



A Manifesto on Missional Living



by dennis gable

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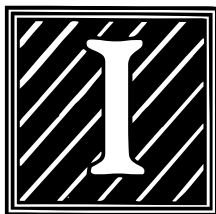
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## **INTRODUCTION**

First and foremost, thank you; L!VELOVE was written specifically for you!

Thank you for your support and partnership in spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ! This is a call that has been placed on my life for many years; the Lord has done incredible, mysterious things in order to have me humbled before the cross.

My prayer is that this would be more than just a collection of words; that it would be an encouragement to your soul.

Believer, or non-believer.

I do not write because I believe that I have all of the answers, I write because God has given me a mind that moves,

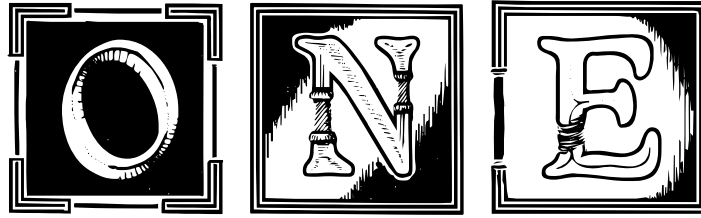
at incredible speeds.

A mind that seems to see things with a slightly different lens than most, and it is my prayer that these words would make you think about how this world interacts with you, but more so, how you interact with this world.

Let us, as one body, with many different parts and functions, fight to rebuild one another. Let's get crazy in here, and live this life in the most ridiculous fashion, doing all for the glory of the Lord!!

We are one and we will change the world, together!

L!VELOVE,  
Dennis Alan Gable Jr.



## THE LOG/SPECK COMBO

The biggest injustice that we do to our brothers and sisters is look at their sin with a different lens than we view our own.

*“Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.*

*“Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you. - Matthew 7:1-6*

Jesus warns us against something that will become quite ironic, not only within 1<sup>st</sup> century Christianity but also in 21<sup>st</sup> century Christianity, and humanity in general.

Read this sentence 4 times:

“For with the judgment you pronounced you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you.” [Matt 7:2]

Now, I want you to think of that one person who does that one thing that makes you say, “they can’t be a Christian and do **that!**”

The only difference typically is that the person you are judging doesn’t know about your sin, because you have such a pretty mask, exceptional at that. And on top of your “pretty mask” there is certainly a deeply rooted sin or pain that draws out such an unloving response.

Let us pretend for a second that your name is Darren, you are 37 years old with a wife and two daughters.

You have a co-worker named Jill; Jill is a 28-year-old with a girlfriend and no children, yet.

It’s 12:36PM on a Wednesday and after some deliberation, you and a few of your fellow office inhabitants make it out to that pizza joint that’s walking distance from the office. While enjoying two pieces of hand-tossed, thin crust pepperoni pizza, a side salad with ranch dressing and an icy cold root beer, conversation is sparked about relationships, marriage, dating, etc.

Jill has been the receptionist in your office for just over a year and a half. It has been about six months since the last “new guy” entered the office, giving your home away from home a very warm, family oriented feel. The extent and depth of Jill’s relationships within the office leads to a deep level of comfort and safety, allowing for honesty and vulnerability. During this weekly attempt at going to lunch as a work family Jill begins to talk about her relationships both previous and present, which includes the current pursuit of her girlfriend,

Allison.

Most of the girls in the office are aware of Jill’s relationship with Allison while the men are left trailing in understanding. Attempting to bring her co-workers all up to speed, Jill discusses some of the specifics of her current relationship and the process that has brought her here.

Jill explains that she met Allison at an Incubus concert, waiting in line for a refill of the concert favorite, Bud Light. Jill was standing behind a woman in line, admiring her beauty. The length of her hair, the cut of her jeans and most of all the tattered black tee shirt from Incubus’ *Make Yourself* tour in 2000.

She states clearly that this was admiration **not** sexual attraction.

While waiting patiently Jill spots her friend James approaching the line with the intent of sliding into the empty space between her and the woman in front of her with beautiful hair. “James, Hi!?” The woman in front of Jill turns when she hears James’ name called out. After Jill and James embrace in an intimate platonic hello, he then turns to embrace the woman that Jill has been admiring throughout her seventeen-minute wait. “Who are you here with?” Jill asks. “I’m here with my friend Allison” he replies. “Jill, this is Allison.” [Their hands extend for an introductory handshake.] “Allison, this is Jill.”

Being a fan of Incubus since their first release, ‘Fungus Among Us’, Jill was gladly solo in her attendance but was also accepting of the invitation to join James and Allison. The three completely lost themselves within the musical glory displayed within the frame of Incubus’ seventy-five minute set, which was then followed by a twenty-minute encore.

After the show the three took a cab to Denny’s for some late-night grub and an honest attempt at sobering up before making the drive home.

It was there that Jill made the transition from ‘admiration’ to ‘attraction’, “There was just something so drawing about her personality, something I couldn’t explain, I just knew that I wanted to learn more.”

In between bites of her vegetarian calzone she says they’ve been dating for just a few months now, and it’s actually her first relationship with another woman. One of Jill’s female co-workers, Stacy, curiously asks, “Is it strange dating a woman?” Jill, finishing her bite, gives her the let me finish chewing finger, takes a drink of her passion fruit ice tea and says, “Well, it’s different. I have dated a handful of men and since this is my first relationship with a woman there is a lot to



learn about how to communicate with her.” “I mean, it’s strange to not feel facial hair when I kiss her, if that’s what you mean.” A chuckle fills the space within the circle of co-workers. Brian breaks the laughter by inquiring about the support and acceptance of her parents. “Ha, my parents... I have great parents.” She proclaims. Jill continues by explaining that she grew up in a Baptist church where her mother was head of the ‘Secret sisters’ and dad was a deacon. “My parents are loving, I’m not sure if supportive is the word I would use to describe them but, certainly loving. They assume that this is some sort of quarter-life phase which, realistically... it might be, however, it is my today.” She continues by assuring the audience that she was never molested or treated poorly in that sense, the relationships that she had with men were somewhat painful as they seemed to be so much more concerned with their pleasure rather than hers.

You join the conversation by asking Jill if she is [still] a Christian, to which her answer is,

“If you are asking if I believe in Jesus, my answer is yes. If you are asking if I go to church every Sunday, my answer is no. But, to answer your question the way you asked it, yes, I consider myself a Christian.”

Your brain becomes like a pinball trapped in the top section of the machine, bouncing rapidly with no certain direction, just movement. In the grip of your own sin your first thought is “how can she call herself a Christian and be a lesbian?”

A question that you are certainly not alone in asking.

Your mind races continuous left hand turns around this question, “How can she consider herself a Christian and so blatantly disobey God?”

“Doesn’t she know that being gay is a sin?”

“God hates homosexuals!”

You check back into the conversation only to realize that Jill answered your question and then some, but unfortunately, you were too focused on the speck in Jill’s eye.

Later that night you [Darren] are telling your wife all about Jill, ranting and raving, pissing and moaning in frustration about how she thinks it’s possible for her to be a lesbian and still call herself a Christian.

It’s about 9:00PM; your wife stands up from her place on the couch and goes into the playroom to inform your daughters that it’s just about bed time and to help them get ready for a good night sleep. Anticipating an email from a potential client you sneak into the office to check the status of your inbox, purposefully breaking the “no work at home” rule. You hustle start up Internet Explorer, and conveniently your homepage is set to your Gmail account. Your fingers, anxious on the keyboard, type your ‘username’, hit the tab key and then enter your twelve-character password; with your right pinky finger you hit the ‘enter’ key to complete your log in. Scanning the ‘subject’ lines of the bold [which means unread] items in your inbox. Gmail is void of the

information that you were searching for, however, was not void of a new advertisement to your most your most visited site,

your secret, most visited site.

You peak out of your office door to see if there is any sign of your lovely, faithful wife.

Getting the girls ready for bed is typically a twenty or thirty minute process with changing, teeth brushing and the always anticipated bedtime story.

A glance to the lower right hand corner of your screen lets you know how much time you have to cheat on your wife.

The arrow that is obedient to the movement of the mouse finds its way to the subject line of the email, which reads, New! Hot Video From Fan Favorite, Chastity.

Click,

the arrow finds its destination, the blue link that lies in the midst of the descriptive text.

Click.

Username, check.

Password, check.

You reach into the bottom drawer of your desk, open the little oak box that looks inconspicuous but holds a travel size bottle of lotion that you refill with your wife's and a rag that is thrown in with the rest of the wash and replaced.

With approximately 14 minutes remaining, your adventure begins,

your *secret* adventure begins.

Jill looks at you from across your desk with a puzzling look and thinks, "how can a Christian masturbate to porn while his wife is putting his children to sleep?"

No, actually she doesn't because you're alone.

Jill doesn't have the freedom make an opinion about your life style, because you choose to live your sin in secret. Locked in the silence of your own home, trapped between your actions and the screen of your laptop, and it is because of the secrecy that the log does not disrupt your vision,

yet.

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There is an individual scale that resides in the balance of our differences, our sin, our shortcomings, our appearance and our possessions. This scale is a pendulum that we control; we swing it in the direction that best benefits us in whatever moment we are facing.

It is by this scale that we decide whether or not someone is *good enough*, for us, for their status, or for their faith. It is also the scale with which we choose to ignore our faults and swing the pendulum in our favor when it is undeserving.

There are numerous factors that tip this scale to one side or the other, but unfortunately the bulk of them are based on our opinions or our political views.

Are we conservative or liberal?

Are we Christian?

Who cares?!

Are we selfishly ignorant?

Yes.

The fact of the matter is that *we all sin and fall short of the glory of God* in more ways than we'll ever admit... We are the most wretched individuals that we will *ever* encounter.

In the midst of the story between Darren and Jill, Darren will never allow himself to be a good friend or co-worker to Jill because of her sexual orientation and he certainly will not love her the way that he should. The bummer is that Jill and Darren's wife have a number of things in common and could potentially be really good friends. Could probably become good friends with Darren's wife, but it seems as if we'll never know.

The first step in living love is to look past the speck of sin in the eyes of others as you acknowledge the log of sin sticking out of your eye.

Darren has found a way to justify his addiction to pornography and masturbation because it happens in the comfort of his own home, and no one else is exposed to his hidden sin, or are they?

The truth behind it is Darren and his wife haven't had sex in over two months; Darren is no longer attracted to his wife the way he used to be. His boundary of sexual attraction and sexual expectation has been stretched far beyond its healthy limit.

It is nearly impossible for Darren to be attracted to his wife because she doesn't have oversized fake breasts, she doesn't wear a full face of makeup while they are being intimate, and she won't participate in the borderline vulgar acts of sexuality that her husband has been tricked into believing are normal.



Darren is being brain washed to rewrite his understanding of “normal.”

Manipulated.

Deceived.

What does this mean for the future of Darren’s marriage?

Destruction.

If Darren isn’t already cheating on his wife, it won’t be long.

Dr. Oz [regular guest on the Oprah Winfrey Show] is a firm believer that a healthy amount of sexual connection between [married] couples is approximately once every two days. With the average actually being once or twice a *week*, according to Dr. Krista Bloom.

If you are married, and not having sex, start!

If you are consistently viewing pornography [married or not], stop it.

Fight to preserve the purity and sanctity of your marriage [future marriage] and the sexual connection you [will] have with your spouse by ending the affair you are having with your computer screen.

Darren’s judgment of Jill’s sin comes only because hers is out in the open, it’s public. His sin on the other hand is in secret, private and disguisable.

Which certainly don’t make them better or worse necessarily but they become absolutely more dangerous!

The real thought behind his chapter isn’t homosexuality and it’s position as sin or pornography and it’s position as sin, it is about viewing all sin on the same scale in order to not judge or exclude anyone based on action.

Love people for who they are;  
they are beautiful,  
they have great qualities,  
great talents,  
and there is a gift in mutually beneficial friendships.



## **THE HALF-FULL YOU TANK**

*For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.*

*The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, **that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.** – 2 Corinthians 12:14-26*

The title of this chapter is actually much longer than the five words that are written just above the excerpt from chapter twelve of Paul's first letter to the Corinthian church.

Is the glass half empty or half full? This question is often asked to measure someone's level of optimism or pessimism depending on the answer given. I'm taking a risk toward the optimistic side.

Each of us has a "tank" that we take from in order to give to those around us. Instead of breaking down the specific tanks that we have, let's just group them all together. Do you wish that your tank could always be full and ready to give?

I do.

I wish I had a full tank that could be wasted on those around me and continually refilled.

Unfortunately, this is not the case; our tank cannot always be full and ready to give. The contents of our tank [personality, talents, appearance, faith, etc.] have to be refilled as we use what we have on those around us.

This tank determines our ability to keep fighting, to keep giving, and if we don't approach our tank as being half full then we are going to deceive ourselves into a lie that we have nothing to offer.

In my life, I have to remain directly connected to the giver of the contents of my tank, Jesus.

There are tangible, "nonreligious" ways to prevent our tank from running on empty, such as positivity, psychological encouragement, good friends, moral behavior, etc. However, the truth of the matter is that just because we are not empty does not mean we are full either, and until we are connected with one who created the tank we can not really experience life on a full tank.

Trust me, I've tried.

What is the status of your tank?

Do you even believe that the contents of it are worth keeping full?

Enough of the analogy... The question that I'm asking is do you believe in yourself? Do you believe that you were created in the image of a perfect creator, with purpose? Are your skills worth of being used? Do you think you are beautiful/handsome?

The answer should be yes.

We always see the greener grass that lies on the other side of the hill.

One of those areas for me is that I **wish** that I had a good singing voice, I absolutely love the adrenaline that comes from performing and jumping around like a madman. It would be silly for me to think that God didn't know what He was doing in creating me because he didn't give me a good singing voice.

Another one of these areas, is a conversation that I have all of the time... I have a pretty rad beard, and for one reason or another a lot of dudes wish they could grow a beard as amazing as mine, until I tell them "with a great beard also comes a great back beard," and they suddenly don't want a beard as much.

Hmm, I wonder why?

What about issues that are more significant than singing and back hair?

Personality for instance, let's assume that you are the friend who is more introverted, and you are constantly afraid that because you don't have the limelight personality that you aren't liked *as* much.

Analogy time. If on a long drive, you are driving through Texas, Arizona or any other state that is predominately desert, and you say, "This sucks, I wish we could see more than just desert on this trip. I'm so bored with all of the dirt."

Imagine the desert, it is plain at first site with nothing very extravagant to look at. We get excited to see movement by anything other than a tumbleweed running through the dirt.

Now think about a Saguaro cactus, they are some of the most incredible plants in all of creation. They can grow and live for over one hundred and fifty years with very little water, and no attention.

Then there are all of the creatures that burrow and live under the ground, a society hidden to the average sight of eyes and yet, incredible.

The effort that has to go toward finding the beauty often times leaves it at mysterious.

Let's compare this to the lush landscape in a place like Seattle, so much beauty that we rarely think about what lies beneath the surface because we are so captivated by the appearance of it all.

There is certainly balance here, but now taking a look at each other for a second.

In one room there might be a beautiful woman or handsome man that looks great on the outside, but you might not ever take the time to find out what is under the surface. What you see is what you take. And then there is the one who gets looked over, everything to offer below the surface and is passed by because there is a lack of "beauty" when really there is just a lack of desire to appreciate the beauty.

So, speaking very generally there is balance, and we all have something if not everything to offer, whether someone is willing to put in the work, or not.

Psychologists, pastors, and other smart, insightful people will tell you "you can't truly love someone until you love yourself."

This truth manifests itself in so many ways. Search your heart, think of the ways that you find it hard to love or be loved because of insecurity, doubt, past hurt, and ultimately the view of a *half empty you tank*.

You're more than carbon and chemicals; you are the image of the invisible! [Thank you, Thrice]  
We have all been created.  
We all have purpose.  
We have been built as different parts of one body.

You are talented enough!  
You are attractive enough!  
You are worth more than enough!

Fill up your "you tank" and even as it runs low, know that you were built for more than you can handle on your own and view this life as *half FULL!*

Once you are able to accept the person that you were created to be, even if this understanding happens slowly, you will be able to experience the ways you are able to love people above and beyond our self deprecating tendencies.

Life becomes so much more real when the grass is no longer greener on your neighbors lawn but is finally perfectly grown, colored and managed in your own.

When your time on earth no longer becomes centered on what this world can do for you but rather what you can do for the world that surrounds you, you get to experience living. Living and loving connected for the betterment of another.



## SHIRTLESS, HOMELESS, BROKE, & TIRED

This chapter might be the most difficult to swallow.

*And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. - Acts 2:42-47*

As Americans we live in the most hedonistic culture to date [personal opinion]. Commercialism and the comparison of our “stuff” is all that the *American Dream* is based upon. The most unfortunate thought however is the truth in this statement, “the man who dies with the most toys, still dies.”

Our focus has been totally taken off of the needs of others at time, including our children, our spouses and those closest to us. Not to mention those who are absent from our daily community.

How expensive is my car?  
Do I have the biggest house on the block?  
Does my ring have the largest diamond?

This isn't just for those who are doing well financially; it is also for the starving college kid.

Does my car have the best system?  
Am I wearing the newest styles?  
Do I throw the best parties?

I want to be very clear that I am not singling out, or picking on individuals who have a lot of money; there is no sin in having a fat bank account [if managed well]. Some have been blessed to be the supporters, and some have been called to be the travelers, pastors, volunteers, etc. I would like to state however, that God is NOT concerned with your financial prosperity, outside of it being a blessing from Him to **bless others**. More times than I can personally count, the rich man is counted as the poor man for he doesn't have the *need* to rely on God daily as the poor man does.



On to my main point.

First century Christians in Jerusalem are the model for how our communities should look. Now, please don't get me wrong, I am fully aware that with the way our culture can travel "church" doesn't look like it did in first century Jerusalem. A Church was pretty literally a community of people, for instance: Tempe would have been a church [or at least those who had made a decision to follow Christ] and we would have been spoken to as "the Church at Tempe".

I am a member at Praxis church in Tempe, Arizona. Personally, I live in Tempe; however, I know a large amount of members and attendees who live in the surrounding cities such as: Mesa, Phoenix, Scottsdale, etc. The space between us makes the Acts model difficult. Not to mention our work schedules, social lives, hobbies, sin time, children, spouses, and lets not forget shopping, personal space, fear of vulnerability.

Let's dissect this concept though, I think we are going to see that it is much more attainable than we would like to believe...

They devoted themselves to:

- The apostles' teaching [the teachings of Jesus].
- Fellowship [the sharing of materials and goods].
- Breaking bread [the Lord's supper as well as dinner meals].
- Prayer.

The verse that this hinges on for me is v. 44, which says, *and all who believed were together and had all things in common.*

All things in common?

Like, they all had the same hobbies, interests, taste in food, etc.

NO...

They were all under the same mind as to how they should live amongst one another. Everyone who was a part of their community understood the need to live outside of themselves...

the need to LIVELOVE!

You need clothes? You got it!  
You need food? You got it!  
You need help to pay rent? You got it!  
You need transportation? You got it!  
You need someone to talk to? You got it!  
You need some money? You got it!  
You need a place to live? You got it!

When asked which of the commandments was the greatest, Jesus replied this way, *“The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”*

At my most selfless moment, I still make sure that I have clothes on my body, food in my belly, a roof over my head and time for what I need to do.

If we are to truly love our neighbors as ourselves, those in our physical community as well as our spiritual community should never be without.

Even if that means we have to sell something of ours to provide for a need of theirs, there is no command greater. Luke records its effectiveness even by letting us know that *the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.*

DANG!

That is so incredible to me...

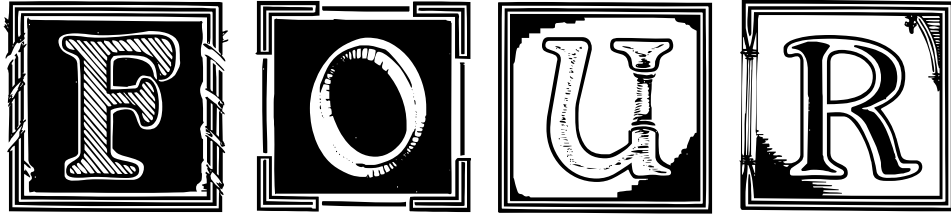
Bible  
Prayer  
Fellowship  
Selflessness

And our world might actually start to look different...

Let's give it a shot! Look to provide for the needs of those around you as you provide for your own, at all cost.

And if you are the person who is in need, don't be afraid to ask us, that is what we are here for, to make sure that you are taken care of.

In conclusion, whether you are the rich in pocket or the rich in spirit [poor] commit to one month of living as if nothing was actually yours but here for the taking, even if you end up shirtless, homeless, broke and tired.



## **SOCIAL INTERACTION 101**

Eye contact.  
Self confidence.  
Firm handshake.  
A genuine interest in the lives of other people.

These are just a few of the components of a good communicator and we all have the ability to be one. You don't have to hide behind your insecurities that boil inside of you leading you to believe that you are not interesting, or worth knowing.

If you have forgotten how amazing you are, reread "The Half-Full You Tank."

"Love" is one of those motivating words that rarely is acted out, much like the word *peace*.

These words merely become slogans,  
marketing ploys.

There is rarely any real vision to pursue the outcome of such incredibly powerful words; what might begin as vision becomes the acquisition of self-fulfillment.

In order to LIVELOVE with people we must to know how to interact with them. Let's focus on something that we can all relate to.

Names.

I have one,

you have one.

So, why is it so difficult to remember them?

Keep thinking...

Good question, right?

Think of how many times you have heard and/or told someone "don't be offended if I forget your name, I'm terrible with names."

Pretty often right?

I used to be completely horrible at remembering names, it was really difficult because I recognize faces extremely well but could never put a name to the face. I became slave to saying, “remind me your name, I’m terrible with names, sorry!”

If I am being honest about my interaction with people, it wasn’t that I was “bad with names,” but it was that I ultimately didn’t care all that much. I was much more concerned with what I was going to tell the person that I was meeting, or moving rapidly into the unfortunately boring question, “so what do *you* do?”

Have you become prisoner to the justification that slides so smoothly off of the tongue?

If so, please understand that you haven’t been making a statement of forgetfulness; you have been making a statement of disinterest.

Try this:

When you meet someone, don’t ask their name unless you really care to know what it is.

Understand that this will be awkward but it will save you from having to fake an interest in the person, asking them questions that you won’t remember the answers to anyway.

If you have a social awakening like I had then you will hopefully reevaluate the way you “love” people, and decide that it is worth the effort to listen and not be so concerned with what you have to say.

Now, when you are introduced to someone, look them in the eyes, shake their hand firmly and actually listen to them. Once you have their name, repeat it at least twice in the conversation.

Be interested!

“Hello, my name is Dennis, what is your name?”

“My name is Jason.”

“It’s great to meet you Jason.”

“Thanks, it is good to meet you too, Dennis.”

“So, how do you spend your days Jason?”

The conversation will naturally move forward at this point, as long as you are interested, truly interested in what they are saying.

This will move so much farther than you “loving” people.

People will know and believe that you are interested in them, they will feel so special the next time you see them and you call them by name, not just “hey... man.”

The outcome of this is that you will see your network grow dramatically, the amount of people that you are able to love will expand naturally, beyond you getting to a place where you are truly longing to love the people you come into contact with!

I think one of the most difficult tasks of loving people is that it makes us see past our selves, our needs, our wants and our issues.

What joy there is to be found in the lives of others!

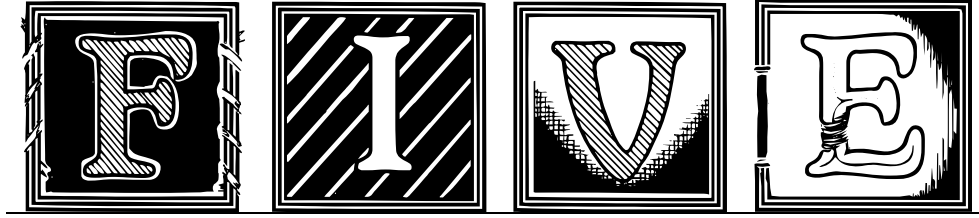
In a world where love has turned into tagline marketability, let us fight for the depth and intention of a word that carries so much weight. Please, do not abuse something that is so powerful!

Eye contact.

Self confidence.

Firm handshake.

A genuine interest in the lives of other people.



## **THE FOUNDATION OF LOVE**

Thank you so much for taking the time to read L!VELOVE. I have poured all that I have into this for you in hopes that it will benefit your life; you have been a benefit to mine by contributing to my life in reading this, praying for me and supporting the movement of the gospel.

Speaking of gospel, what is it?

The gospel is the redemptive story of Jesus.

I am fully aware that not every one of you who will read L!VELOVE is a believer in Jesus. I also understand that not all of you who believe in Jesus are in a relationship with Him. I am cheating you if I write all of these things, and do not at least introduce you to Jesus;

He is the *Foundation of Love*.

*...Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost...*

There is no scripture that speaks more truly to my life. I didn't realize this until I felt the need for a savior and was completely incapable of finding fulfillment that was lasting. We all have this issue, a natural, involuntary disobedience to God. This issue is called sin. *Hamartia* in the Greek, the word literally means *to miss the mark*. What is the mark that we are missing?

Righteousness.

As humans without a perfect relationship with God through the understanding and acceptance of the sacrifice made by the son, Jesus Christ, we are unable to escape this spiritual cancer otherwise known as sin. We are also unable to obtain any form of holy living or righteousness.

We are in *need* of a savior.

In need of a judge who looks at the jury and says "he/she is guilty there is no doubt about that, but, I pardon their action and they are free to go." This does not mean that we are given a life sentence of community service. We are actually offered true freedom, not a laundry list of do's and don'ts so the judge will not change his mind.

This process is called grace, a free gift that we are given from God when we acknowledge him as creator, sustainer, savior and make a decision to pursue his glory and no longer our own.

Grace cannot be earned, and once fully received it cannot be taken away.



Let's get back to the socially rebellious Jewish hippie, Jesus.

Jesus was born into scandal and uproar. His mother, Mary "the virgin," was engaged to a man named Joseph, a carpenter in their poor town. One day after an encounter with an angel and the Lord, she mustered up the courage to tell her man that she was pregnant, but not by another man, by God. Not only does this sound ridiculous, it was also social death to conceive a child outside of marriage.

Jesus' father was a carpenter by trade, which means there were two things Jesus grew up learning. 1. The traditions and scriptures of Jewish religion. 2. How to cut down a tree, swing a hammer and build stuff.

What does this mean?

This means that all of the frail, white, anorexic pictures of Jesus that we are cursed with, are in fact not true to who Christ actually was.

Jesus was a dude!

Full of old-man strength, calloused hands, leathered skin. His wisdom and knowledge of scripture was just as gnarly as he would often leave the religious rock stars speechless, even as a preteen we see this. These are the aspects of Jesus that make him truly unique to any other religious figure!

Sinless,

He was able to call on the strength of God the Father in times of temptation and actually trust that God's will was worth fighting for.

Selfless,

He lowered himself from his place of righteousness in heaven seated between God the Father and God the Spirit in order to be humiliated.

Sacrificial,

in this humiliation he was accused of blasphemy, mocked, called a liar, spit on, beaten to the brink of death and nailed to a tree.

Victorious,

His dead body was placed in a tomb; from that tomb he rose, rolled away that stone that held him in and conquered sin and death on our behalf.

So, the man who we've been tricked in to seeing as a "great religious teacher," is actually nothing of the sort, he is our rebellious redeemer, able to free us from the rules and regulations of a world governed by sin. As you see your need for a savior, as you see the cracks in your own strength, call on Jesus, the only one in history to actually live the life that he preached.

“Work out your own salvation in fear and trembling.” Paul writes these words as an encouragement to the church in Philippi that with or without him present they would fight for their salvation.

Fight, scream, cuss, pray, cry or whatever it takes, be honest with God as you seek his truth and the grace of salvation.

Please understand that this is only a glimpse of the story, a single grain of sand pulled from the beaches of spiritual living. In all of our “knowledge” and “understanding” of God, we don’t have the mental capacity to scratch the surface. Before you start to dig, I hope that you will really consider the importance and need for salvation from our hearts that beat to a wicked rhythm.

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