

GRACE & PEACE

An E-periodical For spiritual enlightenment, edification and encouragement.

SEEKING LOVE ACTUALLY

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DIVINE LOVE IN ACTION

Once again the world has celebrated Christmas commemorating the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. Most born-again Christians do not observe Christmas primarily because it is an unscriptural practice borrowed from elsewhere.

However, irrespective of our perspective on Christmas, the fact remains that 2024 years ago our Lord Jesus Christ took the form of a man using the womb of a virgin. This is an appropriate occasion not only to tell the world about the significance of the incarnation of Christ, but also for ourselves to ponder upon the basic message behind this unique episode. What is the most important truth being exhibited in the birth, life and sufferings of the Lord Jesus? The Lord Himself said, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16)

It was the love for the fallen man that prompted God the Father to send His beloved Son into this wicked world (1Jn. 4:9). Not only His birth, but His sufferings on the cross were also the manifestation of God’s eternal love for us (Rom 5:8). Only because of His great love and mercy, God saved us and regenerated us, (Eph 2:4; 1John 3:1).

Examine Love

It is high time to examine our knowledge and enjoyment of this great love of God. Scripture

exhorts us to know and be gripped by the incomparable divine love and exhibit the same in our day-to-day life (Eph. 3:19; 1 John 4:11–13). Sad to notice that despite the claim of scriptural doctrine and practice in connection with the remembrance of Christ, the manifestation of the love of Christ among the people of God is very much lacking.

While we are eager to judge others, we forget that even the merciless criticism of others itself proves our own loveless attitude.

As we go through these brief notes on divine love, may the Lord direct our hearts into the love of God. May we examine our level of love for the Lord, His word and His people.

Explore Future

At the same time, once again we are at another year-end and soon we shall enter into another New Year. It’s appropriate to look back and forth, examining the past and exploring the future. It is wise to learn lessons from the past and prayerfully plan for the best to rectify our past failures. Thanks once again for your prayers and encouraging words in the past. MAY THE LORD LEAD

GUIDE ALL OF US TO A BLESSED AND FRUITFUL NEW YEAR 2025

NTK

“Better is a dinner of herbs where love is than a fattened ox and hatred with it.” Proverbs 15:17 (ESV)

SEEKING LOVE ACTUALLY

 By Nelson Thomas Mumbai



A few years ago, a leading English Newspaper in Mumbai had a special column where all who seek 'Love Actually' could give free advertisements. I was stunned to note then that there are so many around us who sincerely long for love and affection. Despite all the advancements on every front, many more are desperately looking for love and affection.

Potential of Love

True love revives, inspires and challenges one to move forward. It builds up relationships and strengthens one another. The discouraged and destitute find new hope in an expression of love, even if it's just a loving word or look. Love forgets the bad, remem-

bers the good and even covers many mistakes. Yes, love leads to manifold blessings and benefits for all concerned.

The Apostle Paul narrates beautifully,

“Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things”, (1Cor 13: 4 – 7)

Love is the Answer

Truly there are many who are hurt and desperately longing for love and kindness. Many children do not find love in their parents. Often, parent's expectations are not fulfilled in children. Friends fail to trust each other. Many incidents of cheating and lying make one think that nobody loves truly.

Amid the present complex lifestyle, a sense of worthlessness and emptiness fills the hearts of many. In despair, they lament, “Unwanted, unaccepted, meaningless life”!!! Some even foolishly find 'solace' in suicide as once a young man did after writing, 'nobody loved me'.

In such a scenario, love is the answer, love is the key. As someone well observed, ‘without air, we can survive for a few minutes, without water and food we can survive for a few days, but without love and acceptance we cannot survive for even a moment’.

Yes, there is enough wealth, education, position and good family connections. Yet people cannot find true love. They end up in frustration. This means that more than anything else, our heart is longing for love and recognition. Even if poverty and sickness fill our days, with true love and affection we can overcome all those issues.

Love or Lust

Alas, many fail to differentiate between the selfish, sinful love of man and the selfless, sacrificial love of God. How frequently do we hear about a ‘lover’ becoming a robber or even a murderer! When they are convinced that their selfish motives are questioned or not fulfilled, they become violent. Then they go to any extent to pour out their anger on a fellow being! It is not love actually; it is just self-centred passion and lust. Such only exploit others for their selfish ambitions.

Divine Love

Basically, ‘true love’ can come only from someone who does not look for love; someone who could be the source of all love. Just like a bankrupt friend cannot help the poor, a man who is seeking love cannot offer love. That’s why we have to seek love from God, our Creator alone. The Bible says, “God is love” (1 John 4:8c). Love is part of His essential nature. He is a God of love and cannot change His nature (1John 4:8; 2Cor

13:11; 2Tim 2:13). That means, irrespective of our state or even response to God, His love for us is constant, eternal and inseparable (Rom 8:39; Jer 31:3).

Love Manifested

God’s love is not just an emotion or sympathetic words but exhibited in action. Apostle John writes,

“In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:9, 10).

Not only in the incarnation and life of Christ but also His work of salvation on the cross of Calvary is the ultimate evidence of God’s love for fallen man. His perfect sacrifice could atone for sinners and thus all who believe in the atoning work of Christ are forgiven and regenerated (John 3:16; Rom 5:8; Eph 2:4, 5; 1 John 3:1).

Love Within

Not only does God save us in His great love, but He also poured out the love of God into our hearts through the Holy Spirit (Rom 5:5). It’s the blessed privilege of a born-again child of God to enjoy and experience the divine nature as a result of the indwelling Holy Spirit. That’s why Apostle John makes it very clear that “everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.” “If someone says, “I love

God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar...” (2Pet 1:4; 1John 4:7b, 8, 20b).

Just like many other spiritual exercises and experiences, love too should be a natural lifestyle for a true believer because true Christian life is an outflow of the new life we possess in Christ. Any defect in practical life is because of the defect in the personal life with Christ. As long as we stay close to Christ and walk in the Spirit we will be exhibiting His life and love (John 15:4, 9; 1 John 4:16).

Apostle John rightly affirms that it's contradictory for a believer to live with hatred and enmity. He emphatically says they are liars, murderers and ignorant of anything divine (1 John 2:9–11; 4:20).

Let us sincerely examine our love for the Lord and His people. Is it just a human affection that is deep-rooted in ego and sin? We may suppose that no one around us will know the bitterness and hatred we keep in our hearts against a fellow being. But remember, slowly and surely what is stored in our hearts comes out.

A habitual sinful life of any kind demands a sincere examination of our calling and conversion. Remember, any form of evil disturbs and hinders a believer's walk with the Lord and his love for one another. Living a holy life in close communion with the Lord is imperative for exhibiting Christian love in this hurting world. Then alone our life and testimony will be refreshing and comforting for the many who seek love.

Outline:

Seven Witnesses of Incarnate Christ

 By Bro. David Manchala, Hyderabad

The love of God is first mentioned in the book of Deuteronomy 4:37 and we can see a handful of references in this book about 'God's love' towards His earthly people Israel. In the Book of Hosea, we also see His love towards the wayward Nation of Israel in future.

In the Book of **Romans**, God demonstrat-

ed His love towards Gentiles (all). We will see 'Love of God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ' toward His heavenly chosen people in the book of **Ephesians**.

In **John's writings**, we see, that God showed His love individually by sending His only begotten Son, (John 3:16, 1 John 4:9). God revealed His love for mankind by sending His Son in the likeness of man. The body of

Christ **Prepared by the Father, possessed by the Son and Produced by the Holy Spirit**, is a Triune act, a holy act! What an unspeakable gift!

Out of 4 gospel writers, Luke, the beloved physician, gave a birth certificate to our Lord Jesus Christ. Generally, chapter two's in the Bible speaks about Jesus' manhood such as Philippians 2 practically, Hebrews 2 doctrinally, 1 Timothy 2 evangelically, and Leviticus 2 typically. But, Luke 2 has a historical aspect. God manifested in the flesh. What a great mystery!

God has to become flesh in order to Reveal God's Word, Rule God's will and Restore the relationship between God and man as a result of worshipping God. That is why He is the Prophet, King, and Priest.

Who can explain 'Christ in the Cosmos as a helpless babe in the Crib at His birth?' God's love has gone beyond birth, from Manger to Majesty, from Crib to Cross.

In this article, I would like to give seven witnesses to the Birth of Jesus Christ.

1. **Priestly couple** - Zechariah and Elisabeth (Luke 1) - Christ is our High Priest
2. **Princely couple** - Joseph and Mary (Luke 2) - Christ is our King of Kings and Lord of Lords
3. **Prophetic couple** (spiritual) - Simeon and Anna (Luke 2) - Christ is a Powerful Prophet
4. **Celestial bodies** - Angels and Stars (Luke 2, Matthew 2) - Christ in the Cosmos, now in crib and home.
5. **Social couple** - Shepherds (Luke 2) and Wisemen (Matthew 2) (Highest and lowest in the society) - Christ is available for all social classes even today.
6. **Historical couple** - Caesar Augustus and Governor Cyrene of Syria (Luke 2) - History is 'His' story. He divided not only history into two but also humankind (believers and unbelievers)
7. **Two Genealogies** - Jewish line (Matthew 1) and Gentile line (Luke 3) - Christ broke down the wall of hostility between Jews and Gentiles.

Meditation:

A LOVE THAT NEVER LETS GO!

 By Dr. Joel Albert, Aurangabad

One of the most well-known verses of the Bible, John 3:16 starts with these words
“For God so loved the world, that He gave His

only begotten son..”

Greater words could not have been spoken to summarize and explain the epitome of the word 'love' itself. We could go into the Greek

language and the four different words that reveal four different types of love, But I would like to draw your attention to the word 'love' mentioned here. It's the word *agapaó* (derived from *agape*, which means 'unconditional love').

In a time and age where the word 'love' has been misused and misinterpreted, it is important for us to see love through the following three aspects,

1. His Coming
2. His Crucifixion
3. His companionship

1. HIS COMING

When the verse says HE 'gave' His only begotten son, it means there is an action involved in the love of God! In fact it shows us something so unknown to many of us. The word 'so loved' is not a noun but a verb phrase with a verb showing the action of loving and the adverb 'so' reminding of the matchless and magnanimous, all-encompassing nature of His love!

Many of us think that love is a noun. You see people of the world using the term "I fell in love". Well, seeing someone and 'falling in love' with them has a totally different meaning in the scripture. Matt 5:28 says that it is not love but lust that would lead you into sin! True love is something that we labour for, as Paul reminds the Thessalonian believers in 1 Thess 1:3. Even Heb 6:10 mentions the same verse.

What I mean to say is that love is revealed through actions and not mere feelings! God was not smitten by the world and He didn't fall in love with it. In fact He saw the whole world going towards death and

destruction.

And in spite of them going against Him, He still loved them and that love is revealed through the action of sending His only begotten son. In fact we can say He loved the world so much that he sent the one he loved to most to save them! Oh the wonderful love of God! The love that came to seek me, personified in the Lord Jesus Christ!

2. HIS CRUCIFIXION

Not only did God love us by sending His son but we see love personified on the cross of calvary, where the Lord Jesus Christ did the ultimate sacrifice for the redemption of mankind! Rom 5:6-8, especially v. 8 reminds us how God demonstrated his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us!

Is it not the greatest act of love ever done? Isn't it amazing to see Christ taking up the punishment that we deserved and emptying Himself, being obedient even to death on the cross? His love may be revealed through His decision to come but His love culminates in the demonstration of the ultimate sacrifice on the cross. It's truly something for us to introspect when we speak of trying to be Christ-like in our behaviour. In a time and age where selfishness, ego and pride are just too important to a person, we have the timeless example of the man of calvary who demonstrated His love through the ultimate selfless act of giving it all to give it all to people who did not deserve even a bit of that love.

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2. HIS CRUCIFIXION

We saw the love of the Lord through His coming and His crucifixion. But this love is continues to bind us and bring us into a permanent relationship with Him that last

forever and ever! 1 John 3:1 says "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God:" It tells us about the commencement of this relationship. The fact that the love is bestowed upon us implies the endless abundance of the love for all of us who have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and accepted Him as our Lord and personal saviour. We come into a relationship with the heavenly father through our faith in His son and this relationship will never ever end! 1 Cor 13:13 reminds us that one day faith will turn to sight, hope will turn to reality but the love that sought us, the love that was personified in the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross is the same love which will abide when we are in His presence for all eternity. Let these words of the hymn-writer be our prayer and song as we think about this love, so amazing and so divine.

O love that will not let me go
I rest my weary soul in thee
I give thee back the life I owe
That in thine ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be

What is love?

It is silence --when your words would hurt.
It is patience --when your neighbor's curt.
It is deafness --when a scandal flows.
It is thoughtfulness --for other's woes.
It is promptness --when stern duty calls.
It is courage --when misfortune falls.

Source Unknown.

True & Abounding Love

 By Bro. David Joseph, Goa

Love is a word much used and mis-used all over the world. Some use it sparingly and others use the same in every sentence they speak. What is love in the real sense?

Love Misunderstood

There are many incidents where people have brutally killed the one they claimed to have loved more than anyone or anything. People look at something in the market and say “Oh I love that dress”, while others pick up their dog and holding it tightly say I love you. It is very common to use the word love for physical lust also these days. So what really is love?

Love Undeserving

To understand love we need to understand God, for God is love. His love has extended itself to every person. The Bible says ‘For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life’, God so loved the world - a world or people- who have done every possible thing to provoke God to anger.

We have made ourselves thousands of gods; we have made up hundreds of theories to

prove that ‘God does not exist and He is not the creator of man and the universe’. History records thousands who have been ridiculed rejected and tortured because they believed in God and propagated the same.

We have indulged in every form of sin, openly despising the law of God. We have destroyed creation and its beauties for our convenience, we have done everything for God to punish us with a fatal punishment, and yet God so loved the world.

Love & Justice

But please don’t be under the impression that because God is love so I can get away with anything I do. The loving God is also a righteous God. He will judge everyone for every evil they do. The wages of sin is death, and after death the judgment.

So where is love? Why does he want to punish if He is so loving?

My dear friend, it is the love of God that you are yet alive and not dead right now. It is the love of God giving you and me an opportunity to repent and get back to Him. This very love of God has provided a way of escape to man, to you and me. Though we have sinned and done everything to dis-

please God and bring His judgment upon ourselves a thousand times. He has provided a way of salvation. Because He loves you and does not want you to be punished with eternal separation from God and the horrible fire of hell, God has paid the penalty for our sins in the sacrifice of His dear son Jesus Christ.

Love incomprehensible

The Bible says in Romans 5:8 “But God commends his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” That is love, God’s love! He loved us not when we became good (We cannot be good on our own) but while we were yet in our sins. The Bible also says in Ephesians 3:19 “to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”

Please don’t try to analyze the love of Christ with your limited and human understanding, for the love of Christ surpasses every human thought and boundaries to reach out to the fallen and wandering sinner, inviting him/her to a new and wonderful life in Christ all because God loves you.

Love Forgiving

Love was expressed in the most convincing and powerful manner by Jesus Christ when He suffered and bled and died for the salvation of mankind. A glimpse of that wonderful love is exhibited in the words of Lord Jesus while He was crucified, He prayed and said; ‘Father forgive them they not what they do’

So dear friend, though it may not seem to be true it is. Yes God loves you. He wants

to bless you; He wants you to enjoy God’s presence in your life. Would you like to enjoy His love? Are you also one who is almost fed up with the false promises of so-called friends and others?

Real & Lasting

Are you also one who is seeking true love? One which changes not according to the situations of life, and does not depend on the Bank balance? A Love that is real and lasting and forgiving and understanding?

If yes, then God fulfils your desire and offers you everything you have sought and much more through His Son Jesus Christ. Will you please accept the invitation of God, and confess your need to Him who loves you, and is alive and waiting to cleanse, forgive and bless you?

I suggest you please take full advantage of the free gift of God, He certainly loves you, and you need His love to go through this life and the one to come. I am so glad to be an instrument in the hand of God to bring to your attention the amazing Love of God exhibited in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We will be happy to hear your response. We would also like to pray for you. Please feel free to communicate with us. God bless you

“It is natural to love them that love us, but it is supernatural to love them that hate us”.

Source: Unknown.

God with Us

 By Bro. Samuel Shinde, Chiplun

When we read Exodus, we see that while travelling to the Promised Land from Egypt, God wanted the children of Israel to be assured of His presence. For this reason, He commanded Moses to build a sanctuary. We read in Exodus 25:8, which says, “*And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them.*”

Israel's nature

We notice here that God desires to dwell with them, and not merely visit them. Considering the character of the children of Israel, they have always been ill-tempered and dissatisfied. We notice them murmuring and complaining against God and His servant Moses, most of the time. They complained about food and water in the wilderness in Exodus chapter 16.

In the following chapter, we see them complaining about the lack of water in Rephidim. In the book of Numbers chapter 11 we have them complaining in Taberah, and then crying for meat to be provided, because they were tired of the monotonous routine and eating manna. The discontentment of the whole congregation of Israel grew to an extent where they wished to die in Egypt or in the wilderness in

Numbers 14:2.

To this God reacted, “*How long shall I bear with this evil congregation who complain against Me?...*” (Num 14:27). This is how unsatisfied the children of Israel were with God and His servants Moses and Aaron. This shows their selfish sinful nature.

God's holiness

Considering the absolute holiness of God and the sinfulness of the children of Israel, it is a wonder how God could even think of coming down and dwelling among them!

Can we imagine a person who has lived a stable life and is privy to all luxuries and comforts, to be living in less suitable conditions where one is grown to get used to gut-wrenching stench and decrepit houses? No! Such a person won't even think of visiting let alone living there. Yet God stooped down to our position, stepped down to the dirt and lived amongst the utterly sinful mankind.

God's desire

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God with us

Once sin entered the world, mankind

fell short of enjoying direct fellowship with God. In Gen 3:9 He desired Adam's fellowship, however he sinned. During Israel's journey, God desired to be with them (Ex. 25:8), however, their complacency in sin led them to reject Him.

Ultimately, the Father sought out His lost sheep by sending the One, His own Son. Tabernacle reveals God's desire to dwell with man; and this desire was perfectly fulfilled through the Lord Jesus Christ, whom He named Immanuel, God with us! (Is 7:14; Matt 1:23)

Practical:

Divine Love

 By Enoch Reuben Muniah, Johannesburg

How does one define 'Divine Love'? Anything divine is considered deific, seraphic or angelic. Love may be described as deep affection, endearment or adulation. Love is expressed in many forms: fondness, infatuation, devotion and so on.

Divine Love is a concept whereby love from a higher spiritual source is shown to mankind in one form or another. It is a sacred love from a deity and as believers, we experience that love from God the Father. The scriptures teach us that God is love. That is the very essence, character and attribute of God. The apostle John in his first

epistle tells us, that God is love (1 Jn. 4:8). We are talking about the 'Agape' love of God.

Human Love

In the world of secularism, there is 'Phileo' the friendship kind of love between two persons. David and Jonathan were the best examples of such love. It is also the kind of love between parents and children.

Then there is the 'Eros' kind of love between two lovers. Eros was presumably a Greek god of love and fertility (Cupid) and Aphrodite was the Greek goddess of love and sex as was Venus the goddess of love and sex of the Romans and Diana of the Ephesians. At

times this 'erotic' love becomes erratic, if not neurotic, then tommyrotic and eventually chaotic.

But God's love fails not. It is love divine, all love excelling! I'd like us to look at Divine Love in three aspects viz: The love of the Father, the love of the Son and the love of the saints. We shall begin firstly with the love of the saints, then the love of the Son, followed by the love of the Father.

THE LOVE OF THE SAINTS

The apostle John again reminds us in the gospel of John to love one another; for love is of God (1 Jn. 4:7). The Lord Jesus tells us to love one another as I have loved you for by this shall all men know that you are my disciples if you have love one to another (Jn. 13:34 & 35). The Lord Jesus says it is a new commandment.

In the Greek context, it would be in the imperative mood. It is a command and is not optional. It is not surprising that the disciple 'whom Jesus loved' (i.e.: John) speaks so much of the Love of God. John, who loved the Lord so much that he leaned on Jesus' breast at the last supper (Jn. 21:7 & 20). We are called upon to exhibit that divine love of God both in our conduct and character.

John continues, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another" (1 Jn. 4:11). To us as the saints, His love is unquenchable (SoS. 8:7); His love is constraining (2 Cor. 5:14); His love is immutable, unchanging (Jn. 13:1); His love is indissoluble, an enduring love (Rom. 8:35).

THE LOVE OF THE SON

The love of Christ to the Father. "Because He hath set His love upon me, therefore will I deliver Him: I will set Him on high because he hath known my name" (Ps. 91:14). "But that the world may know that I love the Father" (Jn 14:31).

The love of the Son to the Church. Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it" (Eph. 5:25). As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love" (Jn. 15:9). The testimony of the Father, "this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17). The love of the Son is to those who love Him. "He that hath my commandments and keeps them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loves me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him" (Jn. 14:21).

THE LOVE OF THE FATHER

"Behold what love, Agape love, what boundless love, the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons (children) of God" (1 Jn. 3:1). What an awesome privilege to be called children of God. But there is also the prospect, that we shall be like Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is", (1 Jn. 3:2). Then, there is the purity of God's children. "And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure." (1 Jn. 3:3).

Pure in Thought – "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever

things are lovely, whatsoever thing are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Phil. 4:8).

Pure in Word. “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers” (Eph. 4:29).

Pure in Deed. “Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men’s sins: keep thyself pure” (1 Tim. 5:22).

Anecdote 1

Burning Snake



Once, a man saw a snake being burned to death and decided to take it out of the fire. When he did, the snake bit him. The bite caused unbearable pain. The man dropped the snake, and the reptile fell right back into the fire. The man tried to pull it out again, and again, the snake bit him.

Someone who was watching approached

the man and said: ‘Excuse me, but don’t you understand that every time you try to get the snake out of the fire, it will bite you? Why are you being stubborn?’

The man replied: ‘The nature of the snake is to bite, but that’s not gonna change my nature, which is to help’

Source: KindSpring

Church that Loves

A few years ago, a little boy attended a Sunday school I know of in Chicago. When his parents moved to another part of the city, the little fellow still attended the same Sunday school, although it meant a long, tiresome walk each way. A friend asked him why he went so far and told him that there were plenty of others just as good nearer his home.

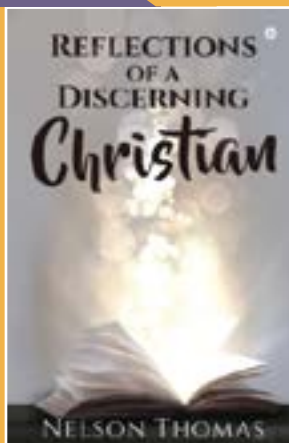
“They may be as good for others, but not for me,” was his reply.

“Why not?” she asked.

“Because they love a fellow over there,” he answered.

Source: Moody’s Anecdotes

MRP 270 /-



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