



How To Love When Your Unloved!

- I. Tough Love _____! (vv.43-44)
- II. Tangible Love _____! (vv.44-45)
- III. True Love _____! (vv.46-48)

CONCLUSION

We move from a "rules" relationship with God to one marked by learning intimacy with Him and the majesty of His love.

We grow in understanding our identity in Christ and live in that reality.

We see God reveal the hidden motivations of our heart and our "false self."

We can refuse God's invitations by not addressing the unredeemed aspects of ourselves and refuse to let go of idols of the heart.

We can be tempted to ignore the need for a deeper soul examination before God to allow Him to reveal where we are refusing to grow.

We suffer as painful circumstances emerge that invite us to consider doing our life with God differently.

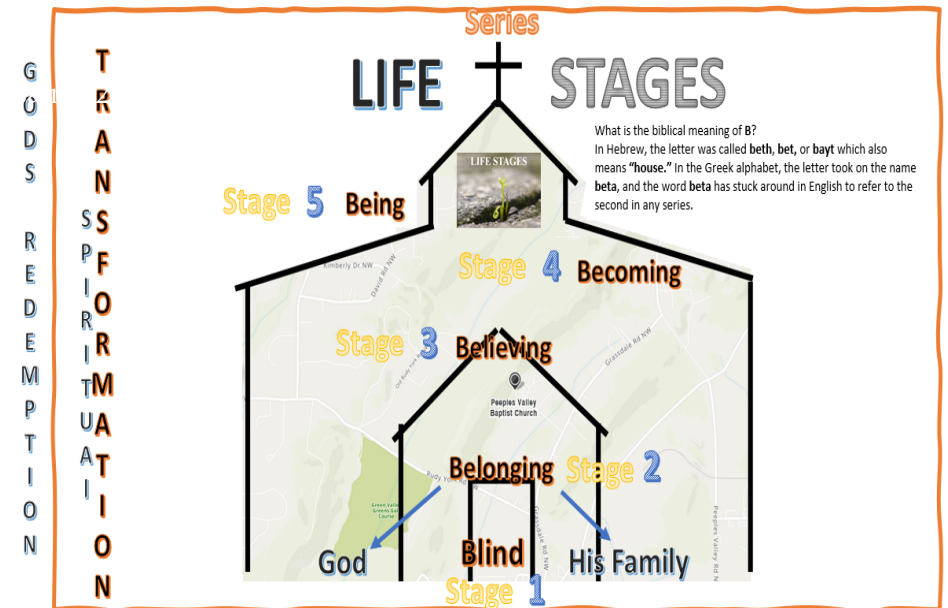
How can I allow God to grow in me a greater capacity to abide in Him and be released from the striving of my **false self**?

1. Identified, 2. Invested, 3. Intensified



**PEEPLS VALLEY
BAPTIST CHURCH**
Together we are becoming!
One Spirit

Stage Three: Persevering Love
[Invitation To Intimacy]
Psalms 27:2,4; Matthew 5:43-48
July 10, 2022 / 11Tammuz 5782



Psalm 27:2, 4 (KJV)

² When the wicked, *even* mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. ⁴ *One thing* have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.

Matthew 5:43-48 (KJV) to love even our enemies

43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. **44** But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless

them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; **45** That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. **46** For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? **47** And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? **48** Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

INTRODUCTION:

The journey up to this point has been fairly straightforward.

We have encountered God's love, and we follow the guidebook of the Scriptures; we pray, we serve, we love. It all seems pretty clear. We have developed a certain "comfortableness" in our walk with God that seems to work. We want to please Him by doing what is right and following His commandments. Our faith, for the most part, is one of living from the outside in rather than the inside out. God is not wanting a "quick pro quo" relationship, wherein He does His part and we do ours, based on some unspoken working agreement.

The life with Christ is not merely about **correcting our bad habits** but **about meeting and satisfying our deepest ongoing**; that is, **for a deeply satisfying love and connection with God.**

But the journey with Christ, like any journey, has unexpected sharp turns, rocky places, and detours on the path. Just when we think we are making progress, **we encounter a bend in the road.**

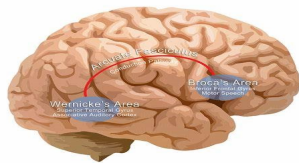
Stage Three is that **bend in the road**. Things start happening in our life that we had not expected.

We may lose our job or a child is diagnosed with a chronic illness or a close friend passes away. Or perhaps it is something far more elusive like a sense of spiritual boredom or apathy.

Life with Christ no longer seems predictable. That's because God loves us too much to allow us to stay in our places of comfortableness and control.

He desires to help us gain an eternal perspective ... to see things through His eyes.

In **Stage Three**, God is inviting us to **a deeper knowing of Him** and **a deeper knowing of ourselves.**



Dieter Zander was a rising star among pastors in America. He pioneered one of the first Gen X churches in America in the 1980's. Then he developed "Axis," a ministry for the "Baby Busters" at Willowcreek Community Church in Barrington, Illinois, where I grew up. On the wings of all his great success he moved to San Francisco to help pastors and ministry leaders re-think church ministry, especially to the younger generation. Sometime around 1995 on one of my trips from Southern California to visit my family in Chicago I went to Willow Creek and saw **Dieter** perform at the piano and pulpit to hundreds of twenty-somethings, including my younger twin brothers. I couldn't believe it when I walked into the sanctuary! The energy in the room nearly knocked me off my feet! It was loud! I felt the music pounding in my body. And the message from **Dieter** brought cheers from the crowd.

I could see why **Dieter** was in such demand as a musician, speaker, and author. It seemed that everyone wanted to listen to him perform and to hear what he had to say.

A Stroke of Grace

*But then **Dieter Zander** suffered a major stroke and went into a coma on **February 4, 2008**. Six days later he awoke as a different man.*

- ✦ **His crippled right hand couldn't play the piano.**
- ✦ **He couldn't sing.**
- ✦ **He couldn't even speak — except very slowly and painfully to mumble a stuttering string of unrelated words.**
- ✦

Dieter's stage was gone.

The applause he thrived on was gone.

The opportunity to use his talents and earn a living were gone.

Gone. It seemed everything was *all gone*.

Yet, inside **Dieter** was still the same person.

His brilliant and creative mind was completely in tact.

He had the same emotions, the same sense of humor, the same wit and eloquence, but he had a bungling mouth

It tired people out trying to understand him. One-by-one they went away.

Isolation set in. He was sealed off from the rest of the world behind the wall that is called Aphasia. My kingdom used to be a stage. A microphone. A piano, and an audience of thousands. My kingdom was a performance. A show. A sham.

Then came the stroke. Now, five days a week, I arrive at Trader Joe's in the early dark, hours before the sun cracks the horizon.

I push my mop up and down aisles, sweep my broom into corners to collect the debris from the day before. The store is quiet, empty. There is one audience in this kingdom.

But that's ok, because I'm not performing. There is no Stage Dieter here.

No superman seeking to wow the masses with feats of spiritual strength.

I'm just me. Just Dieter. The guy who mops the floor, who bales the empty cardboard boxes for recycling, who delivers the spoils to the Salvation Army.