



The Flame

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from GCCN Prayer Ministries

The Prism of Narcissism

It's February and all of a sudden we are under attack by a chubby little cherub brandishing a bow and some arrows. The threat seems to be something about arrows that infect us with fits of *el amor*.

Overall cupid seems to have little difficulty finding rather unresisting targets. Few of us are on guard against the blinding luster of love. Falling under its power seldom generates anything short of an involuntary outbreak of face-splitting smiles.

We are incurable romantics, aren't we? No subject or theme has ever dominated the human penchant for storytelling more than narratives of love.

The common perspectives of love, however, leave something to be desired. Marriage is either increasingly considered passé or little more than an amorous trial run at commitment. What used to be labeled as lust has mistakenly morphed into love. Yet in spite of all the tendency toward the slippery slope of moral decay, the vast majority enter into loving relationships with clear intentions to embrace fidelity.

Perhaps our understanding of love has suffered more from the increasing narcissism in our culture than anything else. Self-absorption that used to surge in adolescence seems to outlive our teen years and thoroughly become entrenched in adult years. Relationships are weakened by the intrusion of self-centered and self-serving agendas.

Self-focus can even threaten the nature of our relationship with God. The adolescent believer who cooperates with the Spirit's influence can reach spiritual maturity, but the latent life-style of serving self-interests all too often interferes with the prompting of the Spirit to grow in grace.

As the expression of our relationship with God, prayer can and often does remain distorted. If my relationship with God is all about what I need and want, it is skewed. Our focus must be centered on Him. If it is not then prayer "will inevitably be task-oriented and too easily become preoccupied with how much and how well, questions that are self-centered, not God-centered" (from *Connected! Unlocking the DNA of Authentic Prayer*, p. 9).

Taking Your Next Step

The choice to put yourself under the canopy of God's authority (see *The Flame*, issue 7) is the first step in shifting the focus of your life. As you pray, seek the work of the Spirit to lead you more and more into a maturity that redefines your relationship with God.

Maturity is a pursuit from which we do not graduate in this lifetime. With each passing day, declare Him as Lord and embrace the perspective of John 3:30: "He must become greater; I must become less."