

The Vision

Growing Great Commandment Families:

Genesis 1:26-28, Revelation 5:9-10

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It is tough to transfer the care of something you deeply love to another. Some families have grown attached to puppies or kittens that they give to others. They hope they place the puppy or kitten with a family that will love and care for it. Imagine the difficulty for those who give up a baby for adoption or a spouse to the care of others. They count on the love and wisdom of those they entrust; and these decisions drain tear ducts and steal away nights of sleep.

It is that very heart-wrenching thing we read in the first chapter of Genesis. God, who is love, created the heavens and earth, and then he transferred care of the earth, which he loves, to a creation that he made in his own image.

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." (Genesis 1:26, NIV)

Like placing a puppy, or more closely, like giving your baby to another, God put his creation in the care of humanity. God said, "Let them rule." In other words, the world's fate depends upon our decisions. No wonder God's law for humanity is all about love. Jesus said that all the law and prophets hinges on these two commandments:

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbor as yourself." (Matthew 22:37-39, NIV)

God envisions his creation governed and blessed by his human children who are close to him in heart, soul and mind. They are steeped in his character of love. They rule in partnership with him. The Bible says:

God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule...” (Genesis 1:28, NIV)

In those words, God sees his children productive, multiplying, spreading, occupying the earth and governing it in love and wisdom. God sees his loving will accomplished through his children. He sees his entire creation blessed by his children. God sees us behaving like him in love, wisdom, and responsibility. God sees any interaction with us revealing him, so that he gives his prophet Isaiah these words:

The earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. (Isaiah 11:9, NIV)

And he gives his prophet Habakkuk these words:

The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. (Habakkuk 2:14, NIV)

Knowledge of the Lord and his glory, or what he does, will be evident everywhere you turn on this earth by how people, God’s children, behave. Obviously, that can’t happen unless all people, all who govern the earth in any way, know God and act like him.

So how is that going to happen? Is God going to wipe out the earth with another flood and start over? No. He made that promise to us. He really does love what he has already made. Instead, he redeems, reconciles and restores his lost and warring children.

He redeems what has been sold into the control and destiny of the evil one. When God forgives our sins, he cancels our debt, our obligation to pay for what we’ve done. It is no longer necessary for God to judge us along with the one who led us astray. God cancels both present

judgment where we are handed over to the evil leader we've chosen to follow, and he nullifies future judgment where we are punished with our leader, the evil one, for rejecting God.

Redemption gives us the right and protection to follow a new leader. A slave could not escape his legal master without fear of retribution. Through redemption, we can rightfully take shelter with God who loves us. We will not be returned to his control or have our destiny with him.

Moreover, people don't just think in a vacuum. They think under the influence of friends, education and society, language, past experiences, diet, medication or alcohol, and the present senses that those things may dull or sharpen, including spiritual senses which involve temptation, condemnation and many emotions and notions. The evil one can impose dark deception through many of those relationships and influencers; but through redemption, God not only nullifies our rejection of God so that we can approach him, but also our failures with God so that we can walk in his light. As we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive them and remove their influence. God both redeems and reconciles.

Indeed, the Bible teaches that the message of Jesus is this:

God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. (1 John 1:5-7, NIV)

God reconciles us with himself and with one another; and as we continue following Jesus and walking with each other, God purifies the sin right out of us. He deals with our thinking. He deals with our behavior. He deals with our separation and goat-like attitudes. It is painful discipline sometimes, but we serve as priests to one another and the world. We grow as a people of forgiveness that reconcile and help others reconcile. We experience restoration and help restore others. God redeems, reconciles and restores.

This is exactly why heaven sings this about Jesus:

You were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.
(Revelation 5:9-10, NIV)

God is not into replacing people. He is into redeeming them. He is into making them a kingdom and priests who both serve God and rule the earth. He wants us as a *kingdom* so his wisdom and love will prevail in our lives wherever we live. He wants us as *priests* so that people on earth can approach him and be reconciled. He wants us to *reign* on the earth so that who he is and what he does is obvious and known wherever you walk the earth.

God envisions us as a family and us as families, who become fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and subdue it. He sees us multiplying and blessing the earth in this manner. He's after every tribe, every language, every people, and every nation, including every variety of persons living in our city and region. He sees us as a congregation and as family units multiplying our love of him and others.

This vision was the theme of my family life and structure when I was growing up. If I woke up early, I'd hear my parents cry aloud to God for my siblings, me and the people in the churches they led. At some point, we'd have family prayer; and often we'd pray for others. Frequently, my father would give me a Bible to read so that I might hear something from God before I started the day. Every day the redemption of the world was on their hearts and in their prayers. Soon it became part of my prayers and soaked into my heart. There was no magic formula to this, just a sold-out commitment that they lived out every day.

God is purifying my heart, sometimes painfully, to love him and to multiply, as a Great-Commandment family in love of neighbor. That is your personal destiny and ours together.