

Character Comes *Through*

1. Where does character come from? Where does love or perseverance or joy or any of the spiritual virtues come from?
2. Love, or any other godly trait, doesn't come *from* you. It comes *through* you.
 - a. God is the Source of love. He wants his love to flow through you.
 - b. **1 John 4:7** *"Let us love one another, for love comes from God."*
 - c. Love originates with God. We are the channel, the conduit.
3. The good news for pastors, or brides and grooms taking vows of love, is that love, joy, peace, patience, etc.... are from God.
 - a. Now and for the rest of your life you don't have to manufacture them.
 - b. There are times when we think we have run out of love. "I just don't have any love left to give." "I have run out of patience." "I just don't have the strength to go on."
 - c. In light of these moments we need to be reminded that we didn't run out of love, we never had any to begin with!
4. The good news is that God is love. The Source is inexhaustible as ever.

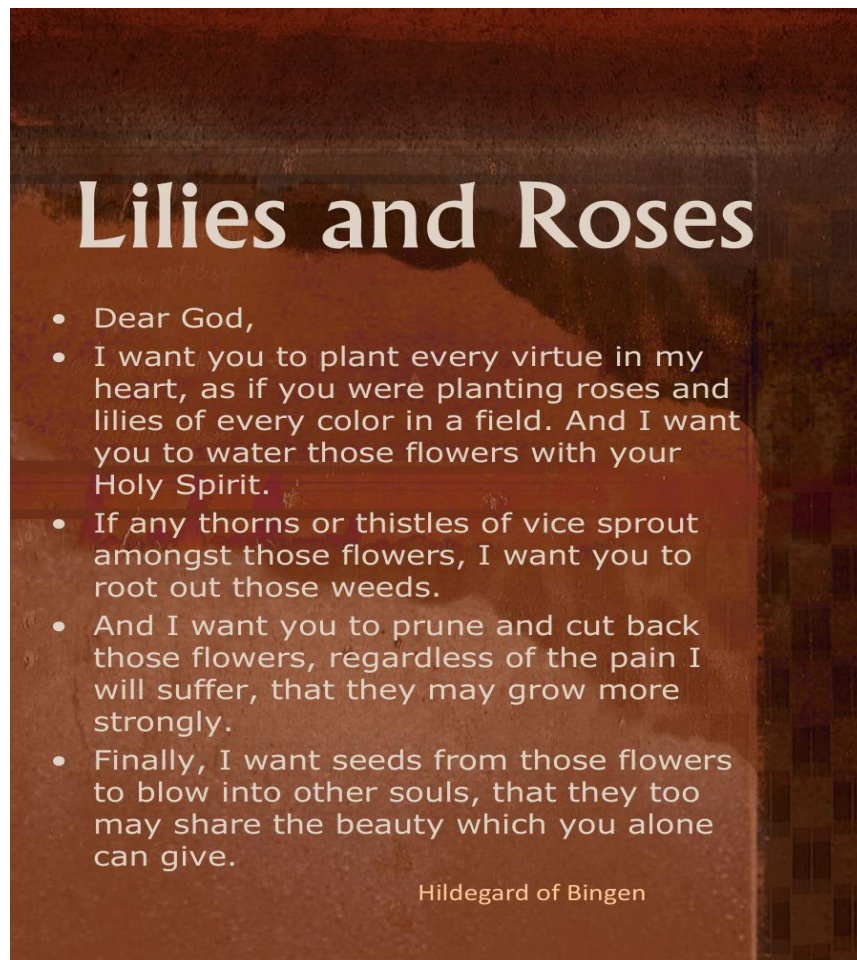
Revelation 3:18 (NIV) *I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.*

- a. It is to him we must go to buy "gold refined in the fire." All **spiritual value** comes from God.
- b. It is to him we must go to buy "white garments" to cover the "shame of our nakedness." All **spiritual virtue** comes from God.
- c. It is to him we must go to buy "eye salve to anoint our eyes, that we might see." All **spiritual vision** comes from God.

5. Our task is not to produce love but to pass it along. Not to generate it, but to stay connected to the Source and to be a channel for the love and other spiritual resources that you have received from God.

1 John 4:10-12 *“This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so love us, we also ought to love one another....if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.”*

- a. By being the conduit connecting God’s love and strength and power to others, God’s love is made complete. What a privilege!
6. Character happens as we stay connected to the Source and let his love flow through us to others. Truly, character comes *through!*



The Unitive Life: *Reflections on Spiritual Maturity*

These books represent a small sample of contemplative writings of the church which have wielded important influence over the development of Christian doctrine. Many of these authors have written several books which have been valuable to my pursuit of intimacy with God and the development of my devotional contact and experience of God. My teaching on the Unitive Life is derived from these works.

Prayer	Hans Urs von Balthasar
Practical Mysticism	Evelyn Underhill
Radical Optimism	Beatrice Bruteau
A Testament of Devotion	Thomas Kelly
The Ascent to Truth	Thomas Merton
The Inner Christ	John Main
The Seeking Heart	Francios de Fenelon
Mysticism	Evelyn Underhill
The Big Book of Christian Mysticism	Carl McColman
The Final Stages of Christian Maturity	Jeanne Guyon
The Interior Castle	St. Teresa of Avila
The Divine Milieu	Pierre Teilhard de Chardin
Final Steps in Christian Maturity	Jeanne Guyon
Self-Abandonment to Divine Providence	Jean-Pierre De Caussade
An Anthology of Devotional Literature	Thomas S. Kepler
Deification in Christ	Panayiotis Nellas
The Spiritual Guide	Michael Molinos
Institutes	John Cassian
On Loving Goal	Bernard of Clairvaux
The Book of Divine Works	Hildegard of Bingen
The Fire of Love	Richard Rolle
The Cloud of Unknowing	(Unknown author)
The Imitation of Christ	Thomas a' Kempis
Revelation of Love	Julian of Norwich
The Dark Night of the Soul	John of the Cross

Abiding Intimacy

- a. Relationship with God moves from personal to intimate to organic
- b. John 15:5 (Message) I am the Vine, you are the branches. When you are joined with me and I with you, the relation intimate and organic, the harvest is sure to be abundant.
- c. Organic life with God is characterized by:
 - Rest
 - Trust
 - Surrender
 - Awareness
 - Simplicity
 - Lack of striving
 - Seeing, not trying to believe
 - Praying, not trying to pray

United will

- a. You want what God wants

Seeing deeply and clearly

- a. Life becomes more transparent. Awareness of God is continual. Depth of insight into self and others increases

A source of divine life to others

- a. All of your life becomes a revelation. The fruit of the Spirit are produced in bumper crop

Procreative power

- a. In your divine assignments others are impregnated with the Holy Seed