

My Favorite Verses

(Volume I ... Mar 2011 – Oct 2014)



*... a collection of brief commentaries
on some of the Bible's most beloved
(and least understood) passages,
parables, verses & sayings*

via Scaughdt
an (i)am publication

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An Introduction to what Follows

I think it goes without saying to anyone who has even briefly glanced at the contents of a Bible that it is a marvelous collection of language -- that regardless of one's religious bent (or lack thereof), that the Bible is a tome literally filled with passages that are both mysterious & moving -- that it is a collection of writings literally overflowing with metaphoric drama, symbolic violence, profound wisdom and good old fashioned common sense ... Of course, it is getting folks to take even that first glance that is often the problem. The vast majority of Christians & Jews refuse to do anything other than cast a cursory look at Bible; preferring instead to blindly accept the often extremely limited interpretations provided by their preachers & pastors, reverends & rabbis. Just as troubling, the majority of the non-religious (often in response to being "damned to Hell" by the well-intended ignorance of a conservative Christian or two) tend to vehemently discount the contents of the Bible's texts without ever reading any of them for themselves.

For roughly the first 15 years of my life, I belonged to the former group -- condemned by friends and strangers alike as "unworthy"; labeled an ignorant "heathen" by those in my community who ironically were just as misinformed about the contents of the Bible as I myself was. Then, in direct response to such crystallized callousness, I joined the latter group for the next two decades thereafter -- loudly blasting Christianity (& its Bible) as "ridiculous" & "unethical" & "primitive"; and doing so with the same arrogant, indignant vigor with which its followers had blasted me.

Then one day in 2004, I decided to actually read the Bible for myself ... And lo & behold, once I did so it became flagrantly apparent that "the Good Book" didn't say half the horrible things I had been told it said -- and that even the horrible things it *did* sometimes offer were often mixed in metaphor or swaddled in symbolism. In essence, after almost four decades of living in the rank shadows of its man-made religion, I finally had the humility & the courage to read the Bible for myself --- to discover the brilliantly beautiful and potently pragmatic Truths wrapped within its verses. After having lived so long bridled by hatred for its mythical madness, I was able to set aside all bias & preconception, and I fell madly in Love with what I found therein.

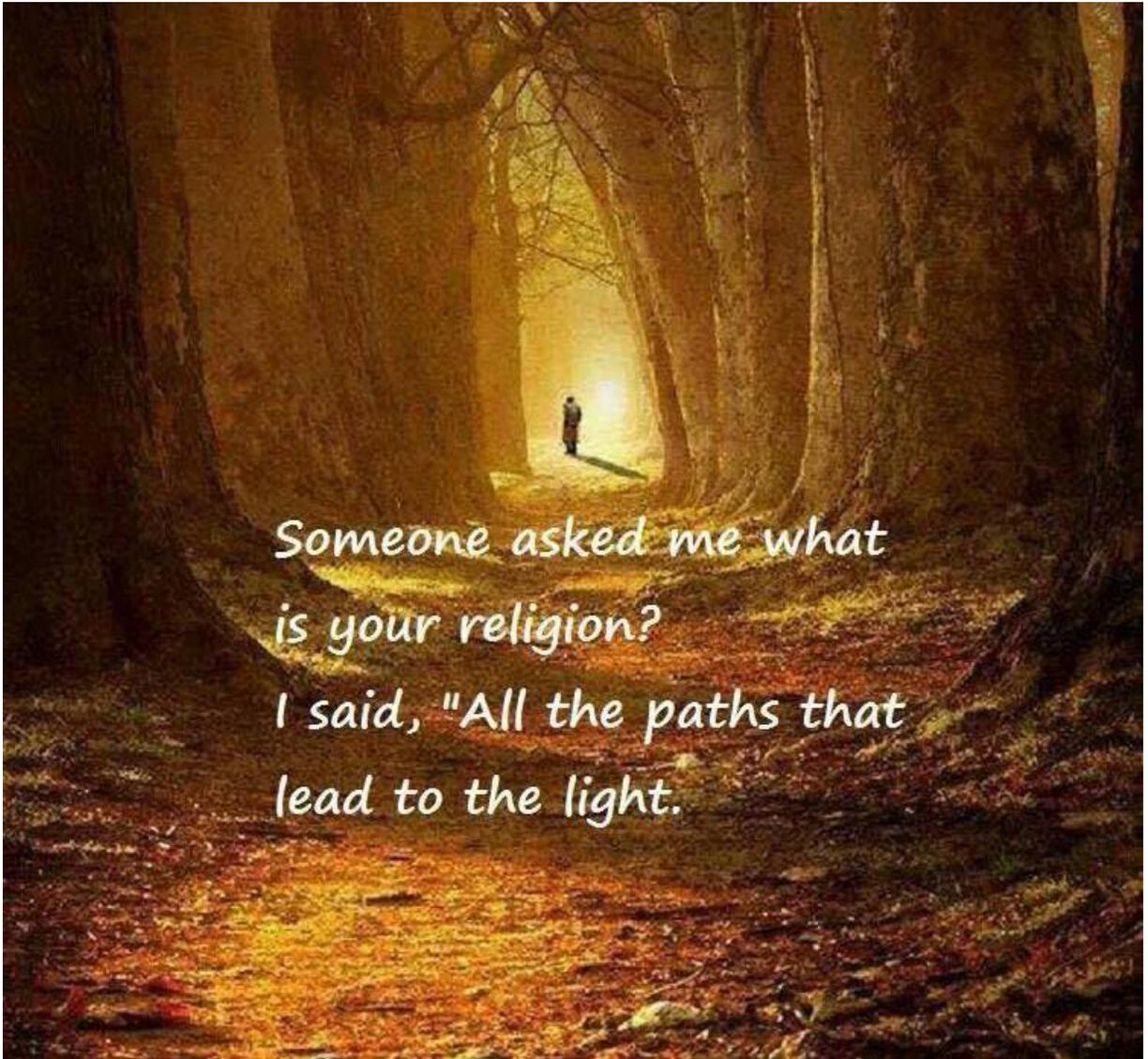
Ever since, I have been on a mission to reawaken Christians & non-Christians alike to the wonders of the Bible's texts. Most Christians I know remain blind followers of a dogma that completely ignores the far greater God of a far greater Love residing within the passages of their own holy tome --- and most non-Christians I encounter still choose to arrogantly discount the same words; and thus remain equally ignorant of the profound and practical psychological truths that rest therein ... What a tragedy!

And so, I decided to periodically share some of the profound Biblical interpretations that I have personally tested to be True; doing so in various shorter books & articles, and also doing so within the loose confines of the shorter commentaries that follow herein ...

May you all enJOY accordingly!

Scaughdt
(February 2015)





*Someone asked me what
is your religion?
I said, "All the paths that
lead to the light."*

“Humankind is still choosing to live as an island – or even worse, as an island king; and that's where all our misery arises. Down the centuries we have been trying to live independently from existence; trying to mold our environment and dominate its inhabitants – a concept that is fundamentally impractical; one that simply flows against the very nature of things.

In the grand scheme of Reality, we can neither be independent of nor dependent upon our surroundings. Conscious life is a state of interdependence; a state where everything depends on everything else. There is no hierarchy -- no rulership and no serfdom; no masters and no slaves; no allies and no enemies. In the true scheme of things, nobody is lower and nobody is higher. In the true scheme of things, existence is a communion; an eternal selfless Love affair.

And yet the idea that we humans have to be higher, better, superior, special, or more powerful persists – and it creates trouble; always has, always will. In order to know Peace, we must be willing to set aside these dangerous & ignorant myths. We must be willing to be “nothing” instead of striving for everything; must be willing to dissolve into the totality of things, instead of teetering upon the brittle pinnacle of our own making. And once we do so, once we drop all the barriers and dismiss all the delusions and release all our arrogance, a true Communion takes place – a Communion that becomes a living, breathing benediction.

To become ONE with the whole in this manner is all that ultimately matters. This is the Truth that resides at the very center of any real religiousness.” ~ anonymous

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“The real thing is not a path. The real thing is the authenticity of the seeker. Let me emphasize this. You can travel on any path, and if you are sincere and authentic, you will reach your destination. Some paths may be difficult, some may be more comfortable, some may have greenery on all sides, and some may have you moving through deserts, and yet if you are sincere and honest with the yearnings of your Soul – if you are authentic to the urgings of your conscience – if you are true to the summons of your True Self, then every path will lead you to your goal. So it simply can be reduced to one thing: that authenticity of Soul-Self is the path. And thus the opposite is also true: that no matter what path you choose, if you do not authentically reflect your Soul-Self, then you will not get anywhere. It is your authenticity and your authenticity alone that brings you back home, nothing else matters. Imitation cannot lead you anywhere. Imitation means that the ideal comes from elsewhere, and as such is not happening within you. You have a seed within you; and if you are only imitating others that seed will remain dormant.” ~ anonymous

John 14:20 ... making Salvation simple (03/01/2011)

Despite what most preachers seem to say to the contrary, attaining a measure of spiritual “Salvation” really isn’t that complicated. Indeed, regardless of your particular personal faith (or your particular lack thereof), there is a very simple formula for attaining entrance to “the Kingdom of Heaven” (or Nirvana, or Valhalla, or pure Contentment). This formula is found within the core precepts of every major religion, and this formula is professed by almost every notable mystic -- and this formula goes something like this:

To gain admittance into Heaven, love your neighbor as your self.

Now we’ve all heard this phrase (sometimes called “The Golden Rule”) or its equivalent many times during our lives, and we have all been taught that it essentially means to care for your friends & family just as you want them to care for you — essentially, we have been taught that it means to be nice to folks. And yet, adhering to the more common interpretation of this phrase will **not** bring the profound Bliss Peace of which Jesus speaks — doing so will **not** grant us entrance to the “Heaven” that Jesus mentions, or to any other form of Bliss-full Paradise. No, my Friends, only those with the courage to enliven this principle’s deepest Meaning will gain access to our most hallowed State-of-Being.

And yet how can we accomplish this feat? Quite simply, all we need do is redefine the terms of our famous formula in precisely the ways that Jesus himself defined them in the Gospels (and then enliven them accordingly) – namely ...

*We must redefine “Heaven” the way Jesus himself defines it in Luke 17:20-21; as right Here & right Now (*not* as a place elsewhere we go to someday after we die).

*We must redefine “Love” the way Jesus himself repeatedly defined it (see John 13:15-17 for starters); as a Caring action (*not* a fuzzy feeling or a friendly thought).

*We must redefine “neighbor” the way Jesus himself defined it in the Parable of the Good Samaritan (see Luke 10:29-37); as referring to our enemies (*not* those who are treating us well).

*And we must redefine “yourSelf” the way Jesus himself defined this concept throughout his ministry (see not only John 14:20, but also Acts 17:28); as “God” (i.e. *not* how we would wish to be treated, but rather how we would treat God Himself).

And once we do so, our traditional formula takes on an entirely different meaning, and provides us as well with the key to the Gates of Heaven itself. For when we plug in Jesus’ own definitions, our formula becomes -- ***To experience pure Bliss in any moment, actively care for your enemies as though they were God.***



And once we have the Courage to put this new formula into practice, the gates to Jesus’ “Kingdom of Heaven” swing wide ... Yes, regardless of your particular faith (or lack thereof), this is the path to true Peace this is pat to true Joy — for this, my dear Friends, ... is The Way!

Psalm 92:12 ... to flourish & grow
(03/02/2011)

According to the Bible, in order to be truly at Peace with our lives we must choose to “*flourish like the palm tree, and grow like a cedar.*” (Psalm 92:12)

Of course, to do so, it is necessary to

*Have a heart that is vibrant like the palm (2 Corinthians 4:16), and yet a skin that is alive like the cedar – receptive to having empathy for the lives of others.

*Bend in the face of the winds of discord like the palm (1 Peter 5:6), and yet have the strength of the cedar — the faith & character to withstand any gale.

*Send roots (of worship) deep like the palm (Isaiah 37:31), and yet send those roots out broadly like the cedar – to respectfully embrace the Truths of other faiths.

*Let your fruit (i.e. your actions) remain sweet (i.e. caring) throughout your lifetime like the palm (Psalm 92:14), and yet remain immune to the seasons like the cedar – remaining joyful in times of loss & defeat as well as during the harvests of blessing and victory.

Amen ... Let it be so.



Luke 17:20-21 ... The Kingdom of Heaven
(03/03/2011)

In the 17th chapter of Luke (specifically, verses 20 & 21), after being repeatedly pestered by scribes to be both more specific and more direct in describing the spiritual Hereafter, Jesus finally relents and offers his listeners a direct commentary on the nature of Heaven, saying “*The Kingdom of Heaven is not coming with things that can be observed ... For in fact, the Kingdom of Heaven is already within & all around you.*”

For earnest students of the scriptures, it is important to note that the Greek word *entos* in this verse, commonly written as “among” in many English translations (which more readily allows conservative Christians to believe that Jesus is actually referring to himself in this verse), is more accurately translated in the King James version of the Bible as “within”, and it is even more accurately translated as “both within and all around” in the passage above ... Note as well that this is ***the only passage*** in the entire Bible where Jesus specifically and directly describes *his* version of the “Kingdom of Heaven”.



John 13:17 ... Salvation as a verb
(03/04/2011)

In the Gospel of John (specifically John 13:17) -- one of the most important (and one of the least understood) books of the New Testament, Jesus makes the bold statement that “If you understand these things [that I am sharing with you], blessed are you *while you do them.*”

Indeed, this oft-overlooked verse actually summarizes one of the foundations of Jesus’ entire ministry. Indeed (in-deed!), a closer look at any of his many Biblical parables also shows that following his Way hinges entirely on action, not mere mental belief or passionate emotion.



John 5:22 ... on the nature of God
(03/05/2011)

In John 5:22 of the Bible we find another verse that is absolutely paramount to the ultimate comprehension of The Way of which Jesus spoke and The Way in which he lived – the verse where Jesus utters the oft-misinterpreted sentence, “The Father judges no one, but rather has given all judgment to the Son.” More than a few conservative scholars and almost all traditional Christian worshipers assume that Jesus is referring to himself as “the Son” in this sentence, and yet a more thorough examination of the scriptures reveals that this is not necessarily the case.

You see, at least as far as Jesus was concerned, God was *not* an authoritarian ruler poised to condemn anyone (believer or non-believer) for anything. Rather, Jesus possessed a profound understanding of the Truth that actions always lead to commensurate consequences (i.e. that we always reap what *we* sow ourselves) – an understanding that, when we read “the Son” to refer to “The Advocate” within each & every one of us, happens to be brilliantly reflected in the verse at hand. Even Luke acknowledged this Truth in the 10th chapter of Acts (verses 34 & 35) when he wrote, “God shows no partiality, but in every nation *anyone* who reveres Him and does what is right is acceptable to Him”, and Jesus himself verified this interpretation in John 8:15 & John 12:47, where he made it distinctly clear that he himself would never condemn or judge anyone.

Thus, it makes perfect sense that if God doesn't judge "but gives all judgment to the Son", and that Jesus doesn't judge at, then Jesus is not "the Son" referenced in John 5:22 at all – rather, *we are!* And our lives bear this Truth out with remarkable consistency ... We not only experience the repercussions (i.e. the "judgment") of our selfish choices, but we each also have the ability to transcend the same by engaging in courageous acts of Love instead!

Amen ... Let it be so.



John 15:12 ... the Commandment of Christ
(03/06/2011)

*“This is my Commandment:
that you Love one another
in the same manner that I have Loved you.”*
~ Jesus Christ (John 15:12)

As complicated as some would make it, Salvation – at least as far as Jesus was concerned – is quite simple indeed: simply set aside all the vindictive & aggressive & fearful verses you find in both Testaments, and return to Jesus' sole Commandment; namely, Loving others in our own lives in the same manner that Jesus loved others in his.

And how did Jesus Love others? By extending humble *deeds* of Kindness, that's how -- especially to those his culture deemed "undesirable", and especially to his own personal enemies.

*“By this will everyone know that you are my disciples:
when you show Love toward one another.”*
~ Jesus Christ (John 13:35)



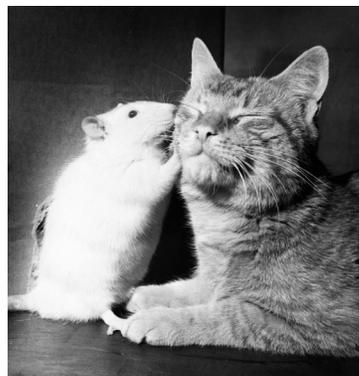
Matthew 5:40-48 ... God's perfect LOVE
(03/08/2011)

Please read the following passage (Matthew 5:40-48) carefully:

"Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you might be Children of your Father in Heaven; for He makes the sun shine on the evil and on the good, and sends rain to the righteous and to the unrighteous. If you love only those who love you, what reward do you have? Therefore be complete [in your Love], just as your Father in Heaven is complete." ~ Jesus Christ

Now please read it again – this time **Care**-fully; noting while you do so that the word commonly translated as "perfect" in the last verse is more correctly translated as "complete" – i.e. without exception; referencing the Love that only comes to us when it works *through* us; the Love that only works through us when we actively Care for those who are causing us annoyance or distress &/or pain.

Amen ... Let it be so.



1 John 4:7-18 ... Good God; no Hell

(03/09/11)

*“Beloved, let us love one another. Because Love is from God, everyone who loves is born of God and knows God ... God is Love, and those who abide in Love abide in God, and God abides in them ... because as He is, **so are we** in this world. There is no fear in Love, but perfect Love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in Love.”*

~ 1 John 4:7-18

This is without a doubt one of the most important passages in the entire Bible, if for no other reason than it – when taken literally -- literally "proves" that God has absolutely nothing at all to do with damnation, Hell or post-mortem torments of any kind whatsoever. The reasoning behind this Truth is actually quite simple, and flows as follows:

*God's Love is "perfect" (see Matthew 5:48) ...

*God's perfect Love therefore knows no fear (see 1 John 4:18 above) ...

*All punishment is of fear (again, see 1 John 4:18 above) ...

*Damnation & indeed condemnations of any kind (including Hell, in its traditional sense) are obviously forms of punishment – and therefore of fear (according to 1 John 4:18) – and therefore **cannot** in any way come from God.

*Therefore, according to the Bible itself, God has absolutely nothing to do with Hell ... He can neither cast Souls there Himself nor allow Souls to be cast there by any other force in the Universe.

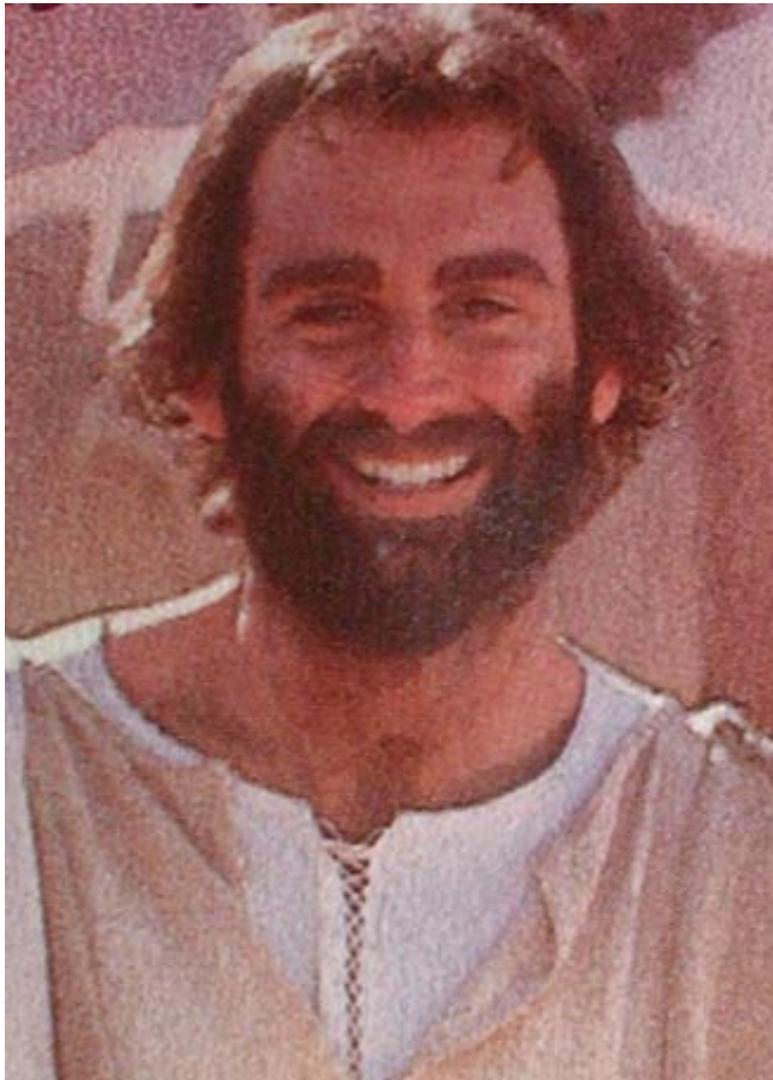
Of course, for followers of Jesus' Way (i.e. those who actively adhere to Jesus' commandments & actively practice his teachings), this Truth is already clear – and doubly so in light of the fact that Jesus so distinctly showed us with his life and told us with his words that the “Kingdom of Heaven” is both always right here & now (see Luke 17:20-21 + Matthew 10:7), and always accessible to anyone who persists in actively Caring for those who seem “least deserving” (see Matthew 22:12-14).



John 15:11 ... Jesus, the essence of JOY
(03/10/2011)

*“I have said these things to you that my Joy might be in you,
so that your Joy might be complete.” ~ Jesus (in John 15:11)*

This verse reflects the fundamental bellwether we are to use in determining the validity of any particular interpretation of any of Jesus' teachings: namely, does the interpretation we are testing bring *immediate* Joy when put into practice ... In essence, if deep-seated Joy is not the result of our implementation of a current interpretation, then we can safely assume that our understanding of that particular teaching is *not* in harmony with The Way of Jesus Christ – and that it would behoove us to go back and try another one.



2 Corinthians 3:18 ... Paul's unwitting Awakening (03/11/2011)

*“And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the Glory of the Lord **as though reflected in a mirror**, are in this very moment being transformed into the very same image – from one degree of Glory to another. ” ~ Paul (in 2 Corinthians 3:18)*

I love this passage dearly -- not because it is “spot on”, but rather because it is “spot on” **and** from the mouth of the “apostle” Paul ... You see, by far the majority of Paul's theology actually *opposes* Jesus' Way of unconditional, active Love. And yet every now and then in his Biblical epistles -- as though his Soul just couldn't help itself -- Paul shines forth with an amazing verse or two. For me at least, this is one of those verses.

Granted, Paul probably didn't intend it to be interpreted as all-lovingly as it sounds, and he probably didn't comprehend its greater depths (e.g. that *we allReady* become as the Father in every one of our deeds of selfless service), and yet it's a pretty amazing verse nonetheless, the Truth of which I have personally experienced on a more than a few occasions.



James 1:17 ... God's constant Gifts
(03/12/2011)

“Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from Above; coming down from the Father of Lights – with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.” ~ James (in James 1:17)

Quite a few theologians have given James a somewhat bad rap due to the somewhat controversial pro-active stance he seems to take (at least relative to the conservative opinions of the apostle Paul) on the "faith vs. works" debate (though it should be noted that even Paul himself regularly sided with “works” as well -- see Galatians 6:5) ... Never mind that Jesus made it clear that James was to run the show once Jesus left (see Thomas 1:12), and never mind that James actually heard Jesus preach and actually walked with him while he was still alive (and never mind that Paul never did so). Despite all the criticism James has received, and despite all the conservative apologists who have lined up to water-down his theology, James 1:17 verse illuminates the Truth that the Divine is not only all-loving, but also a constant source of gentle Grace* as well. In essence, this verse reminds us all that even though it may not seem as though we are being blessed during our moments of pain, if we have the humility to remove our self-absorptions in such times, we will see that this indeed is always so.



(*Grace = otherwise known as the ever-present opportunity we all have to know LOVE, the verb – both that given by us & that received from others)

1 John 2:6 ... Christians are as Christians DO
(10/08/2011)

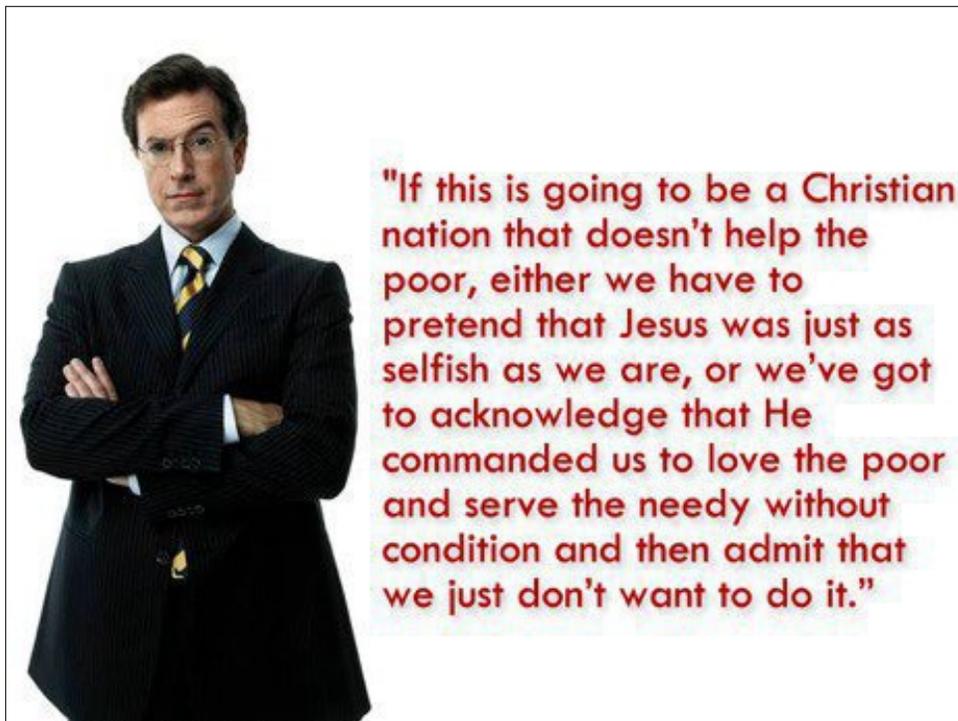
*"Whoever says, 'I abide in him,'
must walk just as he walked." ~ 1 John 2:6*

When Pope Paul VI visited a prison on April 9, 1964, he told several hundred prisoners that he was not there for any typical humanitarian purpose, but rather because he literally saw in them all the incarnation of the Christ. He made it clear to those prisoners that no man is a “sinner” condemned to an eternal hell, but that even in the deepest degradation all could awaken to the realization of the full dignity of their humanity.

In essence, what the Pope said – and did -- during this visit was show quite clearly that being a Christian is not believing a certain way or professing a certain faith, but rather *acting* with radical Kindness & unconditional Compassion. In essence, Pope Paul VI showed that being a Christian was not a noun at all – that being Christian is either a verb, or it is nothing.

“A single courageously Just Man causes Satan much greater affliction than a million blind believers.” ~ Kahlil Gibran

“All that is necessary to make this world a better place to live in is to Love -- to Love as Christ loved; to Love as Buddha loved.” ~ Isadora Duncan



Matthew 5:38-48 ... on praying for "our troops"
(10/30/2011)

In essence, the only way to truly pray for our troops "in Jesus' name" is to pray that they all awaken to **walking** Jesus' Way ... And the only way the troops will walk in Jesus' Way is when they wake up, remember to start Loving their enemies, and thereby cease to be soldiers anymore ... Now **that** is a prayer chain that shouldn't ever be broken!

As a Christian, do you have trouble accepting this Truth? Then take a moment to humbly consider Matthew, chapter 5 -- the words of Jesus himself:

³⁸ "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'
³⁹ But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; ⁴⁰ and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; ⁴¹ and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile.
⁴² Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.

⁴³ "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'
⁴⁴ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,
⁴⁵ so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. ⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? ⁴⁸ Be perfect [in Love], therefore, just as your heavenly Father is perfect."



Matthew 19:25-26 ... If you want to get to Heaven
(01/08/2013)

“[And the disciples] were greatly astonished and asked, ‘Who then can be saved?’ ... Jesus looked at them and said, ‘With man it is impossible, but with God all things are possible.’” ~ Matthew 19:25-26

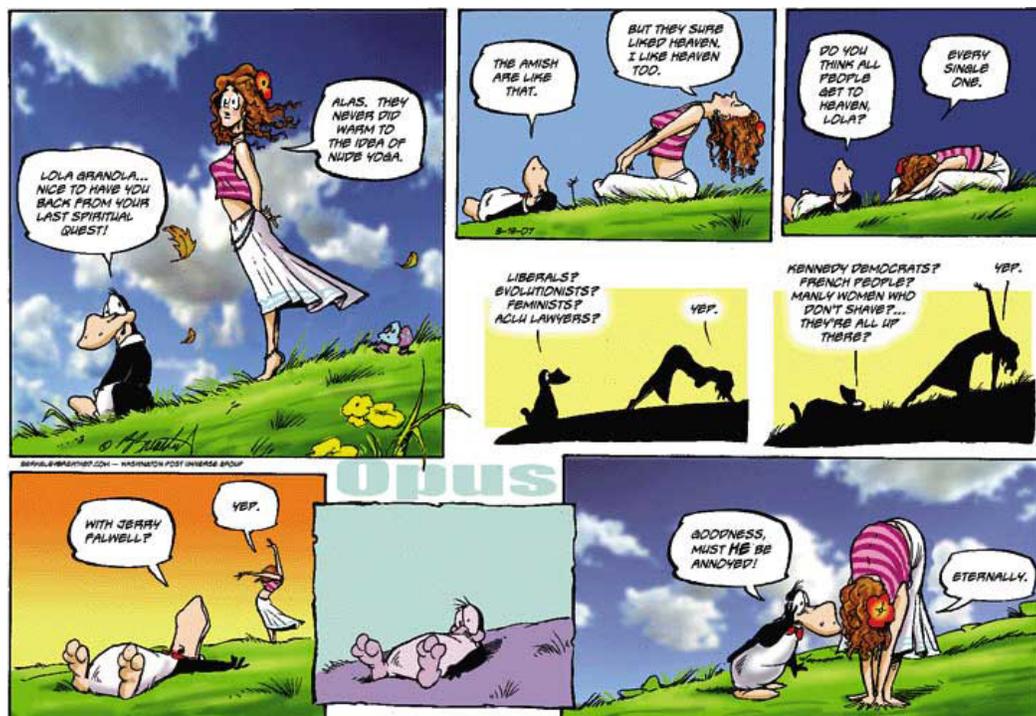
My Friends, I am not here to tell you that there is definitely a Heaven to go to after we die ... and I am certainly not here to tell you that there isn't one either. For I cannot make either of those claims with any certainty — In fact, no one can.

What I *am* here to say is thank heavens for that uncertainty, for it and it alone is what gives our Faith its real Power ... I speak not the “faith” of the Christian who believes in his personal salvation; not the “faith” of the Buddhist who believes in her eventual reincarnation; not even the religious “faith” of the atheist who is absolutely certain that neither God nor rebirth exist at all.

No, I speak here of a far deeper and far more practical FAITH; I speak of the Power that wells up from within us in every moment we choose to set aside our desires and look our fears calmly in the eye ...

... and then choose to extend LOVE to others anyway.

“The kingdom of God is not coming with things that can be observed ... For, in fact, the Kingdom of God is already both within and all around you.”
~ Jesus Christ (an accurate translation of Luke 17:20-21)



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Romans 12:2 ... knowing the Will of God (03/09/2013)

"Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the real will of God—what is good and what is acceptable and what is perfect." ~ Paul (in Romans 12:2)

A dear Friend recently commented on the nature of humanity's relationship to God, essentially equating it with the typical interplay between an employer and his employees -- saying that we are to "do what we are told" if we expect to "get paid" (i.e. get into Heaven) ... I listened respectfully to his opinion and then offered an alternative analogy -- an alternative available to all the believers of all the religions ... and I did so using my relationship with my own current employer. You see, I am not working to "get paid" at all, but rather to be a source of Joy &/or Solace to everyone at work each day, and to use whatever money I happen to receive from my bosses each month to lessen the burdens of others ... As such, as I was typing the conclusion to my response, something profound flowed forth that I'd like to share; something that just might bring us all a bit more perspective and a lot more Peace. As I was tidying up my words about jobs & bosses & obligations & money, I found myself writing the following:

"Of course, it's not about the money [how much you earn or how much you give; how you earn it or how you give it] ... It's about waking up every morning and giving everything you have to give to everyone you encounter for that day -- it's about going to bed overflowing with gratitude for having been given the opportunity to Care for the people who crossed your path in those few waking hours -- it's about professing a desire to be given one more day to LOVE others even more -- and it's about being grateful for the days we have already been given to live, even if that tomorrow never comes."



Have a wonderful day everyone. May it be a day filled with both the humility to see your lives as gifts to others, as well as the courage -- even if just for one brilliant moment -- to act accordingly.

Matthew 25:40 ... on finding GOD
(05/08/2013)

A little boy wanted to meet God, so he set off to find Him. He knew it was a long trip to where God lived, so before he left he packed his little suitcase with some potato chips, some grapes and a few bottles of spring water ... When he had gone about three blocks, he met an old man sitting in the park, just staring at some pigeons. The boy sat down next to him and opened his suitcase. He was about to take a drink of water when he noticed that the old man looked hungry, so he offered him some chips. The old man smiled at him and gratefully accepted. And the old man's smile was so beautiful that the boy wanted to see it again, so he offered him some grapes & a swig of water. Again, the old man smiled at him, and the boy was filled with glee ... They sat there like that all afternoon -- eating & smiling; never saying a word ... As twilight approached, the boy realized how tired he was and he got up to leave; but before he had gone more than a few steps, he turned around, ran back to the old man, and gave him a huge hug. And the old man gave him his biggest smile yet.

When the boy opened the door to his own house a short time later, his mother was surprised by the look of sheer Joy on his face, so she asked him, "What did you do today that made you so Happy?" The boy replied, "I had lunch with God." And before his mother could respond, he added, "You know what? He's got the most beautiful smile I've ever seen!"

Meanwhile, the old man, also radiant with Bliss, returned to his home as well. Upon seeing him, the old man's son was stunned by the look of Peace on his face and he asked, "Dad, what did you do today that made you so Happy?" And the old man replied "I ate potato chips & grapes in the park with God." And before his son could ask, he added, "You know, he's much younger than I expected."

Too often we underestimate the immense *Power* that rests within our every encounter. In-deed, every gentle touch, every sincere smile, every humbled listening and every kind word all do their potent part to uplift those to whom we give them. Every one of them is a small-yet-full portion of the Divine ... and every one of them fulfills the loving Will of God.

Indeed, LOVE remembers that we are all "God's Children" ... and in-deed, LOVE remembers to act accordingly.

"Truly I tell you, just as you do it for one of the least of those around you, you also do it for me." ~ Jesus (in Matthew 25:40)



John 3:5-8 ... our real Rebirth
(05/17/2013)

*"The greatest gift you have to give to this world
is your own self-transformation." ~ Lao Tsu*

LOVE is our real reBirth; the LOVE that only lives in this one moment -- the LOVE that only exists in the very place where we already are. And this reBirth is not a mental prayer or an intellectual thought or a verbal profession of faith. No, the true LOVE of reBirth is a verb – a selfless deed done for another, solely for the good of that other.

It is reaching out to a friend when we have "more important things to do" ... It is resting a gentle hand upon the shoulder of an enemy in despair ... It is giving our last two dollars to the homeless stranger when our own stomachs are rumbling & empty ... In essence, true reBirth is the courageous leap of Kindness made into all those moments when we least wish to be Kind.

So, my Friends, I wonder -- have you been truly Born-again? And much more importantly, will you choose to be Born-again, again?
(... & again & again & again & again)

"Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is Spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.' The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." ~ Jesus (John 3:5-8)



Acts 10:34-35 ... truly walking The Way
(07/22/2013)

If more Christians were a lot more like more Buddhists,
... then they would also be a lot more like Jesus Christ.



*"I truly understand that God shows no partiality,
but that in every nation anyone who honors Him
and does what is right is acceptable to Him."
~ Acts 10:34-35*

John 2:7-10 ... Water to Wine (08/06/2013)

In the Bible, Jesus' first recorded miracle was turning water to wine — something more than a few folks have poked fun at in a number of admittedly amusing ways. Of course, what a lot of folks (Christians included) completely miss is one of the deeper (and certainly one of the most practical) meanings within this intriguing tale ...

As it turns out, for quite a few of the Biblical authors (and almost certainly for Jesus as well), “water” represented the Soul — the “life source”, or the conscient consciousness that resides within each and every sentient being. And as it turns out for Jesus specifically, “wine” (and also “blood”) represented unconditional, active, selfless LOVE.

So you see, Jesus didn't merely turn water into wine ... His entire ministry of Kindness showed us all how to turn our own WATER into WINE.

Get it? ... Got it? ... Good!

“Jesus said to the servants, ‘Fill the jars with water’; so they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, ‘Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet. They did so, and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside and said, ‘Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now.’” ~ John 2:7-10



Matthew 5:44-45 ... betraying Jesus (08/10/2013)

It is wise to remember to stick by your Friends no matter what ... and it is even more so to remember that your enemies are actually your most important Friends. But don't just take my word for it ... Consider the following:

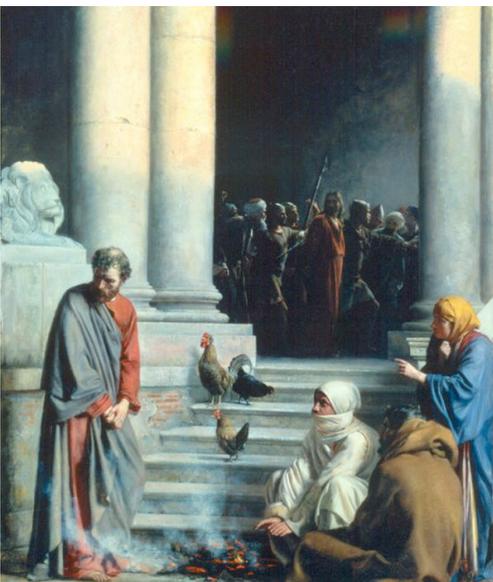
*"Whenever we are confronted with an opponent, we are to conquer him with Love."
~ Mahatma Gandhi*

"Love has within it an innate redemptive power; a power that eventually transforms people. Just keep being friendly to your enemy. Just keep loving them, and they won't be able to stand it for long. Oh, they might react in unpleasant ways in the beginning. They might react with guilt-trips, and sometimes they'll seem to hate you a little more, but just keep loving them anyway. And by the power of that Love they will eventually break down. That's Love, you see. It is always redemptive. There's something about it that builds up and is creative ... So Love your enemies." ~ inspired by MLK Jr.

*"Hate is your enemy; you must defeat it! Anger is your enemy; you must defeat it! Violence is your enemy; you must defeat it! ... Know well your real enemies!"
~ Mehmet Murat Ildan*

*"But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may become children of your Father who is in Heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on both the evil and the good, and sends rain on both the righteous and the unrighteous."
~ Jesus Christ (Matthew 5:44-45)*

Jesus really wasn't kidding around when he made this last statement, and he didn't make it merely because it sounded nice. He made it because **it works** – He made it because it is The Way ... Ignore Jesus' call to Love the "unlovable" if you wish, my Friends, and yet know that every time you do so, you “deny him” the same way Peter denied him -- and that deep within you will know the same impenetrable sorrow as a result ... So why not Love – and know Joy instead?



Matthew 22:39 ... What it means to LOVE
(08/26/2013)

When Jesus said that we were to "Love our neighbors" (Matthew 22:39), it turns out he wasn't just talking about being "nice" to the folks we happen to like. Indeed, as I have radically put this admonition to the test in thousands of encounters over the past decade of my life, I have come to understand that the ramifications of this particular encouragement go **far** deeper than we have been taught, and run **far** deeper than we might first think ...

Firstly, when Jesus said LOVE, he didn't mean for us to have a "warm & fuzzy" feeling in our hearts for others, or even for us to embrace them with soft thoughts or friendly words. No, for Jesus at least, LOVE meant sacrificing our peace of mind; it meant doing the uncomfortable deed; it meant opening up when we wish to remain protected; it meant being Kind to the folks who least deserve our Kindness; it meant giving our last morsel of food when we are hungry and our last two pennies when we are broke ... Most importantly of all, LOVE meant to Give of ourselves more than our things -- to give of our full attention when we'd rather "think happy thoughts" or "have fun"; to give of our time when we have "more important things to do"; to give of our most engaged emotion when we would just as soon set up "healthy boundaries" or engage in superficial back-patting.

No, my Friends, LOVE for Jesus was treating the other -- *every* other -- as though they are our dearest Friends; embracing them with open arms at every chance meeting; continually looking to ease their pain or raise their Joy; considering it a privilege & an honor to help them in any way we can.

You see, for Jesus, LOVE was, is & ever will remain -- a verb ... and a most courageous verb at that.

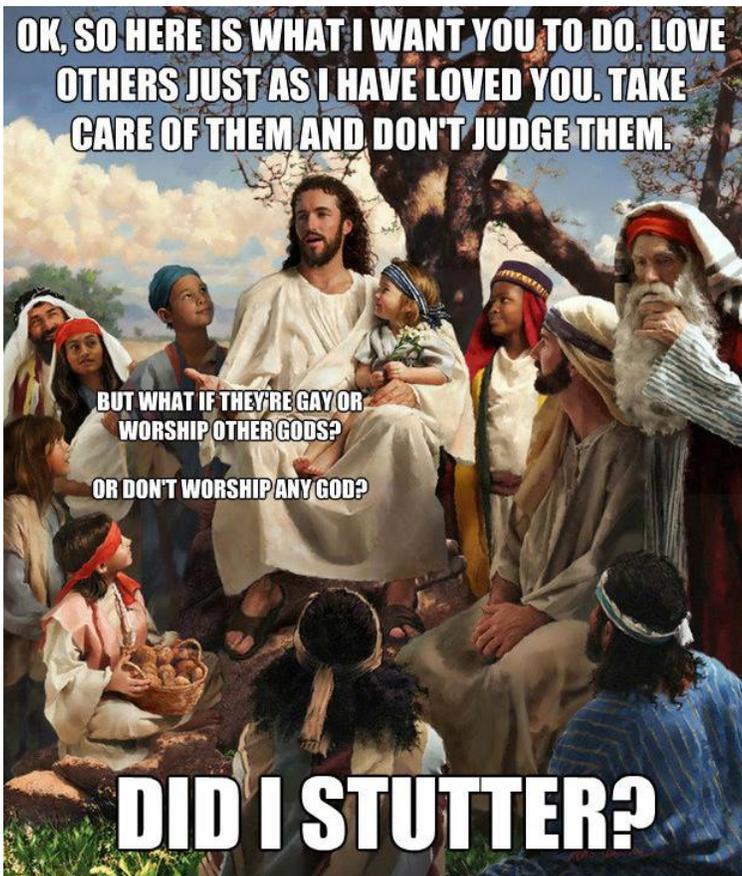
Just as importantly, when Jesus said NEIGHBOR, he wasn't talking about the folks in our lives who are easy to Love. He wasn't talking about the ones giving us compliments or supporting our beliefs; he wasn't talking about the ones who bring us birthday presents or play happily with our children or hang out with us on the weekends. No, for Jesus at least -- as he most astutely pointed out in the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37, the only place in the entire Bible where he defines this particular term) -- our NEIGHBOR is our enemy; the one who is cutting us down, the one who is gossiping behind our back, the one who is attacking our friends, the one who is driving us crazy, the one who is threatening our safety, the one whose beliefs directly contradict our own ... *These* are those Jesus would have us LOVE -- and LOVE completely; actively with courage and sincerely with humility.

For Jesus, nothing else was more important than for us to reawaken to this Way of Being; for us to reawaken to our innate solidarity with **all** our human brothers & sisters and **all** our sentient cousins by radically championing & purely living such Oneness ... For Jesus, **this** was the portal to *his* brand of "salvation" ... For Jesus, **this** was The Way to *his* version of paradise ... For Jesus, humility is the doorknob, kindness is the key, and acts of radical LOVE get us through the door.

We all have folks in our lives whose beliefs contradict our own, whose personalities grate like fingernails on a chalkboard, and whose demeanor can even be downright "mean" ... and it is **these** people who are our gateways to Bliss; it is **these** people who are our most potent opportunities to transcend the selfish beings we are told to be, and become instead the truly caring Human Beings we truly Are.

These "neighbors" are all around us every day; these "enemies" ... waiting patiently to let us into those Hallowed Halls where the angels sing -- waiting patiently for us to realize that it is they who are our personal angels -- waiting patiently for us to show them LOVE.

They are waiting for us all right now ...
So, my Friends ... got Heaven?



"But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you; bless those who curse you; pray for those who mistreat you. If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic as well. Give to everyone who asks of you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back ... Then your reward will be great, and you will be considered children of the Most High, for He is kind as well to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, therefore, just as your heavenly Father is merciful. "

~ Jesus Christ (Luke 6:27-36)

John 10:34-36 ... on being Divine (09/15/2013)

And Jesus answered them, saying: "Is it not written in your law, 'I said, you are gods'? If he called them gods to whom the word of God came (and scripture cannot be broken), how can you say of him whom the Father consecrated, 'You are blaspheming,' merely because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?" ~ John 10:34-36

Taken at face value, this is a troubling set of verses in many ways ... For Christians, Jesus is seen quoting Psalm 82:6 (which he reminds us is still valid scriptural law) to seemingly imply that all are not only divine creations, but in and of themselves "gods". And yet how can this be, when Jesus in so many other places in the Bible clearly repeats the message that there is only one Father, and that only that one God is to be worshiped?

For non-Christians, the last verse (verse 36) shows Jesus seemingly raising himself above the rest of humanity; seemingly calling to be revered as the one and only Son of God. And yet how can this be, when Jesus in so many other places in the Bible goes out of his way to tell others to **not** worship him -- but only to honor the Father; to **not** succumb to such pride -- but instead become "humble as a child"?

Well, I've got some GOOD NEWS for all members of both aforementioned camps, and that Good News is this: these conundrums are reconcilable by simply focusing on the core of Jesus' ministry, and then going forth to live accordingly ...

Christians can realize that Jesus is **not** using this passage to call us all to arrogantly place ourselves above our problems and above others and above God as "gods", but is rather reminding us that we all have a Divine Spark within us – a "Holy Spirit" that wants to Do Good – an "Advocate Within" (i.e. the conscience) that only wants us to make our lives meaning-full by serving those nearby who are in need ... Alternately, non-Christians can understand that Jesus is **not** placing himself on some sort of pedestal here; that he is **not** asking us to worship him in any way, shape or form whatsoever – but is rather reminding us that our greatest Contentment & our deepest Bliss will come to us all in those moments when we emulate his Way of Living; when we literally follow his Way of selfless LOVE.

*"On that day you will know that I am in my Father,
and you in me, and I in you." ~ Jesus (in John 14:20)*

And best of all, this greater Salvation -- this direct admission into Jesus' Here&Now version of "the Kingdom of Heaven" (see Luke 17:20-21) is available to every single sentient being who chooses to set aside his or her self-centered fears & selfish desires in favor of actively Caring for others -- and that this is true regardless of his or her species or gender or race or nationality or religion or sexual orientation.

*"I do not judge anyone who hears my words and does not keep them,
for I came not to judge the world, but to offer the world salvation. "*
~ *Jesus Christ* (in John 12:47)

Indeed, it is time that we **ALL** woke up to what Jesus seemed to know all along: namely, that the entire Earth is a veritable Holy Land -- a potential Paradise of Peace, and that each and every one of us has been Chosen from birth to do our part to make it so.

Amen ... Let it be so.

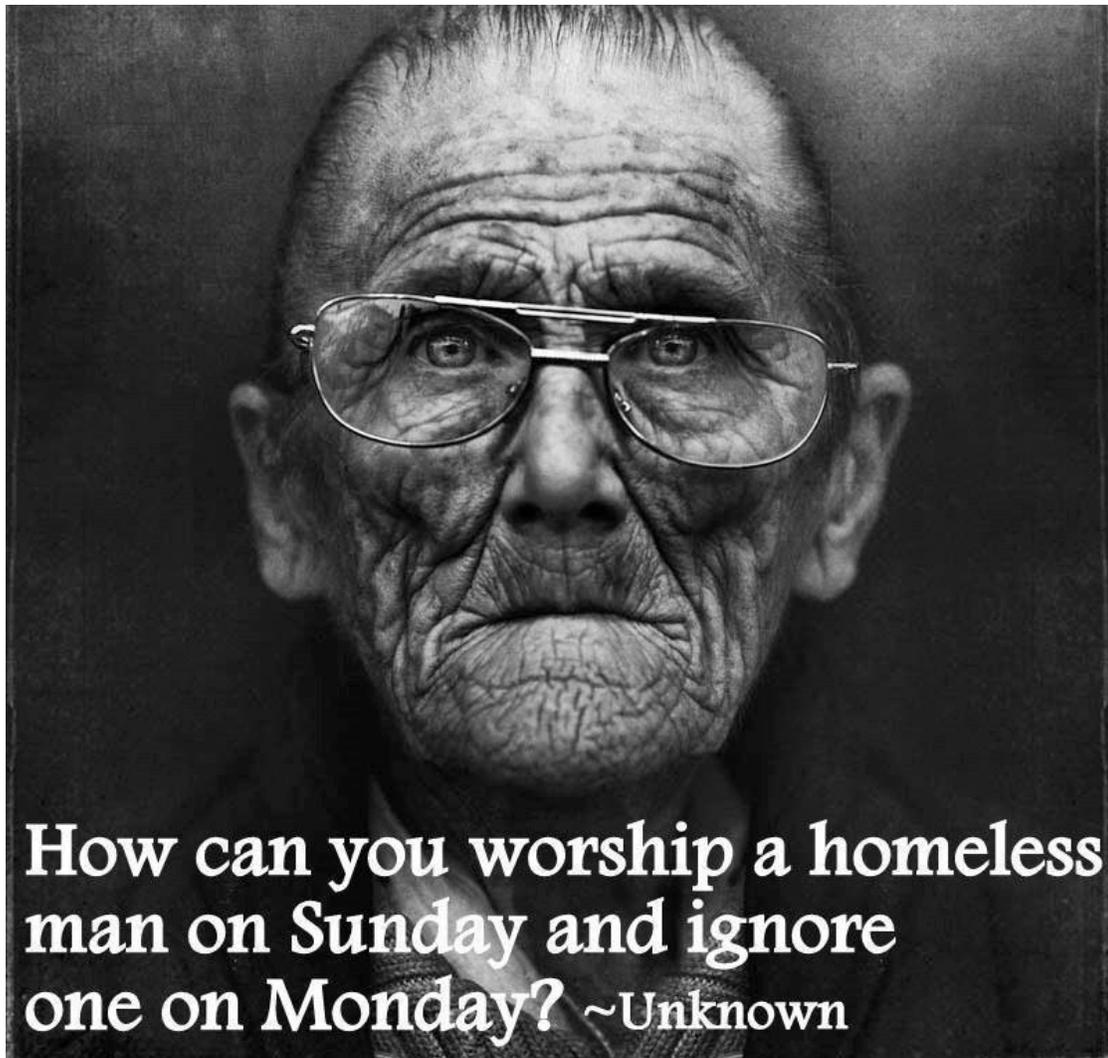
"Blessed are the Peacemakers."
~ *Jesus Christ* (in Matthew 5:9)



Matthew 25:34-40 ... Inheriting the Kingdom
(09/23/2013)

"Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me ... Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." ~ Jesus Christ (in Matthew 25:34-40)

Amen ... Let it be so.



Luke 10:27 ... to Love our Neighbor (09/25/2013)

To get to *his* Kingdom of Heaven, Jesus made it quite clear that we must "Love our neighbor" (see Matthew 22:36-40, Mark 12:30-31 & Luke 10:27). For most Christians the wording of this commandment is well-known, and yet what many folks obviously do not understand is just what Jesus meant by them ... For Jesus, "the Kingdom of Heaven" was **not** someplace we go for eternity after we die, but rather is a state of Being available to all of us right in our current Here & Now (see Luke 17:20-21) ... For Jesus, "Love" was **not** a fuzzy feeling or a friendly word, but rather is a courageous action done for another. For Jesus, LOVE is a verb (see John 13:17) ... Most importantly, for Jesus, a "neighbor" was **not** a member of our own family or our own circle of friends or our own community or our own church, but rather is our *enemy* (see Luke 10:25-37 + Matthew 22:35-40) ... As such, merely using the definitions that *Jesus himself provided* in the Bible itself, Christians and non-Christians alike can clearly see that "Love your neighbor" does **not** mean to merely be nice to our friends, but rather means that we are to be actively Kind towards our enemies.

On a more practical level, this means ... *that if you are a Democrat, your greatest Bliss and your greatest emPowerment will come when you chose to be actively Kind to Republicans (and vice versa), *that if you are a human rights advocate, your greatest Bliss and your greatest emPowerment will come when you choose to be actively Kind to racists or homophobes or any other bigot, *that if you are poor, your greatest Bliss and your greatest emPowerment will come when you choose to be actively Kind to the wealthy (and vice versa), *that if you are a vegan, your greatest Bliss and your greatest emPowerment will come when you choose to be actively Kind to meat-eaters, hunters and animal abusers, *that if you are lover of Peace , your greatest Bliss and your greatest emPowerment will come when you when you choose to be actively Kind towards President Obama &/or any other war-mongering politician, ...



... and *that if you are Christian, your greatest Bliss and your greatest emPowerment will come when you choose to be actively Kind towards Muslims & Buddhists & atheists (or any other members of any other religion).

In conclusion, Kindness isn't awesome because it is "morally right", my Friends ... Kindness is awesome because *IT WORKS!* But don't take my word for it ... Go and see for yourself!

2 Corinthians 5:17 ... real Salvation (09/27/2013)

It is indeed high time for us *all* to aspire to something more than mere "wealth" or "fun" or "power" or "redemption" ... It is time for us *all* to change our perception of what it means to live "the good life" ... It is time for us *all* to alter our definitions of "happiness" & "pleasure" & "comfort" ... And it is time we *all* did so by enlivening our LOVE.

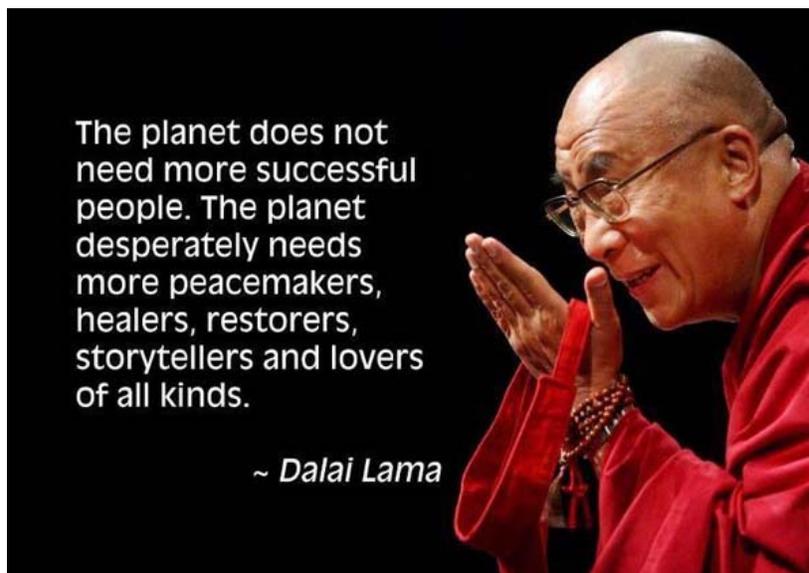
Striving for money will make you the poorest of the poor, striving for power will make you the weakest of the weak, & striving for salvation will make you the damnedest of the damned. my Friends, to know true Peace, we must escape the shackles of economy by giving first and taking never ... To know true Joy, we must escape the prison of judgment by forgiving first and retaliating never ... To know true Bliss, we must leave the concentration camp of arrogance by caring first and condemning never.

For this is what it means to be truly Free ... This is what it means to be truly Saved ... This is what it means to be truly "in Christ" ... This is what it means to be truly "enlightened" ... This is what it means to be truly Human ... This is what it means to be truly Alive.

So ... got Life?

*"The Meaning of your life is to find your Gifts ...
The Purpose of your life is to then give them away." ~ unknown*

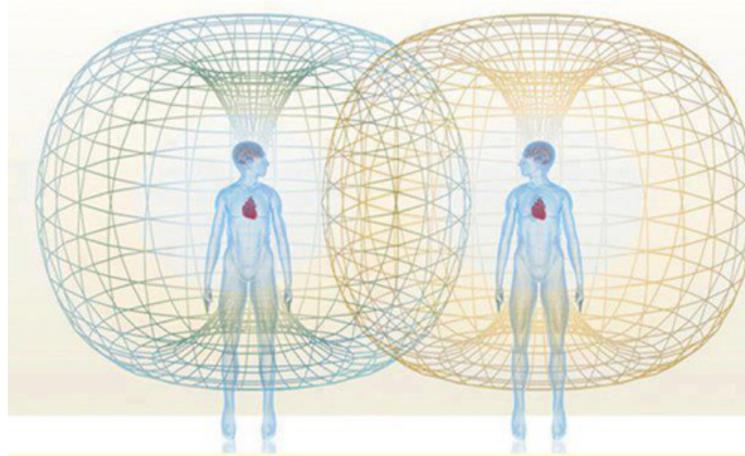
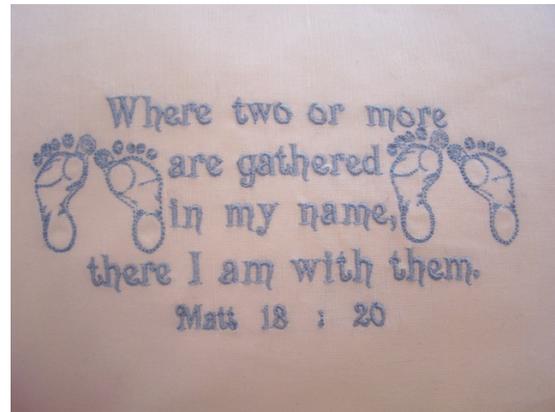
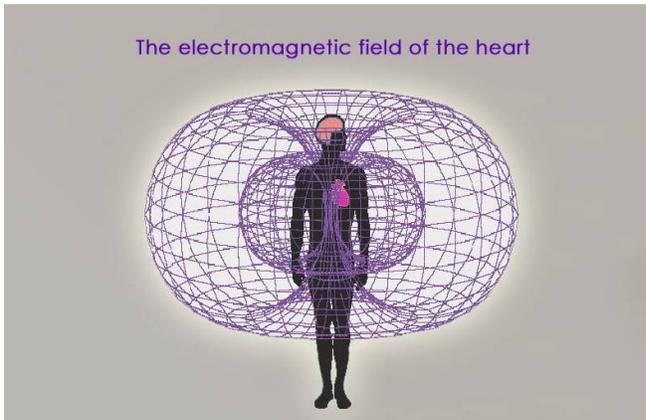
*"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away;
Behold, the new has arrived." ~ Paul (in 2 Corinthians 5:17)*



Deuteronomy 33:12 ... the House of the LORD
(11/20/2013)

Four images ... forty words ... one TRUTH.

**THE BELOVED
OF THE
LORD DWELLS
IN SAFETY.
THE HIGH
GOD SURROUNDS
HIM ALL
DAY LONG,
AND DWELLS
BETWEEN HIS
SHOULDERS. DEUTERONOMY
33:12**



Matthew 19:21 ... the real "Black Friday"
(11/29/2013)

"If you wish to be perfect, then go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and then you will have treasure in Heaven" ~ Jesus Christ (in Matthew 19:21)

This particular Bible verse is quite appropriate for Black Friday, and yet not for the reason most of you might assume. You see, the most ancient manuscripts of this verse do not contain any mandate at all for giving away *all* our money and becoming completely destitute ourselves (though I can attest that this is not at all a bad thing) -- they merely encourage us to fully **give** to the poor after relieving ourselves of our attachment to the things we already possess (as well as our attachment to the things we wish to possess in the future) ...

Now it **is** much easier to accomplish this adjustment of attitude when you have less "stuff" (as I have both personally witnessed & personally experienced repeatedly over the last 9+ years of my life), **and yet** it is *not* necessary to own absolutely nothing to enter the deep-seated state of Bliss that Jesus calls the "Kingdom of Heaven". It is merely necessary for us to use whatever we do happen to own for the betterment of others.

So have a Peace-full Black Friday, my Friends -- one filled with just as much Generosity as your yesterday was filled with Gratitude.

"No one has ever become poor by giving." ~ Anne Frank

"The world says: 'You have needs -- satisfy them. You have as much right as the rich and the mighty. Don't hesitate to satisfy your needs; indeed, expand your needs and demand more.' This is the worldly doctrine of today. And they believe that this is freedom. The result for the rich is isolation and suicide, for the poor, envy and murder." ~ Fyodor Dostoevsky



The less you have,
the more you value it.



One must be poor
to know the
luxury of giving

2 Corinthians 6:2 ... Salvation is Now
(12/05/2013)

Salvation is: attending to another with Heart-felt Kindness, and doing so for just one moment ...

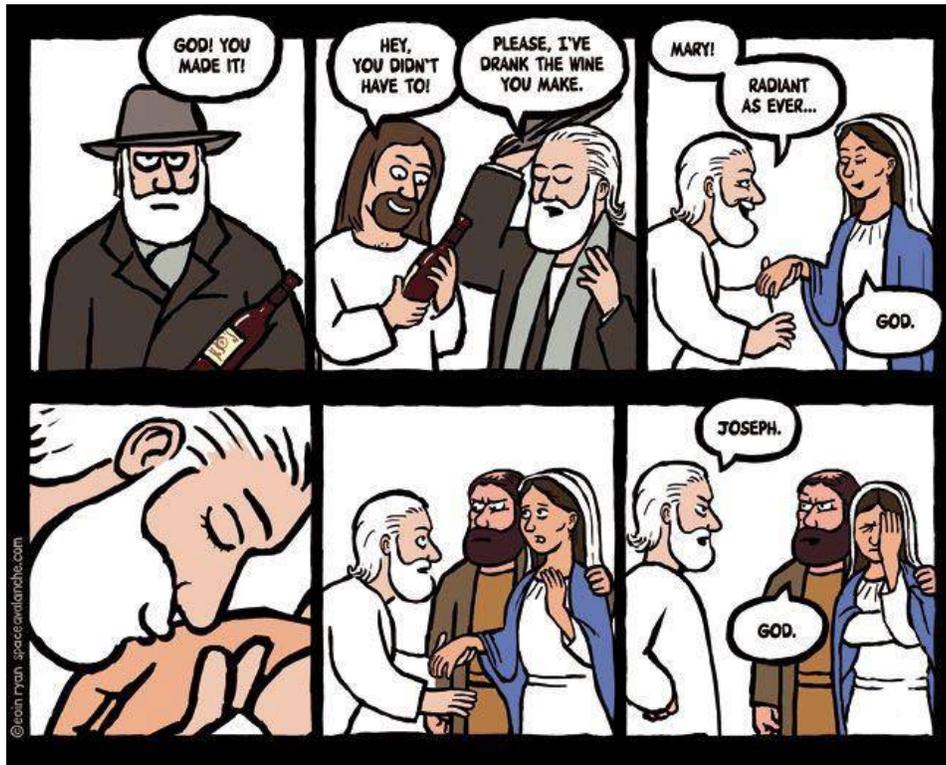
... *this* moment.



*“See, now is the acceptable time;
Now is the day of Salvation!”
~ 2 Corinthians 6:2*

Matthew 5:27-28 ... on lust & LOVE
(11/30/2013)

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way: When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit" ~ Matthew 1:18*



"You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' And yet I say to you that whoever even looks at a woman to desire her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." ~ Jesus Christ (in Matthew 5:27-28)

Essentially, despite how uncomfortable it might make many of us feel, Jesus was right to say this ... Even though our physical yearnings are indeed "normal", and even though we will indeed therefore regularly slip into moments of bodily desire, extra-marital flirting &/or fantasizing about someone other than one's current partner, we are **not** destined to do so.

You see, my Friends, despite the ego's opinion to the contrary, we are **not** "only human" ... we are *HUMAN*. We are all conscious beings, and thereby all have the power of choice. And as such, we also have the power in any given moment to purposefully set aside our own wants & self-centered fixations in favor of thinking about the welfare of another or doing something Kind for them.

Now can we go the rest of our lives without "sinning" in this way ever again? Probably not ... And yet our Purpose is not to become perfect for the rest of our lives (Thank God for that ... literally!) No, our Mission in Life is simply to repeatedly re-awaken our Soul; to repeatedly become a Child of God anew by knowing & then enlivening a divine & perfect LOVE for others. And we are not to do so permanently or even consistently over any period of time. We are simply asked to do so for one brief instant -- **this** present instant; **this** particular moment; **this** one you are currently living, right here & right now.

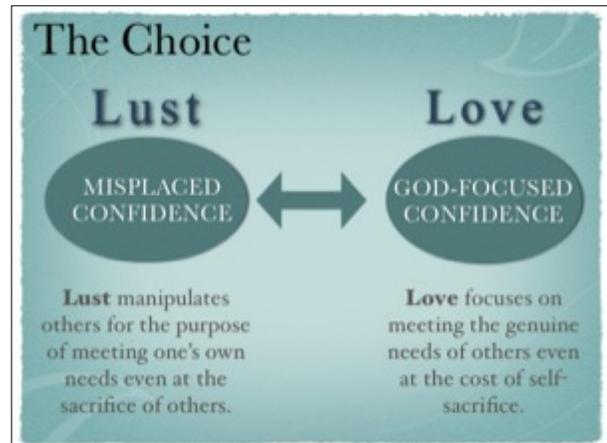
And that's it ... That's all we have to do: in those moments when you are yearning for something, choose to think on the well-being of another instead of your own pleasure; in those moments you are being attacked, choose to be Kind to your enemies instead of attacking them in return or defending yourself; in those moments when you are fantasizing about another or wanting to flirt with them, choose to be gentle & Loving towards your current spouse or partner instead.

And remember: we don't have to do so for "the rest of our lives"; a task so daunting that we tend to give up before we even get started. No, we only have to extend this pure, selfless LOVE for one little moment -- **this** moment ... and then we simply must choose to do so again & again & again. Every time we do so, we will be returning to LOVE and allowing our True Self to be reborn. And every time we don't, we simply need to pause and choose to choose anew once more.

So, the next time you are tempted to betray your wife or your husband or your partner in any way -- either physically via flirting or affair, or mentally via lust or fantasy -- try remembering who you truly Are instead.

For just one moment -- just **that** moment -- try returning to LOVE.

Amen ... Let it be so.

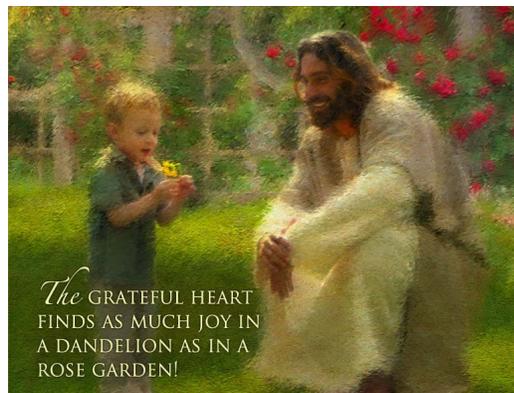


*P.S. In case you are interested, the Bible itself incorrectly says that Jesus was born of a "virgin". While Matthew 1:23 does indeed contain the Greek word "parthenos", which **can** mean "virgin" in the traditional sense, this particular verse makes this claim while restating a prophecy from the Old Testament book of Isaiah (Isaiah 7:14); a prophecy which employs the Hebrew term "almah" -- a word which scholars agree means "a young woman of child-bearing age", **NOT** an actual "virgin" ... And yet, despite this convenient manipulation of scripture by Matthew's author, it is indeed possible that Jesus **was** born of a virgin. Parthenogenesis, the ability to reproduce non-sexually, is an ability found in quite a few species on Earth -- including aphids, honeybees, hammerhead sharks, certain types of geckos, Komodo dragons, and some chickens & turkeys. And in 2007, the International Stem Cell Corporation was even able to create human stem cells from unfertilized human eggs using parthenogenesis. So even though it is *extremely* unlikely that Jesus was conceived non-sexually, it **is** possible that he was ... Of course, these tidbits of Truth actually don't matter one bit. After all, it doesn't take a miraculous birth to make how Jesus selflessly lived and how Jesus selflessly LOVED to be seen as fully miraculous ... They were then ... They still are now ... And in your own life, they could be yet again!

Matthew 18:3 ... Become again as Children
(12/04/2013)

"Truly I tell you, unless you become again like small children, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven." ~ inspired by Jesus Christ (in Matthew 18:3)

In the past whenever I have mentioned this verse to emphasize our need to enliven humility in our dealings with others (especially our enemies), I have often heard folks comment that many children are not very Kind at all -- that many children, especially those of an age similar to the young ones in the images below, are actually quite selfish ... Fair enough. And yet it might be of interest to note that the Greek word for "children" used in this verse ("paidion" - G4086) actually means "infant" or "very young child" – that pristine age when all that is seen is seen with awe & wonderment, and all that are met are reached out to with Kindness & Love.



Acts 17:28 ... in Him we Live
(12/13/2013)

“For in Him we live and move and have our Being.” ~ Acts 17:28

For those truly searching for God, know that “the Beloved” cannot be found in the heavens above, nor can it be discovered residing in the body within ... No, my Friends. If you are sincerely looking for “the Father”, you will only be able to find Him in each & every one of your courageous acts of pure & gentle Kindness. Simply put, if you seek God with an open Heart **and** an active LOVE for others around you, then you will always find Him there -- for within acts of LOVE is where God resides ... After all, it truly is “in Him that we live & move & have our Being.”

Amen ... Let it be so.

“Whoever does not Love does not know God, for God is Love ... If we Love one another, then God lives in us, and his Love is perfected in us.” ~ 1 John 4:8+12



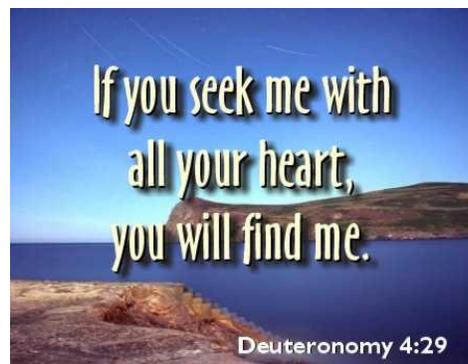
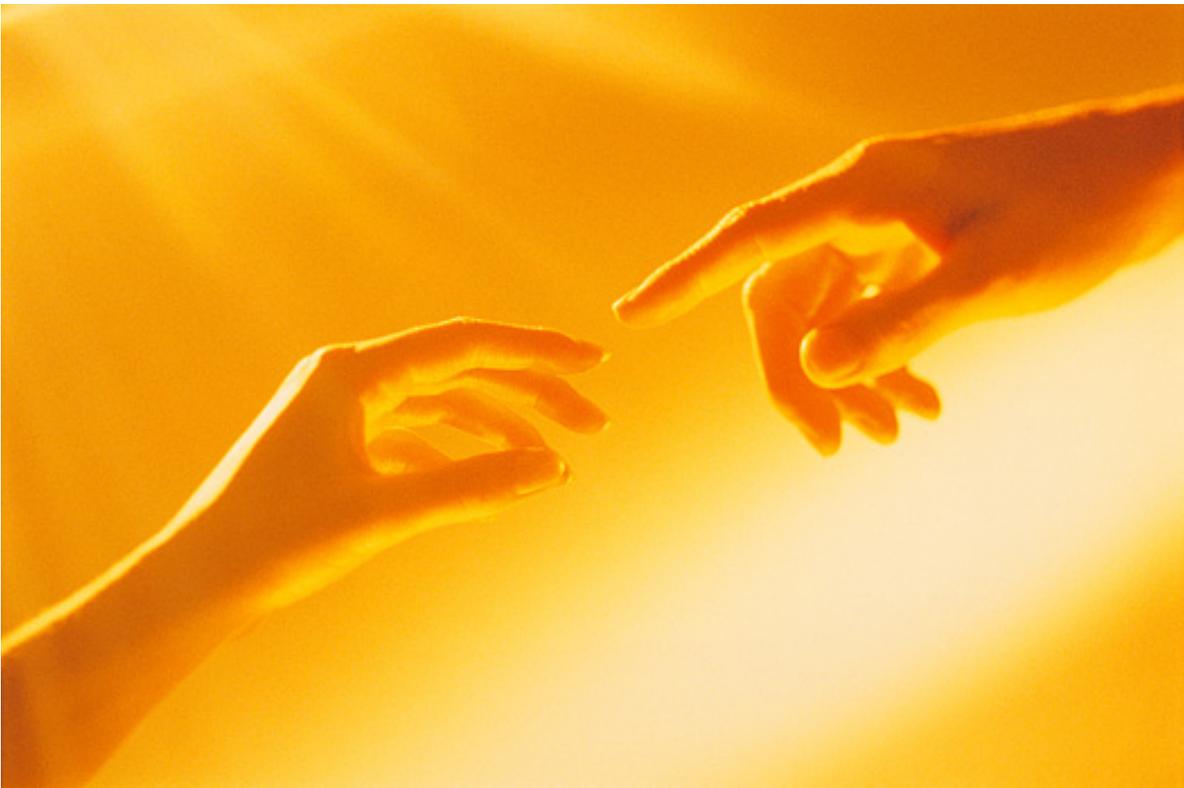
If you don't have the Beloved
why aren't you looking for Him?
If you have the Beloved
why aren't you rejoicing?
RUMI

Jeremiah 29:13 ... finding God
(12/14/2013)

*“If you look for Me wholeheartedly,
you will find Me.” ~ God (in Jeremiah 29:13)*

Our searching is only wholehearted
... when our Heart is fully whole.

Our Heart is only fully whole
... when our LOVE becomes a verb.



He who considers himself as one whose body and limbs consist of all humanity and all creatures, he is the one who certainly finds the universal, all- pervading Spirit in himself.

~ Yogananda



1 Corinthians 13 ... LOVE is (12/15/2013)

“If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have Love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have Love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body to be burned so that I may boast, but do not have Love, I gain nothing. Love is patient; Love is kind; Love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” ~ Paul (in 1 Corinthians 13:1-7)

Over the past several years, I have been known to give Paul a bit of a hard time (often rightfully so), most often about the manner in which he openly contradicts The Way of Jesus Christ in his Biblical letters.

*Where Jesus would have us forgive “seventy times seven” (i.e. everyone, always & completely), Paul often criticizes & cajoles & condemns his enemies ...

*Where Jesus sees God the Father as having a Love that is perfect and completely without condition, Paul often hints that God is wrathful & judgmental & exclusivist ...

*Where Jesus preaches that the Kingdom of Heaven is always “right here & right now” (and that it can only be entered via humbly & selflessly serving others), Paul espouses that Heaven is a reward for proper worship — someplace “elsewhere” that only “worthy believers” will be allowed to enter after they die.

These two theologies simply do not mesh, and I have often been frank about illuminating this fact ... And yet in all fairness, just like the rest of us who are similarly flawed and similarly struggle with our desires & our fears, Paul obviously also has his moments of sheer brilliance — and this passage in 1 Corinthians is certainly one of them.

So here’s to you, Paul ... You may not have comprehended The Way that Jesus shared (and you most certainly did not preach the same Way Jesus preached), and yet you at times *did* indeed know the same LOVE Jesus lived; a LOVE that echoes & reverberates to the same, perfect Harmony — and this, no matter where its beat is struck; and this, no matter who is doing its drumming.

Amen ... Let it be so.



Matthew 5:3-7:27 ... the Sermon on the Mount
(12/16/2013)

“Ours is a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants. We know more about war than we know about peace; more about killing than we know about living. We have grasped the mystery of the atom, and yet have rejected the Sermon on the Mount.”~ General Omar N. Bradley

65 million copies of the Bible are bought or distributed in the United States every year – more than any other publication (nothing else is even a close second). Indeed, the average American house has at least three Bibles in it. We see Americans cheering the Bible, championing the Bible, raising up the Bible, worshipping the Bible, buying the Bible, giving the Bible and owning the Bible ...

It just turns out that most of them don't seem to actually *read* the Bible.

Indeed, according to a recent Gallup poll, only one third of Bible owners knew who delivered the Sermon on the Mount (that would be Jesus), fewer than half of those surveyed could name the first book of the Bible (that would be Genesis), and 80 percent of born-again Christians polled believe the phrase “God helps those who help themselves” is in the Bible (It's not; it's actually from Ben Franklin) ...

Assuming that this is even a partially accurate portrayal of at least a portion of the current Christian population (and I would offer that it is), then it is no wonder that so many Christians openly favor “healthy boundaries” in their relationships ... and desire the deportation of Muslims & other “heathens” ... and actively condemn homosexuals & other “sinners” ... and brazenly advocate the use of torture on potential “terrorists” ... and loudly champion the death penalty for “major offenders” (and aggressive prison sentences for minor ones) ... and zealously defend “just warfare” as an effective means for creating peace.

Admittedly, I am not the expert of experts when it comes to the Bible (no one is), and yet I **do** know enough of its texts and have practiced enough of its teachings to know the following:

First, if Jesus is indeed alive somewhere “up above” -- and if he is looking down upon those who claim to worship him and honor his life, then he most surely has his shaking head in both his saddened hands, ...

... and Second, if he is not still bodily alive, then he is most assuredly rolling over (& over & over) in his grave.



“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer, but if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other to him also; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak to him as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile with them, go also the second mile. Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to receive from you. You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in Heaven. For He makes his sun rise on both the evil and on the good, and He sends rain on both the righteous and on the unrighteous.” ~ Jesus Christ (in Matthew 5:38-45)

1 Peter 2:15 ... the Will of God
(12/17/2013)

*“For such is the Will of God; that simply by doing right
you may calm the ignorance of the unwise.”
~ unknown (in 1 Peter 2:15)*

Quite simply, our Work in this lifetime is to actualize “the Will of God” – a perfect LOVE that will not come into being unless *we* choose to make it so.

Indeed, no matter what we happen to call our own personal deity — “God”, or “Allah”, or “Buddha”, or “Rama”, or “Chi”, or even “quantum oneness” — it remains true that every day each & every one of us *can* change the world in small-yet-potent ways; ways that help to re-manifest the Divine Foundation of Universal Harmony; in essence, ways that bring into being the Will of God.

And when we do choose to make our current moment a platform for broadcasting an unconditional regard for others that is as courageous as it is humble, then the Will of God is always the result — a Will that is filled with Power & Beauty; a Will that soars to the greatest heights of the celestial, and then returns to flood every corner of our being and fill every facet of our reality.

It is a Will that knows only Kindness ... and as such, it is a Will that always brings Peace:

It creates Peace between once-bickering communities;
It creates Peace between once-timid strangers;
It creates Peace between once-hateful enemies;
It creates Peace between once-callous partners;
It even creates Peace between other species once-scorned.

Indeed, my Friends, our Work in this lifetime is to actualize the Will of God ... a Will which is nothing more or less than LOVE, the verb.

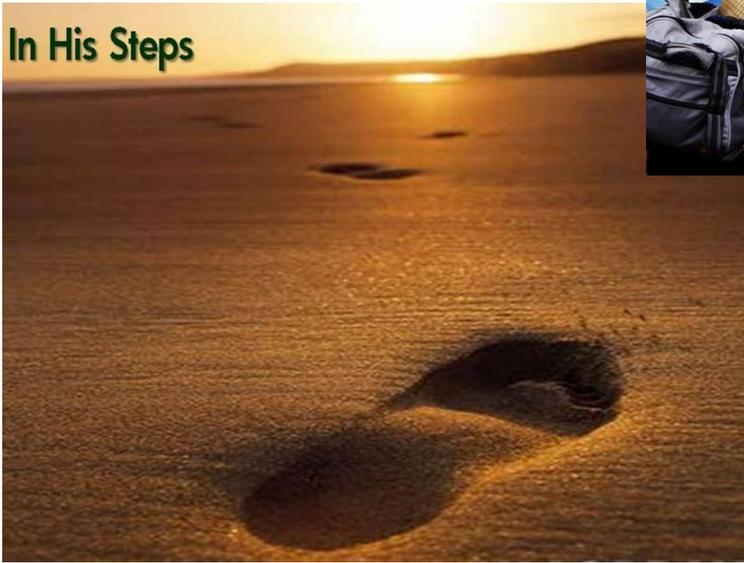
(inspired by Kim Stanley Robinson)



"Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." (Luke 9:58)
But "I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me." (Matthew 25: 35-36)



In His Steps



***I've never met a Christian,
Muslim, Atheist, Sikh, Seventh
Day Adventist, Mormon, Liberal,
Conservative, Anarchist,
Socialist, Marxist, Communist,
Libertarian, Hindu, Zionist,
American, Britan, French,
Icelandic, South African,
German, Angolan. I've only
ever met other humans, some
of whom have let themselves
be divided by labels.***

Freedom is a State of Mind



*"The best way to know God
is to Love many things."
~ Vincent van Gogh*



Mark 1:35 ... never, ever alone
(01/09/2014)

How deliciously ironic it is that regular moments of deep solitude allow for regular expressions of pure Kindness; that in soaking even briefly in pure isolation, we remember that we are never alone.

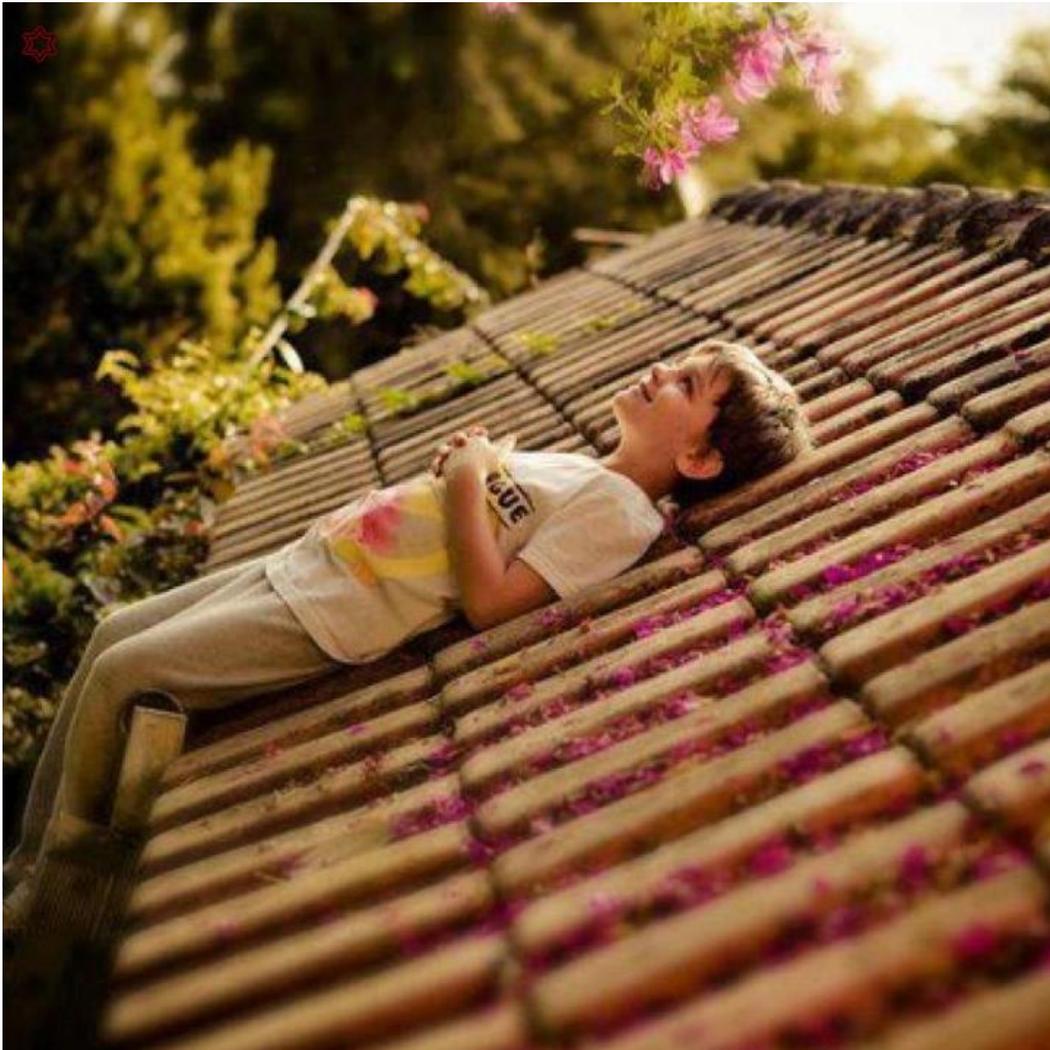
Amen ... Let it be so.

"In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went up alone to a deserted place, and there he prayed." ~ Mark 1:35



"And after he had sent them onward, he went up the mountain to pray. And evening came, and he was there by himself." ~ Matthew 14:23





"And then our solitude is overcome, and we are no longer alone, for we find that our innermost self is the Spirit; that it is God, the indivisible. And suddenly we find ourselves in the midst of the world, yet undisturbed by its multiplicity, for from our innermost Soul we know ourselves to be one with all Being." ~ Hermann Hesse

1 Corinthians 10:13 ... transcending trials
(01/10/2013)

To all who suffer or have suffered:

To live is to choose to Love; to Love especially when you have no stomach for it — especially when everything you've ever held dear crumbles like burnt paper in your hands; crumbles to dust in front of your hopeful eyes ... and you try to take a breath but your throat is filled with the silt of your despair.

It's to choose to Love even when grief is sitting right next to you, with its stank-steamy, tropical-heat thickening the air around your mouth; air somehow heavier than water — more fit for gills than lungs.

It's to choose to Love when grief weights you down like your own flesh, only more of it — lots more of it; a veritable obesity of grief ... When all you can think, over & over again, is “How can I withstand this? How can I live through even this single empty now?”

And yet you DO choose to take that breath ...

You DO choose to live through that moment ...

You DO choose to reach out and take hold of life again.

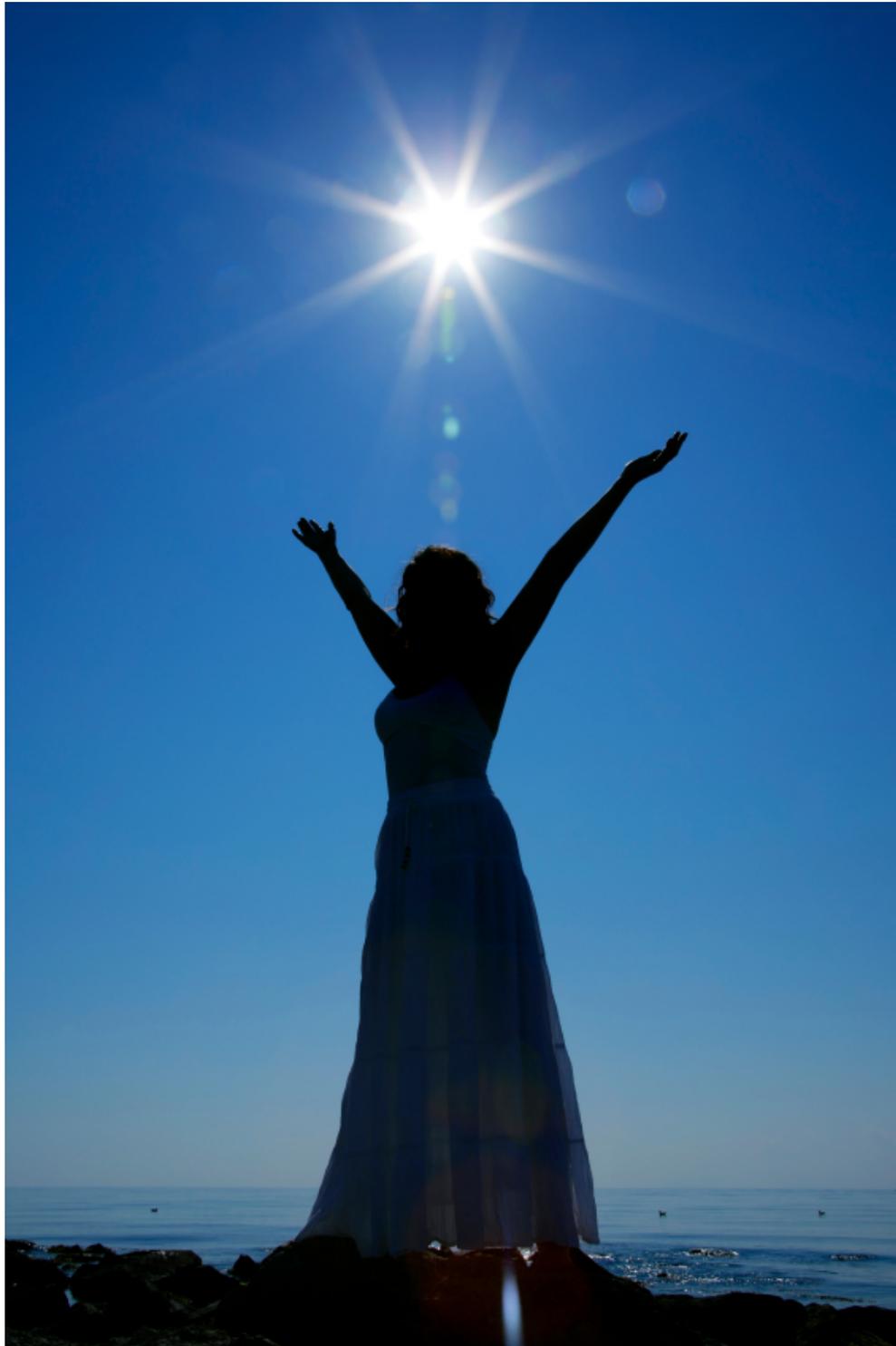
You take hold of it as if it were a child's face resting gently between your palms — a plain face, mind you; one with no sweet smile, no sapphire eyes, no charming lips. And you are holding this small, plain, almost-homely face in your time of seemingly greatest sadness. You are holding it there and you are hurting and you would just as soon turn away and give up ... And yet instead you choose to smile upon that face; you smile upon it and softly say, “Yes, my child ... I will take you with me. Yes, I will Love you again.”

That, my Friends, is what it means to truly Live; not to someday know a deeper joy or one day feel a contentment more lasting, but rather to be covered in your deepest pain and soaked in your most acute distortion of self, and yet choose to rise regardless and stride boldly forth into this next new day.

Amen ... Let it be so.

(inspired by Ellen Bass)





“God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it.” ~ Paul (in 1 Corinthians 10:13)

1 Corinthians 12:4-7 ... our only Gift
(01/12/2014)

Yes, we are all unique individuals, each with unique gifts we can give to others, each with unique talents we can use to serve those around us, and each with unique opportunities every day in which to do so ... And yes, we are all of us patently different in the ways we can Care -- and in the ways we can make our lives Meaningful thereby.

Yes, we are all different, and our paths through life are scintillated & many ... **And yet** how ironic it is that selfless LOVE (the verb) is the one & only Way for us all to practically experience "the Will of God" -- the one & only Way for us all to know a profound & lasting "Salvation".



How ironic it is that, while there are literally billions of uniquely varied tributaries for us to sail towards a horizon of true Joy & pure Peace, there remains only one River which all of these rivulets must ultimately join -- that despite the fact that we do indeed each walk through our days along our own unique pathways to our own unique gaits with our own unique tempos, there is still only one Pure Path with which all our smaller ways must one day merge -- that there is only one, true Way that can ever hope to truly bring us *HOME*.

*"Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit within them; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord that inspires them; and there are varieties of selfless activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."
~ Paul (in 1 Corinthians 12:4-7)*



John 7:37-38 ... The Living Water of LOVE
(01/13/2014)

"On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, 'Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink ... As the scripture has said, "Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water."'" ~ John 7:37-38

To the optimist, the glass is half-full ...
To the pessimist, the glass is half-empty ...
To the pragmatist, the glass is twice as big as it needs to be.

And yet to the one who walks The Way of Love, there is always enough water in the glass to give another a moment of pure solace in their times of thirst.

No matter how hard we have it or how poor we might be, we all have more than enough "water " (Love) in our "cups" (Hearts) to bring more than a bit of Peace to a stranger in need of the same ... Remember, my Friends, our truest Joy comes not from getting enough to drink ourselves, but rather from even briefly soothing the parched suffering of another.

So, my Friends ... got Joy?



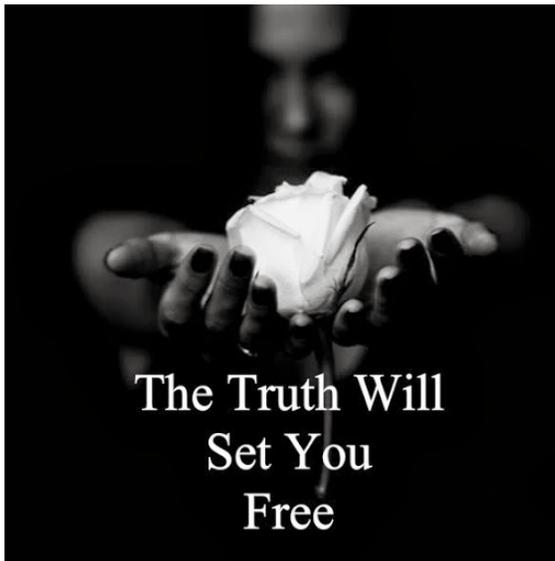
John 8:31-32 ... the Truth that sets us Free
(01/27/2014)

"If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples ... and you will know the Truth ... and the Truth will set you free." ~ Jesus Christ (in John 8:31-32)

Many of you are probably familiar with this passage from the Bible (at least the last half of it), and yet I will wager that most of you have not considered the following very important corollary thereto: If it is indeed so that the Truth sets us free, then it is just as true that everything that constricts us & everything that confines us & everything that limits us ... is therefore **not** Truth.

Indeed, for our LOVE to truly *BE*, our LOVE must be freely chosen, & for our LOVE to be freely chosen, we must first be completely Free to do so.

So, my Friends, have the courage to go forth today and break the chains that bind you. Find & face the fears that are dampening your resolve & the obligations that are hindering your options & the vows that are strangling the potential Power of your LOVE ... Face them, grasp them, and rip them off your Soul ...



And then go forth anew; bold & reBorn.
Go forth and be Free ...
Go forth and Be LOVE.

Amen ... Let it be so.

P.S. In case you were wondering, in the Bible, Jesus himself defines both his Way and his "Word" as LOVE, the verb ...
"By this everyone will know that you are my disciples: if you show Love for one another." ~ Jesus Christ (in John 13:35)



P.S.S. ... here, a bit of **BONUS info** for the deeper Seekers:

*the Greek for "abide" in this verse ("meinete" - Gk 3306) means to actively continue to fulfill ...

*the Greek for "word" in this verse ("logo" - Gk 3056), at least in Jesus' day, was a term that commonly referred not to mere vocal statements and not to Jesus himself, but rather referenced a Divine Wisdom that was ubiquitous -- found both within & around us all ... (see John 1:1-5)

*the Greek for "truth" in this verse ("alētheian" - Gk 225) refers to more than mere scientific accuracy or spoken honesty. Rather, this particular Greek word speaks to Truth as an ideal -- an objective understanding of Universal Reality; the Truth as felt and known in the moral sphere; the Divine Truth as revealed to man via "angel" or conscience (In other words: LOVE, the verb) ... (see John 14:6-7+15-17)

John 13:17 ... The Never-Ending Mountain
(01/28/2014)

No matter how high we climb -- no matter how much we learn or how much we achieve or how great we feel or even how much we serve, the Mountain of Life extends ever-upward. For there is always more to learn, and there is always more to attain and there is always more to experience -- and there is always more to Give.

Yes, even when you are certain that you've reached the Pinnacle -- even when you are positive that there is nothing more to know or have or do, there's always another step to take ... And especially when you think you've given everything you have to give -- as long as you are still breathing, there is still much more for you to offer.

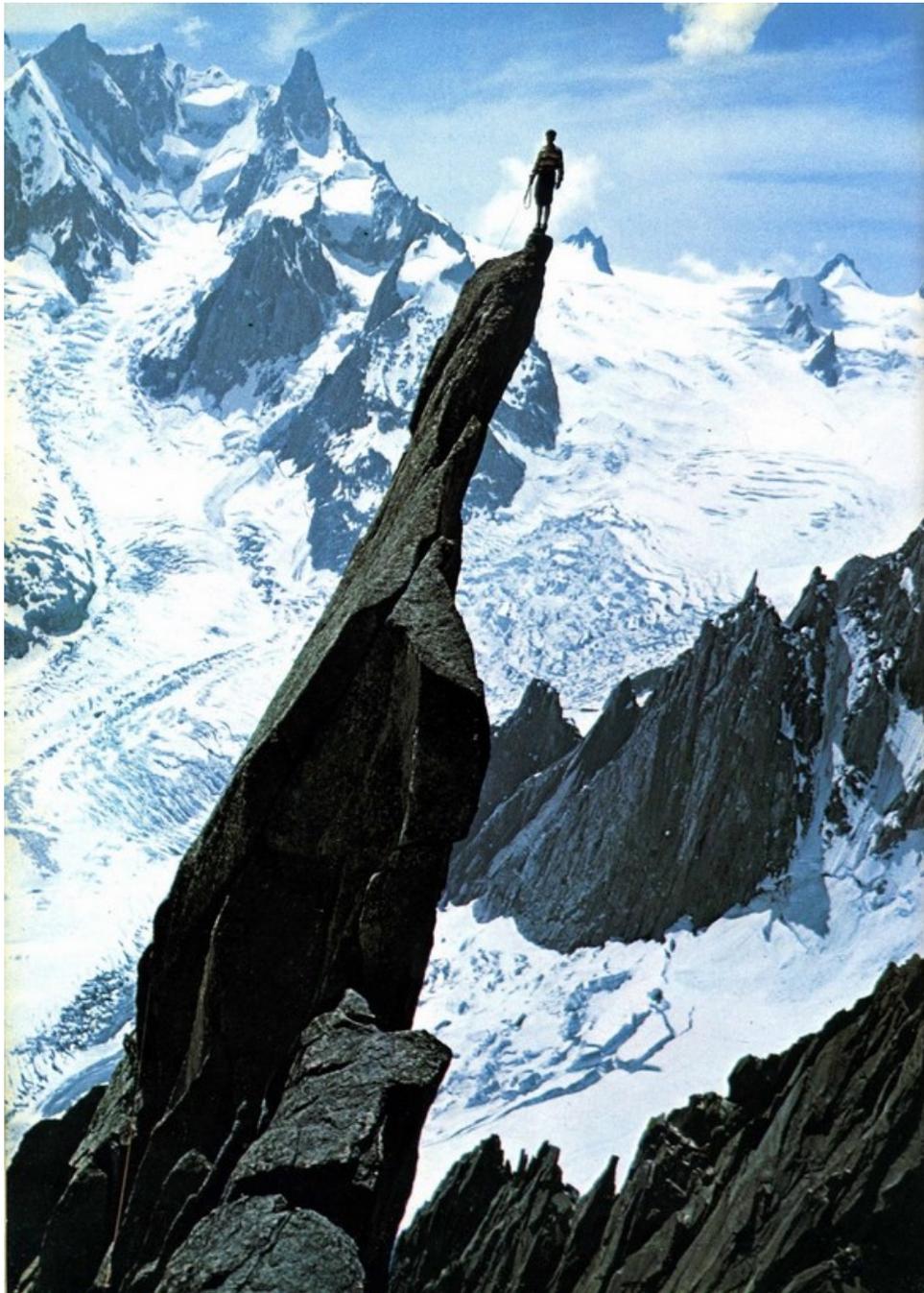
Of course, knowing at least a taste of real Happiness does not demand that we give away everything. Indeed, it is *not at all* necessary for us to sacrifice our entire lives to feel "fantastic" or consider ourselves "worthy", nor must we give "absolutely" or "perfectly" to take a few steps into a state of real Bliss -- the "Kingdom of Heaven" of which Jesus speaks.

No, to sacrifice our very lives for another is not an obligation or a requirement or a commandment at all; rather, it is a *privilege* - a profound honor bestowed on only the very few ... No, my Friends, to truly live a life of pure Joy & deep Contentment, we need not sacrifice everything at all.

And yet, sacrifice a significant portion thereof we must ... Be it our priceless time or a prized possession or a heartfelt forgiveness or our sincere affection, to enter the *PEACE* known to Jesus as "Heaven", we must indeed choose to sacrifice -- willingly & joyfully -- whatever is readily on hand to give.

And what JOY we find in that giving!
... What Peace we find in that sacrifice!

And what a blessing it is that this Mountain knows no end -- what a blessing that as soon as we triumph over any hill of selfishness or scale any peak of fear, we find the next Bliss-filled challenge waiting calmly before us.



"The Kingdom of Heaven will not coming with things that can be observed. For look, the Kingdom of Heaven is already both within and all around you ... And because of the increase of lawlessness, the Love of many will grow cold. And yet the one who perseveres with Love to the end will be saved ... If you understand these teachings, blessed are you while you enliven them." ~ Jesus Christ (in Luke 17:20-21 + Matthew 24:12-13 + John 13:17)

1 John 4:18 ... The nonexistence of Hell (01/30/2014)

Jesus made it quite clear that Heaven -- at least the "Kingdom of Heaven" that he was so fond of talking about -- was not some glorious place we head to after we die. No, for Jesus at least, Heaven was (and still is) already "at hand" -- Heaven was (and still is) all around every one of us in every moment of our lives -- Heaven was (and still is) "within" us all in every instant; waiting to be accessed whenever we wish to do so ...

"The Kingdom of Heaven is not coming in the future with things that can be observed, for truly, the Kingdom of Heaven is already both within and all around you." ~ Jesus Christ (in Luke 17:20-21)

For those who feel capable of accepting this as Truth -- for all you "liberal Christians" & atheists & agnostics & Buddhists & Taoists & Sikhs & Hindus & Jews, I highly recommend going forth and acting accordingly ... I highly recommend going forth to live this day as if it will be your very last -- serving others in need, reveling in the immense beauty of Nature & the Heavens, and generally having a grand old time just being alive at all; laughing & singing & dancing & hugging & Loving the whole day through.

Of course, I also realize that many a conservative Christian (those who primarily follow the Biblical teachings of Paul) will beg to differ with this interpretation -- that many who take the Bible literally will argue not only that Heaven is a place of never-ending glory & pleasure & ease where only the "worthy" are allowed to reside for eternity after their death, but that the eternal damnation of Hell awaits all "the unsaved" -- that the rest of us can only look forward to an inevitable eternity of pain & punishment after we die.

Fair enough ... Personally, I don't see how a deity who could inflict such massive amounts of unjust torment on millions of people is in any way worthy of our worship (He is most certainly *not* a God who is simultaneously all-powerful & all-Loving), and yet all of us who have chosen to be "humble as children" must admit that this version of reality *might* indeed be true; that just such a future *might* indeed await most of us ...

And yet, if the Bible truly is to be taken literally, then we can *all* -- Christians & non-Christians alike -- take Heart and **REJOICE** in the following fact: that according to the Bible itself, there is not now, nor will there ever be, such a God-inflicted damnation!

To prove this point, consider the following bit of "Biblical math":

***Fact #01)** At least as it is professed by traditional Christian dogma, Hell is a punishment administered by God upon all those deemed "unworthy" of Heaven. Yes, some Christians like to say that it isn't a punishment at all -- that it is simply a consequence that we "sinners" choose to inflict upon ourselves, and yet most of us understand that this is a patently ridiculous argument. After all, only the most warped of sado-masochists would ever willingly choose to suffer for eternity, and there simply aren't that many pain-adoring folks around. If we are allowed to "call a spade a spade" -- then we are allowed to call Hell what it is: a punishment.

***Fact #02)** The Bible makes it very clear that all punishment is tainted by fear, and that perfect Love contains no fear ... in fact that perfect Love "casts out *all* fear" ... (see 1 John 4:18)

***Fact #03)** Jesus himself makes it just as clear in the Bible that God's LOVE is absolutely perfect ... (see Matthew 5:48)

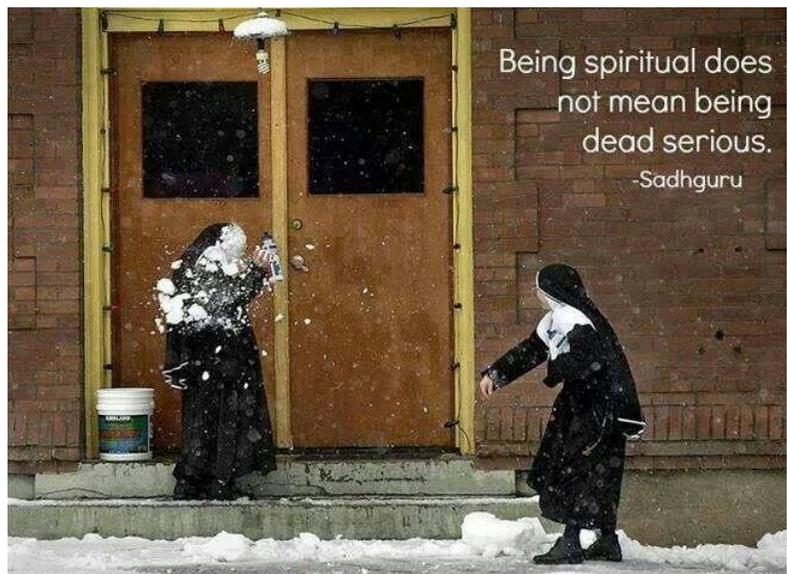
***Fact #04)** Sooooooo, *if* the Bible is indeed literally correct, and *if* it is indeed to be read literally, then God's Love is perfect ... and thereby contains no fear ... and thereby is completely unable to inflict any punishment upon us whatsoever ... including (& especially) Hell!

Well done, God ... Well done in-deed!

"There is no fear in Love, but perfect Love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in Love." ~ 1 John 4:18

"Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in Heaven; for He makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. For if you only love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ... Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect ...

God the Father judges no one, but has rather given all judgment to the Son ... You might judge by human standards, and yet I judge no one ... Indeed, I do not judge anyone who hears my words and yet still does not keep them ... For I have said these things to you so that my Joy might be in you, and that your Joy might be complete." ~ Jesus Christ (in Matthew 5:44-48, John 5:22, 8:15, 12:47 & 15:11)



Mark 16:16 ... Belief is a verb
(02/07/2014)

My religion is Kindness ... My dogma is Service ... My salvation is LOVE (the verb). And in this moment I freely say to all -- indeed in this moment I shout it openly from the rooftops, that if I am one day brought to trial before the Celestial Judge of humankind -- that if I am one day prosecuted by God himself for these beliefs, then I am both honored & overjoyed that there is already more than enough evidence to convict me.

"Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned." ~ Jesus Christ (in Mark 16:16)

*"Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me **will also do the works** that I do ... If you love me, you will keep my commandments ... And this is my commandment, that you **Love one another** just as I have Loved you."
~ Jesus Christ (in John 14:12,15 + John 15:12)*



John 15:12 ... God's math (02/08/2014)

"As for my father, I never knew whether he believed God was a mathematician, and yet he certainly believed that God knew math. And he also believed that only by humbly listening for -- and then courageously harmonizing with -- God's rhythms of LOVE & Peace were any of us able to experience any sense of real Power & Beauty." ~ inspired by Norman MacClean

Higher math can get pretty complicated, and most of us never come close to comprehending its intricacies. How fortunate we are, then, that in every given waking moment of our lives God only requires us to be able to count to two ...

... and then to act accordingly.



"By this everyone will know that you are my disciples: when you show Love for another ... And it is on that day that you will understand that I am in my Father, and that you are in me, and that I am in you ... For my Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and [thereby] become my disciples. Just as the Father has loved me, I have loved you; so you should also embody this Love. And indeed, if you keep my commandments, you WILL embody this Love ...

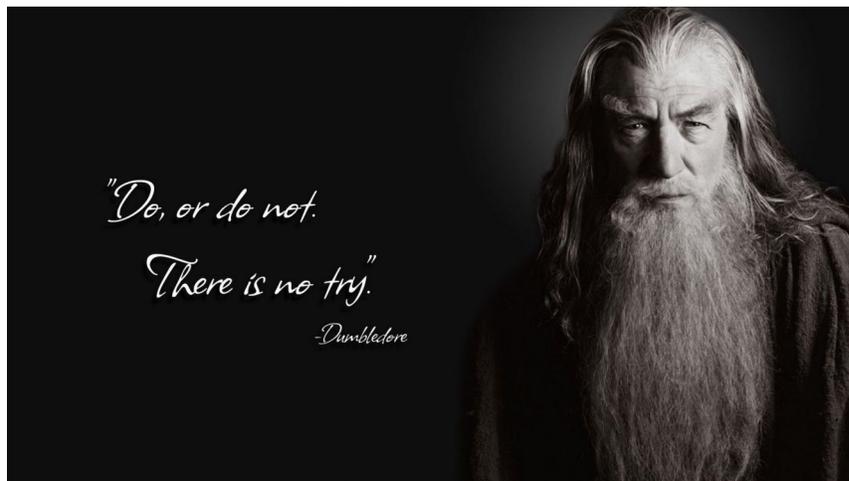
For this is my commandment: that you Love one another just as I have Loved you." ~ Jesus Christ (in John 13:35 + John 14:20 + John 15:8-12)

Well, another day has passed.
I didn't use Algebra once.

Acts 20:35 ... What it means to Give (02/15/2014)

Acts 20:35 is a most intriguing verse. Without going into too much depth, its author shows the self-proclaimed "apostle" Paul quoting Jesus as having said, "*It is more blessed to give than to receive.*" On its face -- fair enough, and yet there is one small problem: nowhere in the Gospels of the Bible do we find Jesus saying these words! Throw in the fact that the "apostle" Paul never once saw Jesus in the flesh and that he never once heard Jesus preach in person -- at any time or on any topic, and one *could* very reasonably conclude that Paul was simply making it all up; that he was simply adding Jesus' name to this particular exhortation in order to give his own message more credibility; that Jesus never actually said these words at all.

Yes, John 21:25 (a verse whose authenticity has also been questioned by the majority of scholars) *does* leave the door open for Jesus to have uttered this phrase at some point, and yet the point I wish to make is the following: **It just doesn't matter!** You see, whether Jesus actually said them or not, these words are simply True. It truly *IS* better to Give than to receive, and every one of us has experienced this psychological & spiritual Reality at some point in our lives. Indeed, it can even be said that this wisdom is so true that Giving is actually the most pure form of Receiving; that Giving to others is itself actually the greatest Gift we could ever give ourselves (or rather, our Selves).



And the same can be said for the words in this picture. Frankly, it just doesn't matter that neither Dumbledore nor Gandalf uttered this particular Wisdom. What matters is that it is True ... "Do or do not; there is no try". This statement is raw Truth, and it is especially true in relation to our Giving.



Indeed, to live a life of deep Meaning & real Purpose, it is not enough for us to gaze longingly at others and merely desire to give to them ... It is too little to gaze at the waters of generosity and merely wish to dive in, and it is also not enough to gingerly give whatever is easy or comfortable to those nearby who are in need; also too little to approach the pool of Giving and merely dip our feet in to feebly test the temperature of its waters.

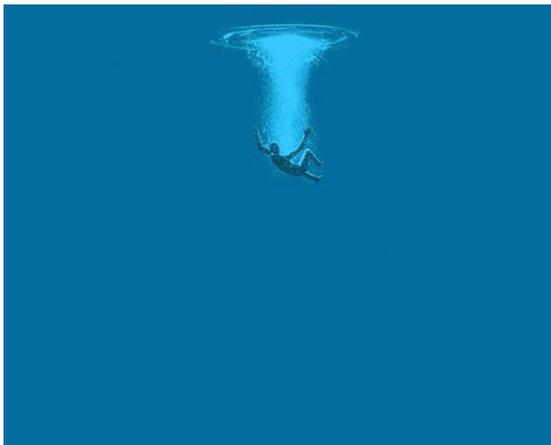


No, my Friends, if we are truly going to "max life out" -- if we are ever going to truly revel in the raw Bliss & ecstatic Joy that await us all in this stupendously marvelous yet tragically short life, we are going to have to throw all caution to the wind and Give everything we have to Give. For just one moment we are going to have to face all our selfishness and confront all our fear and Give to others without holding anything back -- and this, *especially* in those moments we least want to do so; and *especially* for those "least deserving" of the same.

*When we are hungry and on our way to lunch, and the smelly, scary, homeless beggar asks us for some change, we only enter the Kingdom of Heaven when we smile gently into his eyes, touch him softly on the shoulder, and then give him *everything* in our wallets.

*When we are saddened by a great loss or weighted down by a devastating tragedy, and the annoying, intrusive, gently-judgmental Jehovah's Witness comes knocking at our door, we only enter the Kingdom of Heaven when we smile gently into her eyes, invite her humbly into our homes, and then treat her like Royalty.

*When we are feeling listless & lost and when it seems that the weight of the world has come to rest on our shoulders, and we hear that our enemy has sabotaged our success or slandered us behind our backs, we only enter the Kingdom of Heaven when smile gently into his or her eyes, openly express our forgiveness for that trespass, and then give him or her a long & sincere hug.



There is an ocean of LOVE within every chance meeting; an ocean of Giving waiting ever so calmly for us to feel its smooth waters again ... Remember this today, my Friends. Look for this ocean in the eye of every stranger, and then dive fully into those waters, with an abandon as reckless as it is faithful.

Dive in all the Way ... and let this Ocean be you.

"True generosity is measured not by how much we give away, but rather by how much we have left." ~ Shane Claiborne

Matthew 16:24 ... Becoming true Followers
(02/26/2014)

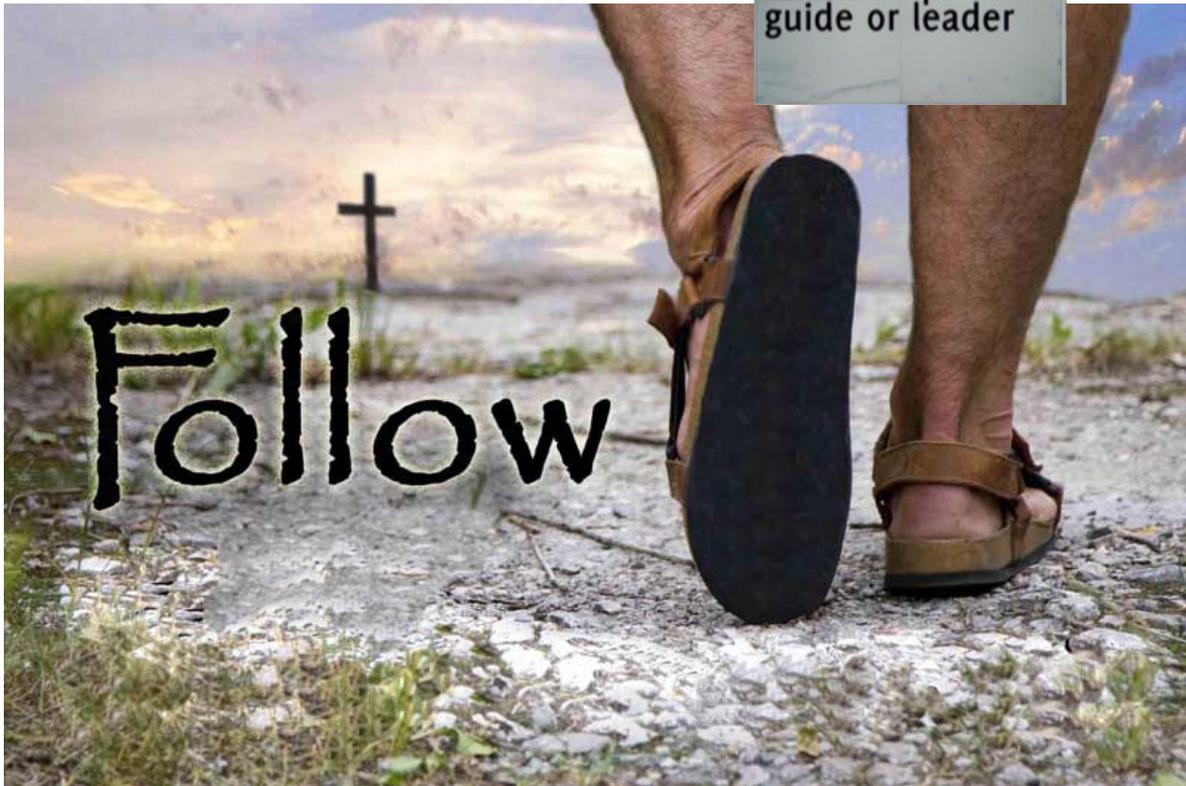
"If any want to become my followers, they must deny themselves, and take up their cross, and follow me." ~ Jesus Christ (in Matthew 16:24)

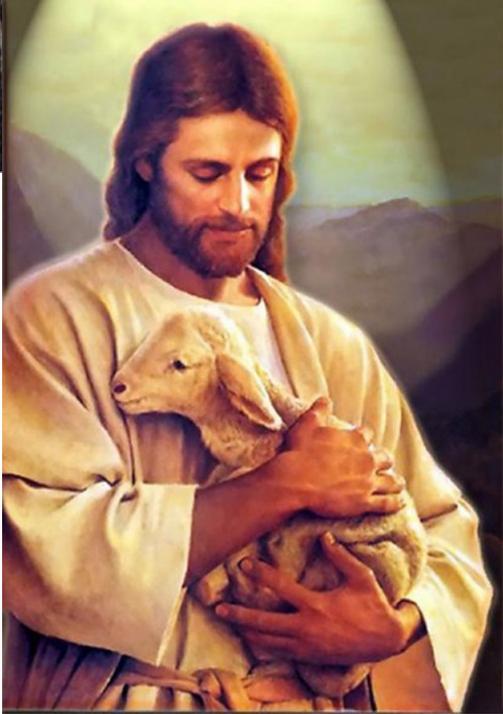
NEWSFLASH: if you are "following Jesus" to save the "lost souls" of others or to "attain salvation" for yourself, then you actually aren't following Jesus at all.

"For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me ... Truly I tell you, just as you did it for one of the least of these, so you did it for me." ~ Jesus Christ (in Matthew 25:35-40)

"By this everyone will know that you are my disciples: when you show Love towards one another." ~ Jesus Christ (in John 13:35)

fol.low (fol-oh) v.
2. to accept as
guide or leader





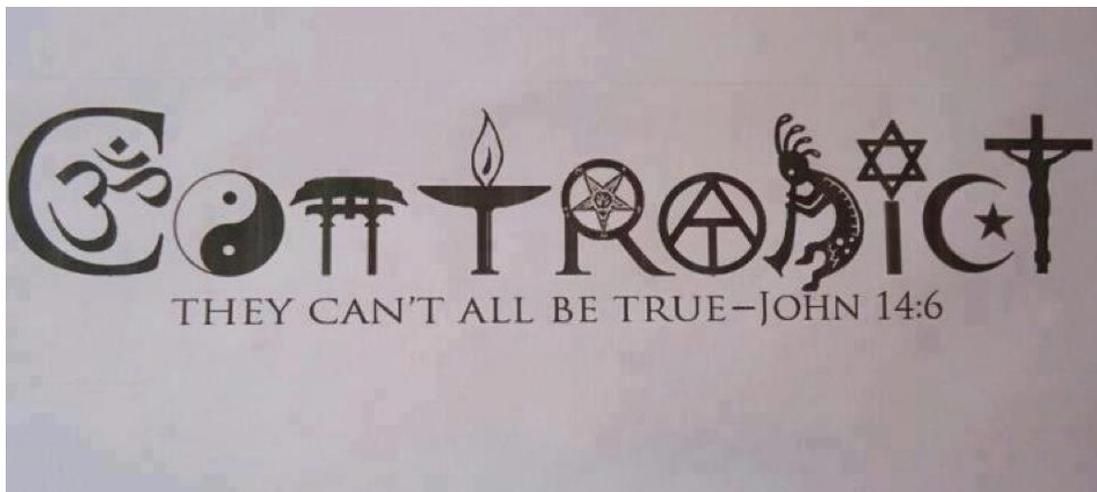
John 14:6 ... only through Christ
(06/28/2014)

While it is true that John 14:6 has Jesus saying, *"I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me"*, this verse is **not** necessarily a call to Christian conservatism. Indeed, nowhere therein does Jesus say that worshiping him is the *only* Way, that he is the *only* manifestation of the Truth, or that he is the *only* path to eternal life.

Even more importantly to those who take the Bible "seriously" (i.e. those who profess to follow it literally) is the Greek word "di" -- commonly translated in this passage as "through". Contrary to popular belief, this word does **not** mean "via" or "because of" or "in homage to", but rather means "on account of" or "by emulating" -- meaning that Jesus is asking us **not** to worship him as a god, but rather to actively **follow** his Way of unconditional Love. And this interpretation not only bears by far the best "Fruit" when put into practice, it is also directly supported by Jesus himself when he said, *"I do not accept glory from other human beings ... Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone ... My Father is glorified by this: that you bear much Fruit and become my disciples ... And by this everyone will know that you are my disciples: that you show Love for one another."* (in John 5:41, Mark 10:18, John 15:8 & John 13:35) ...

And to this I offer a hearty (and a Heart-full) **AMEN!**

P.S. Just because current world religions do indeed dramatically contradict one another does **not** mean that one of them has to be correct ... It is just as likely (if not even more so) that they are all flawed -- in all probability flawed in direct proportion to the exclusivity of their acceptance of their "believers" &/or the intensity of the condemnation of their "non-believers".



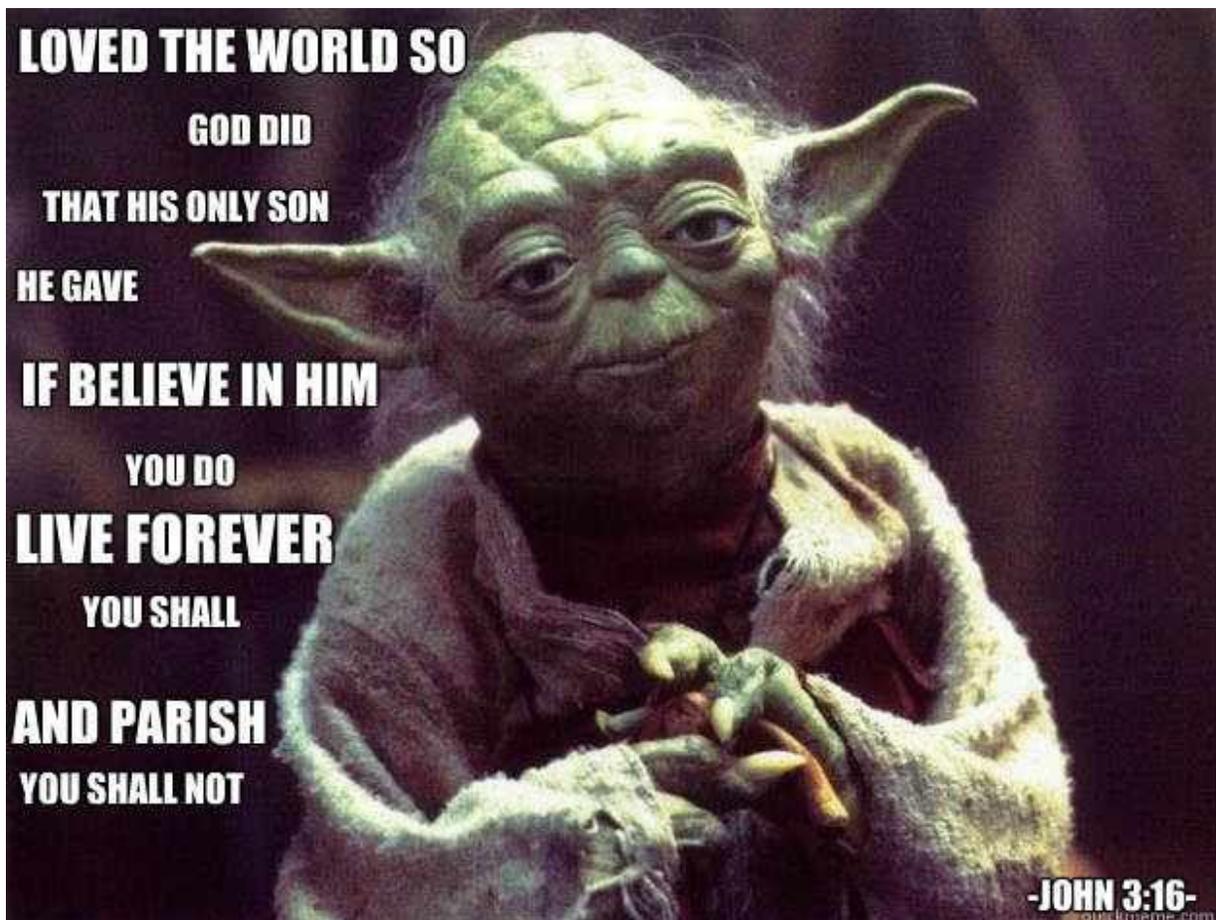
John 3:16 ... Ye shall not Parish
(06/29/2014)

There is *way* too much Right with this image not to share it ...

First of all, you've got Yoda (who was all about courageous actions over zealous words or hollow thoughts) quoting Jesus (who redefined "believe in" as "actively emulate" -- see John 14:12).

Additionally, you've got Yoda replacing the word "perish" in the original verse with the word "parish" -- which is absolutely fantastic once you realize that Jesus was all about praying in private and *not* doing so in church (see Matthew 6:6); in having a private & humble relationship with God, *not* a public & judgmental one.

Amen ... Let it be so.



1 Peter 2:21 ... The POWER Within You
(06/29/2014)

It is quite true that, if it can be purely given (i.e. without selfish motives and free from personal hopes & expectations), LOVE really does always “save” us in the moment it is given ... Allow me to explain.

Initially, it is important to understand that all forms of behavioral dysfunction are born in (and sustained by) the fearful, self-centered instincts of our most primitive “reptile brain”. Unconditional Love, on the other hand, is primarily experienced limbically (i.e. by the limbic system). This so-called "Heart Brain" perceives interactions independently from our higher brain's mere thinking or our lower brain's mere feeling. As such, when LOVE is purely given, it always circumvents the fear of the one to whom we give it, and thereby always arrives right where we intend it to land -- even if only for a moment; right at center of their Heart.

And why is this so important? Well, far more often than not, people refuse to show Kindness to the "bad people" in their lives, primarily because they have been conditioned to believe the lie that such deeds of courageous Caring will not work -- that they won't make anything better. And yet the Truths of the matter are simple and show otherwise: namely, that Kindness is always possible, that Kindness always “works”, and that Kindness is always “worth it” ... Indeed, even if we do not perceive an immediate "improvement" in the other, we can know that our Kindness *has* indeed reached its destination, that it *has* indeed brought them a glimmer of Peace, that it *has* indeed briefly awoken them to who they were as children and who they could become again, and that it *has* indeed guaranteed that this ultimate Awakening will indeed come -- and that it will come much sooner than it would have had we done nothing for them at all.

Mere "love" is easy -- and therefore weak -- when it is given to those treating us well. And yet LOVE is difficult (and therefore Power-full) when we give it to those who are treating us poorly; to those "least deserving" of the same. And it is this latter LOVE that Humanity needs now more than ever; it is this latter LOVE -- and only this latter LOVE -- that will ultimately save us from extinction.

And yet how can we put it into practice? By simply reaching out to all the people we fear – to all the strangers, to all the homeless, to all the unpopular, to all the "weird" ... and to all our enemies.

And when we do so, it is critical to remember that we are dealing with brothers & sisters -- not mere associates; with long-lost Friends -- not mere "enemies" ... It is critical that we remember that "crazy people" aren't actually crazy -- that they are simply experiencing immense psychological &/or emotional pain ... It is critical that we remember that "evil people" weren't born evil; that they learned their "bad" behaviors at points in their lives when they felt they needed them to survive -- that they have simply forgotten to let these behaviors go.

And this holds true for all the "mean people" and the "liars" and the "thieves" and the "criminals" and the "jerks" and the "assholes" and even the "demons" in our lives as well. They were all born Beauty-full, and they were all born Good. They might have made cruel choices to survive in the past, and they might be behaving cruelly to survive their present, and yet they remain Good at Heart --- and they merit our LOVE nonetheless.

In conclusion, we are not here to wall ourselves within citadels of safety or hide within castles of comfort. Nor are we here to secure ourselves behind strong barriers of "good people" & "healthy boundaries". No, my Friends, we are here for a very different Purpose indeed ... We are here to LOVE, and we must do so **ALL IN** -- without fear or hope or condition.

And we must do so not by merely allowing those in need to come to us, but rather by seeking them out; yes, by seeking out the lost, and the damned, and the downtrodden ... And yet also by seeking out the wicked, and the cruel, and the impolite --- and the mean --- and yes, even the "evil".

By seeking them out ... and then by showing them LOVE.

Amen ... Let it be so.



*"For it to this
perseverant Love that
you have been called,
because Christ also
suffered for you, giving
you an example, so that
you might follow in his
footsteps and reflect his
perfect Love."*

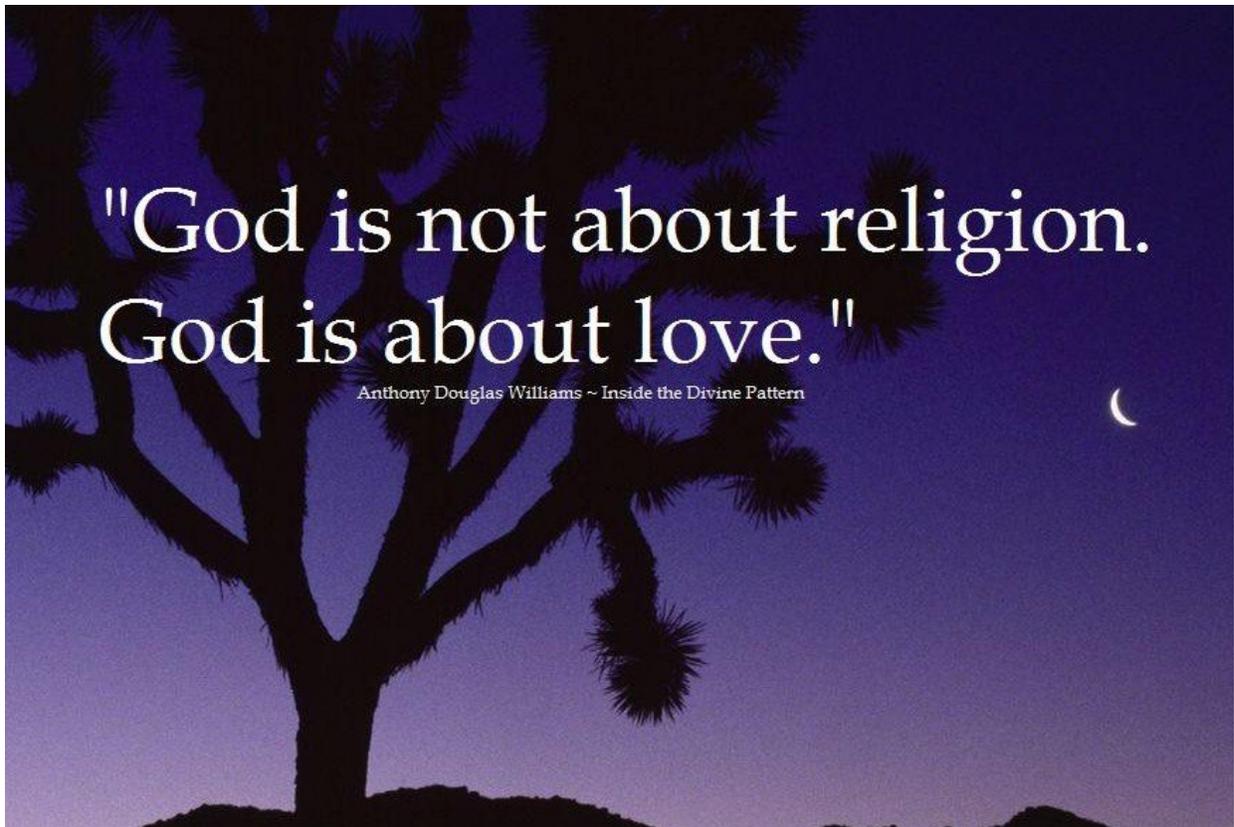
~ 1 Peter 2:21

1 John 4:8 ... Any other God
(06/30/2014)

God is LOVE -- the essence of all matter, the source of all sentience, and the will to actively serve those who are downtrodden or despairing ...

Any other god is simply a deity not worth worshiping.

"God is Love." ~ 1 John 4:8



Galatians 6:2 ... the sustaining Word
(06/30/2014)



Unlike human "literalists" who cherry-pick the Bible -- sorting out its verses and focusing only on those that suit their own personal values, whims & desires – here is someone who has indeed taken "Become the Word of God" quite literally to heart ... Well done, my canine Friend!

P.S. I think it's funny that so many folks (and apparently a few dogs) go to such lengths to "figure the Bible out" or "know it by heart", when all we really need to do to be Saved is to actively Care for those around them (especially their enemies).

*"Bear one another's burdens, for in this way
you will fulfill the Law of Christ." ~ Galatians 6:2*

1 Peter 2:15 ... The Will of God
(06/30/2014)

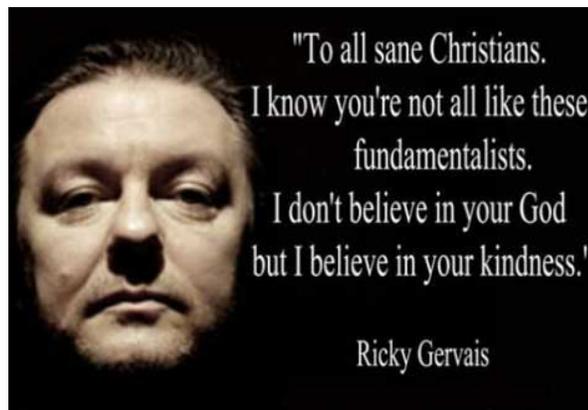
	<p>Anthony</p> <p>You make a mockery of the ill advised and uneducated but you can't destroy the truth.</p> <p>You're a disgusting, filthy, communist. A proponent of homosexuality, an abomination to mankind. Ironically God, you're going to hell.</p>
	<p>God</p> <p>Says who? You? Do you get to decide what I am?</p> <p>In your version of reality, I, the LORD thy God, am a slavery supporting, rape condoning, mass murdering bigot.</p> <p>I am none of those things. Worry about your own soul first before you go around damning God to hell.</p>

This picture is absolutely priceless ... and *so* spot on.

P.S. The Bible itself supports Facebook God on this one as well. We are not called to arrogantly champion our own religious beliefs or openly condemn the beliefs of others. We have been called to humble ourselves as children and serve those in need ... period.

*"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but only the one who **does** the will of my Father." ~ Jesus Christ (in Matthew 7:21)*

*"For such is the will of God that by **Doing Right** you may silence the ignorance of foolish men." ~ 1 Peter 2:15*

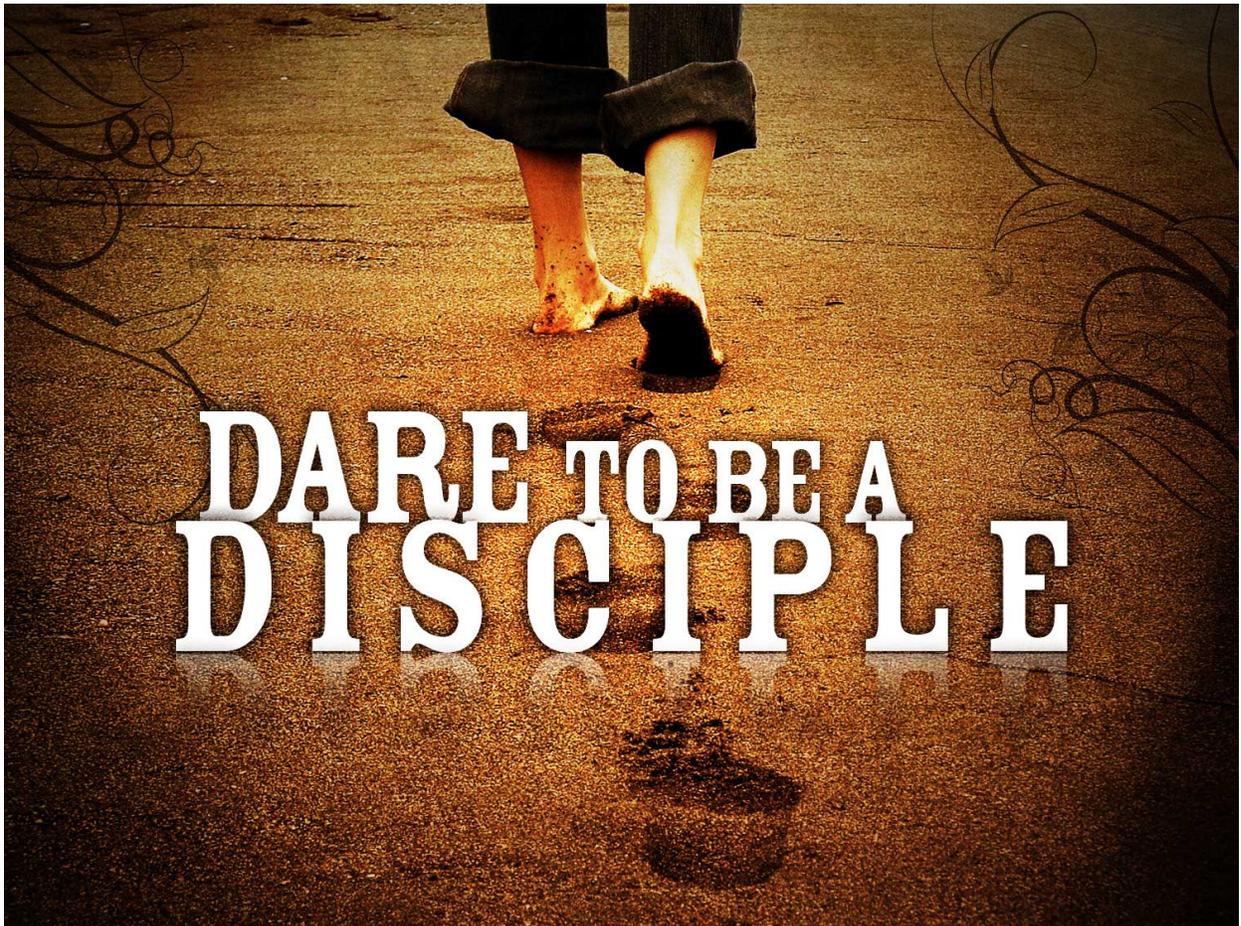


John 15:8 ... on becoming Disciples
(07/01/2014)

A challenge to all Christians (and non-Christians as well): Even if only for today, I dare you to live just one day the way Jesus wanted us to live every day.

That is all ... Peace.

*"My Father is glorified by this: that you bear much fruit and become my disciples ... And by this everyone will know that you are my disciples: when you show Love to one another ... For only those who **DO** what is True come to the Light." ~ Jesus Christ (in John 15:8 & John 13:35 & John 3:21)*



John 13:14 ... the Cleansing Way
(07/01/2014)

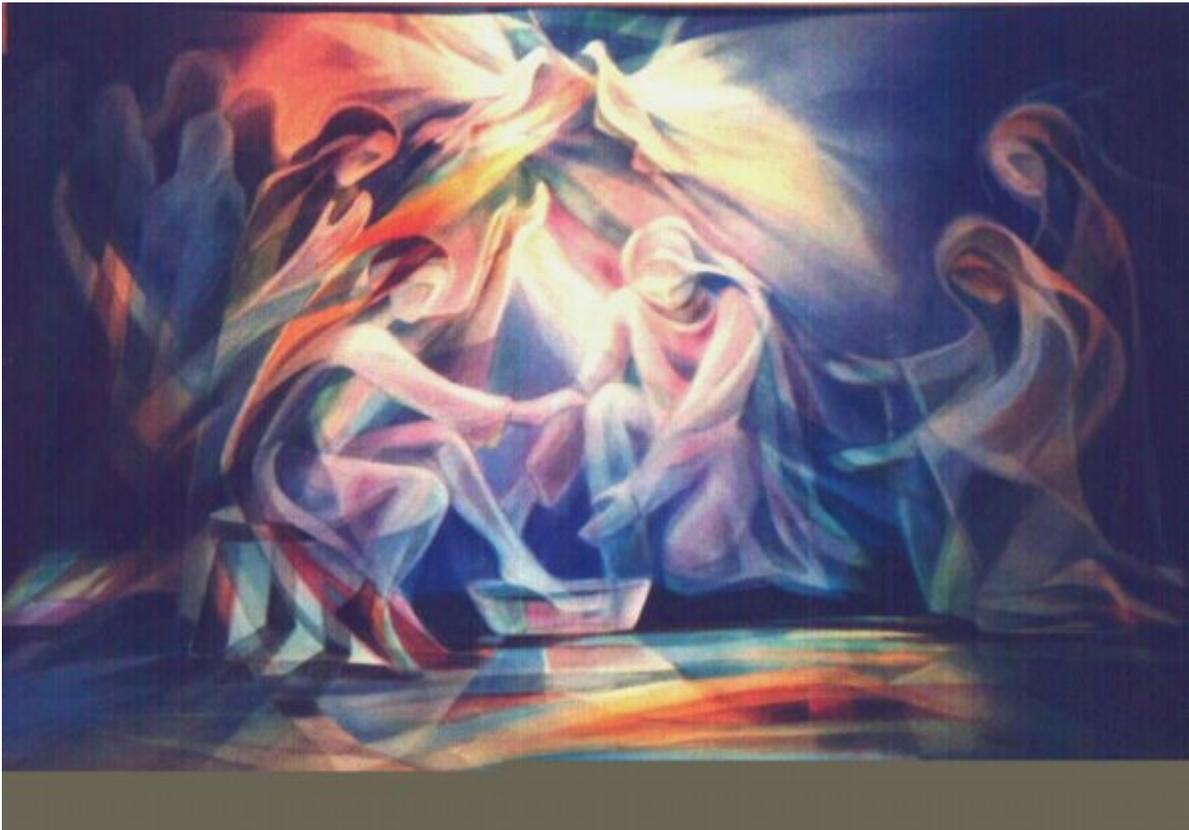
Calling all Christians: As I speak with more than a few of you and read many of your posts, it seems clear that you have forgotten a few of Jesus' more important Commandments ... namely, the two mentioned below; the fulfillment of which would instantly satisfy God's Will -- bringing harmony into your own lives, and humanity that much closer to World Peace.

Amen ... Let it be so.

"And to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you."

~ Jesus Christ (in Luke 6:27-28)

"You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for these are what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, so you also should wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you should do just as I have done for you." ~ Jesus Christ (in John 13:12-15)



John 10:35 ... the unchanging Word
(07/01/2014)

Attention, my Christian Friends: There are (at least) two very different Gods in your Bible – one, a God of judgment & wrath & condemnation, and another, a GOD of unconditional Love & selfless Kindness & perfect Grace. As such, when reading scripture, please discern wisely ...

... and then when living your lives, please act accordingly.

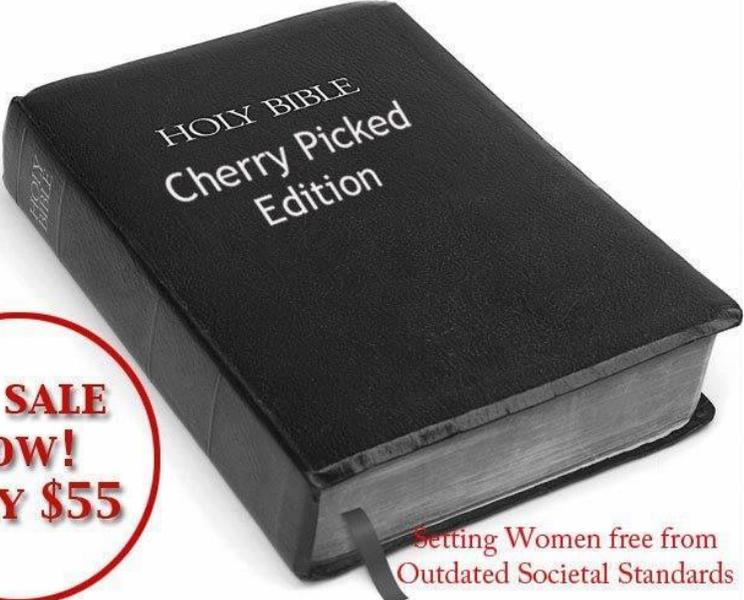
Thank you.

"No one actually believes that the Bible means what it says. More often than not they are convinced it says what they mean." ~ George Bernard Shaw

P.S. Yes, Jesus does say that *"the Scripture cannot be broken"* in John 10:35, *and* because it cannot be broken, it is all the more important to discern which verses of it are Divine and which are "of man" -- which are in harmony with the edicts & the values & the essence of an all-Loving Godhead, and which are in alignment with the dissension & the conflict & the arrogance of mankind.

CHERRY-PICKED BIBLE

All verses Christians do not want to follow have been omitted. Get yours today so you can eat shellfish, get tattoos, control women, and as a bonus, we've added anti-gay verses Jesus never said!



ON SALE NOW! ONLY \$55

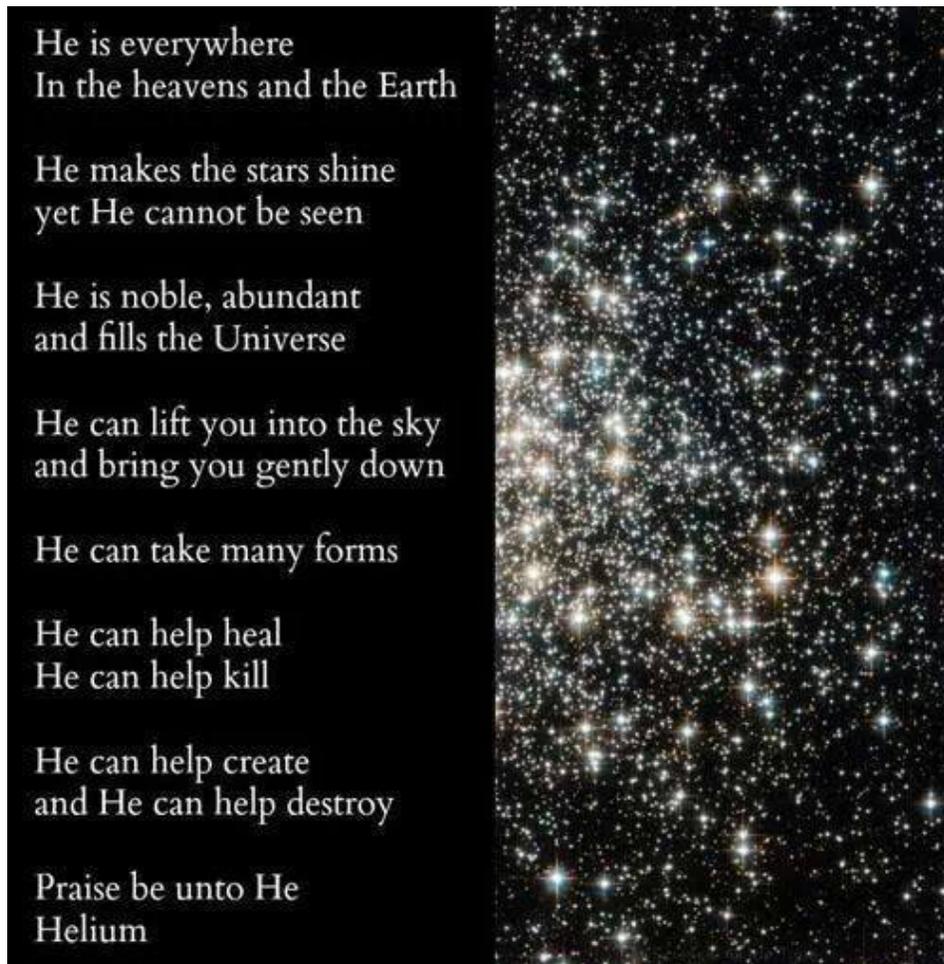
Setting Women free from Outdated Societal Standards

Matthew 18:3-4 ... as great as HE
(07/03/2014)

Science and religion need not be incompatible ... as long as our faith remains as humble as our scriptures say it should be, and proves to be as reasonable as it is humble.

"I do not feel obliged to believe that the God who has endowed us with sense, reason, and intellect has intended us to forgo their use." ~ Galileo Galilei ... [And I do not feel obliged to believe that the same God who has endowed us with a sense of humor desires for us to forgo its use either]

"Truly I tell you, unless you change your ways and become like children, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Indeed whomever becomes humble like a child is the greatest in the Kingdom." ~ Jesus Christ (in Matthew 18:3-4)



Romans 14:4 ... Religulousness
(07/18/2014)

"Imagine a world hundreds of years hence when humans come to believe that certain films from their past were made by God. Imagine that future, where millions of our own descendants persecute, imprison & murder each other over rival interpretations of the Star Wars trilogy, for example. It seems ridiculous, I must admit -- and yet in many ways no more ridiculous than the world in which we are already living today." ~ inspired by Sam Harris

"Who are you to pass judgment on the servants of another? It is before their own master that they stand or fall. And yet they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand." ~ Paul (in Romans 14:4)

"I truly know that God shows no partiality, but that in every nation anyone who honors Him and does what is Right is acceptable to Him" ~ Acts 10:34-35



Mark 12:17 ... the Emperor's due
(07/25/2014)

*"Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor's,
and to God the things that are God's." ~ Jesus Christ (in Mark 12:17)*

What folks seem to so easily forget about this verse is that absolutely nothing of real Worth belongs to any emperor, and that absolutely everything of any true Value belongs to "God" (a.k.a. Allah, Chi, Prana, Buddha, the Soul, the True Self, the Soul, the Source, the ONE, quantum interconnection, collective consciousness, etc) ...

In this sense, on a more subtle & more profound level of Truth, Jesus is saying that we are to quietly give our "leaders" whatever petty material things they desire of us, and focus all our energies & all our intentions on the Meaning-full tasks of the Divine: namely, selfless service for our neighborhoods, willing self-sacrifice for others, amazed wonderment towards Nature, grateful revelry for blessings, sincere forgiveness towards enemies, active compassion for all the downtrodden, and radical kindness towards all sentient brothers & sisters – regardless of race, gender, religion, nationality or species.

After all, for us to be truly "Saved", we must first be free to choose that liberation, and to be so free, we must beforehand liberate ourselves from all our manly "masters".

Even the self-proclaimed "apostle" Paul accidentally tripped over this Truth when he said, *"For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and submit never again to any yoke of slavery."* (in Galatians 5:1) ... Ironically, again on a more subtle & more profound level, these "yokes of slavery" from which we are to free ourselves are not only our political rulers & their selfish demands, but all our conservative religious dogmas & all our society's materialistic, superficial, fear-instilling cultural norms as well.

For example ...

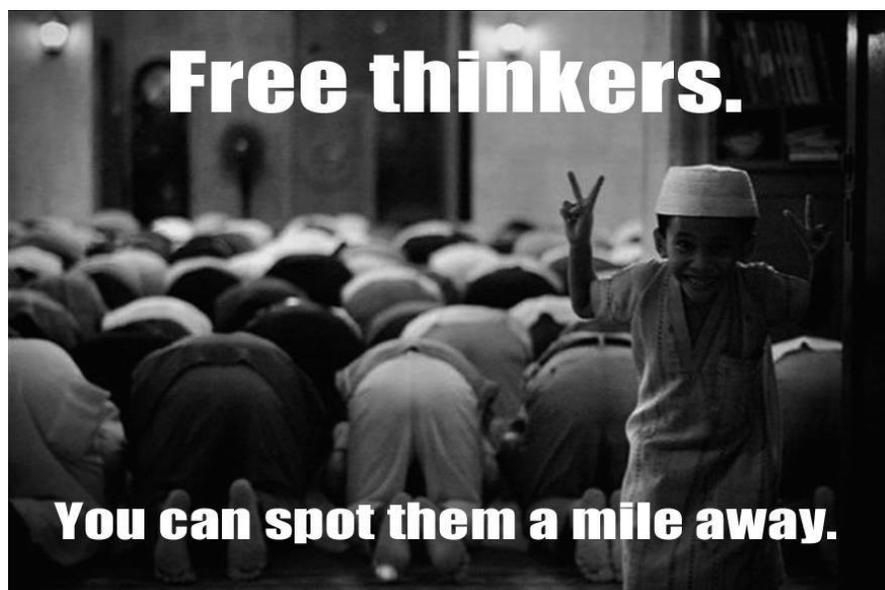
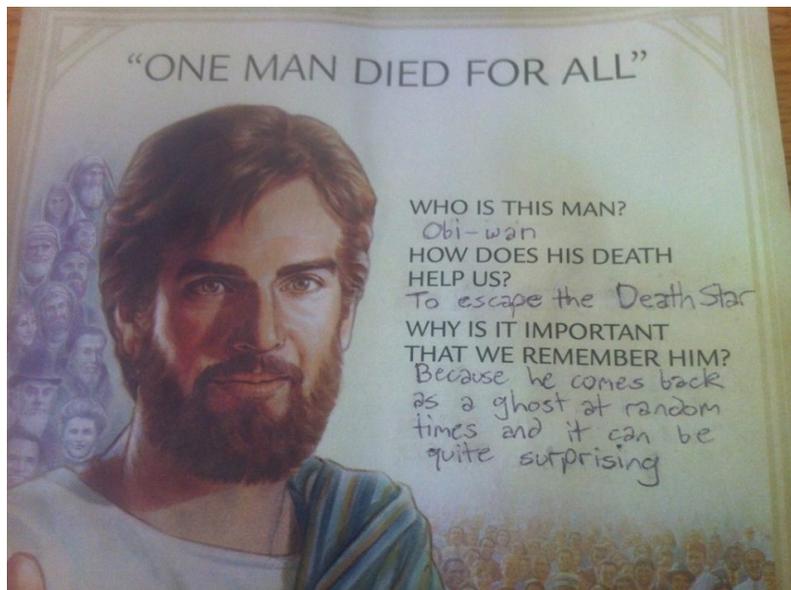
*Where politics says "tow the line" and "finance our war" and "accept us pandering to corporate evils", the Free Soul says "rebel Peace-fully" and "protest for Peace" and "grow your own foodstuffs" and "share with friends & strangers alike".

*Where religion says "kiss my feet to be saved" and "damn the heathens", the Free Soul tells us to "stand boldly for Love over bigotry" and "Love the members of *all* the faiths".

*Where our culture demands that we "act normal" and "behave appropriately" and "don't rock the boat", the Free Soul in-Courages us to go forth and openly become the change our communities so desperately need to see – to protest the corruption of our government by ignoring all politicians and refusing to participate in any of their sham elections, to protest the poisoning of our food while starting community gardens; to protest the unjust incarceration of petty "criminals" while visiting them in their prison cells; to protest the needless & cruel abuse of innocent animals while putting only plants on our plates.

These are the keys to our Freedom, and this is how we can most effectively show all "emperors" that we know just how truly little actually belongs to them.

As such, be well, my Friends ... and be **FREE!**



Genesis 1:9-10 ... And it was Good
(08/21/2014)

And God said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was very good. ~ Genesis 1:9-10

Despite what the Miss Universe pageant has to say about the matter, I'm pretty sure that an all-Loving God (should She even exist) doesn't play favorites amongst the estimated 20 *billion* Earth-like planets that exist in our galaxy alone. That doesn't mean our Earth is any less special or any less beautiful or any less worthy of our caring & our respect, of course ... It simply means that God (should He even exist) has a lot more on His plate than we humans once thought.

As such, maybe it's time we give Him/Her a break and get busy taking care of some of our more pressing problems ourselves, eh?

Be active ... Get involved ... Reach out to others ...
Become the change you wish to See.

Thank you.



Exodus 20:3-5 ... getting RIGHT with religion
(08/22/2014)

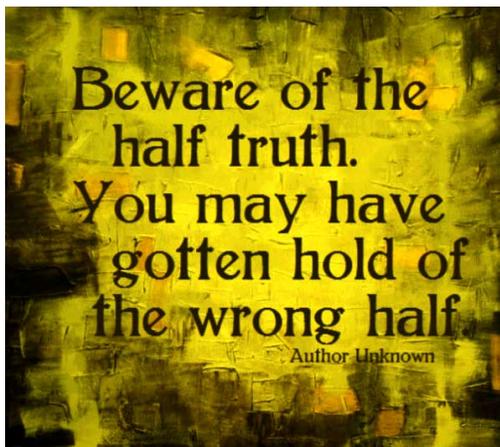
"You shall have no other gods before me ... You shall not bow down to [idols] or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of their parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me." ~ Exodus 20:3-5

Religions can be a dangerous business, if for no other reason than each & every one of them provide two very different -- indeed, two directly opposing -- teachings in regards to the concepts of violence & forgiveness ...

On the one hand, at the philosophical core of every single major religion in the world today, thrive the healthily shining concepts of Love & Compassion & Forgiveness & Kindness ... It is these principles that give many followers a tangible framework for their innate sense of morality, and it is these values that -- when put into practice -- have allowed our primitive ancestors to rise above the banal & the brutal; to transcend their barbaric, self-destructive beliefs in "might makes right" and "an eye for an eye"; to rise steadily towards the glory that awaits us all in the form of a world based in Peace & Respect & Humility & Service.

Fair enough.

And yet, on the other hand -- as evidenced by how those same religions actually preach their scriptures and actually practice their powers in the world today, therein quite obviously also pulses a darker side; a sinister dogma of callous condemnation & charred confinement; one that champions beliefs that denigrate & damn ... one that justifies acts of violence against others. Indeed, the religious leaders of all the major faiths have advocated war & violence & torture & terrorism throughout history -- and many continue to do so today ... And to make matters even more troubling, the sacred texts of those same religions quite clearly do so as well.



This is quite obviously a hypocrisy that taints religion almost to its very hub; making it flagrantly clear that religion, for all its wonderful potential -- and while used by *some* people to incite amazing acts of goodness, principally still remains a refuge for charlatans, despots & scoundrels -- and is still to this day a motivating force for aggression, war & -- dare I say -- evil as well.

As "proof" of this point, please calmly consider the following bipolar conundrums that major religions still actively pose:

**CHRISTIANITY ...* On the one hand, Christianity quite clearly preaches nonviolence (Matthew 26:52), selflessness in community (1 Corinthians 10:24), a humble reconciliation with one's enemies (Matthew 5:43-48 & Romans 12:21), the forgiving of trespasses (Matthew 5:23-24) and peace amongst all humankind (Matthew 5:9 & Luke 2:14).

On the other hand, Christianity has been instrumental in advocating, perpetrating & justifying some of the most egregious acts of violence in all of human history -- including "just wars" (a la St. Augustine's oxymoronic theology), crusades, inquisitions, witch trials, mass executions of the innocent, capital punishment, corporal punishment ("*spare the rod and spoil the child*"), systemic violence & prejudice against women, bigotry against Jews & Muslims, the enslavement of Africans & African-Americans, and the spiritual damnation of all "heathens" & "non-believers" -- not to mention the covering up of the rape of thousands of adolescent youths by Catholic priests and the open lauding of the self-flagellation of thousands of self-righteous Catholic monks & nuns.

This, to say the least, is *not* a consistent representation of a Loving God or a Loving Way of Living.

**JUDAISM ...* On the one hand, Judaism also proudly teaches the moral edicts of communal caring (Talmud, Sanhedrin, 27b), radical acts of kindness (Exodus Rabbah 26.2), peace amongst humankind (Talmud, Gittin 59b & Isaiah 2:4), an open & unconditional forgiving of others (Leviticus 19:18), and reconciliation with one's enemies (Tosefta, Baba Metzia 2.26).

On the other hand, Judaism too has zealously advocated, perpetrated & justified similarly cruel & despicable acts of violence -- including wars, God-ordered Old Testament genocides (1 Samuel 15:1-20, Joshua 6:15-21 & Joshua 10:28-42), the aggressive mistreatment of Arabs in Palestine, along with millions upon millions of barbarically cruel & painful animal sacrifices.

This, to say the least, is most certainly *not* a consistent representation of a Loving Yahweh or a Loving Way of Living.

**ISLAM ...* On the one hand, the Qur'an as well seems to profess the values of kindness towards all others (Qur'an, 39.10), unconditional forgiveness (Qur'an 64.14 & Nahjul Balagha, Saying 201), and an active reconciliation with one's enemies (Qur'an 42.36-43 & Qur'an 60.7).

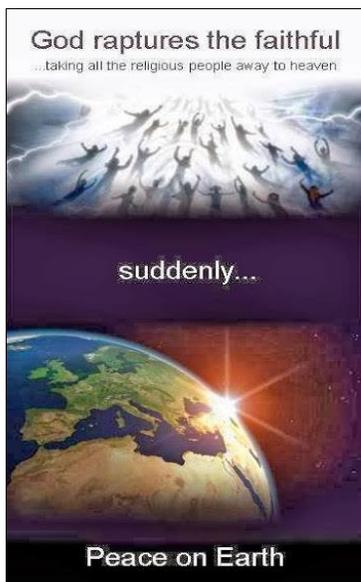
And yet on the other hand, Islam has quite famously advocated -- nay, often demanded, perpetrated & justified absolutely horrific acts of cruelty & physical judgment -- including "holy wars" (Jihad), acts of violent terrorism, cruel punishments for minor offenses, open violence & flagrant discrimination against women, along with open acts of aggression towards all non-Muslims.

This, to say the least as well, is absolutely *not* a consistent representation of a Loving Allah or a Loving Way of Living.

So what are the religious to do? Are they to give up their faiths? Are they to blindly follow the ill-advised and dysfunctional teachings of many of their more cruel prophets and more bigoted preachers?

Not necessarily. There *IS* another Way -- a Way embedded at the very center of every religion; a Way that can be walked by any human being -- believer or not. It is a Way that requires a dropping of dogma, a purging of preachers and a tearing away from theology. It mandates that each & every believer read their religion's sacred texts for themselves ... And it requires that all verses & all passages read that do not reflect a perfect & exception-less LOVE be seen for what they are -- man-made manacles; person-built prisons; cleric-erected cells -- and it requires that these immoral phrases be tossed aside for what they are trying to do: namely, imprison our minds in fear, and thereby imprison our Souls in self-centeredness.

No, my Friends -- to worship a God of LOVE, we must LOVE as that God must LOVE ... And to LOVE as that God must LOVE, we must be free to LOVE without condition or exception. And to be so purely free, we must courageously discard all the religious conventions that keep us from Caring, & we must actively rebuke all the religious teachings that encourage or justify violence of any kind.



This is the Way to refine to your religion ...

This is the Way to re-turn to your God ...

This, my Friends, is The Way.

Amen ... Let it be so.

Mark 2:10 ... the Power to Forgive
(08/23/2014)

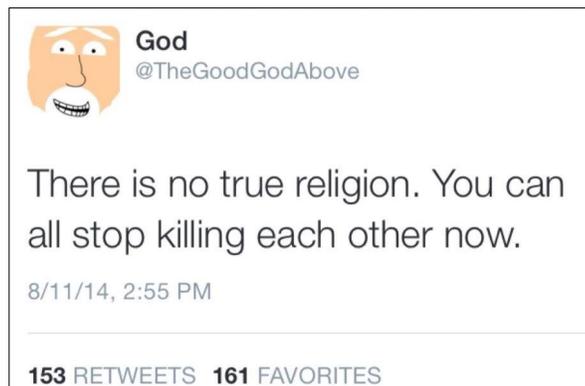
*"The Father judges no one, but has rather given all judgment to the Son ...
You judge by human standards, and yet I judge no one."
~ Jesus Christ (in John 5:22 & 8:15)*

This is yet another example of two verses of the Bible's New Testament combining to show that Jesus was definitely *not* speaking of himself alone whenever he spoke of "the Son of Man" ... Instead, in order to make his Biblical teachings non-contradictory & non-hypocritical, we must read his "the Son of Man" to mean the True Self (or the conscience, or the Soul, or "the Advocate" -- as Jesus called it in John 14 & 15) that resides within *each & every one of us* -- the True Self that blossoms forth anew every time we place humility before arrogance, kindness before callousness, and Love (the verb) before fear.

Indeed, in the case of the above-mentioned verses, it makes perfect sense that a representative of a truly all-Loving Godhead would proclaim quite clearly that neither he nor that Deity would ever condemn anyone for any reason whatsoever.

So, if Jesus & his Father are both willing to accept all others just the way they are -- to boldly stand for justice & compassion, yes, and yet to do so with gentleness & respect & kindness ... well, if Jesus & his God are willing to do this for us, is it too much to ask for us to do this for each other as well? Is it too much to ask that we, especially in our moments of anger or frustration or confusion, choose to let our Soul do the talking and our conscience do the walking? Is it too much to ask for us to err on the side of Caring ... and become again a "Son (or Daughter) of Man"?

*"Know that the Son of Man
has authority on earth to forgive sins."
~ Jesus Christ (in Mark 2:10)*



An honest
God is the
noblest work
of man

God

Matthew 23:23 ... true Tithing
(09/04/2014)

It is high-time for a new Commandment -- one that would force preachers to re-enliven their innate integrity, one that would force churches to finally actualize their most meaningful purpose, and one that would force religions to finally embody a righteousness more pure & true ... And that Commandment is the following: Thou shalt **not** tithe money -- **any** money -- to anyone but the truly poor.

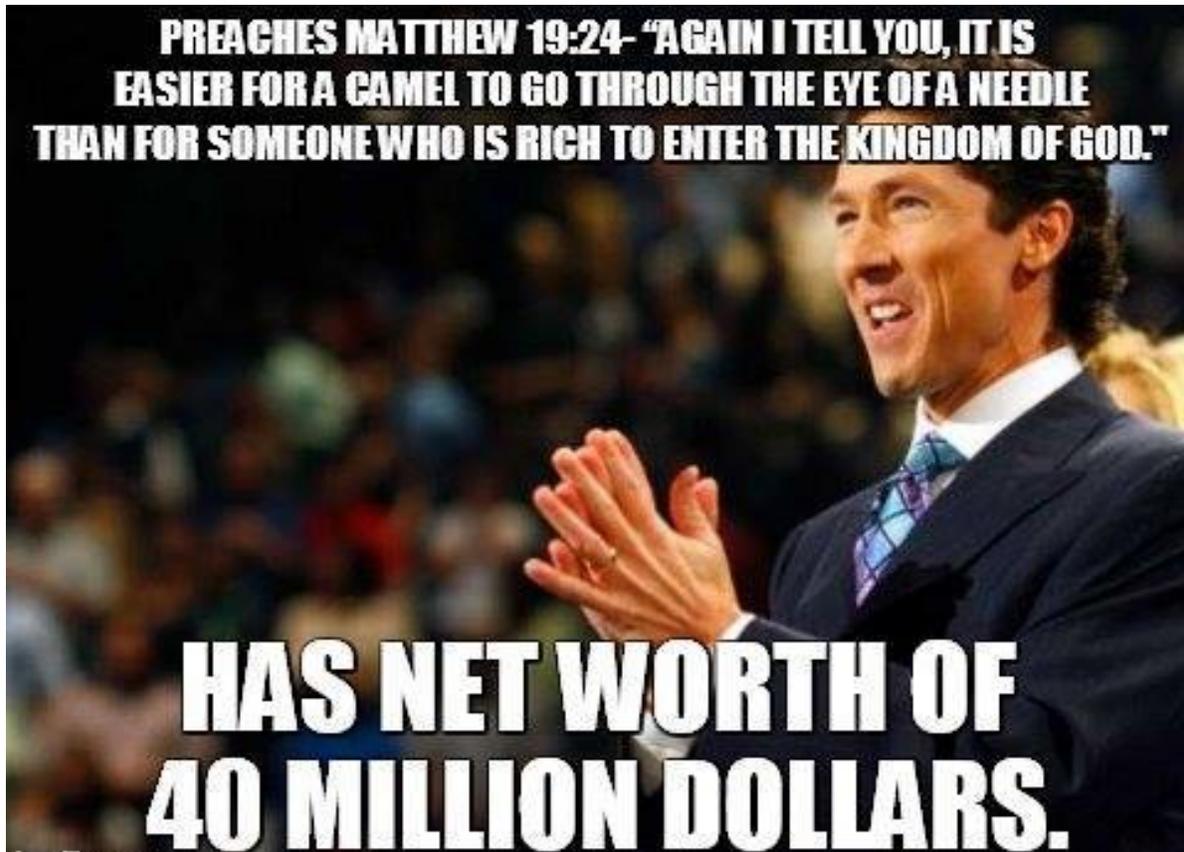
There are people in need all around all of us every day. We don't need our churches to help us distribute our Kindness, and we sure as Hell (pun intended) don't need to give them payments of any kind to absolve us of our sins. If God is not the essence of perfect Love, then tithing money to our 'religious leaders" won't soothe His tendency towards celestial fickleness & greed anyway ... And if God **is** the essence of perfect Love, he sure as Heaven doesn't want our material gifts to go where they are not needed.

Indeed, it's time for us to quit enabling churches to half-do for others what **we** should have been fully & courageously doing for them all along. When it comes to Love & Kindness, it's time to cut out the middle man and go give directly ourselves.

Amen ... Let it be so.



P.S. Remember as well that a true Man (or Woman) of God is never one penny wealthier than the poorest member of their congregation ... *period*.

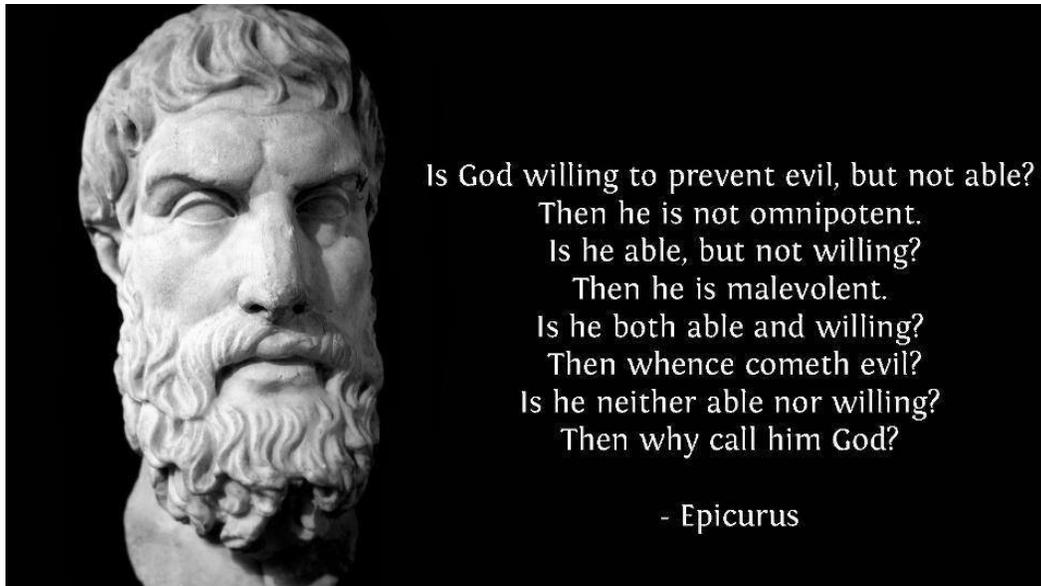


"Woe to you, scribal and Pharisaic hypocrites! For you tithe mint and anise and cumin, and yet have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and compassion and faithfulness." ~ Jesus Christ (in Matthew 23:23)

"Beware of practicing your righteousness before others in order to be seen by them ... So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets ... But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be given in secret." ~ Jesus Christ (in Matthew 6:1-4)

Romans 8:28 -- Evil & the omnipotent God ...
(09/05/2014)

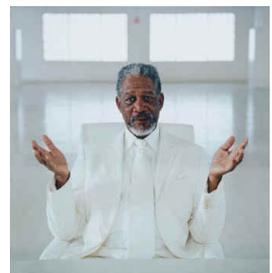
Roughly 2300 years ago, a Greek philosopher named Epicurus made a most intriguing postulation regarding the presence of evil -- one especially poignant for all those who considered themselves to be in any way religious ... It went (and still goes) something like this:

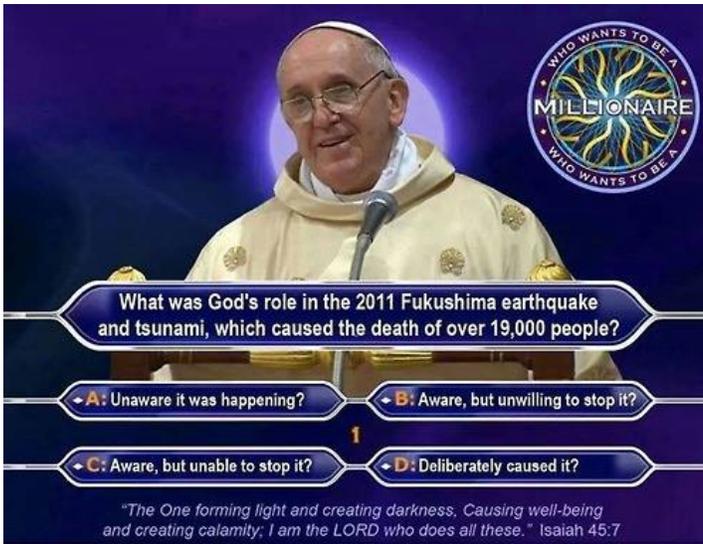


This is indeed a brilliantly concise summation of the problem for any member of any religion, and yet it is a summation that is not fully complete ... For all those secular folks tuning in, allow me to briefly elaborate, and -- for all you religious folks out there who either believe in a just & loving God; or at least want to do so -- allow me to provide you with a solution to this conundrum.

First of all, let's quickly examine the options presented by Epictetus -- not to judge them as "right" or "wrong", but simply to remember how we are to respond to such a God *if* He does indeed exist in any of these forms.

***God #01 -- Good but relatively impotent ...** *If* God exists and is a God who wants to eradicate evil but has become too old or too tired or too weak to do so (or who was never able to in the first place), then *it is up to us* to do so for Him -- remembering, of course, that evil can only be defeated using means that oppose its own; namely forgiveness given to the evil of condemnation; kindness given to the evil of violence; peace given to the evil of war; acceptance given to the evil of bigotry & compassion given to the evil of hatred.





***God #02 -- Powerful but callous (or even malicious) ...** *If* God exists and is a God who is powerful enough to eradicate evil but purposefully chooses to allow pain & suffering -- maybe to "teach us a lesson", maybe so we will "we get what we deserve", or even maybe because He enjoys watching us writhe & despair, then this is a God who is -- at the very least by conscious omission -- actively participating in evil.

And as such, this is a God who we as decent, moral & just beings must **fully & openly oppose**. "God works in mysterious ways" is simply no defense for a God who has the ability to limit suffering and yet maliciously instigates or amplifies the same.

***God #03 -- Uninterested & relatively impotent ...** *If* God exists and is a God who is not powerful enough to stop evil and doesn't even try to do so (&/or doesn't really care either way), then this a God who is worthy of our Compassion (and maybe even our pity), but certainly **not our worship**.



And finally, **THE SOLUTION** ...

Initially, please note that I am **not** offering this alternative as an objective Truth. No one ever has known the full nature of God and no human being ever will. And yet **if** you happen to believe in a God who is all-Loving (and therefore a "Father" or "Mother" worthy of worship) and quite powerful (and therefore a "Creator" or "Source" worthy of honor & gratitude) then there remains a fourth possibility that satisfies this yearning while reconciling Epicurus' apparent contraction; a solution that actually already rests at the heart of the oldest teachings of the founders of all the world's major religions -- including the heart of your own.

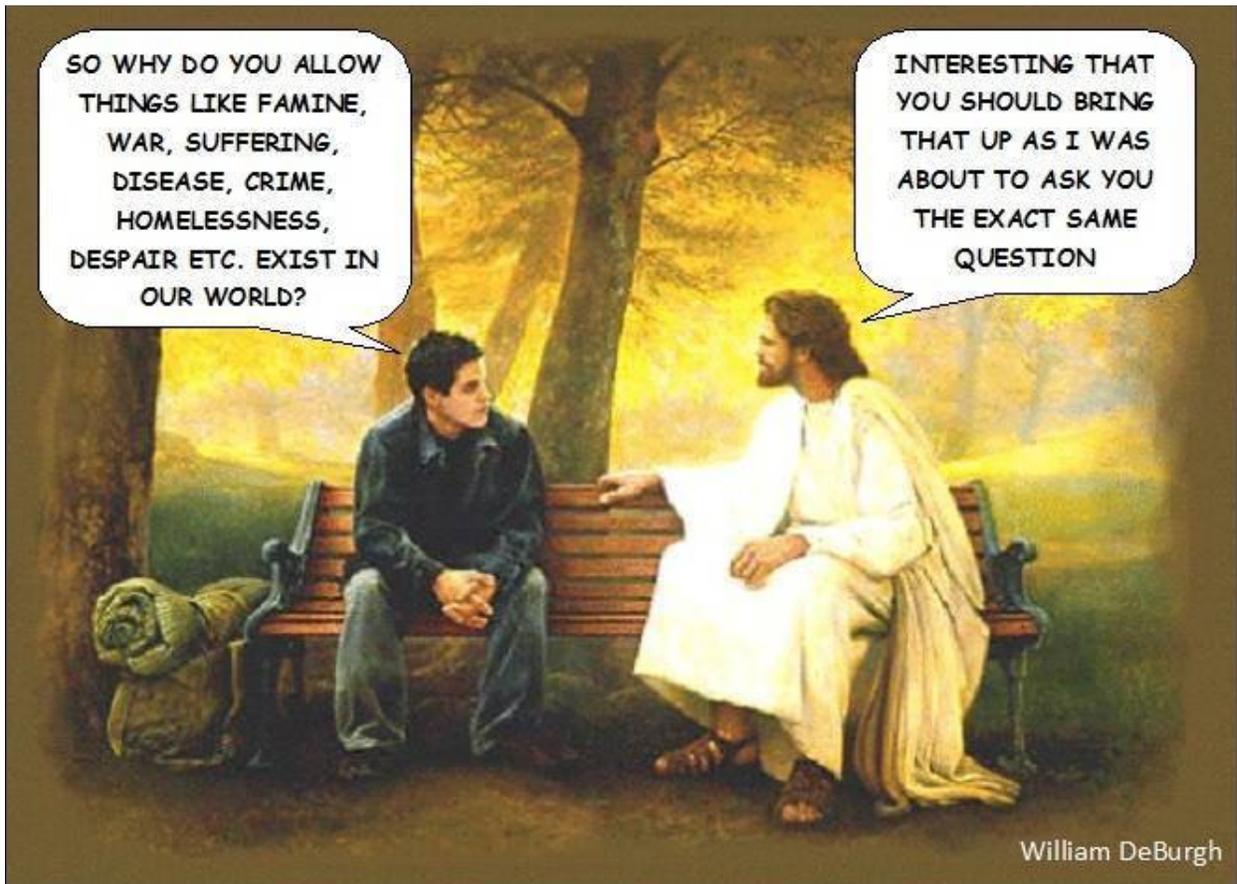
Simply stated, **if** God is a highly potent Creator (or "evolutionary Instigator", if you prefer) who is the embodiment of perfect, unconditional LOVE, then the existence of evil and a lack of a Divine response thereto can easily be explained in the following way:

Goodness comes from the Divine -- a Goodness that includes free will "granted" (in all probability via evolution) to all sentient beings. And since sentient beings have free will without objective understanding, and since their free will is coupled with a highly potent and purely narcissistic drive to survive & procreate, radically selfish choices are frequently made -- choices that often knowingly inflict others with pain in order to ensure the betterment of the ones making them ... These are, in essence, "evil" choices that engender and enliven "evil".

Now **if** this Godhead is anywhere near all-Knowing, then He (or She) is aware of the fact that the maximum amount of Bliss available to any sentient being comes in those moments when free will is used to transcend reasonable selfish impulses of "self-respect" or "self-love" or "self-defense" or "justified retribution" or "fair punishment" -- and choose instead to exude a practical facet of selfless solidarity ... In other words, psychological "Salvation" comes to those who choose LOVE over sadness or fear or anger.

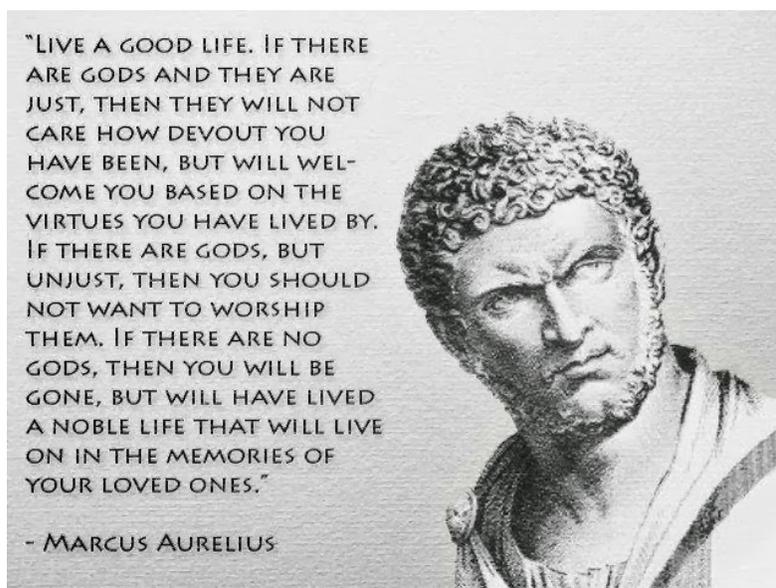
And because our perfected Godhead is aware of this Truth, it is an act of great Love -- indeed, an act of great Self-Sacrifice -- for Him (or Her) to **not** interfere with the "evils" that occur in our lives; to purposefully **not** soothe them or eradicate them in any way; to thereby grace us with the opportunity to transcend our more primitive selfish instincts and respond to evil with Kindness instead -- and thereby enter a state of raw, fear-free, Joy-full & Peace-full euphoria that Jesus called "The Kingdom of Heaven".

Thank GOD for that ... literally!



"For the LORD is good and his Love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations." ~ Psalm 100:5

"We know that God makes all things work together for good for those who are called according to God's purpose ... Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God: what is good and acceptable and perfect." ~ Paul (in Romans 8:28 & 12:2)





*“And I will take one from a thousand
and two from ten thousand,
and they shall Become a single One.”
~ Jesus (Gospel of Thomas 23)*