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MINISTRIES®

LEGALISM & RELIGIOUS SPIRITS

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Legalism



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LEGALISM AND RELIGIOUS SPIRITS

Legalism Leads To A Life Of Struggle

Foundation Scripture:

Romans 11:6 (KJV) – *And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.*

I. The Law Produces Works Of The Flesh.

- A. Works of the flesh produce struggle. They are our human effort trying to do God's job.
- B. **Jeremiah 2:13** – Don't spend your life digging "empty wells" that have no water in them.
- C. **Isaiah 30:1-3** – Our plans always fail and leave us humiliated and confused.
 - 1. We should pray for the following proverb to be a reality in our daily lives.

Proverbs 16:9 – *Man's mind plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps and makes them sure.*

- D. We can make a law out of anything.
1. **Divine healing** – I had made a law out of divine healing at one point in my life. I was always struggling with “trying to get healed.” God revealed that I felt I had to receive a divine healing to prove I had faith.
 2. **Cleaning your house** – We can get so out of balance that we cannot enjoy the house or allow anyone else to.
- E. Legalism in any area steals the joy of it.
1. Prayer
 2. Giving
 3. Bible study
 4. Exercise
- F. Legalistic thinking says, “I have to.” The person who is free says, “I want to, and I am going to discipline myself to do it.”
1. Stop saying, “I have to exercise; I have to clean the house; I have to go to church; I have to pray; I have to give my tithe, etc.”

Practice saying, “I want to.” It will make you feel free instead of oppressed.
 2. It is amazing how our own words affect us emotionally.

II. **The Legalistic Person Is Always Struggling With Something.**

- A. Are you struggling with your marriage?
1. If so, you are trying to change it instead of trusting God.
- B. Are you struggling on your job?

1. If so, you are not securing strength from God to go there daily and be a light for Him. You are more than likely complaining all the way to work and thinking about how much you hate the place.
- C. Are you struggling with yourself? Trying to change yourself?
1. You cannot change yourself; but God can, as you stay in the Word and trust Him to complete you and make you what you ought to be.
 - a. **Hebrews 13:20-21** – May the God of peace strengthen (complete, perfect) and make you what you ought to be.
 - b. **Philippians 1:6** – He that hath begun a good work in me is well able to complete it and bring it to its finish.
 - c. **I Peter 5:10** – *And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace . . . will Himself complete and make you what you ought to be . . .*
- D. Are you struggling with family members and friends? Are you trying to change them?
1. **Try prayer! It works!!**
- E. The legalistic person works at something all the time.
- F. The legalistic person cannot rest mentally because they are always trying to figure something out.
- G. They cannot rest emotionally because they are always upset about something that is not working out the way they desired.
1. They are not adaptable; they are rigid and narrow in their views.
- H. They cannot rest because they are not believing.

III. Faith Believes And Receives.

- A. **Revelation 21:4-6** – I, Myself, will give water to the thirsty, **without price**, from the fountain of the water of Life.
- B. **Revelation 22:1** – River of Life flows out from the throne.
 - 1. This river represents God’s Spirit. He is ever flowing toward mankind to meet their needs.
- C. **Revelation 22:17** (KJV) – “**Whosoever will**” come and drink.
- D. Drink = Receive, swallow, and take in.
 - 1. You can be led to the water, but you cannot be forced to drink it.
- E. **John 7:37** – Jesus said, “If **anyone** is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink.”
 - 1. **Anyone!** Are we sure this is not just an invitation to a select few? Perhaps, those who are perfect; those who pray several hours a day; or those who have memorized the Psalms and Proverbs
 - 2. To be thirsty means to have a need or a desire for something.
- F. **John 4:13-14** – If you drink regular water, you will thirst again; but those who drink **living water** will never thirst again.
- G. Jesus has everything we need. He is everything we need – **we need to be educated in the art of receiving.**
- H. Faith **SIMPLY** believes; and, therefore, receives what has been there for the taking all along.

IV. Learning To Receive

- A. **Ephesians 1:3** – God, in Christ, has blessed us with **every** spiritual blessing in the heavenly realm.

- 1 If God says EVERY, He does not mean SOME.
 2. **All we need now (or will ever need) is already bought, paid for, and in storage!**
- B. **Revelation 3:20** – *Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears and listens to and heeds My voice **and opens the door**, I will come in to him and will eat with him, and he [will eat] with Me.*
1. The doorknob is on your side.
 2. Kenneth Copeland said to me, “Now remember, the doorknob is on your side.” What did he mean? He meant: If you need anything, just ask. If I can help you, **ask**.
- C. **James 4:2** – You have not because you ask not.
1. **Mark 11:24** – . . . *whatever you ask for in prayer, believe (trust and be confident) that it is granted to you, and you will [get it].*
 2. First we receive it into our spirits, then it manifests in the natural.
- D. Get (defined) – To obtain by struggle or effort.
1. Receive (defined) – To act as a receptacle and take in what is being offered.
- E. It seems people are always trying to **GET** something – **get** a breakthrough, **get** a blessing, **get** prosperity, **get** healed, **get** saved, **get** filled with the Holy Spirit, **get** direction, **get** a word from God, etc.
1. The Bible does not teach **getting** as a method of obtaining God’s free unmerited favor and grace.
- F. God is not for sale!

1. **Romans 4:4** – A man “works” – his wages (blessings) are not counted as a favor or a gift but are considered something owed to him.

G. Scriptures regarding receiving:

1. **John 1:12** – To as many as **received** Him, **gave** He the power to become the sons of God.

When we are ready to receive, He is willing to give.

2. **John 1:16** – *For out of His fullness (abundance) we have all **received** [all had a share and we were all supplied with] one grace after another and spiritual blessing upon spiritual blessing and even favor upon favor and gift [heaped] upon gift.*

- a. Some people don't have enough faith to receive abundant blessings – they are afraid to be blessed – they feel more spiritual when they are doing without.

- b. It is good to use caution and wisdom. We don't ever want things to get ahead of God, but poverty does not make us holy.

3. **Acts 8:17** – One by one, they all received the Holy Spirit.

4. Plus many others

H. Forgiveness of sins – I begged for years, but never was educated in receiving.

1. **Luke 5:20-24** – Man, your sins are forgiven.
2. **I John 1:9** – *If we [freely] admit that we have sinned and confess our sins, He is faithful and just (true to His own nature and promises) and will forgive our sins . . . and [continuously] cleanse us from all unrighteousness . . .*
3. **Zephaniah 3:17** – He makes no mention of past sins.

4. **Hebrews 10:16-18** – He forgives, forgets, and cancels the penalty.

a. There is no longer any offering to be made for sin. **WHAT ARE YOU OFFERING?**

b. Your joy, peace, your blood-bought right to feel right before God, boldness in prayer, and enjoyment of life?

I. Receive mercy for your failures.

1. **Hebrews 4:15-16** – Receive mercy and grace and come boldly to God’s throne and **ASK!**

2. God’s grace and mercy are out of all proportion to man’s sin. How could we ever deserve mercy?

We must SIMPLY RECEIVE it or be doomed to live without it.

J. Receive God’s love.

1. **Song of Solomon 5:1** – . . . *Drink, yes, drink abundantly of love . . .*

The cup of God’s love never runs dry.

2. He loves us for no good reason.

a. **Ephesians 1:4-5** – He loved us **in Christ** before the foundation of the world. He planned (in love) for us to be adopted as His own children, **through Jesus Christ** – because it pleased Him and was His kind intent.

b. Laura is pregnant (with a baby girl). We have no “reason” to love the baby yet; we have not even seen her. But we are already planning – buying clothes, furniture, new carpet, dolls, etc.

My daughter is actually restraining me to keep me from being excessive when buying little girl clothes.

Why am I doing that? BECAUSE I WANT TO!

3. **I John 4:16** – Be **conscious and aware** of God's love.

Receiving generously of God's love gives us confidence.

LEGALISM STRUGGLES – FAITH RECEIVES!

Narrow-Minded People With Little-Bitty Lives

Foundation Scripture:

Matthew 9:17 – You cannot put new wine into old wineskins.

I. New Wine And Old Wineskins

- A. **Matthew 9:17** – God is ready to pour out new wine. Are you ready to get rid of your old wineskin?
- B. What is our old wineskin?
 1. **Old ways of approaching God** – No longer by works, but by grace expecting to receive mercy
 2. Legalism (defined) – Striving to follow the law by our own effort. **Trying to be good!**
 3. Old ways of doing things:
 - a. Some churches would never allow a guitar in church because they have always had only the organ.
 - b. Some people would never dance before the Lord because they have never done that.
 - c. Some people would never say, “According to **II Corinthians 5:21**, I am the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ.” They would be afraid God would strike them dead if they called themselves anything but a worthless worm.
 - d. Some people would never say, “According to **II Corinthians 5:17**, I am a new creature in Christ; old things have passed away; and behold, all things are made brand new.”

- e. **We have many “old ways” and “old mindsets” that keep us trapped. Many hungry Christians are like “new wine in old wineskins.” They feel like they are about to burst and don’t quite know what to do about it.**

C. I am tired of old things.

- 1. **Isaiah 43:19** - God says, “Behold, I do a new thing!”

II. Is Your Mind Helping Or Hindering You?

A. **Romans 12:2** – After a person accepts Christ as his Savior, his mind must be entirely renewed; or he will never experience the good plan that God has for his life.

B. Are you ready, according to Scripture, to receive from God freely, or are you still trying to earn and deserve God’s blessings through your own good works?

- 1. **Isaiah 55:1-2** – The blessings are available to anyone who will surrender and accept them.

THIS IS WHAT RELEASES JOY IN YOUR LIFE.

C. Unless our mind is regularly renewed, it will hinder us.

- 1. **Ephesians 4:23** – Every day our mind and attitude should be renewed.

D. **Romans 8:6** – We have a **mind of the flesh** and a **mind of the spirit**.

- 1. **Romans 8:7** – The mind of the flesh is enmity (an enemy) against God.

- 2. Why? Because it hinders the **wonderful, large life** that God has in mind for us.

E. Some people are narrow-minded; and they live **little-bitty, narrow lives**.

1. They have little minds, little ideas, little dreams, and little-minded friends. They have had a little past and will have a little future unless they wake up to the truth.
- F. **Ephesians 3:20** – God is able to do exceedingly abundantly above and beyond all we can dare to hope, ask or think, according to His power that works in us – the Holy Spirit
- G. **Colossians 3:2** – Set your mind and keep it set on things above – high things, big things and not on things upon the earth – low things, little things.

III. What Would It Be Like To Think In The Spirit (Like God Thinks)?

- A. We would have to get rid of all “impossibility” thinking.
1. **Matthew 19:26** – With God all things are possible.
 2. **Mark 9:23** – All things are possible to him who believes.
 3. **Luke 18:27** – . . . *What is impossible with men is possible with God.*
- B. We would have to think in larger terms.
1. **Exodus 3:8** – God planned to bring His people into a good and a LARGE land.
 2. **II Samuel 22:20** and **Psalms 18:19** (KJV) – *He brought me forth also into a large place; he delivered me, because he delighted in me.*
 3. **Psalms 31:8** – . . . *You have not given me into the hand of the enemy; You have set my feet in a broad place.*
 4. **Psalms 118:5** – *Out of my distress I called upon the Lord; the Lord answered me and set me free and in a large place.*

5. **Isaiah 54:2** – *Enlarge the place of your tent, and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out; spare not; lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes . . .*
- a. In other words, “Prepare a place large enough to house the abundant blessings I have in mind for you.”
 - b. Don’t accept the thinking that you need to live in a **little-bitty house** with **barely enough** room or keep your **little-bitty job** forever with its **little-bitty pay**.
 - c. Don’t believe that you will always be on welfare – “Momma and Daddy were on welfare and that is just how it is in our family.”
 - d. Don’t believe you have a **little-bitty mind** that can only understand **little-bitty things**.

STRETCH out your habitations.

REFUSE TO LIVE A “LITTLE-BITTY LIFE”!

- C. We would have to be positive about everything – no negative outlook.
1. **Genesis 50:20** – What the enemy means for harm, God intends for good.
 2. **Romans 8:28** – All things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose.
 3. **Psalms 42:5** – Why so downcast O my soul? Put your hope in God. Wait expectantly for God; praise Him, my Help and my God.
- D. We would have to leave the ordinary behind and be willing to think about doing things nobody has ever done.

1. We are placing one of my books in the hand of every prisoner in Missouri, Illinois, Tennessee, Pennsylvania, and growing. We are doing an entire state at one time – period.

It had never been done, but somebody in our organization **thought big**.

2. Mike Francen took several trains, all linked together, and went all over India with 800 believers – stopping at the train stations; building churches; handing out reading glasses, books, Bibles, tracts; and holding crusades.
 - a. He did the same things with a boat in the Amazon.
 - b. He got an idea to dig wells in countries where they have no clean water, call them Wells of Life, and build a church right next to them. Suddenly, the pastor becomes the most popular man in town.

IV. Narrow-Minded People Usually Miss Their Miracle.

- A. **II Kings 5:1-14** – Naaman almost thought too much to get his healing.
 1. New wine was available, but he still had his old wineskin.
- B. Some people never experience LIFE because they **think** everything to death.
 1. They are worn out most of the time from thinking.
- C. Saul thought too much, and it killed his ministry.
 1. **I Samuel 10:6-8** – Saul received instructions from Samuel.
 2. **I Samuel 13:8-14** – Saul thought, instead of acting in obedience.

- a. His thinking was little. He didn't think God was big enough to bring the people back or to give him new people. The people he had left him.
 - b. He devised a plan to take care of himself instead of trusting God to take care of him.
- D. Narrow-minded people think there is only one way to do things – their way, or the way they are accustomed to, the way their friends and relatives approve of, or according to their particular doctrine, etc.
- 1. People received the Holy Spirit different ways.
 - a. **Acts 2:1-4** – The Holy Spirit came in like a mighty wind, filled the room, tongues of fire sat on each of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues.
 - b. **Acts 8:17** – *Then [the apostles] laid their hands on them one by one, and they received the Holy Spirit.*
 - c. **Acts 10:44** – While Peter was speaking (preaching to the first Gentiles to receive the Gospel); the Holy Spirit fell on all who were listening.
 - 2. Jesus used different methods to heal.
 - a. He laid hands on people.
 - b. He spoke a word, and they were healed.
 - c. He told people to go home, and He said their faith had healed them.
 - d. He cast out devils.
 - e. He spat on the ground, made mud, and rubbed it on a blind man's eyes; then told him to go wash in the river.

- f. He gave some commands: “Get up, stretch out your arm, rise up and walk.”
 - 3. Some people think too much to get healed. They look around, try to figure out what is happening, judge things they have not seen before – they should **only believe** and drink in what is being offered.
- E. Little-minded people give up easily, but **BIG THINKERS ALWAYS FIND A WAY.**
 - 1. **Luke 19:1-8** – Zacchaeus was little in stature, but he was a big thinker. He found a way to do what he wanted to do.
 - 2. Jesus liked his zeal, so He went to his house for dinner.
 - 3. Jesus knew a man like that had possibilities.
- F. **John 1:45-47** – Nathaniel had an opinion, but he was open minded enough to look for truth.
 - 1. Some people are so locked into their old way of thinking; they won’t believe truth even when it stares them in the face.

V. We Serve A Big and Abundant God With Big Ideas.

- A. He pours out blessings.
 - 1. **Malachi 3:10** – I will POUR out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.
 - 2. **Acts 2:17-18** – I will POUR out of My Spirit.
 - 3. He does not **dribble** out blessings; He POURS them out.
- B. He gives ABUNDANTLY.

1. **John 10:10** – I came that you might have life and that more ABUNDANTLY.
2. **Genesis 1:20-22** – God filled the seas ABUNDANTLY, telling Adam and Eve to multiply.

HE SUPPLIES ABUNDANTLY AND EXPECTS US TO TAKE WHAT HE GIVES AND MULTIPLY IT.

3. **Psalm 72:7** – In His (Christ's) days shall the righteous flourish and have PEACE IN ABUNDANCE till there is a moon no longer.

Don't be satisfied with a **little bit** of **peace** occasionally.
Go for all that belongs to you.

C. **Philippians 3:12** – Paul said, “I press on to lay hold of and make my own, that for which Christ Jesus has laid hold of me and made me His own.”

1. Paul was speaking about spiritual perfection, but shouldn't we aim for perfection in every area? Isn't that reaching the height of what is available to us in all areas?

**DON'T BE NARROWED-MINDED
AND LIVE LITTLE-BITTY LIVES!!**

Religion Or Relationship?

Foundation Scripture:

Colossians 1:27-28 – The mystery of the ages is Christ in me, the Hope of glory – not Christ in the church building, or Christ up in the sky, or Christ in a specific denomination; but Christ in me and in you.

I. What Religion Are You?

A. I don't like to be asked that question; and when I am, I would prefer to reply: "I'm not religious – I have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ."

1. Religion is a set of rules and regulations or beliefs that we must follow to be part of a particular organization. Each one – and there are many – has its own set of rules.
2. **As one woman put it, "It is man's idea of God's expectations."**

Sometimes we put expectations on ourselves that have no basis in God's Word. We are also guilty of putting our own expectations on other people, instead of helping them be what God wants them to be.

Example: A person may be called and anointed as an intercessor and then make the mistake of judging everyone's prayer life by his own.

Example: A teacher of God's Word could expect everyone to study as much as he does.

3. **Doctrines vary:**
 - a. Some say sprinkling is the way to baptize; others say we must be immersed.

- b. Some baptize babies, and the parents promise to raise them as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Others say you must have accepted Christ personally and be baptized only after that – they dedicate babies and baptize them later.
 - c. Some baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Others say, “Baptize in Jesus’ name only.”
- 4. Some people believe in all the gifts of the Holy Spirit listed in **I Corinthians: Chapter 12**, and others believe many of these gifts disappeared with the early church. Some believe in speaking in other tongues, and some believe tongues are from the devil.
- 5. Some believe a Christian can have a demon, and others say, “No way.” Some believe in casting out devils and healing the sick, and some don’t. Some believe God can use women, and others don’t.
- 6. Some believe God wants us to prosper; and others believe God is not interested in our finances, just our spirits. I recently talked to a clerk in a department store who had been a believer all of her life. Yet as we talked about some needs in her life, I suggested she ask God to bless her with customers so she could make more money. She said, “Oh, I wouldn’t want to do that. That would not be right.” She had been a believer all of her life and had never asked God to bless her financially because she thought it was wrong.
 - a. **III John: 2** – Beloved, I would above all else that you prosper and be in health, even as your soul prospers.
 - b. Some say, “If God wants me to have that, He will give it to me.” What about **James 4:2?** – **YOU HAVE NOT BECAUSE YOU ASK NOT.**

B. The result of all the division is confusion and powerlessness.

1. Religion does not give you power; but a deep personal relationship with the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost does.
 - a. **Philippians 3:10** (KJV) – *That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection . . .*
 - b. I was religious for years and never even heard that I could enjoy the power of God in my life. I learned **He** was powerful, but was never told that “through Him” **I** could be powerful.
 - c. **II Timothy 3:5** – *For [although] they hold a form of piety (true religion), they deny and reject and are strangers to the power of it . . .*

2. **Matthew 12:25-30** – A kingdom divided against itself cannot stand.
 - a. Jesus believed in casting out demons, but the Pharisees said He was from the devil.
 - b. A religious person cannot stand to see someone do or know something that they can’t do.
 - c. **Mark 16:17** – Those who believe shall cast out devils in His name, and yet there are still “denominations” that don’t believe in casting out devils.

- C. **Matthew 23:23-24** – Pharisees (pretenders and hypocrites) follow the rules but don’t really help anyone. Jesus said, “They strained at a gnat and swallowed a camel.”
 1. Proper doctrine is important, but any organization that just teaches doctrine and never gets around to the practical side of Christianity will only produce frustrated Christians – people who know the rules, but have no power to follow them; people full of head knowledge with no victory in their own lives. They can tell others what to do but don’t do it themselves.

- D. Religions often make up their own rules. If there is something they personally don't like, they make a rule to keep it out of their organization. If there is something they have not experienced, then they believe it cannot be right for anyone.
1. **God gave Moses ten commandments; and by the time Jesus came, the Pharisees (religious leaders) had turned them into 2,200 rules for the people to follow.**
- E. Religion is usually about what I can do, not what Jesus has done. It says, "Here are the rules – if you can follow them, you are all right."
1. **Luke 18:9-14** – Religion (our works) cannot justify us.
 2. Christ's work on the Cross and His resurrection justifies us. His blood justifies us and makes us right with God – not our own ability to follow rules.
 3. **Romans 3:20** – No one is justified by works.
 4. **Matthew 7:21-23** – Many will say Lord, Lord, we did this and that in Your name; and He will say, "I never knew you."

He wants to know us. That does not mean a casual acquaintance, it means to KNOW us. There is a difference in knowing and KNOWING. Dave KNOWS me; Van and Theresa know me.

II. What About The Law (The Commandments Of God And The Rules)?

- A. Aren't we supposed to follow any rules?
1. Yes we are. We are to follow God's commands and His law. **But we can only do so through a deep personal relationship with Him.**

2. **Philippians 2:12-13** instructs us to live a holy life – NOT IN OUR OWN STRENGTH, for it is God Who is at work in us, giving us the will and desire to do right.
- B. **Romans 5:20** – *But then Law came in, [only] to expand and increase the trespass [making it more apparent and exciting opposition]. But where sin increased and abounded, grace (God’s unmerited favor) has surpassed it and increased the more and superabounded.*
1. God gave the Law so we could see what it would take to be holy, which is vital to entering His presence and having fellowship with Him. Man must be made right with God. He must be holy, for God is Holy. Nothing else can ever be acceptable. The Law is holy, but man cannot keep it. If he is guilty in one point, he is guilty of all.
 2. **II Corinthians 5:21** – Jesus came in our place and kept the Law. He makes us right with God – the Holy Spirit sanctifies us and makes us holy.
- C. Holiness (defined/Vine’s Greek) – Sanctification (holiness) is thus the state predetermined by God for believers, into which in grace He calls them, and **in which they begin their Christian course and so pursue it**. Thus believers are called saints.

II Timothy 1:9 – This sainthood is not an attainment, it is a state into which God in grace calls men; yet believers are called to sanctify themselves consistently with their calling, cleansing themselves from all defilement, forsaking sin, living a **holy** manner of life.

1. How could I be a singer if I did not have a singer inside me? I could take lessons and get a song and sing it, but nobody would recognize me as a singer. However, if God has placed the gift of being a singer in me, I can develop the gift and become a singer in the natural realm.

Romans 11:16 – If the root is holy, the branches must be holy.

2. We are **made something** in the spiritual realm by God, and it is then manifested in the natural realm by our cooperation with the Holy Spirit to develop the gift God has given.
3. **Galatians 3:10** – If a person believes they will be holy by following certain prescribed guidelines for behavior, they will be very disappointed.

D. The root of the struggle we experience in our lives

1. If I have accepted Christ as my Savior and have been made right with God, and have had holiness imputed unto me – and I continue in an unholy lifestyle – I cannot possibly be anything but miserable because I am not being what I am.

This is why a heathen is not bothered by his sin, but a born-again individual is miserable when they sin.

2. If I am a religious person, who works hard to follow the rules and regulations – but I am really not born again – I don't have Christ living in me. I will always feel frustrated; because no matter what I try to do, I will never quite measure up.

**I MUST KNOW WHO I AM “IN CHRIST” BEFORE
I CAN EVER HOPE TO DO WHAT HE WANTS ME TO DO.**

E. The strength to follow the Law must begin on the inside and work its way to the outside. God is our strength – **CHRIST IN US, THE HOPE OF GLORY!**

1. **Ephesians 6:10** – . . . *be strong in the Lord [be empowered through your union with Him] . . .*
2. Union means to be one, to fellowship with.

How can Dave and I enter properly into the union of marriage and become one unless we have a rich life of fellowship with one another?

III. Religion Without Relationship Produces Hypocrites.

A. **Matthew 23:1-28** – Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, pretenders (hypocrites)!

1. Sandra had neighbors who wanted to sue the subdivision because they gave her permission to send out a letter to everyone in the neighborhood inviting them to attend a JMM Conference.

They were in church every time the door opened.

2. I led a girl working at a golf course into a personal relationship with Christ. She was so bored in her church that she could not stay awake and had finally stopped going. She loved God, but believed she would have to do penance (pay) for her sins before she could go to heaven.
3. I ministered to a woman working in a department store who was in need all her life because she thought it would displease God if she asked Him to bless her financially.

Anyone you have a true relationship with wants to bless you.

B. What makes us sincere instead of a pretender?

1. Doing something because we genuinely want to – NOT to impress someone.
2. If we pray to get brownie points with God, we are being a pretender and a hypocrite.
3. Trying to do right to stay out of trouble with God or to get Him to love you is part of the old religious system.

Doing right because you want to and because you love God is proper positioning.

4. **Ezekiel 36:25-27** – God gives us a new heart and writes His law in our hearts.

HE GIVES US A NEW “WANT TO.”

5. **Romans 7:18-19, 21-22, 24-25** – Paul describes the war between the new nature and the old. He tells us the only way we can do what is right.
- C. **I Corinthians 1:9** – We are called into fellowship with Jesus Christ, our Lord.
1. I am called into fellowship with God, not called to struggle trying to keep the Law.
 2. God has already given me a desire to do right, and **my fellowship with Him enables me** to do it.
- D. **I John 1:3** – Our fellowship is with the Father and with Jesus Christ.
- E. **John 16:7** – Jesus said He would send the Holy Spirit to be in **close fellowship** with us.
1. Why? Because there is **no way** we can learn what we need to do and do it without that fellowship.

IV. Religion Is A Heavy Burden.

- A. **Matthew 22:34-40** – They wanted to discuss heavy doctrine.
1. Jesus said they were to **concentrate on love**.
- B. Many religious people are prideful, judgmental, self-righteous, and sour. They have a gloom or heaviness about them that can even be seen on their faces. **They do not enjoy life and usually get angry with anyone who does.**
1. **John 10:10** – Jesus said, “Enjoy life.”

- C. **John 9:1-25** shows how complicated religious people can get.
1. Everything has to be deep! It must be explained.
 2. Many people do not even try to understand things concerning the kingdom of God because they are presented in a way that makes them sound confusing.
 3. Nobody can get you more confused than somebody with about ten degrees in theology and no personal relationship with Jesus.
- D. A relationship with Jesus relieves burdens; it does not give you one.
1. **Matthew 11:30** – My burden is light and easy to be borne. I am not harsh, hard, sharp, or pressing.
 2. **Isaiah 61:3** – He gives us the garment of praise to replace a **heavy, burdened, and failing spirit**.
- E. **Exodus 1:11** – Pharaoh put **burdens** on the people to keep them from being powerful.
1. Satan fears the power of the Holy Spirit, and he does not want believers filled with it.
- F. **I Timothy 6:3-5a** – Religious people often want to argue about “words” and doctrinal phrases.
1. A religious spirit exalts the mind above the spirit.
 2. Religious people want to know about my degrees. They don’t care about my fruit – they don’t count changed lives.
- G. A religious spirit (attitude) produces guilt and condemnation. It always has to place blame.
1. **Guilt** or **condemn** (defined)– To press down, to weigh heavily upon.

2. **Matthew 11:16-19** – We cannot please the system.
We always fail, and therefore must feel guilty.

H. **Matthew 12:1-15** – The Pharisees are always watching to find something to accuse us about.

1. Jesus said He was Lord of the Sabbath – In other words, God gave the rules concerning the Sabbath; but He is the boss – and the boss can override His own rules if the need arises.

- a. We have a rule at work that everyone should be there by starting time. They should get there early enough to get all their personal things done (putting lunch away, going to the bathroom, saying good morning to everyone, getting their coffee, calling the kids and reminding them they have soccer after school, etc). **THIS IS THE RULE.**

- b. However, if I give someone permission to be late for a specific reason, my current decision overrides my previous one as far as they are concerned.

2. Jesus wanted to show mercy and help people, but the religious leaders wanted to accuse and condemn.

3. **Luke 11:46** – Pharisees hand out heavy burdens – but won't help anyone.

Do you get tired of the people who are always trying to “**put something on you**” – a guilt trip, obligation, false sense of responsibility, blame, etc?

4. **James 1:27** – True religion is occupied with helping other people.

V. **Pride And A Religious Spirit Are Bed Partners.**

A. **Matthew 6:1-8** – Works done for wrong motives

1. To be well thought of, to be seen and admired

- B. **Colossians 3:17, 23-24** – The right motive behind every work must be to serve and glorify God.
- C. We should give God the credit for anything good He helps us do and take responsibility for all our wrong actions.
1. **Pharisee-type individuals blame others for their faults and take credit for their good works.**
- D. **Romans 3:27** – Those who lived under the Law wanted to know what happened to their boasting if they believed they were justified by faith.
1. Paul said, “It is banished, excluded, entirely ruled out.”
 2. The message of “saved by grace” and “made righteous through faith” was a hard message for the Pharisees to hear. It messed up all their doctrine. It actually made them angry and still has the same effect on people with a **religious spirit** today.
 - a. **Ephesians 2:8-9**
 - b. **II Corinthians 5:21**
 3. When I first began to read Romans, I had to read and read and re-read over and over, actually for years, before I finally got it. When you have lived under the **old system** for many years, it is difficult to believe the **new system**.

IT SEEMS TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE!

- a. We have religious attitudes crammed down our throats all of our lives.
- b. Even people who claim to be unbelievers have religious attitudes.

Example: I’m better than you because of what I do!

VI. Free To Follow The Spirit Of God

A. **Romans 8:1-2** – The law of the Spirit of life has set us free from the law of sin and death.

1. Two laws – One produces life, the other death.

B. **II Corinthians 3:6-13** – The Law ministers death; the Spirit, life.

1. If the Law came with glory (glory so great it remained on Moses' face), how much more glory should the new have.

THE NEW COVENANT – free to be led by the Spirit, salvation by grace, forgiveness of sins, and made right with God – SHOULD PRODUCE MORE GLORY ON OUR FACES.

2. **Romans 7:9-10** – Before children learn about “the law,” they are quite alive –joyous, carefree, and trusting.

C. **II Corinthians 3:15-18** – We must come to Jesus with unveiled faces.

1. When the Law is read, a veil lies upon minds and hearts.

2. **Matthew 27:51** – When Jesus died, the veil in the temple that separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place was ripped open.

a. This signified that the way was now open for the average person to come into the presence of God. Previously, only the High Priest could go in.

b. For the believer's face to radiate the glory in Jesus' face, the veil of the Law must be removed.

c. **For a bride and groom to enter into an intimate relationship, her veil must be lifted. Still living under the Law is the greatest detriment to a believer's close fellowship with God.**

D. The believer is not **under the Law**; inasmuch as, and in so far as, he is led by the Spirit.

1. **Law** (defined/Vine's/Greek) – *The ostensible aim of the law is to restrain the evil tendencies natural to man in his fallen estate; yet in experience law finds itself not merely ineffective, it actually provokes those tendencies to greater activity. The intention of the gift of the Spirit is to constrain the believer to a life in which the natural tendencies shall have no place, and to produce in him their direct contraries. Law, therefore, has nothing to say against the fruit of the Spirit; hence the believer is not only not under law . . . the law finds no scope in his life, inasmuch as, and in so far as, he is led by the Spirit . . .*
2. **Romans 3:19** – The Law only speaks to those **under** the Law.
 - a. A man may be known as a tyrant of a boss or employer – but if I am not **under** his authority, it has no effect on me.
 - b. If I work for him and decide I do not like that type of living, I can get out from under the oppression by learning a new way of living.

Hebrews 10:19-20

E. In order to walk in the Spirit, we must die to the Law.

1. **Die** (defined) – Cease to exist or to have relationship with.
2. The Law does not die; we must learn to not respond to it.
3. **Remember what the Law is – rules, regulations, SHOULD'S, OUGHT'S, expectations, and CAN-NOT'S – it is man's idea of God's expectations.**
4. **Galatians 5:16** – Walk in the Spirit, and you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.

Fellowshipping with the Holy Spirit – worship, praise, thanksgiving, singing, listening to teaching tapes, or reading Christian books – whatever helps you stay “FILLED” with God’s Spirit is what you should pay attention to – NOT KEEPING THE LAW.

- F. He died to a certain type of **obsolete thinking**.
1. **Romans 12:2** – Our minds must be entirely renewed if we are to enjoy what Jesus died to give us.
- G. **Galatians 2:19** – Paul died to the Law and all its demands.
1. The Law is rules, and those who keep the Law are rule keepers (Pharisees). What do the **rules** say?
 - a. If you keep me, God will love you.
 - b. If you keep me, God will approve of you.
 - c. If you keep me, you will go to heaven.
 - d. If you keep me, you can earn blessings; you deserve to be blessed!
 - e. If you keep me, you will feel good about yourself. You can be proud of yourself.
 2. **What is a Pharisee?** A “self-righteous” sect of the Jews who depended on all their **good works**, and who looked down on and judged those who did not follow their rules concerning how to get to God.
- H. **Romans 8:14-15** – Those who are bold enough to be led by the Spirit are mature, and they will no longer live in bondage to fear.
1. People are held in bondage through improper fears of God.
 - a. Afraid they are not pleasing Him

- b. Afraid their sins are too many and too great
- c. Afraid their prayer life is not sufficient to please God
- d. Afraid God is mad at them

I. **II Corinthians 3:17** (KJV) – . . . *where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.*

- 1. Liberty (defined) – Loose, relaxed, free, forgiven, having rights and authority.
- 2. It is the way we feel with a good friend. **Jesus is your friend. Are you comfortable with Him? Are you comfortable even when your hair is not fixed and your makeup is not on?**
 - a. I am only comfortable with “real good friends” seeing me when I first get out of bed.
 - b. Are you comfortable with Jesus even when you make mistakes and fail? Are you able to talk to Him about your weaknesses and receive His correction without feeling rejected?
 - c. What is your RELATIONSHIP with Him like?

J. Liberty in the Spirit does not mean loose living.

- 1. **I Corinthians 6:12** – Paul was free from everything and everyone, but he walked in wisdom – a function of the Holy Spirit – and only did what was best.
- 2. **Philippians 1:10** – He had learned to choose what was excellent and of real value.

VII. Out Of Debt!

- A. How can a person really experience liberty unless they are free from the bondage of debt?
- B. **Hebrews 9:7** – Once a year for a few minutes, they had a zero balance; then the total started climbing for another year.
 - 1. It is like spending all year trying to pay off last year's Christmas shopping bills. On December 15, you get paid and send in the final payment. On December 16, you do your shopping for the current year; charge everything, and start over.
- C. **Hebrews 9:12** – Once, and for all, Jesus paid with His own blood and life.
- D. Ways we try to pay:
 - 1. Good deeds done from a motive of making up for our sins – our good cannot balance our evil.
 - 2. Guilt and condemnation
 - 3. Self-inflicted punishment – refusing to allow oneself any enjoyment in life:
 - a. **Ecclesiastes 3:12-13** – Enjoying life is very important and is the gift of God.
 - b. **John 10:10; 16:24; 17:13**
 - c. **John 15:11** – If you ABIDE in Me, you will have joy. Abiding has a lot to do with relationship.
 - d. **Psalm 91:1** – Dwelling in the secret place gives us power over the enemy. Dwelling has a lot to do with relationship. **I dwell with my husband. He has me on my good days and bad days.**

- e. My dwelling is where I live. I live there when I am healthy and when I am sick.
- f. Jesus is our **dwelling place – our home**. We stay “in Him” when we have done **good** and when we have made mistakes.

- 4. Excessive work – Work must be balanced with rest and enjoyment.
- 5. Feeling unworthy to pray or fellowship with God

Example: If I have really acted badly with my husband, I might avoid going in the room where he is because I feel uncomfortable knowing what I have done. Once things are right between us again, I have my liberty back.

E. Jesus paid the debt we owed.

- 1. **Hebrews 10:14-18**
- 2. **Isaiah 53:4-5**
- 3. **Romans 4:25**

F. Stop trying to pay for something you can never pay for and stop trying to make others pay what they cannot pay.

- 1. **Matthew 18:25** – He could not pay.
- 2. Get a revelation – YOU CANNOT PAY!
- 3. **Romans 10:4** – Jesus paid! You are free. The Law says **YOU** must pay, **BUT**

CHRIST IS THE END OF THE LAW!

Fellowshipping With God

Foundation Scripture:

I Corinthians 1:9 – *God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.*

I. Draw Near To God.

A. **James 4:8** – Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double minded.

1. Notice that we are told to draw near to God before we are told to stop sinning. WHY? Because it is impossible without **a relationship of fellowship**.
2. Fellowship (defined/Vine's/Greek) – Communion, sharing in common. Communication; a contribution; partnership; partaker, or companion.

Communication seems to be one of the central meanings of the word.

3. **Proverbs 3:6** – In all your ways acknowledge Him.

B. **Psalm 16:8** – *I have set the Lord continually before me; because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.*

1. Stability comes from **a relationship of fellowship**.
2. **Psalm 91:1** – He that **dwelleth** in the secret place shall remain stable and fixed.

Dwell (defined/Vine's/Greek) – To settle down in a dwelling, to dwell fixedly in a place; to inhabit as one's home.

C. We are God's home, His dwelling place; and He is our home.

1. **John 14:20-23** – If we love Him and keep His commandments, He makes His home with us.
2. **I Corinthians 3:16** (KJV) – *Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?*

Collectively as a church **and** individually
3. **Ephesians 3:17** – He makes His permanent home in your hearts.
4. **Philippians 4:7** – He has His home in your hearts and minds.

A real revelation of this could dramatically change our choice of thoughts.
5. **II Timothy 1:14** – The Holy Spirit Who makes His home in us
6. **I John 4:15** – *Anyone who confesses (acknowledges, owns) that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides (lives, makes His home) in him and he [abides, lives, makes his home] in God.*

II. How Close Should The Relationship Be?

- A. **John 15** – Vine/branch close
- B. **John 15:5** – Cannot do anything without Jesus
- C. Cannot even desire to fellowship with Him unless He draws us
 1. **Song of Solomon 1:4** – *Draw me! We will run after you!*
- D. **John 15:4** – We cannot bear fruit unless we abide.
 1. Make proper use of our gifts and talents
 2. Exercise the Fruit of the Spirit in daily living
 3. Walk in obedience
 4. Grow up and mature as a believer

- E. Abide (defined/Vine's/Greek) – To continue, dwell, endure, remain, stand, tarry; constant residence; to remain in a place instead of leaving it.
- F. Are you dating Jesus, or have you taken your final vows and received Him as your Bridegroom?
 - 1. When you are dating a person, you can come and go. If they irritate you, you can stay away for a few days.
 - 2. When you are married, you live together. No matter what happens, you are together. It is meant to be for life, better or worse, sickness or health, wealth or lack.
 - 3. One hour on Sunday morning is not an **abiding** relationship. Five minutes in the morning and evening is not an **abiding** relationship.

III. If We Truly Abide In Christ, There Will Be Evidence To Prove It.

- A. Acts 4:13 – The crowds recognized that Peter and John had been with Jesus.
 - 1. They were bold.
 - 2. They were eloquent even though they were uneducated – just common men.
- B. I John 2:6 – He that abideth in Him ought himself to walk, even as He walked.
 - 1. Jesus walked in love, peace, the Fruit of the Spirit, obedience, and power.
- C. I John 3:6 – *No one who abides in Him [who lives and remains in communion with and in obedience to Him – deliberately, knowingly, and habitually] commits (practices) sin . . .*
 - 1. **This does not guarantee perfection, but the one who fellowships regularly with God will progressively manifest more and more holy behavior.**

2. **II Corinthians 3:18** – As we **continue** to behold Him (in His Word), we are changed into His image from glory to glory.
3. **John 8:31-32** – If you continue (abide) in My Word, you will know the Truth, and the Truth will set you free.

King David said he delighted in God’s Word – **hearing, receiving, loving, and obeying it.**

4. Your prayers are answered when you abide.
 - a. **John 15:7** – If you abide in Me and My Word abides in you, you can ask what you will, and it shall be done for you.
 - b. The person who abides and really knows the Word won’t ask for things out of God’s will.
5. The person who abides in His presence is peaceful; he is not anxious or wrought up.
 - a. **Exodus 33:14** – And He said, “My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.”
 - b. He is not **upset** about life, trials, disappointments, obnoxious people, or anything else.

IV. How Can We Recognize When We Are Truly Fellowshiping With God? How Does It Affect Us?

- A. **I John 4:12-16** – When I fellowship with God, I begin to want to bless someone, to surprise or make someone happy, or to give something away.
 1. **II Corinthians 8:1-5** – The Macedonians had an ordeal of severe tribulation, but their joy was so great that it overflowed in lavish generosity.

2. **Psalm 16:11** – In His presence is fullness of joy.
3. **Psalm 23** – Yea, though I go through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; **my cup runs over.**

The blessing of His presence overrides the discouragement of our trials.

B. When I fellowship with God, it makes me want to apologize to anyone I may have hurt. His presence tenderizes my heart – I want to be kind.

C. I sense great contentment and satisfaction.

1. **John 7:37-38** – If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink! Out of his belly shall flow (continually) springs and rivers of living water.

2. **Psalm 17:15** – *As for me, I will continue beholding Your face in righteousness (rightness, justice, and right standing with You); I shall be fully satisfied, when I awake [to find myself] beholding Your form [and having sweet communion with You].*

D. Everything inside me, in my soul, calms down. My mind gets quiet, my emotions settle, and my will moves into agreement with God.

1. I begin to sense a wonderful peace – the peace that passes understanding!

E. When I am in His presence, He reminds me of things I need to do or have forgotten to take care of.

1. **John 14:26** states that He (the Holy Spirit) will bring to our remembrance all the things Jesus told us.

2. I usually keep a notepad with me while I fellowship with God. If I don't, I forget it again.

F. **John 16:7-15** – When I fellowship with the Holy Spirit:

1. He comforts me, counsels and helps me. He strengthens me and shows me what to pray.
2. He convicts me of sin and convinces me to do things right.
3. He helps me face truth.
4. He declares future events to us. He **prepares us spiritually and often mentally** for things that are ahead.

Example: He may let me know Dave is going to want to play golf on the weekend. If I had another plan, it helps me receive his news graciously.

5. He transmits to me everything Jesus has received from the Father.

This divine transmission is very awesome. **Believe** you are being strengthened, prepared for the day, helped, healed, etc.

**ALL OF GOD’S BLESSINGS ARE RECEIVED
BY THE BELIEVER THROUGH BELIEVING.**

V. Methods Of Coming Into The Presence Of God

- A. He is omnipresent (always present) – we must take time to be **aware** of His presence and work in our lives and to **enjoy** Him.
 1. God wants us to enjoy Him, to enjoy life.
- B. Music, singing, praise and worship
 1. **Ephesians 5:19** – Speak out with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, making melody in your heart unto the Lord.
- C. Thanksgiving
 1. **Ephesians 5:20** – *At all times and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ . . .*

2. **Psalm 100:4** – Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. Be thankful and say so to Him.
- D. Reading the Word in a manner of meditation – not reading for quantity, but for quality. Thinking upon (digesting) each thought it presents. We eat our meals in bites, chewing and enjoying each one. We should approach the Word in the same manner, approaching it as a means to entering the presence of God.
1. Take **Psalm 23** and begin to think about **Verse 1** – “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want!” I don’t know about you, but I sense the presence of God.
 2. There is study for educational purposes and that is handled differently than coming into God’s presence through His Word.
- E. Prayer – especially when we are in a quiet place and truly praying with our whole heart.
1. My prayer is effective even when I pray driving my car, but it is difficult to give my **whole heart** to it at that time. I believe my prayers are answered and effective, but I won’t usually sense the presence of God like I will if I am alone and praying with my whole heart.
 2. Prayer is the foundation for every success. We must not fail to pray regularly. It is not a duty – it is a privilege.
 - a. **Beware of praying “religious” prayers.**
 - b. Repeating memorized prayers that are not really coming out of your heart

Matthew 6:5-7 – Don’t pattern your prayers after the hypocrites.
 - c. Praying to sound eloquent before God or man and not really having your attention focused on God

Luke 18:10-14 – The Pharisee prayed before and with himself.

- F. Being a blessing to someone ushers me into the presence of God.
1. God is love; and when we reach out in love, we will sense His presence.
- G. Learn to be **aware** of God's presence. This requires not living life in a big hurry all the time.
1. Take time to recognize God at work.
 - a. Thank you, Lord, for giving me favor in the department store.
 - b. Thanks, Lord, for getting me a parking space close to the building so I did not have to walk far in the rain.
 - c. Thank you, Lord, for reminding me that my purse was sitting on the floor under the chair.
 - d. Thank you, Lord, that my friend called me and encouraged me.
 2. We should be a lot more excited about the things God is doing in our lives.

If we are faithful to be excited, amazed, and thankful about the **little things**, He will give us bigger things to be excited, amazed, and thankful for.

**THE SMALLEST OF BLESSINGS IS NOT INSIGNIFICANT –
IT IS GOD WORKING!**

