

Sensible Giving (or *That's a Lot of Bull*)

I Kings 8

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Several years ago I took my father and a friend to Tijuana, Mexico. Soon my youth group from Bel Air Presbyterian would be building homes for the poor who lived in the abandoned city dump. For \$1,000 we could build a home for a family of twelve who had previously lived under cardboard or old tires.

I remember meeting a lady who had just given birth under a piece of carpet slung over a rope in the midst of the dump on a hillside.

I remember toddlers drinking from greasy pools of standing water in the midst of garbage.

On our way back from the Tijuana dump, we drove by the Crystal Cathedral in California and went on a tour. The tour guide showed us the organ. I can't remember the specs, but it was something like the most expensive organ in the United States. *Just extravagant.*

With the dump on my mind and staring at the organ, this lady said, "But, of course, it isn't *our* organ. It belongs to Jesus."

I grew indignant. I had done the math, and I wanted to scream, "Jesus doesn't *need* a pipe organ! This organ could be sold, and you could build 1,000 homes for the poor only 100 miles from this spot!"

This Friday night you're all invited to "dinner and dancing" at the Adam's Mark Hotel. It's the culmination of our giving campaign, when we'll give our sacrifices and offerings to the Lord.

Well, maybe you've done the math, and the Adam's Mark seems a bit extravagant. It's easy to ask, "Is dinner and dancing at the Adam's Mark the best utilization of our church's limited resources? How many homes could be built in Tijuana with that money? Are we being good stewards?"

When Americans talk about "good stewardship," they usually mean by that "the safe and sensible utilization of limited resources." They mean "utilitarian giving."

Utilitarianism is a product of the Enlightenment, popularized by Jeremy Bentham at the end of the 18th century, and then by John Stuart Mill at the end of the 19th century. In Utilitarianism, Mill writes:

The creed which accepts as the foundation of morals "utility" or the "greatest happiness principle" holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness;

wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure and the absence of pain; by unhappiness pain and the privation of pleasure.

Therefore, “good giving” is what I calculate to produce the greatest pleasure and least pain with the limited resources with which I give.

In the words of the Encyclopedia Britannica, “Utilitarians focus on the consequences of an act rather than on its intrinsic nature or the motives of the agent”

Well, the folks who put this giving campaign together thought we should find a place where we could all meet at once and celebrate. This building was too small. One of those people also suggested that I preach on Solomon’s dedication of the temple in I Kings 8.

I realize this building is not the temple, but David and Solomon did have a very successful building campaign. And David and Solomon are both Old Testament pictures of Jesus, and no one was ever a better steward than Jesus.

So let’s read I Kings 8. The temple is already built, and the priests bring up the Ark of the Covenant.

Verse 5: King Solomon, and all the congregation of Israel who were assembled with him, were with him before the ark, sacrificing sheep and oxen that could not be counted or numbered for multitude.

As they’re bringing the Ark to the temple, Solomon sacrifices so many oxen and sheep that they lose count! He just kills them . . . sacrifices them! Seems a bit wasteful and rather extravagant. It’s probably a genetic disorder inherited from his father David. Remember that David got so carried away when they brought the Ark into Jerusalem, he stripped to his underwear and danced.

Utterly inappropriate,
uncalled for, and
extravagant.

Well, in I Kings 8 they place the Ark in the brand new temple. And the glory of the Lord descends as a cloud *so thick* the priests can’t stand. Solomon gives a speech and then offers an incredible prayer.

Verse 62: Then the king and all Israel with him offered sacrifices before the LORD. And Solomon offered a sacrifice of peace offerings, which he offered to the LORD, twenty-two thousand bulls and one hundred and twenty thousand sheep. So the king and all the children of Israel dedicated the house of the LORD.

On the same day the king consecrated the middle of the court that was in front of the house of the LORD; for there he offered burnt offerings, grain offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings,

because the bronze altar that was before the LORD was too small to receive the burnt offerings, the grain offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings.

At that time Solomon held a feast, and all Israel with him, a great assembly from the entrance of Hamath to the Brook of Egypt, before the LORD our God, seven days and seven more days--fourteen days. On the eighth day he sent the people away; and they blessed the king, and went to their tents joyful and glad of heart for all the good that the LORD had done for His servant David, and for Israel His people.

But they had just lost 22,000 cattle and 122,000 sheep.

That's quite a story.

The building is already built;
The temple is already built;
God is already present;
They are already within the covenant.

God is not requiring this of them, and most of them probably live in conditions that make the slums of Tijuana look good. And what do they *do*? They sacrifice 22,000 bulls and 122,000 sheep. And that's just the peace offering! And they're *happy*?

My assistant Stephanie called the Iowa Beef Processors, and together we calculated that 22,000 bulls is 16.5 million pounds of steak. And I know what you utilitarians are thinking: "That's a lot of bull!" Yes, it is . . . not to mention 12 million pounds of mutton.

And remember, a bull or an ox was not a hobby to these people. It was a livelihood . . . like a tractor to a farmer. It was food for a year; it was transportation.

If we gave like that, we would all show up at church with brand new, top of the line BMW's and drive them off a cliff while we danced for joy. And I bet you might comment, "Why are we doing this? What's it good for? What does this accomplish? This is a bit extravagant!"

The burnt offerings were entirely consumed on the altar. Nobody ate them, nobody used them . . . "What's it good for?" Well, Scripture says it smells good to God — fragrant. It's also accepted as atonement.

But that doesn't make much sense to the utilitarian. "Why must a bull die?"

The peace or communion offering was sacrificed on the ashes of the burnt offering after atonement was made. It's never really said what it accomplished . . . what it was good for. It just smelled good to God. And unlike the *burnt* offering, the meat is to be eaten joyfully by priests and worshippers in the presence of the Lord: a Banquet of Communion.

Twenty-two thousand bulls and 122,000 sheep would require twenty sacrifices a minute for ten hours a day for twelve days. No wonder Solomon consecrated the courtyard for sacrifice! There

would have literally been a river of blood mixed with fragrant oil and wine (from the rituals of the grain and burnt offerings).

A literal river of blood, wine, and fragrant oil, that would flow from this communion banquet on the temple mount, down the Kidron Valley, all the way to the Valley of Hinnom, that is Gehenna, or as it is often translated in the English Bible, *Hell*.

Now what's the purpose of *that*? They didn't know. They were lost in this furiously ecstatic revelry of wild, extravagant giving. *So* extravagant it terrifies us.

And we modern, utilitarian Christians think:

Golly, I'm glad that temple was destroyed. I'm glad we're in the New Covenant and I don't have to go wading in a river of blood, wine, and oil. What was God *thinking* about?

Does He not know that 30 million pounds of steak and mutton, plus all that grain, wine, and oil, could be sold for 100 million bucks! That's a lot of homes in Tijuana or Israel! That's like 625,000 denarii! *Extravagant*.

But Jesus isn't like that, right? No more temple; no more sacrifice; no more blood, wine, and oil.

Remember John 12, a week before Jesus is crucified. He has no place to lay His head. He is a friend of the sick, poor, and wretched. But He goes to a banquet at Lazarus' home. At supper Mary takes a pound of fragrant oil and pours it on Jesus, rubbing His feet with her hair. It is worth 300 denarii — a year's wage.

It must have soaked into Jesus' skin and clothing as the fragrance filled the house. And what was it good for?

You know, some of my favorite gifts are good for nothing. They're just *good*. I've kept a \$20 bill on my desk now for a year. I'll probably never spend it. It's paper-clipped to a note that says, "I love you. Please keep it. IOU. You keep me alive. -Elizabeth"

My daughter gave me the \$20 bill in Nevada last summer on vacation after I got a ticket for speeding. It was her *vacation money* . . . utterly extravagant, and she gave it to me. I didn't need it, and I won't use it. So technically it's good for nothing . . . it's *just good*, so I'll cherish it forever.

Later that week after the supper at Lazarus' house, Jesus hung alone on a cross bearing the sin of a fallen world. And there was a good chance He could smell Mary's perfume. What was it good for? Well, it was just good. It smelled good to God.

It was Judas who spoke up at the banquet and said, “Why was this oil not sold for 300 denarii and given to the poor?” (“This he said not because he loved the poor but because he was a thief.”) He was a utilitarian or a thief . . . or maybe both.

I was *indignant* at the Crystal Cathedral, probably not so much because I loved the poor, but because I loved my own glory, and often I steal it. I was a “better Christian,” and never mind what I spent on my bride, taking her to dinner and dancing to fine music.

Well, Judas was literally a thief, which is strange because he was traveling with Jesus.

Jesus could get coins out of the mouth of fish. Didn't Judas believe?

Jesus could turn water into fine wine. Didn't Judas want some of Jesus' wine?

Jesus could turn five loaves and two fish into a banquet.

Even though Jesus was poor and had no place to lay his head, it appears that limited resources were never a problem for Him.

Limited cattle or limited sheep were not a problem for the God of Israel. “He owns the cattle on a thousand hills.” And if Israel sacrificed them *all*, He could make 22,000 more with a Word.

A utilitarian looks at five loaves and two fish, does the calculations, and says, “No way. I can't give.” But if God is involved, all our calculations and limited resources are just shot to Hell.

In Jesus' story the good steward is not the *safe* steward but the *risky* steward who invests everything. It appears the issue isn't limited resources or limited returns but limited hearts.

We rich Americans have almost unlimited resources (by world standards), but we have very limited hearts. To be rich and not give to your neighbor in need means that your heart is so limited that perhaps it's dead. And how could the love of God be in you (I John 3:17)?

But still the issue isn't limited resources but limited hearts . . . hearts that don't believe, don't trust, don't love.

And maybe “the good” isn't simply maximum pleasure and minimum pain. Maybe we don't know real pleasure. Maybe we can't calculate “the good,” but we can know Him.

That night at the banquet Jesus turned to Judas and said, “Judas, let her alone. She's kept this for the day of my burial.”

Mary anointed Jesus with fragrant oil the way the priest would anoint the grain offerings in the temple. At His Great Banquet Jesus took wine and said, “This is the new covenant in my blood.” He took grain—bread—and said, “This is my body given for you.” In the morning His body *was* broken, bruised, and crucified.

Utilitarians ask:

Why? What's it good for? Couldn't God make atonement another way? Why the thirty-nine lashes? Why the thorns? Why the ridicule? Why the suffering? If He had to die, why not just slit His throat?

There are theological camps that argue over the necessity and utility of the atonement and Christ's sufferings. Strangely, it's a rather moot point, whether or not God *had* to do it, for He *wanted* to do it. It pleased Him to give.

Isaiah 53: "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him . . . when He makes His soul an offering for sin . . ."

Colossians 1:19: "It was God's pleasure to be in Christ, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things . . . making peace by the blood of His cross." Christ is the peace offering for all things.

In the mystery of the Trinity it's clear the cross hurt like Hell. But it was God's pleasure . . . pain, pleasure, and absolute good.

All things pass through Jesus on the cross where He died. It is an absolutely and thoroughly extravagant gift. At the cross there was no price God did not pay.

And the pain and pleasure, sorrow and love, blood and wine, tears and fragrant oil: they flow mingled down, forming a river that flows from the temple all the way to Gehenna. So extravagant . . . it terrifies us.

Utilitarians have a hard time with the cross.

It doesn't make sense . . .
but it is romantic.

Utilitarians may make good businessmen . . .
but lousy lovers.

Recently I was thumbing through my old copy of John Stuart Mills' Utilitarianism from ethics class at CU: Pages and pages of big words on how to calculate the good through the principle of utility. On page 8 I found this [Exhibit A]. It seems I cracked while studying, and even though it served no utilitarian function, I scrawled across the page:

I love my girlfriend
I love my fiancé
Susan Coleman
as of Friday night (tomorrow)

Why did I do that? And was it wrong of me? The ink could have been used for writing checks to homeless shelters!

Well, that following night I gave my bride a ring. It served no utilitarian function. She had already said she'd marry me. Was it wrong of me? That money could have been used to build a home in Mexico!

I'm usually very utilitarian, so giving is dull and mechanical for me. I spend a lot of time calculating how much I am required to give. "Is it 10%? Is that *before* or *after* taxes?"

The day I bought the ring, I was totally non-utilitarian. I had been driving through downtown Denver in my '67 Mustang with two 20-amp coaxial speakers mounted in the back deck, powered by a Pioneer stereo and auxiliary power booster. The volume was extravagant. Over and over I listened to REO Speedwagon scream, "Don't let her go!"

When I arrived at Ken Mark Jewelers on 16th Street, adrenaline coursed through my veins. My life flashed before my eyes. It wasn't just *money*; it was my *life*.

I once told you how Harry the jeweler began showing me diamonds. (Diamonds are just crystallized carbon. These diamonds served no practical utilitarian purpose. But I wanted one.) Some stones were impossible for me to buy. Others were too *inexpensive*, and I wanted to pay *more*. I tried to stay calm, but I wanted to scream:

Harry, I want to pay more!

Harry, I want to spend everything I have!

Harry, I want to spend all my student loan money!

(And I did. Thanks! It was your tax money.)

Harry, it's for my bride! She means everything to me!

Harry, a diamond is forever. And this is forever!

Harry, charge me more!

Harry, it's gotta hurt!

Harry, I want to *bleed* for it!

Harry, the diamond doesn't matter. (I can't tell one from the other anyway.)

Harry, what matters is what I pay.

I want to spend everything I've got to show her how much I love her!

Harry, it's crazy—an ecstatic revelry of wild, extravagant giving.

Harry, please don't tell my ethics professor, but . . .

Harry, this is *love*!

When you give at church, is it like that? You see the plate and your heart races with wild, extravagant joy? You want to *throw* your entire body into the plate?

Maybe you're not giving to a bride but paying taxes to an institution. You would never take an institution for dinner and dancing at the Adam's Mark. Would you take your bride? You should.

How about the Bride of Christ?

Have you ever given like Solomon, like Mary, or like Jesus? — extravagantly, painfully, yet ecstatically?

Sometimes as a father I'll watch my children as they sleep. A strange thought will pass through my mind: "It would be a *joy* to suffer for you." Usually I'm a pig . . . but sometimes as a groom I think about my bride: "It would be a *joy* to die for you."

You may not be able to receive this, but there have been moments in sexual union where in the words of Tolkien, "Pain and delight flow together, and tears are the very wine of blessedness." And in those moments my bride is my temple. I'm lost in her and her pleasure. I literally give her my life—my seed. It's an ecstatic revelry of wild, extravagant giving. It's not profane, for it's bound by a covenant. It's sacred . . . the communion offering in the temple.

Paul wrote, "This mystery is a profound one, and it refers to Christ and the Church." It's the one thing Adam is commanded to give before the Fall, and I wonder if in those moments I taste giving as it is in reality. Ecstasy when viewed from Heaven, a cross when viewed in a fallen world. I don't know.

But let all the utilitarians take note. The goodest (best) thing I ever made on this physical plain was a baby. And other than a few rudimentary procedures, I don't know how it happened. But one of the best ways to make sure it *won't* happen is to stop and ask, "What is this good for?" I just sowed seed in love, and it happened. I know not how.

When you give extravagantly, sacrificially, painfully, and joyfully to the Bride of Christ—the temple of the Spirit—the children of God—maybe fruit just happens, and you know not how.

. . . like when a farmer sows seed, sleeps, and rises, night and day, the seed sprouts and grows, and he knows not how.

Maybe the kingdom is like that. So don't ask, "What's my giving good for?" but "Is my giving good? Is it love? Is it Jesus?" And then you will bear much fruit . . . *more* than babies.

Some of you are suffering because you're not a mother. But anyone who opens themselves to Christ and receives Christ's life is *the* Mother—the Bride—the Church, giving birth to the kingdom on earth. So Happy Mother's Day, Mom!

The story of Mary's perfume is told "wherever the Gospel is preached."

The kingdom of Israel became a world power under David and Solomon. It was extravagant receiving and extravagant giving. "We love because He first loved us."

And the kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our God, because God gave His only begotten Son, like a seed sown dead and come to life in Mother Church.

I can't make complete sense of such extravagant giving. However, I think I can taste it when I picture God in Harry's jewelry store:

Harry starts to show the Lord all his treasures. God can pay for them all, but they are all cheap.

The *Spirit* says, “Harry, this is to dedicate my temple—my home!”

The *Father* says, “Harry, this is for my children! I will give them all things.”

Jesus says, “Harry, I got this girl. She’ll be my bride. She means *everything* to me.

Harry, this is forever, and it’s gotta hurt! Harry, I want to bleed. Harry, I want to get a cross . . . not a *gold* cross but a *wood* cross, and not just any cross. On this cross I won’t just bear whips and nails, bruises and thorns. On this cross:

I want to know her every sorrow.

I want to feel her very wound.

I want to suffer her every shame.

I want to weep her every tear.

I want to bear her iniquities.

“No! I want to *become* sin for her and suffer her Hell . . . my blood for her Gehenna. I want all her sufferings from all space and time there on that cross . . . an eternal sacrifice so she can see and always know I AM her Prince of Peace, I AM love, and I bear all things, believe all things, hope all things, endure all things, suffer all things for her. There is no price that I will not pay.”

[Prayer] “So, Lord Jesus, through reading the Scriptures and through praying with people in tragedies and sorrows, who see visions and receive words from you, I’ve come to realize that you *are* with us, and every tear, every sorrow, every fear is with you. And *we* are with you. More than that, the Hell that we deserve you suffer in our place.

“And, Lord, when I begin to see just how big your cross is, that that old Roman wood and those Roman nails were just a picture of something deeper than all creation, God, it scares me. It terrifies me. And I’m offended, Lord. I’m offended because I’m so small and I’m so limited.

“But, Lord Jesus, we thank you that in your mercy you are born small like a baby, into our hearts. And you grow large into the King of Glory. One day you will sweep us away in your wild, extravagant dance, that is the kingdom of God.

“And so, Lord Jesus, even though we’re scared, take us.”

If you’ve never given your heart to the Lord, don’t be afraid. He *is* gentle and kind and lowly in heart. His sacrifice appears like it demands everything, but in reality, it *romances* everything.

If you've never given your heart—your self—to Him, say this now in the silence of your own heart:

Jesus, I give myself to you. I don't understand you, but thank you for dying in my place for my sin, for the love of me. I'm yours.

“Come, Lord Jesus. Dwell in your temple and make your temple fruitful. Thank you that you do it, Lord Jesus, when we surrender to your love. It's in your name that we pray, Jesus, for you are the price that was paid for us to speak to our Father. And the Father is in you, and the Spirit emanates from you. And you are God. And we worship you. Amen.”

Should the Crystal Cathedral have a million dollar organ? How would *I* know? I wasn't one of the hearts that gave it.

How much should you give to the building fund? How would *I* know. I'm not the heart that gives it.

However, if you give in love, that is, in Jesus, I'm convinced you'll give exactly the right amount.

Amen.

Further Reading

The creed which accepts as the foundation of morals "utility" or the "greatest happiness principle" holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness; wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain and the privation of pleasure.

-John Stuart Mill, Utilitarianism

Utilitarianism – Ethical principle that action is right if it tends to maximize happiness, not only that of the agent but of everyone affected by his or her act. Thus, utilitarians focus on the consequences of an act rather than on its intrinsic nature or the motives of the agent

-The Britannica Concise

Then they brought up the ark of the LORD, the tabernacle of meeting, and all the holy furnishings that were in the tabernacle. The priests and the Levites brought them up. Also King Solomon, and all the congregation of Israel who were assembled with him, were with him before the ark, sacrificing sheep and oxen that could not be counted or numbered for multitude. Then the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the LORD to its place, into the inner sanctuary of the temple, to the Most Holy Place, under the wings of the cherubim. . . . And it came to pass, when the priests came out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the LORD, so that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD. . . . "So the LORD has fulfilled His word which He spoke; and I have filled the position of my father David, and sit on the throne of Israel, as the LORD promised; and I have built a temple for the name of the LORD God of Israel. And there I have made a place for the ark, in which is the covenant of the LORD which He made with our fathers, when He brought them out of the land of Egypt." . . . Then the king and all Israel with him offered sacrifices before the LORD. And Solomon offered a sacrifice of peace offerings, which he offered to the LORD, twenty-two thousand bulls and one hundred and twenty thousand sheep. So the king and all the children of Israel dedicated the house of the LORD. On the same day the king consecrated the middle of the court that was in front of the house of the LORD; for there he offered burnt offerings, grain offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings, because the bronze altar that was before the LORD was too small to receive the burnt offerings, the grain offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings. At that time Solomon held a feast, and all Israel with him, a great assembly from the entrance of Hamath to the Brook of Egypt, before the LORD our God, seven days and seven more days--fourteen days. On the eighth day he sent the people away; and they blessed the king, and went to their tents joyful and glad of heart for all the good that the LORD had done for His servant David, and for Israel His people.

-I Kings 8:4-6, 10-11, 20-21, 62-66

Then, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was who had been dead, whom He had raised from the dead. There they made Him a supper; and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with Him. Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil. But one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, who would betray Him, said, "Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denari and given to the poor?"

-John 12:1-5

Surely He has borne our griefs
And carried our sorrows;
Yet we esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten by God, and afflicted.
But He was wounded for our transgressions,
He was bruised for our iniquities;
The chastisement for our peace was upon Him,
And by His stripes we are healed. . . .

**Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him;
He has put Him to grief.
When You make His soul an offering for sin,
He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days,
And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand.**

-Isaiah 53:4-5, 10

According to Scripture the moving cause of the atonement is found in the good pleasure of God

-Louis Berkhof, Systematic Theology

It is in this sense that, as there may be pleasures in hell (God shield us from them), there may be something not all unlike pains in heaven (God grant us soon to taste them).

For in self-giving, if anywhere, we touch a rhythm not only of all creation but of all being. For the Eternal Word also gives Himself in sacrifice; and that not only on Calvary. For when He was crucified He “did that in the wild weather of His outlying provinces which He had done at home in glory and gladness” [George Macdonald]. From before the foundation of the world He surrenders begotten Deity back to begetting Deity in obedience. And as the Son glorifies the Father, so also the Father glorifies the Son. And, with submission, as becomes a layman, I think it was truly said “God loveth not Himself as Himself but as Goodness; and if there were aught better than God, He would love that and not Himself.” From the highest to the lowest, self exists to be abdicated and, by that abdication, becomes the more truly self, to be thereupon yet the more abdicated, and so forever. This is not a heavenly law which we can escape by remaining earthly, nor an earthly law which we can escape by being saved. What is outside the system of self-giving is not earth, nor nature, nor “ordinary life,” but simply and solely Hell. . . .

The golden apple of selfhood, thrown among the false gods, became an apple of discord because they scrambled for it. They did not know the first rule of the holy game, which is that every player must by all means touch the ball and then immediately pass it on. To be found with it in your hands is a fault: to cling to it, death. But when it flies to and fro among the players too swift for eye to follow, and the great master Himself leads the revelry, giving Himself eternally to His creatures in the generation, and back to Himself in the sacrifice, of the Word, then indeed the eternal dance “makes heaven drowsy with harmony.” All pains and pleasures we have known on earth are early initiations in the movements of that dance: but the dance itself is strictly incomparable with the sufferings of this present time. As we draw nearer to its uncreated rhythm, pain and pleasure sink almost out of sight. There is joy in the dance, but it does not exist for the sake of joy. It does not even exist for the sake of good, or of love. It is Love Himself, and Good Himself, and therefore happy.

-C. S. Lewis, The Problem of Pain

And he sang to them, now in the Elven-tongue, now in the speech of the West, until their hearts, wounded with sweet words, overflowed, and their joy was like swords, and they passed in thought out to regions where pain and delight flow together and tears are the very wine of blessedness.

-J. R. R. Tolkien, The Return of the King

Love involves giving, and God, self-complete, has only Himself to give. He surely does not suffer out of some deficiency of being, as His creatures do, but from the love that overflows from His being. That is, in fact, how the Gospels define love: “For God so loved the world *that* he gave his one and only Son.”

The pictorial Chinese language combines the two concepts of love and pain in eloquent symbolism. In the character that expresses the highest kind of love, symbols for love and for pain are brushed on top of each other to form a world like “pain-love.” Thus a mother “pain-loves” her child. She pours out her whole being on the child’s behalf.

-Dr. Paul Brand and Philip Yancey, In His Image