

Walking With Jesus

How YOU Can Be An Authentic Christian

by
Scott Shannon

Dedication

To Rev. Jesse Bradley, the pastor of the Sebastopol
Community Church and ActivateLife.Org who
showed me how to be an authentic Christian.
He transformed my life.

Also to my son, Michael, who has helped me in
so many ways during the months that I
have been writing this book.

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Walk With Jesus



Do you want to walk with Jesus? I do. I walk with Him every day, and doing so has transformed my life in ways that I could never have imagined. Jesus wants us to have a personal relationship with Him and this does not require a religion, a church, or a priest. I'm not saying that anyone should stop going to church. Our churches are where we experience a community of faith that should nourish and sustain us as we follow the Christian path.

I wrote this book to encourage any Christian who reads it to follow the Gospels and to become more Christlike in everything they do. Salvation is an often misunderstood gift from Jesus Christ. My heart bleeds for those millions of Christians who don't know or don't realize the Gospel truths about salvation. They go through life living in ignorance and sin, without repentance, and are unable to experience a true relationship with our Lord. You may think differently, but I believe they are going to Hell.

The following words from Jesus are, I believe, one of the most powerful statements He ever made about having a personal relationship with Him.

Matthew 7:21-27 - *Not every one that says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but He that does the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Therefore whosoever hears these sayings of mine, and does them, I will liken Him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that hears these sayings of mine, and does them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.*

I urge you to keep an open mind as you read this book. Examine your life and ask yourself whether or not you are living the word of God. Ask yourself if you are what some people call a "Cultural Christian", a "Carnal Christian", or a "Buffet Christian".

A cultural Christian is one who may go to church every Sunday, may wear a cross as jewelry, and may participate in the "good works" of their church. But they do not have a personal

relationship with Jesus. They believe they are Christian, but still feel the need to wear the latest fashions, or listen to the latest music, or drive the newest car, or watch the latest movies, or make a point of letting people see that they are praying. Does this describe you?

Carnal Christians are living a life filled with fornication and/or adultery.

A buffet Christian picks and chooses the easy parts of the Bible they want to obey and leaves the difficult parts of being a Christian alone.

I also urge you to carefully read what Jesus has said about what He expects of every one who follows Him, and live his teachings completely.

In writing this book I have focused primarily on the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, with generous references to the teachings of the apostle Paul and scripture from the Old Testament. The words of Jesus, in my opinion, are all that we truly need to learn about salvation and eternal life. But we both know that the rest of the Bible also has much to tell us about living a Godly life.

You may, of course, disagree with what I say. I expect many people will. This book may be considered by some to be radical, confrontational, and offensive. I welcome your comments, however, whether positive or negative. If you like my book I urge you to share it with other Christians in your life. If you cannot afford to buy this book please let me know and I will send you a free copy in PDF format.

You may send an email to me if you wish to write. Please don't send hate mail. If you are a Christian you should know that hate has no place in Christianity. Don't risk losing your eternal life just to let me know that you hate me. You won't change my beliefs. Just delete this book from your reading device or throw the paperback book away. Constructive criticism is always welcome and may cause me to re-publish my book with your suggestions

(and a mention in my dedication).

Much of this book consists of scripture from the Gospels followed by a discussion of how these words of Jesus may be applied to our lives. I have made some small changes to the King James version of the Bible used in this book. I updated words like seeketh, crieth, prayeth, and so on to read seeks, cries, prays, etc.

Some chapters may be difficult for you to read and accept. But I want to assure you that I am not telling lies or merely trying to sow dissension. I am not a false teacher because everything I write is grounded in scripture or sound Biblical or cultural scholarship. My goal throughout this book is to show you a way to get closer to Christ without the barriers and "traditions" that the Christian church of almost every denomination has put in our way.

I don't know you, but I love you as a Christian brother or sister. We are all sinners struggling to deal with the complexities of modern life. I am a sinner, but I do have a personal relationship with Jesus. We walk together several times each day. I urge you to read my book with an open mind and to consider the evidence that I present. **The only thing at stake is your immortal soul.**

The Commands of Jesus



This chapter, unlike all of the other chapters, does not contain very much of my writing. I have listed about fifty or so commands of

Jesus in modern English, then followed with scriptural references from the Gospels, so that you may interpret the verses as you please.

Jesus made many very specific commands in the Gospels. I recommend that you read each one, pray and meditate on the scripture, then follow each of His commands to become an authentic Christian with a hope for eternal life.

It is not enough, as many Christians believe, to be "born again" and to "accept Jesus Christ as my personal savior". You must be born again as a new person and you must transform your life and behavior according to His will. Anything less will, according to Jesus, bring you His scorn, and eternal damnation.

I know this may seem difficult, but you must realize that becoming an authentic Christian requires a total daily and lifelong commitment to Jesus and to living a Christian life according to His commandments.

Here are some of them:

Love, bless, and pray for your enemies.

Luke 6:27-29 - *But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which spitefully use you. And unto Him that smites thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and Him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not to take thy coat also.*

Matthew 5:43-48 - *Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which spitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for He makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.*

For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

Preach the Gospel and teach obedience.

Matthew 28:19-20 - Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.

Luke 9:60 - Jesus said unto Him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.

John 21:15-17 - So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto Him, Yea, Lord; thou knows that I love thee. He saith unto Him, Feed my lambs. He saith to Him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, loves thou me? He saith unto Him, Yea, Lord; thou knows that I love thee. He saith unto Him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto Him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, loves thou me? Peter was grieved because He said unto Him the third time, Loves thou me? And He said unto Him, Lord, thou knows all things; thou knows that I love thee. Jesus saith unto Him, Feed my sheep.

You must be born again.

John 3:3-8 - Jesus answered and said unto Him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, He cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto Him, How can a man be born when He is old? can He enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, He

cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind blows where it lists, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goes: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

Follow Jesus.

Matthew 4:19 - And He saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

Matthew 11:28-30 - Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Mark 1:17 - And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.

John 1:43 - The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and find Philip, and saith unto Him, Follow me.

John 12:26 - If any man serve me, let Him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, Him will my Father honor.

John 10:27-29 - My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

John 21:22 - Jesus saith unto Him, If I will that He tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.

Pray to God our Father.

Matthew 6:9 - After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

John 16:23-24 - And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.

Don't be distracted from hearing God's Word.

Luke 10:38-42 - Now it came to pass, as they went, that He entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to Him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

Confess Christ before men.

Matthew 10:32-33 - Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, Him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, Him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.

Mark 5:19 - Howbeit Jesus suffered Him not, but saith unto Him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.

Mark 8:38 - Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful

generation; of Him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

Luke 12:8-9 - Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, Him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God: But He that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God.

Privately rebuke a brother and if He repents forgive Him.

Matthew 18:15 - Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell Him his fault between thee and Him alone: if He shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.

Luke 17:3-4 - Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke Him; and if He repent, forgive Him. And if He trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive Him.

Don't covet your brother's blessing.

Luke 12:13-15 - And one of the company said unto Him, Master, speak to my brother, that He divide the inheritance with me. And He said unto Him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? And He said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which He possesses.

Luke 15:29-30 - And He answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

Judge not so that you may not be judged.

Matthew 7:1-5 - Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholds thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considers not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

Luke 6:37 - Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.

Luke 6:41-42 - And why beholds thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceives not the beam that is in thine own eye? Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholds not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye.

John 7:24 - Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.

The laws of the Old Testament, other than the Ten Commandments, do not apply to Christians because Jesus gave us a new covenant. The other laws of the Old Testament were given to the Jews.

Luke 16:16 - The law and the prophets were until John (the Baptist): since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presses into it.

Hebrews 8:13 - *In that He saith, A new covenant, He hath made the first old. Now that which decays and waxes old is ready to vanish away.*

Romans 11:27 - *For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.*

Galatians 3:13 - *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangs on a tree.*

Heb 9:11 - *But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.*

Matthew 5:17 - *Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.*

Mark 12:30 - *And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.*

Matthew 19:18-19 - *He saith unto Him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honor thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.*

Hebrews 8:6-7 - *But now hath He obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also He is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.*

Love God and others.

Matthew 22:37-40 - *Jesus said unto Him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.*

Mark 12:30-31 - *And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.*

Luke 10:25-28 - *And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted Him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto Him, What is written in the law? how reads thou? And He answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself. And He said unto Him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.*

John 15:12 - *This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.*

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

Don't call Jesus "Lord" when you don't obey Him.

Luke 6:46 - *And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?*

Matthew 7:21-23 - *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but He that does the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*

Don't waste time on argumentative people.

Matthew 7:6 - Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

Pay your taxes and give to God what is His.

Matthew 22:21 - They say unto Him, Caesar's. Then saith He unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.

Mark 12:17 - And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marveled at Him.

Luke 20:25 - And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marveled at Him.

Don't sell things in God's house.

Mark 11:15-17 - And they came to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves; And would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple. And He taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves.

John 2:13-16 - And the Jew's passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the

changers of money sitting: And when He had made a scourge of small cords, He drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise.

Strive for perfection.

Matthew 5:48 - Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

Keep alert and watch for the second coming.

Matthew 24:44 - Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

Mark 14:62 - And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

Luke 12:35-40 - Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when He will return from the wedding; that when He cometh and knocks, they may open unto Him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when He cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that He shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if He shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, He would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.

Luke 21:27-28 - And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And

when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draws nigh.

Do not look with lust at another person or view pornography.

Matthew 5:27-28 - Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looks on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

When you pray do it secretly.

Do not divorce and marry another, this is adultery. Do not marry a divorced person.

Matthew 5:32 - But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causes her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced commits adultery.

Matthew - 19:9 - And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, commits adultery: and whoso marries her which is put away doth commit adultery.

Mark 10:11-12 - And He saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, commits adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she commits adultery.

Matthew 6:5-6 - And when thou prayes, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayes, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray

to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which sees in secret shall reward thee openly.

Build on the rock of obedience to Jesus.

Matthew 7:24-27 - Therefore whosoever hears these sayings of mine, and does them, I will liken Him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that hears these sayings of mine, and does them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

Luke 6:47-49 - Whosoever cometh to me, and hears my sayings, and does them, I will show you to whom He is like: He is like a man which built a house, and dug deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock. But He that hears, and does not, is like a man that without a foundation built a house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.

Quietly do good for God's praise alone.

Matthew 6:1-4 - Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand does: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which sees in secret himself shall reward thee openly.

Forgive others.

Matthew 6:12 - *And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.*

Matthew 6:14-15 - *For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*

Mark 11:25-26 - *And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.*

Beware of hypocrisy, greed, and the doctrines of men.

Matthew 15:7-9 - *Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draw nigh unto me with their mouth, and honor me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.*

Matthew 23:28 - *Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.*

Luke 6:41-42 - *And why beholds thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceives not the beam that is in thine own eye? Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholds not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye.*

Luke 12:1 - *In the meantime, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch*

that they trod one upon another, He began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

Luke 20:46-47 - Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts; Which devour widow's houses, and for a show make long prayers: the same shall receive greater damnation.

Rejoice when you are persecuted.

Luke 6:22-23 - Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.

Be baptized.

Matthew 28:19 - Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Mark 16:16 - He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but He that believes not shall be damned.

Repent of your sins.

Mark 1:15 - And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.

Luke 13:3-5 - *I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

Luke 15:7 - *I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repents, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.*

Luke 15:10 - *Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents.*

Luke 15:18-24 - *I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto Him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And He arose, and came to his father. But when He was yet a great way off, his father saw Him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed Him. And the son said unto Him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on Him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; He was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.*

Treat others as you would like to be treated.

Matthew 7:12 - *Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.*

Luke 6:31 - *And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.*

Worship Only God.

Matthew 4:10 - Then saith Jesus unto Him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.

Luke 4:8 - And Jesus answered and said unto Him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.

Keep asking, seeking, and knocking.

Matthew 7:7-11 - Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asks receives; and He that seeks finds; and to Him that knock it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will He give Him a stone? Or if He ask a fish, will He give Him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?

Luke 11:9-13 - And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asks receives; and He that seeks finds; and to Him that knocks it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will He give Him a stone? or if He ask a fish, will He for a fish give Him a serpent? Or if He shall ask an egg, will He offer Him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?

Have a childlike faith.

Mark 10:15 - *Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, He shall not enter therein.*

Luke 18:17 - *Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein.*

Invite the poor to eat with you.

Luke 14:13-14 - *But when thou makes a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.*

Don't fear people - fear God.

Matthew 10:28 - *And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*

Matthew 16:23 - *But He turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offense unto me: for thou savors not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.*

Luke 12:4-5 - *And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear Him, which after He hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear Him.*

Do not use vain repetitions when praying.

Matthew 6:7-8 - But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knows what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him.

Mark 12:40 - Which devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation.

Don't call your brother a fool.

Matthew 5:22 - But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hellfire.

Pay attention to what God will and will not accept from you.

Matthew 12:25-38 - And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: And if Satan cast out Satan, He is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand? And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you. Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except He first bind the strong man? and then He will spoil his house. He that is not with me is against me; and He that gathers not with me scatters abroad. Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaks a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven Him: but whosoever

speaks against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven Him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come. Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit. O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart brings forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.

Don't be worried about what you have or don't have.

Matthew 6:25-32 - Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knows that ye have need of all these things.

Luke 12:22-30 - And He said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The

life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment. Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls? And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest? Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and to morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will He clothe you, O ye of little faith? And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knows that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

John 14:1-4 - Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.

John 16:33 - These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

Honor God with all that you have been given.

Matthew 25:14-31 - For the kingdom of heaven is as a man traveling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one He gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and

straightway took his journey. Then He that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise He that had received two, He also gained other two. But He that had received one went and dug in the earth, and hid his lord's money. After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoned with them. And so He that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou delivered unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto Him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou delivered unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto Him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. Then He which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. His lord answered and said unto Him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knew that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: Thou ought therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from Him, and give it unto Him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and He shall have abundance: but from Him that hath not shall be taken away even that which He hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of his glory.

Humble yourself and take the lowest position.

Luke 14:8-11 - *When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honorable man than thou be bidden of Him; And He that bade thee and Him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when He that bade thee cometh, He may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. For whosoever exalts himself shall be abased; and He that humbles himself shall be exalted.*

Luke 18:13-14 - *And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalts himself shall be abased; and He that humbles himself shall be exalted.*

Matthew 23:12 - *And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and He that shall humble himself shall be exalted.*

Matthew 19:30 - *But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.*

Store your riches in heaven not on earth.

Matthew 6:19-21 - *Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

Matthew 6:33 - *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*

Luke 12:19-21 - *And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto Him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is He that lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.*

Luke 12:31-34 - *Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and to morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will He clothe you, O ye of little faith? And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knows that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that fails not, where no thief approaches, neither moth corrupts. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

John 12:25 - *He that loves his life shall lose it; and He that hates his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.*

Do more than expected.

Matthew 5:38-41 - *Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to Him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let Him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with Him twain.*

Act with compassion and not prejudice towards others.

Luke 10:30-37 - And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped Him of his raiment, and wounded Him, and departed, leaving Him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when He saw Him, He passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when He was at the place, came and looked on Him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as He journeyed, came where He was: and when He saw Him, He had compassion on Him, And went to Him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set Him on his own beast, and brought Him to an inn, and took care of Him. And on the morrow when He departed, He took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto Him, Take care of Him; and whatsoever thou spends more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinks thou, was neighbor unto Him that fell among the thieves? And He said, He that shewed mercy on Him. Then said Jesus unto Him, Go, and do thou likewise.

Believe in Jesus.

Mark 16:16 - He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but He that believes not shall be damned.

Luke 9:35 - And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear Him.

John 12:36 - While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them.

John 6:29 - Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.

John 20:29 - Jesus saith unto Him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

John 14:6 - Jesus saith unto Him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes unto the Father, but by me.

Live in Me and live in My love.

John 8:31-32 - Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

John 15:4 - Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

John 15:9 - As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.

Don't swear an oath.

Matthew 5:33-37 - Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these comes of evil.

Give to those that ask.

Matthew 5:42 - Give to Him that asks thee, and from Him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

Luke 6:30 - Give to every man that asks of thee; and of Him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again.

Luke 6:38 - Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.

Minister to others as you would to Jesus Himself.

Matthew 25:34-46 - Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall He answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye

did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

If you transform your life by living EACH AND EVERY ONE of these commands of Jesus every day you will truly be an authentic Christian. Jesus has told us, in great detail, how we must behave in order to have a personal relationship with Him. If you do not live as Jesus commands, you have no hope of gaining eternal life.

It is also important to notice the commands or rules that are not here, but have been imposed on various congregations throughout the history of the Christian church.

Here are some of them:

Do not dance.

Do not listen to anything but Christian music.

Do not listen to any music.

Do not watch television or listen to the radio.

Do not wear makeup.

You must eat fish on Friday. No, wait, that doesn't apply anymore.

You must fast for forty days before Easter.

You must never wear a dress that shows your legs above the knee.

You must not kiss anyone before you are married.

You must not talk about sex with anyone.

Oral sex with your spouse is sinful and prohibited.

The "missionary position" is the only way to have intercourse with your spouse.

Do not drink coffee.

Do not drink alcohol.

You must never wear a beard or mustache.

You must never put a tattoo on your body.

A wife must be submissive to her husband and obey Him in all things.

Remember, too, that Jesus gave us a new covenant. All of the Old Testament laws are no longer valid for Christians, with the

exception of what we call the "Ten Commandments". This has major implications for living a Christian life.

Here are a few Old Testament laws that are no longer valid for Christians:

You no longer have to force your daughter to marry her rapist.

You may now eat shrimp, clams, lobster, mussels, and other shellfish.

You may now eat pork.

You may now wear polyester or cotton blends.

You may now wear a cotton dress with a wool coat.

You may now wear a cotton shirt with wool trousers or a woolen suit.

You do not have to sacrifice animals on your church altar.

If you are a slave, you no longer have to submit to your master.

You no longer have to marry your brother's wife if He dies.

It is alright to end sexual intercourse before you have an orgasm.

You probably haven't been following any of these laws. I have observed many Christians who "cherry pick" only those Old Testament laws that prove a point for them and ignore the rest. I call them "buffet Christians". They often use these laws they have chosen to batter another person for the "evil of their ways". They do not recognize their own evil. They must have missed Jesus' words in the Gospels stating that He had fulfilled the law and was giving Christians a new Covenant.

It is important to note, however, that many Jewish sects still abide by most of the Old Testament laws. Since they don't accept Jesus as the Messiah, they are still ruled by the old laws. I doubt, though, that many of them are still sacrificing animals on their temple altars or forcing their daughter to marry her rapist.

The New Covenant



Luke 16:16 - *The law and the prophets were until John (the Baptist): since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presses into it.*

Hebrews 8:13 - *In that He saith, A new covenant, He hath made the first old. Now that which decays and waxes old is ready to vanish away.*

Romans 11:27 - *For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.*

Galatians 3:13 - *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangs on a tree.*

Hebrews 9:11 - *But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood He entered in*

once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

Matthew 5:17 - *Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.*

The new covenant that Jesus gave to us frees us from the Old Testament laws. Instead, Jesus gave us a covenant of love and a promise of a personal relationship with Him, if we want it. This does not mean that the rest of the Old Testament should be put aside or ignored. The Old Testament is filled with stories that instruct us or give excellent moral lessons. There is also the beauty of the Psalms and the prophecies from various periods in history, and SO much more.

Matthew 22:37- - *Jesus said unto Him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.*

Jesus made it so simple for us; love God, and love everyone else.

But since He gave us this message, first the Roman Catholic Church, and then the various Protestant denominations have distorted his message. We have church "traditions" beginning two to three hundred years after Christ's death. There are now centuries of edicts and the decisions of men, none of them based on scripture. Many of these traditions are based on lies or attempts to control the masses with fear.

The Protestant Reformation began when Henry the Eighth, an adulterer and fornicator, wished to rid himself of his first wife. He couldn't get an annulment or a divorce from the Pope, so He made himself the head of the church in England.



As the Reformation continued through the years we saw the establishment of a variety of sects, creating barriers to Christian unity over doctrinal disputes. This resulted in our living under the laws of men, and not the simple command of Jesus to love God and everyone else.

Does it really matter if we use wine or juice at a communion? Is it truly important whether we are baptized with water or, instead, by the Holy Spirit? Both forms of baptism are mentioned and

approved of by Jesus in the Gospels. Why do we need to believe or not believe that the wine and bread of our communion ritual is transformed into the real blood and real flesh of Jesus? Yet people have been killed or burnt at the stake for believing one or the other of these ideas.

It would take hundreds of books to discuss all of the differences between the various Protestant sects. There are currently more than 41,000 of them. How is it possible that there could be so many disagreements among Christians? But my main point here is that all of these divisions that Christians use to distinguish themselves don't truly matter.

It is said that Evolution is a scientific fact and Creationism is a pseudo-science. You are free to believe whatever you want. If you believe that the Bible is the inerrant word of God, then you must live and obey every law and commandment it contains. You may not say, "Well, this doesn't apply to modern times." If you believe the Bible was written by men (and some women) who were inspired by God, then you must live and obey all of the commands of Jesus. **But it doesn't matter.**

You are entitled to your own religious beliefs and so is everyone else. If you believe something different, then you are probably not a Christian. Arguing about the theory of evolution has nothing to do with salvation, serving God, or having a personal relationship with Jesus. You may also choose to reject a belief in the theory of gravity or global climate change. Nevertheless these things are real. If you refuse to believe in science, then you are free to wallow in your ignorance.

I am a sinner. You are a sinner. We are all sinners. There are sinners of all kinds sitting with us in church. It shouldn't matter to us what their sin is. That is between them and God. It is not our place to judge them or tell them what to do or what not to do, especially not with force, violence, shunning, shaming, or legislation.

Imagine the wonderful world we would have if every one who claims to be Christian actually accepted the new covenant with Jesus, and behaved like an authentic Christian. Our society would be changed beyond recognition.

**I believe this is something we should all work toward.
Authentic Christianity could save the world.**

Prayer



Matthew 21:13 - And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.

Matthew 21:22 - And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

Matthew 23:14 - Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.

Mark 9:29 - And He said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.

Matthew 5:44 - But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate

you, and pray for them which spitefully use you, and persecute you;

Matthew 6:5-15 - And when thou pray, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou pray, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which sees in secret shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knows what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him. After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen. For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Matthew 26:41 - Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

Mark 11:24-26 - Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

Mark 13:33 - Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.

Luke 21:34-36 - And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.

I love to pray, and do it several times each day. I hope you do, too. When I pray I experience a slightly altered consciousness and truly believe that I am strongly connected to Jesus. Every time I pray I believe that my personal relationship with Christ is deepened. Also, praying always makes me cry as I am somewhat overwhelmed with awe and the power, majesty, and friendship that I experience.

Jesus has told us that we should never make a public show of praying. Prayer is probably best done in the privacy of our own home. But praying in public is also alright as long as those around us are not made aware of it (except in church). I'm sure you have seen people in restaurants, or athletes on the field, who make a great show of praying. This is not earning them any points with God



If I am in public when I pray I simply close my eyes and speak my prayer in my mind. Since God knows our thoughts there is no question that my prayer is heard. And I still wind up crying. (No, I am not mentally unstable. That is just my personal experience.) Remember not to link hands with other people at a table, and not to raise your hands toward God. Jesus told us not to make a show of our praying.

Jesus has taught us how to proceed when we pray in Matthew 6:5-15 (See the scripture above.) This does not, of course, mean that we should only say "The Lord's Prayer" when we pray. However, the underlying formula of this prayer is an excellent guide to what our own prayers should be.

Here is an example of how we might use the Lord's prayer as a guide for any number of prayers.. I have used my own prayer practice as an example.

Our Father, Who art in heaven,

Dear Lord, heavenly Father, Friend, beloved God,

Hallowed be thy name,

Praise Him with all of the love that is in your heart.

Thy kingdom come,

Acknowledge His dominion over us all.

They will be done,

Speak of His power and your acceptance of His will.

On earth as it is in heaven.

Again acknowledge His dominion over everything.

Give us this day our daily bread,

Thank Him for providing all of our needs.

And forgive us our trespasses,

Express your sincere and complete repentance for your sins.

As we forgive those who trespass against us.

Forgive those who you feel have wronged you in some way.

And lead us not into temptation,

Ask the Lord to guide you in living an authentic Christian life.

But deliver us from evil.

Ask Him to keep you from further sin. This is also a good place to insert your prayers for others.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever.

Praise Him and thank Him again with your sincere love.

Amen.

Amen.

One thing that is certain is that God does not want us to speak rote prayers. Roman Catholics, for example, are assigned a certain number of repetitions of a prayer after they give a confession to a priest, as in "say ten Hail Marys".

Unless God accepts a confession to a priest as repentance for sins, and He very well might, then centuries of Catholics have been denied a personal relationship with Jesus. They may also have died without truly seeking forgiveness for their sins from Him or expressing their repentance to Him.

Four False Beliefs About Prayer

Many people have been taught to believe things about prayer that are just plain wrong.

Here are four false beliefs about prayer and also some my beliefs about how prayer can become more meaningful in your life.

- **False Belief #1: Prayers Are Requests For Things We Ask Down Here To God Up There.**



PRAYER.

conversations with God

God is not somewhere out there in the universe. He is omnipresent and exists everywhere. If you become an authentic Christian He will be near you whenever you choose to speak to Him. Don't think of God as being "out there". You are never separate from God.

- **False Belief #2: If I Pray More Often I Will Get A Faster Response**

Do you believe that the more prayers you offer, the faster you will get a response?

I have often heard people say, "I need a lot of prayers." Do you think that more prayers make your need appear more valid?

Matthew 6:7 - But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him.

- **False Belief #3: Those Who Believe The Most Get More**

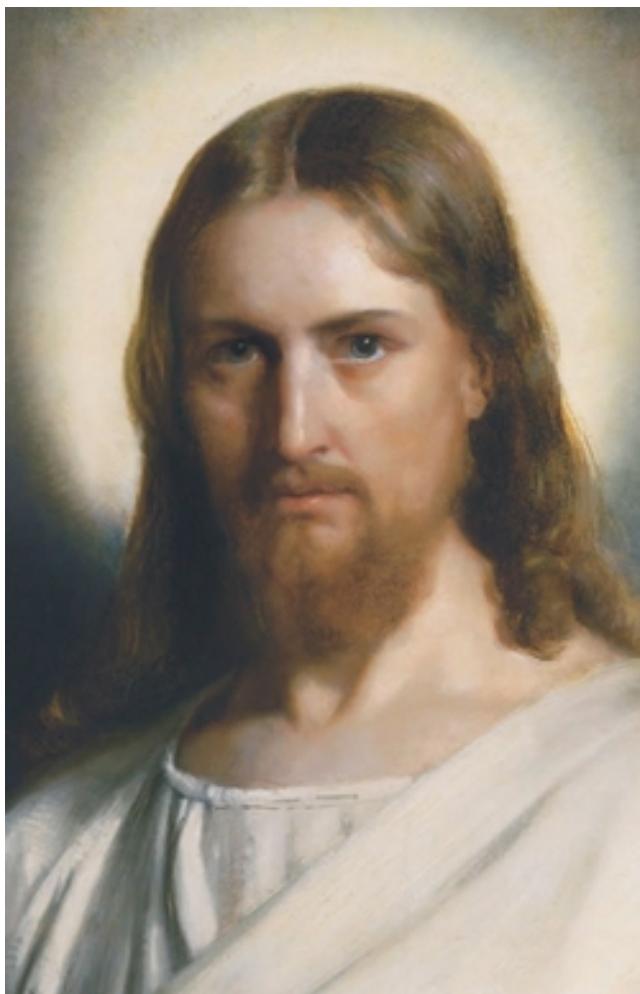
From God.

You must have a personal relationship with Jesus and you must believe in Him. Any other beliefs, doctrines, and traditions of the church are irrelevant. You must be an authentic Christian or He will turn away from you until you are.

- **False Belief #4: God Hears All Prayers But Only Responds To A Christian Prayer.**

This is something we can never know. But it is arrogant to believe or say, "God only answers the prayers of Christians." If your God isn't big enough to embrace everyone with Christian love, it is only because you have become too big to embrace God.

Some Gifts From Jesus



Jesus has given us many gifts, and continues to do so once we have a personal relationship with Him and live as authentic Christians.

Salvation



Matthew 7:21-23 - Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but He that does the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

You may believe or have been told that "Jesus died for our sins", and that when you make that first commitment to Jesus by being "saved", you are now guaranteed a place in Heaven. This is not true. Furthermore, you won't see God in heaven for "being good", doing "good works", merely calling yourself a Christian, or giving generously to your church. These things may be pleasing to God, but they are not the key to salvation.

In order to have any hope of salvation you must have a personal relationship with Jesus on a daily basis. You must give thanks, praise, confession of your sins, and repentance for those sins every time you pray. Anything less may cause Him to turn away from you and not know you.

Salvation requires obeying Jesus' commandments and living a transformed Christian life. You cannot get away with half measures. You dare not play games with Jesus. He knows your thoughts. He knows what is in your heart. He sees whether or not you are obeying His commands and living as an authentic Christian. If you aren't you are risking your eternal soul.

Is "once saved always saved" true?

Satan has worked his evil on millions of Christians through the ages who believed his lies spoken by priests, family members, and maybe even pastors. These unfortunate Christians are now in hell.

When I speak to people on the street or in stores, and the conversation turns to salvation, this is the phrase I most often hear: "Once save, always saved". They don't want to debate this statement and usually say, "It's in the Bible", then walk away.

Is this true? Does the Bible say this? Well, no. It doesn't. Not anywhere. Not anywhere.

While it IS true that Jesus often says that we will have eternal life through Him, He also adds the commands that we must follow obey Him (see the chapter *The Commands of Jesus*, earlier in this book). His death on the cross gave forgiveness of sins for all who came before Him, not those who came afterward. Those people must have an intimate personal relationship with Him and follow all of his commands to even have a hope of salvation. No matter what you do or say, salvation is not guaranteed to anyone. However, you have a much better chance if you live as an authentic Christian.

Also, consider carefully when you say, "Jesus Christ is my personal savior." Is He? If you say this because you once walked to the front of a church and "got saved", then you are deluding yourself. If anyone tries to tell you "once saved, always saved", then they are misguided, or simply uneducated about what the Bible says, or they are lying to you.

Do you have an intimate relationship with Jesus every day? Do you repent of your sins every day? Do you praise Him and worship Him every day? Do you resist sin as far as you are able? Do you live a truly Christian life daily, not just on Sunday morning? Do you feel guilt that you can never forgive yourself for?

Do you show Christian love to everyone you encounter throughout your day (such as fast-food workers, the garbage man, store employees, a stranger on the street, etc.), or do you only show love to those people that you know? Merely speaking kindly and giving everyone a smile and a "Thank you" is a nice way to show Christian love to strangers.



If you cannot do these things then what is holding you back? Do you hold on to a rigid belief about Christianity? Do you insist that all of the doctrine, dogma, and traditions of your church MUST be followed without question or reflection?

Grace



John 1:14-17 - And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. John bare witness of Him, and cried, saying, This was He of whom I spake, He that comes after me is preferred before me: for He was before me. And of his fullness have all we received, and grace for

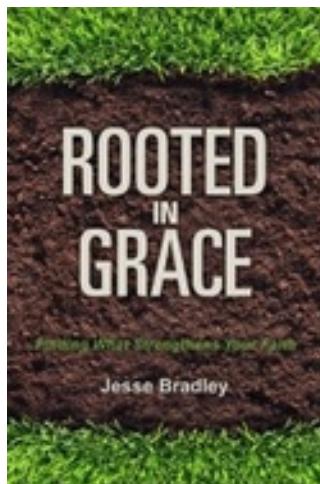
grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

"Grace" in the New Testament is the English translation of the Greek word *charis*, meaning "that which brings delight, joy, happiness, or good fortune."

Grace is a spontaneous gift from God to man - generous, free, totally unexpected, and undeserved - Grace takes the form of divine favor, love, clemency, and a share in the divine life of God. The gift of Grace brings us to an even closer relationship with Jesus.

When we are the recipient of Grace from God we are filled with joy and the Holy Spirit. The light within us shines and we are motivated to do everything we can to please Him.

For a truly thorough and inspiring book about this topic I recommend that look at the book, "*Rooted In Grace*" by pastor Jesse Bradley. It is available on Amazon.com.



Forgiveness



Matthew 6:12-15 - *And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their*

trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Matthew 18:35 - So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

Mark 11:25-26 - And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

Luke 6:37 - Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.

Luke 17:3-4 - Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke Him; and if He repent, forgive Him. And if He trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive Him.

Jesus makes it very clear that we must forgive everybody who we think has wronged us; members of our family, our friends, and everyone else (even the politicians who won't let us have medical care).

I have seen such wonderful results when one person forgives another. Their anger is gone and there is a new lightness to their being. In my many years of hospital visits I have seen hate that, to me, results in terrible illnesses and suffering.

Is there anyone in your life that you have not forgiven? Is there someone in your life that you hate? If so, what is holding you back? Pride, fear, or stubbornness? Do you realize how much your lack of forgiveness is harming your Christian life?

Remember, too, that you cannot have a personal relationship with Jesus if you are refusing to forgive.

Healing



Matthew 4:23 - And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.

Matthew 9:35 - And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

Luke 9:6 - *And they departed, and went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and healing everywhere.*

Luke 9:11 - *And the people, when they knew it, followed Him: and He received them, and spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing.*

We all know that Jesus was a healer two thousand years ago. But it is important to remember that He is still our healer. When we are praying and experiencing our personal relationship with Jesus we can ask for the healing of ourselves or others.

Strangely enough, many scientists have performed experiments that prove that prayer is very powerful in the healing process.

However, it is important to remember that it is God's will whether or not a person is healed though our prayers. Healing is not something that we can demand. It is not something we can assume will happen because we "deserve" it.

How You Might Help The Healing Process

Believe the following:

- It's God's will to heal.
- God is a generous giver.
- God gives through the laying on of hands.
- God gives healing power to the sick.
- Believe that you will receive healing when you pray.

We are free to say that it is God's will to heal, but we shouldn't make a statement such as, "It is God's will to heal everyone!". It's simply not true and you will sound foolish. If God healed everyone there would be no need for hospitals, the medical professions, or health insurance. In the gospels, Jesus never said "No" to a person

seeking healing. He didn't say, "God has a different plan for you."

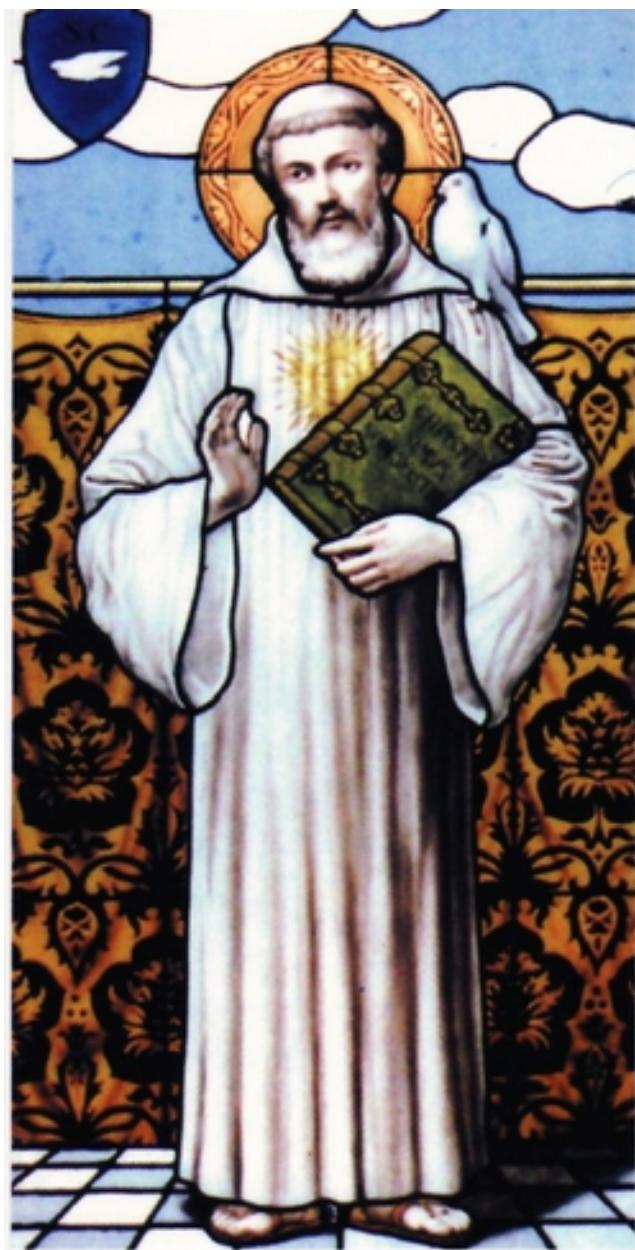
My Personal Experience of Healing

I was seriously assaulted in 2010 when I attempted to rescue my grand-daughter from a child molester who abducted her. I was left in a wheelchair until 2013, but was still in great pain and had serious brain damage from the assault. I am ashamed to admit that I didn't seek healing from God until the lawsuit I had against the child molester was settled. As I said earlier, we are all sinners.

I prayed sincerely and often that I might be healed, but it didn't happen until four months ago. I experienced a complete healing that removed my brain dysfunction and took away most of the pain (I still have serious arthritis in one knee).

This book is a gift to Jesus for healing me.

Humility



Luke 14:8-11 - *When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honorable man than thou be bidden of Him; And He that bade thee and Him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when He that bade thee cometh, He may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. For whosoever exalts himself shall be abased; and He that humbles himself shall be exalted.*

Luke 18:13-14 - *And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalts himself shall be abased; and He that humbles himself shall be exalted.*

Matthew 23:12 - *And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and He that shall humble himself shall be exalted.*

Matthew 19:30 - *But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.*

Jesus makes it very clear in the Gospels that humility is required to be an authentic Christian. You are not the center of the universe. You should not boast of your achievements before anyone. Even doing an end zone dance would seem to violate this command. Likewise, obviously praying before a stadium full of people would violate this command. Instead, pray quietly from the sidelines, in the dugout, or alone in the locker room.

Do not say that you thank God for winning the game, winning the race, winning the fight, or for receiving an award. It is, though, perfectly alright to witness for God at this time. Simply say, "I thank God for His presence in my life" or something like that.

You trivialize God and disrespect Him when you publicly thank Him for a win.

Our relationship with Jesus is a personal one and should not be degraded by publically thanking Him for a win.

Gratitude



Ephesians 5:20 - *Giving thanks always for all things to God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Colossians 3:15 - *And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also you are called in one body; and be you thankful.*

Colossians 3:17 - *And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.*

Gratitude should always be part of our prayers as we thank Him for all of the blessings He bestows on us each day.

We should also remember to express gratitude every day to each of our family members, our coworkers, and especially to strangers who do something nice for us.

Giving thanks to God is an important part of being an Authentic Christian.

An Exercise In Showing Gratitude

Here is an exercise in using gratitude to God to gain a new perspective on any problems you may have. Feeling grateful helps you to experience greater love, joy, and blessings in your life. Expressing gratitude to God can help you deal with even the darkest of states.

If there's an area of your life that feels challenging, blocked, or is not going as you want it to, or if a problem is causing you pain, fear, anguish, or frustration, try showing your gratitude to God for giving you another way to show your love for Him for having to face this challenge..

When you are dealing with a problem, try to find something you can feel gratitude for. It could be a person, situation, or circumstance that are part of your problem. Try to discover what is

positive, or what you might appreciate, in the situation. Does the situation bring you any gifts or benefits

Does the situation hold any gifts? Are there any benefits to it you can feel grateful for? Now I am not suggesting in this exercise that you feel gratitude for being in the bad situation. Before you try to change your thinking into a more positive idea you must first allow yourself to feel and examine all of your thoughts and feelings about your problem.

This exercise can also help you take greater responsibility for the part of you that may have created this problem. Taking responsibility for our actions is the mature, adult thing to do. It can also empower us.

To help you with this, try asking yourself the questions below:

- What have I learned from this situation?
- What gifts have I received from this person or problem that could benefit me?
- How may my life be better for having to deal with this problem? And if not now, then in the future?
- Has my love and compassion deepened because of this problem?
- Have I become stronger or wiser because of this problem?
- How has this problem helped me to learn more about myself?
- What good has come from this problem?
- Has there been any positive inner or outer change in my life?

- What positive qualities and traits have I demonstrated in dealing with this problem (for which you may feel gratitude)?

Can you think of any problems you once had that you are now grateful for?

What are you grateful for today?

Charity



Matthew 5:42 - *Give to Him that asks thee, and from Him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.*

Luke 6:30 - *Give to every man that asks of thee; and of Him that takes away thy goods ask them not again.*

Luke 6:38 - *Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.*

Luke 14:13-14 - *But when thou make a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.*

Jesus is clearly telling us that we must take care of the poor. That includes both individual Christians as well as businesses and governments (local, state, and federal). When governments, usually made up of many people who call themselves Christians, make it difficult or even impossible for the poor to get assistance, they are damning themselves to hell by violating the will of God. I don't understand why they don't get it. They claim to be Christian, but act like demons.



Individual Christians should make it a point to either give directly to the poor, or else give to charities that serve the poor. I have lived in a small suburban community of only four square blocks for about fourteen months. It is an oddly mixed neighborhood of middle class and poor people. Some of us live in modest houses while others live in small trailers (there is no zoning here).

I give directly to the poor even though I am currently living in poverty. For example, about a year ago I decided to start a food drive in my neighborhood. I visited every house (about 80) to see if they were lacking food or if they would be willing to make a weekly donation of food to be given to the poor in our small neighborhood. The results were incredible! About 60% of the people agreed to my plan of helping the poor who lived among us. This has enabled me to deliver a good quantity of food to 8-12 poor families every week. They all have young children, except for two elderly people and one disabled veteran.

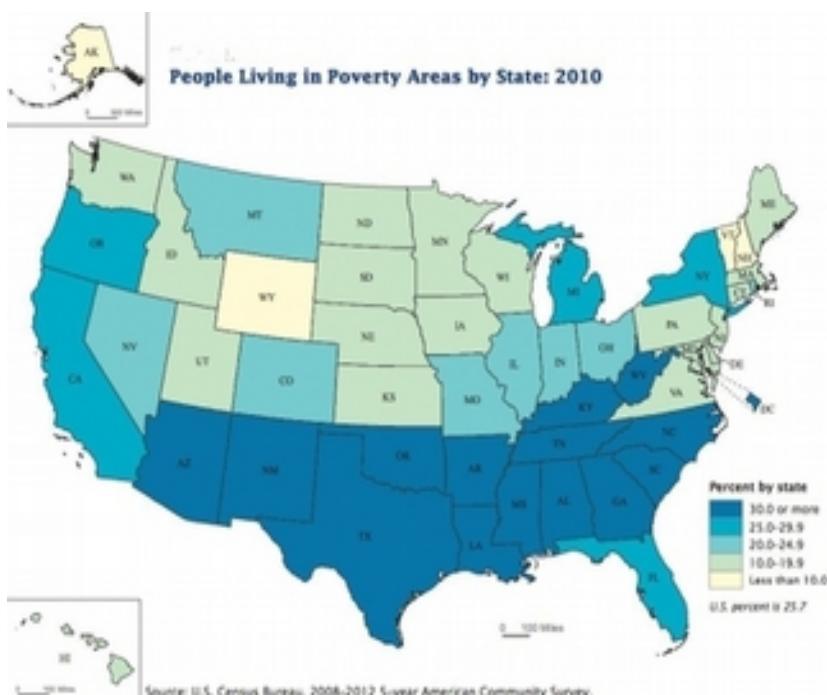
Now you might say, "Don't you have social services in your town?", or "Can't they get food stamps?", or "Why don't they just get a job?".

Yes, we have a state social services office in our town, but they are notoriously unhelpful. For example, if you tell them, "I can't get my medication. I don't know what to do!", they will usually answer, "I'm sorry, we don't provide medication here". But if you say, "I'd like to apply for Medicaid so that I can get health care and medication", you will enter a six-month qualification process that may only end with denial (if you haven't died in the meantime). Our governor in North Carolina, a supposed Christian, refused free Medicaid expansion money from the federal government that would have allowed them to serve hundreds of thousands of the poor (30% of the population) in our state.

As far as food stamps are concerned the answer is yes, some of them already receive food stamps. But their monthly food stamps allowance (recently reduced by budget cuts) of \$40 to \$100 cannot possibly feed a family of four to six people.

And as for jobs, many of them DO have jobs. They have "wonderful" minimum wage jobs for ten to twenty hours per week. Most multinational employers (WalMart, K-Mart, McDonalds, Burger King, and the rest) no longer offer full-time jobs to anyone except management. They hire four people for a job so they don't have to pay any benefits.

The following chart shows the obscene amount of poverty in our country. Only eighteen states have poverty levels below 20% of their population. This shows data from 2010, but I'm sure it is even worse now. Where are the Christians serving the poor?



Businesses owned or managed by Christians should make sure that their employees are paid a living wage, whether or not it is mandated by the government. It is unconscionable that we have millions of the "working poor". Many employers limit most of their employees to part-time schedules so that they do not have to provide benefits such as sick leave, family leave, health insurance,

and vacations. Many of their employees must seek food stamps or other assistance in order to minimally take care of their families. So our taxes go to support the policies of these greedy corporations. This not right.

Restaurants, bakeries, and grocery stores owned by Christians should make sure that any surplus food they have is given to local food banks or churches serving the poor.



Matthew 19:21 - Jesus said unto Him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.

The rules of hospitality have changed considerably since Jesus made this statement. Perhaps, back then, it may have been possible to be homeless and poor, and still survive, even with a family. It is

possible, though, to follow the spirit and intent of the command in our current day and continue to be an Authentic Christian. Rather than sell your house, your cars, your clothing, and everything else to live on the street, I believe you may obey this command by moderating your acquisition of possessions.

If you simplify your life and reduce the amount of unneeded possessions you will discover a surplus that will allow you to be charitable. Whether it's only \$10.00 or a million dollars you must find a way to be charitable.

Jesus will not accept anything less.



Please give your support to the poor among us. They need food, housing, clothing, and medical care for themselves and their children.

Temptation



I believe that Satan, after being forced out of God's presence, came to the earth. Many Christians believe that it is Satan who rules here. I tend to agree with them.

I cannot believe that a loving God sends us constant temptations to lead us into sin. He only wants to love us and for us to love Him. Satan, however, has been leading people into sin and damnation for thousands of years. This seems especially obvious now.

Consider the current state of the world. There are constant wars due to greed or a lust for power (or oil). There is massive poverty and hunger around the world. The United States is the richest country in the world yet we have an obscene number of the poor, including the working poor. Some of our politicians seem to work ceaselessly to prevent the poor from getting any help with their misery. A huge number of employers won't even offer full-time jobs, preferring instead to offer only part-time hours to several employees rather than offer a meager full-time wage to one.

Consider the epidemic of fornication and adultery in our culture, the prevalence of gun violence that "Christian" politicians will do nothing to restrain, the massive problem of domestic abuse and child abuse, our media's obsession with sex and lust, the worship of money and possessions, and the widespread destruction to our environment (given to us by God) that, again, politicians will not legislate against.

Doesn't this sound like the work of Satan?

How We Might Avoid Temptation

- Recognize your tendency toward sin.

James 1:14-15 - *But every man is tempted, when He is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, brings forth death.*

Satan works against all of us, so don't be surprised when you are tempted with sin. Expect it. Be prepared for temptation.

- Run away from temptation.

1 Corinthians 10:13 - *There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*

God will not allow Satan to tempt us beyond what we are able to resist, if we choose to. He will always give us a way out. When we are tempted by Satan we must look for a godly alternative (it's always there) and go the way that God will show us.

- Resist temptation with the Word of truth.

Hebrews 4:12 - *For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

2 Corinthians 10:4-5 - *(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.*

It is helpful to read God's word when we are tempted, but few people carry a Bible with them at all times. However, if you are an authentic Christian with a close, personal relationship with Jesus, you may ask Him for help at any time. When you do have a Bible close at hand you can always find help to resist temptation there, too.

- Refocus with praise.

Psalms 147:1-7 *Praise ye the LORD: for it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely. The LORD doth build up Jerusalem: He gathers together the outcasts of Israel. He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds. He tells the number of the stars; He calls them all by their names. Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite. The LORD lifts up the meek: He casteth the wicked down to the ground. Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our God:*

Do you find yourself being tempted when you are fully concentrated on our Lord? I don't think so. When you commune with Jesus throughout each day you will hold Satan at bay. He will give you the strength to resist Satan's evil.

- Repent quickly when you fail.

1 Corinthians 6:18 - *Flee fornication. Every sin that a man does is without the body; but He that commits fornication sins against his own body. 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? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.*

1 Corinthians 10:14 - *Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.*

2 Timothy 2:22 - *Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.*

James 1:15 - *Then when lust hath conceived, it brings forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, brings forth death.*

Luke 4:8 - *And Jesus answered and said unto Him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.*

In these verses we are told that the best way to avoid sin is to run from it or to turn away from Satan. We are also told that sin leads to eternal death. Can anything be clearer?

On The Way To Original Sin:



Worshiping Money



Matthew 6:24 - No man can serve two masters: for either He will hate the one, and love the other; or else He will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

The word "mammon" means riches or material wealth. If your life is devoted to the acquisition of money, or the spending of money, then that is your God idol that you worship. You may go through the motions of being a Christian, but Jesus is not fooled. He knows what is in your heart and in your mind.

As Christians we should live a simple life. If you currently have a \$3 million dollar home, might it not be possible to survive in a \$1 million dollar home? Do you truly need a mansion to meet your needs? If you have a large family you may need a six bedroom home. But do you also need a game room, a home theater, a library, a huge area for entertaining, and twenty acres of land? Do you have more cars than you actually need? Do you own a boat that you rarely use? Could you not experience the same joy from renting a boat or going with friends on their boat? Do you need a television in every room? Do you have to wear expensive suits or dresses? Might it not be possible to survive by only spending less on your wardrobe? Do you truly need thirty pairs of expensive shoes? Is it required that you only stay in a suite when traveling? Do you only fly first class? Do you need an expensive car? Do you need more than one house? Do you need the most expensive cuts of meat on your table? Can you survive without servants? Do your children have to attend an Ivy League college or wear the most expensive athletic shoes?

I think you can see where this simplification of your life is leading. You'll have to adjust these ideas to your own situation in order to obey God's command. Most people do not live in million dollar homes, drive expensive cars, or spend their days trolling the mall. Most people are struggling financially.

However, too many people in our culture use shopping, even those who are struggling financially, as their primary leisure activity, spending more time at Walmart or the local shopping mall than they do with their families. Many people use credit cards to satisfy their lust for "things". They burden themselves with huge amounts of consumer debt at outrageous interest rates. I recommend that you search the Internet or your local library for information about "how to get out of debt". You will learn strategies and techniques

for removing this terrible burden.

You may then be free of worshiping mammon and keeping your focus on your relationship with Jesus.



Love, Marriage, and Sex



Luke 20:34 And Jesus answering said unto them, **The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage.**

Matthew 19:5 And said, **For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.**

Luke 16:18 *Whosoever puts away his wife, and marries another, commits adultery: and whosoever marries her that is put away from her husband commits adultery.*

I have been married twice, sort of. My first marriage lasted three years. The marriage was annulled (I was a Catholic then) after I discovered that my wife had an abortion without telling me. I also discovered that she had been unfaithful. I was devastated and also obtained a civil divorce.

My second marriage, a year later, lasted twenty-eight years. My wonderful wife, Connie, died of cancer in 2000. We were both unfaithful to each other about four years into the marriage. However, we each soon realized that it was better to put the energy that we used in being unfaithful into our existing marriage. This decision led us to a renewed commitment to our marriage and we both looked forward to, perhaps, at least fifty more years together. Neither of us were practicing Christians at the time, but we later repented of these terrible sins. After Connie died I took a vow of celibacy to honor her. That vow remains unbroken.

An Epidemic of Fornication



Fornication is voluntary sexual intercourse between two unmarried persons or two persons not married to each other. As human beings our sex drive is strong. And I'm sure there have been fornicators throughout the centuries. However, our current culture accepts millions of fornicators without condemnation.

I believe that the beginning of this epidemic started in the mid 1960's. The hippie culture embraced fornication as an expression of "love". Over the ensuing decades fornication has, it seems, become the norm. Millions of people are now living in sin and think that is alright. They most probably never received meaningful education about sex from their parents. They never learned about the Christian marriage covenant. They may have received inadequate parenting that destroyed their self-esteem. They may have experienced incest that made them feel worthless. Their Christian education may have been sadly lacking, focusing more on Bible stories and less on how to be an authentic Christian.

Whatever the reason for practicing fornication, for living in sin without repentance, there is no excuse for this lifestyle choice. While the incidence of teenage pregnancy has been going down during the past decade, it is still an epidemic. Fornication can lead to abortion for those who do not want to accept responsibility for their choices. It seems like almost half of the cases tried by Judge Judy are two unmarried people who have had a child and are now fighting about support, visitation, and property. This will make it very difficult for the child since two enemies cannot provide effective parenting.

An Epidemic of Adultery



Matthew 5:27-28 - *Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looks on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.*

Matthew 5:32 - *But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causes her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced commits adultery.*

Matthew 19:9 - *And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, commits adultery: and whoso marries her which is put away doth commit adultery.*

Mark 10:11 *And He saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, commits adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she commits adultery.*

The message from Jesus is very clear. He tells us what adultery is and then tells us not to do it. He did NOT say "do not commit adultery unless your church says it is alright". But millions of divorced people are living in sin, and many are fully accepted into their church without requiring repentance or an end to their sinful life. These unfortunate Christians have been lied to by their church.

This policy of many churches to fully accept divorcees has led to a serious crisis among many divorced and remarried Christians. They have followed the doctrine of men and not the commands of God. And this has been going on for more than a century, except in the Roman Catholic church.

I cannot offer a solution to this terrible dilemma. But I believe that all Protestant churches should re-examine their current policies about divorce and truly serve their congregations by telling them the truth. Marrying divorced couples should cease. You may lose a church member, but you will be practicing the will of God and, perhaps, motivate the couple to seriously consider the sin they will be committing. Jesus never said that following the laws of God would be easy. See my chapter *Some Commands Of Jesus*. He also spoke of the "narrow path" leading to salvation. Authentic Christianity is a very narrow path where following God's commands may be very difficult. But that is the way it is.

Matthew 7:14 - *Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leads unto life, and few there be that find it.*

Divorce and remarriage is pervasive in our culture. Following the commands of Jesus and asking all of the divorced couples to divorce their current spouses is not going to happen. Asking them to live a life of celibacy until their spouse dies does not seem to be an option. Following this path would result in the disruption of millions of families and broken homes for children.

It is hard to believe that this is what God wants, but His message is very clear. It is up to our churches to deal with this problem. Yet I cannot imagine what the solution might be.

Some Behaviors That Can Destroy A Marriage



1st Corinthians 13:11 - *When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.*

There are so many factors that can work against having a good marriage. In order to make sure your marriage survives and thrives,

here are some of the biggest threats to a marriage that every couple should be on the lookout for:



1. Failure To Put Your Family Before the Demands of Others

We have all heard the stories about the meddling in-laws, or the mother who won't let go of their child after marriage. We hear these stories because, to a lesser or greater extent, they are true.

The role of your relatives and friends will change when you say "I do," because when you come together as one, you've chosen to put your spouse above everyone else. A lot of marriages struggle because the couple do not have their priorities right. They find themselves pulled in every direction, except toward each other. Healthy couples will put their marriages above the demands of others.

2. A Lack of Communication

It's sad, but true, that most married couples don't spend much time having quality conversations, maybe only a few minutes a day. We need to connect in a meaningful way with the ones we love. If we ignore communication in our most important relationship we are very likely to drift apart.

So take the time to have meaningful conversations with your spouse every day.

3. Failure To Deal With Stress Effectively

It seems that it is almost unavoidable to have stress in our lives. The demands of work, family, and finances are most likely your biggest cause of your stress. However, a lot of the stress we feel is self-inflicted. When we react the same way to forgetting to fill up the gas tank as we do when we lose our job, often with excessive anger or even violence, then something is wrong in our psyche.

Millions of Americans suffer from pathological narcissism to the point that it is almost our national disease. They feel that they must always be in control of every situation and that everything must be perfect at all times. They will not admit any weakness in themselves and will rarely admit to being wrong about anything. They usually believe that their needs come before the needs of anyone else. Road rage is an excellent example of this disease in action. Living as a narcissist is very stressful.

Can you imagine what happens when two narcissists get married? (Sadly, it happens a lot.) It's almost a certainty that these marriages will end in divorce. The stress of maintaining a relationship with someone who does not always agree with you, who does not do what you demand, or has needs of their own is usually more than they can stand.



4. Allowing Technology To Interfere With Your Time

Our modern technology can be wonderful, but it can also interfere with our relationships. The use of the Internet, mobile phones, video games, streaming online movies, smart TVs and the like can make having a relationship difficult.

Do you spend hours on the Internet after you get home from work? Do you always answer your mobile phone no matter who you are with or who is calling? Do you spend hours playing video games instead of spending quality time with your partner? Do you sit silently by your spouse as you both watch movies or television shows? This is how technology can take over our lives and destroy our relationships.

The Internet is a great place to do research whether for business, school, or just out of curiosity about some topic. It can be the best source of learning about the news, especially if you want to get many different perspectives that you won't get from your newspaper or evening news on TV. The Internet is also good for shopping and getting the most for your money. However, any other use of the Internet is a total waste of your time. Spending time on Facebook, Instagram, Google+, Twitter, or any other social media is not a good use of your time. And you're not truly being social.

Your waste of time on the Internet could be spent having quality time with your family or spouse.

The same is true of video games and watching television. It's alright if you don't know the latest plot twists and story lines of *Law & Order* or *Modern Family* when they are discussed next day at work. Does it really matter who wins on *American Idol* or *America's Got Talent*? It's entirely different though, if you sit down with your family and watch a reality show like *Teen Mom* or a documentary such as *Cosmos* or *The American Experience*. Afterward you will have an opportunity to discuss these shows with your family. Now that's quality time!



Finally we come to the issue of mobile phones. Modern mobile phones can take photos and videos, help organize our schedules, play games, talk to us, let us surf the Internet, send texts to other people, check our email, and even make phone calls. Does anyone besides me ever ask, "Do we really need them?".

During the years that I was a therapist or a social worker on call 24 hours per day I had a mobile phone (or a cell phone as we called them then). This was necessary in the event of an emergency and so I would not be chained to my land line phone. That part of my life is now over.

For the last fourteen years I have had a pay-in-advance mobile phone that only makes phone calls. I have no monthly bill, no long-term contract, but have to pay \$1.00 when I use the phone to make a call. How much are you spending every month on mobile phone bills for you and your family? Are there really no better uses for your money?

My former daughter-in-law never turned her mobile phone off during the hours she was awake. She neglected both her husband and her child preferring instead to spend her time texting five or so friends. Why do people spend ANY time texting? Don't stronger relationships and better communication happen when people actually talk?

So I urge you to rethink your use of technology. When using it is what is best for your marriage and your family then that's OK. But when you use it to avoid actual human interaction you are harming your relationships.

5. Being Selfish

Marriage is a continuous life lesson in "sharing". If you are not sharing your hopes, your dreams, your fears, your doubts, your feelings, and your household labor with your spouse, then you are being selfish.

Also, it can be hard to put another person first all of the time. But that is what is required to have a successful marriage. We rarely get any real instruction about marriage (or sex either, for that matter). We can't trust what we are shown on television about marriage. TV marriages are fantasies at best, and very bad examples at their worst. You've probably seen reruns of *I Love Lucy*. This show has taught four generations of people about marriage. The lesson was usually manipulate or lie to your spouse about almost everything.

During the seventies we had *All In The Family*. This show taught us that the husband must never be confronted with his racism and

bigotry, that it was better to "keep the peace" in this family that was almost constantly engaged in arguing. Moving forward in time we had *Married With Children*. This taught us that belittling or humiliating your spouse was the proper behavior. I can't write about any situation comedies of the last twenty years because I never watched them.

We are rarely given a good example of how to have a Christian marriage by our parents. Most likely because they were never taught how to do it either. But millions of people have no other example so they behave in marriage as their parents did. Unless they are filled with the Holy Spirit they continue the mistakes of selfishness, spousal abuse, constant bickering, or even child abuse.

I urge you to look at your current behavior very carefully. Are you being selfish in your marriage?

6. Refusing To Forgive

To forgive others is a command of Jesus. If your spouse does something that offends you don't hesitate to discuss it with them. But know that the discussion will be much better if you begin the conversation with, "I was hurt by something you said (or did) today. But I want you to know that I forgive you." If their response is, "I never did THAT!", then don't get into an argument about it. Just say, "Well, that was what I experienced. I thought you would like to know."

It's really as simple as that.

7. Having Poor Boundaries

We are one flesh with our spouse, but we are not one person. It is important to remember that we may need some time for ourselves. We can't spend every free hour together. Recognize this and make sure that your spouse has time to spend in whatever way they want to.

Another problem we may have with boundaries is not protecting our marriage from family and friends who want to spend more time with us than we might actually want to spend with them. If you want to avoid spending time outside your marriage don't lie to them. Tell them how you plan to spend your time alone together and explain that it is very important to both of you. You might also suggest a time that you feel is better for your getting together.



8. Not Letting Go of the Past

You have both made mistakes in the past and may only now be living in an authentic Christian marriage. Either or both of you may have done terrible things, been mired in sin, or avoided having a Christian life. That describes most of us.

It is important to forgive each other for past mistakes and then keep them in the past. It is especially important to hang on to any mistakes or bad behavior that may have occurred during the marriage. These mistakes should have been discussed and forgiven long ago. You are only creating conflict in your marriage if you continue to blame your partner.

Don't live in the past (or the future). We only have what is happening now in our lives and in our relationships. Concentrate on what God is doing in your life.

9. Being Dishonest

Exodus 20:16 - *Thou shalt not bear false witness . . .*

When you lie to your spouse you can destroy your marriage, so there is no excuse when you do it. Honesty and trust are two of the cornerstones of a successful marriage.

When I was dating many decades ago I remember that I told a "half-truth" to the girl I was dating. About a week later she discovered the whole truth. She immediately terminated our relationship. I was devastated at the time, but now I say, "Yes. Way to go!".

I am not suggesting, of course, that you end your marriage when you discover a lie told by your spouse. But I strongly recommend that you have a serious discussion about it. Let your partner know how their dishonesty made you feel and ask that they never do it again. The pray together. One of you should repent for their sin. The other spouse should conclude the prayer by showing gratitude to God for His presence and guidance in your marriage.

10. Bringing Violence Into Your Marriage



There is **NEVER** an excuse for hitting, shaking, slapping, or throwing your spouse around a room. There is **NEVER** an excuse for hitting or spanking your children. Now you might say, “She makes me mad.” You’re wrong. If we get angry it is because we have chosen to get angry in response to something another person said or did.

A spouse who experiences violence should report the incident to the police immediately, otherwise the offending spouse will learn that He or she can get away with using violence without consequences. Then, to ensure that you are safe, leave the house and go to a shelter, a motel, to your parent's house, or stay with a friend. If necessary, obtain a protective order from your local court. It doesn't cost anything.

Do not reunite with your spouse until He or she has promised to go immediately to counseling with your pastor or a licensed marriage counselor.

Some people file for divorce when they have experienced violence from their spouse. However, in a Christian marriage this is not a "godly" reason. But if there is a second incident of violence I would recommend that you initiate a formal separation. I know that this will tear your family apart, but you cannot live with a spouse who abuses you. A permanent end to the violence must then be the first step toward a reconciliation.

Disciplining Your Child Without Violence



I know that speaking against spanking is a controversial idea, but it is a form of violence. Also, the old saying, "Spare the rod and spoil the child", is NOT in the Bible. When you spank a child you may alter their behavior for the moment, but you are also teaching them that the bigger and stronger person can use violence against another. Also, it makes you an object of fear, not a person to love and respect. Can you imagine how you would feel if, after doing something wrong (or just annoying), a person two to three times

your size came into the house and began spanking or beating you? I'm sure you wouldn't like it. Imagine how a child feels when the same thing happens to them.

Spanking can also lead to child abuse if your spanking gets out of control. Whenever I have spoken about this topic in public I usually receive resistance from more than half of the people present. It's truly disheartening.

Many parents use a time-out to discipline their children. But the usual time-out is not really very effective. I have an alternative to the standard time-out below.



Use An Active Time-Out

An excellent alternative to spanking is to give the child what I call an "active time-out". Traditional time-outs usually involve putting a child in a corner facing the wall and making them stay there for whatever amount of time you decide; thirty minutes, an hour? It often depends upon how mad you are.

An active time-out works like this: The length of the time-out

should be equal to a child's age. So a three year-old would have a three minute time-out. An active time-out is also the loving and constructive way to discipline your child.

You do not face the child against a wall or in a corner. Instead, they must sit in a chair facing YOU beside them. You clearly explain that this is a time-out because of their behavior. Then you discuss their behavior by asking questions such as "Why do you think you behaved that way?", "What were you feeling/thinking when you did that?", "What do we need to do so that never happens again?", "Do you understand why that behavior was wrong?", "What will you do the next time you are feeling/thinking that way?", and so on.



Never accept "I don't know" as an answer from the child. Be sure to periodically praise the child for how well they are doing in the time out and, also, let them know how much time they have left in the time-out. Using an egg timer or an hour glass makes a good visual reminder for the child.

A loving alternative to a time-out is just to sit with your child, discuss their behavior, and ask the same types of questions you might use in an active time-out. But now add what I call "logical consequences". For example, if a child breaks something on purpose, make them pay for it. (If it is an expensive item, let them

earn only a few dollars by doing special chores.) If a child lies, take away a toy or a privilege for a set period of time. If a child constantly interrupts when others are talking, or if a child uses profanity, a logical consequence might be that you have them be silent for ten to thirty minutes at a set time for a week. I think you get the idea by now. Using logical consequences works best with children who are older than seven or eight.

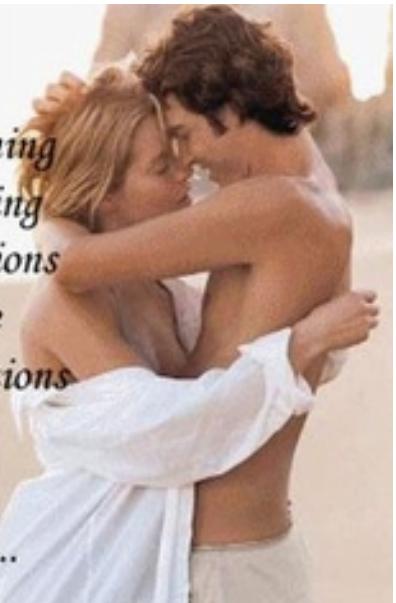
I know that my recommendations about disciplining children will be hard for you to follow if you believe that using violence against your child is the only way. The oft-repeated saying, "Spare the rod and spoil the child." is a belief that spanking or beating a child is alright. Violence against children is firmly ingrained in our culture. I strongly urge you to at least try my methods for a week or two. I think you will find that they work.

But I ask you to consider my own experience with disciplining children. In the early nineties I was the director of a residential group home for twenty-four sexually and physically abused children aged two to twelve. These children were very disturbed and misbehavior was a daily occurrence for many of them. However, we were forbidden by the state of Florida to use any kind of corporal punishment (spanking or beating).

I introduced active time-outs and logical consequences to the facility. This resulted in profound changes in the children. Before I took over the facility they had experienced only yelling and traditional time-outs lasting at least a half an hour. The staff resisted me at first. I even received anonymous death threats about this policy change. However, I was the director of the facility and they had to comply or be fired. Most of them complied.

*Love me without fear
Trust me without questioning
Need me without demanding
Want me without restrictions
Accept me without change
Desire me without inhibitions
For a love so free*

Will never fly away



How Do You Know That You Are In Love?

Most people are never taught about love, so they get their ideas from TV, the movies, romance novels, and magazines. But you almost never see a depiction of true love; the kind that holds a marriage together.

Use the following tests of love to make sure that you are truly in love with your potential spouse, or just infatuated or feeling lust for them. Tests of Love appear in a book written by Chip Ingram, the Senior Pastor of Venture Christian Church in Silicon Valley, California, and CEO and Founder of Living on the Edge - an international teaching and discipleship ministry. His book is *Love, Sex, and Lasting Relationships*. These are not the original tests of love by Pastor Ingram. I used his tests to inspire my own list, but I highly recommend his book for a more detailed study of these issues.

Tests of Love

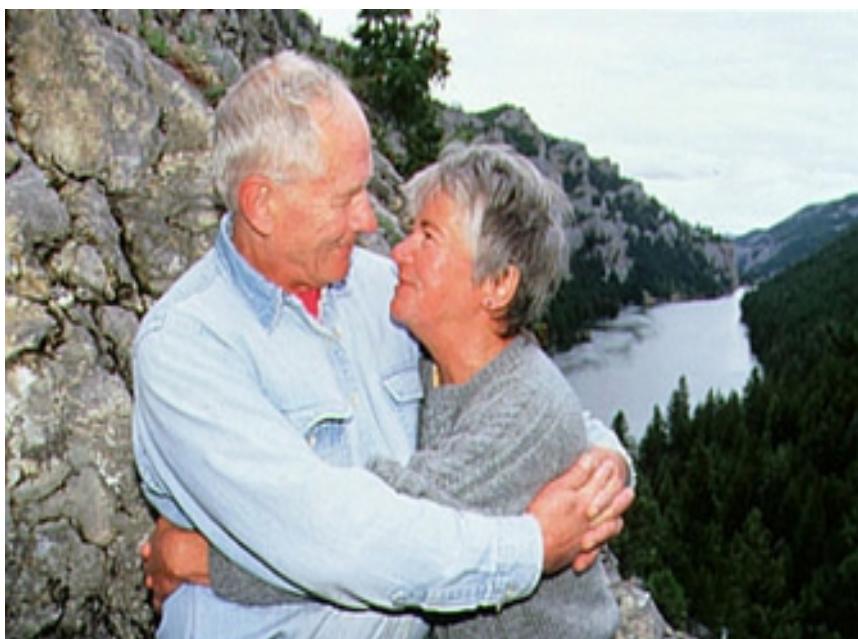
- **Time** - There is no such thing as "love at first sight". That's only on TV and at the movies. You may experience lust at first sight or a strong interest in the person at first sight, but never love. Falling in love takes time. You cannot really know another person after six weeks, three months, or maybe not even in a year. You must see the other person in every possible situation; facing challenges, sickness, at church, at work, and so on. How do they deal with the difficult times? Do they revert to childishness or martyrs when they are sick? Do they allow you to help them through difficult times or do they reject your help? Can they hold a job? Are they devout in their religion or are they just going through the motions?
- **Focus** - Does the other person maintain their attention on you over time? When you are together do they ignore you by spending time texting, playing a video game, talking on the phone, or silently watching TV? If they can't give you their attention when you are together then it seems to me they will not make a good partner.
- **Knowledge** - How much do you truly know this person? Do you know about all of the experiences that made them the person they are today? Do you know where they were born, details about their family, and what their childhood was like? Do you know where they have traveled? What their previous long-term relationships were like? Do you know where they went to school and what kind of student they were? What illnesses have they had? What challenges and disappointments have they experienced? If there are things that they don't want to talk about, that should be a serious concern. What are they hiding and why? Do they use you to enhance their social status?
- **Exclusivity** - Do they date other people and never seem to find the occasion to frequently spend time with you?

- **Work** - Are they able to hold a job and follow the rules there (arriving on time, following a dress code, etc.)? Do they have a career or just a job? Will you have to live in poverty because there are no prospects for a well-paying job? Another aspect of this test is can you work together? Can you cheerfully assemble a piece of furniture together? Paint a room? Read a map? If your work together provokes frustration or anger, then one or both of you may have some serious character flaws. I recommend that you truthfully and carefully examine the incident to discover what went wrong. Then find a time to calmly discuss the situation.
- **Trust** - Do you trust this person? Do you feel secure in your growing affection? Do you ever discover that they have told a lie? How did you both deal with it? Is there jealousy in your relationship? Expressing jealous show a lack of trust. It is infantile behavior.
- **Boundaries** - It is important to recognize that you are two people with your own goals, emotions, and interests. If you are discouraged by the other person in pursuing your goals then that is not a good sign. If they feel threatened when you act independently then they do not love you. Do they try to suppress your expression of emotion? Do they make statements such as, "You made me angry!", or "I hate it when you cry". No one can make another person angry. Being angry is a choice we make and is often an expression of fear. As humans we have a vast range of emotions. Someone who loves you will understand this and not try to restrict your expressions of emotion. For example, if you cry or are in emotional distress the other person should say such things as, "I'm sorry you're upset" or "Is there anything I can do to help?". Regarding your interests, it is normal for two people to have some interests in common, but also to have a range of other interests. A partner who tries to restrict your pursuing other interests is trying to

dominate or control you. That is not love.

- **Delayed Gratification** - A mature person recognizes that, without frustration, we can't have everything we want "NOW". They don't overly use credit cards to get immediate gratification and saddle themselves with debt. They are able to live within their means while still practicing charity and saving a portion of their income. Likewise, in the area of sex, they don't pressure you to fornicate. They recognize that marriage is a sacred covenant and don't want it soiled by having sex before marriage. I have to admit, though, that when I was very young I could not imagine getting married without having a sexual relationship first. I justified this by thinking, "What if we are not sexually compatible?". I did not realize the sacred covenant and how powerful it can be in resolving ANY problems between a couple. If you trust in God and the covenant of marriage, you will have a wonderful life together.
- **Affection** - Expressing affection for each other is vital to a relationship. Are you able to hug, kiss, hold hands, and cuddle both in private and when around other people? If the other person won't show you affection when you are with others, then something is wrong. Now I'm not saying that you should be "make out" in public. But holding hands or short kissing should take place between you.
- **Physical Attraction** - I have deliberately left this one for the last test, because most people put this one first. Our culture often makes physical attraction seem the only, or most important, aspect of a relationship. It's not. The other person may be beautiful or handsome, but it is important to remember that beauty fades over time (unless you can afford a really good plastic surgeon). My second wife was thirty-four when we married and I was only twenty-three. We were both beautiful and there was a strong physical attraction. We both aged, of course. By the time she was

forty-five she began the slow decline to actually becoming hideous. She was too thin and her facial skin began to sag. This distorted and emphasized her wrinkles. After I hit thirty-five I began a long struggle with my weight. I began at a trim and fit 140 pounds. Over the years I weighed as much as 240 pounds, then down to 165, then back up over 200. My wonderful wife never complained or chastised me about my weight. In the days before she died in the year 2000, she became beautiful again. Her wrinkles disappeared and her facial skin tightened. I fixed her hair as she had worn it in 1973 and there was the woman I married. I considered it a gift from God.



The Ideals of Christian Love

Matthew 22:37-40 - Jesus said unto Him, ***Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou***

shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Here is a poetical version of 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 :

Love suffers long,
and is kind;
Love does not envy;
Love vaunts not itself,
is not puffed up,
Love does not behave itself unseemly,
seeks not her own,
is not easily provoked,
thinks no evil;
Love rejoices not in iniquity,
but rejoices in the truth;
Love bears all things,
believes all things,
hopes all things,
endures all things.
Love never fails

The Different Kinds of Love

The word most used in the Gospels for love are variations of the Greek word "Agápe". (Remember, the Gospels were originally written in Greek.)

The early twentieth century Anglican theologian Oliver Chase Quick wrote,

"If we could imagine the love of one who loves men purely for their own sake, and not because of any need or desire of his own, purely desires their good, and yet loves them wholly, not for what at this moment they are, then we should have in our minds some true image of the love of the Father and Creator of mankind."

If we express our Christian love for everyone we encounter then we will avoid so much sin. We cannot steal from a person we love. We cannot lie to or about a person we love. We cannot be jealous

of a person we love, but rather celebrate their success and happiness. We cannot kill a person we love. And we cannot, as an authentic Christian, commit the sins of adultery or fornication with a person we love.

If we practice Christian love at all times then we cannot harm another person in any way, whether emotionally or physically.

- We will not react in anger when we feel slighted or disrespected by another person. (Your road rage will be a thing of the past.)
- We will not walk around in public showing off our guns to prove our "manhood" or to prove the importance of the 2nd amendment to our Constitution. (No one is coming for your guns. Really.)
- We will not try to harm or subjugate other races or ethnicities to assert the dominance of the "white ideal". (Segregation is a sin. Separating parents from their children by deporting them is one of the most cruel things our government can do.)
- We will raise our children with love and respect. We will not practice the misguided parenting rules of our parents or grandparents. We will not use violence against our children, but will repeatedly show and teach them that misbehavior has logical consequences. (We will not spank our children because it teaches them about violence and bullying, not correct behavior.)
- We will not resent the poor among us, but will instead increase our charity to assist them. (There are SO many charities that serve the poor and they always need more money.) We will also not advocate for laws that deprive the poor of help to have at least the basic necessities of food, housing, medical care, and clothing. Being poor is not something people choose. But in our current economic

situation it can sometimes be impossible to find any job, let alone one that pays a living wage. My son, for example, has mostly been unemployed for the past five years, only able to obtain a few months of part-time work in all that time.

- We will be kind to our employees or co-workers and always seek to ensure that their needs are met as far as we are able. (Have you heard about teamwork) (Have you heard about paying a living wage?)
- We will cherish God's creation and work toward making sure that is protected and preserved in a healthy state. (Yes, climate change is a scientific reality. Climate change denial is delusional and only supports those who are seeking a profit from their fossil fuels.)
- We will not try to interfere in or try to control other people by throwing our Christian beliefs in their faces. (Do you try to force your beliefs on other people? Do you support legislation that enforces Christian beliefs? Religious freedom is for everyone, not just Christians.) (We are not a Christian nation, but rather a true melting pot of different religions and non-believers.)

Matthew 5:43-47 - *Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which spitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for He makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye?*

The Many Words For Love

There are several Greek words for love that are used to describe love. The Greek language distinguishes how the word is used. Ancient Greek has four distinct words for love: agápe, éros, philía, and storgē. While only the word Agápe appears in the Gospels, knowing about the other Greek words for love can help us better understand the total human experience of this emotion.

- **Agápe**, as previously discussed, refers to Christian love. This includes both the love God has for us, as well as the love we have for each other.
- **Éros** is physical, passionate love, with sensual desire and longing to become one flesh. It is also an expression of romantic love, which may be pure emotion without the balance of logic. Sometimes *eros* is expressed as "love at first sight". Most teenagers only express this kind of love since their experience and training is limited. **Éros** can also apply to dating relationships, as well as the physical expression of love in marriage.
- **Philía** is "mental" love. It describes an affectionate regard or friendship in both ancient and modern Greek. It includes loyalty to friends, family, and community, and requires virtue, equality, and familiarity.
- **Storge** means "affection" in ancient and modern Greek. It describes a natural affection, like what parents feel for their children and other family members.

The Marriage Covenant



Mark 10:8-9 - *And they two shall be one flesh: so then they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*

Marriage is a covenant. It is a sacred bond between spouses that is instituted by, and publicly entered into, before God as a permanent union that lasts until death. It is usually consummated by sexual intercourse.

Andreas J. Kostenberger is the Director of Ph.D. Studies and Professor of New Testament at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has written that God's plan for the marriage covenant is made up of at least the following five vital principles:

1 - The Permanence of Marriage.

Marriage is intended to be a permanent choice, to last until death. God makes this very clear. Divorce is not permitted except in cases where a spouse has committed adultery. If spouses are committed to a permanent union, then they will work hard to rescue a troubled marriage. Our modern culture, however, teaches us that we are meant to be always happy (not possible), to avoid conflict (an impossibility), and that it is alright to move on to another spouse if they do not fulfill our "needs" (which may actually be our selfish desires.)

2 - The Sacredness of Marriage. Marriage is not just an agreement between two consenting individuals (a civil union or contract); it is a covenant made to your spouse before God that you are joining your lives until death.

3 - The Intimacy of Marriage. Marriage is the most intimate of all human bonds. It unites the partners in a union of "one-flesh". Christian marriage usually involves leaving one's parents and the establishment of a new family with the spouse.

4 - The Mutuality of Marriage. The partners in a marriage should practice total devotion to their spouse at all times. Yeah, really, at all times. They must each be concerned about the well-being of their spouse. They should be each other's best friend, as well as accommodating lovers and partners for life.

5 - The exclusiveness of marriage. Since marriage is a covenant between you, God, and your spouse you should never commit adultery. (Rather obvious, isn't it?) If you do, it is undoubtedly your own fault. You have failed to communicate your own sexual needs in the privacy of your marriage. You can't expect your partner to read your mind about your needs and desires. The

exclusiveness of marriage also extends to premarital sex, or fornication. If you are contemplating marriage then you should not even consider it unless you can have frank discussions about ANY conceivable topic, including sex.

Marriage and Sex



Today's popular culture promotes sexual activity in almost every message we receive. But the purveyors of our media culture seem to forget or ignore the fact that sex was God's idea. He did not create it just as a way to procreate, but also as an extremely pleasurable and satisfying experience that acts as a "cementing" force in our relationships.

There is nothing in the Gospels that prohibits any kind of sexual expression in marriage. Lust is perfectly alright, and even a bit fun. And fun in the marriage bed is totally acceptable to God no matter which acts you perform or what positions you might assume. Too many marriages have been destroyed by one or the other partner (or both) being inhibited about sex, or inhibited about even talking

about sex. But if you create a Godly marriage you will have thoroughly discussed your future sex life. If you don't establish a great sex life you are cheating yourself of one of the greatest of human experiences.

Here are some tips for getting the most from your sex life and your marriage:

- Know what satisfies your spouse. When you talk about sex, whether before or after your marriage, make sure that you each understand what satisfies your partner. However, expect this to change after you each become more experienced.
- Kiss each other passionately. Deep, extended time spent kissing will likely relax you and arouse you to want other activities.
- Touch each other, caress each other, explore your spouse's body. Most women AND men enjoy being intimately touched. It will likely take you both into a more excited state.
- Recognize that not every experience of intimacy such as kissing, touching, and cuddling have to lead to intercourse (too many people think that they do). Sometimes it is enough just to be close and intimate. You should be able to say, "I'm not really in the mood for sex now, but I would love to spend time kissing, cuddling, and caressing you." As long as "not being in the mood" doesn't last for too long a period it should be alright.
- Anticipate that your frequency of intercourse may change over time. You won't be on a perpetual honeymoon. The stresses of work, paying bills, having children, and a range of other things will most likely reduce your sex drive. But don't feel guilty or angry at your spouse when this happens.

Remember to continue cuddling and kissing to maintain your intimacy.

- Try new things together including different positions for intercourse, oral sex, role playing, costumes or wigs, dominate/submissive games, or anything else that you can think of. Your sex life is there for you to explore together and, as long as both spouses agree, do whatever you choose with each other. Have fun.
- Make your spouse know that He or she is appreciated and loved. Flowers, candy, or love notes left around the house may go a long way to getting your partner in the mood for intimacy. But so does respect and courtesy.
- Don't argue, but discuss your differences when you disagree. Be prepared for agreeing to disagree on many topics.
- Don't put yourself in traditional gender roles. If the wife wants to fix the car or the husband wants to do all of the cooking, then why not? Of course you should both share childcare and household chores. This sharing doesn't have to be "50/50", but both partners should share the work as much as possible.
- Spend time together doing things you both enjoy. Entertain the friends you used to spend time with before you were married. Don't leave your spouse home alone while you spend an evening with the guys (or the girls). Instead, plan a time when one is out with the boys and the other is out with the girls.
- Pray together every day. This will strengthen your marriage in ways you cannot imagine.



Marriage Equality



Let me say, at the beginning of this chapter that I am neutral on this issue because it hasn't touched me personally. If I am ever asked to perform a wedding for a same-sex couple only then will I have to make a choice. I am not a bigot, narrow-minded, or believe that being a homosexual is a sin. I may have an opinion about this issue, but unless I take action and marry a same-sex couple, it doesn't matter what I think, or feel, or believe. It only matters if I DO something for or against.

Unless you have "walked in the shoes" of these men and women you have no right to judge them, condemn them, or feel that you

have the right to crusade against them. At least, not if you are an authentic Christian. If you have "walked in their shoes" you still have no right to judge them, condemn them, or feel that you have the right to crusade against them. Of course, you are not likely to do any of these evil things unless you are a secret homosexual filled with self-loathing and shame.

I could stop writing about this topic right now, however, there is so much ignorance and irrational fear about this issue on the part of many Christians, that I would like to fully discuss it. My hope is that some knowledge and sanity may be introduced into the discussion.

Does This Issue Really Concern You?

I would also like to say that, unless you are a minister or priest, the issue of marriage equality should not really concern you, unless you have a desire to control and change anyone who is different from you. You may consider homosexuality a sin, but aren't we all sinners? Don't you deal with sinners wherever you go? One sin is no greater than another to God. What does it truly matter that there might be homosexuals in your church (I assure you there is a great probability that they are there)? Do you know which people in your church practice bondage or who regularly commits adultery? Of course not. The sex lives of other people, whether in or out of your church, are not your business. (I assure you there is a great probability that they are there).

A Confusing Issue For Some

I have to admit that the issue of marriage equality, or "gay marriage", as it is most often called, has been confusing for me. Like many in the clergy, and many Americans, too, we are wrestling with determining how to respond. I have watched marriage equality become the law in twenty-one states as of this writing. I have watched Christian denominations struggle with a response in line with their doctrines. I have also seen the fear and the hate of too many Christians.

I have also seen many people dredge up arguments against marriage equality from the Old Testament. These arguments are from supposed Christians who apparently have not read the Gospels and therefore have not learned that Jesus offered us a new covenant. The Old Testament laws now only apply to the Jews (except for the Ten Commandments).

I have seen people claim that 2,000 years of church "tradition" cannot be ignored. But church tradition cannot be trusted, as you will see in my chapter *Some Terrible Traditions Of The Christian Church* later in this book.



Will Marriage Equality Destroy Traditional Marriage?

There are many people, especially politicians, who proclaim that marriage equality will destroy traditional marriage and sometimes even civilization. I have to ask "how"? Do these politicians feel that if gay marriage is allowed that heterosexuals will suddenly begin fleeing from their marriages and into the arms of a same-sex lover? That's totally absurd. Does a gay marriage in California have any effect at all on your marriage in Kansas? Does a gay marriage down the street have any effect on your marriage? Does a gay marriage in your church effect your own marriage? No. Do

you attend all of the marriages that take place in your church? Of course not. No one is requiring a pastor to perform a gay marriage. And no one is requiring you to be present at a gay marriage. **The only real threat to marriage is the ease with which we can get a divorce.** Of course, no one every mentions this fact.

What Did Jesus Say?

Nothing. Jesus never mentioned homosexuality. Or porpoises, the Internet, or automobiles, or television. Since His strongest message was that we should love one another as He has loved us, I think He would have condemned homosexuality if He thought it was important. The only condemnation of homosexual behavior in the New Testament is from Paul. And He was not speaking about committed same-sex relationships. I doubt that He would ever have imagined that such a thing could even exist. Paul was a man of his time. His knowledge of human sexuality was naturally limited and flawed, and He could therefore only judge same-sex unions in the context of his culture. In Paul's time Roman and Greek same-sex pairings were either with temple prostitutes or else with older men dominating young boys in order to assert their power. It was culturally sanctioned child molestation. He would never have been able to conceive of two men being in love, having families, and seeking to spend their lives together. It wasn't part of anyone's world view at the time. I'm sure there were homosexual life partners back then, but they wouldn't have exposed their love to public view.

My Story

I feel I also have to inform you about my own unique perspective in dealing with this issue. It is difficult to reveal myself in this way, but I think it will help you to understand the issue of marriage equality a little better.

I was born a homosexual. It was never a choice as so many ill-informed people claim. I remember being sexually active in my

mind at the age of five. No one knew what my interior feelings were, but I know that I had a very strong interest in other boys. When we played together I would do anything I could to see them naked (that rarely happened). I would often visit the local public swimming pool and hang out in the men's locker room to see naked men. This behavior continued into my teen years.

I was a bookish and artistic boy, not really into sports, and I was called a "faggot" or a "queer" long before I knew what those words meant. I was bullied unmercifully in middle school, even by some of my teachers (Hello, Coach O'Neil, the cruellest teacher I ever had.), and if I hadn't taken up smoking at the age of thirteen (it was considered "cool".), and been befriended by the most popular boy in school, I believe I would have committed suicide.

I was molested by a scouting adviser when I was thirteen. I wanted desperately to tell my parents so that I could quit the Boy Scouts and remove myself from the situation. But when I tried to tell my mother what had happened to me I believe she knew what I was leading up to and said, "If I thought that man had ever touched you I would kill both you and Him". Needless to say, I was not able to speak of my sexual abuse until I was well into adulthood. My mother was later very sorry, but that was her world view at the time. She really didn't know any other way to behave.

My first marriage was primarily undertaken in order to please my parents so that they would not doubt my heterosexuality. I was nineteen, a bisexual, and very ashamed of my homosexual impulses. I dated both girls and men in high school. I was not very experienced in gay sex, but had a healthy response to having sex with girls, and with my wife after we were married. As I wrote in a previous chapter, I asked that that marriage be annulled after three years due to her infidelity and secretly having had an abortion. The official reason for the Catholic church was that the marriage had never been consummated. Yeah, right. It was my child she aborted.

I learned some major truths about human sexuality as I studied for my master's degree in counseling psychology, as well as during the fifteen years I worked as a therapist with individuals, couples, and

families. I wrote my master's thesis about male sexuality through the decades of a man's life from the teen years through old age.

The Sexual Continuum

Totally Gay <<<<<<<<>>>>>>>> Totally Straight

The most important thing I learned was that human sexuality for everyone, male and female, is actually expressed on a continuum from Totally Gay to Totally Straight. The majority of men and women express their sexuality as totally straight. They don't choose to be straight. That is just who they are. Likewise, those who express their sexuality as anything but totally straight don't choose their sexual orientation. Again, that is just who they are. There are still millions of other people who go through life expressing their sexuality back and forth along the entire spectrum. This is why we have bisexuals. They may incline more toward one direction than another, but don't hesitate to move in the opposite direction if they feel a strong sexual attraction. I am not saying that anyone's fornication is not sin, merely trying to clarify the subject of sexual orientation.

There is no such thing as a sexual "preference". Do you remember when you "decided" to be straight? Of course not. It never happened. Likewise, the same is true of the LGBT community. Believing anything else is a denial of science and the totality of human experience.

As of this writing I do not personally have to make a choice about how to deal with the issue of marriage equality. I live in North Carolina where there is currently a constitutional amendment that prohibits gay marriage. I cannot perform a gay marriage, even if I wanted to.

Where Major Religions Stand on Same-Sex Marriage

These religions allow same-sex marriages:

Reform and Conservative Jewish movements
Unitarian Universalist Association
United Church of Christ
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Evangelical Lutherans

This religion allows the blessing of same-sex unions:

Episcopal Church

These religions do not permit same-sex marriages:

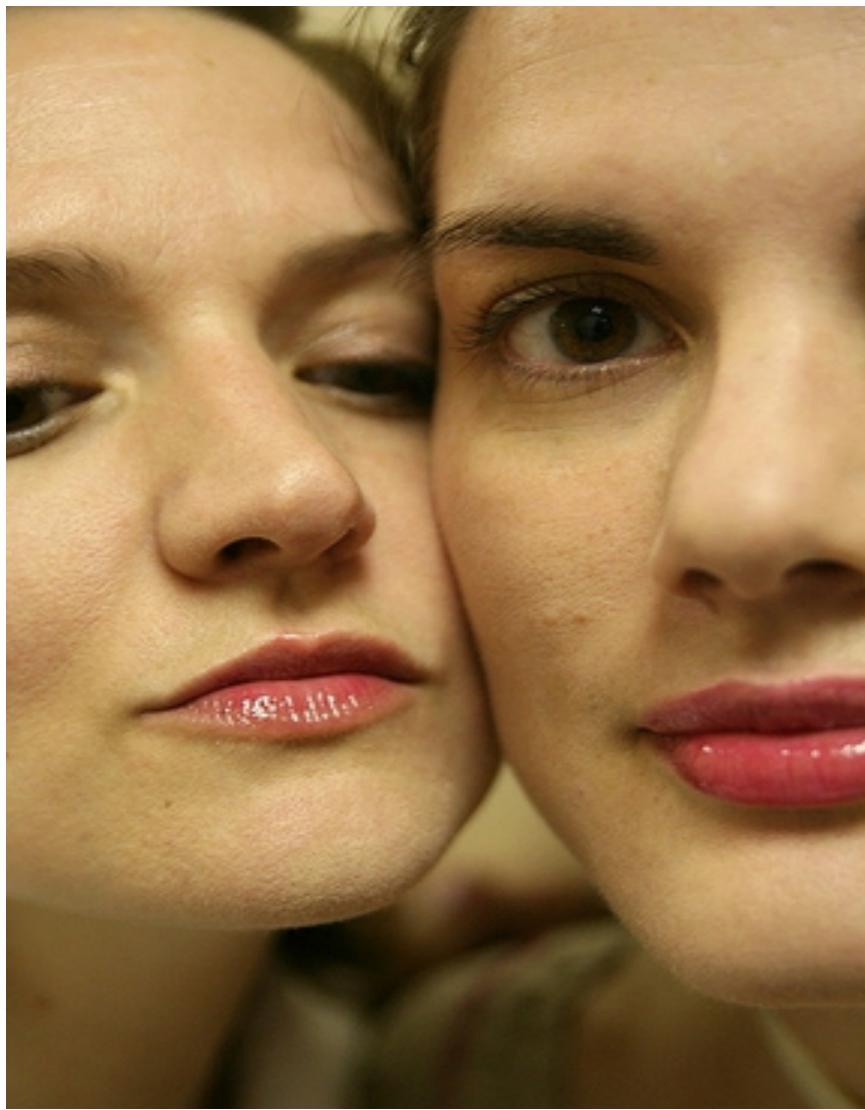
Roman Catholic Church
Orthodox Jewish Movement
Southern Baptist Convention
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints
United Methodist Church

If you would like to study this issue in greater depth I recommend the following two books from Amazon.com. The first speaks in favor of same-sex marriage and the second one is against it.

God and the Gay Christian: The Biblical Case In Support of Same-sex Relationships by Matthew Wise

Can You Be Gay and Christian?: Responding With Love and Truth To Questions of Homosexuality by Michael W. Brown





The Terrible Traditions of the Christian Church

Matthew 15:9 *But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.*

Mark 7:7-8 - *Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And He said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.*

This scripture makes it very clear that we should not abide by the doctrines or traditions of men.

First, the Christian religion did not begin until Jesus returned to heaven. Jesus was teaching to Jews, and possibly the occasional Gentile who happened to hear Him. It was the apostles and later Paul who established Christianity. This is where the laws of men first came into our faith.

The First Pope

There is some controversy in the Christian world whether Peter or Linus was the first Pope. Peter was the Bishop of Rome, but never had the title of Pope. Linus was the first to take that title somewhere between 64 A.D. and 67 A.D.

There is nothing in the Gospels that tells us to establish a hierarchy of Bishops, Archbishops, Cardinals, Priests, and Popes. **This is the doctrine of men.**

Luke 13:34 - *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which kills the prophets, and stones them that are sent unto thee; how*

often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!

Jesus told us to be part of a community of faith. He never told us to subjugate ourselves to men in the church who exalted themselves, enriched themselves, and ruled over our lives. **This is the doctrine of men.**

For many, many centuries the church did not allow anyone but priests to read the Holy Bible. Even when it became allowed in the 15th century A.D., only very rich people could afford to own a Bible. The Roman Catholic church puts a priest between us and God when we want to confess and repent of our sins. **This is the doctrine of men.**

The Roman Catholic church seems to have been organized so that we could not have a personal relationship with Jesus. They didn't even tell us that this relationship with Jesus was required by the Gospels if we had any hope of salvation. Please don't get the idea that I am anti-Catholic. I almost became a priest in 1986! I also believe that the Roman Catholic church has provided comfort to lost souls, communities of faith, and a knowledge of God to many, many millions through the centuries, but...

The Roman Catholic church introduced the sacrament of Confession where we tell our sins to a priest. Then HE grants absolution and a penance. The priests would also prescribe a series of rote prayers that we were to repeat rapidly again and again, depending upon what the priest told us to do. You may have heard that we were told to say, "10 Hail Mary's", or "7 Rosaries", or whatever.

Of course it is possible that Jesus understands that the Roman Catholic church perverted His message and commands, and that He DID hear the prayers of the truly repentant no matter how they prayed. I would like to believe that this was the case.



The image above is of a catholic confessional. The priest sits in the middle. Those who wish to confess to the priest go in on either side and pull a curtain shut to darken the area. The priest has small windows on both side of his area so that He can see and speak to either person who has come to confession. It should be noted that those who do not wish to use a confessional may request a face to face meeting with a priest. That's what I did when I was a Catholic.

The doctrines of men have been foisted upon us in so many ways, both by the Roman Catholic church and the various sects of the Protestant churches.

I don't know about your experience, but I was taken to a variety of churches when I was growing up. I was instructed in many rules or "Christian Laws" that had to be followed in each of them, sometimes in church and sometimes at home. **These rules are all the doctrines of men.**



Here are some of the rules that I was told everyone must live by:

You may not dance.

You may not swear, or even say the word "cuss".

If you are a child, you must be seen and not heard and behave like an adult as soon as you can walk.

If you are a child you must eat everything on your plate or you will go to Hell.

You may not wear makeup.

You may not touch your genitals, even when washing.

You may not look at your genitals at any time.

You may not listen to the radio or watch television.
You may not listen to popular music, only Christian music.
You may not go to the theater or the movies.
You may not read men's magazines, even if it is just for the articles.
You may not drink alcohol.
You may not eat meat or chicken.
You must eat fish on Friday. Oh, wait, they changed that.
You must pray and fast for forty days before Easter.
You must pray to the virgin Mary and the saints to intercede for you with God.
The Pope is infallible when He says He is.
You must have natural childbirth without drugs so that you experience the pain that Eve brought upon all women..
You must not kiss anyone before you are married.
You must show your connection to God by screaming, crying, and shaking at the front of the church.
You must show your connection to God by speaking in tongues.
You must not smoke cigarettes.
You may only wear dark colors and extremely modest clothing.
You must cover your head in church if you are a woman.
You may not laugh in church.

Can you remember the doctrines of men that you were told, or may even still be following?

Tradition

There are times when tradition may be acceptable or possibly even pleasing to God. But there are certain traditions that may even be hated by Him.

Some of the traditions many Christians are currently following violate the commandments of Jesus.

Matthew 15:1-3 - *Then came to Jesus Scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for*

they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But He answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?

Matthew 15:7-14 - Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draw nigh unto me with their mouth, and honors me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. And He called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: Not that which goes into the mouth defiles a man; but that which comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man. Then came his disciples, and said unto Him, Know thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying? But He answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.

The long-practiced “sacred” traditions violating the commandments of God was an important teaching of Jesus.



When people sometimes ask me why I don't celebrate Christmas I give them a copy of this chapter either in person or via the Internet. Sometimes I give them a link to this information on my website at Worldwide-Christian-Ministry.Org. I can only hope that my writing will convince them to stop celebrating the Pagan holidays instituted by the Christian church.

First, there is no command in the Bible to celebrate Christmas. Also, this celebration was not practiced by the early followers of Jesus (the ones who knew Him). The celebration of Christ's birth was begun sometime in the fourth century A.D. This practice is condemned by Jesus in the scriptures above. Jesus repeatedly chastised the Scribes and Pharisees for the many laws and traditions that they had inserted into the Hebrew religion. So, too, would He chastise the leaders of the church for introducing "traditions" that have nothing to do with His commandments.

And there is nothing in the Bible that orders, or even suggests, that we should celebrate either the birth or the resurrection of Jesus. And certainly not a celebration that incorporates Pagan practices!

It is my belief that we should question the traditions that have been handed down through the centuries, although few dare to. Many Christians don't practice the Roman Catholic traditions of Saint's days, Lent, or Ash Wednesday, although they are not aware of the Pagan roots of these traditions. But these same Christians don't realize the Pagan roots of Christmas, Easter, and Halloween. Once you know the truth I sincerely hope that you will reconsider your participation in these godless practices.

I know that some will say, "Well, I'm not a Pagan, so this doesn't apply to me". **But Jesus says that it does.** Some will say that these practices are "for the children". While children do enjoy these celebrations, you now know that Jesus has told us not to follow the traditions of men. Others will say, "I know the church must have sanctified these practices, so it's alright to celebrate them", or "My pastor says it is alright". You are wrong. God's words are simple, clear, and very easy to understand; don't do it.



Do you remember your last Christmas season? Did you go shopping on "Black Friday" where people trample each other to save a few dollars? Did you overspend on gifts that you could not really afford while putting yourself in piles of debt or depleting your savings? Did you decorate your house with the Christmas spirit? Did you have a Christmas tree? Did you bake gingerbread men? Do you go caroling from house to house?

I have some alternative practices for Christmas, Lent, Easter, and Halloween later in this chapter. These will provide a Godly practice that will not lead your family further into sin and will also insure that your children do not suffer any disappointment by not participating in these Pagan practices like other children..

The History of Christmas



The New Testament does not give a date for Jesus' birth. This might suggest that the early Christians had no interest in or knowledge of Jesus' birth date. Jesus knows the future until the end of time. If He had wanted us to celebrate his birthday He would have told us.

How Did the Celebration of Christmas Begin?

The Pagan holiday of Saturnalia was practiced by Romans for centuries. This celebration took place between December 17th to the 25th. The Roman courts were closed and Roman law decreed that there would be no punishment for damaging property or causing injury to anyone.

At the beginning of the festival the authorities selected a person to represent "an enemy of the Roman people". Each community chose a victim that they forced to eat a massive amount of food and engage in lustful pleasures for the week. When the festival concluded on December 25th they brutally murdered this man or woman in order to "destroy the forces of darkness". Other aspects of the Saturnalia include mass intoxication, rape or other lustful practices, roaming the town naked while singing, and the baking of human-shaped cookies.

In the 4th century A.D. the Christian church wanted to convert as many Pagans as they could. They told them that they could still celebrate Saturnalia, but as Christians they would be celebrating the birth of Jesus. The church thought they might be able to change the Pagan practices of Saturnalia, but it didn't work. Today when we celebrate Christmas we are using many of those same Pagan rites.

Stephen Nissenbaum, a professor of history at the University of Massachusetts, in his 2010 book entitled, *The War For Christmas*, wrote, "In return for ensuring massive observance of the anniversary of the Savior's birth by assigning it to this resonant date, the Church for its part tacitly agreed to allow the holiday to be celebrated more or less the way it had always been."

The Reverend Increase Mather of Boston observed in 1687 that "the early Christians who first observed the Nativity on December 25 did not do so thinking that Christ was born in that month, but because the Heathens' Saturnalia was at that time kept in Rome, and they were willing to have those Pagan Holidays metamorphosed into Christian ones."

In 1466 A.D. Pope Paul II revived some of the most depraved parts of the Saturnalia. He forced Jews to run naked in the streets of Rome for the amusement of the Christians. An eyewitness reported, "Before they were to run, the Jews were richly fed, so as to make the race more difficult for them and at the same time more amusing for spectators. They ran... amid Rome's taunting shrieks

and peals of laughter, while the Holy Father stood upon a richly ornamented balcony and laughed heartily."



Here is a quote from the 2000 edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Volume 11; page 390:

"During the later periods of Roman history, sun worship gained in importance and ultimately led to what has been called a 'solar monotheism.' Nearly all the gods of the period were possessed of Solar qualities, and both Christ and Mithra acquired the traits of solar deities. The feast of Sol and Victus (the unconquered Sun) on December 25th was celebrated with great joy, and eventually this date was taken over by the Christians as Christmas, the birthday of Christ."

Take notice that it says, "both Christ and Mithra acquired the traits of solar deities?" Do we want to worship a SUN GOD? The

Christians wanted more converts so they made Jesus more like the idols found in sun worship. They even tricked the Pagans by claiming that December 25th was the birthday of Jesus. This is why we have Pagan traditions in the celebration of Christmas.

But I have to ask, "Who converted whom?" By celebrating Christmas aren't we making God angry by incorporating Pagan traditions into our worship? Just because it's "always" been done this way doesn't mean that we have to continue walking in error and dishonoring God. We should stop immediately, or face the wrath of God on Judgment Day. Do you want to face God with your excuses about "tradition" and "it was for the children"? He will turn from you in disgust.

Matthew 7:21-23 - *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but He that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*

Is there any doubt about how Jesus wants us to follow His teachings?

Jeremiah 10:1-4 - *Hear ye the word which the LORD speaks unto you, O house of Israel: Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them. For the customs of the people are vain: for one cut a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the ax. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not.*

Do you recognize the condemnation of the decorated tree centuries before the birth of Jesus? Why would you want to continue this practice now that you know that God condemns it?

Satan Claws



Santa Claus is like a god to children all over the world. He has the god-like qualities of creating millions of toys with his helpers, the elves. He is all-seeing and all-knowing in order to see if children have been "naughty or nice". *He sees you when you're sleeping. He knows when you're awake. He knows if you've been bad or good, so be good for goodness sake.* He flies through the air with magic reindeer, one with a big red nose. He enters homes with the magic to come down through the chimney or enters through a locked door. He receives the offering of cookies and milk. and so on.

Parents deliberately lie to their children in order to teach them all of the lore of Christmas and Santa Claus. They also get told the lies about Easter and Halloween. Then, when the children develop the ability to think and reason, they must feel a bit betrayed by all of

these lies. I remember feeling that way. Some measure of respect for the parents must be lost.

What kind of parenting is this? As Christians we know that we must not bear false witness to anyone. How can you claim to love another person and then lie to them? And what are you teaching them?; The Pagan practices of the ancient Romans.

How can you expect them to grow up as authentic Christians? I know that is what you want for your children. We all do. Consider how many lies and myths the average seven year-old must keep in their head. And then we add the Bible stories of miracles, then the teachings and miracle workings of Jesus. Can you imagine how confused they must be? They probably won't tell you, no matter how confused they are. They might get in trouble if they question anything an adult tells them.

Satan is the father of lies and He is the fallen angel who seduced the 4th century church to include the Pagan celebration into the church as Christmas.

John 8:44-47 - *Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in Him. When He speaks a lie, He speaks of his own: for He is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. Which of you convinces me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God hears God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.*

Revelation 22:14-15 - *Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loves and makes a lie.*

1Corinthians 10:20-21 - *But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the*

cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils.

Where Did the Christmas Tree Come From?

Tristam Coffin in his 1973 book, *The Book of Christmas Folklore*, wrote:

"Most people have heard that the Christmas tree originates in the German Tannenbaum and is some sort of vestige of Teutonic vegetation worship. This is partially true. However, the custom of using pine and other evergreens ceremonially was well established at the Roman Saturnalia, even earlier in Egypt" (p. 209).

In his 1853 book, republished in 2010, *The Two Babylons*, Alexander Hislop wrote:

"The Christmas tree, now so common among us, was equally common in Pagan Rome and Pagan Egypt. In Egypt that tree was the palm tree; in Rome it was the fir; the palm tree denoting the Pagan Messiah, as Baal-Tamar, the fir referring to Him as Baal-Berith. The mother of Adonis, the Sun-God and great mediatorial divinity, was mystically said to have been changed into a tree, and when in that state to have brought forth her divine son. If the mother was a tree, the son must have been recognized as the 'Man the branch.' And this entirely accounts for the putting of the Yule Log into the fire on Christmas Eve, and the appearance of the Christmas tree the next morning" (page 97).



In her 2008 book, *Festivals, Holy Days, and Saints' Days*, Ethel Lucy Hargreaves Urlin wrote:

"The Christmas tree... recapitulates the idea of tree worship... gilded nuts and balls symbolizing the sun... all the festivities of the [heathen] winter solstice have been absorbed into Christmas Day..."

the use of holly and mistletoe to the Druidic ceremonies; the Christmas tree to the honors paid to Odin's sacred fir...." (p. 236).

Ace Collins in his 2010 book, *Stories Behind the Great Traditions of Christmas*, wrote:

"This idea of decorating homes on holidays is both worldwide and age-old....So the Saturnalian laurel, the Teutonic holly, the Celtic mistletoe, and the Mexican poinsettia have all attached themselves to this polyglot ceremony..."

"Many of the plants used at Christmas are symbols of fertility. Certainly any evergreen (fir, yew, laurel) with its ability to return verdure in the barrens months is appropriate, but by far the most interesting are the holly, the ivy, and the mistletoe. Holly, with its pricking leaves, white flowers, and red berries symbolizes the male reproductive urge. In fact, in the English carols... the holly is the male and the ivy is the female. This use of the plants was most likely borrowed by the Christians along with other customs of the Roman Saturnalia," (p. 22-23).

Tony van Renterghem wrote in his 1995 book, *When Santa Was a Shaman: The Ancient Origins of Santa Claus & the Christmas Tree*:

"In newly Christianized areas where the pagan Celtic and Germanic cults remained strong, legends of the god Wodan were blended with those of various Christian saints; Saint Nicholas was one of these. There were Christian areas where Saint Nicholas ruled alone; in other locations, He was assisted by the pagan Dark Helper (the slave He had inherited from the pagan god Wodan). In other remote areas...ancient pockets of the Olde Religion controlled traditions. Here the Dark Helper ruled alone, sometimes in a most confusing manner, using the cover name of Saint Nicholas or 'Klaus,' without in any way changing his threatening, Herne/Pan, fur-clad appearance. (This was the figure later used by the artist Nast as the model for the early American Santa Claus)" (page 96).

The Roman Catholic Saint called Nicholas also has a Pagan past. Tony van Renterghem wrote:

"He was a compilation of two separate saints (one from Myra in Asia Minor, the other from Pinora), both of whom were -- as the Church nowadays admits -- nothing more than Christianized water deities (possibly related to the Greco-Roman god Poseidon/Neptune)" (Page 96).

In the 1970s, the Second Vatican Council actually stated that no Roman Catholic bishop by the name of Nicholas had ever existed. Vatican II further confessed that the legends attributed to this "saint" had no Christian origin, and "probably" came from pagan traditions. I guess very few got the message. I was a Catholic at the time and never heard a thing.

Tony van Renterghem, also wrote::

"By absorbing such Pagan feasts and traditions, the Christian Church could subtly bring in its own theology: in this case, establishing the good Saint Nicholas, bringer of love and gifts, while grudgingly allowing the presence of the Olde Religion's Hermes/Pan, but only as a slave to Saint Nicholas. Thus, in parts of Europe, the Church turned Hermes into Saint Nicholas' captive, chained Dark Helper; none other than Satan, the Dark One, symbolic of all evil...."

"In Holland and several other European countries, the Saint Nicholas figure is still highly esteemed. He appears as a tall, dignified, bearded, white-haired old man, dressed as a Catholic bishop, complete with cloak, mitre, and pastoral staff, a seemingly genuine Catholic saint, but with a bizarre, quite unsaintly habit of riding through the skies on a white horse, followed by his Dark Helper. It seems that our Catholic saint inherited some of these customs from the pagan god Wodan, who had also been a bearded, white-haired old man, also dressed in a hat and cloak, carried a staff (or spear), rode a white horse, and dragged along the same dark slave/helper on a chain" (p. 97).

Alexander Hislop, also wrote in his book, *The Two Babylons*:

"The Wodan or Odin of Scandinavia can be proved to be the Adon of Babylon". Nimrod, Adon, or Adonis, of Babylon was the great "war-god." Odin was the same. Nimrod, in the character of Bacchus, was the god of wine. Odin was said to partake of no other food but wine. The name of one of Odin's sons, Balder, indicates the meaning of Odin's own name. Balder is a form of the Chaldee Baal-zer, "The seed of Baal." The Hebrew "z" in the later Chaldee frequently became a "d." Baal and Adon both signify "Lord."

Because Balder is the "son of Baal," as well as the "son of Adon," or "Odin," then Baal, Adon, and Odin seem to be the same person -- they represent Nimrod, the first human to be deified and worshiped by the Pagans as a "god" after the Flood.

Jeremiah 44:19-25 - *And when we burned incense to the queen of heaven, and poured out drink offerings unto her, did we make her cakes to worship her, and pour out drink offerings unto her, without our men? Then Jeremiah said unto all the people, to the men, and to the women, and to all the people which had given Him that answer, saying, The incense that ye burned in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, ye, and your fathers, your kings, and your princes, and the people of the land, did not the LORD remember them, and came it not into his mind? So that the LORD could no longer bear, because of the evil of your doings, and because of the abominations which ye have committed; therefore is your land a desolation, and an astonishment, and a curse, without an inhabitant, as at this day. Because ye have burned incense, and because ye have sinned against the LORD, and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD, nor walked in his law, nor in his statutes, nor in his testimonies; therefore this evil is happened unto you, as at this day. Moreover Jeremiah said unto all the people, and to all the women, Hear the word of the LORD, all Judah that are in the land of Egypt: Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying; Ye and your wives have both spoken with your mouths, and fulfilled with your hand, saying, We will surely*

perform our vows that we have vowed, to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her: ye will surely accomplish your vows, and surely perform your vows.



The above image depicts Isis, the virgin queen of heaven who gave birth to the god Osirus, while remaining a virgin.

Alexander Hislop also wrote in *The Two Babylons*, previously mentioned:

"Therefore we find the women of Judah represented as simply 'burning incense, pouring out drink-offerings, and offering cakes to the queen of heaven, as in Jeremiah 44:19-25. The cakes were the 'unbloody sacrifice' she required....In the fourth century, when the queen of heaven, under the name of Mary, was beginning to be worshiped in the Christian Church, this 'unbloody sacrifice' also was brought in. Epiphanius states that the practice of offering and eating it began among 'women of Arabia; and at that time it was well known to have been adopted from the Pagans. The very shape of the unbloody sacrifice of Rome may indicate when it came. It is a small thin, round wafer; and on its roundness the Church of Rome lays so much stress....The importance, however, which

Rome attaches to the roundness of the wafer, must have a reason; and that reason will be found, if we look at the altars of Egypt. 'The thin, round cake,' says Wilkinson, 'occurs on all altars.' Almost every jot or tittle in the Egyptian worship had a symbolical meaning. The round disk, so frequent in the sacred emblems of Egypt, symbolized the sun" (p. 159-160).

Hislop also brings out the truth in the following shocking words: (To me, at least, it seems they ought to be shocking to any Christian with a clear and conscientious mind:

"Indeed, it is admitted by the most learned and candid writers of all parties that the day of our Lord's birth cannot be determined, and that within the Christian Church no such festival as Christmas was ever heard of till the third century, and that not till the fourth century was far advanced did it gain much observance. How, then, did the Roman Catholic church fix on December the 25th as Christmas-day? Why, thus: Long before the fourth century, and long before the Christian era itself, a festival was celebrated among the heathen, at that precise time of the year, in honour of the birth of the son of the Babylonian queen of heaven; and it may fairly be presumed that, in order to conciliate the heathen, and to swell the number of the nominal adherents of Christianity, the same festival was adopted by the Roman Catholic church, giving it only the name of Christ. This tendency on the part of Christians to meet Paganism half-way was very early developed....Upright men strove to stem the tide, but in spite of all their efforts, the apostasy went on, till the Church, with the exception of a small remnant, was submerged under Pagan superstition" (p. 93).

Hislop continues:

"That Christmas was originally a Pagan festival, is beyond all doubt. The time of the year, and the ceremonies with which it is still celebrated, prove its origin. In Ancient Egypt, the son of Isis, the Egyptian title for the queen of heaven, was born at this very time, 'about the time of the winter solstice.' The very name by which Christmas is popularly known among ourselves -- Yule-day -- proves at once its Pagan and Babylonian origin. 'Yule' is the

Chaldee name for an 'infant' or 'little child;' and as the 25th of December was called by our Pagan Anglo-Saxon ancestors, 'Yule-day,' or the "Child's day," and the night that preceded it, 'Mother-night,' long before they came in contact with Christianity, that sufficiently proves its real character" (pp. 93-94).

Hislop also wrote:

"There can be no doubt, then, that the Pagan festival at the winter solstice -- in other words, Christmas -- was held in honor of the birth of the Babylonian Messiah" (p. 102). and, "the Saturnalia lasted seven days; loose reins were given to drunkenness and revelry, slaves had a temporary emancipation, and used all manner of freedoms with their masters. This was precisely the way in which, according to Berossus, the drunken festival of the month Thebeth, answering to our December, in other words, the festival of Bacchus, was celebrated in Babylon" (p. 96-97).

T. G. Crippen, author of the 1990 book, *Christmas and Christmas Lore*, wrote:

"Now in December and the beginning of January there were several festivals which were intimately associated with the daily life of the Roman people. First, from the 17th to the 21st December, was the Saturnalia, the great Roman holiday....One might call it the "Feast of Topsy-turvey-dom"; when slaves were allowed for a few days to enjoy the semblance of freedom, were waited upon by their masters, and chose from amongst themselves a mock king to preside over their revels. Next, on the 22nd, came Sigillaria, the Feast of Dolls, when a fair was held, and dolls and other toys, mostly of earthenware, were given to children. Then, on 25th, came Brumalia, otherwise Dies Natalis Invicti Solis, The Birthday of the Unconquered Sun, when the days began to lengthen after the solstice....It is believed to have been instituted ... by the emperor Aurelian, in honour of Mithras, the Persian sun-god..." (p. 8-9).

You should now be able to see that the pagan customs of Christmas had nothing remotely to do with the Messiah, or the Word of God, or the Scriptures.

John 8:32 - *And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*

I have told you the truth, as well as presented the writings of noted cultural and Biblical scholars. The question is now, "**What are you going to do about it?**" Are you going to continue worshiping Satan or are you going to cease the celebration of Christmas in order to give all of your love to God?

Family Alternatives To The Celebration of Christmas

I have devised what I believe to be an excellent way to celebrate gift giving in your family. If, as you may claim, that you only celebrate Satan's Christmas "for the children", here is what you might do.

Begin the practice of giving your children one gift every month throughout the year. You can pick any day of the month, but please don't make it around the 25th. Let your children know that, depending on their behavior every month, they will receive an appropriate gift as a reward for their behavior. Don't tie any of this celebration to Jesus, but do bring in a concept of God caring about their behavior. Explain, in words they can understand, that we all want to please God and show our love for Him. And the best way they can do this as a child is by being "good".

When they come home from school one day asking about Christmas or Santa Claus don't start talking about Pagan holidays or Satan. Simply tell them, "We don't celebrate Christmas in our home and we don't believe in Santa Claus." Don't arm your child with words that He or she can take back into the classroom and taunt or frighten the other children, such as "We're Christian in my house and we don't celebrate Christmas or believe in your stupid Santa Claus." So be careful about what you say.

I also recommend you keep a calendar for each child that will contain a daily sticker showing whether their behavior was

acceptable for each day. This will give them a visual reminder to see how they are doing each month. It will also take the place of their being concerned that some elf at the North Pole is watching everything they do.

Doesn't that sound fun, healthy, and in line with authentic Christian beliefs? I hope you agree.

The Pagan Origins of Ash Wednesday and Lent



Ash Wednesday and Lent are not mentioned in the Bible. The apostles did not observe them. They were not even practiced until almost one-thousand years after Christ's Resurrection. And just like Christmas they have Pagan roots.

The marking of believers with a cross of ash on their foreheads on Ash Wednesday is done together with another non-Biblical practice called "Lent."

Matthew 6:16 - *Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which sees in secret, shall reward thee openly.*

The practice of putting ashes on one's forehead before a fast was clearly known from ancient times. Otherwise, why would Jesus have spoken against it? In the Norse Pagan religion of the Vikings, placing ashes on one's forehead was thought to ensure the protection of the Norse god, Odin. This practice traveled to Europe during the Viking raids and conquests. The laying on of these ashes was done on Wednesday, the day named for Odin, Odin's Day.



However ancient the Norse practice was, the roots of the ash ceremony go all the way back to India and the Vedic religion. The Indians believed that ashes were the seed Agni, an Indian fire god. This where the Romans got their word for fire, It is from this name that Romans got their word for fire, ignis and the English language got such words as ignite and ignition. Agni was said to have the power to forgive sins. Ashes were also considered symbolic for the purifying blood of the Vedic god Shiva, "the Destroyer", who it is said had the power to cleanse sins.



There are other Pagan roots to this practice. In Ancient Babylonia worshipers of the god Tammuz would spend forty days fasting before the celebration of his death and resurrection. You'll read more about this "god" in my discussion of Easter later in this chapter.

I hope that you can see that this invented ritual has nothing to do with honoring God. I will suggest an alternative practice to Ash Wednesday and Lent after we look a bit further into these bogus rituals.

Lent - Another Pagan Celebration



Lent is the period of 40 days before the Pagan celebration of Easter. Practitioners of Lent are asked to fast or give up some "luxury" during this period. Even if this were not a Pagan practice, giving up chocolate, coffee, or a favorite TV program would surely not be considered an appropriate gift to God. Those Catholics and Episcopalians who believe that such inconsequential gifts would be

pleasing to God are just deluding themselves. We should all know better if we stopped to think about it for a moment.

Alexander Hislop (1807-1865) wrote in his 1853 book, republished in 2010, *The Two Babylons*:

"Let any one only read the atrocities that were commemorated during the 'sacred fast' or Pagan Lent, as described by Arnobius and Clemens Alexandrinus, and surely He must blush for the Christianity of those who, with the full knowledge of all these abominations, 'went down to Egypt for help' to stir up the languid devotion of the degenerate church, and who could find no more excellent way to 'revive' it, than by borrowing from so polluted a source; the absurdities and abominations connected with which the early Christian writers had held up to scorn. That Christians should ever think of introducing the Pagan abstinence of Lent was a sign of evil; it showed how low they had sunk, and it was also a cause of evil; it inevitably led to deeper degradation. Originally, even in Rome, Lent, with the preceding revelries of the carnival, was entirely unknown...."

In the early 19th century, the German explorer Alexander von Humboldt noted a practice among the pagans in Mexico, being held in the spring. His account states:

"Three days after the vernal equinox... began a solemn fast of forty days in honor of the sun."

A fast of forty days was also held in Ancient Egypt. According to English scholar John Landseer, in his 1823 book, *Sabean Researches*, an Egyptian fast of forty days was held in honor of Osiris.

John 4:23-24 - *But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeks such to worship Him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.*

I firmly believe that those who observe our modern "Christian/Pagan" practices may be deeply religious. They may even have a strong personal conviction, but they are missing a vital element of the faith in these practices. **They are lacking truth.**

The word "holy" means set apart, different from the rest. If we continue to practice traditions that cannot be pleasing to God, then how can we be considered holy? How are we different or holy as Christians if we continue these Pagan practices?

Of course, everyone doesn't have the courage to do things differently from the rest of the world or the people around them. But the terrible sad truth is that mainstream Christianity lost her way. The church fell into apostasy (a total desertion of, or departure from, one's religion or principles), long ago. This apostate tradition is now continued by, perhaps, well-meaning priests, pastors and preachers. They do not act with God in the power of the Holy Spirit, but rather by men in the spirit of the world.

And Satan wouldn't have it any other way.

An authentic Christian alternative to the celebration of Lent

Fasting is an authentic Christian practice. But it must be true fasting, not just giving up chocolate. Rather than participate in the Pagan tradition of Lent, I recommend you do the following.

- If you want to fast do it because you want to get closer to God through prayer and meditation during this period.
- Plan to fast for a certain period of time each month.
- Decide on the number of days you want to fast, whether it be two, five, ten, or twenty.

- Choose the same days every month to help your practice stay regular.
- Make sure that you stay hydrated during your fast with either water or juice.
- You don't have to fast continuously during whatever period you choose to fast. You may decide to only keep your fast from the time you get home from work until the time you go to bed. It is more important that you be able to focus on God during your fast rather than concern yourself with its length.

The Worst Tradition of All – Easter



When I was ten years-old I asked my parents how the period from Friday evening to Sunday morning could be considered three days and three nights. It didn't make sense to me. I was a logical and a careful reasoner (about some things) from the age of ten. My question, asked in the context of a discussion about Easter, was met with a slap and the warning, "Don't be a blasphemer." I didn't

know what a blasphemer was, but it was clear that I shouldn't question anything about Easter.

Hundreds of millions of Christians celebrate Easter, supposedly in honor of the resurrection of our Lord. So the Bible must have a lot to say about it. Right? There must be numerous verses that mention rabbits, eggs and egg hunts, baskets of candy, hot cross buns, Easter bonnets, buying new clothes for Easter, as well as Lent, Good Friday and sunrise services -- not to mention Easter itself.

I haven't found any, except... Since the Bible is the source for all things Christian does it mention *Easter*? Well, yes. But not in the way you might think. And also not with truth.

Acts 12:1-4 - Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. And He killed James the brother of John with the sword. And because He saw it unleavened bread.) And when He had apprehended Him, He put Him in prison, and delivered Him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep Him; intending after EASTER to bring Him forth to the people.

Is this the Bible authority for Easter? Well, no.

These verses are NOT actually talking about Easter, although at first it appears that they are. The word that was translated "Easter" was written in the original Greek of the New Testament as "pascha". This was derived from the Hebrew word "pesach", meaning "Passover". This word always means "Passover" throughout the Bible and it can never be "Easter". The translators of the King James version of the Bible either made a mistake or, deliberately translated the word "pesach" as "Easter" to buttress Christian practices and tradition. Some more modern translations of the Bible translate the word correctly as "Passover".



In case you are not familiar with the whys and hows of the celebration of Passover, here is the story:

Exodus 12:21-31 - *Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said unto them, Draw out and take you a lamb according to your families, and kill the passover. And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the basin; and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning. For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the LORD will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you. And ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee and to thy sons for ever. And it shall come to pass, when ye be come to the land which the LORD will give you, according as He hath promised, that ye shall keep this service. And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the LORD'S passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in*

Egypt, when He smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. And the people bowed the head and worshiped. And the children of Israel went away, and did as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron, so did they. And it came to pass, that at midnight the LORD smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle. And Pharaoh rose up in the night, He, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead. And He called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the LORD, as ye have said.

So these verses are telling us the story of the final plague that God brought forth upon the Egyptians because the Pharaoh would not let the Israelites leave Egypt. And God ordered the Jews to follow this practice of celebrating the Passover FOREVER.

Instead of endorsing Easter, this verse actually proves that the fledgling Church was still observing the supposedly Jewish Passover ten years AFTER the death and resurrection of the Jesus!

What About the New Testament?

1 Corinthians 5:7-8 - *Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*

Early Christians commemorated the Passover, and did not celebrate Easter. This is from the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th edit., Vol. 8, p. 828:

“There is no indication of the observance of the Easter festival in the New Testament, or in the writings of the Apostolic Fathers... The first Christians continued to observe the Jewish festivals, though in a new spirit, as commemorations of events that those

festivals had foreshadowed. Thus the Passover, with a new conception added to it, of the Messiah as the true Pachal Lamb... continued to be observed."

Galatians 4:9-10 - But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, where ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years.

Where Did Easter Come From?



Let's consider this story: It is Spring. We use bunnies and flowers to decorate our home. The parents help the children paint beautiful designs on eggs. The eggs are dyed in many different colors and later placed in special seasonal baskets. Before that we hide the eggs around the home and our children search for them. It's so much fun! The family may also smell the "heavenly" aroma of the hot cross buns that mother is baking in the kitchen. We've been fasting for forty days, but that will stop the next day. Everyone chooses their very best clothing to wear to the next morning's

sunrise worship service. This is to celebrate the savior's resurrection and the renewal of life. When we get home from the service we will enjoy a succulent ham with all the wonderful foods that go with it. We'll all have a wonderful day. This is one of the most important religious holidays of the entire year.

This story is about Easter, right? **No**. This is actually a description of an ancient Babylonian family -- 2,000 years before Jesus! This family was worshiping their God Tammuz for his death and resurrection. He was able to return from the underworld thanks to his mother/wife, Ishtar. Now "Ishtar" was actually pronounced "**Easter**" in most of the Semitic dialects. But this celebration might also have been a Phrygian family honoring Attis and Cybele, or maybe a Phoenician family worshiping Adonis and Astarte. Or this worship might also represent any number of Pagan fertility celebrations of a death and resurrection of some god.

Our modern-day Easter celebration was given to us through the Anglo-Saxon fertility rites of the goddess Eostre or Ostara.

And these are all the same festivals. They are only separated from us by time and culture.



The 1967 version of the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* states:

"The origin of the term for the feast of Christ's Resurrection has been popularly considered to be from the Anglo-Saxon Eastrē, a goddess of spring... the Old High German plural for dawn, "eostarun"; whence has come the German Ostern, and our English Easter" (Volume 5, page 6).

Albert Henry Newman, in his 1920's book, *A Manual of Church History*, wrote:

"The fact that vernal festivals were general among pagan peoples no doubt had much to do with the form assumed by the Eastern festival in the Christian churches. The English term Easter is of pagan origin" (p. 299).

In her 1915 book, *Festivals, Holy Days, and Saint's Days*, Ethel Luck Hargreaves Urlin wrote:

"On this greatest of Christian festivals, several survivals occur of ancient heathen ceremonies. To begin with, the name itself is not Christian but pagan. Ostara was the Anglo-Saxon Goddess of Spring" (page 73).

1 Corinthians 5:7-8 - *Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*

Peter is referring here to Passover. This is the time we should be celebrating. In order to celebrate Passover instead of Good Friday and Easter Sunday we need only use the Internet or call your nearest Jewish temple or synagogue. Find out when Passover will be celebrated this year.

Then have this meal in your home with your entire family. You may want to find out about what is eaten at Passover, but that is

not really important. (Just don't eat a Pagan ham!) The Jews are required to eat unleavened bread, also called "matzoh". But as Christians, our focus should be more on Christ's sacrifice on the cross as our Paschal lamb.

Instead of celebrating Easter, use the date of each year's Jewish Passover to time your celebration of the resurrection of Jesus. The month in the Jewish calendar for celebrating Passover is called "Nisan". The date and day of the week will be different every year because it is based on a lunar calendar. It may be near the day of Easter, or even before or after that day.

Here is a table that you can use to determine the true date and day of the week that you should celebrate the resurrection of our Lord and Savior. The dates in the table are from the ancient (and current) Jewish calendar. The actual day and date will vary from year to year.

| The Events | | How We Know |
|--|--|--|
| Nisan 13 | | |
| Jesus and the twelve disciples came into Jerusalem from Bethany, to partake of the Passover meal. | | <i>Mark 14:12-16 - And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover, his disciples said unto him, Where wilt thou that we go and prepare that thou mayest eat the passover? And he sent forth two of his disciples, and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him. And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? And he will shew you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there make ready for us. And his disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover.</i> |
| Jesus ate an early-evening Passover meal with His disciples. After the meal, the walks with His disciples towards the Mt. of Olives. | | |
| Jesus was betrayed by Judas at the olive grove in Gethsemane, arrested and brought before the high priest, Caiaphas. | | |
| The Jewish trial ends at daybreak. | | |

| Nisan 14 | |
|--|---|
| In the morning, Jesus was brought before Pilate the governor. | N |
| Jesus was crucified and dies around 3PM | I |
| Jesus' body was placed in the tomb at twilight. | G |
| | H |
| | T |
| | O |
| | N |
| | E |
| Luke 23:44-46 - And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst. And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost. | |
| This shows that Jesus died around the ninth hour or approximately 3PM. He would have been buried before sunset because of the approaching Sabbath, for that Sabbath day was a high-day. | |
| John 19:41-42 - Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand. | |

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| Nisan 15 | | |
| This was the first annual Sabbath or high-day - the first day of Unleavened Bread. The tomb is guarded and secured by sealing it with a stone. | D A Y O N E | John 19:31 - <i>The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.</i> |
| The annual Sabbath ends at sunset. | N I G H T T W O | |
| Nisan 16 | | |
| With the annual Sabbath now over, the women bought and prepared spices for anointing Jesus' body. | D A Y T W O | Mark 16:1 - <i>And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him.</i> |
| The weekly Sabbath begins at sunset. No work is to be done as commanded in the fourth commandment. | N I G H T T H R E E | |

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| Nisan 17 | | |
| The women brought the prepared spices early in the morning while it was still dark. When they arrived they found that Jesus had already arisen. | D A Y T H R E E | <p>John 20:1-2 - The first day of the week came Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and saw the stone taken away from the sepulchre. Then she ran, and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid Him.</p> <p>Jesus resurrection had already taken place by the time Mary Magdalene arrived at dawn. And THAT is the day that we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus, whether it falls on a Monday, a Thursday, or even a Sunday, and whether it happens a week before or a week after the 'traditional' Pagan celebration of Easter.</p> |

If you accept these calculations, and why wouldn't you, your family will no longer participate in Good Friday or Easter Sunday. Instead, you will celebrate the resurrection of Jesus no matter what date or day it falls on. **This will be pleasing to Him.**



Eggs, Egg Hunts and Easter

Eggs have been associated with the Easter celebration from the beginning. Almost every culture in the world has a tradition of coloring eggs in various ways. The most beautiful I have seen are the jewel encrusted porcelain eggs created by Faberge for the Russian imperial family in the early 20th century. I believe we may admire their beauty and craftsmanship without making them part of our worship.



In his 1956 book, *Handbook of Christian Feasts and Customs*, Francis X. Weiser wrote:

“The origin of the Easter egg is based on the fertility lore of the Indo-European races... The egg to them was a symbol of spring... In Christian times the egg had bestowed upon it a religious interpretation, becoming a symbol of the rock tomb out of which Christ emerged to the new life of His resurrection” (page. 233).

This is a good example of how Pagan symbols and customs become part of Christianity. Pagan sounding names are replaced by Christian ones. This, it seems, was done to deceive. As well as, perhaps, make people feel better about following a custom that is clearly not in the Bible.



The *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1991 edition states:

“Around the Christian observance of Easter... folk customs have collected, many of which have been handed down from the ancient ceremonial... symbolism of European and Middle Eastern *pagan spring* festivals... for example, *eggs*... have been very prominent as symbols of *new life* and resurrection” (Volume 4, page 333).

In his 1956 book, *Egyptian Belief and Modern Thought*, James Bonwick wrote:

“Eggs were hung up in the Egyptian temples. Bunsen calls attention to the mundane egg, the emblem of generative life, proceeding from the mouth of the great god of Egypt. The mystic

egg of Babylon, hatching the Venus Ishtar, fell from heaven to the Euphrates. Dyed eggs were sacred offerings in Egypt, as they are still in China and Europe. Easter, or spring, was the season of birth, terrestrial and celestial." (Pages 211-212)

Is the Pagan origin of "Easter" eggs now clear to you? God never authorized "Passover eggs" or "Days of Unleavened Bread eggs".
Please don't go against His word.

The Easter Bunny



Here is an additional quote from Francis Weiser from his 1956 book, *Handbook of Christian Feasts and Customs*, about the origin of the “Easter bunny”:

“In Germany and Austria little nests containing eggs, pastry and candy are placed in hidden spots, and the children believe that the Easter bunny, so popular in this country, too, had laid the eggs and brought the candy” (p. 235)

Sunrise Services



Ezekiel 8:13-18 - He said also unto me, *Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations than they do. Then He brought me to the door of the gate of the LORD'S house which was toward the north; and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz. Then said He unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man? turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations than these. And He brought me into the inner court of the LORD'S house, and, behold, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the LORD, and their faces toward the east; and they worshiped the sun toward the east. Then He said unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man? Is it a light thing to the house of Judah that they commit the abominations which they commit here? for they have filled the land with violence, and have returned to provoke me to anger: and, lo, they put the branch to their nose. Therefore will I also deal in fury:*

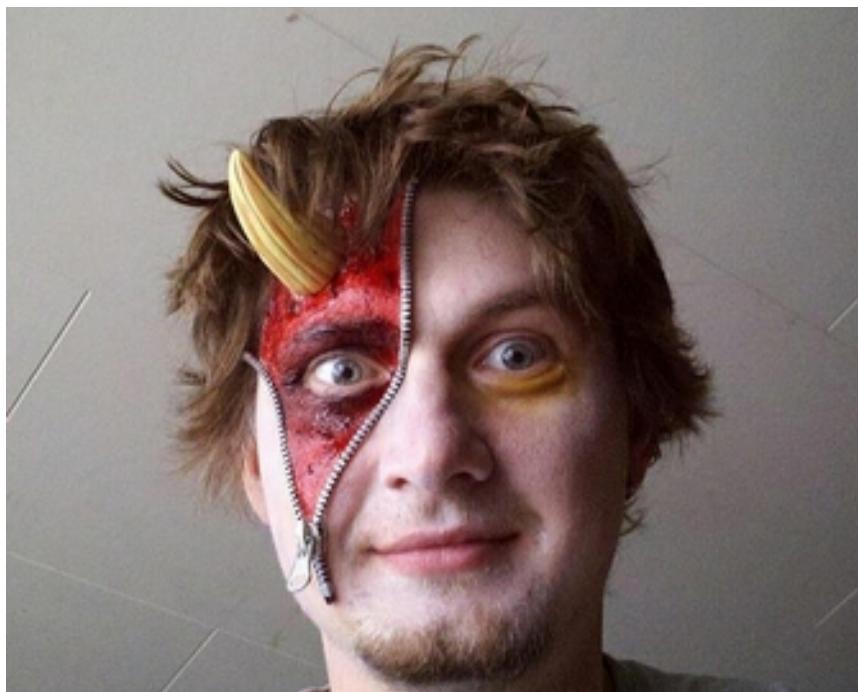
mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them.

Here God tells us not only to cease the worship of Tammuz, the god first associated with a celebration of fasting and his death and resurrection. He also clearly tells us to not turn away from Him to celebrate the sun rising in the east.

Ezekiel 9:9-10 - Then said He unto me, ***The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great, and the land is full of blood, and the city full of perverseness: for they say, The LORD hath forsaken the earth, and the LORD sees not. And as for me also, mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity, but I will recompense their way upon their head.***

That's a very strong warning!

The Tradition of Halloween



Today, most everyone thinks that Halloween is just a day when children put on costumes and wander from house to house shouting, "Trick or treat!", and collecting candy along the way. Adults often throw a costume party for their friends because, "Doesn't everybody love to wear costumes?". Halloween is celebrated every year by millions of families in the United States, Canada, Puerto Rico, Ireland, the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand.

Before we take a look at the history of this heathen practice let me ask you these questions:

- How would you feel if your spouse displayed photos of their former girlfriend or boyfriend throughout your home?
- How would you feel if your spouse celebrated an anniversary every year to remember the special times they had with another person before marrying you?



Exodus 20:4-5 - *Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.*

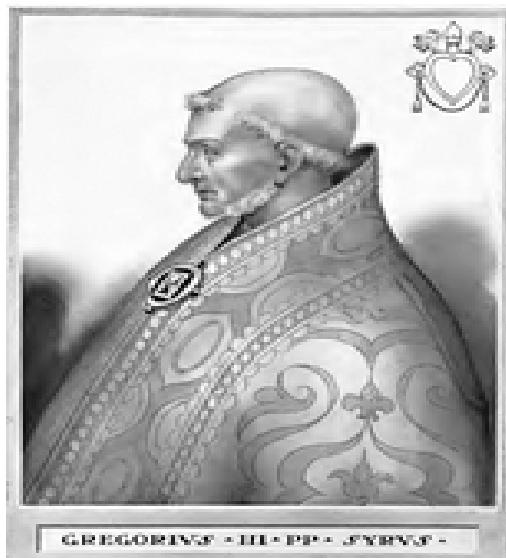
Our God is a jealous God. He demands our exclusive devotion and worship. Do you think He cares if you teach your children to participate in a holiday that honors Satan?

Pagan celebrations have been held on October 31st for thousands of years. More "recently", these Pagan rites were celebrated 2,000 years ago in Ancient Rome as the "Lemuria".



The Pagan feast of Lemuria was held to exorcise malevolent spirits and ghosts of the dead. They made offerings of beans. These feasts were held on May 9, May 11, and May 13.

On May 13 in 609 A.D. or 610 A.D., Pope Boniface IV consecrated all of the Pagan gods of Rome to the Blessed Virgin. The Pagan feast of Lemuria was "Christianized" and renamed "All Saint's Day". In 834 A.D. Pope Gregory III moved All Saint's Day to November 1st. This made October 31st become All Hallow's Eve, later shortened by the people to "Halloween".



What Is The History of Halloween?

Jack-o-lanterns represent the fires and torches used in the Pagan rite of Samhain when people wore costumes made of animal skins and heads. The Pagans told fortunes by examining the burned sacrifices. These Pagans also believed that the spirits of the dead would roam the earth and play tricks. They left food for the spirits so they wouldn't play any tricks.

Regional customs differed slightly, such as in Ireland where they honored their sun god. They held a parade where the leader wore a costume with the head of an animal. In England, families told ghost stories, ate apples and nuts, and walked about in costumes of demons or ghosts to trick them into not harming them.

When Rome conquered Britain in 43 A.D. they integrated Britain's celebration of Samhain with another festival to honor the goddess of fruit and trees (like apples).



Halloween in the United States

Halloween was not celebrated in the United States until the 1800's. Immigrants from Ireland and Great Britain introduced their Halloween customs.



Should Christians Celebrate Halloween?

Here, Jesus is speaking about Satan:

John 8:44 - "He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in Him. When He lies, He speaks his native language, for He is a liar and the father of lies".

As Christians we should all recognize that the Pagan origins, history, and the celebration of Halloween is not pleasing to God, but to Satan. Who but Satan could inspire such monstrous actions on this so-called harmless children's holiday?

An Alternative To The Celebration of Halloween

In order to avoid your family celebrating this Pagan holiday I recommend that you do the following:

It seems that both adults and children love to put on costumes. So throw a costume party for your children in August or September (so that it will be in their recent memory when Halloween comes around). Include adults in the party if you want to. Put the kids in one room and the adults in another.

When Halloween rolls around and your child complains that, "everybody but ME gets to wear a costume on Halloween. I hate you!". Calmly explain that "our family doesn't celebrate Halloween." and "Don't you remember the wonderful costume party we had in August?".

Again, as in the alternative to the Pagan Christmas, don't tell your child that it is an evil holiday. Don't say ANYTHING that He or she can take back to school to taunt the other kids. But DO let the teacher know that you don't celebrate Halloween for religious reasons. Tell the teacher that you would appreciate it if your child did not have to color or draw pictures of Halloween symbols like jack-o-lanterns, witches, or ghosts. Provide the teacher with an alternative coloring book if necessary.

If there is a Halloween costume parade at school keep your child home that day if you can. Take the child to a museum, amusement park, to ChuckECheese, or to any other activity that you can think of to make it a special day. If you are working and can't keep your child home from school, make arrangements for the child to be sent to the school library during the costume parade. If the school won't agree to this, take your child to work.

Keep your house dark on October 31st. Stay in the back of the house, or take the family out to dinner and a movie while there are trick-or-treaters on the prowl. And under no circumstances should you give candy to anyone that comes to your door.

If you follow my recommendations for alternatives to all of the Pagan holidays you will free your family from sin, from displeasing God.



The Ignorance of Many Christians



When I grew up, my primary religious experience was in fundamentalist, evangelical churches. But at the age of fourteen my aunt took me to an Episcopalian Sunday school. I thought I knew all about being a Christian, but I continued to attend this church and soon discovered a place where the people dressed and acted the same in church as they did the remainder of the week. This was a place where it was alright to be honest and to talk about one's doubts and struggles both with religious issues and in daily life. There was even an atmosphere of excitement and celebration that was expressed during the worship services. What a revelation!

I was only staying with my aunt for the summer. When I returned to my parents I, of course, found an Episcopal church to attend. I was very disappointed that my new church wasn't the same as the one I had gone to all summer. The policies, the atmosphere, and the people were very different. There was no more mixing of adults and teenagers in Sunday school. We got sent off to hear Bible stories that I had heard at least ten times before. We were treated like children. There were puppets (not cool), felt board presentations (not cool), and slide shows of families and biblical characters that seemed more like comic books than anything real. The services did not provide any opportunity for real fellowship. The community of faith that I sought and eventually found was simply not there. What a disappointment.

The second church wasn't doing anything wrong. They were just out of touch with authentic Christianity. They were so bound up with their dogma and rules that they didn't stop to consider what their congregation might actually need. How did they miss that a church is supposed to be a community of faith instead of just a gathering of worshipers? I believe that they were just ignorant of what a church was supposed to be.

As I have visited hundreds of churches during the past decades I have seen the same thing happening. Some churches seemed to be truly expressing the spirit of Christianity. Others seemed to be rigid, up tight, lacking in warmth, and did not have any sense that they were not just worshipers. Some seemed more concerned with putting on a good show with rock music, videos, and a short

sermon. They seemed out of touch with biblical Christianity, the things Jesus commanded us to do, or how to be Christians every day of their lives.

Other churches I have been to almost did not seem to be Christian at all. The sermon was about using prayer to gain prosperity, or politics (and who should be voted for), or an emphasis on sinful behavior with no guidance on how to change or how to repent (just a lot of threats of eternal damnation).

It's clear to me that many Christians do not have even a rudimentary understanding of Christianity or how to be authentic Christians.

Here are just a few of the wrong or misguided beliefs shared by far too many Christians:

Your behavior will affect how God loves you.

Jesus loves us no matter how sinful we are as long as we remain in a personal relationship with Him. This does require the behavior of an authentic Christian. Whether we do good works, or donate a lot of money to the church just doesn't matter.

Church Is Just A Weekly Event That Everyone Attends.

Ephesians 2:19-22 - *Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together grows into a holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are built together for a habitation of God through the Spirit.*

Sometimes people seem to believe that going to church on Sunday (and sometimes Wednesday) is just something that everyone does. They may believe they are "good" Christians, but live their lives the rest of the week without actually behaving as Christians.

They also seem to believe that what they wear and how they look is more important than fellowship with the rest of the congregation.

Never Express Your Struggles Or Doubts.

The Christian life can be hard. Modern life can be difficult and sometimes we may need help dealing with our challenges. Sometimes we may have doubts about a certain tenet of our faith that may, or may not actually be biblical. (Rules like never dance, don't watch TV, never wear makeup, or you must submit to the will of your husband).

A true community of faith would allow the discussion of doubts, whether in private or in public. A true community of faith would make it possible to learn about and help a brother or sister in Christ to reveal their challenges and struggles. It is not loving one another to remain rigid, up tight, or to ignore the needs of those who should be considered our Christian friends.

Only The Spiritual Or The Ordained Should Be Part of Church Leadership.

Being ordained does not confer any special grace or powers on a person. We are all just people. Being ordained only means that we have chosen to serve our congregations. Hopefully by truthfully teaching the word of God and helping people to live that word. However, far too many fall short in their duty to us.

Becoming a church volunteer, a Sunday school teacher, a worship leader, or a member of the church board should be open to any member of a congregation, both male and female. There is no reason that women should be excluded from church leadership and ordination, yet many denominations, including Roman Catholicism, continue in this backward policy.

The Bible Is Mostly About Rules.

Have you READ your Bible? The Gospel of our lord Jesus Christ is about LOVE. Love for everyone. Everyone.

The Bible is about teaching us to have a personal, intimate relationship with Him.

The Ignorance of Many Christians in America

Matthew 7:21-23 - Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but He that does the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

We are a nation of religious illiterates. We know almost nothing about other religions so our usual reaction is fear and hate. This often leads to acts of violence or an attempt to suppress the other religions. I recently heard a United States Governor proclaim that, "only Christians should have religious freedom in America." This is both shocking and somewhat frightening. What if this religious bigot became president (many governors do)? He would probably do everything in his power to establish Christianity as our state religion and suppress all others. How is it possible that our Supreme Court could rule that corporations are people with religious liberty?

Also, a true understanding of Christianity is almost absent in America. It seems that most Christians don't even realize what is at stake; their eternal souls and eternal life with Jesus.

It is terrible to think what will happen on Judgment Day. Jesus will turn away everyone who did not have a personal relationship with Him. He will say, "*I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*"

New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof recently wrote about the amazing lack of religious knowledge in the United States. He

wrote, "a person cannot understand the world without knowing something about the world's religions, including Pentecostals and Evangelicals.

Stephen Prothero wrote in his 2009 book, *Religious Literacy*, that America is a "nation of religious illiterates." And that this ignorance is a "major civic problem," Prothero is also strongly in favor of returning to teaching religion in the public schools. "In addition to reading, writing and arithmetic, religion ought to become the 'Fourth R' of American education." Prothero also said:

- "Only 10 percent of American teenagers can name all five major world religions and 15 percent cannot name any."
- "Nearly two-thirds of Americans believe that the Bible holds the answers to all or most of life's basic questions, yet only half of American adults can name even one of the four gospels, and most Americans cannot name the first book of the Bible."

I was truly overwhelmed when I researched this topic. I didn't realize how serious this problem is. I've known for many years that most people aren't authentic Christians, but I didn't realize that they don't even know how.

Ten Ways Christians Misuse Faith

Living as an authentic Christian is one of the most beautiful things one can experience. And there are many, many Christians who demonstrate that to the world every day. It is unfortunate that Christianity can also be perverted, exploited and abused. But here are some ways that Christianity may be used for the wrong reason:

- **As A Form Of Escapism Because You Don't Have Anything Better To Do**
- **To Get Money**

- **To Gain Popularity With Your Friends Or Neighbors**
- **To Avoid Risk and Sacrifice**
- **To Control Others**
- **As a Promotional Tool For Your Business**
- **To Rationalize Bad Behavior**
- **To Explain the Unexplainable, or to Reject “Secular” Ideas**
- **Getting The TruthSo You Can Put Others In Their Place**
- **To Change Cultures**

A Christian Church Takes It To a New Low By Handing Out Guns In Churches

Last month (June 2014) at the Lone Oak First Baptist church in Paducah, Kentucky, a line of people wrapped around the building waiting anxiously to get inside, but not because they sought spiritual guidance from Jesus Christ's teachings, but to win one of the twenty-five guns being raffled off. One may be inclined to think Lone Oak First Baptist is an aberration among churches purported to be "followers of Christ," but according to the Kentucky Baptist Convention, handing out human-killing weapons is the best way to get people into church. Last year there were at least 50 "Christian" church gun giveaways in Kentucky alone, and an official at Lone Oak Baptist said handing out free guns is a rallying point to bring people to Christ.

Evangelist Pat Robertson Has Said Some Crazy Things Over the Years

I cannot believe that all of the following words came out of the mouth of a Christian. And consider how many millions of Christians have heard Him say these or similar things through the years. Yet they continue to give Him money. This following proves astounding ignorance.

"The feminist agenda encourages women to leave their husbands, kill their children, practice witchcraft, destroy capitalism and become lesbians."

"Many people involved with Adolph Hitler were Satanists, many of them were homosexuals -- the two things seem to go together."

"Just like what Nazi Germany did to the Jews, so liberal America is now doing to evangelical Christians."

"We have the ability to take him (President Chavez of Venezuela) out and I think the time has come that we exercise that ability."

"I don't think I'd be waving those [gay pride] flags in God's face if I was [Orlando, Florida]. It will bring about earthquakes, tornadoes and possibly a meteor."

"Presbyterians are the spirit of the Antichrist."

"There is no such thing as separation of church and state in the Constitution. It is a lie of the Left."

"I think 'one man one vote,' would not be wise [in South Africa]. There needs to be some kind of protection for the minority which the white people represent."

Pat Robertson -- A Prophet for our Times

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Don't Call The Police About Your Father's Violence

Robertson has a show called *The 700 Club* on the ABC Family channel. A child wrote to the show for advice.

"Whenever my parents fight, my dad threatens my mom with his gun. Fortunately, this now means nothing to my mom, and she never goes nuts about it; she is very calm. But as a child, I get nervous and worried when this happens. Even my younger brother saw this incident. What should we do about it and Him?"

"You don't want to get your father busted... but you could," Robertson answered in a clip posted online by *The Raw Story*, before suggesting that the child talk to his mother instead of "snitching" on his father.

"Tell her, 'Mom, this thing is scaring me and I ask you, please, to get my father some help.'"

Be Grateful For An Adulterous Husband

When answering a question from another viewer, and it is the wife's job to focus on the positive and make sure the home is so enticing, so He doesn't want to stray."

Islam = Nazism?

While feeling sorry for himself because He's been called a "fanatic" and a "bigot" for saying what He deems to be "truth," He told his viewers that, "Islam is to blame for not only the Boston Marathon bombing, but for terrorism around the world. Islam is like Nazism."

"Un-acquire" Your Sexuality

"I know people disagree on the question of homosexuality: Is it something they're born with or is it something they acquire? I think a lot of it is acquired. ... Normally speaking, a person who has acquired this can un-acquire it. We've had many people who have indeed left the homosexual lifestyle and gone into a heterosexual relationship and been very, very happy."

What is Macaroni 'n' Cheese?

"What is this mac 'n' cheese? Is that a black thing?"

Alzheimer's Justifies Divorce

"I hate Alzheimer's. It is one of the most awful things, because here's the loved one -- this is the woman or man that you have loved for 20, 30, 40 years, and suddenly that person is gone ... I know it sounds cruel, but if He's going to do something, He should divorce her and start all over again, but to make sure she has custodial care, somebody looking after her."

We Should Legalize It

"We're locking up people that take a couple of puffs of marijuana, and next thing you know they've got 10 years. They've got mandatory sentences, and these judges, they say, they throw up their hands, they say, 'There's nothing that we can do. There's mandatory sentences.' We've got to take a look at what we're considering crimes, and that's one of them. I'm not exactly for the use of drugs -- don't get me wrong. But I just believe that criminalizing marijuana, criminalizing the possession of a few ounces of pot and that kind of thing, I mean, it's costing us a fortune and it's ruining young people. Young people go into prisons, they go in as youths, and come out as hardened criminals. And that's not a good thing."

Feminism, Lesbians, and Witchcraft

This is an interview between Terry Meeuwsen and Robertson in the *Washington Post*:



Pat Robertson: If a woman is a lesbian, what advantage does she have over a married woman? Or what deficiency does she have?

Terry Meeuwsen: Well, she can't have children.

Robertson: That's exactly right. And so, if these married women can't, don't have children, if they abort their babies, then it kinda puts them on a level playing field.

"The feminist agenda is not about equal rights for women. It is about a socialist, anti-family political movement that encourages women to leave their husbands, kill their children, practice witchcraft, destroy capitalism and become lesbians." (1992 Iowa fundraising letter opposing a state equal-rights amendment.)

Hinduism Is Demonic

"We're importing Hinduism into America. The whole thought of your karma, of meditation, of the fact that there's no end of life and

there's this endless wheel of life, this is all Hinduism. Chanting too. Many of those chants are to Hindu Gods -- Vishnu, Hare Krishna. The origin of it is all demonic. We can't let that stuff come into America."

"If anybody understood what Hindus really believe, there would be no doubt that they have no business administering government policies in a country that favors freedom and equality."

Other Religions Are The Anti-Christ

"I think the Antichrist is Islam."

"Presbyterians are the spirit of the Antichrist."

"You say you're supposed to be nice to the Episcopalians and the Presbyterians and the Methodists and this, that, and the other thing. Nonsense, I don't have to be nice to the spirit of the Antichrist."

The Separation of Church and State is a Lie

I guess Pat Robertson never read that statement in the Constitution that says, "Congress shall make no law respecting (concerning) religion."

"The separation of God from government has been a tragedy for the whole country. It has been a tragedy to think that this is a secular country."

"There is no such thing as separation of church and state in the Constitution. It is a lie of the Left and we are not going to take it anymore."

Haiti Has A Deal with the Devil

"Something happened a long time ago in Haiti, and people might not want to talk about it. They were under the heel of the French.

You know -- Napoleon the Third or whatever. And they got together and swore a pact to the devil. They said, 'We will serve you, if you'll get us free from the French.' It's a true story. And so the devil said, 'OK, it's a deal.' And they kicked the French out -- the Haitians revolted and got themselves free -- but ever since, they have been cursed by one thing after the other."

Become A Muslim And Beat Her

Robertson advised a man to become Muslim so He could beat his troublesome wife.

Shocked About Pornography

"I'm shocked that some women watch porn."

Karate And Demons?

"I don't see anything wrong with being a wrestling coach, or a boxing coach. But if you get into that business where those who are involved in martial arts, before they start, are actually inhaling some demon spirit -- and some of them do that, by the way -- that enormous strength comes about not from a human source but from a demonic source. You don't want to have anything to do with any of that. So I'll leave it to you, but it's a question of: Are you going to help little kids get out of the ghetto, like Chuck Norris does, or are you gonna teach rich people how to hurt their friends?"

Obama's Protesting Clowns

"President Obama has chosen to attack a segment of our population: those who have been successful. He is attacking those who own capital, those who use jet aircraft as a business tool. He's attacking all the people who have any kind of luxury or wealth, and yet, He goes to Martha's Vineyard and hobnobs with the rich. ... These clowns up there at Occupy Wall Street are just picking up the President's message, perhaps in a cruder form."

The American Civil Liberties Union and Abortion Caused the Tragedy of 9/11.

This is a conversation between Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell:

Pat Robertson: I think we've just seen the antechamber to terror. We haven't even begun to see what they can do to the major populations...

Jerry Falwell: The ACLU's gotta take a lot of blame for this.

Robertson: Oh yes.

Falwell: ...and I know I'll hear from them for this, but throwing God -- successfully, with the help of the federal court system -- throwing God out of the public square, out of the schools -- the abortionists have got to bear some burden for this because God will not be mocked, and when we destroy 40 million little innocent babies, we make God mad. I really believe that the pagans and the abortionists and the feminists and the gays and the lesbians, who are actively trying to make that an alternative lifestyle, the ACLU, People for the American Way, all of them who tried to secularize America, I point the finger in their face and say, "You helped this happen."

Robertson: Well, I totally concur.

What Is A Transgender Person? Oh, Wait, I Remember!

"I may be an old fuddy-duddy, but what is transgender?"

"This whole business about transgenders, you're saying they've got boy parts but they want to go to the girls' restroom, that's absurd."

"I think there are men who are in a woman's body. It's very rare. But it's true — or women that are in men's bodies — and that they want a sex change. That is a very permanent thing, believe me, when you have certain body parts amputated and when you have been shot up with various kinds of hormones. It's a radical procedure. I don't think there's any sin associated with that.

"We talk about transgender, I have a former stallion who is now a gelding."

Homosexuality and America

"There's never been a civilization, ever in history, that has embraced homosexuality and turned away from traditional fidelity and traditional marriage, traditional child rearing, and has survived."

I think Greco/Roman civilization lasting more than 1600 years might count. They didn't know about long-term loving relationships, but they had temple prostitutes who were male. They also enshrined state approved child molestation in boy male/ man male relationships.

Possessed By Demons

"Being gay is demonic possession."

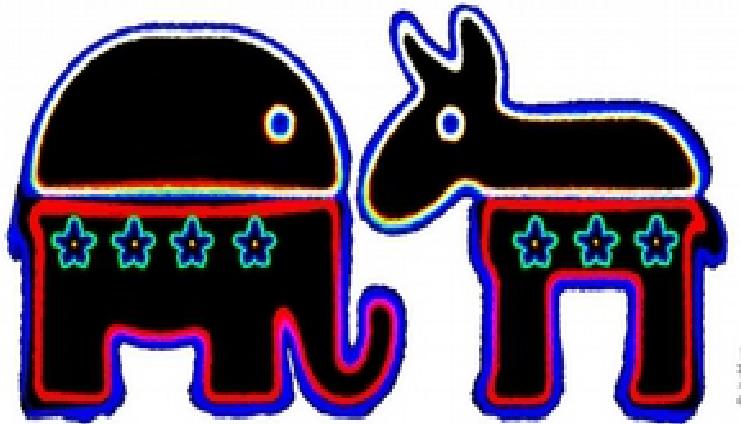
He's A Man, So It's Alright To Commit Adultery

Robertson approved of General David Patraeus' adultery saying "He was just a lonely man and she was "extremely good looking."

The Truth About President Obama

"Obama is a 'socialist' who wants to destroy America.

Christianity and Politics



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Before you read this chapter I want you to know that I am neither a Democrat or a Republican. I vote independently in each election for any candidate, regardless of party affiliation, based on their legislative history (if any), what they claim to stand for, the debates I witness, and whether their policies are in line with the values of authentic Christianity (even if they are Jewish or any other religion).

I receive a digest every day that sends me at least one hundred articles and videos culled from Fox News, The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Huffington Post, and dozens of other print and TV news outlets from across the country who report on Christianity and politics.

In my effort to be an authentic Christian I believe it is important to tell the truth in all things. What follows is the truth as I see it based on the reporting I have received. You may disagree with me, but I urge you to read my words with an open mind.

Mark 12:17 - *And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marveled at Him.*

First, I believe that mixing politics with Christianity is against the will of God. Jesus clearly stated that we should keep government and religion separate. It seems that some people actually believe that Jesus established the United States. Others believe that the framers of the Constitution created us as a Christian nation. But that is totally false.

The Constitution clearly states that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof ..." and Article VI specifies that "no religious test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or Public Trust under the United States." We generally call this "Freedom of Religion". But with these statements the Constitution also "Freedom from Religion". Many of the creators of the Constitution came from countries where a state religion practiced tyranny upon the people. They did not want this for the United States.

Many Christians seem to believe that Christianity should become our state religion despite what is said in our constitution. Other Christians have made statements such as "religious freedom in our country is for Christians, not people of other religions." Isn't that ridiculous?

Here's an another "interesting" quote from Pat Robertson:

"The founding document of the United States of America acknowledges the Lordship of Jesus Christ because we are a Christian nation." - Pat Robertson

Pat Robertson is deluded. The "founding document, our Constitution, says nothing about "The Lordship of Jesus Christ". The United States of America is not a "Christian nation."

There are many different Christian doctrines, and a huge variety of Christian traditions and practices, but our church is still divided after 2,000 years of evolving, growing, bickering, diluting, changing, and dying off. We can't seem to agree on any firm theology except for a few relatively unimportant doctrines, and we probably never will until all Christian religions start being

authentically Christian. I read recently that there are 41,000 distinct Christian denominations in the world. **Are there really 41,000 Christian teachings for us to disagree about?**

We have widespread poverty, murder, homelessness, gun violence, rape, child murder, child abuse, prison populations, lack of access to medical care, spouse murder by their abusers, teenage pregnancy, high school dropouts, and suicide. Congress could fix, or at least make an impact, on most of these problems. But this elite group of hundreds of so-called "Christians" are beholden to special interest groups, and major donors who seek to control our government. They seem to no longer represent the people.

Our Supreme Court has recently made rulings that make it easy for anyone to donate as much money as they want, even hundreds of millions of dollars, so they can buy and control our legislators. (Has anyone heard of the Koch brothers?). They also hand down rulings that make our medical clinics less safe, that leave minority voters once again subject to discrimination and being almost unable to vote, deciding that corporations are people with religious values, and other rulings that don't serve the interest of the American people.

Key Christian Values and How Some of Our Legislators and Governors Don't Represent Any of Them

Even though our First Amendment clearly forbids it, some "Christian" politicians do their best to put their religious beliefs into public policy. Some would even have the laws of the Old Testament enacted into law.

These same politicians scream about the lack of "constitutional values", but ignore the reality of our First Amendment. The First Amendment is very clear and direct. "Freedom of religion" also means freedom *from* religion. We should all tell people about the good news of Jesus, but we should never force a person to become a Christian or marginalize them when they don't. While I believe that Christianity is the only religion for me, I am still aware that

there are many other religions in our country with devout followers. I also believe that the First Amendment makes room for all religious traditions (or none).

But our politicians at all levels continually try to enact legislation that would force their warped view of Christianity on us. Then they refuse to act as Christians and do anything about the gun violence in our nation, widespread poverty, or lack of medical care, even refusing to create laws that would keep guns out of the hands of criminals and the mentally ill.

Still, that doesn't stop Republicans from constantly trying to put their perverted view of "Christianity" into much of the legislation they attempt to force on the American people while ignoring the values that Jesus taught us.

These values of Jesus include:

- Helping the Poor.
- Not Judging Others.
- Being Hopeful Instead of Paranoid, Fearful, and Angry.
- Acceptance of Others Who Are Different.
- Helping Those Who Can't Help Themselves.

So, how exactly are these people Christian?

Any Politician Who Tries to Interject Religion Into Government Should Immediately Be Removed From Office.



This, of course, won't happen and I'm kidding in my heading. But if a politician does try to put religion (any religion) into their legislation they deserve to be removed from office because this means they are ignoring the Constitution. And that is not what our government is supposed to do. Right?

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion...”

There is simply no excuse, no reason, for any politician to violate this law.



The Conservative Crusade To Eliminate the Rights of Half The Population

The Declaration of Independence contains the statement that “all [men] are created equal” and have “unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” It is sad that now, after 238 years, that this promise is no longer true for about 175 million citizens.

The rights of this group are rapidly being chipped away by other Americans. Under the guise of defending their own rights to life,

liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, they trample on the rights of others. The other Americans who are trying to deny other citizens their unalienable rights are mostly Republicans who claim to be Christian. These "Christians" seem to only care about the First Amendment (the right to free speech) and the Second Amendment (the right to bear arms). They tend to ignore the rest except when they are charged with a crime. Then they freely use the Fifth Amendment (the right to not incriminate oneself) if it suits their purpose.

These "Christians" act and speak as though the Constitution does not apply to all men or any woman. They seem to believe that unalienable rights are reserved only for the rich and the religious Christian right. They pass laws or regulations that restrict the voting rights of others, prohibit women from being in control of their private medical decisions, reduce assistance to the poor, make voting difficult for large numbers of the population (mostly Democrats), give tax breaks to the rich, subsidies to multi-national corporations, and force millions into poverty with barbaric slave wages. They also seem to never hesitate to tell ANY lie that serves their purpose.

A recent Supreme Court decision to allow corporations (who are now considered people) to discriminate against anyone they decide offends their owner's religious views. They didn't realize that this decision does not just apply to Christians. Recent news reports offer stories about Jews who will now serve only Jews, a Muslim who cut off the hand of a shoplifter (it's in their Sharia law), employers who immediately fired all of their gay employees, and a renewal of discrimination by restaurants who now will not serve minorities.

Religious tyranny now reigns supreme over America. The gains we have made to provide civil rights might soon be a thing of the past.

If Our Founding Fathers Were All Christians, Why Did They Say These Things?



No one can deny that Christianity has been a major force in our history. From the Pilgrims to our current day the Bible and Christianity are a big part of our heritage.

But many conservatives believe that one has to be Christian to be patriotic; That we are a "Christian nation"; that full citizenship and all of the freedoms in the Constitution are only for Christians; that only Christians may force their beliefs on others by withholding full medical care from their employees, by refusing to serve those who not Christian, or to discriminate against homosexuals. They seem to forget that a Muslim, a Jew, an Atheist, or any person who believes in another religion

can refuse to serve them! I'm almost certain that this has happened since the recent Supreme Court rulings that businesses have "religious beliefs". It just hasn't happened to someone who is important enough to bring national attention to this "unlawful discrimination".

If you can't accept what our Constitution says about the separation of government and religion in our country, then I doubt that the

following statements made by our "Founding Fathers" probably won't convince you either. But for those of you with open minds, here are some of the things they said about religion:

George Washington, letter to the United Baptist Chamber of Virginia (1789) - "If I could conceive that the general government might ever be so administered as to render the liberty of conscience insecure, I beg you will be persuaded, that no one would be more zealous than myself to establish effectual barriers against the horrors of spiritual tyranny, and every species of religious persecution."

Thomas Jefferson, letter to Peter Carr (1787) - "Question with boldness even the existence of a God; because, if there be one, He must more approve of the homage of reason, then that of blindfolded fear."

Samuel Adams, The Rights of the Colonists (1771) - "In regard to religion, mutual toleration in the different professions thereof is what all good and candid minds in all ages have ever practiced, and both by precept and example inculcated on mankind."

Thomas Paine, The Rights of Man (1791) - "Persecution is not an original feature in any religion; but it is always the strongly marked feature of all religions established by law. Take away the law-establishment, and every religion re-assumes its original benignity."

Roger Sherman, Congress (1789) - "Congress has no power to make any religious establishments."

Benjamin Franklin, Poor Richard's Almanack (1758) - "The way to see by faith is to shut the eye of reason."

Thomas Jefferson, letter to the Danbury Baptists (1802) - "I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people build a wall of separation between Church & State."

Thomas Paine, The American Crisis No. V (1776) - "To argue with a man who has renounced the use of reason is like administering medicine to the dead."

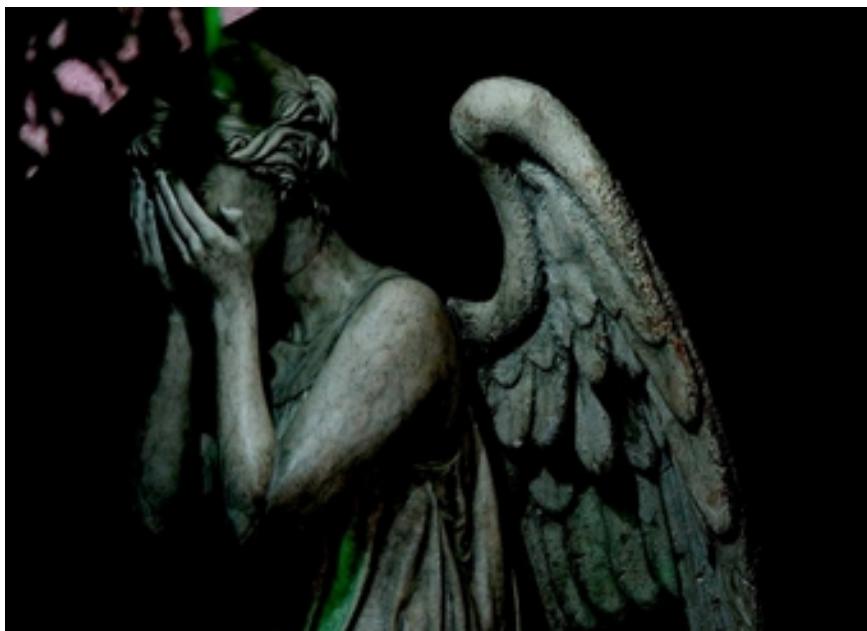
Thomas Jefferson, A Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom (1779) - "Our civil rights have no dependence on our religious opinions, any more than our opinions in physics or geometry."

James Madison, letter to William Bradford, Jr. (1774) - "Christian establishments tend to great ignorance and corruption, all of which facilitate the execution of mischievous projects."

George Washington, address to Congress (1790) - "There is nothing which can better deserve our patronage than the promotion of science and literature. Knowledge is in every country the surest basis of public happiness."

James Madison, General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia (1785) - During almost fifteen centuries has the legal establishment of Christianity been on trial. What has been its fruits? More or less, in all places, pride and indolence in the clergy; ignorance and servility in the laity; in both, superstition, bigotry and persecution."

In Conclusion



If you've made it this far I'd like to think that it is because you enjoyed my book. Or maybe if you got this far its because you just wanted to read whatever outrageous thing I had to say next.

Whatever your reason, I'm glad you made it to the Conclusion and I hope I have encouraged you to think about the things I have written. My hope is to start a dialog between Christians of all sects, and to encourage everyone to become an authentic Christian.

I also hope that you will share this book with other Christians in your life. Or buy a thousand copies and give them out to every Christian and non-Christian you meet (grin).

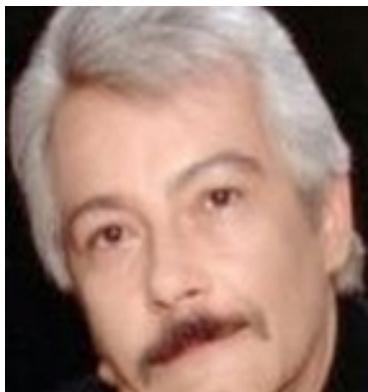
Most of all, I sincerely hope that you decide to become an authentic Christian.

Here is a beautiful piece of scripture that, I think, sums up all that I wanted to say in this book"

2 Peter 1:2-11 - *Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But He that lacks these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that He was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*

God Bless You.

– Rev. Scott Shannon, July 2014



A Special Request From Pastor Scott

If you feel inclined I would appreciate it if you would give an honest review of my book. Reviews help sell books, especially if the reviews are good ones. Bad reviews (one or two-star) at least show that you were interested enough to say something about the book. Three-star reviews usually indicate that you liked my writing, but found some fault in my book's layout or formatting.

If you don't like some or many of my ideas, by all means say so in your review. I want to hear about your views and, as I said in my introduction, you may motivate me to update my book. But please don't give me a bad review unless you also didn't like my writing style (spelling errors, grammar problems, etc.). My book has been proofread and edited professionally by five different people, so I DO want to know about any of those errors you find.

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