

Daily Life with Christ. Love-32: Understanding the objective, universal, unchanging, eternal nature of proper love: 5 characteristics of being a friend of God.



(Pdf copy at <http://www.fbcweb.org/Doctrines/041218.pdf>; for background and complete series, see <http://www.fbcweb.org/doctrines.html>).

George: If the root of all sin is improper love for self, yet it is natural and good to love our self, what is the difference between proper love for self and improper love for self.

Stephen: As I mentioned, improper love for self is a love that sees self as the ultimate goal, the ultimate good. In other words, the whole point and goal in life in improper love is self. In this case, the goodness of God and the goodness of others is only viewed in terms of what they can do for self. Any so-called “love” for God and “love” for others is only so for instrumental reasons—which means that the person does not love God for His goodness or others for their eternal worth. It is not difficult to see how this is only a love for self, a love that does not live in the intrinsic goodness of God or others who are made in His image. It is also not hard to see why this is the root of all sin, starting with Satan who loves himself more than God or anything else. For Satan, everything revolves around himself and what he wants to do: “I will be like the Most High.” Satan also believes, not without good reason, that man really does not love God—that he only loves God because God pays him with blessings to love Him. The implication is that God is not worthy to be worshipped in and of Himself—that God is not our final and greatest end as such.

George: Don't you love God because He blesses you?

Stephen: No! He is worthy to be loved whether He blesses me or not. He is my final end, final goodness, regardless of the blessings. Our hearts are made for Him and they are restless until they rest in Him. He is the sum and source of all goodness. He completes man in time and in eternity. He is foundation and source of all goodness.

George: Don't you appreciate His blessings?

Stephen: Of course! We are to praise Him for the blessings but not because of the blessings. His blessings are just one of the innumerable evidences of His love and goodness. The greatest evidence of His love, of course, is not in the temporal blessings we enjoy daily, but at the cross as per Rom. 5:8. Loosely speaking, "God's death" on the cross while we were enemies demonstrates His immeasurable love. We all now have the opportunity to live in Him as friends. Friends do not love each other instrumentally . . . do not love each other simply or only because what the friend can do for him. In true friendships you actually care about your friend.

George: Are you comparing our relationship with God to friendship?

Stephen: Yes! That is what both the metaphysics of human relations teach and what Scripture explicitly declares, John 15:15 "No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends."

George: In what way can a believer be friends of God?

Stephen: There are 5 characteristics of true friendships that apply in the human realm and with God. First, friendship entails mutual benevolence. This requires at least two who love each other with a love that seeks the good for each other. They want the friend to exist and to do well. Second, friendship requires that each one know that the other wishes his good. Just wishing one well is not enough, there must be a realization of that the other person wishes one good as well. Third, friendship requires mutual acts of beneficence—there must be acts beyond the wishing for there to be close friendship—wishing is not enough, actions are required. Fourth, true friendships have a semi-permanent quality in that the friendship is not easily lost—it continues to exist through difficulties. Fifth, friendship is based on a certain fellowship in some goodness, be it common life, virtue, or actions. All of these are involved in our friendship love with God. Friendship with God is the highest and most intimate form of love possible with God.