

Religion versus Relationship!

Law versus Love!



***“Religion is our attempt to reach God.
Jesus is God coming to us!”***

Jesus is Our Religion!

The root word of religion comes from the Latin “ligare” which means to bind, with the implication that we are to be bound to God. “Re-ligare” or Religion would then mean to rebind, or “reconnect” with God. True religion connects us to God and leads us to develop a living relationship with Him. As Christians, our identity is first in Christ, not in a particular church or denomination. Our relationship and our connection with Christ should define who we are.

Something new began with the life of Jesus. For centuries, man had been trying to earn the love of God, though the observance of rituals, the offering of sacrifices and the keeping of multitudes of laws to obtain righteousness. Religion was basically man trying to earn the Love of God!

Through His death on the cross, Jesus ushered in a new covenant, a new agreement between God and man, a new era of amazing Grace. It cost us nothing, but it cost the Giver everything. God not love us because of the works we do for Him. While He may appreciate our good works, He values most of all our love for Him!

Jesus taught at the Last Supper that the sacrifice that was about to take place represented a new covenant, a new agreement—that the shedding of His blood would permanently save us from sin and would bring a new exodus from the bondage of sin and death.

In the first chapters of John, we get a hint that Jesus was going to change things forever:

“The **Law** was given by Moses, but **Grace** and **Truth** came by Jesus Christ.” – **John 1:17**

There is a major difference between Jesus and Moses, between Grace and Law.

In Matthew chapter five, Jesus gives six different examples from the Law of Moses, where Jesus offers a new way, a better more loving way, yet a more difficult way.

“You have heard that it has been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:” – Matthew 5:38 “But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil... whosoever shall smite you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also. Love your enemies... do good to them that hate you...” – Matthew 5:39 – 44

If we all obey Moses’ “eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth” teaching, the world would soon be both blind and toothless.

“You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to the judgment...’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment.” – Matthew 5:21,

Jesus expects a lot more from us than not just murdering someone. He wants us to be loving and kind and patient with our brothers and sisters, and even with our enemies, as He did on the Cross, when He asked the Father to forgive His enemies.

Breaking Free from the Law!

The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross set us forever free from the Old Testament law. We are not and cannot be saved by the law: "And by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the Law of Moses." – Ac.13:39 "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight. Therefore, we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." – Rom.3:20, 28.

The law was considered a curse for the lawbreaker: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." (Gal.3:13.)

The law was only our schoolmaster to bring us unto God and to show us His absolute perfection which was impossible for us to attain: "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." (Gal.3:24.)

The law was not for the righteous: "Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient." (1Tim.1:9.)

It was impossible for anyone to keep the law "Did not Moses give you the law and yet none of you keeps the law? (John 7:19.)

We cannot be saved by the law: "For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God."--By Jesus! (Heb.7:19.)

Jesus – Word, Sacrifice, Temple and High Priest!

In most religions, you have several common components: a set of laws and regulations, a temple, a priesthood, and often various sacrifices. In Jesus, we find all of these.

JESUS – The Word

In John, Chapter One, Jesus is called the "Word" and the "Word made flesh." In the book of Revelation, Jesus is referred to as "The Word of God." – Revelations 19:13.

Jesus greatly simplified the multitude of Old Testament laws and regulations by giving us two great commandments to follow: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind... and to love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." – Matthew 22:37-40

Jesus – The Sacrifice

John the Baptist, when he sees Jesus in the first chapter of John, states “Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sins of the world.” – **John 1:29**

Jesus in the sacrifice that will cleanse us from our sins. It is no longer the blood of an animal sacrifice (See Leviticus 16) but it is the blood of Christ!

“We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” – Hebrews 10:10

The Mosaic Law was only a shadow of realities to come: “For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can **never** with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.” (Heb.10:1.)

Are Sacrifices needed to please God? Consider the following verses:

1 Samuel 15:22 “To obey is better than sacrifice...”

Psalms 40:6 “Sacrifices and offerings thou did not desire...”

Psalms 51: 16-17 “For You (God) **desire not sacrifice**, else I would give it. You delight not in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.”

Isaiah 1:11 “To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me?...I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs or of he goats.”

Hosea 6:6 “For I desired mercy and not sacrifice; and the **knowledge** of God more than burnt offerings.”

Matthew 9:13 “I will have mercy and not sacrifice”

Hebrews 10: 1-4 “It is impossible for sacrifice to take away sins.”

See also: Psalm 50:14; Micah 6:6-8; Amos 5: 21- 24; Malachi 3:3

Centuries before Christ, David, Isaiah and others were realizing that sacrifices were no longer enough and that something else was needed!

Jesus totally undid the need for any type of sacrifice through His grand act of self-sacrifice on the cross. The Gospel is the Good News! “God was in Christ, **reconciling the world unto Himself by Jesus Christ**...For He hath made Him to be sin for us...that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” **2 Cor. 5:19, 21.** We are accepted with God because of the sacrifice of Jesus. We should obey God out of love and gratitude, not out of works trying to gain merit with God! God desires relationship with us, not us offering mere works to please Him!

We may feel our mistakes separate us from God, which are minor compared to what some of God’s greats have done. Have you ever killed a man? The apostle Paul was responsible for killing Christians. David had a man killed in order to get the man’s wife. Obviously, you can never be too bad for Jesus.

God sees our mistakes as things that can bring us closer to Him, unto a new relationship with Him, if we humble ourselves and repent of our wrongdoings. God is close to the broken-hearted, those who realize that there is nothing good in

themselves, and that our Salvation is all through Jesus.

The Sacrifice of Thanksgiving – It is Relational!

Jesus did the miracle by dying on the cross for us and offering us His free gift of Salvation; our duty is to receive Him and to be thankful!

Jonah 2:9 “I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving.”

Hebrews 13:15 “Let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God...”

God sent us Jesus, to save the lost and broken world, rather than to give up on humanity. Temple sacrifices are no longer needed; in fact, the temple itself is no longer needed as we see in John chapter two.

Jesus– The Temple

Do we need a temple or a building to worship God in?

- **John 2: 19-22** Jesus is now the Temple
- **Matthew 21:13** “den of thieves”
- **Genesis 3:8** God and Adam and Eve communed in the garden. “They heard the voice of the Lord walking in the Garden in the cool of the day
- **Revelations 21:22** No temple found in the Heavenly City!
There was no temple in the beginning of time in the Garden of Eden, and there will be no temple at the end of time, in the Heavenly City!
- **1 Peter 2: 5-7** “you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ...” He is our precious cornerstone!
- **Psalms 22:3** God dwells in the praises of His people.
- **Acts 7:44-50** In the Old Testament, God seemed very happy with a tent, the tabernacle. “Our ancestors carried the Tabernacle with them through the wilderness. *It was constructed according to the plan God had shown to Moses.* ... King David found favor with God and *asked for the privilege of building a permanent Temple* for the God of Jacob. However, *the Most High doesn't live in temples made by human hands.* As the prophet says, ‘Heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool. Could you build Me a temple as good as that?’ asks the Lord. ‘Could you build Me such a resting place? Didn’t My hands make both heaven and earth?’ (Acts 7:44-50).
- **Acts 17:24, 25** God who made the world and all that is in it, being Lord of both Heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by human hands....
- **1 Cor 3:16** Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?
- **1 Cor 6:19** What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

See also: 2 Chronicles 6. 18

Prior to Christ, the tabernacle and later the temple was where the Divine and the human met. We now meet the Divine through Jesus! Jesus made the temple redundant. It is He who now forgives sins, not sacrificing animals in a temple! The temple was no longer to be the dwelling place of God, because after Pentecost, God the Holy Spirit dwelt in believers.

Temples and church buildings are substitutes for the real and we allow them to be the center of our life instead of Christ. Building a temple/church often reveals that inherent desire of ours to *do* something for God instead of focusing on building a close relationship with Jesus and the Father. Wanting a temple can be focusing upon what is seen here on earth rather than spiritually perceiving what is unseen. See **2 Cor. 4:18**

Reading: Matthew 17:1-5

During the transfiguration of Jesus on a high mountain, Peter's response was to offer to build three tabernacles there. God Himself immediately responded saying "This is My Son, hear ye Him!"

Temple building is our human response to our encounter with the Divine. Perhaps it is easier to do works for someone than have an intimate relationship with them. However, the true "work of God is to believe on Him whom He has sent" and to love Him. (John 6:29) It is so engrained in us to want a temple where we can go to see God, instead of letting Him visit our heart and commune with us and reveal things He wants to change in our lives. God and Jesus desire to abide in our hearts (John 14:23), which is an intimacy rarely found in a temple.

Remember, God originally asked Moses to build a tabernacle, which was a tent and not a building. David thought he had a better idea: a permanent building, a temple like other religions had. (See 2 Samuel 7 and 1 Chronicles 17). God in His great love for us, accommodates our requests and appears in His Glory at the temple opening. Similarly, God told the prophet Samuel that Israel was rejecting God in asking for a King in 1 Samuel 8, verses 6 and 7, yet God then lovingly works with the various Kings of Israel even though Kings was not His ideal plan for Israel.

Jesus – The High Priest

Religion is our attempt to reach God. Jesus is God coming to us! Jesus came to tear down the religious system as a foundation for people connecting with God, and to replace it with Himself!

- **Heb. 9:11** "Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands..."
- **John 14:6** "I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the father but by Me!
- **John 10** "I am the door."
- **John 19:30** On the cross, Jesus said, "It is finished." No more sacrifices or temples are now needed. Jesus is now where God meets man!
- **Matthew 4:19** "Follow Me" not a religion or an institution!

Jesus calls us away from the role of needing to have a mediator, except for Himself. There is no need of all these religious props. God himself yearns for closeness with His creation. Jesus expounded on this in John 14, verse 23 when he said, "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them." God wants intimate relationship with us, which is more important than our "religion" or our denomination.

“To see the law by love fulfilled and hear His pardoning voice transforms a slave into a child and duty into choice” - John Newton

Jesus in John!

Jesus turns the Water into Wine!

Let's take a look at the significance of Jesus' very 1st miracle.

Reading: John 2: 3 – 10 Notice in verse six that Jesus desecrates a religious icon, symbolizing that these outward symbols are no longer needed for cleansing. Religion will no longer be “outside in,” that if I live right, God will come in and bless me and cleanse me. A relationship with Jesus is “inside out.” God through Christ completely loves, blesses and cleanses us, and therefore I obey out of love and try to please Him!

In religion, God is useful, if I obey God will give me things, he will take me to Heaven. In relationship, you obey because God is beautiful! You don't obey Him to get things because you already have everything in Christ.

Jesus meets the Woman at the Well!

Reading John 4:7-24; Jesus breaks all barriers: He talks with a Samaritan foreigner, who happens to be a woman, and a sinful woman at that!

Verse 14: Jesus is the living water!

How do we build a relationship with God, through religious law and rituals or through love? Do you love your wife because of some duty or from the heart? God is in relationships. God is in the midst of two or three who are gathered together in his name. (Matthew 18:20)

May we do things for God out of our sincere love for Him, not out of religious duty! A loving relationship with Jesus is a much better way than trying to fulfill endless religious law. There is such intimacy in the book of John, as you can see in the following verses:

John 4: 24 God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him **must** worship Him in Spirit and in Truth!

John Chapter 7:37: “If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink.”

John 14:23: “My father and I will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with Him.” John 15:4: “Abide in Me, and I in you.”

Relationship, not Religion, is God's Ideal

Christian spirituality and the Christian ethic is boiled down to a very simple premise, “Love God and love others as you love yourself.”

The emphasis that Paul makes is even simpler than what Jesus 1st made when He was asked to sum up the law and the prophets in Matthew 22:37 -40.

“For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. - **Galatians 5.14**

Paul skips the 1st commandment Jesus gave to love God, why this apparent contradiction? Why did Paul find the liberty of only partially quoting Jesus? Paul

says just focus on loving others and you will get it all! Paul is not alone here. James and Peter says the same thing:

James 2:8 James said to keep the Royal Law, “If ye fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well.” James goes just for part two “love your neighbor.”

1 Peter 4:8 “And **above all** things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.”

1 John 3.14 The apostle John says the same thing: “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.”

John later says: “If a man say, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar: for he that loves not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? ²¹ And this commandment have we from him, that he who loves God love his brother also. **1 John 4:20-21**

Work on your love for one another and we will see how much you love God. Your love for God is null and void if you don't love your brother. The entire New Testament church starts teaching each other to focus on relational spirituality with the goal of loving others. The emphasis is to love others, love others, and love others. The early church caught on to a very important principle... Our religion, our faith is relationship, our spirituality is worked out in the relationships we have with others, and our liturgy is in serving one another. Other centered love fulfills all that the Mosaic Law was trying to do!

What gave New Testament writers the inspiration to say such a thing!

Why did they skip the 1st commandment to “love God with all your heart, soul and mind?” They realized that the danger is when you start with loving God, you often don't continue to the 2nd commandment of loving others as yourself.

Sad to say, far too often, we love God to the point where we show disdain for others. I love God so much that I can judge and condemn others-- that is how much I love God!

Throughout history, focusing only on loving God and failing to “love others as ourselves” led to horrible tragedies such as the Spanish Inquisition, witch burnings, crusades, ISIS and all kinds of horrific violent acts because “I love God.” We do it all in the name of our religion. The New Testament church says don't even think about how much you are loving God unless you are expressing it first and foremost through your love of others. Loving God can be outright dangerous if it leads you to religious fanaticism and away from Jesus' heart of love for all. We can even love God so much, that we look down upon those of other denominations, because they don't believe like we do. One of Jesus' final prayers was that the believers “may be one in Us” (John 17:21) but our lack of love for others hinders the fulfillment of Jesus' earnest prayer.

Were Peter, James, John and Paul contradicting Jesus in the above verses?

Mt 22.37- 40 was said to someone who was not yet a Christian but to His own disciples, at the last supper Jesus gives a new commandment:

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.³⁵ By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” - **John 13:34**

Here with His disciples, Jesus skips the 1st commandment of Matthew 22:37-40. He already knew they loved God, but now He shows the emphasis of Christian spirituality, that the “greatest love is to lay life down for others,” not God.... **John 15:12, 13**. Of course, laying down your life for God is important, as we are exhorted in Romans 12 to “present our bodies as a living sacrifice unto God,” but the real test of Christian love lies in how we show love to one another!

This is extremely important. Many people have rejected Christianity because of the poor samples of the Christians. Mahatma Gandhi said: “I don’t reject your Christ. I love your Christ. It’s just that so many of you Christians are unlike your Christ.”

Matthew chapter 25 reminds us of one of our main duties to be a sample of this other centered love:

³⁵ “For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶ I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.”

Loving others is the primary thing! It is our liturgy and our spirituality! Some Christians put political causes and action over Jesus’ admonition to love the lowliest! Others overemphasize the rituals of religion. Hell is full of rituals; Heaven is a relationship! God seeks relationship with you, it isn’t a ritual! “If we love one another, God dwells in us, and His love is perfected in us.” – 1 John 4:12

Also, loving others can be the cure for many of our own problems. If you are feeling sad, unloved, lonely, or empty, reach out to give to someone else who is in even greater need, and you will sense the light of the life of God within you start to grow stronger, warmer. His peace and contentment in your heart will begin to provide more of what you need. Lift up someone else, and you will find that He will lift you up in ways that are even greater.

Galatians 5:22, 23 Fruit of the Spirit list- 9 characteristics, but Love is 1st and paramount. Love is the fruit of the spirit and then followed by eight characteristics of what love looks like. The fruit of the Spirit is really a character analysis of Jesus, who is the ultimate revelation of God’s Love!

1 Corinthians 13 also brings out how Love for others is the greatest virtue. Fruit of the Spirit is really a character analysis of Jesus. Love is the choice to relate to someone as valuable...It is unconditional and active, helps someone become a better version of themselves. Love sees people the way God sees them, as precious. Our relating to them will flow out of that.

Jesus clearly made the old covenant obsolete. There was something inherently wrong with the “old covenant” as it was not God’s ideal. The author of Hebrew

states: **“By calling this covenant “new,” He has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear.” - Hebrews 8:13 NIV**

Relationship is Our Religion

God's original plan for Israel was to develop a kingdom of priests, a holy nation, with all His children in relationship with God. Israel never made it, and like the church over the centuries, failed God miserably. **Exodus 19:5-6**

When God spoke in Exodus 20, the people distanced themselves, saying, “let not God speak with us, lest we die.” This fear kept them away from God. “Do not have God speak to us”, we prefer a priest. Moses pleaded for the people not to fear, to come and enjoy intimacy. This is the religious system, people afraid of intimacy with the Almighty. See **Exodus 20:18 -21**

Peter tried to restore God's vision for a “kingdom of priests”, though the Church has failed in this as did Israel of old. It is our status today, as priests, who communicate directly with God. (1 Peter 2:9) It will fully happen at the end of time! (Rev.1:6)

Back to Exodus: Moses accepted intimacy, the others said no. God wants nothing more than to be intimate in friendship and conversation with us. So much of scripture is God approaching us and us saying “no thank you.” Thank God He doesn't give up on this plan! God would like for us to rest on His breast, to partake of His nature and be blessed by the revelations that come from living close to Him! Fear not to come close to God, and He will teach you the right kind of fear.

One fear says, “God hates me, I am not good enough and I am doomed.” This is the fear that makes you move away from God. This is not of God!

A healthy fear says, “God loves me and wants relationship with me. I am in awe!” I love Him so much that I do not want to disobey Him.”

Meditate upon this: God absolutely loves me, there is nothing I have to do to get on God's good side! He is not far away, but at my side, and will be with me always, even unto the end of time. (Matthew 28:20)

We are the Bride of Christ! We can say relationship is our religion!

“For thy Maker is thine husband...” –**Isaiah 54:5**

“And I will betroth you unto Me forever... in lovingkindness, in mercies. I will betroth you unto Me in faithfulness: and you shall know the Lord.” – **Hosea 2:19,20**

“Can you make the children of the bride chamber fast while the bridegroom is with them?” – **Luke 5:34**

“...ye should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.” – **Romans 7:4**

Remember, John 15:8, God is glorified by bearing fruit.

“For the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife has made herself ready...Blessed are they who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” –

Revelations 19:7, 9

“Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;” –**Ephesians 5:25**

The Promise of the coming New Covenant! Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 36

Jeremiah 31:31 – 34 “The days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah.

³² It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though **I was a husband to them**,” declares the LORD. ³³ “This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time,” declares the LORD. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”

Ezekiel 36: “²⁶ A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes...”

Moving from Law to Love

We had to be delivered from the law which was for the lawbreaker: "But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter." "But if the husband (the law) be dead, she (the Church) is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man (Jesus)!" (Rom.7:6, 3.)

But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, the just shall live by faith." (Gal.2:16; 3:11.)

"For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death!" For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." "But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law." "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested." (Rom.8:2; Gal.2:19; 5:18; Rom.6:14; 3:21.)

For Jesus fulfilled the law and became the end of the law so that it passed away: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof." "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth." (Mat.5:17; Heb.7:12,18; Rom.10:4.)

After the time of Christ, the early church and its apostles condemned those who claimed to keep the law: "Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment." (Acts 15:24.)

Therefore, the enemies of God's new Law of Love accused the early church--from Jesus and Stephen to the apostle Paul--of blasphemy against the law, breaking the law and preaching against the law because they preached the law of love: "And set up false witnesses, which said, This man (Stephen) ceases not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law." "Saying, This fellow (Paul) persuades men to worship God contrary to the law." "This is the man (Paul) that teaches all men everywhere against the people and the law." (Acts 6:13; 18:13; 21:28.)

The self-righteous religious hypocrites of Jesus' time and the days of the early church were infuriated because Jesus and Paul and the Apostles, the Early Church, taught that law could not be kept, could not save us, was a curse, and therefore we had to be delivered from it and saved in some other way, and that new way was strictly by faith in God's love--Jesus. "For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith." (Rom.4:13.)

We are saved by faith in God's love, His mercy and His grace and truth in Jesus Christ. The Apostle James says that we who do the will or the love of God now dwell under a new law, a perfect law of liberty, freedom from the old law. (Jas.1:25.)

Jesus forgave an adulteress who was caught in the very act and brought before Him by His own accusers and critics to be stoned.--but he forgave her and sent her away forgiven: See John 8:3-11! He as good as indicated in this instance that she was not the greater sinner--that her self-righteous, hypocritical, wicked and sinful religionist accusers were! Religion operates on a basis of "I am condemned and am a sinner." Relationship realizes we have sin, but there is no condemnation, as Jesus paid for our sins, and we obey Him out of love and thanksgiving.

This was the most raging controversy between Jesus and the Jews! It was the most raging controversy between St. Paul and the legalists, the concision or the circumcision, Jews who believed in Jesus but still insisted that they must keep the Mosaic Law. **St. Paul spent most of his epistles showing how it was impossible to keep the law,** and that the law could not save them, but they must be saved through the love of Jesus by faith.

Therefore Jesus did not destroy the law, but he fulfilled it and he was the end of it! The old law passed away and is no more! We are no more required to keep the laws of the Moses of the Old Testament! See Romans 10:4 "For Christ is the

end of the law for righteousness to every one that believes.”

We now only have to keep God's law of love, His only law--love! For the laws of Moses are no more to the believer in Jesus! We now only have the Law of Jesus, God's only law, His Love!--A stronger law than Moses'! But it is greater and stricter even than the old Mosaic Law, because now everything you do must be done in His Love!--Read St. Matthew Chapters 5 and 6! You must have more mercy and love than the law!--Mt.9:10-13.

It all boils down to whether you're going to believe in Moses or Jesus!-- Whether you're going to insist that we keep the dead laws of Moses and the Prophets of yesterday or the living love-law of Jesus and His Apostles of today! **The laws of Moses were too difficult to keep and couldn't save us!** This is why Jesus had to come with the love, mercy, grace and forgiveness of God which we could accept freely without any works or any law except Love! This amazing Grace should lead us to live a life of gratitude, one of the healthiest attitudes one can have!

"A New Apostle's Creed!"

All You Need Is Love!

Love is our Religion! Love for God and others, for **"God is Love"**! (1Jn.4:8) **Love is everything, for without love there is nothing!--**No friends, no families, no fathers or mothers or children or health or happiness or God or Heaven--there could be none of these without Love! And none of these is possible without God, for He is Love!

This is the solution to all of the problems of today as well as to the problems of the past: LOVE!--True love, the Love of God and the love of fellowman!--This spirit of God's Love which helps us all to fulfill His Great Commandment to love one another! This is **still** God's solution, even in such a complex and confused and highly complicated society as the world today!

For it is man's rejection of the love of God and his loving laws that causes him to be selfish, unloving, vicious and cruel and unkind to each other, man's inhumanity to man which is so apparent in today's weary world with all of its enslavement by oppression, tyranny and exploitation, robbery by the rich, suffering from hunger, malnutrition, disease, ill health, overwork, evil abuse, the tortures of war and nightmares of perpetual fearful insecurity.

All of these evils are caused by men's lack of love for God and each other and their defiance of His laws of love and peace and harmony with Him, each other and His whole Creation. "For he that loveth not his **brother** whom he **hath** seen, how can he love **God** Whom he hath **not** seen?" (1Jn.4:20)

It's really just that simple: if we love God, we can love each other! We could then follow His rules of life, liberty, and the possession of happiness, and all would be well and happy in Him!

This is why Jesus said the first and greatest commandment is to love--to "love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind ... And the second is like unto it," it's almost equal--almost the same, "thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." (Matt.22:36-40)

Those He was speaking to then asked Him, **"WHO IS MY NEIGHBOUR?"** And with the story of the Good Samaritan, He tried to show them that it is **anyone who needs our help**, regardless, of their race, creed, colour, nationality, or condition!

For if we have real love, we can't face a needy situation without doing something about it. We can't just pass by the poor man on the road to Jericho! We must take **action** like the Samaritan did! (See Lk.10:25-37.) Many people today says, "Oh, I'm so sorry, how sad!" But **compassion must be put into action!** That's the difference between pity and compassion: Pity just feels sorry; compassion does something about it!

We must show our faith by our works, and love can seldom be proven without tangible manifestation in action. To say you love someone and yet not try to help them physically in whatever way they need--food, clothing, shelter, etc.--this is **not** love! The need for real love is a **spiritual** need, but it must be manifested **physically** in works--"faith which **works** by love"! (Gal.5:6)

For "whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwells the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth!" (1Jn.3:17,18)

The greatest manifestation of our love is not the mere sharing of our material things and possessions, but the sharing of ourselves and our personal services for others, which is our faith, and which results in our works and the sharing of our material possessions. Jesus Himself had nothing material to share with His disciples, only His love and His life, which He gave for them and for us that we too might have life and love forever!

For "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends!" (Jn.15:13) The sharing of **ourselves**, our **love** and our life with others is the greatest of all sharing.

This is why God created man to begin with: to love--to love and enjoy Him forever and to help others to do the same! It was **God** Who created love and gave man the need to love and be loved, and it is **He alone** Who can satisfy the deep yearning of our soul for total love and understanding. The human spirit, that intangible personality of the real you can never be fully satisfied with anything less than utter union with the God that created it.

To receive God's love ask Him to come in. Jesus promised, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: If any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come into him." (Rev.3:20) He waits lovingly and meekly at your heart's door, not forcing

Himself upon you, but waiting for you to simply ask Him in.

When you have done this your life will be changed. His Spirit within you will then enable you to do the humanly impossible: **Love God and man!**

You will discover true happiness--not in your personal pursuit for selfish pleasure and satisfaction, but **in finding God and giving His life to others** and bringing **them** happiness! Then happiness pursues and overtakes and overwhelms you, personally, without even seeking it for yourself!

Let's strive to truly love others with the unselfish, never-ending love of God, the love that Jesus commanded us to live when He said, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you." Love isn't love till you give it away in service to God and others!



Key verses to memorize: John 13:34; John 15.13; Romans 7:4; Romans 10:4; Romans 13.8; Galatians 5:14; James 2.8; 1 Peter 4.8; 1 John 3.14; 4:20, 21;



*"You say you love Jesus, but do you really know Him?
He's a Shepherd weeping bitterly, still weeping for His children.
He was a man of sorrows, why aren't you weeping too?
For when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion upon them,
Because they fainted and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.
Do you seek His face, redeemed by Grace, secluded in your blessings?
While we seek our own, lost children roam, and Jesus goes on weeping.
They that sow in tears, shall reap in joy! My brother, are you able?
If a man forsake not all that he has, he cannot be His disciple.
He that takes not his cross to follow, he is not worthy of Me.
While we seek our own, lost children roam, and Jesus goes on weeping."
– From the "Songs that Made the Jesus Revolution"*

"The first secret to loving others is to immerse yourself in a love relationship with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—and abide there."—*Anne Graham Lotz*

Closing: Points to Ponder!

No doubt, you may find Jesus in a church. Remember though that the church can be compared to a cup holding the precious water, the life giving words of Jesus. You must always remember that **it is the content of the cup that saves you – Jesus** -- not the cup!

Sadly, all too often, our religion and our dominations divide us, instead of us "being one," as Jesus prayed we would be in John 17, verse 21. If we were one, Jesus goes on to say our "oneness" would help the "world to believe." It is a sobering thought that

our pride that we are “the right church” may be actually turning people away from faith in Christ.

Let's have the true Jesus religion by being bound to Jesus out of our great love for Him, because of what He did for us. We do not have a religion that teaches that if I obey, God will accept me. We are already accepted, so let's work from a loving heart to build His Kingdom.

It is not up to us to bridge the gap between man and God. God did that through His Gift of Jesus. Even the name of Jesus – Emmanuel – means “God with us.” “I will be with you always” Jesus promised shortly before He departed into Heaven. (Matthew 28:20)

The separation between God and man no longer exists. God broke down the barrier. We are reconciled to Him, received back into His favor and are called to help others find that same reconciliation. The jailer in Acts chapter 16 asked Paul, “What must **I do** to be saved?” This is the emphasis of many religions, what must “I do.” Paul's answer was so simple, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved!” There is nothing we can do except believe. Jesus clearly stated, “This is the work of God that you may believe on Him whom He has sent.” – John 6:29

May you have a fruitful relationship with Jesus and bear much fruit unto Him!
“Herein is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit!” – John 15:8

And always remember, “neighbor love” flows out of a heart filled with love for God! His love inspires us to sacrifice in order to share what we've found with others. Just fall totally in love with Jesus and His Spirit within you will then enable you to do the humanly impossible: **Love God and man!**

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and **everyone who loves...knows God.**” – 1 John 4:7

Written by John Patrick. Some parts excerpted from the teachings of Bruxy Cavey and various Christian authors.

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