

# Religion Key Passages

Transcript from David Hamilton's Video project for  
the SourceView Reader

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## **Note for transcript use:**

*The blue text was used for editing purposes, and should all be gone, but if it is there, compare with video.*

*The use of red text is to draw attention to scriptures used. While checked for use in the video project, it would be best to confirm when used for the written projects coming. The spoken may have altered a word or added a comment ...and sometimes only selections were used out of a large passage.*

*The use of green text is to highlight the need to take extra care to find exact spelling or wording, especially quotes used and words in Hebrew. Also any questions on correct wording.*

# Religion Sphere Key Passages

## God and the Sphere of Religion

1	Jesus Is Our High Priest	Heb 2:16-18
2	Reconciled to Be Reconcilers	2Co 5:18-20
3	Jesus Is God's Prophet	Joh 6:14
4	The Purpose of Prophecy	1Co 14:3
5	Jesus Is Our Intercessor	Heb 7:24-25
6	When There Is No Intercessor	Eze 22:30-31

## The Marks of True and False Religion

7	A New Covenant	Jer 31:33-34
8	True Religion: God First in All.	Heb 11:17-19
9	Greatest Sin #1: Idolatry	2Ki 17:7-18a, 22b-23
10	Genuine Religion: Compassion and Holiness	Jam 1:27
11	Greatest Sin #2: Injustice	Isa 58:1-12
12	Moses Intercedes for Israel (and Egypt!)	Exo 32:7-14
13	God Looks at the Heart	1Sa 16:7
14	Inner Transformation Desired	1Sa 15:22-23
15	What Is the Ultimate Good?	Mic 6:8
16	Repent! Believe! Follow!	Mar 1:14-18
17	Forgiven and Cleansed	1Jn 1:5-9

## Biblical Purpose of Religion

18	God Devises Ways to Bring Us Back	2Sa 14:14
19	Why? For Love or for Gain?	Job 1:1-2:10
20	Personal Revelation of God	Job 42:5-6
21	God's Heart Longing Expressed	Psa 81:13-16
22	Repentance and Forgiveness of Sins	Luk 24:47

## Two Streams: Mobile and Local Expressions of Church

23	Declare His Glory among the Nations	Psa 96:1-6
24	Paul's Missionary Team	Act 20:4
25	Paul's Ministry Described	Col 1:28-29
26	Levites Called to Serve the Tabernacle	Num 1:48-53
27	James Leads the Church in Jerusalem	Act 15:13-22a

## Role of Religious Leaders

28	Doing God's Thing God's Way	1Ch 15:12-13
29	Five-fold Gifts	Eph 4:11-13
30	Qualifications for Church Leadership	Tit 1:5-9
31	Disciplines of a Church Leader	2Ti 2:1-7,15
32	Come. Go.	Mar 3:14-15
33	Mobile Teams Teaching God's Word	2Ch 17:7-10
34	Ministry of the Prophet	1Sa 12:19-25
35	Prayer and Spiritual Warfare	Eph 6:10-20

## God with Us – God at the Center

36	Not Without Your Presence	Exo 33:15-17
37	Named Jesus; Named Emmanuel	Mat 1:20-23
38	Purpose of Jesus' Coming	Mar 10:45
39	Two or Three Gathered in His Name	Mat 18:20

## Life of a Jesus-Follower

40	Be Holy	Lev 20:26
41	Fruit of the Spirit	Gal 5:22-25
42	Declare the Excellencies of Him	1Pe 2:9-10
43	Imitate Jesus; Embrace Suffering	1Pe 2:21-25

## **Religion & Healthcare**

- |    |                                   |             |
|----|-----------------------------------|-------------|
| 44 | Levitical Laws for Healthcare     | Lev 13:1-46 |
| 45 | Commissioned to Heal              | Mat 10:1,8  |
| 46 | Prayer Produces Wonderful Results | Jam 5:13-16 |

## **Crossover Passages**

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|----|------------------------------------|--------------|
| 47 | Crossover with FAMILY              | Jer 32:33-35 |
| 48 | Crossover with ECONOMICS           | Act 8:18-23  |
| 49 | Crossover with GOVERNMENT          | Jdg 6:25-32  |
| 50 | Crossover with EDUCATION           | Mat 13:52    |
| 51 | Crossover with MEDIA/COMMUNICATION | Rom 10:14-15 |
| 52 | Crossover with CELEBRATION         | 2Ch 5:12-14  |

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# Religion Sphere Introduction

As we look at the sphere of religion, we want to consider what this sphere is all about. God's purpose for this sphere is the extension of mercy and reconciliation between those who have had broken relationships - with others and with God. Competing religious worldviews contend for the hearts of minds of men and women everywhere. Without falling into a contentious spirit, we are to enter this marketplace of religious ideas, and clearly display why the gospel of Christ is unique. In fact, the gospel is the only means of enduring grace. For it alone makes lasting reconciliation possible through God's sacrificial love displayed on the cross.

Our first section, like in all of our spheres is God and how he wants to reveal his character and ways, teach us through this sphere. So we're gonna look at six passages on God in this sphere of religion.

## Number one: Jesus is our High Priest.

We read from **Hebrews 2:16-18**. We also know that the Son did not come to help angels; he came to help the descendants of Abraham. Therefore, it was necessary for him to be made in every aspect like us, his brothers and sisters, so that he could be our merciful and faithful High Priest before God. Then he could offer a sacrifice that would take away the sins of the people. Since he himself has gone through suffering and testing, he is able to help us when we are being tested.

When we look at the foundation of the Bible and particularly the scriptures from the Original Testament, the two main religious roles are that of priest and prophet. And they are complimentary gifts, but they're distinguished one from another in this way: the priest's role was to speak to God on behalf of the people, the prophet's role was to speak to the people on behalf of God. And Jesus is the prophet-priest. He fits both roles perfectly. He comes as a mediator to speak to God on our behalf and speak to us on God's behalf.

## Number two: Reconcile to Be Reconcilers.

We read from **2 Corinthians 5:18-20**. And all of this is a gift from God who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!"

Reconciliation, restoration of broken relationships, being adopted and reunited into the family of God... That's what Jesus came to do. That's what's so wonderful and so unique about him. And he invites us into his ministry to be partners with him in this task of reconciliation.

## Number three: Jesus is God's Prophet.

**John 6:14**. When the people saw him do this miraculous sign, they exclaimed, "Surely he's the prophet we have been expecting!"

In **Deuteronomy 18** God speaks to Moses and he promises that one day there's gonna be a prophet, not just one of many prophets, but really The Prophet. It's a, the language of the Messiah, the one who would most fully communicate God to human beings. And this prophet would be known because it says **chapter 18, again of Deuteronomy, verse 22**, his predictions will come true. If the prophets predictions do not come true, you'll know that the Lord did not

give that message. So when the miraculous happens, when people say, be healed and people are healed and what they speak about happens, you listen carefully. So when people saw the miracles that Jesus was doing, this must be The Prophet, the Messiah, the one that is promised, the one who will speak to us on God's behalf. And it was confirmed by these miraculous signs.

This is very similar to what's in **Mark 16:17**, after Jesus gives the great commission and they go out and begin proclaiming the gospel. It says many accepted what they preached and proclaimed it and miraculous signs followed them. This is what we should expect from God. Because if God is powerful in his words, and when we speak his words like Jesus spoke his words, miraculous signs will follow.

## **Number four. The Purpose of Prophecy.**

**1 Corinthians 14:3** For one who prophesy, strengthens others, encourages them and comforts them.

This is a great definition of the purpose of prophecy. Sometimes when we think of the prophet, we think of some scary man with disheveled hair, and a bony finger pointing, predicting something about the future. And at times prophecies are predictive, but more often than not, they're prescriptive. They're not telling you what will be. They're telling you what you should do. Prophets, another way to say this is that prophecy is more about forth-telling than it is about foretelling. Instead of talking about what will happen in the future is telling you how you should live your life right now. And prophet, a true prophet of God wants us to align our lives with God's life. Our will with God's will. Our words with God's words. Our actions with God's actions. Our heart with God's heart. When we do this, we're walking in the way that the prophet intends us to walk.

## **Number five: Jesus is our Intercessor**

**Hebrews 7:24-25.** But because Jesus lives forever, his priesthood lasts forever. Therefore he's able once and forever to save those who come to God through him, he lives forever to intercede with God on our behalf.

The fact that Jesus lives forever and is forever at the right hand of God and is forever interceding for us that he's always championing our cause. He's always on our side. He's always for us. This is what gives us confidence that our salvation is not a temporary, fleeting, passing phenomenon, but a reality that will endure to the very end of time. He's championing our cause every single moment of every single day guaranteeing and eternal relational intimacy with us and the God the Father, God the Spirit and Himself, God the Son.

## **Number six: When There is No Intercessor**

This particular passage just paired with the one that we just looked at about Jesus being our intercessor. This one is entitled When There is No Intercessor and it comes from **Ezekiel 22:30-31**. God says in this passage, I look for someone who might rebuild a wall of righteousness that guards the land. I search for someone to stand in the gap in the wall, so I wouldn't have to destroy the land, but I found no one.

I found no one.

So now I will pour out my fury on them, consuming them with the fire of my anger. I will heap on their heads the full penalty for all their sins. I, the sovereign Lord have spoken.



This is one of the most tragic, most sorrowful passages in all of scripture. God, who is always compassionate and merciful looks for every opportunity to extend forgiveness, redemption and salvation. But as a loving God, he must also uphold justice and equity. And if there is not someone who stands in the gap and, and advocates for those who are guilty of wrongdoing, he is required to uphold justice, but he wants to extend mercy. On this occasion in Israel's history, there was not a single person who would come and stand before God and plead on behalf of the people. He said, if there had been one, just one person who stood in that gap, I would've saved them, but there wasn't that one person. So instead of showing them the mercy that I desired, I had to execute the judgment that was required. The good news is in the passage that we looked at in passage five, that now and forever Jesus is the intercessor who stands in the gap. The sorrow of this situation need never happen again because our God is always interceding for us.

## SECTION INTRODUCTION

This section contains 11 passages, which highlight the marks of true and false religion. Not all religious activity on earth is in keeping with biblical truth. And so we need to look at that and evaluate that. So these passages will help us to understand God's ways of working through the religious sphere.

### Number seven: A New Covenant.

This is taken from **Jeremiah 31:31-34**, but this is the new covenant I will make with the people of Israel after those days, says the Lord. I will put my instructions deep within them and I'll write them on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be my people. And they will not need to teach their neighbors, nor will they need to teach their relatives, saying you should know the Lord. For everyone, from the least to the greatest, will know me already, says the Lord. And I will forgive their wickedness and I will never again remember their sins.

This new covenant, what God envisions, what true religion is really all about, is inner transformation. It's something that happens within and works its way out, leading to external demonstration. Religion is never something external that you impose, habits, rituals, traditions, that you require that you try to do with the vain hope of achieving some kind of internal change. No, it's the other way around a change of heart. A change of mind, a change within that comes to evidence itself in the externals.

Sometimes people think of religion as a list of obligations that I just need to obey. I need to fulfill. And if I obey it long enough and hard enough and diligently, then someday I'll be able to say, ah, I love God. I'll feel those emotions and have that, that buzz inside, go, oh it's wonderful. And if I can maintain that long enough someday, I'll be able to say, I'm a man of God. I'm a woman of God. I really know God. You try to obey in order to love in order to know. And that's just the opposite of what this new covenant is all about. It begins with knowing God. **John 17:3** says that **this is eternal life to know God and Jesus Christ whom He sent.**

Eternal life is not something that happens after death. Eternal life is this transformed inner experience that comes when you have relationships through intimacy with the living God and his son Jesus. And when we know God, it's impossible not to love him. Everything about the God of the Bible, the creator of the heavens of the earth, the redeemer of our souls is absolutely attractive and desirable. He's just and kind, and patient and good and, and wise and creative. Every thing about him is desirable. So if you really knowing what he is, it's, what's not to love about him? Everything is to love about him. And if you love him in **John 14**, several times, Jesus says this, if you love me. You will keep my commandments. So just the natural consequence. So instead of trying to obey, to love, to know - get to know him, fall in love with him and you'll see obedience naturally follows.

## Number eight: True Religion. God First in All.

Hebrews 11:17-19, It was by faith that Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice when God was testing him. Abraham who had received God's promises was ready to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, even though God had told him, Isaac is the son through who your descendants will be counted. Abraham reasoned that if Isaac died, God was able to bring him back to life again. And in a sense, Abraham did receive his son back from the dead.

To make sense of this passage in the story of Abraham and Isaac, we need to go back to **Genesis 18**. This chapter is the longest conversation that Abraham has with God. And he's interceding on the behalf of Sodom and Gomorrah, a city that God needs to bring judgment, but as always, God is looking, how can I extend compassion? And so Abraham says, well, God, you wouldn't judge everybody if there were 50 of those everybodys were just and all the others were wicked. God says, right, well, what about 45? I wouldn't do it for 45. 40? 30? 20? 10? And Abraham talks God down. And what he is doing in that process is he is discovering who God is. He's getting to know God.

See the gods of his day, of the culture out of which he came, gods of the surrounding cultures were fickle, angry, bitter - gods that you had continuously appease. If you didn't appease them, they'd do you in. They'd they throw lightning bolts at you. They'd destroy you. They were gods who loved motivating people through fear. This is not the God of the Bible. And every time that that Abraham says, well, what if there's five less or 10 less? God's response five times is I will not destroy. I will not destroy. I will not destroy. I will not destroy. I will not destroy.

You see God was teaching him that he's not like the gods. God is a life giver, not a life taker. He's not like the angry, fickle unjust middle Eastern gods of the surrounding cultures. So when several chapters later in **Genesis 22**, God says, you're gonna take my, your son, your only son, the son that I promised you, your miracle son and sacrifice him. He did exactly what Hebrews says here. He reasoned, "well, God is not a life taker. He was not one who destroys life. He's one that gives life. I can trust God in this."

We also read in **Romans 4:16-19**. These insightful thoughts. ...Abraham is the father of all who believe. That is what the scriptures meant when God told him I've made you the father of many nations... That's what the name Abraham means. His name was previously meant Abram, which meant respected father, but after almost a century of living, God said would change your name. You're not gonna be just a respected father, which must have been a shameful name for him to carry, because he would've snickered behind his back. Because he wasn't a father of anyone said, I am gonna make you father many nations. This happened because Abraham believed in the God who brings the dead back to life. And creates new things out of nothing. Even when there was no reason for hope. Abraham kept hoping, believing that he would become the father of many nations. For God has said to him, that's how many descendants you will have. And Abraham's faith did not weaken...

He trusted God that he would bring new life out of even nothing. So he trusted God with the life of his son. He knew that God, what he revealed about this life giving, life enhancing, life protecting, life covering, life anointing God was so good that he could make God first and his son and his family, his life, everything would work out just fine. Because God is so very trustworthy.

What Abraham discovered is important for us too. When we recognize and come to know our God for who he truly is, it is with joyous confidence that we can put Him first in every dimension of our life. If that's a struggle for you, perhaps you need to get to know God a little bit better.

## Number nine: The Greatest Sin #1: Idolatry

There are two passages that we'll be looking at at the greatest sins mentioned in the Original Testament. And the first one, The Greatest Sin #1 is Idolatry. And we're gonna read selections from **2 King's chapter 17**. This is speaking of the time when Israel was carried away into captivity and ceased becoming a nation, the Northern kingdom ceased to exist. **This disaster came upon the people of Israel because they worshipped other gods [because of idolatry] they sinned against the Lord, their God who brought them safely out of Egypt... did followed the practices of the pagan nations the Lord had driven from the land ahead of them... They built pagan shrines for themselves in all their towns, from the smallest outpost to the largest walled city. They set up sacred pillars and Asherah poles at the top of every hill and under every green tree. They offered sacrifices on all the hilltops, just like the nations the Lord had driven from the land ahead of them. So the people of Israel had done many evil things, arousing the Lord's anger. Yes, they worshiped idols despite the Lord's specific and repeated warnings.**

Again and again, the Lord had sent his prophets and seers to warn both Israel and Judah: turn from all your evil ways. Obey my commands and decrees — the entire law that I commanded your ancestors to obey and that I gave you through my servants the prophets...

But the Israelites would not listen...They worshiped worthless idols, so they became worthless themselves... They followed the example of the nations around them... and made two calves from metal. They set up an Asherah pole and worshipped Baal and all the forces of heaven. They even sacrificed their own sons and daughters in the fire. They consulted fortune tellers and practiced sorcery and sold themselves to evil, arousing the Lord's anger.

Because the Lord was very angry with Israel, He swept them away from his presence... They did not turn from these sins until the Lord finally swept them away from his presence just as all the prophets had warned. So Israel was exiled from their land to Assyria where they remain to this day.

So when you look at the 10 commandments, the first four of those commandments have to do with our vertical relationship with God, of how we love God. If we love anything more than we love God, we make that thing an idol. Anything that replaces God as your first love is destructive to your life and to our society.

## Number 10: Genuine Religion: Compassion and Holiness

from **James 1:27**, pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you.

This passage contains two thoughts, holiness and compassion. Now sometimes we have distorted images of these two words. Sometimes people speak of holiness as something austere and harsh and, and yeah, rigid. And compassion is kind of a laissez-faire, anything goes, whatever you want to do, acceptance and boundary-less. And neither of those are what the Bible is talking about. God is both compassionate and holy. He's always motivated by mercy and always holding to a life giving standard of righteousness. He lives in the realm of compassionate holiness. That's holiness with no harshness or he, we could say he lives in the realm of holy compassion, mercy that is always within the bounds of biblical standards. It's not holiness or compassion. It's not either or - it's both/and. That is true pure and genuine religion.

## Number 11: The Greatest Sin #2: Injustice

...is we're looking at The Greatest Sin #2: Injustice. In passage number nine, we looked at idolatry. This one is injustice, we read in Isaiah 58:1-12. These selections. **Shout with the voice of trumpet blast, shout aloud. Don't be timid. Tell my people Israel their sins. Yet they act so pious. They come to the temple every day and seem delighted to learn all about me. They act like a righteous nation that would never abandon the laws of its God. They ask me to take action on their behalf, pretending they want to be near me. We have fasted before you, they say. Why aren't you impressed? We've been very hard on ourselves and you don't even notice it.**

**I will tell you why, I respond. It's because you are fasting to please yourselves. Even while you fast, you keep oppressing your workers...This kind of fasting will never get you anywhere with me...Do you really think this will please The Lord? No! This is the kind of fasting I want: Free. those who are wrongly imprisoned, lighten the burden of those who work for you. Let the oppressed go free and remove the chains that bind people. Share your food with the hungry and give shelter to the homeless. Give clothes to those who need them and do not hide from relatives who need your help...**

**Then when you call the Lord will answer, yes, I am here, he will quickly reply. Remove the heavy yoke of oppression. Stop pointing your finger and spreading vicious rumors! Feed the hungry and help those in trouble...**

While the second set of commandments, the last six commandments of the 10 commandments, are about our horizontal relationships, about how we love our neighbor. And injustice happens when we don't love our neighbor as ourselves. And so if we're not loving God, we're not loving our neighbor, we are committing idolatry or injustice. Have you ever tried to hide from relatives who need your help? It gets pretty particular. Have you ever driven by someone who's asking for food? Who's hungry? Oh, this is true religion- where we are really care about others as much as we care about ourselves,

## Number 12. Moses Intercedes for Israel (and Egypt).

From **Exodus 32:7-14**. This is right after the Israelites had formed a golden calf and worshiped committing idolatry in the very process of all being saved by God. It violated this very important first command that we've already looked at in a previous passage. **The Lord told Moses quick, go down the mountain. Your people who you brought from the land Egypt have corrupted themselves... They have melted down gold and made a calf and they've bowed down and sacrificed to it. They're saying these are your gods O Israel, who brought you out of the land of Egypt. Now leave me alone so my first anger can lay against them and I will destroy them. But Moses tried to pacify the Lord, his God, oh Lord. He said, why are you so angry with your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt.**

It sounds like moms and dads talking about their kids. When the grades at school are great - My son, my daughter. But there's a note from the principal's office, honey, your son, your daughter.. and God says, Moses, your kids, that the one that you brought out of Egypt, Moses, no God, your people, the ones that you brought out in Egypt, there's a reality and a humor and a vividness in this story that just smacks of genuineness.

**...Why are you so angry with your own people whom you brought from the land of Egypt with such great power and such a strong hand? Why let the Egyptians say their God rescued them with the evil intention of slaughtering them in the mountains and wiping them from the face of the earth? Turn away from your fierce anger. Change your mind about this terrible disaster you've threatened against your people. Remember your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and**

Jacob... So the Lord changes mind about the terrible disaster he threatened to bring on his people.

This is such a precious and beautiful passage. God changed his mind, but not his character, not the principles upon which he makes his decisions. As we see many times throughout the scriptures, God will always be just, but is looking for every opportunity in which he can justly display mercy. And if the conditions for mercy are met, he will quickly change the proclamation of judgment to extension of mercy. He's consistently does this throughout history. And so if we know God, we can pray and intercede and contribute to forming those conditions, which allow him to change the preferred judgment into restorative mercy. This is what God's desire is.

This is why we are exhorted by James. To remember that in **James 2:13**, that **mercy triumphs over judgment**. The reason it's true for us and our actions with one another is because it's true in God. This is how he acts towards us.

Now, something really important to notice that Moses intercession, he doesn't excuse the Israelites. He doesn't say, oh God, you're being too harsh. Really what they did wasn't so bad after all, it's just the first time, give him a break. He doesn't make excuses for sin. He recognizes that God is just in his assessment and the consequences that he says they deserve are the appropriate ones. His line of argument is something totally different. And we learned some great things about this, and God is right to judge them as he is, but he least his intercessions, is first, the impact on the Egyptians, the godless, the ones who don't know God, the pagans, they will see the judgment and they will misinterpret God's motives. They will say Moses argues, God took them out into the desert to kill them. He took them out to judge them. And that's not what God's intent was. His intent was to do them good, to bless them, to take them through the desert, into the promised land, to display mercy and compassion on them. And so God's character, though He would be just in doing what he would do would give a wrong impression to those who really did not understand the full picture. God said a legitimate, that's a legitimate reason. I will take that in consideration. And the other reason is an impact on their Israelites because God had made a promise of covenant to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, their forefathers that he would make them as numerous as the stars in the heaven and the sands of the sea. And if you just destroy them all, it would set back that promise generations and generations.

And for those two reasons, for love of the Egyptians and for love of the Israelites, God listened to Moses and spared judgment and extended mercy and displayed what religion is really about as we come into his presence and intercede on the behalf of people for good.

## **Number 13: God Looks at The Heart**

**1 Samuel 16:7**, but the Lord said to Samuel don't judge by his appearance or height, for I rejected him. The Lord doesn't see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.

This story is when Samuel was trying to discover which one of the sons of Jesse God intended to be the next king of Israel. And he looked at the eldest and he looked tall and handsome but God said, no, it's not about these things. And he led him to David who was not even present at that time, but who was out in the field, caring for sheep. God knew David's heart. True religion is not about outward performance. True religion is about inner realities. The character of our heart, our internal responses to God. It's about intimacy within. That's what we're really about.



## Number 14: Inner Transformation Desired.

From 1 Samuel 15:22-23. We're reading about Samuel's response to Saul who disobeyed God and took on a role that he should never have taken to sacrifice the sheep before going into battle. His disobedience displeased God. He stepped out of his domain of authority and he tries excuse himself, but it was a religious thing I did. But Samuel replied to him. What is more pleasing to the Lord? Your burnt offerings and sacrifices are your obedience to his voice. Listen, obedience is better than sacrifice and submission is better than offering the fat of rams. Rebellion is as sinful as witchcraft.

Some of these little like little white lies, these little small sins that we think is like, no big deal. It's like witchcraft. Anytime we don't hear and obey God, it is doing the things that are absolutely contrary to him and stubbornness is as bad as worshiping idols. So because you've rejected the command of the Lord, He has rejected you as king.

This is serious business. We're called to listen to God to understand his word, to obey him. And as we walk in that life of submissive obedience, honoring him seeking to please him in our inner being. That's so much more important than all the outward show of religious activities, the pomp and circumstance of religious ritual. He wants your heart. He wants to see that change within. That's what makes the real difference. That that's true Religion.

## Number 15. What is The Ultimate Good?

This comes from Micah 6:8. No, O people, the Lord has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, to walk humbly with your God.

Some translations say to do justice, love mercy, walk humbly. You know, that's not my normal inclination. My inclination is to love justice and do mercy. I do mercy because I understand that if I don't forgive, I won't be forgiven. And so it's to my benefit. I'm sure you prayed the Lord's prayer, and it says, forgive us our sins (or our trespass or debts, depending on your tradition) as we forgive those who sin against us. You are making a contract with God every time you pray that. If I'm slow in forgiving other people, be slow in forgiving me. If I'm quick in forgiving other people, be quick in forgiving me. They go like, okay, I, I wanna be the person who forgives quickly, because I know I'm gonna need it. So I do mercy because I know it's needful.

But when someone, I don't like having to do mercy, because it means someone's done something mean to me. If I have to forgive someone that they've been unkind or unjust or something's gone wrong. And when something mean happens towards me and then something goes wrong with that person, I'm kind of a little bit happy. I shouldn't be, but I kind of love justice. I go like, yes, that, that, that felt good.

But you know what? That's not how it should be. And that's not how it is with God. See, he does justice, but he loves mercy. When we say that he does justice, it means that he never gives us, any one of us less than we deserve. We get what we deserve or better. Or when we say he loves mercy, he always is looking to give us better than we deserve. The only way I can walk like that, in that absolute, generous love that God asks for every person - is if I walk with God, if I walk humbly with him, if I walk with an attitude of a learner, depending on him saying, teach me, shape me, mold me, make me like you, Lord, make my thoughts more like your thoughts, my attitudes, more like your attitudes, my words and my actions more like yours. I need you. And if we do that, he begins forming his character in us and we start learning how to do justice, but love, love mercy.

## **Number 16: Repent! Believe! Follow!**

These three words you'll find in Mark 1:14-18. Let's read this. Later on after John was arrested, Jesus went into Galilee, where he preached God's Good News. The time promised by God has come at last! he announced. The kingdom of God is near! Repent of your sins and believe the Good News.

One day when Jesus was walking along the shore, the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew throwing the net into the water, for they fished for a living. Jesus called out to them, Come follow me. And I will show you how to fish for people! And they left their nets... and followed him.

The way Jesus introduces the gospel message is very different from how we often hear it today. Sometimes we present the gospel as we're trying to sell sweets in a candy store. You know, if you just buy this and we talk about all the promises and all the good things that we try to make it look glorious and beautiful. We speak of the benefits and the promises, but this is not what Jesus does. When he meets those who will be his first disciples, He lays the expectations out very clearly. If we're gonna participate with him in True religion, we have to change the way we think, change the way we make choices, change our worldview. This is what repent means. It means a 180 degree turn. The Greek word for this is **Mentenoia**, which is literally a change of mind. And that which we considered to be good because it was pleasurable or the sins and pursuits that we had and say, That is not good. And I'm aligning now my mind with God. That's what repentance is about.

And then to believe, to trust God that we can't fix things by ourselves alone. We need help and he's willing to help us. He's willing to forgive us and change us and transform us. And, and we trust him.

And the third it has to involve obedience. Repent. Believe. Follow. In other words, obey. You know, the only promise Jesus makes in his presentation of the gospel, in this opening passenger in Mark? Is that if we do those three things, if we repent, believe, and follow, if we obey? His promise is that he will change us. He'll transform us.

The people he was speaking to were fishers of fish. And he says, by the time I'm finished with you, you're going to be fishers of men. You're gonna be different persons at the end of this process and journey with me than you are at the outset of this process. And that's his commitment. He commits himself to you and to me to work in our lives, to change us, to shape his character in us so that he can accomplish his good purposes to us. Repent. Believe. Follow.

## **Number 17: Forgiven and Cleansed.**

This comes from 1 John 1:5-9. And I love this passage. This has ministered to me so many times. I hope it encourages you. This is the message we heard from Jesus and now declared to you: God is light and there is no darkness in him at all. So we are lying if we say we have fellowship with God, but go on living in spiritual darkness; we are not practicing the truth. But if we are living in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other and the blood of Jesus, His son, cleanses us from all sin.

If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us, our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.

This is such an incredible promise. And friends, we all have things that we need to confess. And confess, this word in English literally means - it comes from the root in Latin - means to 'say the same thing as' to have our speech align identically with the speech of another; to agree with.

Let me give you an example, perhaps I'm praying one morning and as I'm in my time with before God, he reminds me remember your conversation with George yesterday? And God says you lied. I kind of think about it said, oh, oh no, I, I didn't lie. I exaggerated said, no, you lied. Well, I stretched the truth a little bit. No, you lied. Well, it was had elements of truth and elements that were a little bit false. You lied. And, and I have not confessed my sin until my words match His. And I say, God, thank you for reminding me. I lied. I need to make that right.

And see, the moment that I agree with his evaluation - and we can confess good things about ourselves or bad things that we've done, whatever he has said - when we align our words with His, that's confession. And we're confident of this, that when we confess our sins, when we align ourselves and say, I adopt your perspective. He instantly says, I forgive you.

He's faithful. That means he's constantly, he's dependable. He's trustworthy. You can count on this. And he's just, he doesn't break rules of doing this. He's doing the right thing. So he's faithful and just to forgive us.

But what I love about this is not that we're not just forgiven. He says he goes on to state and he will cleanse us from all wickedness, from all unrighteousness, from all the consequences of sin. Boy, do I need that! And perhaps you need that too. Good news is not only that we're forgiven and guilt and shame are dealt with, but he, that cleansing, that change, that transformation is wonderful. He doesn't just forgive us and leave us in our current sorry state. He forgives us and begins to work in our midst. He doesn't leave us in our mess. He cleans up the mess so we can be practitioners of the truth as it said in this passage.

## SECTION INTRODUCTION

This next section as contains five passages, considering the Biblical Purpose of Religion. So lots of different religions in the world, we want to see what is uniquely biblical, what matches the word of God.

### **Number 18: God Devises Ways to Bring Us Back.**

This comes from **2 Samuel 14:14**. All of us must die eventually. Our lives are like water spilled out on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again. But God does not just sweep life away; instead he devises ways to bring us back when we have been separated from him.

That is such a lovely phrase. He devises ways to bring us back when we've been separated from him. And you know, we've all been separated from God. We've not walked in the original design for which he made us. But God has pursued us with his love and He's intentionally devised a way; he didn't actually really stumble upon something and say, oh, here's some way I can fix it. No, he had to invent and create and develop this. Jesus is that way. His life, his death, his resurrection, his incarnation and his atonement. Everything that he is, God made fully human. Reconciling us to God. This is the way that he has made. He's devised a solution for all the problems we have created. In order so we can find our way back home, find our way back to right relationship with God. Find our way back to that place of adoption. Being included in the Trinitarian love of the Godhead with Father, Son and Holy Spirit, restored to family love once again. God devises a way. Fantastic.



## Number 19: Why? For Love or For Gain?

Job 1:1-2:10. Some selections from this initial part in the book of Job. There was once a man named Job who lived in the land of Uz. He was blameless — a man of complete integrity. He feared God and stayed away from evil. He had seven sons of three daughters. He owned 7,000 sheep, 3000 camels, 500 teams of oxen, and 500 female donkeys. He also had many servants. He was, in fact, the richest person in that entire area...

One day, the members of the heavenly court came to present themselves before the Lord, and the Accuser, Satan, came with them...

Then the Lord asked Satan, have you noticed my servant Job? He is the finest man in all of the earth. He is blameless — a man of complete integrity. He fears God and stays away from evil. Satan replied to the Lord, Yes, but Job has good reason to fear God. You have always put a wall of protection around him and his home and his property. You have made him prosper, everything he does. Look how rich he is! But reach out and take away everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face...

One day... a messenger arrived at Job's home with this news... the Sabeans raided and stole all the animals and killed all the farm hands... The fire of God has burned up your sheep and all the shepherds... bands of Chaldean raiders have stolen your camels and killed your servants... The house collapsed and all your children are dead. I'm the only one who escaped to tell you.

Job stood up and tore his robe in grief. Then he shaved his head, and fell to the ground to worship... Praise the name of the Lord. In all of this, Job did not sin by blaming God.

One day, the members of the heavenly court came again to present themselves before the Lord and the Accuser, Satan, came with them. ...Then the Lord asked Satan, have you noticed my servant, Job? He's the finest man in all the earth. He's blameless - a man of complete integrity. He fears God and he stays away from evil. And he has maintained his integrity, even though you angered me to harm him without cause. Satan replied to the Lord, Skin for skin! A man will give up in everything he has to save his life. But reach out and take away his health, and he will surely curse you to your face... So Satan ...struck Job, with terrible boils from head to foot...

...in all this, Job said nothing wrong.

Now Job is the oldest book, we are told, in the Bible. He would've been a contemporary from similar culture, similar timeframe as Abraham. And this book deals with some of the most basic and universal questions that human beings have about God, life, suffering, justice, and why we do what we do.

But there's something special about this book. When we read this tale, we have an advantage over Job. You see, he didn't see what happened in that meeting in the heavenly court, but we do. We know what's going on behind the scenes. We get a telling glimpse of the discussion between God and Satan. This gives us insight as to what is really at play. Satan challenges God saying, in essence this: your kingdom and my kingdom are essentially the same. People follow me because of what I give them. People follow you because the blessings you give them. Job, doesn't really love you. He serves you just for what he gets from you. Take away the blessings and he will no longer worship you. He will curse you.

That was the challenge. This is not a challenge of power. It's not something that God could just, you know, put his thumb down and squish, you know, the opposition. Do people love God for who God is? Why do they follow him? Is it for gain or for love? It really is not an issue of the

justice of God or the power of God or the love of God. These are usually the ways that we frame the discussion around Job.

The issue is why do you serve God? What is the motive behind your action? Why religion? Is it for selfish reasons in order to get the divine blessings? Or is it because you actually love God for who he is, for himself?

Satan declares that Job serves God only for the blessings. God says Job does what he does out of love. And so the gauntlet is thrown down. The challenge is made and what's on trial is the motivation of Job's heart. Will he love God just for who he is? Even when all the divine blessings are taken away? And note it was Satan that takes them away. Not God. If he doesn't, then there's really no difference between the two kingdoms. A cosmic contest plays out and when Job loses all and still praises God, there must have been shouts of victory among all the angels in heaven. Job is who he is and does what he does motivated purely by his love for God. Not for what he gets from God. This is true religion. This is what it's really about.

## **Number 20. Personal Revelation of God.**

**Job 42:5-6. I had only heard about you before, but now I have seen you with my own eyes. I take back everything I said, I sit in dust and ashes to show my repentance.**

In our previous passage, we would be looked at the beginning of the story with Job and this contest between God and Satan and the motive of Job's heart. Job suffered greatly during this time. He lost everything, all his wealth, all of his riches, all of his houses, all his children.

Obviously when you go through rough times, you ask a lot of questions. Job asked 125 questions. And his friends have to listen to him for a while, they try to silence him. They try to tell him to shut up. You have no justification. Certainly you've done something wrong. You deserve this. This is genuinely from God. Finally, they give up with him because he's still unsatisfied with their attempts and answers and the questions going go unanswered and God shows up.

And when God shows up, he doesn't go. Well, question one, here's answer one. Question two, answer two. God does something very surprising. He starts asking Job questions. He actually asked him 75 questions. And so almost as God comes along with the side and says, Job, great job in your questions, but don't stop there. There's more to think about. Have you considered this? how about that? And he joins Job in this discovery process and tries to encourage him on and pressing in and pressing on.

See Job, like many of us, like all of us, had a lot of secondhand information about God. You pick up all kind of thoughts or images about God from television and movies and sermons and Sunday schools and friends and school and, and whatever. Some of those things are true and some are not. How you sift that out? How you know what's really true about God? But through this difficult experience, all of those false concepts were being challenged and he was able to divest himself of those things. And he had an experiential encounter with the living God. He gets a fresh revelation of God, not based on hearsay, but on a personal face to face encounter with God himself.

See, when we talk about real religion, it's not a, the goal is not to accumulate a lot of facts and information about God. It's not abstract knowledge, cleverly devised theology, checking all the boxes and getting things right. The purpose is a transformational encounter, a personal knowledge of God, meeting with him and knowing him on a personal basis.

## Number 21: God's Heart Longing Expressed.

This comes from Psalm 81:13-16. Oh, that my people would listen to me. Oh that Israel would follow me walking in my paths! how quickly I would then subdue their enemies, how soon my hands would be upon their foes. Those who hate the Lord would cringe before him; they would be doomed forever. But I would feed you with the finest wheat. I would satisfy you with wild honey from the rock.

As we read this passage, we can hear the heart cry of God. It's almost a say, oh, oh, that they would do this. Oh! This is his longing, his desire. Sometimes we think of God's will as something very static and calculated. It's filled with emotion. It's filled with the longing to bless us to do good to us, to help us overcome our enemies. This reason he expresses this is our sins and our disobedience, our distancing ourselves from him frustrate his good plans for us. He can't do all the good things he would love to do for us. The heart of God is one of blessing. If we would just, if we would just listen, if we would just follow, Oh, the things that you would do.

## Number 22: Repentance and Forgiveness of Sins

Luke 24:47. It was also written that this message would be proclaimed in the authority of his name, to all the nations, beginning in Jerusalem. There is forgiveness of sins for all who repent.

The great commission is repeated in each of the four gospels and the beginning of Acts. And each has a little bit of different emphasis. Mark tells us to preach to everyone. Matthew tells us to disciple all the nations. John reminds us that we're being sent out in the same way, by Jesus, as Jesus was sent out by the Father. But here in Luke, in his version of the great commission, he actually gives us the content of the message that is to be preached. And the message is this, there is forgiveness of sins for all who repent. And so two important truths can be drawn from this. One. It's our job to repent. Two it's God's job to forgive. That's it. When we repent, he forgives. That's the Good News. That's the gospel. If we do the former, he will do the latter. You can count on it. Good News. Preach it.

## SECTION INTRODUCTION

This next section is about two streams, the mobile and local expressions of the church. And we'll look at five passages and together we'll consider how throughout the scriptures and history, there have always been two stream of religious service. Both of which are designed by God and are anointed by God. The technical terms that they are known as the sodality and the modality. But let's say that a little more easily. It's the mobile and local expression of God's ministry and people

In the Original Testament this was depicted by the prophet who was mobile. They would go from city to city and, and proclaim the word of Lord. And we know the true prophets and there were false prophets, but God's design was that people would speak the word of God in his name, wherever He called him to go. And besides the prophet there was the priest. And there was sometimes good priests and sometimes bad priests, but they stayed in the location where the tabernacle was in earlier history and later at the place of the temple. When they worked together, prophets and priests -like in the generation where Zechariah and Haggai, the prophets, worked together with Ezra, the priest, good things, in fact great things happened.

That same pairing of these two streams we also see the New Testament, where the mobile expression of the church is led by Paul and his missionary band. And the local expression is led by James and the elders in Jerusalem. In pre-reformation history these two streams were

expressed by those serving in the Catholic orders, the mobile church, and by the parish priests, the local church. So let's consider what the Bible have to say about these things.

## **Number 23 Declare His Glory Among the Nations**

Psalm 96:1-6, sing a new song to the Lord. Let the whole earth sing to the Lord, sing to the Lord, praise his name. Each day proclaim the good news that he saves. Publish his glorious needs among the nations. Tell everyone about the amazing things He does. Great is the Lord. He is most worthy of praise. He is to be feared above all gods. The gods of other nations are mere idols, but the Lord made the heavens. Honor and majesty surround him. strength and beauty fill his sanctuary.

When we think of these two streams, these two functions of the church, the local and the mobile, the point is everyone needs to be involved in spreading the good news that he saves. He is the true God, the living God, the creator God, the Redeemer God. And when you look at this passage, you see that there's not a lot of difference really, between evangelism and worship. There are two sides of the same coin. When we worship God, we're proclaiming his glorious deeds to him. When we're doing evangelism were proclaiming his glorious deeds to others. It's the same thought, but one is directed in gratitude towards Him, and the other is directed towards others as an invitation to come and participate in the privilege of having relationship with this remarkable God. Worship is vertical. Evangelism is horizontal, but all of it must be driven by a daily passion to make his glorious deeds known.

## **Number 24: Paul's Missionary Team**

Acts 20:4. This happens during his third missionary journey. Several men were traveling with [Paul]. They were Sopater son of Pyrrhus from Berea; Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica; Gaius from Derbe; Timothy; and Tychicus and Trophimus from the province of Asia.

Paul was a team player and included a diverse group of people among his colleagues. Those mentioned in this passage, accompanied him on the third missionary journey, but there are only some of the many colleagues and coworkers with whom he collaborated in spreading the good news. Throughout the book of Acts and in Paul's letters, there are 39 named individuals that are identified as being his coworkers. They come from different provinces and include both Jewish and Gentile background believers. They come from different economic context and their names indicate that more than a quarter of them, at least 10 or 11 were women. There was room for everyone on his missionary team.

## **Number 25: Paul's Ministry Described**

Colossians 1:28-29. So we tell others about Christ, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all the wisdom God has given us. We want to present them to God perfect in the relationship to Christ. That's why I work and struggle so hard depending on Christ mighty power that works within me.

Paul here states the goal of his ministry. He uses a Greek phrase three times, **xxxxxxxxxx**, which means every human being or all human beings. He does this three times and each time with a different action. He warns every human being. He teaches every human being and he presents every human being to God. It's a rhythm that's intentionally repeated in the Greek, say, this is my big picture of you. This is my global vision. This is for everyone. I warn and teach and present. He does so with great intensity and focus, there is purpose and clarity of objective. He's got a clear vision, a mission statement that's driving his every action. This is a life of a true leader within the mobile stream of the church. He's fully committed to extending

the kingdom of God everywhere, where it currently is not. He wants to say, go to places is never gone before and touch every single person on earth.

## **Number 26: Levites Called to Serve the Tabernacle.**

Numbers 1:48-53. For the Lord had said to Moses, ...put the Levites in charge of the Tabernacle of the Covenant, along with all its furnishings and equipment. They must carry the tabernacle and all its furnishings as you travel, and they must take care of it and camp around it. Whenever it is time for the tabernacle to move, the Levites will take it down. And when it is time to stop, they will set it up again... Each tribe of Israel will camp in a designated area with its own family banner, but the Levites will camp around the Tabernacle of the Covenant... The Levites are responsible to stand guard around the Tabernacle.

Their ministry, the ministry of these Levites was focused on one location - wherever the tabernacle was. At a later time it would be wherever the Temple was in Jerusalem. Their role was to care for the place where God gathered with his people. It was a place where those who loved God would congregate, to meet with God, to do their sacrifices, to receive forgiveness and to experience the grace of God. There was a lot of work that was needed to maintain this place and make sure it served its functions and in a place of meeting with God. Their calling was very specific and this calling is still applied in many ways throughout the body of Christ today, as people called to a particular location, serve there, day in day out, week after week, year after year, making sure that people can come and meet with God.

## **Number 27: James Leads the Church in Jerusalem.**

This is taken from Acts 15:13-22.. When they had finished James stood and said, brothers listen to me. Peter has told you about the time God first visited the Gentiles to take from them of people for himself. And this conversion of Gentiles is exactly what the prophets predicted... And so my judgment is that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. Instead, we should write and tell them to abstain from eating food offered to idols, from sexual immorality, from eating the meat of strangled animals, and from consuming blood. For these laws of Moses have been preached in Jewish synagogues and city on every Sabbath for many generations.

Then the apostles and elders together with a whole church in Jerusalem chose delegates, and they sent them to Antioch and Syria with Paul and Barnabas to report on this decision...

Acts 15 is a pivotal moment in the history of the early church. It is known as the council of Jerusalem. At was at this time that the church came together because they had to make some important decisions. And so they came together - leaders from the mobile stream of the church, that's Paul and Barnabas, and from the local expression of the church, Peter and James, together with other leaders to address the issues facing them and make decisions on matters of faith and practice. Because they collaborated together in a godly way, agreement was found. And together it facilitated a great multiplication of the church at that time in that generation. This is what should happen in every generation. People from the mobile and local church coming together, considering how can we do things? How can we communicate? How we can make the decisions that would advance the growth of the gospel everywhere we go around the world.

## **SECTION INTRODUCTION**

This next section has to do with the role of religious leaders. We will look at many particular aspects of this over the next nine passages. We'll learn about God's high standard for those who are called into this form of Ministry.



## Number 28: Doing God's Thing, God's Way.

1 Chronicles 15:12-13 says this. David said to them, the Levites... "You are the leaders of the Levite families. You must purify yourselves and all your fellow Levites, so you can bring the Ark of the Lord ...Because you Levites did not carry the Ark the first time, the anger of the Lord our God burst out against us. We failed to ask God how to move it properly.

That last phrase is the key one. Sometimes we get an understanding of about what God wants it to do, and we don't take time to ask him, how do you want us to do it? And we take off under our own power, with our own ideas, with our own initiative. And when we try to do God's thing, our way, we fail. In this situation with David people died, The plans were thwarted. There was a setback. Everything was delayed because they did not ask the question. 'God, how do you want this done?' Is not enough to know that what of God's will. We must also know always the how of God's will. Godly leaders.

Godly leaders, press into God and ask all the right questions. What do you want me to do? How do you want me to do it? When, how, with whom and everything else that might pertain to that decision. We don't want to just get a blueprint from God and say, thank you and take off on our own. We want to develop everything that we do in clear partnership and deep fellowship and close intimacy with God walking with him, depending upon him listening to him and obeying in detail.

## Number 29: The Five-fold Gifts

as found in Ephesians 4:11-13. Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son, that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.

There's several places in the Bible that have list of gifts, different ministries. And I always was confused. Then one day I was thinking about this one in Ephesians four. it has one of the shortest lists. I thought, ah, just five, five gifts, some, Hey, I've got five fingers. And I thought these gifts correspond to those five fingers. The first one is like the apostle. The apostle is a Jack of all trades, a master of none. We kind of tend to think of it as a very high lofty gift. It just means the pioneer or the first one to go. And when you're the first, you do a little bit of everything, just like the thumb can easily touch all of the other fingers? The apostle does a little prophetic, a little evangelistic, little pastor, a little bit of teacher. The other fingers don't touch each other so easily. I can make my little pinky touch my index finger, but I have to kind of help it. And it feels uncomfortable after awhile. But this with the thumb, I can do that very easily.

The next finger is the prophet the one, it says, thus says the Lord, speaking about what's right and wrong in calling people to a high standard. The third gift in this list is the evangelist. That's the middle figure. Relax. I'm not gonna show it to you by itself. I want you to see it's the central finger and the tallest, that's evangelism, which should always be the central task of the church and the main thing it does. The next gift. The next gift of the list is that about pastor and that's your ring finger. And pastor's concerned about long term relationships about continuity of fellowship, just like a wedding band speaks of a lifelong commitment between a man and a woman. Finally the last gift is that of the teacher that corresponds to the pinky because this is the finger that is most suitable for this action — for cleaning out your ear from the wax so you can better hear the word of God. That's the function of a teacher.

So the apostle, the prophet, the evangelist, the pastor, the teacher. All of these gifts are functioning within the body. We need this diversity. We need different perspectives, different

contributions, different leadership styles and leadership emphasis. It should never be a one man show. But when these gifts are used rightly it is not these gifts alone that are the function of ministry. Paul says here their responsibility is to equip God's people so they do the work of the ministry. It's not that those up front and leadership of the church who carry these functions are the one to do all of the ministry. They're to enable the whole church, the whole body of Christ to participate in ministry, wherever they are, doing whatever they do in their various vocations as they're engaged in the spheres. We need to equip in the church so that all believers everywhere are ministering and advancing the kingdom of God. That's what this is about - the whole church being served by these five gifts in order to see God's purposes established everywhere on earth.

## Number 30: Qualifications for Church Leadership.

This comes from **Titus 1:5-9**. I left you on the island of Crete Paul writes, **so you could complete your work there and appoint elders in each town as I instructed you. An elder must live a blameless life. He must be faithful to his wife, and his children must be believers who don't have a reputation for being wild or rebellious. A church leader is a manager of God's household, so he must live a blameless life. He must not be arrogant or quick tempered; he must not be a heavy drinker, violent or dishonest with money. Rather, he must enjoy having guests in his home, and he must love what is good. He must live wisely and be just. He must live a devout and disciplined life. He must have a strong belief in the trustworthy message he was taught; then he'll be able to encourage others with wholesome teaching and show those who oppose it where they are wrong.**

Paul unpacks the qualifications for a leader of the church. In the opening phrase, he repeats one word, which is the foundation, the word blameless. That's the key thing. We have to work to be an example, a model to everyone else.

And then he talks about three different categories. First of all, he talks about family relationships, how you live with your spouse, how you live with your children. If you can't manage your own household, how can you manage that household of God? The second thing he talks about are the character qualities of a leader. First, he mentions five things that a leader should avoid. These are really an expansion on the principles of **Deuteronomy 17**, how to a leader must exercise, self control in the areas of power, sex, and money. Or to make it a little broader of authoritarianism, hedonism and materialism. See, he mentions three of them in the area of power of authoritarianism. It seems like that's the biggest concern that we don't lord it over other people but to be servants to people.

But then the second thing he does in this area of character qualities, he mentions six positive things that a leader should pursue. The first two about the leader's love life. The two words that begin with the word, **the Greek word Philo. So Phils and PHAs and Phils** means to love strangers. It's hugely thought of as hospitality, but to love people who are not like you. In the context where Paul is writing it said if you want to be a leader of the body of Christ and you have come from a Jewish background, you need to be able to love people from a Gentile background. Or if you are from a Gentile background yourself, you need to be able to love people from a Jewish background. If you can't love people who are different from you, you're not qualified to be a leader in the body of Christ.

And then the next word is like, but you have to be **Philxx**. You have to have to be a lover of good to be lover of strangers. But that, that doesn't mean everything goes, because there are standards. What is good? What is right? What is correct? You need to love those things. So you have to be a person of passion if you're gonna lead. You can't inspire and lead other people if you're lethargic and I don't care. You have to be passionate about what you do. Love

is a passionate activity. The next four words are all about having that passion under self control. That just making sure it's tempered with wisdom. So talks about family talks about character qualities, five don'ts and six dos, and finally about skills and abilities. And he says you, the leader must be able to encourage and must be able to rebuke.

Some of us like to encourage people. And we find it really hard to confront them. And we always like to say the nice happy thing. Others are just given to saying it like it is, pointing out what it's wrong. That's just the way it is. And it's hard for them to think about being an encouragement. If you going to be a leader in the body of Christ, you need to develop the skill of doing both. So be blameless, good relationships with your spouse and your children. Avoid wrong use of power, sex and money. Love passionately, and keep it under self control, encourage and rebuke. Those are the qualities of a leader in the body of Christ.

## **Number 31: Disciplines of a Church Leader**

taken from 2 Timothy 2:3-16. Endure suffering along with me, as a good soldier of Christ, Jesus. Soldiers don't get tied up in the affairs of civilian life, for then they cannot please the officer who enlisted them. And athletes cannot win the prize unless they follow the rules. And hardworking farmers should be the first to enjoy the fruit of their labor. Think about what I'm saying. The Lord will help you understand all these things.

Always remember that Jesus Christ, a descendant of King David was raised from the dead. This is the Good News I preach. And because I preach this Good News, I am suffering and I have been chained like a criminal. But the word of God cannot be changed. So I am willing to endure anything if it will bring salvation and the eternal glory in Christ Jesus, to those who God has chosen.

This is a trustworthy saying, if we die with him, we'll also live with him. If we endure hardship, we will reign with him. If we deny him, he will deny us. If we are unfaithful, he remains faithful for He cannot deny who he is.

Remind everyone about these things and command them in God's presence to stop fighting over words. Such arguments are useless, and they can ruin those who hear them. Work hard so you can present yourself to God and receive his approval. Be a good worker, one who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly explains the word of truth. Avoid worthless, foolish talk that only leads to more godless behavior.

That passage is very clear. It's a high privilege and high expectations if you're gonna be a leader in the body of Christ. And you must embrace the discipline, you must embrace the cost. You must endure hardship. You must be imitators of Jesus and you need to stay focused on what God has called you to do.

## **Number 32: Come. Go.**

This is taken from Mark 3:14-15. Then he appointed 12 of them and called them his apostles. They were to accompany him and it was, he called them to be with him and he would send them out to preach, giving them authority to cast demons.

In Mark 1:17 one of the first words that Jesus says to his aspiring would be disciples was the word, "Come, follow". We get to Mark 16:15, the last word, the last command he gives to his disciples is "go and preach". Begins with coming, ends with going. Coming to know him, to have fellowship with him, to journey through life with him. Going to give other people the same opportunity that you've had to invite them into the privilege of fellowship with this incredible God man, Jesus Christ.



And so when he comes to this passage he selects the first 12 and spends all night praying. He says, who do I want to be with me? And why do I want them? Why am I choosing them? These are the two things that are highlighted. One that they would be with them. Come have fellowship with me, get to know me. Let's hang out together. Let's love each other. Come.

And secondly, go, go, and I'm gonna send you out. You're gonna preach. You're gonna heal. You're gonna cast out demons. You're gonna do the work of ministry and the things you've seen me do, you're going to do. Come, go, come, go. This is the essence of discipleship. And this is what leaders need to be calling people to do always more intimacy with God and more engagement in serving the needs of the world. That's that's the message of the gospel. That's what discipleship is all about.

## **Number 33: Mobile Teams Teaching God's Word.**

This comes from 2 Chronicles 17:7-10. In the third year of his reign Jehoshaphat [King of Judah] sent his officials to teach in all the towns of Judah...He also sent out the priests Elishama and Jehoram. They took copies of the Book of the Law of the LORD and traveled around through all the towns of Judah, teaching the people. Then the fear of the LORD fell over all the surrounding kingdoms so that no one of them wanted to declare war on Jehoshaphat

Wow. What a powerful thing. The king organized mobile teaching teams. They would go from town to town, village to village and teach from the scriptures the ways of God. This had a transformative impact on Judah. But it didn't stop there. This impact spilled over into the surrounding kingdoms. Kingdoms that would normally be trying to take advantage of war against Judah, they heard what was being said, and they were stunned, amazed, touched, transformed themselves. And peace was the result. Was rooted in the reverence for God and the understanding of his word that was being taught and spread abroad through these mobile teaching teams. Maybe we should take lessons from that experience and think about how we could apply that today.

## **Number 34: Ministry of The Prophet.**

This comes from 1 Samuel 12:19- 25. Pray to the Lord, your God for us, or we will die! They all said to Samuel. For now we have added to our sins by asking for a king. Don't be afraid, Samuel reassured them. You have certainly done wrong, but make sure now that you worship the Lord with all your heart, and don't turn your back on Him. Don't go back to worshipping worthless idols that cannot help or rescue you. They are totally useless. The Lord will not abandon his people because that would dishonor his great name. For it has pleased the Lord to make you his very own people. As for me, I will certainly not sin against the Lord by ending my prayers for you. And I will continue to teach you what is good and right, but be sure to fear the Lord and faithfully serve him. Think of all the wonderful things he's done for you. But if you continue to sin, you and your king will be swept away.

This is a rich passage to read and think of all the different things that Samuel does as a prophet. He's, he's addressed their wrongdoing. As they come back and repent and, and express their sorrow, he reassures them. He gives them hope. He speaks of forgiveness. So he who spoke words of correction is now able to speak words of affirmation, but then he goes on and teaches more, more about the character of God, more of what's expected of them. And he's personally committed to them. He's committed to pray for them. He reassures them, I am not gonna abandon you, and God's not going to abandon you.

You can't speak the word of God in a corrective way to those for whom you're not deeply committed. It's out of the love for the people that you're ministering to and the life of prayer of intercession mediation on their behalf, that you have authority to speak corrective words. And

that is something really important for all of us to remember. It's not just a role of proclamation of the word of God, but also an intercession, standing in a place of prayer on behalf of the people of God. That's what a prophet does, a real prophet.

## **Number 35: Prayer and Spiritual Warfare.**

This comes from Ephesians 6;10-20. A final word: be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on all of God's armor so that you'll be able to stand firm against all the strategies of the devil. For we are not fighting against flesh and blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world and against evil spirits in the heavenly places. Therefore put on every piece of God's armor so you'll be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle, you'll still be standing firm. Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body of armor of God's righteousness. For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News, so that you'll be fully prepared. In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. Put on salvation as your helmet and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Pray in the spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.

And pray for me too. Ask God to give me the right words so I can boldly explain God's mysterious plan that the Good News is for Jews and Gentiles alike. I am in chains now, still preaching this message as God's ambassador. So pray that I will keep on speaking boldly for him as I should.

These are the concluding words of the book of Ephesians. And some have described this book as sit walk, stand. The first couple chapters talk about how we are seated in heavenly places with Christ Jesus, who we've become as adopted sons and daughters of God because of the, this mighty work of redemption. And then you have a two and a half chapters, four or five part of six, that talk about how we should walk out our life. The consequences, the application five times it says, walk this way, walk this way, walk this way. And very practical living. Because of what he has done for us, this is what we should now do as those who have been transformed by him.

Finally, we have this word stand. So we sit with Christ. We walk as he would have us walk and we stand in warfare against the enemy. Stand in a place of warfare, stand in a place of prayer. This is part of every Christian life. If you are not aware of the warfare, if you're not being diligent, putting on the helmet of salvation, taking the sword of faith, girding yourself up with, in these ways that are describing this passage, then you are vulnerable and you need to take a stand. Stand firm, do battle as God called you to do it. Not against flesh and blood, but against spiritual principalities in the place of prayer.

## **Number 36: Not Without Your Presence.**

Exodus 33:15-17. Then Moses said to God, if you don't personally go with us, don't make us leave this place. How will anyone know that you look favorably on me —on me and on your people - if you don't go with us? For your presence among us sets your people and me apart from all the other peoples on earth.

The Lord replied to Moses, I will indeed do what you've asked for. I will look favorably on you, and I know you by name.

God's Emmanuel presence is the greatest good. It's the thing is to be treasured above all else. His presence is a sign of his favor that he's with us. It's our distinguishing mark. There's

nothing that makes us more special or better than other people. As followers of Jesus the only thing that we had going in our favor is that we're not walking through life alone, but walking through life with him. And it's his presence, which is our great strength, our great confidence. It's his presence that protects us and guides us and leads us. It's his presence that transforms us. And it enables us to be the people of God, a uniquely distinguished people set apart from all the other people on earth. His presence is our distinguishing mark. Run hard after it, make sure that you and I, let us make sure that we don't do anything that would grieve his presence, that would cause him to want to go away. Let us always live with a heart and a hunger and a thirst for him.

## SECTION INTRODUCTION

The next three passages in this section are really at the heart of the religious sphere. It's about God being with us, God, being at the center. This is the heart of the religious sphere, but not only of the religious sphere in every one of our spheres, we need to make sure that God is at the center of everything we do.

### Number 37: Named Jesus; Named Emmanuel.

Matthew 1:20-23. As he considered this [this is Joseph, the husband of Mary] an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying Joseph, son of David the angel said, do not be afraid to do take Mary as your wife for the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. And she will have a son and you are to name him Jesus for he will save his people from their sins. All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord's message through his prophet. Look, the Virgin will conceive a child. She'll give birth to a son and they will call him Emmanuel, which means God is with us.

In this brief passage, in this encounter with the angel, and then the reflection on the ancient words of the prophet Isaiah, there are two names that are attached to the One who would be miraculously born from Mary. Jesus and Emmanuel. Emmanuel is about God's intimacy with us, that in Jesus, God was fully present and fully with us. And he journeys through life with us, experiencing life as we experience it. The Creator experiencing life as a creature. And he continues to offer this Emmanuel possibility to us. We can walk with him.

The other name that he is given is Jesus. **Jeshua**. And the reason that he's given this name is a wonderful phrase that we often overlook says he will save his people from their sins. The name **Jeshua** or Joshua or Jesus is the name savior, but he says Jesus will save us from their sins. The Greek preposition for from is **apo**. And it means - it's very graphic. It means to be distancing yourself and going away from it's like, you're going on a journey and you walk through -out the door of your house and you walking away from the house. And with every step that you take you're going further and further away. It's not a static statement. It's a, it is a moving continuous action kind of preposition that you're going further and further away. So what Jesus does is he comes distance us from sin at ever greater degrees. It's not just that he saved us like by forgiving us, he's causing us to live our lives further and further and further and further away from sin. More like him, less like the way we used to live before we encountered him. What a wonderful, what a wonderful thing that is. This is a savior you and I desperately need.

### Number 38: The Purpose of Jesus' Coming.

Mark 10:45. For even the Son of Man [Jesus said] came not to be served, but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many.

This passage is central, the key statement in the book of Mark. It declares the very essence, the reason for Jesus' coming. But this is not the only statement of this kind. There are at least 60 different passages throughout the New Testament that state why Jesus came. He gives his purpose. They are phrases that begin with, like in order to, so that, for, and if you pay attention to those phrases, you can go through the New Testament and underline and highlight and consider all the various things that Jesus has done and why he came. It's rich and it's varied, but it's all rooted in this particular verse. This attitude of servant-heartedness. God comes and he addresses many needs. He heals us. He delivers us from the enemy. He upholds the law. He fulfills righteousness. There are many things that he says that he came to do. But it's because of his servant heartedness, that he's not thinking about himself and his own needs, but he's thinking about how he can care for us and our needs and how to heal our brokenness and restore our alienation and to redeem us from our sin. He comes to meet our needs. I don't know of any other God, in any other religious construct that is like this. All the other gods are desires that people serve them. Our God desires to serve us. What a remarkable God He is.

## **Number 39: Two or Three Gathered in His Name,**

**Matthew 18:20. Jesus says for where two or three gather together as my followers, I am there among them.**

What a wonderful promise. Jesus calls a us to himself for fellowship with himself. He also calls us to one another, that together we're to enter into the fellowship of his presence. We're not a lot of Lone Rangers having a one on one relationship with God. With two or three committed to loving relationships, horizontally and vertically there's this wonderful communion that happens. This is what it's all about. And he's at the center. When we gather he's at the center, he is the reason we gather he's the purpose we gather. He is the one who gives life and hope and strength and confidence and transformation. Don't you love him?

## **SECTION INTRODUCTION**

In this next section we're gonna be looking at four passages that describe the life of a Jesus follower.

## **Number 40: Be Holy.**

This comes from **Leviticus 20:26. You must be holy because I, the Lord, am holy. I have set you apart from all other people to be my very own.**

Friends, we are called to be imitators of God. We're called to be holy because he is holy. We're to be holy in the same way that He is holy. He has perfect knowledge and he perfectly lives up to all the knowledge he has. We have limited knowledge, but if we will do all that we know we're supposed to do, we're holy as He is holy. Not to the same degree, but in the same kind.

But not only are we to be holy because he's holy, in **Luke 6:36**, it says where to be merciful because he's merciful. And in **Matthew 6:12**, it says we're to be forgiving because he's forgiving. And in **Matthew 10:8**, it says we're to be generous because he's generous. He's freely given to us. We're freely to give to others. And the list can go on and on. The more we discover about God - who he is, his character and His nature, the wonderful attributes of this glorious God - these things become a stimulus for our own growth and imitation. We're to follow in his footsteps. That means everything that we discover about who he is, we need to ask him, by his grace to work those same realities into our lives.

Revelation always proceeds transformation. The knowledge of God is really important in your own discipleship and growth as a Jesus follower. We must see him. We must see him afresh

and anew and deeper and broader at every turn of our lives. We must keep our eyes focused on him. We must consider him as we read in **Hebrews** three. We must focus on him, as we read in **Hebrews** 12. We need to passionately seek to run hard after him and get to know him ever more deeply, ever more whole-heartedly, ever more obediently.

In 1 John 3:2-3 it says this: Dear friends we are all ready God's children, but he has not yet shown us what we will be like when Christ appears. But we do know that we will be like him [Why?] for we shall see him as he really is. And all who have this eager expectation will keep themselves pure just as he is pure. Will keep themselves holy, just as he is Holy, will keep themselves merciful just as he is merciful, Will keep themselves... You fill in the blanks.

See, we know that we'll be like him for we as shall see him as he really is. When we are in his presence, when we really glimpse him and we say, oh, that is so wonderful. It's just such amazing that you are like this. How could we aspire to be otherwise? We want to align ourselves with our Glorious Lord. And so this revelation, this is the foundation for this breakthrough of transformation. So let's keep running hard after God, let's keep pursuing with our whole heart. Let's be holy as he is holy.

## **Number 41: The Fruit of the Spirit**

comes from **Galatians** 5:22-25. But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control. There is no law against these things!

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucify them there. Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives.

Friends, this is such a wonderful statement we've just read. Let's follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives. Think about what you do in the area of religion or as you go about life in whatever sphere you're involved with, how are we a follower of Jesus? Are we pursuing as you're in your workplace, are you pursuing love in that part of your life? As you're talking with a neighbor, are you pursuing joy in that part of your life? As you're going to school and, and hanging out with friends, are you pursuing peace in that part of your life? As you're talking with your boss, are you pursuing patience in that part of your life? As you're talking, dealing with your children and having some challenges there perhaps, are you pursuing kindness in every part of that part of your life? See, every one of these attributes need to be evident in every part of our life. This is how the kingdom of God grows - in us and through us in the world. And we only do this as he's at work in us.

You know, you never see an apple tree in an orchard kind of groaning and struggling like fruit, Fruit, fruit. There's an apple, there's an apple. They just naturally do that because as the sap flows through the tree, that's what it does. As we let God flow through us, as we spend time in his presence, let him do his work. We don't change ourselves. We can inhibit change, but we can collaborate with the change that he's working in our lives so that his fruit it's not just the fruit of the Spirit. It's not my fruit or your fruit. It's his fruit, emerges a reflection of his character, because he is perfect Love. He is perfect joy and peace and patience. He is goodness and kindness, his perfect faithfulness and gentleness. And he's extraordinary in his self control. May we allow all of these things to flourish in our lives more and more.



## Number 42: Declare the Excellences of Him.

1Peter 2:9-10. But you are not like that for you are chosen people. You are Royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you had no identity as a people; now you are God's people. Once you received no mercy; now you have received God's mercy.

Because of what God has done in our lives, we should all be proclaiming his goodness to others. Some translations talk about this as declaring the excellencies of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light. Excellencies of him. We need to talk about how wonderful our God is. Don't try to shove truth down people's throats that they're not wanting, but do talk about how amazing this God is at every turn at every opportunity. There's so much to say about him so much good, so much that is wonderful. And as we looked at a the previous passage, the connection between worship and evangelism is almost the same. They're so close. In worship we tell him that we think he's excellent and evangelism we tell others that we think he's excellent.

Let me tell you a story. Some years ago, I was involved in leading that evangelism outreach in **Vegan Delma**, the main resort city in central coast of Chile. And we had been doing this for a couple years and we had quite a bit of success and there's a walking area in the evenings where many people gather in the middle of summer and so easy to set up and have some music and present some drama, share some testimonies and then talk with people about Jesus. And, we've been doing this successfully and we were feeling quite competent about it. And we'd seen people come to the Lord night after night.

On this particular night we had a great program. And everything worked as well. But as we broke up and talked with people, not a single person got saved. And we went back to the place and where we were staying said, what happened, Lord? What was the matter? We felt like we had kind of forgotten what we were really doing. We had, we got the program down so well, we could kind of just do it on our own. And we remember that what we were supposed to be doing is talking about the excellences of him.

So we determined it the next night to kind of correct our, our actions. We'd go not to that central place where people gather, but to a park where in the evenings almost no one was there and we would just worship him. And we'd just align our hearts once again with declaring his excellences. So we gathered in that park determined to just worship God that night. We were not about evangelism, not about the task of getting the gospel out to other people just wanted to worship him.

And as we worshiped this place that never had anyone first, a handful gathered and then more and more, we just kept worshiping, just telling him how much he loved him, how wonderful he was. And we kept worshiping. And when we finished worshiping, a large crowd, many dozens of people had gathered around us. And they'd been sitting there for the longest time, just watching us. We didn't say anything to them. We didn't preach the gospel. We didn't do a drama. We were just worshiping. And when we finished, we just said, Thank you for being with us as we worship God, if you want to chat with us, feel free to do so. We broke up and dozens gave their life to the Lord that night. We just worshiped. We just talked about the excellences of Him. We just, we just spoke of His love with his mercy of his kindness. We reminded this is really what we're doing. When we can express our love for God in public, and it's genuine. It's real, it's attractive. It'll draw people. It'll make them say, I wanna know that God too. You've got something that I really want. That's what this passage in Peter's talking about. We have a great message. We have a marvelous God, let's not be afraid of speaking of his excellencies.

## Number 43: Imitate Jesus; Embrace Suffering.

1 Peter 2:21-25. For God called you to do good, even if it means suffering, just as Christ suffered for us, he is your example. And you must follow in his steps. He never sinned nor ever deceived anyone. He did not retaliate when he was insulted nor threatened revenge when he suffered. He left his case in the hands of God, who always judges fairly. He had personally carried our sins and his body on the cross so that we can be dead to sin and live for what is right. By his wounds you are healed. Once you were like sheep and wandered away. But now you have turned to your Shepherd, the guardian of your souls.

We're called to be imitators of Jesus. Not only when the good times, but in the hard times. Not only the hard times, but in the hardest of times when everything is going wrong, when perhaps we're being treated unjustly, perhaps even in times of persecution. We need to learn to suffer well, to endure well. That's what Jesus did. It's easy to imitate when everything is going well. It's challenging to do well when things are hard. And that's what that's, when you really see is Jesus and his blood at work in your life.

You know, when someone treats you unjustly, it's natural to want to react and they're mean to you and you want to be mean back to them and get even. But when the moment we do that, the moment we react to someone, we give them leadership in that relationship. So imagine if someone punches you in the nose and you react by punching them in the nose. What have you just done? You've succeeded to them the role of the ones who determining the direction the relationship is going in. You say you lead. You're mean I'll be mean. And you're submitting to them. What God calls us to do when we are as imitators of Jesus, who went to the Cross and was like a lamb before shearers who did not open his mouth, though he was being unjustly accused, He did not accuse anyone. If instead of reacting into moments of injustice, we learn to respond in the opposite spirit. Then something transformative happens. If someone punches you in the nose and instead of punching back in reaction, which is re-action doing the same thing that they did again, giving them the leadership. You respond with the opposite spirit and we're to embrace them whether physically or metaphorically. You've just changed the whole dynamic of that relationship. You are now leading it. Jesus through his kindness, through his mercy, through his love, through his servant-heartedness changes the discourse of our relationships. He he's the one who, because he does this earns the title Lord of Lords, King of Kings. He leads. No longer do other people set the agenda. Jesus sets the agenda. If you respond in a Christlike manner, you maintain the leadership and the relationship and you exemplify the spirit of Christ. Let's imitate Jesus. Even if it means suffering.

## SECTION INTRODUCTION

In this next section, we're gonna be looking at the sphere of religion and healthcare. And we've seen that this issue of healthcare is one that is shared by government and family and economics, as well as religion. And so it's very important because if the individual is not healthy, if they die, get sick and cease to exist - everyone suffers. So every one of these spheres is concerned about the wellbeing of the individual.

## Number 44: Levitical Laws for Healthcare.

Selections from **Leviticus 13:1-46**. The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, if anyone has a swelling or rash or discolored skin that might develop into a serious skin disease, that person must be brought to Aaron, the priest or to one of his sons. The priest will examine the affected area of the skin... On the seventh day, the priest will make another examination... Anyone who develops a serious skin disease must go to the priest for an examination... If anyone has a boil on the skin that has started to heal... that person must go to the priest to be examined. If anyone has suffered a burn on the skin... the priest must examine it... If anyone, either man or

woman has a sore on their head or chin, the priest must examine it...On the seventh day, he will examine the sore again... If anyone, either man or woman has shiny white patches on the skin, the priest must examine the affected area.

It and goes on and on. All these various diseases, the priest must examine, he must evaluate. He sometimes quarantines them. The priests and the Levites that are supporting them are charged with the primary functions of healthcare. They're checking out the illnesses. They're setting appropriate quarantines, they're evaluating. Is this something that's contagious? Or is this a, is it growing? Is it expanding? Should it be withdrawn from the community so others don't get it? Or is this, are, is it improving? They monitoring people until their health is fully restored. So we see that this was a function that God gave to leaders within the religious sphere. Religious leaders should be compassionate and concerned about the health of people. They should go do everything they can to contain illness and to facilitate wholeness.

## **Number 45: Commissioned to Heal.**

Matthew 10:1,8. Jesus called his 12 disciples together and gave them authority to cast out evil spirits and to heal every kind of disease and illness...

He said, heal the sick, raise the dead, cure those with leprosy, and cast out demons. Give as freely as you have received!

As Jesus followers, we are to step into this calling, the calling to heal, to care for other people on their place of need. And we can give to the degree that we've received that. It says freely you've received freely give. Perhaps we need to receive healing of every kind in order to be agents of healing, that gives us authority. There's something genuine. And we just facilitate that. We know that the healer is Jesus himself, but as his followers, we help build the bridge for that healing to happen.

## **Number 46: Prayer Produces Wonderful Results.**

This comes from James 5:13-16. Are any of you suffering hardships? You should pray. Are any of you happy? You should sing praises. Are any of you sick? You should call for the elders of the church to come and pray over you, anointing you with oil in the name of the Lord. Such a prayer offered in faith will heal the sick and the Lord will make you well. And if you've committed any sins, you'll be forgiven.

Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.

Sometimes we are fearful about obeying these instructions in these passages. Because we think what if I pray and nothing happens? Well, you don't know that. All we're called to do is do what we've been asked to do. We pray. We pray earnestly, we pray in faith. We pray in the name of Jesus. We pray with others, and we do what we do. And we leave the results in God's hands.

You know, there was a time when I was leading a, a ministry in South America and a colleague of mine had gotten typhoid fever and I went and prayed for him one day. And after I left, he got worse. The next day I came back and I said, can I pray for you again? He said, oh, please don't. That was a little bit discouraging at the time. But I kept praying and God heard this earnest prayer. It's not casual, One time prayer. There's no magic or trick. Or if I just do this, I'll manipulate God into answering this. We do what we do and We leave the results in God's hands. I can tell you stories of times when I prayed that and nothing seemingly happened, but



many times I prayed and people's lives were touched. They were healed and they were changed.

You know, let's change analogy right now. You know who the person who has made the most, uh, soccer penalties in history? It's **Leon L Messey**, You know, who's the one who's missed the most soccer penalties in history? **Leon L Messey**. It's that -you just have to keep going at it more and more times. And the more you do it, the more success you'll have. And - The more times it just doesn't it turn out, like, as you had hoped. You keep persevering, earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results. Friends, even when they're not, the prayer is not answered in the manner or the timeframe that you are expecting, God is doing things behind the scenes in your life, in their lives. And you just keep pressing in. Wonderful results are on the way.

## CROSSOVER INTRODUCTION

As in every sphere, the last six passages are crossover passages, connecting religion with each of the other six spheres. Some of these examples show healthy ways that they collaborate together. Some of the examples show areas where the wrong kind of collaboration happened, and it was destructive. Ponder on these passages and consider the principles that you learn from them and how you might apply them in your context where you live today.

### Number 47: Religion and Family

will be from **Jeremiah 32:33-35**. **My people have turned their backs on me and have refused to return. [God is speaking.] Even though I diligently taught them, they would not receive instruction or obey. They have set up their abominable idols right in my own Temple, defiling it. They have built pagan shrines to Baal all in the valley of Ben-Hinnom, and there they sacrificed sons and daughters to Molech. I've never commanded such a horrible deed; it never even crossed my mind to command such a thing. What an incredible evil causing Judah to sin so greatly.**

Here's where religion and family got really messed up. And God is grieved. Israel had turned to idolatry and they picked up the practices of pagan nations around them. And one of them was the worship of Molech. Molech needed to be appeased. And if he was appropriately appeased, then you could guarantee victory in a battle or prosperity in a crop or some other request.

But Molech demanded a very high price. He would only answer a request if you sacrificed one of your children. Imagine that.

The idols, those stone idols of Molech were made out of granite. And, and the belly of this statue was a hollowed out stomach. And they placed a fire around it to heat the stone up until it was sizzling red hot, and then they take a newborn child and lay it in the hollow of that stomach. And the child would literally fry to death. You can imagine the flailing arms and the screams of despair. It was a horrible, horrible thing. It was like- it says here - a horrible evil and incredible evil. What parent would do that for their child? They were religion was so mixed up that they thought they could make gods happy by destroying their own family. And God says it is just unthinkable. How could you ever think that a god would ask this? That I, I would, I would never have thought of even commanding or it's the detestable it's horrid.

Unthinkable, that we would kill the youngest in our society for personal convenience to gain something, to avoid something. It's horrible. We don't have Molech idols, but the young still perish. The most defenseless in our midst, the ones who don't have a voice to speak up for themselves. True religion is not like this. True religion protects the life of the little ones. True

religion enhances family. Doesn't destroy family. True religion is what gives life. Not what brings death.

## **Number 48: Religion and Economics.**

We're reading from **Acts 8:18-23**. When Simon [not Simon Peter, another Simon] saw the Spirit was given when apostles laid their hands on people, he offered them money to buy this power. Let me have this power too, he exclaimed, so that when I lay my hands on people, they will receive the Holy Spirit.

But Peter replied, may your money be destroyed with you for thinking God's gift can be bought! You can have no part in this, for your heart is not right with God. Repent of your wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps He will forgive your evil thoughts for, I can see that you are full of bitter jealousy and are held captive by sin.

This man Simon saw genuine power and transformation through the hands of the apostles, and thought he could buy this. He thought that religion was for sale. That it was some kind of trick that you could manipulate. He thought this would be a good way to make a profit. You can't buy genuine faith. You can't sell biblical religion. You have to give it away freely and you have to hunger after it without a greedy heart and pursue it with a generous spirit.

## **Number 49: Religion and Government**

the crossover passage between Religion and Government. We're gonna read from **Judges 6:25-32**. That night the Lord said to Gideon, take the second bull from your father's herd, the one that is seven years old. Pull down your father's altar to Baal, and cast down the Asherah pole standing beside it. Then build an altar to the Lord you God here on this hilltop sanctuary, laying the stones carefully. Sacrifice the bull as a burnt offering on the altar, using as fuel the wood of the Asherah pole you cut down.

So Gideon took ten of his servants and did as the Lord had commanded. But he did it at night because he was afraid of the other members of his father's household and the people of the town.

Early the next morning, as the people of the town began to stir, someone discovered that the altar of Baal had been broken down and that Asherah pole beside it had been cut down. In their place of new altar had been built, and on it with the remains of the bull that had been sacrificed. The people said to each other who did this? And after asking around and making it careful search, they found that it was Gideon. The son of Joash.

Bring out your son, the men of the town demanded of Joash. He must die for destroying the altar of Baal and for cutting down the Asherah pole.

But Joash shouted to the mob that confronted him, why are you defending Baal? Will you argue his case? Whoever pleads his case will be put to death by morning. If Baal is truly is a god, let him defend himself and destroy the one who broke down his altar! From then on Gideon was called Jerub-baal, which means let Baal defend himself, because he broke down Baal's altar.

So we have Gideon doing a bold religious act, confronting idolatry, not just in the town where he lived, but even in his father's household. It was a scary thing to do. He knew that it would insight the ire and anger of the people. That's why he did it at night. He was justifiably afraid. And when his deed was found out, people said, let's, let's execute him. A crime has been committed. Let's kill him.

And his father, even though it was on his property, wisely said, listen, this is a religious activity, not a governmental one. If Baal is really god, Baal will take care of it himself. If he is not, why would you be risking your lives for something that is not a God? And so made this distinguishing between the religious sphere and the governmental sphere. No governmental action was to be taken against Gideon for the exercise of his religious beliefs. If a god can't defend his own, he is not a god. And who would like to fight for such a non-god?

## **Number 50: Religion and the sphere of Education.**

Matthew 13:52, Jesus added Every teacher of religious law who becomes a disciple in the Kingdom of Heaven is like a homeowner who brings from his storeroom new gems of truth as well as old.

If you're gonna be following Jesus and you're gonna be a teacher, you need to remain teachable. You're gonna be learning new things from him. So is that you've known in the past, that are true. And you keep using that, keep bringing that out of the storeroom, drawing on those old insights, but always embracing the new insights, the fresh things that he is giving. Teachers must be teachable. And if God is growing your understanding in the religious sphere, make sure you bring all of that into your teaching.

## **Number 51: Religion and the sphere of Media/Communication**

Romans 10:14-15. But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they've never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? And how will anyone go and tell him without being sent? That is why the scriptures say how beautiful are the feet of messengers who bring good news!

Communication is at the heart of the religious practice of evangelism. We can't spread the kingdom of God without media/communication. They work hand in hand. And so good communication is like putting on beautiful sandals when you're going across the mountains. It helps you walk better. It keeps you from getting sores on the soles of your feet. You're protected. You can go further. Good communication and good religion go hand in hand together, to preach the good news of a good God in a world that needs to hear a lot more about good things.

## **Number 52: Religion in the sphere of Celebration**

taken from 2 Chronicles 5:12-14 And the Levites who were musicians - Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun, and all their sons and brothers —were dressed in fine linen robes and stood at the east side of the altar playing cymbals, lyres and harps. They were joined by 120 priests who were playing trumpets. The trumpeters and singers performed together in unison to praise and give thanks to the Lord. Accompanied by trumpets, cymbals and other instruments, they raised their voices and praised the Lord with these words;

“He is good! His faithful love endures forever!”

At that moment, a thick cloud filled the temple of the Lord. The priests cannot not continue their service because of the cloud, for the glorious of presence of the Lord, filled the Temple of God.

When the spheres of celebration and religion align to worship God, amazing things happen. It must have been a beautiful spectacle. The fine linen... I mean, it was something lovely to behold and something delightful to listen to with all these instruments and all these choirs. But is the blending of these anointing of these two spheres that usher in the glorious presence of the Lord. It made such an impression that people were stunned. His presence was so great that everything came to a standstill and people stood in awe before the God Who was Present. That's what happens when the spheres collaborate around of the glory of God