

# INTRODUCTION

I am looking forward to leading you through the thought processes and the biblical teachings that have convinced me that God wants us to be *active* in our faith—that believing is more than a mental and spiritual condition; it is about the way we live each day. I believe that God wants more than our worship; He wants us to transform our belief into behavior that blesses all of His creation.

My conclusions are based on the Bible. The Bible story is about people. They were lovingly created. They made enormous mistakes. They had to be salvaged by their loving Creator. The Bible is primarily about how much the Creator loves the human race.

Much of our traditional thought about God has drifted in the direction of how we must please Him. Part of this thinking has included a pervasive concern with living and behaving in a God-pleasing way. It has been wrapped around our concern with proper behavior in order to receive the blessing and good will of God.

We cannot cajole, encourage, or entice God into loving us and into giving us earthly gifts and eternal rewards for our behavior. This is off-target thinking. God is not longing for anything more than our thoughtful, prayerful partnership and for us to live sensibly in this world. Devotions and worship are right, and they are appropriate, but they must generate life changes and goodness. Worship is for our benefit—it is a way to generate well-being in us. God’s teachings and His guidance are for *our* benefit, not His. Devotions and worship are not actions that will make God love us more; they are not an end in themselves. They are a means to an end. They are to make us better people and brighter lights in this world.

God is not a needy personage. There is no emptiness in Him that can be assuaged or filled by our attention. It is good for us to adore the Lord God, and He does indeed want a loving relationship with us. It is helpful to think of Him as a selfless parent. A wise, loving parent guides his child, and even when the child falters, his love never wavers. God's Word is all about His loving compassion for us. The rules and laws that God has prescribed for us are not to meet *His* needs. They are for *our* well-being, which is the goal of God's love and which brings him satisfaction and joy.

The heart of Christian living is to live out the love of Jesus that is in us. Jesus said to the people, "You are the light of the world!" I want to motivate people to take seriously this responsibility to bring light into the darkness felt by people around us. Each of us must celebrate being chosen and blessed with this task.

We, too, are sometimes broken. But we are deepened, healed, and enriched by seeing people everywhere needing loving kindness. We must spill, sprinkle, splash, and soak people with loving-kindness. When we do that, it is God. God is love, and when we love anybody, even a tiny little bit, we are giving them God. Our kindness nourishes their souls with the most lifegiving nutrition there is—love!

I hope and pray that you will catch this vision—that you will be awakened to see the man, the woman, the stranger, the neighbor, the greeter at Walmart, the cashier at the bank, the worker at the carwash, the clerk at Walgreens, and everybody else, as candidates for a kind word, a smile, a compliment, a warm greeting. That is love! I pray you will see every human being as one of the *walking wounded* to whom you can give a lifting, healing touch. That is letting your light shine and being a light in the world.

You are a reservoir of soul-nourishing goodness, heart-warming love, and spirit-lifting care, because that is the spirit of Jesus. The Holy Spirit is in you, waiting to be released, shared, and spread to people. And it is so simple.

I will lead you through the reasoning behind my passionate belief that God, though He loves our praise, adoration, and our personal relationship with Him, receives even greater joy when He sees us spreading love, kindness, helpfulness, and honest care for one another.