

LOVE SPIRALS

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INTRODUCTION

A. Dimensions of personal life

1. Vertical:

revelation incarnation Holy Spirit	↓	+	↑	worship service
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2. Horizontal: social relations, weaker brother relationships, church, home
3. Personal

Experiencing the horizontal helps us understand the vertical;
understanding the vertical motivates us to do the horizontal.

B. Concept of interpersonal relationship

1. Reciprocation (*e.g.*, feedback between a guitar and amplifier)
 - a. Degree The reciprocal process forms a spiral, not a circle; the process comes around to the first person at a higher level than where it began.
 - b. Time It takes time to change.
2. Influence (*vs.* force or determinism)

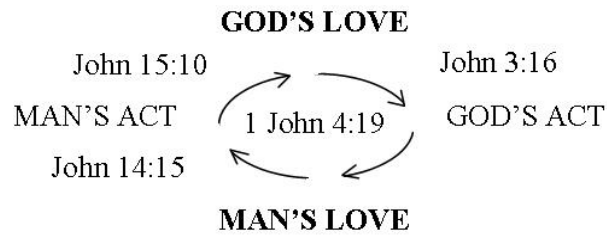
Biblical love means influence (not cause) plus reciprocation (not the domino effect only).

- C. Method of Bible study to get at this idea: topical study by using a concordance on the word *love*.

I. GOD-TO-MAN LOVE SPIRAL

A. Pattern of the relationship

John 3:16: “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son.”
 John 14:15: “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”
 John 15:10: “If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love.”
 1 John 4:19: “We love because he first loved us.”



What is true of the love-give-love cycle is likewise true of the love-forgive-love cycle. Luke 7:47: (a) Who loves much is forgiven much; (b) “*who is forgiven much loves much.*” Note the two ways of reading James 5:19-20; 1 Peter 4:8; Proverbs 10:12; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. “*Love covers a multitude of sins.*” Does it mean a loving person tends to overlook the sins of others? Does it mean people tend to overlook the sins of a loving person? Who is doing the loving—the forgiver or the forgiven?

B. Application

1. Love provided the context for redemption.
Love motivated the atonement: John 3:16.
2. Love establishes the character of our relationship to God.
 - a. Changes fear to love: “*This is love—that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous*” (1 John 5:3).
 - b. Changes meanness to discipline: “*As many as I love I reprove and discipline*” (Revelation 3:10; cp. Proverbs 3:3-5).
3. Love shows the justice of God’s condemnation.

Rebuffed love is condemned on all hands.
4. Love avoids the specter of a self-centered God.

The reason for the creation was “*to the praise of (the glory of) his grace*”: Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14. God gets his glory from the praise and gratitude of those to whom he has first given of himself.

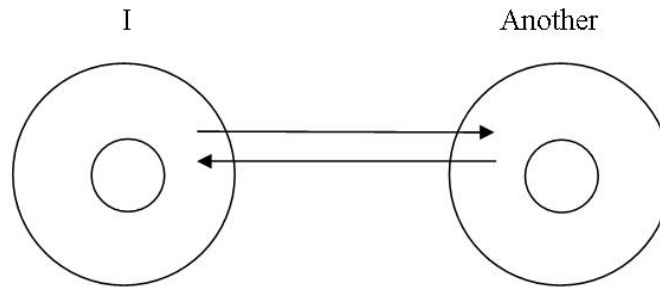
What avoids self-centeredness in God provides the model for avoiding self-centeredness in people. The vertical and the horizontal have the same features: interpersonal acts and processes. Vertical and horizontal relationships are never separate. In fact, many of God’s blessings to other people are channeled through us.

II. MAN-TO-MAN LOVE SPIRAL

A. Pattern of the relationship

Golden Rule: Matthew 7:12

First Great Commandment: Matthew 22:39-40



B. Application

1. Sets the pattern for expressing love (defines love):

responsible caring, intelligent good will, acceptance, mutual respect, self-giving for the joy of others.

People may be afraid to love because they fear getting run over, being made a doormat, being made into a zero, being taken advantage of. They become assertive as in being aggressive.

a. Letting people take advantage of us is not being loving; it is not good for them. We stand up for ourselves because we love them, not because we are being assertive.

b. Part of the answer to this perceived problem is that love tends to beget love (instead of running over). In fact, unreturned love is the height of sin. (The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant.)

2. Demonstrates how to reverse the downward spiral of deteriorating relationships.

Reversing the spiral is by an act of love in response to evil—turning the other cheek.

God's not returning in kind to us moves us to do the same thing to others. Jesus chose healing miracles to win the right to be heard about the gospel. A soft answer turns away wrath (Proverbs 15:1).

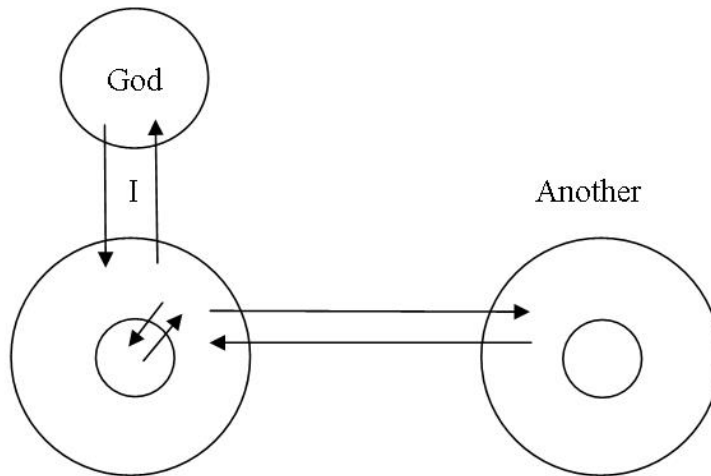
3. Provides the atmosphere for evangelism and ministry.

"The love of Christ constrains us" (2 Corinthians 5:14).

III. PERSONAL GROWTH SPIRAL

A. Pattern

Personal growth takes place in the give-and-take of vertical and horizontal personal interaction. Growth is a product of those reciprocating patterns.



B. Application

1 Corinthians **13:5**: *"Love is not easily provoked"* (self-control).

1 John **4:18**: *"Love casts out fear"* (security).

Most virtues are somehow connected to love in scripture.

CONCLUSION: THE PRIMACY OF LOVE

1. The amount of material about love in the Bible
2. The fact that it fulfills the Law: Matthew **22:34-40**; Galatians **5:13-14**; Romans **13:8-10**. Love helps us know what to do and moves us to do it.
3. How inclusive it is

total person: mind, will, action, feelings

total virtues: the number of virtues associated with love

All personal processes involve love, whether vertical, horizontal, or internal.

4. How longstanding it is: *"love never fails"* (1 Corinthians **13:8**)
5. Its relative importance

More important than knowledge: *"Knowledge puffs up; love builds up"* (1 Corinthians **8:1**).

More important than supernatural gifts (1 Corinthians **12:31**). It is good to

desire gifts, but it is better to love people.
Greater than faith and hope: 1 Corinthians **13:13**

6. How often we can call on it to solve problems

The use of supernatural gifts: 1 Corinthians **12-14**
Relationship with weaker brothers: 1 Corinthians **8** (meat); Romans **14:15**

7. What it is called

The Great Commandment: Matthew **22:34-40**
The Royal Law: James **2:8**
The Golden Rule: Matthew **7:12**
The Law of Christ: Galatians **6:2**

8. What it produces

Love causes us to overlook faults in others if we love them; love causes us to overlook faults in other people if they are loving people; so it is especially good when we loving persons overlook the faults of loving persons. Love for others can even cause us to overcome our own faults so we will not be harming them.

Luke **7:47** points out that the sinful woman's sins were forgiven "*because she loved much.*"

CONCLUSION

Basic Christianity is summed up in the one word *love*.

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