

# PARADIGM MINISTRIES

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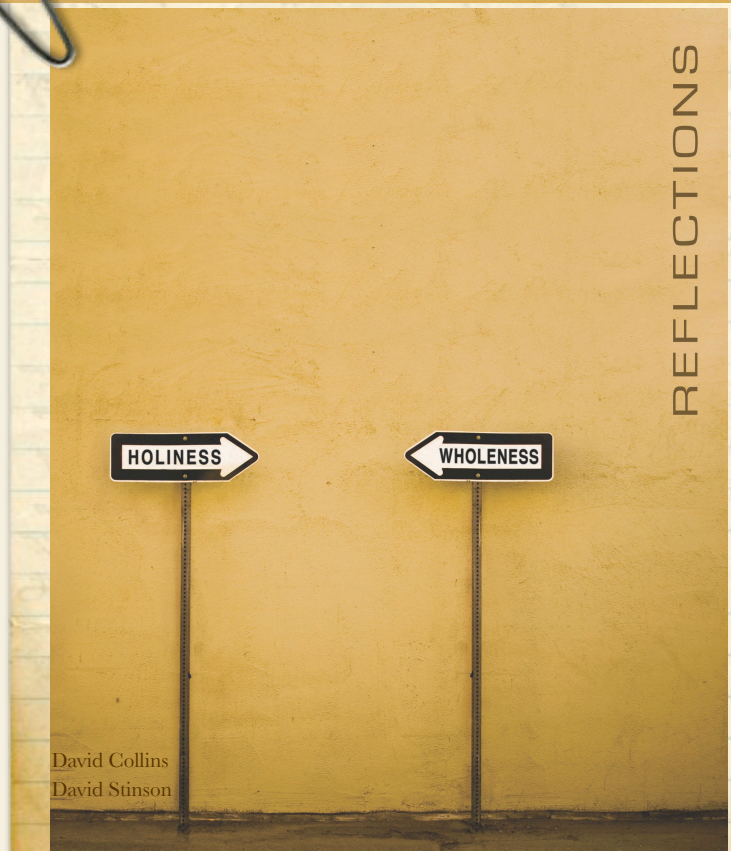
## Humanity's Value Affirmed Because Christ Became Human

The intrinsic value of humanity has traditionally rested upon the Genesis account; God created us in his image. We were set apart from every other created being. Yet strangely, that has not caused us to cherish that uniqueness. In reality we have miserably failed to live the second greatest command of "loving our neighbour as ourselves." Why?

At a specific time in history, God entered his own creation as one of his own; a man. He took on a very specific manner that challenged the concept that form is superior to motive. He challenged the definitions that justified discrimination while entering into relationships that were considered improper. In associating with outcasts (both moral and physical), he elevated their significance. He challenged our understanding of entitlement by picking up a towel and washing feet; by eating with tax collectors; by allowing a prostitute to touch and anoint him. (John 1)

In so doing, Jesus elevated being human to a point of great worth. All were worthy of receiving his love. Their behaviour was not necessarily condoned but each was so valuable that they were sought out and elevated. They were given a glimpse of how God actually saw,

Finally a resource that both informs and guides us through the examination of our deepest convictions about God. This workbook helps to bridge the gap between knowing something and being convinced of it. Knowing is head knowledge, believing is heart knowledge and conviction is the two combined in action. *Reflections on Holiness and Wholeness* provides us with a sacred space to discover some missing pieces in how we perceive life. Through teaching and reflection, we are given the opportunity to look honestly at our beliefs, and to allow the Holy Spirit to guide us toward convictions that shape our lifestyle to reflect the longings of His heart.



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them. They suddenly were not seen only through the lens of their conduct. They now were recognized as being so valued, that God himself declared it by his presence. He reached out to them, touched them, loved them, wept for them, challenged them, taught them, served them, defended them and ultimately - died for them.

This event exposes flaws in our interpretation of what God desires. We have moved from loving people to trying to save people as God's primary mandate. It is possible to evangelize people without loving them. It is not possible to love people without witnessing to them of what God has done for you and for them. By elevating evangelism above love, we have made it possible to share our faith without the necessity of our need to also love the individual regardless of their condition.

The danger lies in our misunderstanding of the mandate to love. Many view love as a soft thing. We see it as an emotion that tolerates the intolerable; that does not take a stand against evil.

The love God speaks of, on the other hand, is the strongest of all emotions. It is more powerful than hate. In fact, it is the only emotion that can overcome all others. It is not naive. It is not subjective. It is a very intentional decision to give

support and affirmation to a person whether they deserve it or not. (1 Corinthians 13)

When we place the mandate of evangelism ahead of the mandate to love, our loving becomes vulnerable to the individual's response to our message. If they disregard our message, people are quickly categorized. In truth we have placed them, at best, in the category of unresponsive and, at worst, we alienate or attack them because we see them as dangerous. We have become accustomed to being the determining judge of who is acceptable to associate with and who is not based on lifestyle. Even discussing this issue causes some to question the writer's commitment to evangelism and the Great Commission.

In light of this, how have we been able to justify adopting patterns that are very similar to the ones that Jesus himself seemed to rail against? Is it not dangerous ground to think of ourselves as more righteous than another - any other human being?

I have seen much "unrighteousness" in my lifetime. I have witnessed genocide, looked into the eyes of individuals who have dismembered neighbours and I have wrestled with the emotions that rose up within me. Yet is my first response to be directed towards the behavioural sin or towards the value

of the person? This same type of person may have hung on a cross beside the incarnate God. Jesus' response to him was not based on what he had done, but rather, on what he longed for, to have peace with God. Stating these truths does not negate the need for justice. It simply removes the foundation for self-righteousness.

To that end Christ came, as a baby dependent upon his mother. He grew in both wisdom and stature. Motivated by his love for each person, he took on the form of a servant and humbled himself to the point of dying a criminal's death. Should we live any differently?

We rarely see people soften to the love of God as long as they are attacked for all the wrong that they do. Jesus did not waste time fighting symptoms. Rather he focused on root causes. He revealed the lust for power, greed, arrogant self-righteousness and an elevation of one's own importance above the value of another human being, regardless of their state.

Jesus' incarnation was an invitation to step out of the building and be the Church. (Matthew 25)



For further study on this topic read [Kissing The Leper](#) by Brad Jersak

**For a great read or great stocking stuffer see Reflections (Pg.1)**