

Study 2

THE HIGH HUMAN CALLING

There are two words in the title of this study that tell us much about what a human being is: 'high' and 'calling'. These words are of great significance as we consider the nature of our humanity.

Whenever we think of a human we must think of something that is *high*, not low. It is often said, "Oh, but we are only human"—as if being that puts us on some kind of low level. But it will be seen in this study that in the light of what we were created to be, nothing could be further from the truth!

Also, any thought of what a human being is must include the matter of *calling*. Every person has been given an incredible *vocation from God*: a high and noble purpose that we were all created to fulfil. Actually, it is impossible to be *truly human* apart from a fulfilment of this vocation that comes to us from above.

In Study 1, 'The God Who Is', we saw that every person has a mental picture of what God is like. The same is also true when it comes to our way of understanding humanity. We all have a view of what a human being is. Once again, the big question is whether or not we have the *right* one: the one given to us by our Creator.

Humankind is made in the *image* and *likeness* of God. In view of what we have learned about our Maker, the fact that we are created in His likeness is a striking thought. If that is the way He is and we are made to be *like Him*, a human must be something very wonderful indeed!¹

In this second study we are going to see what the Scriptures reveal about *who we are* as those made in God's image, and *how*, therefore, *we are to live* in His world. Such a revelation provides the sense of personal dignity and nobility that our heart demands—showing just how magnificent a human being really is.

However, as we move through what is before us here, it will become very apparent that the way we were *created* to live is not how we *actually* live, of ourselves, today. In the following studies this problem will be clearly defined and God's amazing solution made known.

our nature:

(as those created in the moral image and likeness of God)

To be created in the moral image and likeness of God is to be 'like Him'. This doesn't mean we are to be all-knowing and all-powerful etc., but that we are to be like Him *relationally*. The word 'moral' speaks of *relational choice*. To speak of some 'moral issue' refers to a relational choice to be made. Being created in our Maker's moral image and likeness also means that we are His *representatives* in His world.

Genesis 1:27

God created human beings in His own image.

¹ Further to the definition given in Study 1, we may now say that, authentic *human vocation* is activity that expresses who and what we are as *the image and likeness of God* in His world. It is what we do in service to God and others that is divinely purposeful: done in fellowship with Him and in His love.

Genesis 5:1–2

He made them in the likeness of God. He created them male and female and blessed them. And when they were created, He called them [humankind].

Later in the series we will explore the delightful nature of the male / female relationship that our Creator has purposed. But for now, the task before us is to deal with the subject of humankind in general.

In Study 1 we saw what *God's* nature is: the most basic elements of His *divine* Being. Now we must see what *our* nature is: the most basic elements of our *human* being, as those made in His image.

- children

God being by nature Father has created us to be—above all else—His children.

Luke 3:38

—*the status of the first human creature*

Adam [was] the son of God.

Malachi 2:10

Do we not all have one Father? Did not one God create us?

Deuteronomy 14:1

You are the children of the LORD your God.

Human family-hood is so basic to us all. It is a wonderful gift from the Father-Creator. For some of us family-life may have been a deeply satisfying and enriching experience. However, on the other hand, it may have been disappointing—even painful. And sadly, there are some who through tragic circumstances have never known what it means to be part of a family unit.

But whatever our experience has been, one thing remains absolutely true. The family-hood for which we were created is to be found, above all else, as children of the one true Father—those who are a part of His own dearly loved, eternal family!

Ephesians 3:14–15

[The Father is the One] from whom His whole family [and all family-hood] in heaven and on earth is named .

1 Corinthians 8:6

There is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we [exist].

As Creator He is the One *from* whom we have come. As Father He is the One *for* whom we exist. His perfect Fatherhood is, above all else, what we were created to know, enjoy and respond to!

2 Corinthians 6:18

—*a 'very great and precious' promise to His people!*

I will be a Father to you, and you will be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty.

In Study 1 we saw what *kind* of Father God is. And He has made us in His own likeness so that He may *be* that kind of Father *to* us!

It is an unchanging fact that true human life is enjoyed as we know more and more of His extraordinary Fatherhood, and what it means for us to be His grand and noble children.

In future studies, we will marvel at how it is that God restores His people to the untellable pleasure of being *before Him*, and *with Him*, as His sons and daughters in His world—and anticipating the glorious fulfilment of that relationship in the eternal world to come!

- creatures

Like all living, breathing things we are by nature creatures. And as creatures of our Creator we are *utterly dependent* upon Him for all that we are, have and do. As seen in Study 1, the extent of our dependence is illustrated by the fact that if He doesn't give to us our next breath then we won't have it!

Genesis 2:7

The LORD God formed [the first man, Adam] from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and [he] became a living being.

Job 33:4

The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life.

Job 34:14–15

If ... He withdrew His Spirit and breath, all people would perish together and would return to the dust.

Only the Creator is Self-existent. *Our* existence depends every moment upon *Him*—our almighty, awesomely wise and amazing Maker!

Psalms 139:13–14

—*magnificently formed*

You created my inmost being; You knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

Isaiah 40:6b–7

—*magnificent, but fragile*

All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field. The grass withers and the flowers fall.

Yes, truly magnificent but extremely fragile, needing all that comes from our Maker's hand to sustain us—not only physically but in every other way. He is in fact the divine source of our every human need, and delights to generously supply each one. Being creaturely children of such a good Father-Creator is, indeed, a marvellous thing.

Acts 17:25

—*our exclusive Provider*

[God] Himself gives all [people] life and breath and everything else.

Isaiah 64:8

—*the united affirmation of those who are in tune with the wonder of creaturely reality*

We are the clay, You are the Potter; we are all the work of Your hand.

How very basic is this affirmation! And it is one that will be confirmed many times as we proceed through the series. To truly live upon the earth in enjoyment of what we were created to be, each of us must understand the absolute creaturely nature of our humanity. So many of our personal problems come from a failure to understand this basic fact of our being. Life is a struggle when we try to live apart from our good and faithful Creator.

- servants (worshippers, rulers, stewards)

Knowing the kind of unsearchably great King God is, it is an incredibly significant thing to live under His reign as servants: those who gladly do His will.

Isaiah 44:21

[The LORD said,] "I have made you, you are My servant."

As God's servants we are also called to be 'worshippers': those who find their delight supremely in Him. In the original biblical languages the words for *service* and *worship* are often the same.

As the servants of God we are also called to be 'rulers': those who have been given authority over the whole of the creation to *rule over* and *care* for it on His behalf. As His image we have been created to represent His kingship within His creation. We are by nature 'the royal children of God'—servants with a truly regal status!

Genesis 1:26

—*made in the likeness of the King*

God [has made human beings in His image and likeness] so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

Psalm 115:16

The highest heavens belong to the LORD, but the earth He has given to the human race.

Psalm 8:5–6

[LORD], You crowned [human beings] with glory and honour. You made them rulers over the works of Your hands; You put everything under their feet.

Being God's servants we are also called to be 'stewards'—those who have been entrusted with the management of what belongs to the One we serve. He has given us so much! And yet all that we've received is not for us to *possess* apart from Him. Every detail has been *entrusted* to us with one end in view: that we be *with Him* in the accomplishment of His glorious purposes of love.

Our stewardship involves the faithful exercise of *authority*, the faithful fulfilment of *responsibilities*, and the faithful investment of *personal energies*, *abilities* and *material resources*.

We will see in this study and others to come that our service as rulers of the creation and stewards of what has been entrusted to us, may be, a constant and joyous action of worship!

As creaturely children we are dependent every moment upon our Father-Creator for existence; and in this we have much in common with our living, breathing fellow-creatures (that is, the animals) and all other created things. But being the image of God, we are also very much different to the other creatures. As has been said, we have a grand stewardship entrusted to us, part of which is to represent the Creator-King's *rule over* and *care for* both our physical environment and our fellow-creatures within it.

Genesis 2:15

—*exercising true authority over our environment*

[Adam was] put in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

Proverbs 12:10a

—*exercising true authority over our fellow creatures*
The righteous care for the needs of their animals.

Sadly—partly in reaction to our poor record of caring for our fellow-creatures—many today deny the uniqueness of human beings and our primacy within the creation. They insist that we are merely part of the animal kingdom.

This may sound like a very noble and generous attempt to increase the dignity of animals. But all it does, in fact, is reduce and demean our humanity. It is never a noble and generous thing to minimize or disregard the call of God.

As was seen in Study 1, all who have been given authority will ultimately have to give an account to the One who has entrusted it to them. We are to neither *abuse* nor *refuse* the exercise of this authority. Our calling—we will increasingly see—is to gladly respond to our Maker and be with Him in all that He is doing in His world.

As the stewards of God, human beings are the constant objects of their Creator's attention. During an extremely difficult season of his life, God's servant Job (whom we'll hear of in Study 5) found this to be a reality that was almost overwhelming!

Job 7:17–19

What are human beings that You make so much of them, that You give them so much attention, that You examine them every morning and test them every moment? Will you never look away from me, or let me alone even for an instant?

Our Maker never takes His eyes off us for one second. We are created to be His image—those who serve and represent Him in His world! Job eventually came to delight in this in a way he'd never known before.

Service to our King brings us into the flow of true and full human vocation. Another of God's servants who appears in Study 5 was Joshua, who saw how good and natural it is to decide for such a way of life, and said:

Joshua 24:15

As for me and my household, we will [worship and] serve the LORD.

the vocational glory of our humanity

Having looked briefly at each of these elements of our created nature, it is clear that we, above all other creatures, have a very unique and wonderful relationship to God. Our *human* nature corresponds exactly at every point to His *divine* nature. All that *we are* fits in perfectly with all that *He is*. He is by nature the *great* Father, Creator and King; we are by nature His *grand* children, creatures and servants! It is in understanding the call of God to be His likeness that we find the glory of our humanity. And it is in *authentically being* the image of God, that all we are and do may be a manifestation of our Maker's dynamic, personal presence on the earth!

Yes, as children-creatures-servants of the Father-Creator-King we are by nature *like Him*. But it is important to see just how this is *so*, and on the other hand how it is *not so*—a distinction that may be illustrated in the following way:

BEING	VOCATION
GOD (divine Being)	GOD humanity
humanity (human being) the rest of creation	the rest of creation

In the diagram above, the horizontal line indicates the separation between what is *divine* and what is not. The column on the left shows that when it comes to the matter of *being*, only God Himself is above the line. We as humanity together with the rest of the creation are below the line. We are not *like Him* in our *being*. Ours is *human being*, His is *divine Being*.

However, the column on the right shows that when it comes to *vocation* it is a very different matter. In this we *are* above the line. Vocationally we are able to *participate in the divine nature* as those who are called to be *one* with Him in His life, His way and His work! The apostle Peter² declares this amazing fact:

2 Peter 1:4

[Through] His very great and precious promises ... you may participate in the divine nature.

And so, although we are *not* actually like Him by nature in terms of our *being*, we *are* like Him by nature in terms of our *vocation and calling*.

our holy calling

Human vocation is the most awesome thing imaginable. Our Maker has said:

Leviticus 19:2

“Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy.”

2 Timothy 1:9

[God has] called us to a holy [calling].

The calling we have received is, indeed, a *holy* one. In Study 1 we saw that God’s holiness is all that He is and does as God that *separates* Him from, and makes Him to be *different* to and *other than*, *anyone* or *anything* that is less than God.

Because He is holy, we—who are made in His likeness—are also called to be holy. This means that we are to be all that God has created us to be, and to do all that He has created us to do—as His image—and to be *separate* from, *different* to and *other than* anything that would make us to be less than *that*.

As those who are *above the line* in the righthand column of the diagram we *do* have a ‘holy calling’. That is, we have a calling that is entirely different to, separate from and other than the rest of the creation.

We are called to be holy children of the Holy Father, holy creatures of the Holy Creator and holy servants of the Holy King!

² Further on in the series the nature of an apostle will be explained.

righteousness: the way of life, freedom and rest

To fulfil the high and holy vocation we have been given is to be in the *action* of all we were created to be. And in this we have more than mere physical existence and know much more than just personal survival, or even some sense of personal flourishing. We are participants in the very life of God!

Luke 10:28

—*God's promise to those who keep the two great commandments that summarize our calling*

“Do this and you will live.”

In Study 1 we saw that the Holy One's righteousness is His *right relational action* according to the way, or law, of His own nature as Father, Creator and King. To fulfil our holy calling, *we* also are to do what is relationally *right* according to the way of *our* own nature as His children, creatures and servants.

We saw also that as the Righteous One God enjoys total personal freedom and rest. As later studies will show, righteousness, life, freedom and rest always go together—and all four are what the Father desires His children to enjoy. To fulfil our high human calling is to live truly, freely and serenely in the way of God Himself!

James 2:12

Speak and act as those ... [who fulfil] the law that gives freedom.

As the series progresses, how we may be brought into all of this will become increasingly clear. We'll see what the One who loves us has done to liberate our spirit—and our will—so that we may share in the blessedness of His own life and vocational action!

Our holy calling is to:

1) TO KNOW GOD

The *primary purpose* of God in creating us to be *like* Him was that we might *know* Him. That is that we may enjoy a personal and intimate relationship with Him. To pursue such a relationship with our Maker is *the primary expression of true human vocation* and is the most significant thing we can do. Nothing else is more worthy of our energies!

We've said that we have been made in God's *moral* image and likeness and that the word moral speaks of *relational choice*. And here we learn that this involves, above all else, our choice to pursue a personal and intimate relationship with Him.

To *know* someone is not just to understand certain *facts* about them. True—relational—knowledge only comes when over a period of time others open themselves up to us and we to them. In this we can come to know the way they think, feel and respond in the various circumstances of life. And then we can even *anticipate* how they will think, feel or respond in a particular situation.

In the same way, coming to know God involves more than receiving certain pieces of information about Him. It must always involve close, ongoing, personal communication and interaction. In our first study, 'The God Who Is', we learned a number of awesome things about the One who made us. But no matter how carefully these are examined, they alone will not bring the knowledge of God we were created

for and to which we are called. What is required is the response that will be outlined in this study.³

Without a personal and intimate relationship with God, all vocational pursuit is without the indispensable inner fountain that makes it to be humanly authentic.

Jeremiah 9:23–24

This is what the LORD says: “Let not the wise boast of their wisdom or the strong boast of their strength or the rich boast of their riches, but let those who boast boast about this: that they understand and know Me.”

Mental and practical development, personal strength, influence and success and financial acquisition, are vocational priorities that are very naturally pursued. But these cannot be compared to that supremely significant expression of human vocation: *the knowledge of God*.

The one sentence story of Enoch’s life is most instructive:

Genesis 5:24

Enoch walked faithfully with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.

The most significant thing that could be said of anyone’s life is not that they attained a certain amount of ‘wisdom’, ‘success’ or ‘wealth’ but that they *walked with God*. Life is so short! Soon we will be gone. To pursue the primary expression of true human vocation—fellowship with God—is the most urgent human need we have.

knowing God and the gift of forgiveness

To know God truly is our greatest human need. But at the heart of this experience there must be a *clear conscience*. Knowledge of God and the forgiveness of sins are two inseparable experiences. The Redeemer of His people has declared:

Hebrews 8:11–12

They will all know Me from the least of them to the greatest. For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.

Much will be said throughout these studies about the matter of forgiveness (and other elements of freedom for our conscience). We will see that in His unsearchably great grace, God has acted decisively in the midst of our human history in a beautiful and awesome way though His Son—and with what aim? Our liberation! That is, to bring us freedom from the deadly guilt and crippling shame of failure to fulfil our ‘high human calling’. And why? Above all, that we may *know Him!*

We can only continue to move on into the subject of knowing God, on the basis of this great gift He has made available to us. It will be seen later in the series how this truly is a *gift*—not able to be earned, but only freely received through faith in what God has done through the Death and Resurrection of Jesus (which was briefly mentioned in the introduction to Study 1—and will be proclaimed in Study 6 as the awesomely significant Event that it is!). Only God’s lavishly given grace to us in this way enables an intimate and life-giving knowledge of Himself. Such total forgiveness

³ The word ‘outlined’ is appropriate because this study—although a rich and complete summary of true human vocation—does only provide the basic framework of our response to the call of God. This will be filled out in many life-giving ways throughout the second part of the series.

alone cleanses and calms the conscience, frees the spirit and purifies the heart to want one thing above all else: fellowship with Him.⁴

It will be seen that forgiveness brings us freedom *from* the torment of guilt, condemnation and shame, so that we may be free *for* the fulfilment of our high calling.

We come now then, to the first key concept in regard to our 'high human calling'.

enlightened in His presence, & (out of a clear conscience, a free spirit and a pure, undivided heart) receiving the supreme blessing of:

*** *a life-giving, inner spring of great delight in Him***

We have said that to know God is *the primary expression of true human vocation*. Now it must be said that joy, or delight, in God is *the most basic characteristic* of true human *experience*. There can be no enjoyment of an authentic humanity without it. To have such joy—in full-hearted response to *revelation* of the Father's perfections—is, indeed, the *key* to an authentically human relationship with Him.

All this has to do with WORSHIP—something that every person is, one way or another, engaged in all the time. Whatever we look to—or give ultimate 'worth' to—for emotional satisfaction or personal and circumstantial security is, the object of our worship (or 'worth-ship').

In Study 1 we saw that among God's perfections as the Holy One was the reality of His being 'the Blesséd One'. The One who has 'unbounded joy and delight and perfect rest and peace in the light of all that He is and does'—and that His joy and delight in Himself is part of that 'deep, out-flowing fountain of His divine eternal-Being of love!'

And so, as those created *in the image and likeness of God* we are commanded to 'rejoice in the Lord always'. That is, commanded into the supreme blessing and holy happiness that our hearts cry out for every day! We are to be like *Him*—always enjoying and delighting in His divine perfections. And, of course, HE ALONE IS WORTHY TO BE THE PRIMARY OBJECT OF OUR JOY!!!

Anyone whose conscience is free from shame and accusation is able to delight in all that God makes known of Himself. When our conscience—in its depths—is untroubled, then our *heart* is pure and undivided and so may be *full* in its desire for fellowship with God. It is then that all of the enormous energy of our human spirit may be directed joyously towards Him—in full-hearted worship! This is not only the most basic expression of *true human experience*, but is also the primary expression of *true human righteousness*. And it is in such worship that we know the personal fullness we were created for.

The joyous worship that God's children, creatures and servants know, *always* has the same source. It comes out of their delight in the amazing things their good, merciful and gracious Father-Creator-King has done: those manifestations of His righteousness and faithfulness towards them. WHEN WE SEE HOW HE HAS

⁴ These matters of freedom of spirit and purity of heart will be dealt with in detail in studies further on.

ACTED MIGHTILY AND WONDERFULLY ON OUR BEHALF, THE JOY BEGINS TO FLOW!!!

Isaiah 65:13–14

My servants will rejoice ... My servants will sing out of the joy of their hearts.

1 Samuel 2:1

My heart rejoices in the LORD.

Isaiah 61:10

I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God.

Psalms 92:4

You make me glad by Your deeds, LORD; I sing for joy at what Your hands have done.

The Father loves to make known to us what He has done so that we may share with Him in His own holy happiness!

1 Peter 1:6, 8

[In the midst of our many trials, we may ... go on being] filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy.

Psalms 43:4

I will go ... to God, my joy and my delight.

Psalms 84:10

Better is one day in Your [presence] than a thousand elsewhere.

There is so much to enjoy in the creation. But so much more to enjoy in the Creator Himself!

Psalms 27:4

[My greatest desire is] to gaze on the beauty of the LORD.

He is the Supreme Object of joyous contemplation! One Bible teacher of a previous generation rightly declared, "God is ravishingly beautiful!"⁵ Another more recently said, "Whenever I think of the holiness of God, I become rhapsodic!"⁶ The Blessed One loves to delight our spiritual senses with the wonders of His glory as our Father, Creator and King.

Psalms 36:8–9

[LORD,] You give [people] drink from Your river of delights. For with You there is the fountain of life.

Psalms 73:25–26

Whom have I in heaven but You? And earth has nothing I desire besides You. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

Job 35:10

[He] gives songs in the night.

Matthew 22:37

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul [and with all your strength] and with all your mind.

Psalms 37:4

Take delight in the LORD.

⁵ Jonathon Edwards

⁶ John Kleinig

Philippians 4:4

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

The primary source of true and satisfying human happiness is the enjoyment of God. To know this *every day* is our first responsibility and most pressing need.

where—or to Whom—all this is leading us

Before we go any further, there is one thing that must be established which is of immense importance. We've spoken above of the need to find our delight in the Holy One's good, merciful and gracious actions of righteousness and faithfulness towards us. And in a general sense that is precisely the source of all rich enjoyment of Him—as was the experience of many godly men and women throughout the period of the Old Testament. But the *absolute key* to knowing the *great delight in God* we are speaking of here, is found in all that the Father has accomplished (and has today made available to us, every moment) in the New Testament revelation of *JESUS: His divine, Eternal Son 'made flesh' on our behalf!*

We need not only the indispensable gift of forgiveness spoken of earlier. Our need is also, for *every element of the divine Sonship* that Jesus manifested within His humanity as He lived in our midst:

- His absolute freedom of spirit in His Father's presence and before all others,
- His amazing personal and vocational identity,
- His complete serenity in the midst of circumstantial complexity,
- the peerless manifestation of His Father's glory in all that He said and did,
- the awesome sense of eternal destiny that was always a part of His days.

And the *supreme wonder* of His glory as the Son among us, was that the same inner spring of divine blessedness we saw as the crowning perfection of the Father, was always welling up within *Him*—an eternal inner spring of great delight in His Father's presence! As such He was the *very embodiment* of the high human calling being spelt out in this study.

The fact is that we have *no capacity* to fulfil all the grand dimensions of this calling, apart from, what the Father done for us in His Son. We must come to see that He has freely and fully opened up to us a *dynamic participation* in all that was manifested among us—the very indwelling life of *Jesus* by the gift of the Holy Spirit! How this becomes possible will begin to be richly proclaimed in Study 6, and filled out in liberating and life-giving detail in Study 8 and beyond.

Our present study and the next two are simply providing some foundational understanding that will enable us to embrace, in the best possible way, what is yet to come. These are not meant to bring us *assurance* but an indispensable *perspective*. For some they may be rather confronting, even alarming. And yet they will powerfully communicate the awesome dimensions of what it means to have been created in the image and likeness of God—and will also bring sharp clarity to the nature of our present experience of life in this world.

Yes, there are indeed, glorious things to be unfolded as the series progresses. But just now, this proclamation of our high human calling is like the sounding of a trumpet, to begin to usher us into what our heart has always longed to know!

With these things in mind then, we are ready to look at the four elements of an intimate and life-giving relationship with our Maker—each one flowing out of an 'inner spring of great delight in Him'.

Having a life-giving, inner spring of great delight in the Father, and *firstly*, always choosing to respond to Him in an adoring spirit of:

- reverent awe

(the absolute wisdom & wonder of knowing He is GOD!)

When, by God's grace—out of a clear conscience and a free spirit—we are able to delight in the revelation of all that He is and does, there is, then, a deeply joyous and reverent awe before Him. We know that He is the Holy One!

To have reverent awe in the presence of our Maker—that is, 'the fear of the LORD'—is an *absolutely wonderful* thing. It is also the primary expression of *human wisdom*: that source of humanly authentic, functional practical-action we were created to live within each day.

Proverbs 9:10

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.

Fullness of joy, also goes hand in hand with true fear of the Holy One.

Isaiah 11:3

—*the sheer joy of knowing that He is God!*

[The LORD'S servant] will delight in the fear of the LORD.

Psalms 2:11

—*enjoying reverence for the King of kings!*

[Worship and] serve the LORD with fear and celebrate His rule with [joy and] trembling.

Proverbs 14:27

The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life.

Matthew 6:9

—*the primary expression of a prayerful spirit*

[Jesus said, "This] is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name'."

To 'hallow' the Fathers' name is to joyously and reverently *set Him apart* in our affections as the One who is worthy of supreme honour—acknowledging the awesome nature of all that He is, has done, is doing and has promised to do as God.

Ephesians 3:14

I [fall on my knees] before the Father.

Isaiah 6:3

—*the awe-struck heavenly worship to be enjoyed on earth*

[The heavenly beings] were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty."

2 Samuel 7:28

Sovereign LORD, you are God!

Habakkuk 3:2

I stand in awe of Your deeds, LORD.

Revelation 4:11

—*an awesome Creator!*

You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for You created all things, and by Your will they were created and have their being.

Psalm 33:8–9

Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the people of the world revere Him. For He spoke, and [the creation] came to be; He commanded, and it stood firm.

Psalm 100:3

Know that the LORD is God. It is He who made us.

Habakkuk 2:20

Let all the earth be silent before Him.

Zephaniah 1:7

Be silent before the Sovereign LORD.

Jeremiah 10:7

Who should not revere You, King of the nations? This is Your due. Among all the wise counsellors of the nations and in all their kingdoms, there is no one like You.

Psalm 104:1

LORD my God, You are very great; You are clothed with splendour and majesty.

Psalm 96:9

Worship the LORD in the [beauty and] splendour of His holiness; tremble before Him, all the earth.

Every human inhabitant of this world is called to find their awe-filled delight, primarily, in the unsearchably great perfections of their Maker and King.

And the true fear of the LORD is most wonderfully enjoyed in the light of His liberating grace towards us.

Psalm 130:3–4

If You, LORD, kept a record of our sins, Lord, who could stand? But with You there is forgiveness, so that we can, with [reverent fear and awe, worship and] serve You.

In future studies it will be seen how the grace of God in forgiveness is, indeed, the spring of awe-struck worship in God's holy presence—bringing the greatest joy that the human spirit can ever know!

Nehemiah 1:11

Your servants ... delight in revering Your name.

Hebrews 12:28–29

[Let us] worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.

Isaiah 66:2

—*those who know that God is God, and they are not!*

These are the ones I esteem: those who are humble and contrite in spirit, and tremble at My word.

Humility before God does not necessarily include a low view of oneself. What it does require is a true and high view of Him and a true and high view of what we were created to be. Of course, where there is moral and vocational failure in the light of our high calling, humility will rightly include 'contrition': a deep sorrow over personal sinfulness. But through receiving God's forgiveness this may be transformed into the blessedness of true humility in His presence.

When Jesus as the Son of God among us enjoyed a sinless humanity, He had no need for personal contrition. Yet He was the supreme example of true humility. He

knew exactly who He was and who He wasn't. As Son, He had joyous and reverent regard for His Father's word and way above all else.

The call of God directs us into the holy happiness we were created for. There is, indeed, nothing more personally exhilarating than having a joyous spirit of reverent awe before Him—the One who made us and 'gives us life and breath and everything else'!

having a life-giving, inner spring of great delight in the Father and *secondly*, always choosing to respond to Him in an adoring spirit of:

- childlike trust

(the peaceful simplicity of lifting up our soul to Him)

When out of a calm conscience and a free spirit we are able to delight in the full range of God's perfections (the glory of His dynamic eternal-Being of love, righteousness, faithfulness, goodness, moral purity, mercy and grace, purposefulness, power, blessedness and dynamic personal presence of love) we find ourselves *trusting* in Him. There could be no more natural and obvious thing to do! In the midst of all of life's circumstances and situations we may continually and joyously lift up our soul to the Father.

Psalm 40:3

[They] will fear the LORD and put their trust in Him.

Psalm 9:10

[LORD,] Those who know Your name [—who You are and what You do—] will trust in You, for You ... have never forsaken those who seek You.

Psalm 25:1

[To You, LORD, I lift up my soul.] In You, LORD my God, I put my trust.

Psalm 119:162

I rejoice in Your [word] like one who finds great [treasure].

To treasure God's life-giving word is absolutely essential for an authentic experience of free and full humanity. In one of our later studies, we will see in some detail the indispensably, enriching nature of the word of God for those who are created to be His image.

Psalm 119:140

Your promises have been thoroughly tested, and Your servant loves them.

In the Scriptures we have a record of God's tested and proven promises. To those who know Him these are 'very great and precious' (2 Peter 1:4), having been proved by them again and again to be reliable.

Luke 1:38

May it be to me according to Your word.

Psalm 130:5

In His word I put my hope.

Psalm 62:1

Truly my soul finds rest in God.

Psalm 33:21

In Him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in His holy name.

All the complexities of life dissolve into nothing when we enjoy the creaturely humility that comes from the fear of the Lord, and a simple childlike trust in Him—the peaceful simplicity of lifting up our soul to our Maker!

Yes, content in the assurance of His perfections we have the deep peace and inner rest that belongs to His children. As the series continues, one thing that will be increasingly clear is the *enormous significance* of being able to trust God.

having a life-giving, inner spring of great delight in the Father, and *thirdly*, always choosing to respond to Him in an adoring spirit of:

- grateful affection

(the inner music of thankfulness for the reality of His love)

When out of a still conscience and a free spirit we are able to delight in the Father's unfailing love and faithfulness towards us, we *love Him*. What else would we do! And such warm-hearted affection towards God naturally finds its expression in gratitude and thanksgiving.

Psalm 118:28 [NASB]

You are my God, and I give thanks to You.

Psalm 107:8

Give thanks to the LORD for His unfailing love and His wonderful deeds for human beings.

Psalm 28:7

My heart leaps for joy, and with my song I [give Him thanks].

Job 10:12

[I say to God,] "You gave me life."

Psalm 63:3

—*the most highly valued thing*
[LORD], Your love is better than life.

Life without the knowledge of God's love is not really life at all, only mere existence. When the Father's goodness, mercy and grace are enjoyed (those exuberant manifestations of His divine Self-giving!) the gift of life takes on new and grand dimensions—with the inner music of a grateful affection in His presence.

Psalm 31:7

I will be glad and rejoice in Your [unfailing] love.

Psalm 13:6

I will sing to the LORD, for He has been good to me.

Psalm 16:2

I said to the LORD, "You are my Lord; apart from You I have no good thing."

Psalm 31:19

How great is Your goodness, which You have stored up for those who fear You.

Psalm 136:1

Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good. His [unfailing] love endures forever!

Psalm 116:1

I love the LORD, for He heard my voice; He heard my cry for mercy.

Yes, true and authentic human living involves the constant, joyous offering up of thanksgiving to our Maker. Throughout the studies before us we will be exposed more and more to the wonders of His love—and be given more and more cause for a continual spirit of grateful affection towards Him!

having a life-giving, inner spring of great delight in the Father, and *fourthly*, always choosing to respond to Him in an adoring spirit of:

- wholehearted obedience

(the holy happiness of pursuing His pleasure & doing His will)

When our conscience is undisturbed and our spirit is free—and we are able to delight in the wisdom and will of God—our natural response is to unwaveringly obey Him, wholeheartedly pursuing His pleasure.

A superb outcome of lovingly responding to our Creator's good commands is that we may have the joy of bringing Him pleasure in all that we do. It is, of course, basic to any truly intimate relationship to freely desire the pleasure of the other person.

The Creator's commands are so good. Obedience to them enables us to share in the excellence of His great purpose of love for us as His image. And so we could say that to *not* obey is, really, an act of self-denial!

As was mentioned in Study 1 the law, or way, of God is not about oppressive legal demands; rather, it is the way of *life*. True obedience is always a matter of joyous and adoring response.

Here are some rich examples:

Psalm 40:8

I [delight] to do Your will, my God; Your law is within my heart.

Psalm 119:73

—*eager for the Creator's way*

Your hands made me and formed me; give me understanding to learn Your commands.

Psalm 119:35

Direct me in the path of Your commands, for there I find delight.

Psalm 119:14

I rejoice in following Your statutes as one rejoices in great riches.

Psalm 119:32

I run in the path of Your commands, for You have set my heart free.

Psalm 119:129

Your statutes are wonderful; therefore I obey them.

Psalm 119:167

I obey Your statutes, for I love them greatly.

Psalm 119:143

—*the joy of being in the way of God when things are rough*

Trouble and distress have come upon me, but Your commands give me delight.

1 John 2:3, 5

We know that we have come to know Him if we obey His commands ... If anyone obeys His word, [the love of God is truly brought to its goal] in them.

1 John 5:3

This is love for God: to keep His commands. And His commands are not burdensome.

Ecclesiastes 12:13

Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the [wholeness] of every human being.

To obey our awesome Creator in the manner we've been describing is fundamental to any whole and authentic experience of our humanity.

And so, we have the first expression of true human vocation. It is the supreme blessing (provision) of knowing God, as we always choose to relate to Him in a richly joyous and deeply intimate way: in reverent awe, childlike trust, grateful affection and unwavering obedience—in the midst of every situation and circumstance of our lives.

This 'supreme blessing' / provision of knowing God, is actually a participation in the very *blessédness* (absolute holy happiness and pleasure) of the Holy One, Himself!

Of course, what we are seeing here of our vocational life is merely a brief sketch; but it is one which throughout the series, will be progressively painted in full colour on a canvas of enthralling biblical revelation!

Now let's move on to the next element of our high human calling.

Our holy calling is:

2) TO GLORIFY GOD

A true and authentic vocational human life is such that it also brings our *Creator* glory, honour and praise. And this is the case when we as *His creatures* experience that fullness of joy and delight already spoken of: an unbounded pleasure in Him.

As was declared in Study 1, 'God continually acts in history with one grand purpose above all others: THAT THE SUPREME EXCELLENCE AND WONDER OF ALL THAT HE IS AND DOES—HIS GLORY—MAY BE MADE KNOWN AND ENJOYED IN ALL THE WORLD!!!'

Isaiah 43:6–7

Bring My sons from afar and My daughters from the ends of the earth—everyone who is called by My name, whom I created for My glory.

Isaiah 60:21

They are ... the work of My hands, for the display of My splendour.

And now, the second key concept in regard to our 'high human calling'.

In the *blessédness* of our communion with the Holy One there is:

*** a glorious reflection of Him—as His representatives**

We've shown that we have by nature a *vocational likeness* to God. As children of the Great Father, creatures of the Great Creator and servants of the Great King, our nature *corresponds* to Him at every point. This enables us to fulfil the first part of our human vocation: to know Him in the supreme, holy enjoyment (*blessédness*) of a *personal communion with Him*—that intimate, relational union we were created for above all else.

Now we are going to see that our vocational likeness to God has another stunning aspect to it: it includes the capacity to actually be *like* Him in the way we *live*! As His image we may truly *represent* Him in His world. What a high and noble calling this is: to be—as the Son was among us—a *visible* representation of the *invisible* God! This is the *wonder* of the second part of our calling.

God's *glory* is all that He is and does as God. And we were made in His likeness to be able to *reflect* significant elements of that divine glory through our humanity. The capacity to reflect His glory, of course, doesn't make us to be God—just truly human. For example, when we stand in front of a mirror we see our image or reflection. We understand that what is there before our eyes is not us, but our likeness. In the same way, as human creatures—who are *not God*—we are able to be reflections of His glory through our humanity.

So then, delighting with the *whole of our being* in all that God is and does, we may be *human* reflections of the *divine* glory and so, *glorify* Him. HOW AMAZING!!!

2 Corinthians 3:18

We, who ... contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into His image with ever-increasing glory.

Now let's give our attention to the nature of this grand calling to reflect the glory of our Creator.

Firstly, we fulfil our vocation as His representatives through the enormous, ongoing blessing of constantly reflecting:

- His own holy affections

(in our inner being ***a spring of divine moral purity:***

strong, jealous passion for His glory and praise, with hatred for sin—& grief at its intrusion into our or another's heart, mind, words or actions; which is also *simultaneously* within us

a spring of divine love: pure-hearted & yearning, self-giving desire for all to know the blessedness of communion with the Father—able, to live freely & fully as His image in His world)

The term 'holy affections' refers to those deep inner stirrings of God's innermost Being: expressions of that 'divine inner spring of the One who *is love*' (from the Study 1 outline).

At the beginning of this study we've already spoken of that supreme holy affection of God, in which He has great joy and delight in all that He is and does. And we saw that as the image of God we may spontaneously share with Him in this, as we delight in the awesome revelation of His unsearchably great perfections as the Holy One—particularly as they have spoken powerfully to our deepest human needs.

Now we are to see that it is by having such delight in God's perfections and wholeheartedly relating to Him (in an adoring spirit of reverent awe, childlike trust, grateful affection and wholehearted obedience) that we then have the capacity to also reflect the glory of two other *elements of God's holy Being: an inner spring of*

HIS OWN MORAL PURITY'S JEALOUS PASSION and of HIS OWN LOVE'S OUTFLOWING, YEARNING DESIRE FOR THE BLESSÉDNESS OF OTHERS!!!

The wonder of our high calling as the image of God is that HE DELIGHTS TO CAUSE THESE VERY *DIVINE* AFFECTIONS TO BE ALWAYS DYNAMICALLY STIRRING WITHIN THE DEPTHS OF OUR *HUMAN* BEING!!!

For us, it is out of these two glorious indwelling realities that all other reflection of our Maker's glory arises. They are absolutely indispensable, then, to the fulfilment of our high and awesome calling to be visible images of the invisible God on the earth.

Yes, and the more fully we enjoy the inner spring of great delight in God spoken of in the first part of our study, the more these two holy affections become, at once, a mighty inner spring of grand, vocational activity within us.

the inner stirrings of His divine moral purity

As the image of God we are to be like the Holy One Himself: entirely separate from all that is evil, impure, morally dark or unlovely. This is how we were created to be. No wonder the conscience suffers so dreadfully when we are not this way.

For God, His moral purity is a manifestation of the fountain of His eternal-Being of love. That divine spring, out of which flows everything that manifests *the radiance and blazing splendour of His, own, glorious uncreated-relational-light!* That is, what is right, just, fair, true, kind, wise, lovely, beautiful and breathtakingly excellent—and, of course, the reality is, then, that there is nothing in Him that is dark, impure or unlovely.

For us, a reflection of such moral purity takes place in this way: AS WE ARE EMBRACED IN HIS LOVE AND FIND OURSELVES DELIGHTING IN HIM WITH THE WHOLE OF OUR BEING, THERE IS A SPONTANEOUS MANIFESTATION WITHIN US OF HIS OWN MORAL PURITY'S HOLY PASSION!!!

Here are four of these manifestations:

1) *holy jealousy*—for His glory & praise & the honour of His name

Out of a dynamic, inner spring of great delight in God there is, at once, a surging inner zeal—above all else—for His supreme and universal honour. This includes a reflection of that untainted, divine jealousy which springs from His own eternal-Being of love. Out of a pure-hearted, responsive love for Him, then, we cannot bear to see Him dishonoured or disregarded in any way—by any person, situation or thing anywhere in His world!

Psalm 67:3

May the peoples praise You, O God; may all the peoples praise You.

Psalm 145:21

Let every creature praise His holy name for ever and ever.

Delight in all that God is and does always produces within us such fiery passion for Him to be worshipped, adored and praised, and for His word to be honoured.

As previously mentioned, Jesus Himself declared that such strong and intense longing was to be at the heart of all prayerful request. He said:

Matthew 6:9–10

This, then, is how you should pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Free-spirited and pure-hearted children of God fervently desire that His name be hallowed: set apart in every person's heart as the supreme focus of their honour and delight. And, furthermore, there is a yearning to see His great reign over all things gloriously manifested in history—as His heavenly purposes of love are fulfilled on the earth!

2) *holy hatred*—for whatever is against His will and way

The more we delight in the love of our Maker and His other glorious out-flowing perfections (producing within us a joyous spirit of reverent awe) the more inwardly disturbed we are by anything that is contrary to it, particularly in our own life.

Proverbs 8:13

To fear the LORD is to hate evil.

A joyous spirit of reverent awe before the Father and a hatred for evil, always go together. Biblically, to hate is to *choose against*.

Psalms 119:104

I gain understanding from Your precepts; therefore I hate every wrong path.

3) *holy pain*—from living in a world where wickedness so often prevails

To joyously know and respond to God, *as God*, is to share in His holy grief and indignation when faced with whatever disregards and opposes Him.

Psalms 119:136

Streams of tears flow from my eyes, for Your law is not obeyed.

Yes, those whose greatest joy is in God can sometimes find themselves weeping with a deep and holy sorrow when His name and word are dishonoured.

2 Corinthians 11:29b

Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?

To walk with God and see others deceived and led astray from His way, brings, participation with Him in His burning anger against such wickedness. It will be seen further on in the series, that a participation in the divine anger is never focused upon our *own* righteousness but *His*. It is for our Creator's name and honour that we are jealous.

Psalms 119:53

Indignation grips me because of the wicked, who have forsaken Your law.

4) *holy refusal*—of every kind of impurity, with a decisively responsive *dread* of any conformity to it

Where the conscience is clear and untroubled, our will is free to *decisively choose against* what is personally defiling and also grievous to the Holy One. We may then, indeed, *dread* any personal conformity to such things.

Psalm 101:2–3

—*in our homes the moral purity of God Himself*

I will conduct the affairs of my house with a blameless heart. I will not look with approval on anything that is vile.

2 Corinthians 7:1

Let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, [coming to the goal of] holiness out of reverence for God.

When our delight is in the Holy Father, we are enabled to purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit. That is, we may reflect the purity of God Himself in all that we desire, think, say and do!

In Study 1 we saw in 1 John 1:5 that “God is light” and that “in Him there is no darkness at all.” As God’s image this utter ‘purity of being’ is part of our vocational heritage. It may, indeed, be understood that the Father’s purpose was that it be said of His beloved humanity: “They are light, in them there is no darkness at all”!

2 Peter 2:7–8

—*the inner response of one who lived in the midst of wickedness*

[He] was distressed by the depraved conduct of the lawless (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard).

These four things truly are powerful manifestations of that *jealous passion* coming out of a great delight in God. What an awesome privilege it is to be called to participate in this way in the heart of the Holy One Himself—the inner stirrings of His own divine moral purity!

the inner stirrings of His divine love

From what was seen in Study 1, it may be truly said that the entire Being and action of God is defined by one thing: AN ABOUNDING AND IRREPRESSIBLE FULLNESS OF DIVINE, SELF-GIVING LOVE—WITH ITS INCESSANTLY OUTFLOWING, YEARNING DESIRE FOR THE BLESSÉDNESS OF HIS BELOVED HUMANITY!!!

Once more the call comes to us that as the image of God we are to be like Him—specifically, to be visible *human* representations of His *divine love* on the earth! And, again, this becomes a reality only as we find ourselves exalting in His love with the whole of our being, so that there is A SPONTANEOUS MANIFESTATION WITHIN US OF HIS OWN OUTFLOWING, YEARNING DESIRE FOR THE BLESSÉDNESS OF OTHERS!!!

Yes, as always, our capacity for refection of His glory is within the reality of a God-given, inner spring of *great delight in Him*. This is fully in line with what Jesus declared when asked what the greatest commandment was. He said:

Matthew 22:37–39

“ ‘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 neighbour as yourself’.”

He couldn’t state the first apart from the second, for in authentic human experience the two are inseparable. To love God with the whole of our being is, indeed, the greatest commandment of all. And yet to love our neighbour as ourselves is exactly

like it in both essence and importance. It is inconceivable that the one be enjoyed without the other being expressed. The second is the inevitable outcome of the first.

1 John 4:19

We love because He first loved us.

Where this kind of inevitable love for others doesn't happen, there is clearly a grave deficiency in the intimacy of our relationship with the One who is love.

1 John 4:8

Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

But the more our heart is moved by the love of God for us, the more it becomes a spring within us of yearning desire for others to know both the blessing and blessedness we enjoy. We cannot bear that they should remain outside of what is for us *life itself*—longing for them, also, to experience the holy happiness of that inner music of a grateful affection in His presence!

And, of course, all such longing is with a view to seeing the display of God's splendour through them. For this inner stirring of divine love always has within it a jealous passion for His honour, glory and praise.

In future studies the amazing outcomes of God's action towards us in His Son will be increasingly declared. And it will be seen how these powerfully impact the affections of those who embrace them. Through the dynamic proclamation of these things the love of God may be richly known, celebrated and engaged in, as these scriptures show:

1 John 3:1

What great love the Father has lavished on us!

Romans 5:5b

God's love has been [flooded] into our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

1 Thessalonians 4:9b

You yourselves have been taught by God to love each other.

And so, we now have some understanding of the enormous, ongoing blessing of an intimate participation in these two 'holy affections': those dynamic manifestations of an inner spring of great delight in Him that are a reflection of His glory. That is, the passionate, inner stirrings of His, own, divine moral purity and love.

Secondly, we fulfil our vocation as His representatives through the enormous, ongoing blessing of constantly reflecting:

- the truth of His word

(in our thinking a holy perception of God, humanity & creation,
& seeing all things at all times in the light of this worldview)

It was God's good, creational purpose that in every moment of every day, our mind should reflect the truth of who *He* is as Father, Creator and King; the truth of who *we* are as His children, creatures and servants (worshippers, rulers, stewards); and the truth of what the *creation* is: its origin, nature, purpose and goal. Having then:

# a true view of God	a right theology
# a true view of humankind	a right anthropology
# a true view of creation	a right cosmology

How these three elements are perceived constitutes a person's 'worldview': that 'big mental picture' which strongly shapes the drives we have, the way we think and the decisions we make. All three, truly understood, together with our Makers' redeeming (liberating) historical action, is what is being referred to throughout the series when the 'the truth' is spoken of. And such understanding is, as will be increasingly seen, a 'holy perception': one that is uniquely and dynamically God-given.

Research has shown that we talk to ourselves at the rate of at least 1,300 words per minute. God's ultimate intention for us is that every thought produced by these mental exercises, should be a representation of His own divine truth!

All this, of course, flows on naturally from what has gone before. When by divine mercy and grace there is great delight in the Father, resulting at once in a holy spring of His own moral purity and love within us, then the truth of His word is naturally reflected in our thinking.

In regard to this whole matter of 'knowing' and 'perceiving', there is a universal principle of life that must be understood: OUR THINKING IS SHAPED BY WHAT OUR PASSIONS DEMAND!!! This is, indeed, a universally significant statement. In fact, as these studies unfold it will be seen that every expression of our humanity in thought, word or action, is powerfully affected by strong, inner stirrings: *non-negotiable, personal agendas*—many of which we have little awareness of.⁷

It is also a well-established fact that the emotional impact of our *primary relationships* strongly affects the way we think. Clearly, then, our *supreme* primary relationship needs to be one of joyously, intimate communion with our Creator!

Those whose greatest passion is to know the Father (expressed in an adoring spirit of reverent awe, childlike trust, grateful affection and unwavering obedience towards Him) may have His *divine wisdom* in abundant measure. Again, we see that:

Proverbs 9:10

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

Psalms 111:10

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow His precepts have good understanding. To Him belongs eternal praise.

Full-hearted worshippers of the Holy One know who *He* really is, and how they are to relate to Him. They know who *they* are, and who those around them are and how they are to relate to *them*. And they know what the *creation* is and how to relate to *that*. And such wisdom is so *good* and *life-giving* that all who receive it, do indeed, find themselves joyously and wholeheartedly affirming their Maker's worthiness of endless praise!

1 John 2:20

You have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth.

Yes, as the Father's adoring (revering, trusting, grateful and unwaveringly obedient) children live daily in His world, they have the vast blessing of knowing the truth: 'things as they really are'. And so in the midst of puzzling and even distressing circumstances, they have a whole spectrum of 'given perception': that which enables them to rejoice in the reality of who He is, what He has done, will do and has

⁷ The nature of such agendas will be identified as we move through our series from Study 10 onwards.

promised to be presently doing on their behalf. And in this, they are able to, free-spiritedly, always be making choices in accordance with His way.

Psalm 119:24

Your statutes are my delight; they are my counsellors.

It is such an excellent thing to have our Maker's truth in our thinking—with His sure and certain way continually before us!

Psalm 119:99

—what can sometimes be the case in this world

I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on Your statutes.

An authentic response to freely-given, divine revelation brings more wisdom than what can be received from 'wise' instructors who live against it and contrary to it.

Proverbs 3:13

Blesséd are those who find wisdom, those who gain understanding.

Proverbs 8:30–31

—wisdom's joyous understanding of God, the creation and humanity at the beginning

I was filled with delight day after day, rejoicing always in His presence, rejoicing in His whole world and delighting in humankind.

Yes, wisdom's Creator-centred holy joy!

Philippians 4:8

—the habitual focus of the Father's faithful, 'creationally'⁸ wise thinkers'

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, what ever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

Such expressions of 'divinely-virtuous-perspective', *so rightly* find a happy and habitual place in the minds of the beloved and adoring children of God: good fruit of the Holy One's anointing!

But in regard to this matter, it must be underlined here that *wisdom* (expressed in 'the truth of His word') is not merely to do with functional response to divine *commands* (what we must *do* on the basis of how our Creator has wisely structured things in His world: conformity to 'the Maker's manual'). As spoken of earlier, it has to do *above all else*, with this: our wholehearted embrace of ALL THAT HE HAS DONE AND HAS PROMISED TO BE DOING NOW, ON THE BASIS OF WHAT HE HAS ACCOMPLISHED FOR US IN HIS SON!!!

Our 'habitual focus' is to be not only upon the Father's 'creational' wisdom (the way we are to live and relate to others), but also His 'redemptive' wisdom (what He has done for us in Jesus to set our spirit free to *know* and *respond* to His love!!). From Study 6 onwards the rich details of this will be extensively proclaimed.

So, as well as always reflecting our Creator's holy inner stirrings of *moral purity* and *love* in our inner being, we have also been created to live each day within a—moment by moment—reflection of *the truth of His word* in our thinking.

Now finally, we will see something of the outcome of these two fruits of a sustained, adoring spirit of communion with our Maker.

⁸ Throughout the series the words 'creationally' or 'creational' will be used to express the functional way our Creator has made things to be.

Thirdly, we fulfil our vocation as His representatives through the enormous, ongoing blessing of constantly reflecting:

- His purpose[s] of wisdom & love

(in our daily, relational living a holy, regal & joyous self-giving in all we desire, think, say and do—that which is eternal)

God has wonderfully planned that we should have a major part with Him in His action of working out in history what He has purposed from eternity. Yes, it has been given to the children of God to joyously invest their noble and regal humanity, in the Father's wise and eternally significant purposes of love!

To reflect the purposes of God is, actually, nothing more and nothing less than to be engaged with Him in His actions of love in His world.

Many speak of the difficulty and complexity of discerning God's will for their lives. But it is basically, a very simple process. We must freely remain in the joy of God's love, love Him with all of our being and—at all times—be actively participating in His love for those He has placed around us. In doing this we will be right in the centre of His will at any given time—and every day will be a wise and personally enriching investment of our lives!⁹

Very often it is thought that the will of God is to be found in some great action 'out there'. However, it is usually to be known and worked out 'right here' in the faithful and loving service of those who are before us day by day. The Father is able to, very naturally, lead us into any future 'out there' situations, as we continue wholeheartedly and faithfully in the 'right here' ones in the present.

Yes, we are to remain in the enjoyment of the Holy One's amazing presence and be fully given to the loving of our neighbour 'where we are'. Doing this, is to be hour-by-hour *fully engaging with Him* in the magnificent details of His will.

a holy, God-given self-giving in all we say and do

As this study has shown, our 'high human calling' is, in essence, to be visible representations on the earth of the love of God. And this, as we exalt in His love with the whole of our being, so that, there is within us *an inner spring of His own incessantly outflowing, yearning desire for both the blessing and blessedness of others!*

When such holy passion is stirring in our heart, then all of our daily, relational interactions may, indeed, be humanly authentic: a *manifestation* of holy and regal, God-given self-giving in everything we desire, think, say and do (as His likeness).

This *holy* self-giving truly is different to, separate from and other than anything else. It is, in essence, nothing like the kind of self-giving that taints our most noble, relational actions outside of intimate communion with God. It is the inevitable fruit of a great delight in Him and those other two *holy affections* we've been speaking of: the *jealous passion* of divine moral purity and the *yearning desire* of divine love.

What would such holy, self-giving love look like? Well, later there will be a large study entitled 'On The Way In The Action Of Divine Love', where (in the light of the

⁹ We will speak in much detail about knowing God's guidance each day in a later study—where particular complexities that can be involved are also addressed.

incredible reality of God's mercy and grace) this question will be answered in greatly encouraging detail.

Just now, however, it is enough to look at these few supremely comprehensive words of Jesus:

John 15:12

My command is this: love each other as I have loved you.

John 15:13

Greater love has no one than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.

Luke 6:27b–28, 35b–36

Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you ... and you will be children of the Most High [sharing in His own nature], because He is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as Your Father is merciful.

And then we may add these words of the Apostle Paul that will be spoken of more fully in that study to come:

1 Corinthians 13:4–8b

Love is [longsuffering], love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.

We will come to see that such relational action truly is the heritage of all who receive the Father's gift of life in His Son!

manifestations of divine love that are maintained by the word of God

As already alluded to above, in Study 1 we were told that God's love as a 'holy affection' is one that is neither inflamed by infatuation, nor governed by a grasping self-interest. And so such love is entirely *different to, separate from* and *other than* any human feeling of tenderness and fondness, where a prior intimacy with our Maker is lacking.

We also referred earlier to the transforming power that is present in the proclamation of God's amazing action towards us in His Son. But even among those who have experienced the impact of such proclamation, there may still be—within the complexities of life—expressions of relational living that lack a holy distinctiveness.

Participation in the actions of the love of God may well be wonderfully *spontaneous* but will not always be *automatic* in this life.

And so, the following very practical kinds of urgings are required:

1 Peter 4:8

[Love] each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.

Colossians 3:13

Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

James 1:19b

Every one should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.

Romans 12:9

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.

1 John 3:18

Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and truth.

Romans 12:10b

Honour one another above yourselves.

James 3:13

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.

Philippians 2:3–4

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of others.

Ephesians 4:32a

Be kind and compassionate to one another.

Romans 12:15a

Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.

Hebrews 13:16

[Do] not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

It is very true that regardless of how rich a person's previous experience of divine love has been, it can never be assumed that present circumstances of life will not dull the wonder of what has been known. And so such urgings as those above, are certainly the gift of God to all who have responded to His call. They, actually, show us where we really are, relationally, at any given time—and direct us back into the blessing that is our heritage in His presence.

Then finally, there is this very relevant and passionate prayer on behalf of a community that had come to wholeheartedly embrace the love of God:

Philippians 1:9–10

[This] is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in [full] knowledge and [all perception], so that you may be able to discern what is best [and be able to test and prove the things that differ from what is holy].

The complexities of life in this world certainly do abound—strongly contesting a participation in the wise and purposeful actions of divine love. The nature of such complexity and God's abundant provision within it will be dealt with in detail as the series proceeds. And as the word of God continues to be proclaimed, we will be left without any doubt that the love we've been describing remains, absolutely, the *daily heritage* of all who embrace His lavishly given grace.

Yes, a dynamic engagement with the Holy One in His own divine Self-giving may, most certainly, be a liberating and life-giving daily-relational-reality—and this, it will be seen, regardless of past or present circumstances!

the eternal significance of being with Him in His purpose[s] of wisdom and love

It is a marvellous thing to know that everything we do as a reflection of God's love will follow us into eternity. EVERY DEED DONE IN DIVINE LOVE IS ETERNAL!!!

1 Corinthians 15:58

Therefore, my [dearly loved] brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.

1 Corinthians 3:13

[People's] work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work.

As was said in Study 1, all of history is leading towards a great *climax*. It is then that the real nature of our deeds will be seen.

On that awesome Day to come, only what has been a participation in the love of God will survive His fiery judgment. Every desire, thought, word and deed that has flowed from Him will endure—and form part of the rich reward and privilege that His children and servants will enjoy in their eternal home, forever!

Revelation 14:13

Then I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Yes," says the Spirit, "They will rest from their labour, for their deeds will follow them."

To be engaged in the fulfilment of 'the high human calling' is to travel a path that has massive significance for both time and eternity!¹⁰

CONCLUSION

The two sections of this study have revealed that our high calling involves both *RELATIONAL INTIMACY* and *VOCATIONAL PARTNERSHIP* with God. And these two inseparable elements will appear, again and again, as we continue to pursue the great themes of His grace and the freedom and fullness this brings.

Made in the likeness of our *great* Father, Creator and King as His *grand* children, creatures and servants, we have been called to *know* Him. And this, as we walk with Him in an adoring spirit of reverent awe, childlike trust, grateful affection and unwavering obedience. And also, to *glorify* Him through our humanity—as we reflect His own holy affections in our inner being, the truth of His word in our thinking and His purposes of wisdom and love in our daily, relational living.

A person living truly as the likeness of God is one who shares with Him in His joy, and is a glorious reflection of divine passion, thinking and wisely, purposeful action of love. To see a fulfilment of the high human calling is, in fact, to see exactly what God is like. What a magnificent creature a human is. And what an amazing calling it is that we have received!

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¹⁰ As already indicated, in the second part of the series—Studies 9-25—the broad, rich and eternally significant dimensions of our calling will be increasingly explored.