

Experiencing God's Heart for Others - Part 2 of 2

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Isn't it interesting that almost everything in the natural world grows? Except for rocks, sand and dirt, we can observe, measure and even restrain or control growth. We do that with the grass by mowing it, and we trim the shrubs and weed the garden. We also manage the growth of our physical body by trying to eat healthy, exercise and get enough sleep. We even like to manage the growth of our hair and nails according to style preference or necessity.

Growth can and should be managed, but to stop growth is to cause death because all living things grow. When a tree reaches maturity it doesn't stop growing, it just grows differently in cycles of seasons. Human growth is similar, when we reach our physical peak, growth becomes more internal and goes through phases or cycles.

Since all living things are designed to grow then we can draw the conclusion that growth is a process through which God works. We can even draw the conclusion that growth is an inherent attribute of God. This is important to our understanding of God and of life in general because within the process of growth there is always a potential for variation, surprises and new developments to occur. That's what makes life exciting, unique and endlessly beautiful.

Standards for Growth

The standard or ideal that all human beings strive for originates from the substance of God, which is **absolute goodness**. However while we are growing our own standards fluctuate. People learn and grow in different ways and at different times. This is the reason parents, teachers, and society as a whole, create rules. In the same way that physical growth needs to be managed, so also mental and emotional growth need to be managed.

All growth happens through give and take action, the endless cycle of giving and receiving. So that means when we manage mental and emotional growth we are managing the processes of thoughts and emotions. As a parent or teacher we try to influence the mental and emotional growth of children in a good direction through our words and behavior, and by creating and enforcing rules.

Rules of Engagement

Let me illustrate this with an example from the Bible, and I'll call it "God's First Rule". Adam was growing because that's how all life happens. So during his teen years he was probably a bit more focused on his physical prowess and figuring out how things work. While Eve was a teenager she was probably a bit more focused on relationships and emotional connection, as is naturally the way the female mind works. Because of these different focuses and different rates of development there was a rule put in place for their own protection.

We'll call this "Rules of engagement". They are necessary so that no one gets hurt, like in sports or other competitions we have rules like this. Also in driving, in work, and in society we have all kinds of rules to protect people from getting hurt or from hurting each other. The rule was there to help Adam and Eve reach their goal. If they were able to reach their goal of oneness with God's heart and ideal, then the rule would no longer be needed for them because it would become mute, irrelevant. It would have fulfilled it's purpose.

The rules are not the standard

The rule existed to protect the standard of goodness which is God's heart, and to protect the hearts of Adam and Eve while they were developing. The rules are a support mechanism, a tool to guide the way.

Too often, people get caught up in using "rules" as an absolute standard, because rules are very concrete. Rules make everything clear or black and white. That's helpful when you're learning and growing. But the goal of emotional growth is to bring us into the realm of heart where rules are unnecessary because perfect love has dominion.

I experience perfect love as the place where only goodness is acknowledged, where hope and faith in goodness create patience and override anger. I experience perfect love as unconditional, desiring only the best for everyone, willing to struggle and sacrifice, to endure without end.

The absolute standard of love is unchanging because it is God, the origin, the source. Everything that has not yet reached oneness with God's heart is in the growth process. But that process is also related to God's love; it's a realm of grace. We can't experience God's love without going through the process of growth, because it's a gradual unfolding; a natural development in consciousness.

There should be no judgment in the process of growth, only guidance and direction.

So basically, this is why we can and should refrain from judgment while pushing ourselves to a personal higher standard. We have to acknowledge and leave room for growth, even our own growth, because the process of growth is how God works; it's how everything works. That is why there is grace.



Mistakes are supposed to be acceptable. While raising children, if you focus on mistakes and punishment the child will develop emotional problems, even psychological problems. Children need to experience parent's unconditional love, and that the rules are there to help them learn and grow. Teaching, guiding, correcting and even reminding is not the same as judging, it's the heart of wanting to benefit the other person that makes the difference.

Going back to that first garden story of Adam and Eve; you might then ask why they were expelled

from the garden? I believe they expelled themselves. The "Garden of Eden" is a metaphorical term for a realm of purity and natural growth. The entire story is symbolic but the symbolism has deep meaning.

Adam and Eve's ability to reach mental and emotional maturity was stunted by a new type of give and take action. The giving and receiving of destructive emotions such as guilt, fear, shame, jealousy, blame, rage and resentment trapped them in a cycle of thoughts and feelings that blocked their ability to feel God's love and grace.

It was these errant thoughts and emotions that blocked them from being able to restore their mistake. Their actions began to reflect these emotions, and their relationships suffered. When we act based on guilt, fear, shame, jealousy, blame, rage and resentment we multiply them in ourselves and in our relationships. You might say that the "flaming sword" blocking the way to the "garden" represents the thoughts and emotions that they couldn't get past.

Shouldn't people be judged for criminal actions?

Of course, we need systems in society to deal with the results of corruption and evil. I'm just saying that as individuals we're not responsible for judging everyone else – that's why Jesus told us not to. On an individual level we are meant to use mistakes, even evil, to learn and grow from (remove the log from your own eye first).

On a societal level we have to manage, protect and keep order so that goodness can keep growing. Remember, that's what the rules are for – to guide and protect while we're mentally and emotionally growing closer to God.



People are hurt, confused and conflicted

None of us are one with God's heart yet, and so we feel a bit insecure, we're not sure of our value. That's what causes us to measure and judge, we're trying to figure out where we're at and it makes us feel better when we can say someone else is bad or wrong. This is a huge problem within religion, because religious people tend to judge based on their own understanding of right and wrong which they believe is from God. Politics is equally bad because we tend to infuse our political views with morals from our religious views.

But maybe none of those views are in line with

God's heart. We certainly have not found the perfect system or society yet.

I saw this video on FB that showed how differently people treated a little girl when she was dressed up like a homeless child and when she was dressed up like a middle class child. It was the same 6 year old child but people judged her as "bad" and "threatening" when she was dirty and wore ragged clothes.

We can be very external in our judgments. We have to examine our views and ask ourselves if we are seeing things the way God sees things.

The only thing that God can do is weep and say,

"I wish you knew my heart. I wish you knew how much I love you, I wish you knew how much more you are capable of. I wish you knew how joyful life is meant to be. I wish you could feel me."

Restoring the Realm of Heart

The results of the Fall of Man are emotional issues. We live in a realm separate from God's heart, unable to feel the depth of Parent's heart. The problem is not that we feel these troublesome emotions, but that we get stuck there and we act them out. We allow these self focused emotions to motivate our actions.

We are fearful and seek to console ourselves by accumulating wealth and power and judging others. We manipulate, blame and accuse to cover our guilt and shame. We complain and divide instead of seeking unity. Resentment drives us to seek revenge.

The goal of all religions

The only way to overcome this twisted realm of emotional immaturity and confusion is to learn and practice the truth God has given us, and to follow the examples of love God has sent into this world. Spiritual growth and restoration is in the realm of thoughts and emotions because that's where our actions come from. The same action can be done from a heart of love or a heart of hate, but the results of those 2 actions would be entirely different.

The rules restrict our actions while we're developing a heart and mind that resembles God. When we've done that, the body will naturally act out of true love.

Both Spiritual growth and restoration are about developing a heart of true love that resembles God, and that's why Jesus told us not to judge others, but to measure ourselves first for the purpose of growth and learning, not to flog ourselves, but to grow closer to God.