

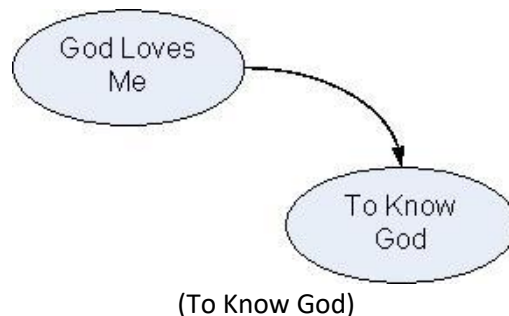
The Growth Spiral of Love: Our Love of God

This begins with our knowledge of God's love for us. One of the first things we hear from God's word, as written in John's Gospel, is that He loves us, and that He sent His Son to die for our sins.

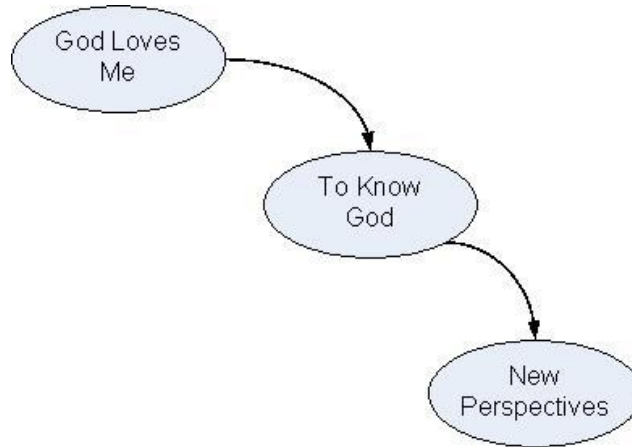
"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." (John 3:16)



When we accept Christ as our Savior that love is confirmed within our hearts as we experience freedom from the Death-hand of Sin, and the burden of our sins. Praise God, we receive the peace giving and joy filling presence of the Holy Spirit, and we know God to be our "Father."

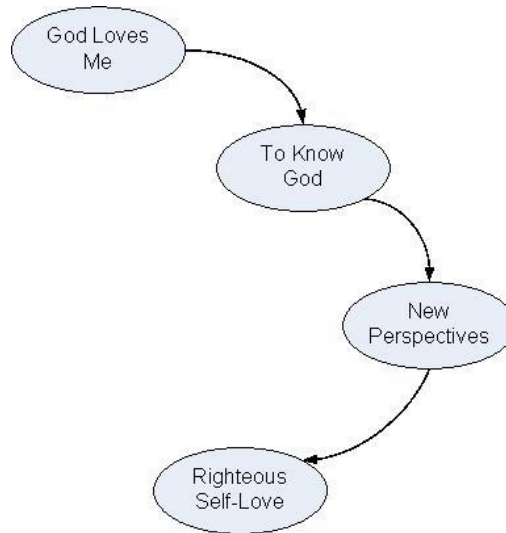


Because God first loved us, we are enabled to love Him. We are becoming aware of the love that we now have for Him, and the desire within us to love Him more. It is because of this relationship that we begin to see ourselves from a new perspective. Not as the world sees us, but as God sees us.



(New Perspectives)

By this new perspective, a view from redemption, we are able to be led in righteous self-love. This is a love which is not based upon the values of the world, but upon the Love that God has for us, and the new life that we have in Christ.

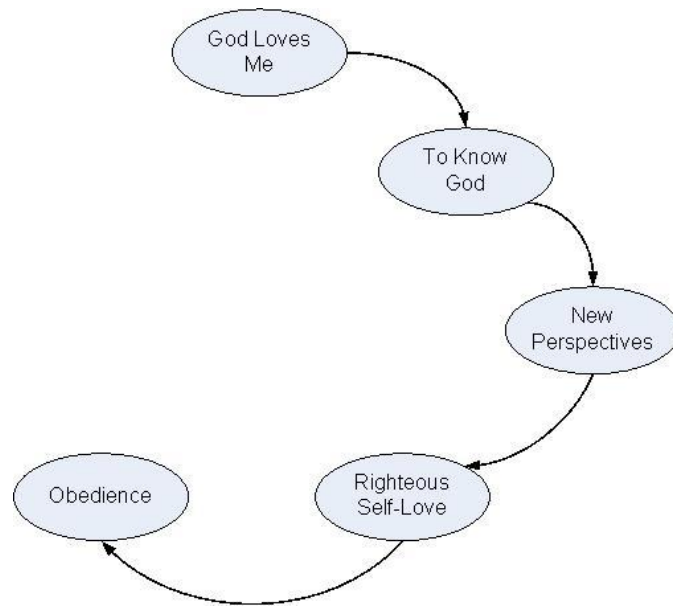


(Righteous Self-Love)

In Christ we see that a life that was empty is now made whole. We are worth loving because God loves us; in fact He gave His Son for us.

It is in Him that we find our sense of self-worth. He gives us a purpose for living, and He gives us a message which is worth sharing with the world.

Righteous self-love calls for us to obey God's will for our lives, because it is in this way that our needs are correctly fulfilled.



(Obedience)

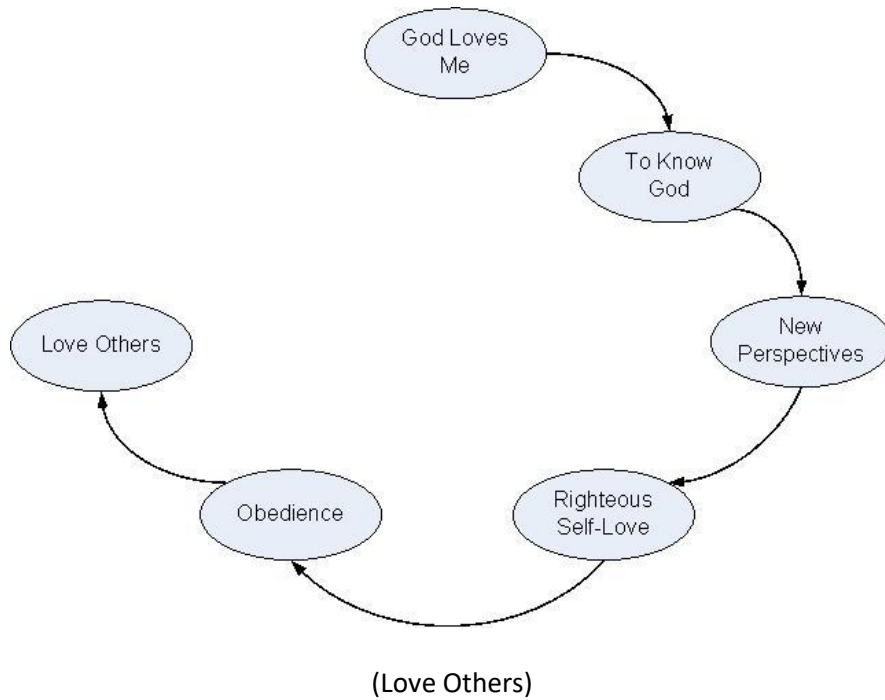
We have a love for Him which longs to grow in the wealth of a righteous self-love. With this understanding of God's love for us we are enabled by God to deeply love others in Christ. This is how God gives His best to others through us.

Remember that Jesus told us to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. Perhaps a part of this commandment tells us that we are going to have a hard time loving our neighbor if we dislike ourselves. Likewise, if we love ourselves in a selfish manner.

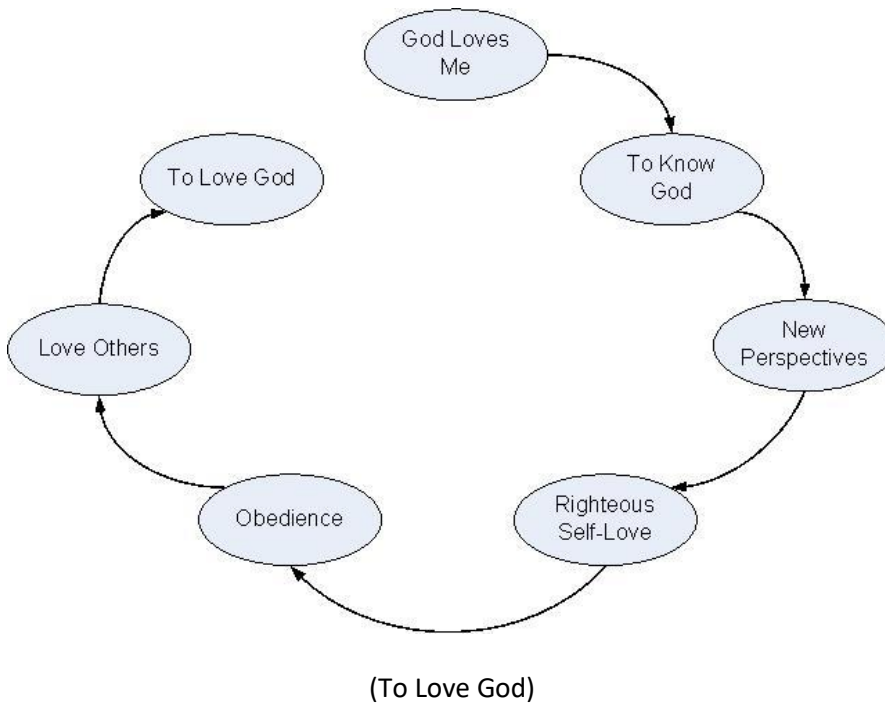
In Christ we have gained a more correct view of ourselves. The same worth that we know we now have in Christ, we see in others. The value of their lives increases for us, as does the importance of other's needs.

We are able to understand the potential for all people in Christ because of the change in our hearts. As we surrender ourselves to the leadership of the Holy Spirit, God shows us what He wants to give to other people by His work in, through, and with us.

We can give this to them in the love of God because God has given it to us, and through this giving and receiving process we grow in our love for God.

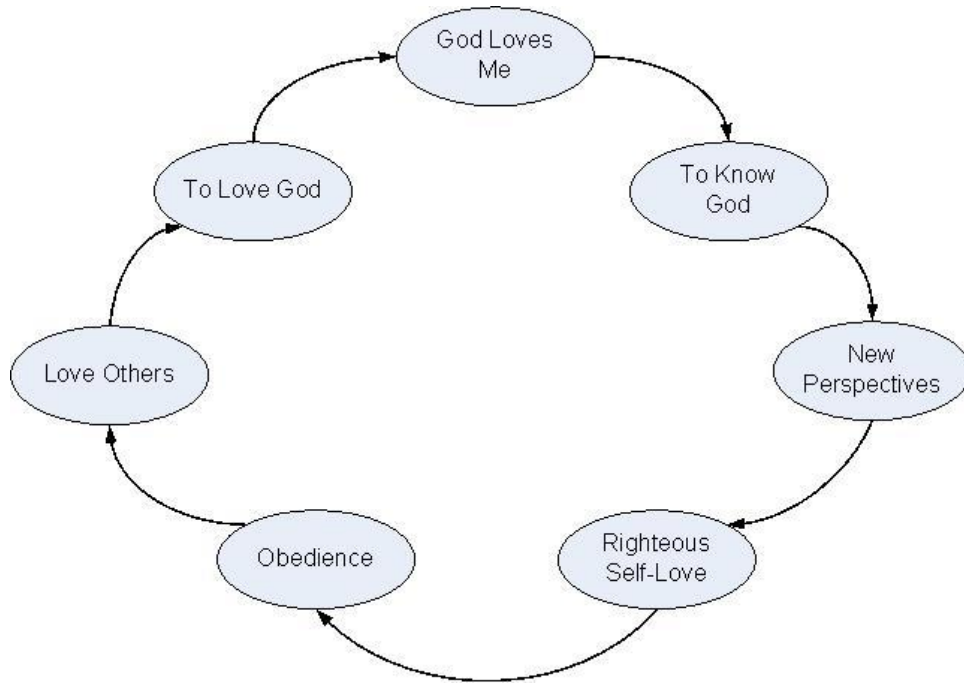


All of what we experience and learn is meant to result in a greater love of God. From the time we first learn that God really does love us, through the growing process of learning to love others, our love for God grows. This growth completes the final step in the Spiral, and that is a deeper understanding of God's love for us.!



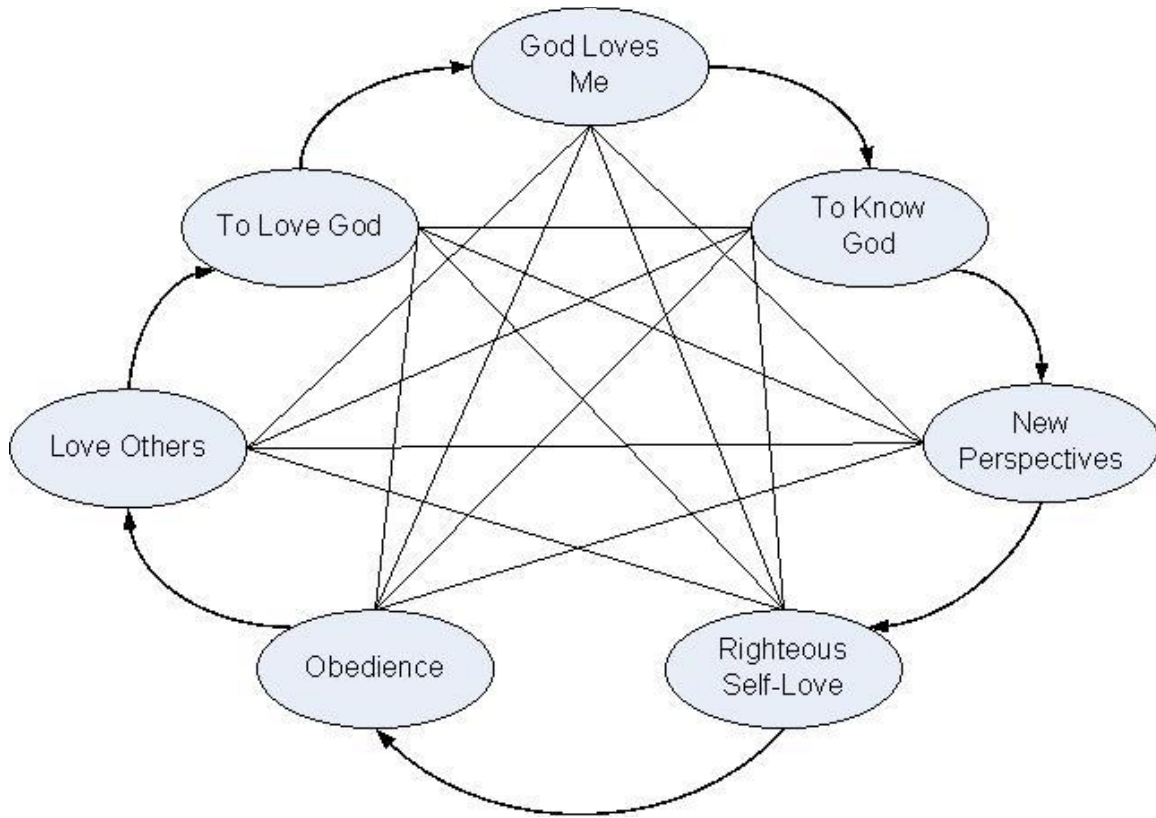
This brings us back to the first experience with the love of God, which is, learning that God loves us. Only now we know much more about that love.

With this deeper understanding we not only discover that our love has grown, but that our desire to love God has deepened at the same time. New realizations arise concerning this powerful change in us, allowing the righteous self-love to grow in Christ, and the Spiral continues.



(Completes the Spiral)

At this point you may be asking, “Well if it happens this easily then why isn’t it happening to me?” One thing I have never experienced is “instant growth”. Just add water and poof there it is! I’m lazy enough to wish it were that easy. Better sense tells me my active participation is necessary to live in the fullness of Life in Christ, and it takes more than just simple processes. Life is complex as this last drawing illustrates.



We are complex people with many interconnections between our thoughts, ideas, concepts, feelings, and actions. Nothing happens in a relationship just one simple step at a time, but as we grow in Christ we will learn to love God more and more. We will experience patterns of growth in our new Life in Christ.

This does, however, leave questions concerning the growth of love in a deep relationship because the above is very general in its approach to this question. So, continue with me as we examine "The Growth Spiral of Love."