daily routine rotate around the five daily prayers and various supplications in between.

Coming into Cornerstone, and its diverse community of followers of Jesus, has further inspired me to become more open minded - affording me the courage to go into spaces that before were challenging to my religious beliefs.

In this, I have come to understand and appreciate the differences in our societies. But more importantly I have come to see the deeper meaning our common beliefs and love the people around me based on my love for God.

Love comes in many forms. It is part of human nature for a person to develop love for wealth, ambitions, spouse and children, but the highest form of love in my opinion, is the love for Allah (God). This for me rotates around living and acting from a point of wholeheartedness and love for yourself, those around you, and extends towards Allah (God). It is from this foundation that I adopted the mantra "what good is my life, if not to make the lives of other's better?"

Love Thy Neighbor As You Love Yourself

His creation. It is put into the hearts of mankind and brings joy to the soul. Love is the reason life blossoms, and it inspires commitment and sacrifice for the work we believe is important in this world.

Being able to create deeper bonds with others in the Africa Youth Leadership Forum (AYLF) leadership team has created a space for us to grow as a team as well as individually. We have invested time and resources in the lives of our small group coordinators, small group members and the AYLF alumni including opening up our lives to them.

AYLF doesn't just want to create a new breed of leaders in Africa, we also want these leaders to learn and understand our Creator's will for us.

In our work with the Salaam Mentoring community, we are very blessed to share this month of Ramadhan with the people around us. We chose this month to dwell on the golden rule which is "To love thy neighbor as you love yourself." To this end, we've made deliberate efforts to visit our friends in their homes, share our iftar (meal for breaking the fast) with neighbors and be more intentional with keeping in touch with each other.

Our friends from various religions may see Ramadhan as a time for strict religious activities, but in Salaam, we've purposed to look at this period as a time to unite, reconcile and worship together. We wake up for suhoor (morning meal before the fast), prepare meals, pray together and break our fast in Jama (together). We often do this in the company of our Christian brothers and sisters, and have them join us at meal time. This has become a great platform for us to build bridges across divisions and helps us experience the true meaning of Ramadhan.

In our High School Leadership Development (HLD) work, we reach out to many young people who are struggling to find their identity, and their footing in life and walk with them on a journey of leadership development in the spirit of Jesus.

Attaching meaning to the work I do and being able to continuously grow spiritually and mentally gives me a kind of satisfaction I can only thank God for.

Assalam Aleikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakaatuh (May Peace and Blessings be upon us all)!

8 I believe that "love" is a gift from the Creator for



Emmanuel Bakata

Leadership Academy Alumnus, South Sudan

Our Shared Values...

Our Shared Vision...

In Jesus!

inspiring a generation of South Sudanese to love one another in a manner that honored Jesus' commandment to love, then I knew I was going to have to become that model of God's love in this community. Please understand, that for long periods of time, many communities in South Sudan have been divided along tribal lines and most of us are taught from childhood to hate and disassociate with those in other tribes by looking at them as "enemies" - so this wouldn't be an easy task!

I have discovered more on the job that to become a reflection of the love of Jesus, I need to cultivate a serious devotion to the heartbeat of God. I believe that when an individual heeds Jesus' greatest commandment, their speech, feelings and attitudes are affected. I find that the more I am loving God "with my heart," the more I am inclined to share, guide, teach, counsel as well as point people in the way of Christ through speech. A heart that is filled, cannot NOT give, as the scripture says that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

Loving God "with my soul," does something to your soul and as a result your emotions. Your emotional intelligence rises, you begin to empathize with other people's pains and problems. It's from that deeper understanding of loving God with my soul and how he's passionate about creation that inspires me daily to learn to value and put people first in my life.

Loving God "with my mind," has to do with a consideration for the lover to upgrade their minds for the betterment of their lives and also their communities. Loving God, affects our minds in a way that we begin thinking through complex issues, birth new solutions with an upgraded mindset. The understanding of loving God with the mind inspires the possessor to reason out issues and seek for the counsel of God on every matter affecting humanity. The world needs upgraded thinkers.

Loving God with my strength, does affect my energy in a way nothing else in this world can. I become a competent being always pushing forward the things placed on my heart that make this world a better place!

We cannot live together as brothers and sisters unless we love one another. In my personal life and in my calling to disciple the next generation of servant leaders at the Leadership Academy of South Sudan, I have come to see the transformational power in learning to love one another through the shared values, and vision, we can all find in Jesus.

At the academy, students come from really different backgrounds and as mentors, there's a tendency to always identify ourselves quickly with those whose religious, tribal and political orientations, are similar to ours. But the main goal is always to find common ground where we can relate to others, which bridges the divide. And in my experience, there is nothing better than the leadership principles, precepts and person of Jesus of Nazareth.

When I received the call to travel to South Sudan to teach discipleship, I was excited about getting the job immediately after finishing University. But it soon dawned on me how big of a responsibility it actually was! It was a bigger calling than just a mere job, the responsibilities that lay ahead of me required that I spent time in prayer seeking God's counsel and direction, so as to be of value to this community I value so deeply.

In prayer, the Holy Spirit spoke deeply in my heart from the book of John (13:34-35) about the love of Jesus on the very same theme of this newsletter: "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

If there was any way I was going to play my part in

Cornerstone

Newsletter Pictorial



AYLF coordinators retreat in Uganda



Branly facilitates a workshop with COSA coordinators - Dodoma



CLA Uganda girls unpacking computers donated by Sseko Designs



Women's day gathering at the Kigali Office



Youth Corps - Visiting students at Ekitangaala Highschool



Construction of the Student hostel in Kigali is complete!



Small groups meeting in the Kigali Hostel Hall



Highschool outreach initiative in Arusha



Launch of the COSA Cooperative in Kampala



Advanced Leadership gathering in Kigali



Visiting COSA small groups in Moshi



After a long year of Covid-19 lockdown delays, students finally graduate!

A Family of Friends!



Seeking to Love, UNCONDITIONALLY

Komugisha Comfort

CLA, Rwanda

It is a great honor for me to live and work alongside the young people of CLA Rwanda, where I serve as a Teacher of History, a Matron for the girls, and the Health assistant - which has been life changing for me. These young men and women come from all different backgrounds and each with God-given unique abilities and dreams. Our goal is to take them from where they are, and empower them to become greater than they imagined they could be - molding them into servant leaders.

I am proud of our headmaster, Sam Birondwa, my fellow teachers, and especially the other ladies that I work with; Madam Nyakato Beatrice, Madam Josephine Mukasa, who are truly inspiring women of virtue and are always led to love God, and love their neighbor just like Jesus taught. It is this community that has kept me inspired and motivated to keep serving and giving my best despite life's challenges.

I have always loved Robert Greenleaf's statement that, "The servant-leader is servant first... it begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first." We cannot achieve the vision of empowering the young men and women that come through the Leadership Academy without the nurturing force of Love. Thus, the great commandment Jesus taught has become the pillar of our work: to love God, and to love and serve others (Matthew 22:35-40). Loving God with all heart, soul, mind and strength makes us to have pure hearts that lead us to love other people

12 unconditionally.

All of religion comes down to how we love God and how everything that we do (our relationships, our work, entertainment, education, etc.,) all display our love for God and for others. No amount of success, status, or possession will matter at the end of my time at Cornerstone, if I haven't done what God sent me to fulfill in this community of our family of friends.

As the senior woman at the Leadership Academy, every year I work with young men and women from different family and religious backgrounds and you just can't imagine the number of God-sized visions and dreams I encounter in the countless young men and women who come here - it is incredible! They are very high-potential people, but all of them still have a lot of learning and growing-up to do on their journey. And so it is our role to walk alongside them with servant-hearts, nurturing their talents, focusing their energies, and setting them on a path toward success.

It is this love that Jesus taught, which compels us at the Leadership Academy to be able to tirelessly work with the countless young men and women we encounter - they are not always easy, they are not always healthy, but we always seek to love them UNCONDITIONALLY.

As a pan-African woman and believer of Jesus, my piece of wisdom would be that, the World we wish to have is sought after within the context unconditional LOVE. We need to have a world in which all people have peace, joy, equal opportunities, assurance of safety, assurance of good health, the right to live in one's nation, access to education, and all other basics of life, including a right to travel across borders within our Creator's great earth.

The missing link on our continent has not been a lack of natural resources because God has blessed us with a lot, but it is a lack in UNCONDITIONAL LOVE among the continent's inhabitants. As a people, we have to have a paradigm-shift and champion this mindset first at an individual level and then at a community level as it radiates out to transform the world!



Paul Michi

COSA Executive Committee, Uganda

The Greatest Among Us Should Be The Servant of Others

A huge accomplishment for us so far this year is the formal launch of the COSA Cooperative Society, with the aim of enabling members to save, access credit, undertake investments to grow the fund and offer welfare support to members.

The Cooperative Society was founded on the slogan, "Better Together," and brings on board all members of Cornerstone's broad family of friends (including children and spouses) to save together, invest together and collectively benefit from corporate investments.

We are taking advantage of our ever-growing membership and long established relationships to partner with well-trusted friends and do business together for positive impact. Currently the membership of the cooperative society has grown to over two hundred members, and a financial portfolio of over one hundred million in just a period of five months in operation. Many of our members running businesses have been able to obtain loans at our appealing interest rate and on friendly terms of borrowing.

As we continue develop the Cornerstone of Africa's next generation, we are proud to report that we will continue our representation in the 11th Parliament of Uganda by Hon. Alfred Ekasi and Hon. Lagen David who have both been sworn in to serve for the next five years (2021-2026). A number of other members within our wider community were also elected to serve both at national level and local government levels.

Our collective vision of positive transformation will find its way inside the parliament of Uganda and several district council halls shining the light of reconciliation across all divides - a voice against corruption and abuse of authority and exemplifying the principles of integrity, humility compassion, and hard work.

Our greatest teacher, Jesus Christ taught us that the greatest among us should be a servant of others (Mathew 20:26), and it is in this spirit that we aspire to be an ever-expanding movement of transformational servant leaders in Africa, building a better world day-by-day, by loving God, and love our neighbors as ourselves.

The road to 2021 has been unprecedented with Covid-19 continuing to disrupt and redefine our work with COSA (Cornerstone Old Students Association). The most affected of all our activities include our physical gatherings, the monthly gatherings in Kampala and our traditional annual Easter retreats.

The pandemic caught us unaware last year, and many of our members lost business, employment, and loved ones. In these very challenging seasons, we have witnessed tremendous support from within our members in varying proportions. The relationships we have maintained over the years in our Cornerstone family has been tested and tried during these precarious times. The good news is, even in the midst of these tests, our bonds have proved firm and unshaken. We've witnessed incomprehensible generosity amongst our members, people sharing the little they had with their fellows in need. It has been heartwarming to watch this 'love of neighbor' in the spirit of Jesus.

Due to the restrictions on gatherings, our focus in COSA has partly shifted towards strengthening small group fellowships - especially regional fellowships that take place in Soroti, Gulu, Arua, Kabale, Fort Portal and Mbale regions. With the re-opening of higher institutions of learning, our students at Stage 2, have been able to resume regular meetings and fellowship.

When restrictions eased at the end of 2020 and in to early 2021, we were able to organize smaller Easter retreat celebrations around the country, as well as a one-day event for those in the central region in Kampala. In late June the lock-down was reimposed and we had to go back to our online meetings.



Elvis Namajojo

COSA, Tanzania

Being Pro-active

In Our Real Purpose

ier relationships between Muslims and Christians are now taking shape all around us.

This work of sharing Jesus' love with others has allowed me to learn to prioritize the needs of others before mine. For example, in my own family, I have been appointed to serve as the secretary general and my work is to avail my family with updates and records that directly affect us at home and our community. I have also been highlighted as an exceptional youth influencer through my work and service to my community particularly for my advocacy work and peace building initiative against radical extremism and violence.

I am involved in several peace-building activities here in the region of Mtwara (that I come from), and sadly, we've seen a rise in the existence of radical extremist groups in recent years. Hateful incidents such as verbal abuse, the destruction of properties, and even targeted killings, have increased along with more open recruitment of youth into extremist groups.

These incidents have compelled me into action to find ways of how I could be a part of the solution for our region's well-being. To this end, I have conducted and still do conduct household and family visits where I teach the importance of loving one another and I share peace building skills with members of these diverse families.

Through these visits of mine I have learnt that most people get recruited into these radical movements under the promise that their economic hardships will be over, while others are forcibly recruited by the extremists against their will. I now carry this conviction that the only way to share the love of God with families in our region is through sharing of knowledge and skills on peace building and economic empowerment.

In this work, we are daily presented with the privilege to value and honor those around us by sharing the love of Jesus with them by sharing our lives with them. In Mtwara, I have been able to do this by meeting up with youths, women groups and students while sharing with them about the goodness of Jesus revealed in his principles, precepts, and person. Many have been drawn to Jesus through this and I have seen it starting to permeate into our community one individual at a time. Health-

I have as well served as the regional Secretary General representing the Tanzanian Youth Ministries and my work has been to share the word of God with students in secondary schools and higher institutions of learning - an experience which has exposed me to various networks of friends within and out of Tanzania.

In all this, I have grown to love God through studying our sacred scriptures. Through reading and meditation, we get to discover the love of God and his promises and ultimately His plan for humanity. Studying the scriptures has helped me, my friends and family to comprehend the ways, patterns, and methodologies, by which God has loved humanity over the ages past. This study has helped me understand the beauty and power in the message of Jesus, and the greatest of all commandments from God, which represents his love for humanity and in the same manner requires us to share that love with others on a daily basis:

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37-40).

I believe that one of the best strategies we have at building a better world is if each of us get to know what it means to love God in our own ways, then we will align our value systems with our Creator's higher purpose. In doing this, the evils of this world like corruption, selfishness, violence, discrimination, and oppression, will cease to be definers of our civilization. Instead, we bring the Kingdom of God on earth as it is in Heaven... just as Jesus prayed.



Loving Those Who Are Different From Us

Gertrude Edakasi
CLA, Uganda

There are many examples in scripture that are in line with Jesus' teaching on this particular subject. For example, the Apostle Paul elevated the gift of love as the greatest commandment of all by penning these words in 1 Corinthians 13:

"If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal."

We are without a message if all our actions to those around us are void of the transforming nature of love. Life becomes more meaningful when we love those who are different from us - even those we call 'enemies'. Jesus demonstrated this so well in His ministry when he reached out to all sorts of individuals in society's social ranks: the prostitutes, the tax collectors, the lepers, and all who society considered social outcasts and not deserving of love, AND even the gentiles, who were considered the enemies of the day. You and I are to model this example, so that, "The kingdoms of this world, become the Kingdom of our God" (Rev. 22:18).

I must admit that this revolutionary approach is not something that I had growing up, and it has taken me time to learn. When I was young, I only knew and associated with those in my own culture and faith, however, serving at Cornerstone Leadership Academy has afforded me the privilege to meet and work with people from all walks of life. In this diversity here, I have experienced love, kindness support, and understanding the roots of this has not only changed my perspective about life but has also taught me to share the love of God with others.

And look at me now! I fell in love and decided to marry a man from a different part of the country, a different tribe, culture, and denominational background... BUT the compelling love of God joined us together, and to this day sustains us.

My dear friends, 1 Corinthians 3:13 writes that all our works will be tested by fire on the last day, those works that were done out of selfishness will not last, but those done out of love for God and others will last because love is enduring and everlasting.

We will only experience real joy and meaning in life when living out love becomes our obsession, with Jesus at the center of it all.

Love is not just something we feel, but more importantly, it is something we do. For it is in our daily practice of self-sacrifice and commitment to others that we participate in building a better world together.

Some may think that happiness in life comes from fulfilling all of our appetites and desires, but these never end, and in the end, we are always left unsatisfied. But no, instead, real happiness comes from living in alignment with one's meaning in life, and this comes when we deepen our understanding of Jesus' sacrificial love, and live in obedience with God.

Jesus knew the divine importance of loving others, as he knew how self-absorbed human beings could be and how men would fill their lives with empty pursuits in search of happiness and meaning. He therefore issued a 'prescription' which when followed fully would lead us to the true meaning of life. This prescription was that of loving God with all our hearts, minds and souls and loving neighbor as we love ourselves.

As teachers and mentors, we understand that the greatest commandment isn't just a great 'suggestion,' but it is actually our responsibility to implement in our daily work. It doesn't come easy, but it takes love for a mentor to be able to walk in the shoes of those they are mentoring, which sometimes feels like lowering themselves to another's level. The young people that we work with come from diverse backgrounds, some have psychological and emotional challenges, some have not experienced love from their parents. Therefore, it is our responsibility to demonstrate this love in the way we relate with each one of them.

Alumni Initiative Spotlight

One of the ways we continue engaging our alumni is through the Advanced Leadership Initiative (ALI). This is an exciting new frontier of our work where we seek to mobilize a network of social entrepreneurs, through a deliberate and collaborated effort that catalyzes transformational change in local communities. In this, we work to support members in being part of small groups for personal, professional, and spiritual growth, as well as to network, inspire and empower members in ways that advance social impact initiatives of their own and/or of others. In the following section, we profile a few of these great initiatives:

Honest Kansime

In 2015, Kansime Honest started Girls to Lead Africa in Kanungu, Uganda. GTLA is a girls' leadership incubator and believes that when girls are empowered to become leaders, they not only stand up for themselves but for their peers. The organisation focuses on building the skills of young girl leaders aged 10 - 25 years in schools and colleges through training and mentoring, enabling

them to run for school office, introduce gender transformative policies once elected, and address the harmful patriarchal systems in their school communities. Currently, there 527 girls in formal Education under their GTLA sponsorship and these are prefects/ministers/leaders their schools or colleges. In their Teenage Mothers program, GTLA is empowering young mothers with sexual reproductive health rights and helping them reclaim their lives and take up leadership as well. Kansime continues to work tirelessly to see more girls become leaders and transform this country and continent.



Denis & Eve Okurmu

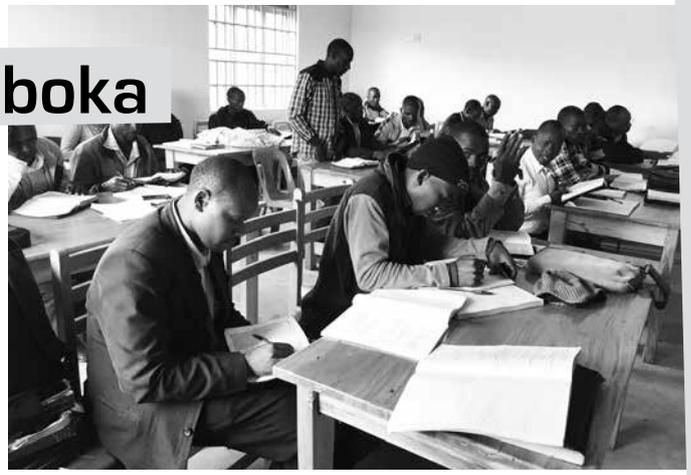


Denis and Eve started Edu Child Foundation Uganda with a focus on empowering girls and women through access to formal education, providing financial management skills, raising awareness against early marriage and domestic violence, and promotion of menstrual hygiene for school going girls in rural areas.

Their foundation directly supports 100 orphaned and vulnerable children in school. Through their monthly community medical camps they have so far reached 15,360 people. Over 170 women directly benefit from their community savings and loans schemes where they have access to small credit to start and operate small-scale business or improve their agricultural products. ECFUG also runs a soccer club and a computer training center that is helping keep the youth stay engaged in activities that promote talent and personal spiritual, intellectual, physical, social and leadership development.

Onesmus & Betty Ngoboka

Betty and Onesmus run a ministry with a variety of projects in Rukungiri. The first is God's Embassy Ministries Church, that has grown to having 13 branches, and birthed a bible institute to help train pastors to do their ministries better, soon graduating its first class of 30 of pioneers. The church ministry also has a financial Institute (SACCO) that helps people to acquire a loan at low-interest rates. This has helped many to use loan money to build houses and startup businesses. Next, in a quest to provide



quality education to their children and community in a rural setting, Betty quit her job and started a school with only her two children for the first term. Now the school has both a nursery and primary section which goes to primary 6. The team also started the Nyakagyeme vocational Institute last year in partnership with the government of Uganda to provide vocational and hands-on skills like tailoring, metal welding, salon management and hairdressing, garment cutting and design among others. The vision of the institute is to empower the youth who never went to school to get practical skills that can make them earn a living.

John Mark Gareeba



John Mark Gareeba founded Uganda Children Forum (UCF) - a platform that is aimed at social transformation of children ages 6-16. They organize debates of all formats, from Media Talk Shows, to National Pupils' Dialogue, to Poetry Challenges and Creative Writing Competitions in all the 4 regions of Uganda. As COVID-19 set in, they became creative in adversity, and launched online programs, engaging children through zoom meetings. Through this, the children have learnt to do online present-

tations and gained skills of creative writing. The children in UCF are continuously taking up leadership roles in their schools such as Julian Maber who was inspired to become head prefect at Green Hill Academy. To date, UCF has impacted over 1000 children through their programs. Recently, UCF also carried out a charity campaign to raise awareness and distribute food in Rwampala District where children were facing famine due to crops decimated by hailstorms and floods. This charity campaign helped over two hundred families with over five thousand children get relief of food and clothes.

Sarah & Tonny Tiberwondwa

Sarah and Tonny Tiberwondwa started Christian Teachers Africa (Chrita) 7 years ago in response to the poor quality of education available locally in Angole Village, in Serere District. They started up a low-cost primary school under a mango tree with 50 kids that has now grown to 220 kids. Along the way, they started Asianut microfinance in an effort to empower parents and community members with small loan and simple financial services, which now has 300 active members. Next, they addressed the problem of poor drinking water in the community and started a WASH initiative to repair broken boreholes, and plant new boreholes, along with a volunteer team that reaches out to ensure homes are healthy. They have so far repaired 30 boreholes and planted 3 new ones in communities.



To Love God

When you break down the 5 key words in it one-by-one, looking for the meaning in the language of the scriptures here is what you find:

1. **"Love."** In the Hebrew language (used to recite the Shema) the word for "love" is "ahava" - a word that conveys the sense of an affectionate, intimate, caring relationship. Similarly, in Aramaic (the language Jesus spoke with his disciples) the word is "khuba" - which is used in regards to something or something dear to one's heart, something for which one feels the kind of love that is expressed both in words and in actions. In short, both of these words are describing an affectionate, devoted loyalty to God and His things.

Many modern Christian books and writers simply conclude that loving God is simply the same as obeying God. While I have always felt this was part of the answer, I didn't think it was the full answer. It felt too cold and bound up with a sense of duty alone. So, I have never been satisfied with that answer. Maybe in part, because I have known children who obey their parents (out of fear for example) but did not love them.

Furthermore, I have had experiences where I was immersed in the love of God and for God - which deeply involved my heart and it was more like the kind of love I described earlier.

In those moments we experience what it means in the scripture where it speaks of love being "shed abroad in our hearts" (Rom.5:5) And, also what it means when it says, we are able to love because we are first loved. (I. Jn. 4:19) It's given to us as something like a beautiful gift.

2. **"Heart."** In Greek and in Hebrew these words we find translated as 'heart' in English speak of the innermost part of the human being, the seat of our emotions, affections, desires and intentions.

3. **"Soul."** Here the word used describes the very essence of who we are as living creatures, human beings created in the image of God - now experiencing a sense of separation from our Source - but designed to experience union.

4. **"Strength."** The word used means the energy or will-power that leads to action.

5. **"Mind."** The word used has the familiar connotations of rational, analytical and imaginative thinking.

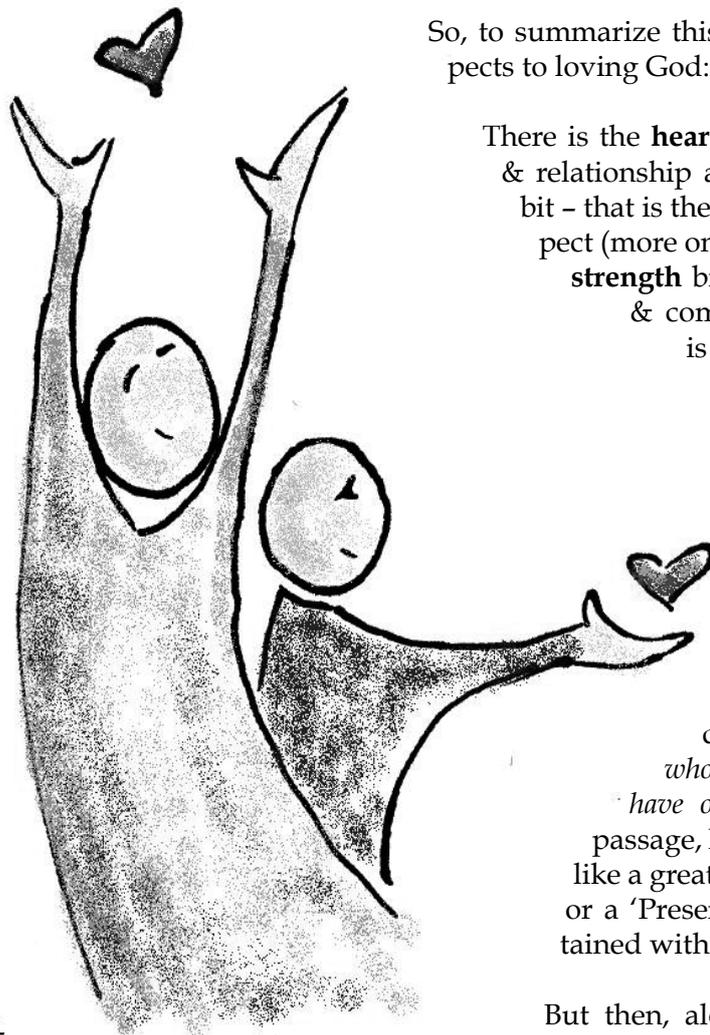
So, to summarize this, we can see these 4 aspects to loving God:

There is the **heart** bit - that is the feeling & relationship aspect. There is the **soul** bit - that is the communion & union aspect (more on this below). There is the **strength** bit - that is the obedience & commitment aspect. There is the **mind** bit - that is the study and understanding aspect.

But then, what do we think of when we think about God? One of my favourite depictions of God is found in Acts 17:28 ...where God is described as that One: "In whom, we live and move and have our being." Reading this passage, I imagine God something like a great 'Field of Consciousness' or a 'Presence' that we are all contained within.

But then, along with this, we have that incredibly personal, human-like depiction of God being like a "loving father," which Jesus gave us. Furthermore, we also read that God is Spirit, God is Life, God is Light and above all else, God is love.

So, how do we combine all these various, multi-faceted descriptions of God? It truly is beyond comprehension. And yet, we will only do justice to His nature by keeping all these incredible attributes in mind. This is our original Source and almighty Creator, all-knowing and all-powerful, yet at the same



time, never far away, loving and ever accessible to us. Well, as I mentioned at the beginning, I chose to write about "loving God" as a way of forcing myself to re-examine what it really means. But, as I began to pull my ideas together, I was lacking a clear outline or direction on how to approach it. Then, one early morning as I was thinking and praying about it - I asked for guidance on this topic.

Immediately, the idea came to me that I should look at the life of Jesus to see how he did it. So, that is how I will conclude this article:

7 Ways Jesus Expressed His Love for God

1. Jesus loved God by "growing" or becoming the best version of himself. We read: "Jesus grew in wisdom, stature, favour with God and favour with man." Lk 2:53 This small verse shows a wholistic development of the mental, social, physical and spiritual aspects of a person. Our life here on earth is given to us by God to use fruitfully - so in a way, we belong to God. If you have something that belongs to someone whom you love - you will seek to take care of it well, until you meet them again and give it back. We come from God, we belong to God and we are going back to God.

2. Jesus loved God by dedicating himself to God's plan for the planet. In "The Lord's Prayer" that Jesus gave to his disciples the central point is: "thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Jesus also gave something similar, as one of the main reasons for his coming to earth: "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose." Luke 4:43. The coming of 'the kingdom of God' was Jesus' main focus. The phrase appears 100 times in the 4 gospels. And he asked us to make it our life priority: 'Seek first the Kingdom of God.' Mt. 6:36

3. Jesus loved God by living life with joy. God is the author and giver of life. If we view life as a punishment rather than a gift - then we are somehow dishonouring the giver. So, one way to love God is by living in gratitude, which leads to joy - out of a deep understanding that all things ultimately work together for my good. And Jesus taught that, despite the fact that 'in this world you will have tribulation....be of good cheer!" John 16:33

4. Jesus loved God by living and acting out of a constant sense of union with Him and awareness of His abiding presence. Love always seeks union with the beloved. Jesus spoke to this when he said, "I and the Father are one." This is actually the ideal for all of us. As it says in I Cor.6:17 - "Whoever is

united with the Lord is one with him in spirit. Yet, so often we operate from a state of feeling disconnected and separated from God. In John 14:23 Jesus says: "*Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.*"

5. Jesus loved God by showing love to all of God's children unconditionally. That's why he taught the second greatest commandment was to love your neighbour as yourself. And he demonstrated an unconditional kind of love that transcended religion, race and all divisions. This was clearly shown in the way he treated the Samaritans who were of a completely different group than his own. In the story of the Samaritan woman at the well found in John chapter 4 - it states that he stayed in her village for 2 days. How many of us have spent 2 days staying in the homes of those with a different religion from ours? And He also taught that it is only when we "love our (so-called) enemy" that we deserve to be called children of God. Mt. 5:44, Lk. 6:27.

6. Jesus loved God by purifying himself so that he could fully embody and radiate the light of God to others. In John 17 he said "For their sake I sanctified (purified) myself- that they too may be sanctified.' To sanctify means to clean, purify and set apart something for a holy purpose. The more we also do this, the more clearly the light of God can shine forth from us like a lamp whose glass has been cleaned. So, we too as Jesus stated become: "*The light of the world.*" We light up our surroundings by embodying and radiating the Divine Light - to those around us.

7. Jesus loved God by recruiting, mentoring and teaching an ever-expanding movement of people that seeks to love God, love their neighbors and love one another. When Jesus was about to leave the planet - he asked Peter, one of his key disciples the same question three times: Do you love me? Each time Peter replied "Yes!" then Jesus then asked him to, 'feed my sheep.' Basically, he was saying, 'Then take care of my people, keep the movement going. Give yourself to the process of nurturing and mentoring more followers in the way, I have taught you.' If this was so deeply on the heart of Jesus, it must be very close to the heart of God, and it's another way we can demonstrate our love for Him as well.

In conclusion, I hope this has been helpful. I have gained more clarity on it for myself, but as I said at the beginning, seeking to love God with all our heart, soul, strength and mind is something that will take our entire life time to work out.



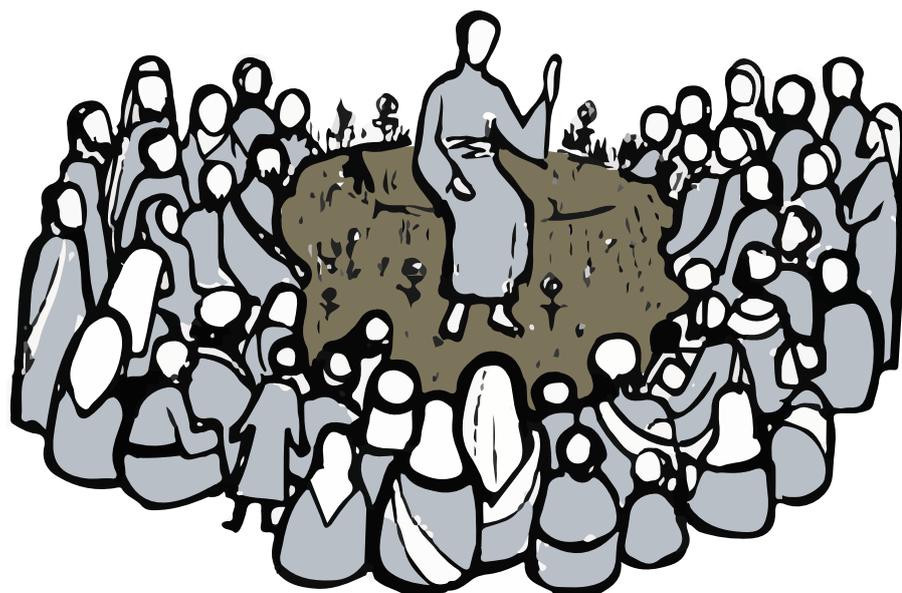
What Does it Really Mean to “Love God”?

I am choosing to write on this first portion of our theme, partly to force myself to clarify, in my own understanding, what it really means to ‘love God’.

Let me begin by saying, that this idea of “loving God, with all your heart, soul, strength and mind” has challenged me all my life. It’s been hard to grasp and seems even harder to completely fulfil. And, perhaps it was meant to be exactly like that - one of those deep ‘mysteries’ that we struggle with, through-out our lives, to figure out - and this ensures that we must keep working on it our entire lives.

may love God to some extent, but many other things pull at our heart. We also get lazy or distracted by many other things.

I grew up in a strong Christian background, with much teachings on the scriptures, but the centrality and significance of this simple passage was never emphasized. It was only years later when I got involved in the “Prayer Breakfast” circles that I started to give it more consideration. One of my key mentors in this movement - taught that for all of us, our life purpose was: *“To love God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind, and to love your neighbour as your self.”*



“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the law?”

(Luke 10:27; Matthew 22:36-40; Mark 12:28-31)

For example, if Jesus had said the greatest commandment was “reading the Bible” or “going to Church” or “tithing” (and other such good things), it would be easy for us to become self-righteous with the feeling that we had *“been there - done that.”*

In other words, if it were something simple to achieve, we would just do it and then focus on other things. But I have yet to meet someone who truly can say they have *always* and consistently “loved God, with all their heart, soul, strength and mind!” We

infinite, eternal, invisible, all-knowing and all-powerful Being that, in the words of a song-writer is, *“... too wonderful for comprehension ... Like nothing ever seen or heard”?*

The phrase, *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind”* forms the centrepiece of The Shema, which is the daily prayer Jewish people are supposed to recite every morning and evening, that serves as a declaration of their faith.

I also grew up in a tradition where there was a strong emphasis put on *‘what you believed’* - especially in regards to inheriting eternal life. Yet this commandment seems to be less about what you believe and more about the orientation of your entire personality as well as how you treat others. Furthermore, in Luke 25:10, when Jesus was asked the question: *“What must I do to inherit eternal life?”* he basically responds that by fulfilling these two great commandments, one qualifies for eternal life.

But, I have continued to wonder... how do you really love an