

Genesis 1

²⁶God spoke: "Let us make human beings in our image, make them reflecting our nature

So they can be responsible for the fish in the sea,
the birds in the air, the cattle,
And, yes, Earth itself,
and every animal that moves on the face of Earth."

²⁷God created human beings;

he created them godlike,
Reflecting God's nature.

He created them male and female.

²⁸God blessed them:

"Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Earth! Take charge!
Be responsible for fish in the sea and birds in the air,
for every living thing that moves on the face of Earth."

³¹God looked over everything he had made;

it was so good, so very good!

It was evening, it was morning--

Day Six.

Genesis 2

¹⁸GOD said, "It's not good for the Man to be alone; I'll make him a helper, a companion."

¹⁹So GOD formed from the dirt of the ground all the animals of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the Man to see what he would name them. Whatever the Man called each living creature, that was its name. ²⁰The Man named the cattle, named the birds of the air, named the wild animals; but he didn't find a suitable companion.

²¹GOD put the Man into a deep sleep. As he slept he removed one of his ribs and replaced it with flesh. ²²GOD then used the rib that he had taken from the Man to make Woman and presented her to the Man.

²³The Man said,

"Finally! Bone of my bone,
flesh of my flesh!

Name her Woman

for she was made from Man."

²⁴Therefore a man leaves his father and mother and embraces his wife. They become one flesh.

Tobias 8

4 ...Tobias got out of bed and said to Sarah, "Sister, get up, and let us pray and implore our Lord that he grant us mercy and safety." ⁵So she got up, and they began to pray and implore that they might be kept safe. Tobias began by saying,

"Blessed are you, O God of our ancestors,
and blessed is your name in all generations forever.

Let the heavens and the whole creation bless you forever.

⁶ You made Adam, and for him you made his wife Eve

as a helper and support.
From the two of them the human race has sprung.
You said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone;
let us make a helper for him like himself.'
⁷ I now am taking this kinswoman of mine,
not because of lust,
but with sincerity.
Grant that she and I may find mercy
and that we may grow old together."
⁸And they both said, "Amen, Amen." ⁹Then they went to sleep for the night.

Song of Solomon 2

⁸Look! Listen! There's my lover!
Do you see him coming?
Vaulting the mountains,
leaping the hills.
⁹My lover is like a gazelle, graceful;
like a young stag, virile.
Look at him there, on tiptoe at the gate,
all ears, all eyes--ready!
¹⁰My lover has arrived
and he's speaking to me!
Get up, my dear friend,
fair and beautiful lover--come to me!
¹⁴Come, my shy and modest dove--
leave your seclusion, come out in the open.
Let me see your face,
let me hear your voice.
For your voice is soothing
and your face is ravishing.

¹⁶My lover is mine, and I am his.
Nightly he strolls in our garden,
Delighting in the flowers

Song of Solomon 8

The Woman

⁶Hang my locket around your neck,
wear my ring on your finger.
Love is invincible facing danger and death.
Passion laughs at the terrors of hell.
The fire of love stops at nothing--
it sweeps everything before it.
⁷Flood waters can't drown love,
torrents of rain can't put it out.
Love can't be bought, love can't be sold--
it's not to be found in the marketplace.

Matthew 5

You're Blessed

¹When Jesus saw his ministry drawing huge crowds, he climbed a hillside. Those who were apprenticed to him, the committed, climbed with him. Arriving at a quiet place, he sat down ²and taught his climbing companions. This is what he said:

³"You're blessed when you're at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule.

⁴"You're blessed when you feel you've lost what is most dear to you. Only then can you be embraced by the One most dear to you.

⁵"You're blessed when you're content with just who you are--no more, no less. That's the moment you find yourselves proud owners of everything that can't be bought.

⁶"You're blessed when you've worked up a good appetite for God. He's food and drink in the best meal you'll ever eat.

⁷"You're blessed when you care. At the moment of being "carefull,' you find yourselves cared for.

⁸"You're blessed when you get your inside world--your mind and heart--put right. Then you can see God in the outside world.

⁹"You're blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That's when you discover who you really are, and your place in God's family.

¹⁰"You're blessed when your commitment to God provokes persecution. The persecution drives you even deeper into God's kingdom.

¹¹"Not only that--count yourselves blessed every time people put you down or throw you out or speak lies about you to discredit me. What it means is that the truth is too close for comfort and they are uncomfortable. ¹²You can be glad when that happens--give a cheer, even!--for though they don't like it, I do! And all heaven applauds. And know that you are in good company. My prophets and witnesses have always gotten into this kind of trouble.

Matthew 19

³One day the Pharisees were badgering him: "Is it legal for a man to divorce his wife for any reason?"

⁴He answered, "Haven't you read in your Bible that the Creator originally made man and woman for each other, male and female? ⁵And because of this, a man leaves father and mother and is firmly bonded to his wife, becoming one flesh--no longer two bodies but one. ⁶Because God created this organic union of the two sexes, no one should desecrate his art by cutting them apart."

John 15

⁹"I've loved you the way my Father has loved me. Make yourselves at home in my love.

¹⁰If you keep my commands, you'll remain intimately at home in my love. That's what I've done--kept my Father's commands and made myself at home in his love.

¹¹"I've told you these things for a purpose: that my joy might be your joy, and your joy wholly mature. ¹²This is my command: Love one another the way I loved you. ¹³This is the very best way to love. Put your life on the line for your friends. ¹⁴You are my friends when you do the things I command you. ¹⁵I'm no longer calling you servants because servants don't understand what their master is thinking and planning. No, I've named you friends because I've let you in on everything I've heard from the Father.

¹⁶"You didn't choose me, remember; I chose you, and put you in the world to bear fruit,

fruit that won't spoil. As fruit bearers, whatever you ask the Father in relation to me, he gives you.

John 17

²⁰I'm praying not only for them

But also for those who will believe in me

Because of them and their witness about me.

²¹The goal is for all of them to become one heart and mind--

Just as you, Father, are in me and I in you,

So they might be one heart and mind with us.

Then the world might believe that you, in fact, sent me.

²²The same glory you gave me, I gave them,

So they'll be as unified and together as we are--

²³I in them and you in me.

Then they'll be mature in this oneness,

And give the godless world evidence

That you've sent me and loved them

In the same way you've loved me.

Romans 12

Place Your Life Before God

¹So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life-- your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life--and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him.

²Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking.

Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.

⁹Love from the center of who you are; don't fake it. Run for dear life from evil; hold on for dear life to good. ¹⁰Be good friends who love deeply; practice playing second fiddle.

¹¹Don't burn out; keep yourselves fueled and aflame. Be alert servants of the Master,

¹²cheerfully expectant. Don't quit in hard times; pray all the harder. ¹³Help needy Christians; be inventive in hospitality.

¹⁴Bless your enemies; no cursing under your breath. ¹⁵Laugh with your happy friends when they're happy; share tears when they're down. ¹⁶Get along with each other; don't be stuck-up. Make friends with nobodies; don't be the great somebody.

¹⁷Don't hit back; discover beauty in everyone. ¹⁸If you've got it in you, get along with everybody.

1 Corinthians 6

¹³You know the old saying, "First you eat to live, and then you live to eat"? Well, it may be true that the body is only a temporary thing, but that's no excuse for stuffing your body with food, or indulging it with sex. Since the Master honors you with a body, honor him with your body!

¹⁴God honored the Master's body by raising it from the grave. He'll treat yours with the

same resurrection power. ¹⁵Until that time, remember that your bodies are created with the same dignity as the Master's body. You wouldn't take the Master's body off to a whorehouse, would you? I should hope not.

¹⁷Since we want to become spiritually one with the Master, we must not pursue the kind of sex that avoids commitment and intimacy, leaving us more lonely than ever--the kind of sex that can never "become one." ¹⁸There is a sense in which sexual sins are different from all others. In sexual sin we violate the sacredness of our own bodies, these bodies that were made for God-given and God-modeled love, for "becoming one" with another. ¹⁹Or didn't you realize that your body is a sacred place, the place of the Holy Spirit? Don't you see that you can't live however you please, squandering what God paid such a high price for? The physical part of you is not some piece of property belonging to the spiritual part of you. ²⁰God owns the whole works. So let people see God in and through your body.

1 Corinthians 12

³¹And yet some of you keep competing for so-called "important" parts. But now I want to lay out a far better way for you.

1 Corinthians 13

The Way of Love

¹If I speak with human eloquence and angelic ecstasy but don't love, I'm nothing but the creaking of a rusty gate.

²If I speak God's Word with power, revealing all his mysteries and making everything plain as day, and if I have faith that says to a mountain, "Jump," and it jumps, but I don't love, I'm nothing.

³If I give everything I own to the poor and even go to the stake to be burned as a martyr, but I don't love, I've gotten nowhere. So, no matter what I say, what I believe, and what I do, I'm bankrupt without love.

⁴Love never gives up.

Love cares more for others than for self.

Love doesn't want what it doesn't have.

Love doesn't strut,

Doesn't have a swelled head,

⁵Doesn't force itself on others,

Isn't always "me first,"

Doesn't fly off the handle,

Doesn't keep score of the sins of others,

⁶Doesn't revel when others grovel,

Takes pleasure in the flowering of truth,

⁷Puts up with anything,

Trusts God always,

Always looks for the best,

Never looks back,

But keeps going to the end.

⁸Love never dies. Inspired speech will be over some day; praying in tongues will end; understanding will reach its limit.

Ephesians 5

²Mostly what God does is love you. Keep company with him and learn a life of love. Observe how Christ loved us. His love was not cautious but extravagant. He didn't love in order to get something from us but to give everything of himself to us. Love like that.

Relationships

²¹Out of respect for Christ, be courteously reverent to one another.

²²Wives, understand and support your husbands in ways that show your support for Christ.

²³The husband provides leadership to his wife the way Christ does to his church, not by domineering but by cherishing. ²⁴So just as the church submits to Christ as he exercises such leadership, wives should likewise submit to their husbands.

²⁵Husbands, go all out in your love for your wives, exactly as Christ did for the church--a love marked by giving, not getting. ²⁶Christ's love makes the church whole. His words evoke her beauty. Everything he does and says is designed to bring the best out of her, ²⁷dressing her in dazzling white silk, radiant with holiness. ²⁸And that is how husbands ought to love their wives. They're really doing themselves a favor--since they're already "one" in marriage.

²⁹No one abuses his own body, does he? No, he feeds and pampers it. That's how Christ treats us, the church, ³⁰since we are part of his body. ³¹And this is why a man leaves father and mother and cherishes his wife. No longer two, they become "one flesh." ³²This is a huge mystery, and I don't pretend to understand it all. What is clearest to me is the way Christ treats the church. ³³And this provides a good picture of how each husband is to treat his wife, loving himself in loving her, and how each wife is to honor her husband.

Colossians 3

¹²So, chosen by God for this new life of love, dress in the wardrobe God picked out for you: compassion, kindness, humility, quiet strength, discipline. ¹³Be even-tempered, content with second place, quick to forgive an offense. Forgive as quickly and completely as the Master forgave you. ¹⁴And regardless of what else you put on, wear love. It's your basic, all-purpose garment. Never be without it.

¹⁵Let the peace of Christ keep you in tune with each other, in step with each other. None of this going off and doing your own thing. And cultivate thankfulness. ¹⁶Let the Word of Christ--the Message--have the run of the house. Give it plenty of room in your lives. Instruct and direct one another using good common sense. And sing, sing your hearts out to God! ¹⁷Let every detail in your lives--words, actions, whatever--be done in the name of the Master, Jesus, thanking God the Father every step of the way.

1 John 3

When We Practice Real Love

¹⁸My dear children, let's not just talk about love; let's practice real love. ¹⁹This is the only way we'll know we're living truly, living in God's reality. ²⁰It's also the way to shut down debilitating self-criticism, even when there is something to it. For God is greater than our worried hearts and knows more about us than we do ourselves.

²²We're able to stretch our hands out and receive what we asked for because we're doing what he said, doing what pleases him. ²³Again, this is God's command: to believe in his personally named Son, Jesus Christ. He told us to love each other, in line with the

original command. ²⁴As we keep his commands, we live deeply and surely in him, and he lives in us. And this is how we experience his deep and abiding presence in us: by the Spirit he gave us.

1 John 4

God Is Love

⁷My beloved friends, let us continue to love each other since love comes from God. Everyone who loves is born of God and experiences a relationship with God. ⁸The person who refuses to love doesn't know the first thing about God, because God is love--so you can't know him if you don't love. ⁹This is how God showed his love for us: God sent his only Son into the world so we might live through him. ¹⁰This is the kind of love we are talking about--not that we once upon a time loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to clear away our sins and the damage they've done to our relationship with God.

¹¹My dear, dear friends, if God loved us like this, we certainly ought to love each other.

¹²No one has seen God, ever. But if we love one another, God dwells deeply within us, and his love becomes complete in us--perfect love!