

Love Not Right

Little Watchman

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Published in Australia

First Publishing December 2019

Smashwords Edition

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Also by Little Watchman

Basic Christianity

The Bigger Picture

Little Watchman Translation (of the New Testament)

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Introduction

While it is incredibly important for the church that we do build our doctrine correctly on good foundations, and that we “rightly divide” the message of the Bible, there is a teaching contained in that very message which tells us of something even more important than the message itself.

According to the Bible, the overriding principle in all our relationships, in the way in which we relate to God, and in the way we relate to everyone around us, both Christian and non, is that we should love them.

Throughout the last 2,000 years Christians have argued amongst themselves, almost without ceasing, about what is true, and about who is right. This has led to division amongst the church itself, and a deserved reputation amongst unbelievers that we, (and therefore Yeshua as well), are all judgemental hypocrites.

We need to put that thinking aside to ask ourselves something far more important than “Who is right?” We need to start asking, “Who is loving?”

And if the answer is not “We are”, if the answer is not “I am”, then we need to change our behaviour. We need to change our thinking. And we need to change it today.

This little book is an attempt to start some discussions, to get Christians thinking, and to move us toward a reputation as a group of people who are known for their love of others. To put aside our preoccupation with who is right and to focus on doing what we were commanded - loving one another. To focus on Love, not Right.

A Dream

One night Christian had a dream where he was taken by an angel to visit two very different worlds.

He was told that the first was called Youtopia. On Youtopia he noticed that everything was very clean. The streets were tidy, the cars were all new. The lawns were manicured, the paths were swept. Everyone was polite and well mannered. It was safe, secure. Pristine.

As they walked around, observing, he started to notice that all the men were dressed almost identically, the same light suit, the same brimmed hat. The women too, all wore similar knee length calico frocks and wide brimmed white sun hats. In fact, as he listened, he realised that even their manner of speaking was almost all the same. And the more he looked, the more he thought that they even walked the same, and used the same gestures and mannerisms. It was almost as if they were all, clones – of him!

He watched a small child playing happily with a ball in the front yard of a house near a big oak tree. As his gaze wandered down the street he realised that all the houses looked pretty much the same too, in fact, even all the streets looked much like the same street repeated over and over.

But he also noticed an unusual bronze pole, about a meter tall, on every street corner. He was about to ask the angel what the poles were for, when suddenly, behind him, he heard a screech and a loud BANG. He turned to see a car, crunched against the oak tree, with steam coming from under the hood, and a soccer ball rolling slowly across the road. His thoughts instantly turned to the child, fearing that he might have run out after the ball, and be lying dead or injured between the car and the tree. But then he noticed the boy standing in the yard with his mother, as she called back to her husband inside the house.

The driver slowly emerged from the vehicle. Unhurt, but clearly quite angry. When the father of the child came out he went straight up to the driver. And, after they had politely exchanged a few words, they walked over to the bronze pole together. They both placed their hands on the top of the pole and raised their voices to utter a single word, “Judgement”.

Christian looked at the angel quizzically, only to have him motion back to the two men with a wave of his upturned hand. Suddenly a voice came from the pole. “The judgement of the court is that the child has violated Rule 16b, subsection 7 of the Home Play Act, ‘*No child will play with a ball in an unfenced yard when there is a foreseeable possibility of the ball rolling onto a vehicular thoroughfare.*’ The child is to be brought to the nearest Center of Justice for immediate punishment.”

“Punishment?” Christian asked the angel. Shocked.

“The law is the law. Punishment is the just penalty for breaking a rule.”

“Come”, he said, “we’ve seen enough here. Let me take you to Agapegia.”

Agapegia was very different. Very. For starters it was messy, well, more disorderly than messy. And there were some very odd looking people, wearing some questionable fashion choices. He saw the occasional tattoo, and even some pink hair. (And that was

a dog!). The cars were all different, the houses were all different, the people were all different. And yet, walking down the streets, it still felt remarkably safe. Everybody smiled at him as they walked along, sort of nodding hello as if they had seen him around but didn't know his name.

As they turned a corner near the shade of a big oak he saw a small child playing catch with his dog in their front yard. Instantly his gut wrenched as he recalled the horrifying scene from Youtopia. Christian turned nervously to the angel to ask if they should stop the child playing in the yard, but the angel was smiling back at him, as if he knew what he was thinking. "It's OK" he smiled, "Watch". Christian turned back anxiously to see a car coming down the street just as the child and the dog both jumped for the ball at the same time, knocking it out of the yard towards the road.

As the car came nearer it slowed down, and stopped right in front of the child's house. A young woman with a pierced nose and a shaved head stepped out of her car, picked up the ball and walked up to the child. She lovingly bent over, and, passing the ball back to the child, she said with a wink, "Perhaps you and your beautiful little doggie should play in the back yard. Let's go and ask your mom."

And holding the little child's hand she walked him to the front door and knocked gently. "Your little guy was playing catch with his dog in the front yard. I thought I had better stop and let you know."

"Thank you, that's so thoughtful of you.

Please, come on in. I'm Janet, do you drink coffee?"

Youtopia and Agapegia are actually two churches. Maybe you've visited them.

Youtopia is a church built on the Law. You get there by focusing on Old Testament law, and the Pharisaical things which come with that, legalism, self-righteousness, judgement, condemnation. There is lots of stern looks, finger pointing, tut-tutting in those churches. Lots of gossip. Lots of pride.

The end result of always judging others and legalistically applying punishments and disciplines without grace is that only people who are exactly like you will stay. Others will be driven away. (And good riddance).

But even then you won't really be happy, because on the inside you know that even you, yourself, don't live up to the standards you impose on others. You know that Yeshua was right, you're a whitewashed tomb, filled with death and decay, but pretending to everyone else that the façade of your life is the truth.

Inside you know that you're a hypocrite. You live in fear of being found out. And it will eat away at you. Youtopia is a miserable place. It's dominated by control, fear, hatred. Strangers are distrusted and judged for who and what they are. They are definitely not welcome.

Agapegia is what the New Testament church is supposed to be like. There are no rules because none are needed. Everyone lives in freedom, by the spirit. And everyone always considers others as more important than themselves, everyone does to others as they would have others do to them. Everyone lives out Yeshua's command, "Love others the way I have loved you."

Agapegia is a beautiful place. People are happy there. They are confident to be themselves. It's dominated by freedom, peace, love. Strangers are loved and accepted no matter who or what they are. They are more than welcome.

Listen to what the spirit says to the churches.

To the church of Agapegia the spirit says, "Well done good and faithful servants. You have honoured me, I will honour you. You have shown that you are my disciples by loving each other the way I loved you. You have lived grace and love. I am so proud of you. I am proud to have you represent me. Come and share in my blessing."

To the church of Youtopia the spirit says, "Go away from me. I never knew you. I loved you, you hated. I forgave you, you judged. I sacrificed myself for you, you cared only for yourselves. You have no part in my blessing."

Let the one who has ears, hear what the spirit says to the churches.

Love, not Right.

The Right Question

Stop for a few seconds and look carefully at these two images. Make a note of what you see.



I'm guessing that you thought something like, "The boy's hat is gone. The girl is looking the other way. The bucket and spade are the other way around." Oh, that's right... and the umbrella has rotated around too".

Let me tell you what I see. I see two pictures of the same boy and the same girl building the same sandcastle on the same beach near the same umbrella. Do you get my point? It is very easy to see differences. It comes naturally to us. But I didn't tell you to look for the differences - you just assumed. It's not so easy to see similarities, to see the things which unify us. It's not easy to see the 99% we have in common with each other, but it's incredibly easy to see the 1% we have that's different. And when it comes to church... we not only see the 1% difference, we think our way is right, and their way is wrong, and we divide ourselves because of it. And Sadly this is nothing new. It has always been a problem. Paul said this in 1 Corinthians:

"Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly – mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men? For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not mere men?"

What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe – as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building."

We are so quick to divide. I think it's because we're obsessed with being right. With being right and being seen to be right.

But who cares who's right! It's almost impossible to find a Bible passage where God teaches us that we must be right. But there are many where he says, regardless of who is right and wrong... love one another. For example, "The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not

rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated?" The question that God would ask, is not "Who is right?" He would ask, "Who is loving?"

1 Corinthians 12 is about how we are all different but we are all part of the one body. In fact, we are designed to all be different. You are a hand, I'm a foot, someone else is an eye. But we are all needed. We are all part of the same body. We are not a cloud, and a hammer, and a tree, things with nothing in common. We are all parts of a body. Yeshua's body. And how ridiculous it would be if the eyes said that the other parts were no longer parts of the body because they were not eyes!

1 Peter 2 tells us that we are a building of living stones. Stones. Not bricks. We are not all identical. But we are all the same. Rocks are all rocks. Each one looks a little different, but they are all still rocks. We are all part of the same building. Bricks are all exactly the same. If we were a building of bricks, that would be uniformity. But we're meant to be all a little different. A building of stones is unity, not uniformity.

We need to focus on the bits that are the same, not on the bits that are different. The Bible says that we are all living stones. Don't you think that's incredible! Have you ever seen a living stone before? And yet, instead of greeting other Christians with, "Wow. Another living stone. How awesome to meet you." We greet them with, "You're different. You're not welcome."

Let's focus on our similarities not on our differences.

Let's aim for unity not for uniformity.

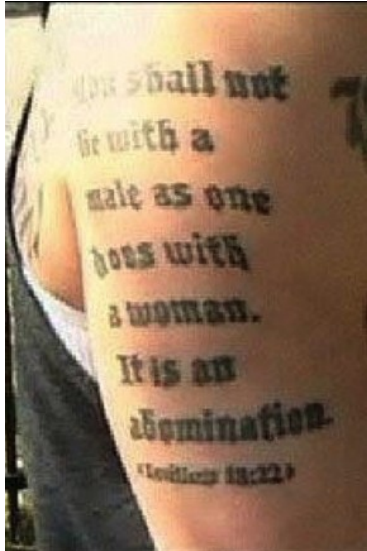
Let's love one another and not divide over who is different, over who is right.

Let's unite in Love, not Right.

The Law

Somehow when we start heading down that road of judging others according to some list of do's and don'ts we never seem to apply that same list to ourselves.

This is exactly what Yeshua was talking about when he said, "Hypocrite. Why do you point out the speck of dust in your brother's eye and you miss the plank of timber in your own eye."



Tattoo quoting Leviticus 18:22 forbidding homosexuality - \$200

Not knowing that Leviticus 19:28 forbids tattoos - priceless

This guy, (with the tattoo), was so caught up on judging people by using the old testament law against homosexuality that he didn't even realise that he was breaking that very same law himself. James said, if you want to keep one part of the law, then you have to keep all of it. You can't pick and choose. It's all or none.

I see quite a few Christians wanting to judge other people by using the old testament Jewish law. Using that law to "prove" that God hates whatever behaviour it is that they don't like, and that they don't want you doing.

Yet I've never met a single Christian who was promoting the concept that we should ban anyone from church if they have eaten pork. Or even if they have ever broken the Sabbath, (Saturday), by working, or by not spending it resting to honour God.

What gives anyone the right to choose which of these old testament laws should be enforced and which ones shouldn't? And why do that same list of enforceable vs acceptable breaches of the law always coincidentally fall into the same categories as "ones which other people break" vs "ones which I break".

Why are we so full of hypocrisy? How are we so blind to it ourselves?

We know that we are saved by grace and yet we can't resist reverting to the law in order to show how others are wrong and I am right. How others are evil and I am good.

But all we really show is how blind, and ignorant, and so full of self importance and self righteousness we really are.

Christians are NOT under the Law. The Law was for the Jews, and Yeshua fulfilled it on the cross. It's done. It only serves us now as a guideline for the kind of behaviour God wanted for his people. Christians are free to do anything, and we must choose wisely.

Particularly when it comes to non-believers. Somehow the church seems to think it has a role to point out, (vocally), where the world is sinning. But it is the holy spirit's job to make non Christians aware of their sin. That has never been our task. John the Baptist had a powerful ministry of repentance to the Jewish believers, not to the Gentile non believers.

Yeshua gave us a new commandment. Love one another. So that non-Christians would know that we are his disciples. They won't realise that if all we are on about is judgement and condemnation.

Of course we are right when we speak about their sin, and about their destination if they continue in it. But it is not about who is right. It should be about who is loving.

Paul said the same thing in Romans 2. You who judge others, you are condemning yourself because you who judge do the same things.

We think we are oh so smart and oh so good. But if we really looked at our own hearts we would see that we are just as vile and putrid as those we judge.

Paul said, "You who preach against stealing, do you dishonour God by robbing temples?" We draw the line just in front of where we think we stand ourselves. But God draws the line at perfection. We pretend we're OK because we are on the right side of our own line, without realising how far we have crossed to the wrong side of God's line.

Do you want God to treat you with judgment or with forgiveness? Do you want God to prove that he is right or to love you anyway?

Then do to others what you want them to do to you. Stop judging and forgive. Stop needing to be right and start loving.

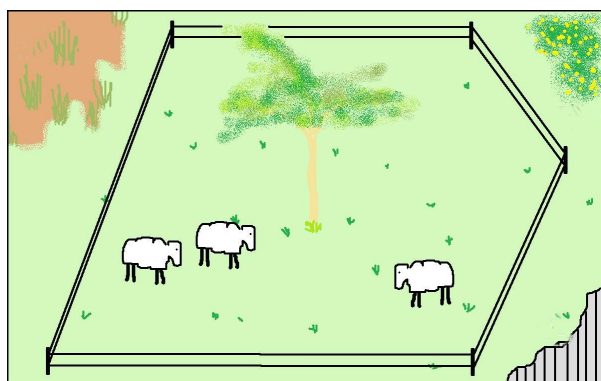
Start Love, not Right.

Grace

If you've read "The Bigger Picture" then you already know this, but just in case you haven't, I'll mention it again. There are no actual rules for Christians.

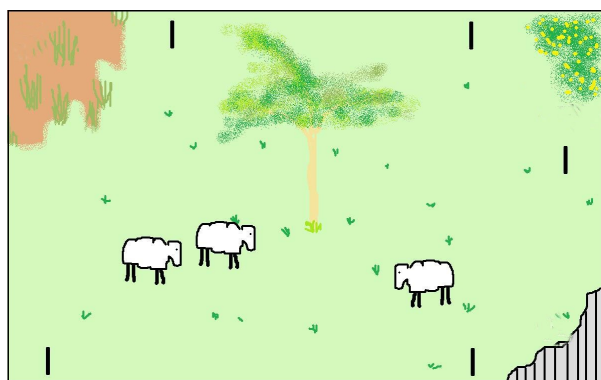
In the Old Testament the Law was pretty black and white. The line between what was acceptable behaviour and what was not, was clearly spelled out in Jewish Law. Particularly in the 10 Commandments.

They were sort of like fences around a flock of sheep. They controlled where the sheep were able to go. For their own protection - the fences stopped them going places that were dangerous for them to be. Keeping them away from the boggy swamp, and back from the edge of the cliff.



But the Old Testament, (the old covenant), has been replaced by the New Testament, (the new covenant). We are no longer under The Law because Yeshua fulfilled it and it was nailed to the cross and crucified with him.

We are under Grace. The new covenant is about grace and forgiveness. About love and acceptance. It's no longer about rules and regulations.



The fences are gone. You can still see the old fence posts, and we know where the fences used to be. (We can still read them in the Old Testament. We just need to remember that those rules no longer apply to us). But now, there are no fences actually stopping us from going wherever we want to go.

The problem is, when there are no fences sheep, (and humans), just want to run wild. Kind of like teenagers as they start to become adults. They realise that they will no longer be under their parents' rules and they just want to take full advantage of that new found freedom. Sadly too many of them abuse that freedom by getting into alcohol and drugs, sleeping around, or getting into all sorts of trouble.

With freedom comes responsibility. We are suddenly free to do whatever we want, but we will have to answer for the choices that we make.

Remembering where the fences used to be is a good way of keeping ourselves out of trouble. Now we are allowed to eat the grass over near the dandelions, but to get near the dandelions we will have to cross that old boundary. And when we do that we should be very aware that this used to be against the rules and it may be dangerous. But there is nothing actually stopping us from going there. And it is not necessarily wrong to do it.

Some people get freaked out by the lack of fences and they try to build new ones of their own. A bit like the Pharisees did. I'm sure they mean well, but they not only build new fences for themselves they try to build them for others too. They make new rules to replace the old ones. No drinking, no smoking, no dancing, no movies. These are all rules made up by people to make them feel safer, to make them feel like things are under control. Some of them are good principles, but this is not God's way. It is not Christianity. Christians are free. Completely free to do whatever they want.

Some people are very self righteous. They think that they are righteous, but they don't realise that none of us are righteous in our own effort. They worry that if we have no rules then we will run wild and do all sorts of terrible things. Paul even said that making rules like "don't touch this", "don't eat that", sounds like it's a good idea. He said that these rules have the appearance of wisdom. But he also said that they lack any value whatsoever in restraining the indulgence of the flesh. This thinking that we need to have rules to control us is founded in human wisdom. It is based on fear. And it doesn't even work.

God has created this system where we are completely free. Trust him. He knows what he is doing.

These "rules people" forget one massive difference between New Covenant Christians and Old Covenant Jews. Christians have the holy spirit - teaching, guiding, helping, empowering us, not only to do the right thing, but to want to do the right thing. If Christian "sheep" start wandering along the edge of the cliff they will soon be reminded by the holy spirit that this is a dangerous pastime. If we are willing to listen to him, and to obey, then even though we have complete freedom we will not fall into the same dangers that sheep used to fall into before the Law was given.

The Bible has quite a lot to say about wisdom. And especially about man's wisdom versus God's wisdom. About how people think they know what is right, but how far superior God's thinking is than ours. And how, no matter how smart, or clever, or righteous we think we are, we need to go to God and to ask for his advice all the time when it comes to making wise decisions. We need to learn to rely on his wisdom and not on our own understanding.

When we do that, we will be able to use our freedom wisely.

Just like when I became an adult, I knew that my father's rules about eating vegetables, and holding his hand when I crossed the road, no longer applied to me, but I still kept

them in mind as guidelines for a good life. I still eat vegetables, and I'm still careful when crossing the road. So too, Christians should continue to make wise decisions for their life, based on and guided by those old rules, but not bound by them. And relying on wisdom from the holy spirit, not on wisdom from themselves.

We are free. We are no longer subject to those rules and their consequences.

We are under Grace, not under Law.

So we shouldn't even be using the Law to decide whether we are right or wrong, let alone using it to decide if others are right or wrong. And worse, excluding them on the basis of that judgement.

We're all under grace. We should be showing grace, not judgement.

Let's live by Love, not Right.

Love

Actually, there is one rule. There was one thing which Yeshua told us to do that he said was a commandment. Not optional. But it's such a big thing that it sort of goes beyond rules. It really is a principle to live by more than a rule that you have to follow. So I'm sticking with the "there are no rules" thing. But let's see how this principle should change the way we live. It can even change the very focus of our lives.

In John 13, Yeshua gave his disciples a new commandment. "Love one another". It's the only commandment he ever gave us. So it's important. In fact, Yeshua said that when the world sees how we love one another they will realise that we are his disciples. When we love one another the way Yeshua loved us, the world will realise who we are. Not when they see the size of our mega-church. Not when they see how prosperous we are. Not even when they hear how great our music is. Not even when they listen to our amazing preaching. But when they see how much we love one another.

In Matthew 22 Yeshua summed up the old testament Law in two statements. "love God" and "love one another". He was saying that if you did both of those, properly, completely, then you have satisfied the law. And he was right. (Of course).

As we read the Bible and build up "the bigger picture" in our heads it seems that in old testament times God's dealing with man had more of an emphasis on the first... "love God". But in new testament times, (which includes now), God seems to be dealing with us in a different way. Now his emphasis is on the second... "love one another". Of course the Jews had to love one another too, but that wasn't their focus. And Christians have to love God too, but that's not our focus. Yeshua didn't command us to do that. He commanded us to love one another. That should be our focus.

Wouldn't that revolutionise our evangelism if our starting point was that people already realised that we are Yeshua's disciples? If they already knew us because they had seen, or at least heard about, our famous love for one another.

A lot of Christians think they do love one another. But I think this is a bit like the rule from the old covenant which told people to honour their parents. Most people I ask whether they have honoured their parents think that they have.

Have **you**?

But you can see the gears working when I ask them, "Oh. That's great to hear. What did you do? Did you hold a parade? Did you build a statue? How did you honour them?"

Now of course I'm being obtuse just to make a point. Most of us read that old law "Honour your father and mother" but in our heads we think, "Do not dishonour your father and mother". But really that's not the same thing.

And I think most of us read Yeshua's commandment the same way. He said, "Love one another" but in our heads we hear it as "Do not hate one another". Very different. Very very different.

Most churches are pretty good at not hating one another. But very few would really score high on actively loving one another. In fact in most churches, they hardly even know one another, let alone love them.

Look around the next time you go to church. Ask yourself questions about each person you see. What is their name? What do they do? Do they have a pet? A hobby? Have you ever eaten a meal together with them? Do you really love them? Really? What have you done to love them?

God wants us to focus particularly on this one thing... loving one another. I have seen churches where they have come to this realization and they have really tried actively to love one another. It was a beautiful thing. But it's not easy. And even when we do come to this realization and we do want to love one another. How do we do that? What does that really mean? How do we live that out?

We have to do it. So we have to work out how. We can't use "We don't know how" as an excuse. It's a commandment, not a suggestion.

We are commanded to Love, not Right.

Not Not Hate

Have you ever done something which you later realised has really hurt one of your good friends? The kind of thing which makes you try to avoid them for a while because you know that that conversation is going to be pretty uncomfortable.

Peter did that. He told Yeshua that he would stand by him even if it meant his own death. Yeshua said he wouldn't, he said that Peter would deny him completely to save his own life. Yeshua was right.

At the time when Yeshua needed him the most, when he was falsely arrested, when he had every right to expect his friends to stand up in his defence... That very night, just as Yeshua had said, Peter denied three times that he even knew Yeshua. And as he denied it the third time he heard the rooster crow, and remembering what Yeshua had said, he looked over to where Yeshua was. At the same moment Yeshua lifted his head and looked directly at Peter. I can imagine Yeshua's look of disappointment, I can imagine that gut-wrenching knot that would have formed in the pit of Peter's stomach as he saw that disappointment on Yeshua's face and realised what he had just done. No wonder he went off and bawled his eyes out. I probably would have been sick. That realisation, and knowing that there was nothing you could do to take it back.

And after you have let your friend down, eventually the day comes when avoiding each other is no longer possible and you have to face them. You know they have every right to hate you, to yell at you, to abuse you. Fortunately you're among a bigger group of friends, ... but then, "Can we talk?"

The anxiety, the pounding heart, the cold clammy sweats as you walk off together to a quieter place.

And then Yeshua asks Peter, "Do you love me?" Nailed. How can he respond to that? If he says "Yes" then Yeshua can ask, "Then why did you abandon me in my hour of need!" Peter knows that when it came down to it, he didn't love Yeshua at all. Peter humbly answers with the truth, "No." He says, "You know I'm fond of you."

Are you married? Can you imagine if your spouse asked, "Do you love me?" and you replied with, "You know I'm fond of you"? What life expectancy would you put on that relationship! It's in a bad place.

Yeshua asks Peter again, "Do you love me?" and Peter replies again, "I'm fond of you." Do you think he's wondering if Yeshua is letting him get away with this? Do you think he's hoping "fond of" is enough? Do you think he's squirming, knowing that he deserves to feel this uncomfortable?

The third time Yeshua asks Peter, "Are you fond of me?" Peter knows that he's nailed. He knows he didn't get away with it. He knows that Yeshua knows. "Yes Lord, you know everything. I'm fond of you."

Sometimes our relationships aren't what we think they are. Sometimes we need to "have a talk" and be honest with each other. Yeshua didn't yell and scream at Peter for only being fond of him. This was more like, "I'm glad we had this talk. I'm glad we both understand where we're at in this relationship. Let's move ahead now that we understand each other and build something great."

I imagine Peter thought he was about to get the, “well in that case you can’t be part of my team any more” speech. But Yeshua isn’t like us. His love is unconditional. He sees the long term. He sees the potential. And he reinstates Peter as the leader of his disciples.

How about you? Do you love Yeshua? How about other people? Do you love them? Especially the people in your church? Or are you just fond of him, fond of them?

Yeshua gave us one commandment, “love one another”, but most of the time we’re just fond of each other. (or worse). Most of the churches I’ve seen are satisfied that they don’t hate one another. But loving and not hating are not the same thing.

Just like that “honour your parents” rule from the old covenant. It is not, “don’t dishonour your parents”. And “love one another” is not the same as “don’t hate one another”.

Someone somewhere came up with the idea of rating relationships according to a scale of 0..5. I don’t recall who it was. Maybe it was Bruce Crowther.

0 - You don’t know them at all

1 - You recognise them and maybe nod “hello” as you walk past each other. Maybe you see them in the lift at work, maybe in your apartment building.

2 - You say “hello” and talk but you don’t take any risks with what you talk about, it’s safe stuff, like the weather, or simple facts like whether the traffic is bad.

3 - You’re starting to have a real relationship, you share opinions and feelings, carefully. Still about the weather, or sports, but being careful not to offend them, but starting to take the risk of telling them how you feel about these facts or events.

4 - You have a fairly open relationship. You share opinions and feelings openly, and about bigger things, like politics, or religion. And you might argue for a different opinion, but you do still keep some personal things secret.

5 - You are totally, 100%, completely honest and open about everything, regardless of how the other person might respond. You can still be tactful, but you don’t try to hide who you are from the other person. You don’t pretend that you have one opinion or ideology when you have another. This is pretty rare. Most people can only be this open with God. Some with their spouse...

It’s easy to move a relationship to the next level because you can start the conversation and make it as deep as you want. The risk, is that the other person won’t be comfortable with that, and they will break off the relationship, or reject you in some way. But if we never took risks in relationships, then we would live in a lonely world where everyone was a “1”. Take the risk. It’ll be worth it.

It’s quite an interesting exercise to rate your church using this scale. Get a large sheet of paper, and write your name in the middle. Walk around your church group, asking each one to write their name somewhere around the edge. Join the two names with a

line. Ask them to write their rating of your relationship along that line, near their name. Then you write your rating near your name. (And do the same on their sheet).

After you have collected 10-20 names, sit down somewhere and look at them. Did you always rate the relationship the same as the other person did? Were your numbers higher or lower? Why is that? Has one of you gotten the wrong idea of the relationship? Is one of you holding back?

In big churches you might have quite a few 1's, but in most smaller churches you will probably have lots of 2's. Hopefully you have at least some 3's.

But if yours is a typical church, then you might not. Most churches are full of 1's and 2's. We're supposed to love one another and the best we can do is talk about the weather! How are we going to explain that to Yeshua when he asks, "Did you do what I told you?"

It's too easy to make excuses, like, there are too many people to know them all. Or, we're just busy people leading busy lives. We don't live near each other. But what it comes down to, is that we can make excuses or we can do what we were commanded.

Make the time to go and find each of those people, and start a conversation. Or call them. But work out how you can start the conversation to move it up a level. Share some feelings and opinions with them. Do what you can to move each relationship to a "3". Then next week, do what you can to keep it there.

Now of course, "3" isn't really cutting it in the "love one another" stakes either is it? If we really loved one another the way Yeshua loved us we would all be 4's and 5's. Although 5 is pretty rare. To be totally, 100% honest is difficult. And not always a good idea, sometimes a little tact is a very good thing in a relationship. But being a "5" is more about being open about your ideas. You can still keep some information personal, but don't hide who you are. Hopefully you have a 5 relationship with God, and hopefully with your spouse, if you have one.

But if all your church relationships were 4's that would be an amazing church to be part of. Maybe it's idealistic. But so was "love one another the way I have loved you". I think it's worth trying for. I think it's doable.

Let's work out how we can improve our relationships.

Let's take a step closer to Love, not Right.

But How?

Some time ago now, Gary Chapman wrote a book called “Five Love Languages”. If you have never read it, then get one and read it. The concepts in that book are fundamental if you want to actively love others. And if you can get a hold of those ideas and put them into practise then your love life, (your love others life), will explode.

In the book he describes 5 “languages” or styles that we all have of feeling loved. There is more explanation later in the chapter, but they are Receiving Gifts, Quality Time, Acts of Service, Physical Touch/Intimacy, Words of Encouragement.

But that causes a problem. If, for example, my love language is Acts of Service, but yours is Words of Encouragement. Even if I choose to obey Yeshua’s command and to actively love you. But I try to show you love in my language, by Acts of Service, by doing something for you. Then you will not understand what I am saying. I will be saying “I love you” but you won’t understand it. Because you feel loved when people give you genuine compliments about yourself. You will probably appreciate what I did at some level, but you won’t really feel loved the way you would have if I had complimented your new shoes, or the painting you did.

If your language is Words of Encouragement, and I want to show you love, then I need to give you a compliment. A genuine compliment, not flattery, but one which makes you feel good about yourself.

If you only speak English and I say 愛するよ then you just won’t understand what I’m saying. In the same way, if I speak one love language but it’s not the one you understand, then I’m not showing you the love that I think I am showing you. To properly communicate my love to you I need to know your love language. And to know that, I have to get to know you.

But this love languages thing can revolutionise your church. Not just loving one another, but doing it in the language of the one who is being loved.

Find the Gifts people in your church and give them gifts. It doesn’t have to be expensive, but wrap it nicely, make some effort.

Find the Quality Time people in your church and spend time with them focused on doing what they love doing. Not just with them, but focused on them. (And let them choose the activity).

Find the Acts of Service people and do something for them. This one is tough because these people really struggle to let others do things for them. You might have to settle for doing things with them instead of for them. And show your appreciation for what they do for you by just thanking them. Privately.

Find the Physical Touch people in your church and give them a hug, or a pat on the shoulder, or tell them a secret. (Chapman’s “Physical Touch” language is more about intimacy and trust, and not just about touch).

Find the Words of Encouragement people in your church and compliment them on something. But make sure it's true, and that you mean it. They are very suspicious of false compliments.

Loving one another, in their love language, is fundamental to being a successful church. You have to make this happen. It's not optional.

So, what are these "love languages"? And how will you know who is which?

Receiving Gifts

Gifts people love getting gifts. Particularly gifts that show that you have put some thought and effort into it. Gifts that show that you have specifically chosen this gift based on knowing them and what they like.

Don't give gifts people a gift that is not wrapped, even if it's really expensive. The fact that you have taken time to do the wrapping is important to them. And the fact that you didn't, says that you don't really care. Don't give them a generic gift, it has to be something specifically for them. And definitely do not give them a gift voucher unless you absolutely know, (as in they specifically told you), that this is what they want. For them, it's not the gift it's the thought that counts. Don't ever forget their birthday. And if you travel somewhere make sure you buy them at least something small that they will like.

You can recognize Gifts people by the gifts they give you. They will be nicely wrapped. Possibly with hand made cards, or customised wrappings. And the gifts they give you will have taken a lot of thought and will usually match you really well.

Quality Time

Quality Time people want you to spend time with them doing the things that they are interested in. Checking your email on your laptop while you watch a girlie movie with your wife is not quality time. Deliberately leaving your laptop at the office so you can watch a girlie movie with your wife is great quality time, (as long as she likes watching girlie movies of course). Don't ever try to do two things at once while spending time with them. The issue is... are you focusing on me? Are we doing this thing together? Or are we just in the same location?

It is really hard to recognise quality time people. If I am trying to work out someone's love language, usually I arrive at Quality Time by eliminating all the others. But often they have a special hobby that they love to do by themselves for hours at a time. Gardening, reading, rebuilding cars... things like that.

Acts of Service

As a strict definition, Acts of Service people want you to do something for them. But actually I have found that in reality, Acts of Service people usually want to do something for you. They will feel really valued and loved if they can do something for you that helps you a lot.

But unlike the other love languages, Acts of Service people really struggle to receive their own love language back. They feel guilty, like they should be helping you, not letting you help them. They really struggle with letting others do things for them. So, often the best you can do to show them love is to help them do something together for someone else. Sometimes, like if they're moving house or something like that, then they will let you help them, but usually only if they are helping too. Even if they are really sick, they're probably going to feel very uncomfortable with you doing something like cooking dinner for them.

If your wife is an Acts of Service person you had better keep a very short list of things that need fixing around the house.

And be careful if you are turning down their offer of help. They will hear "I hate you". Make sure they know you love them first, and that you value their offer. Then tell them why you don't need their help. For example, "I don't need a lift to the airport because my company will pay for a taxi". They can accept that.

You can recognise Acts of Service people very easily. They are always the ones in the kitchen washing up after group dinners. They are the ones who always turn up for working bees. They are the ones stacking the chairs and sweeping the floors.

Churches make good use of their Acts of Service people but they don't always make them feel appreciated. And as much as they would like to hear a quiet thank you every now and then, what they really would like is if you could get in there and help them.

Physical Touch/Intimacy

Physical Touch people love being touched and hugged. They like having their hair played with. They like holding hands. But of course that's not always going to be possible or appropriate in a church! Actually, I think these people are actually more about intimacy and closeness than about physical touch. I think physical touch is just a common way of showing intimacy. If we feel close to people we let them touch us. So these people feel loved when you let them touch you.

I find that the people Chapman calls Physical Touch also feel loved if they are included in secrets. They feel loved if you confide in them. And from what I have seen they can usually be trusted to keep those secrets. So that's a good combination. You can also trust them with a special authority or information that nobody else is allowed to know.

If it's your spouse, then touch their hair, or shoulder as you walk past them. Physical Touch is very politically incorrect in many cultures these days, so you need to be very careful how you show love to these people. But you will know. And when touch would be inappropriate, try to share confidences with them instead. Open up about yourself. What they are looking for is closeness. They want to feel close to you. And that doesn't have to be physical.

Be careful when pushing them away. They will hear it as "I hate you". So make sure if you do need to push, add an explanation something like "I don't hate you, but I need space right now". They will probably still feel a bit hurt, but they will get over it faster.

Physical Touch people are usually very easy to recognize. They are usually the "touchy feely" types. The ones who touch your arm when they talk with you.

Words of Encouragement

Words of Encouragement people want compliments. But they only want compliments if they think you are being genuine and if they think they deserve it. So don't over do it, and don't exaggerate.

But way more importantly for this love language, the one thing they do not want is criticism. If you criticize them they will hear "I hate you", even if all you said was "Yes, you're right the pasta you cooked is a bit salty". If you do need to criticize them over something, make sure you have built a good solid foundation of compliments first, (over a period of time), and make sure that they *know* that you love them. They must know it, really know it. Then you need to give them another compliment now. And then you can mention the criticism. Don't make a big deal about it, just mention it almost in passing, and then follow it up with another compliment. They will know what you are saying. And if you do it this way, they will hear "I love you, but yes, you're right the pasta was a little salty. But the dessert was one of the best ever". You don't need to spell out the criticism as much as you would with other people. Keep it low key. They will exaggerate it in their own heads anyway.

Words of Encouragement people are very easy to recognize if you criticize them. And even if you don't, particularly if they are not feeling all that loved in recent times, they can become very critical of everything and everyone. They can be very judgemental.

The other thing that helps to identify Words of Encouragement people, is that they often have a habit of telling you the same story many times. Usually stories about them, and usually stories that make them look good.

So... which one are you? What about the other important people in your life, which ones are they? What about the other people around you? What about the people at church?

How is knowing that going to change how you interact with them? How will it change how you react to things which they do and say? How will it change how you show love to them?

How will this help you and your church to Love, not Right?

Acceptance

If Christians are as free as we have claimed, then how can we judge others?

We can't.

I think the other reason we love rules so much is that when there are rules it gives us an easy way to judge others. And even though Yeshua told us not to, we still love to do it. Almost like we can't help ourselves.

If there is a law saying, "No Dancing", then it is easy to point the finger at a dancing couple and shake my head with a "Tsk. Tsk." But if there is no law against it, what can I do? I might think that I wouldn't dance like that. But so what?

All I can do is love them. Accept them. And leave it to the holy spirit to decide if he wants to do anything about their dancing.

I'm only guessing, but based on my own journey to perfection, I assume that you also didn't change overnight. You didn't wake up one morning a lost sinner and go to sleep that night a perfect Christian not needing any more correction in anything you do. In fact, based on my own journey, I would say that if you were honest, you would admit that most of the time you feel like you're not even close.

When God was preparing his people to enter the Promised Land he told them that he would drive out their enemies little by little. Not in a single year, otherwise the wild animals would become too numerous for them. Little by little, as they grew to take the place of what was driven out.

It's the same with our sin journey. God drives out our sin little by little, one at a time. Then, as we respond and grow in righteousness, he drives out a little more. But he does the driving, and he chooses which sin to work on next. (Or, too often in my case, again).

About 20 years ago a young guy came to preach at our church. He told of his conversion from drug dealer to full on Christian evangelist. And his new full time ministry helping drug addicts find Yeshua and reform their lives. It was a powerful message.

During the morning tea break he went outside for a cigarette. I saw him through the glass doors, alone. So I went out to chat. "Seems like nobody likes you" I said to break the ice. "It happens everywhere" he said. Looking back through the doors I could see people staring as they talked with each other and sipped their coffee, some of them even "tut tut"ing as they shook their heads.

"It's only tobacco" he said, "A year ago I was on heroin. I think I'm doing pretty good!"

Why do we expect every other Christian to be in the same place as us when it comes to dealing with their sin? They didn't start in the same place, they didn't start at the same time, and they are not us. (Fortunately for them!)

God deals with our sins little by little, one at a time, in his order. Why can't we let him have the freedom to do that in other Christians' lives too. Why do we feel the need to set the agenda for them? Like we know what we're talking about! And like we know what he should be doing.

Sadly I also see this a lot with married couples. They knew each other when they got married. They loved each other, and accepted those flaws in the other person. They publicly promised to God that they would love this person until one of them dies.

And yet, after a few years they are demanding that the other person change. If they've got it bad they nag and badger the other person all the time, putting them down in public for what they perceive is a sin. Some self righteous spouses know they shouldn't do that so they just pray to God every day to change their partner.

Mind your own business. It's not your job to change your spouse. It's not your job to tell God how and when to change your spouse. Look at the plank in your own eye.

God is slowly transforming each one of us to the image of his son. Not that we should have a beard and long hair, but we should be changing to have the same character as Yeshua. We should be changing to be motivated by the same things that motivated him. Not money and power, but love and faithfulness.

We should be changing to have the same priorities as Yeshua had. Serving God not serving man. Progressing the kingdom of Heaven not the kingdoms of the earth. Caring about others first and ourselves last.

If you are a Christian then you are on this journey. Others who are along the way may be able to help you get there, and let you know what tripped them up and slowed them down.

But it is your journey. It is between you and God. Don't let other people put you down or give you a hard time for what they perceive as your lack of progress, or for not being where they are already at. Listen to what they say graciously just in case they might be right, but wait for God to tell you where to change.

Can you think of any verses in the Bible that teach that you should love a visiting preacher? Or welcome him? Maybe even talk with him as a human being? What if he was giving up his life to help save teens addicted to drugs? Maybe you have more in common with Jonah than you admit.

It's time for us to walk away from this constant judgment of others, and to start actually loving each other. Accepting others for who they are, and where they are at. Letting each other live with the freedom that the Bible so clearly shows that we have. God replaced the old covenant with the new one. God replaced Law with Grace. It's time we did too.

It's time that we started to Love, not Right.

Too Late

Of course we want all our relationships to be good. When our relationships are good, everything else in life seems easier to deal with. And maybe you're getting the message and you do want to love others. But maybe with some of those relationships it's already too late?

Sometimes relationships go bad. Maybe yours already did.

It doesn't matter where the "blame" lies. Firstly because wherever the blame lies, you are both suffering because of it. And secondly because in almost 30 years of pastoral care, I have never seen a relationship between two people where one person had all the blame for what was going wrong.

And if you want to live out Love, not Right, then this has to be not about blame. This has to be about fixing it.

Hopefully you both want to fix it. But even if it's just you, as long as one of you is still committed to making it work, there is hope. Lots of hope. So read on and don't give up just yet.

No matter how bad your relationship with this other person has become it is not as bad as your relationship with God used to be. You and God used to be enemies. There cannot be any relationship in all of Creation worse than "God and I are enemies".

And God found a way to fix that. So there is definitely hope for you two.

God fixed it by making a decision. He decided to unconditionally love you, no matter what. Not just any love. A completely unselfish love that always put your needs above his. Always. He was willing to be the one who sacrificed whether you responded or not.

God kept loving you as you rejected him. Time after time. As you flirted around with the world. As you ran off into sin after sin. Perhaps even cheating on him with other religions and so called "gods".

God just kept loving you. 100%. Unselfishly. Unconditionally. Sacrificially.

Until eventually you came back to him. Repenting. Sorry. Wanting him. Wanting to be restored to a good relationship with him. Wanting with all your heart to love him back.

Sometimes our human relationships are so far gone that this is what it takes to fix them. One person in the relationship has to make the decision that regardless of what they get back from the other person, they will unconditionally love them. They will treat them as if they are getting back the love that they crave, even if they are only getting back spiteful hate and more and more hurt.

Are you willing to be that person?

If you are, then your relationship has hope. There is no guarantee, but it has a LOT more hope than it had two minutes ago before you made that decision. A lot more.

It's not going to be easy. Unconditional love is tough. It hurts. It can sometimes hurt way more than it has been hurting so far. Because you are putting so much more in, and maybe getting even less back.

But if you can persevere, then the other person will notice. In time they will be thinking to themselves, "What the heck is going on." They still might not be giving you back the response you want, but they will notice. They can't ignore it any more than you could when you eventually got to a point where you could no longer ignore God.

Keep loving them.

Read the book "Five Love Languages" by Chapman that I talked about above. At least read through the summaries above and work out the other person's love language. And go hard. Go for it with everything you've got. Become dedicated to loving them in their language.

Do not expect instant success. Just like it was with God and you, when he tried to get your attention, it might take a long time. You have to be prepared for the long haul. Just keep on loving them - in their love language, (not yours).

Challenge yourself every day, to come up with ways to love them better than you did yesterday.

And finally, pray. Pray a lot. Pray every time you try to love them. Pray that God will give you the love you need. Pray for him to love them through you.

Loving someone who wants out of a relationship is difficult work. Even just loving someone who has been hurt is difficult work. Probably your love won't be enough.

Especially when you are at the point that you want to love them, but you feel like you just can't do it... Pray. Ask God to take the hate, or anger, or frustration from your heart. Close your eyes and actually picture yourself reaching into your heart and cupping the hate in your hand and passing it up to God. Ask him to take it from you, and to replace it with his own love. Ask him to fill your heart with his love, so that you will be able to pour out, not your own love, but God's love to the other person.

To give her credit, I first heard this idea of handing your bad emotion up to God and asking him to give you his love so you can love the other person, many years ago from Nancy Missler in a series of talks she called "The Way of Agape". If you find that somewhere I recommend listening.

And be satisfied yourself with God's love for you. You do not need the love of another person to be satisfied. If you are relying on that, then you will most likely be disappointed. Yeshua has everything you need. Go to him if you're thirsty. Don't dig your own well like they did in Jeremiah, and ended up with mud instead of the living water that God was offering them.

There is still hope for your relationship. But you can't just "give it a try", you have to be completely committed to it. For a while you are going to have to do all the work. All the work but nothing back. Are you ready for that?

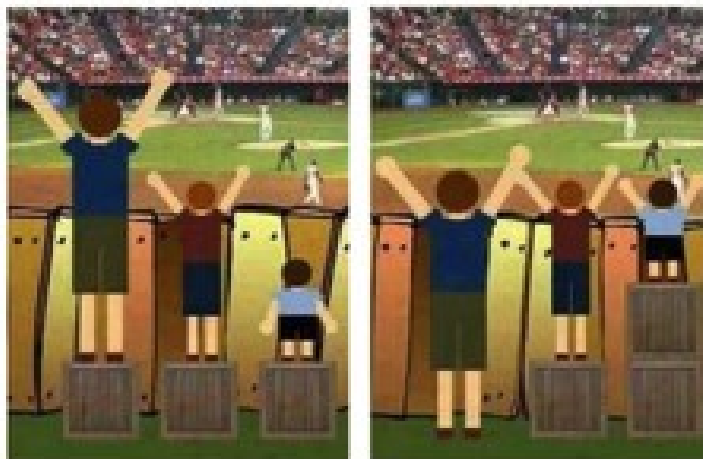
And keep praying. Keep God's love flowing out of you. And you might just get that relationship you always wanted, without even leaving the one you're in now.

Remember it's not about blame. It's not about who's right. It's only about choosing to love. God's love.

Pour out Love, not Right.

Sharing

Time to compare a couple of images again. What do you see this time?



One of them is based on being right, on judgement, on self-righteousness, the other is based on love, on justice, on not thinking too highly of yourself.

The one on the left justifies itself with, “we all have the same”. It’s not my fault that other people can’t survive with what I have. It’s about valuing people by what they can achieve for themselves.

The one on the right is trying to bring justice to everyone. It’s trying to be loving. It requires sacrifice. It involves someone going without something. Maybe even going without something they earned, something they have every right to keep. But almost certainly, something they don’t really need.

It involves someone else getting more than they “deserve”. But it’s about valuing everyone equally and being willing to put love into action to make that a reality.

Love requires sacrifice. It requires self-denial. It requires you being willing to be the one who is wronged. The one who goes without.

Usually this topic has been called “Giving”, but for Christians, instead of asking, “How much are you giving?” it is much more useful to have in mind, “How much are you keeping?”.

Christians are taught a lot about giving. Give in secret. Give cheerfully and not reluctantly. Give generously... I don’t think we struggle with understanding any of this. The only question I usually hear about giving is, “How much do I have to give?”.

The short answer is... zero. You don’t have to give anything.
The long answer is... zero. You don’t have anything to give.
Read carefully if you missed it. They’re different.

One of our modern Christian misconceptions is that we own things. Everything we have, all the stuff we think we own, all the income we receive, all of it, is not ours. It all belongs to God. God has simply given it to us to look after for him. We are stewards. A steward is someone who looks after someone else's property or money on their behalf.

Get it? It's **all** God's money. We have just been entrusted with looking after some of it.

If you "get" this, it will change your whole attitude to giving. Instead of thinking of giving, you will think of keeping. Of course God expects you to keep some of it to provide for your own needs, and those of your family. But even the generous amongst most modern Christians that I have talked with keep 90% or more of what God has entrusted them with.

Now, before we get all high and mighty about that. Remember that each Christian should give what they have decided in their **own** heart. It's not up to you to tell anyone else how much to keep. It's not up to me either. It's God's money, if he thinks they are keeping too much he can deal with them himself.

But how about you? Do you think you are keeping too much? If God asked you to explain why you kept so much for yourself would you feel comfortable? Do you feel like you are being generous?

One day Yeshua watched people giving at the temple. (In those days they had a big box for giving, and didn't "pass the plate/bag" like we do now). The rich man made a big fuss about putting in 10% of his fortune. The poor widow humbly put in 2 small copper coins. But it was all she had to live on. Yeshua said, she gave much more. She put in about a 60th of a day's pay, a few dollars. He put in what was probably equivalent to thousands of dollars. But she gave more. She only had a few dollars.

How much should you keep? It depends on your situation - how much you have, and how much you need. Do you think you keeping more than you need to? Ultimately, it depends on why you are keeping the amount you do.

Just like every action for Christians. It does not matter what you do. It matters why you do it. Are you being generous? Or are you being selfish?

Are you cheerful about giving? Or are you struggling, and only giving begrudgingly because you love money?

Are you reluctant to give because you rely on money for your security instead of relying on God?

So, how much should you give? Think about how much do you need to keep? And think about why. Develop that attitude that it's not your money. This will help you keep a loose hold on money, and give it a loose hold on you.

And then you will be free to give. You will be able to keep giving until you feel like you have been generous. And then, you will be able to give cheerfully.

When you can give generously, cheerfully, without even keeping count, then you're probably not keeping too much. When you can do that, you're more focused on loving others than on being right about what percentage you are justified in keeping.

When you can do that, you're giving in Love, not Right.

Too Wrong?

It's one thing to say, "love others". It's another thing altogether to say, "love them no matter what". I understand when someone says, "I do love them, but what they're teaching is a false doctrine. And the Bible says we need to reject false teachers."

So how wrong can they be and we still love them? How wrong can they be before we have to say, "Sorry, we do love you, but you're out"?

Is there a limit? Can they be too wrong to love?

My wife and I recently watched a video called "God's fingerprints in Japan". It basically made the observation that amongst the hundreds of Shinto gods there is one called Amenominakanushi, (the god who is lord of the center of heaven). It made the claim that Shinto teaches that this god was not created, (but the others were), and so, like Paul preaching to the Athenians about their "Unknown God", the authors of the video were suggesting that Christian Missionaries could reach Japanese people the same way, by saying that "This god you call Amenominakanushi, he is the true creator god and his Hebrew name is Yahweh".

So, if this is correct, then it might make reaching the Japanese a lot easier because there is a starting point with a god they already accept. Currently only 1% of Japanese are Christian even though they have had the gospel preached there for over 500 years. One of the big stumbling blocks for them is that Yahweh is a foreign god, so he is not for the Japanese.

So even though my gut feel was against this, my wife and I started exploring the idea to see if God was in it at all. We started with, "OK, let's accept that we can say to a Japanese person, this god and Yahweh are the same." Where do we go from there?

So if this is the same god, then can a Japanese person keep worshipping him the way they have always done? If not, then what needs to change and what can remain?

As a way of helping us to formulate our thinking we asked parallel questions for Roman Catholicism. Surely the Roman Catholic god is the same god right? They definitely worship the right god, and they agree that Yeshua is his son. And we see that this is essential to being saved, so we would need the Japanese believer to accept that too.

Does it matter that the Japanese person would keep burning incense when they go to the temple? Catholics burn incense right? And candles. And while I don't do that myself, I don't see that it would disqualify anyone from salvation.

One of the issues for the Japanese believer is that they would want to also worship other gods. Shinto has many named gods, as well as millions of local gods which dwell in mountains, rivers, rocks,... But we're not comfortable with that! Yahweh is a jealous god. And he is clearly the only true god, and Yeshua is his only son. Worshipping outside of them is clearly unacceptable for a Christian. So all the other Shinto gods have to go.

But then when we thought of our Roman Catholic parallel we realised that they worship Mary. And quite often the Catholic concept of a saint elevates them to a higher level - and they are also even worshipped and prayed to.

But if we're not happy with a Japanese Christian maintaining their worship of Shinto gods are we really OK with Catholics worshipping Mary? It seems inconsistent if we are.

Now the Catholic church has a lot of rituals too. So does Shinto. Do we care? Is that OK for Catholics? To me it seems like they are just traditions of men and they have no power whatsoever. And it even seems to me that they do some harm - because people are led to believe that these empty rituals do actually have power. But when it comes down to it, I would put them in a category of "not for me", but I wouldn't think of them as disqualifying someone from being Christian.

So clearly I am judging right and wrong. I am deciding who is a Christian and who isn't. How can I do that without being hypocritical when I say "Love, not Right".

There logically must be some level where certain behaviour or thinking does make me non Christian. Obviously if I worship Satan as well then I'm out, right? So somewhere between that and "full on, whole hearted, devoted follower of Yeshua" there is a line that I cannot cross and still be saved.

In Revelation Yeshua says that he hates the teaching of the Nicolaitans, (who seem to have accepted adultery and eating food sacrificed to idols). But he didn't say that they were not saved, just that he hated their teaching. There is a big difference. The Bible definitely teaches that we should be leading increasingly righteous lives that glorify God. But in our "Right, not Love" thinking we extend that to claim that various groups are not even saved because of some behaviour or belief.

There is a line, but God decides where that salvation line is, not me, not you. If I try to decide where the line is I am 100% sure that it will be on the lost side of me, (so I am on the saved side of the line), but because of my tendency to judge and condemn, because of my desire to justify myself while showing how wrong others are, because of the way that I am wired, I will never draw the line as close to Satan worship as God will. I will never draw it as far away from God as he will and still include people. God is just, but God is loving. He will be finding ways to include as many as possible. I am more likely to exclude as many as possible, (while keeping myself "in" of course).

We need to focus more on being inclusive, or at least on correcting the error in a loving, non-judgemental way. But this is the key I think. We cannot allow worship of Shinto gods in our churches. But we must still love those who do it.

I think it rapidly became clear that this "Fingerprints in Japan" thing wasn't the right way to reach the Japanese people. And it raised lots of questions about Catholicism. We're right. They're wrong. But we still need to be loving. We still need to treat them in a loving way, even when they're so wrong they're not even Christian.

No matter how wrong they are, we need to Love, not Right.

Mark Driscoll

Mark Driscoll founded Acts 29, a significant church movement which changed the lives of thousands of people. A few years ago he was unceremoniously fired and publicly maligned. Was he wrong? Of course he was wrong. But does that mean we should no longer listen to anything he says? Churches would be pretty quiet if we all followed that rule. They would become places for silent mediation.

There seems to be plenty of evidence that Mark Driscoll has been angry, rude, aggressive, harsh, irreverent. That he has treated some people badly, and he has things that he needs to repent from and apologise for.

Don't you too? I do.

By the way, I suspect his love language is "Words of Encouragement". So he doesn't feel loved when people criticise him, so he reacts. Badly. That is a big issue for Words of Encouragement people. They need to learn to recognise that and to deal with it when it happens. But those around them need to learn too, and to express their criticism in a more appropriate way. Build them up first. In his case, he has done some great stuff. Acts 29 seems like a fantastic movement. Give him credit for the good he has done. Make sure you acknowledge those things to him before you criticise him. And then acknowledge them again afterwards. If you approach a Words of Encouragement person like that then instead of just provoking a reaction, you might actually be able to help them change.

We need to love people in their language.

And we need to forgive. We need to give people room, and time, to repent. God is working on them. Be sure of that. God cares about Mark Driscoll's behaviour much more than you do, and he hasn't struck him with lightning yet.

Sure, we need a higher standard from our leaders. But it's not perfection. That's impossible. Maybe he does need a father figure, a mentor, like John Piper to gently guide and correct him. Maybe we all need that. I'd like one. I'm sure I would be a better Christian if I'd had one these last 30 years.

But, regardless about how you feel about some of the things he has done, let's keep loving the guy. And let's be mature enough to recognise the good stuff in what he has brought us, and overlook the rest. Let's be loving.

Bookshops stopped stocking his books. Websites point out all his errors, quoting his sermons, showing where he was wrong.

Who is right? Definitely not Mark Driscoll.

Who is loving? Definitely not Christian America.

They even criticise his t-shirts. And berate him for saying that tattoos are OK.

Of course they're OK. We live under the new covenant, not the old covenant. "Everything is permissible."

But not everything is beneficial. Maybe a tattoo isn't beneficial to you. Maybe to me it is. So I'll get one and you can keep your skin clean and we can just love each other and agree to be different. We live in Agapegia not Youtopia.

How would you have responded to Mark Driscoll if you knew him?
What would have happened if he had been the pastor of your church?
Would he have been treated with Love, not Right?

Homosexuals

I don't particularly like the idea of singling out one particular group, but because of the Western acceptance of the gay lifestyle and the current issue of gay marriage, this has become a growing issue in the church. So I think it's a good example to work through to see how well we are doing with the whole "Love, not Right" thing.

God loves homosexuals. And the way the church in general has treated them in recent years should make us ashamed. Unlike us, God loves everyone. God loves straight people, thieves, murderers, gossips, the greedy, the rich, the poor, even pedophiles.

There is no doubt whatsoever that God loves homosexuals. His son died to save their souls just like he did for everyone else. And churches around the world should be reaching out to help and love homosexuals just as they would any other person.

I keep reminding you that Christians are not under the Law. Yeshua removed those fences when he died on the cross. We are free to do anything. So just because some old Jewish law says something is forbidden, that doesn't mean that it necessarily applies to us. Whether it is about eating pork or about our sexual preference.

But that freedom comes with the responsibility to use it wisely, and to choose our actions carefully to reflect God's holiness. We have freedom, but it isn't freedom to sin.

So, what does that old Jewish law say? Where did the fence used to be?

We already saw above that in Leviticus Moses records what God said to him... "Do not lie with a man the way one lies with a woman." In the same section God tells us not to have sex with animals, or our sister, or our father's wife, or any close relative.

Why? Because these things defile you. They have defiled the nations around you and they will defile Israel if you tolerate them. And if you defile the land, God will throw you out of it.

In Romans 1 Paul also tells us that if people reject God then he will hand them over to their own sinful desires. He mentions homosexuality specifically. So homosexuality was still clearly regarded by Paul as a wrong choice. A wrong use of our freedom. And it is also part of that spiral which starts with the rejection of the knowledge of God and ends in total depravity.

The Bible clearly still teaches that homosexuality is a sin.

So the church must be loving and accepting towards the people but without compromising our position that their behaviour is sinful. Just as we should be towards

those addicted to pornography, or thieves, or murderers, or even those who seem squeaky clean on the outside, but who are steaming inside with greed and pride.

We need to love homosexuals, but we should make it clear that homosexual behaviour is sinful and not something which is acceptable for the people of God.

The biggest non-Biblical arguments for accepting homosexuality seem to be “We were born this way” and “We love each other”.

Both of those may well be true. But as we have seen, homosexuality is a sin. And over the years I have talked with many people about their sins, and faced some issues with my own. One thing I have found, is that each of us seems to have a predisposition to a particular type of sin. For some it is lust, coming out in pornography or affairs, for some it's greed, often coming out in risky business deals that are shady at best and just plain gambling, or dishonest at worst. For some it's pride, coming out in anger and arrogance. But each one of us has a particular one, toward which we just seem predisposed.

Being “born that way” just means to me that homosexuality is your predisposition. The sin you are most attracted to. And whether or not it is fair for me to tell you that you should not indulge it... You should not indulge it. Any more than I should indulge mine.

The other argument I would make against the “born that way/we love each other” argument is that pedophiles can say the same thing. They can also claim that they were born this way. That their love is natural and beautiful. And the children, (in their innocence), might also say that they love the pedophile.

I don't think I have met any normal, sane adult who wants to legalise pedophilia. Certainly none that would entertain the idea that their pre-pubescent child could be “dating” an adult pedophile. That is a horrendous thought.

But he was born that way. His love is pure...

Allowing this as an argument for homosexual marriage opens a very ugly box.

We very definitely should not be accepting of gay marriage within the church. We should also not accept gay clergy. (One who is actively gay, not someone who is trying like all of us to fight against his predisposition). The Bible has high standards for our leaders, and our leaders should be shining examples of the Christian life. But if they are openly flaunting their sin instead of trying to deal with it, then they do not qualify. Whether that sin is homosexuality, or addiction to drugs or alcohol, or even if it is that they are given to violence and anger, or even pride or greed.

But we need to be known for our love, not for our judgement. We need to find ways to stand strongly for our position, but we must do that in a loving way. The way out of the spiral is for them to turn back to God. They won't be able to stop sinning until they've done that.

More than proclaiming to the world “You must not allow gay marriage because some god you don’t believe in says so”, the people outside need to hear, “Even though you don’t believe in him, God loves you. And his own son died so that you could receive forgiveness for all your sins”.

They need to hear Love, not Right.

Conflict

Compromise is love in action. When you know that you're right, when you know that the other person is wrong, but somehow you just can't find a way to make them realise. So instead, you compromise for the sake of love.

One of the best examples of this that we have is in Acts 15. Up until then Christianity was still pretty Jewish. Most of the Christians were also Jews. They had grown up under the law. It was unthinkable for them to eat "unclean" animals, to eat without washing, to work on a Sabbath, so many things.

But now Christianity was reaching the Gentiles, (non-Jews), and there was powerful evidence from God that their conversion was real, and that God himself was accepting them as his children. Trouble was, they weren't interested in "The Law". And rightly so.

So... big arguments, pointing of fingers, yelling "you're wrong", storming off, even saying, "well if you believe that then you're not even a Christian."

So Paul and his fellow workers head off to Jerusalem to discuss it with the apostles and find out what they think. Paul makes some great arguments about how we're no longer under law, but under grace. So great that the apostles agree. But.

How can there be a but! They agree that he's right. They know that he's right.

And yet, they ask him to accept a compromise. Not because he's wrong, not because he's only 90% right, but because he's loving and because the Jews feel this so strongly that it's hurting some of them.

This is love. Acting for the sake of others instead of demanding your way because you just proved that you're right.

So for the sake of love, they agree not to eat blood, food sacrificed to idols, or strangled animals. And to avoid fornication, (pretty sure there was no argument about that one, but from what we read in some of the other letters, like Corinthians, there was quite a prevailing culture among the Gentiles that it was all OK).

So this showed some give and take on both sides. A general acceptance and love, and paved a way forward for the church to love together instead of splitting apart as could so easily have happened.

Paul talks about similar issues in Romans 14 when he asks those who eat meat not to do it in front of those who are vegetarian. Not because it's wrong. But because demanding your own freedom simply because you're right is not loving.

Yeshua taught about this kind of conflict in Matthew 18. Not so much about compromise, but about being willing to go to the other person and talk it over. When someone sins against you it's actually possible that you misunderstood. It's possible they did. Or they didn't realise they had offended you. Start with going by yourself to talk with them. You might come away with everything resolved and have a better

relationship as well. If not, take a couple of trusted people each and discuss it further. And eventually ask the whole church if you still can't agree.

But don't give up. Don't just walk away without resolving things. Don't walk away and gossip about them. That will only ever lead to division and hurt. It is not love, and it's not right. You lose twice.

Conflict isn't always bad. I see so many Christians that think that being meek means you never have conflict with anyone. You just keep your mouth shut and suck it up. That's not meek. That's weak.

And it doesn't help.

It's not Biblical. Yeshua clearly taught us to go and have the conflict. But to do it early, not to let it stew away until we're ready to go to court. Do it straight away. Even if you're in the middle of making an offering at the altar! Go now. Put this book down, make the phone call. Have the coffee. Get it resolved.

Conflict is difficult. But broken relationships are worse. Broken churches hurt everyone. Face up to your responsibility to try to sort this out before it's too late.

If you've let it get to the point that you're ready to sue, then it's probably already too late, let it go. Why not rather be wronged? Why are you so obsessed with proving that this person did wrong and they must fix it. Why are you willing to expose this to non-Christian courts to get them to rule? How is that building the church's reputation of being loving? Doesn't it only reinforce our reputation for being judgemental?

But if it's fixable, then have the coffee. Don't avoid the conflict. Talk things over. Lovingly. Compromise if you need to. Consider others more important than yourself. Find a way together to Love, not Right.

Self Denial

It's ironic, but probably the hardest relationship to keep from becoming about "Who is right?" is marriage. Partly because when people are closer to us we find it a lot easier to express our disagreement, and much harder to control our emotions when we do that. So we burst out in anger against our spouse for thinking a particular way, when we would leap to their defence if someone else dared to speak to them like we just did.

Why is that?

I think it is also partly because church teaching on the roles of husbands and wives has been pretty flakey. The traditional "Husband is Master and Wife is Servant" model where he must be obeyed in silence, but where everyone in the house lives in fear of his wrath, is just plain wrong. Men seem to have a predisposition to abusing control, and this so easily degenerates to a situation where the wife is treated like a doormat and she feels no love at all.

Now, just before we get in to what the Bible says about the roles of husbands and wives, let's just look first at the roles of Yeshua and his church.

The Bible says that the church is Yeshua's body. Particularly in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12. Yeshua is the head, we are the body - his hands and his feet, here on Earth.

Now I think we get that. We understand what the relationship looks like. Yeshua is the head. He is the leader. He makes the decisions. We are the body, we translate his decisions into action here on the planet.

So then, when Paul says in Ephesians 5 that the husband is the head of the wife we equate that with our picture of Yeshua being head of the church. And so the husband becomes the boss. And, because we don't properly understand the Yeshua-Church thing, the wife becomes the doormat.

But we forget, (or ignore), one overwhelming fact. Yeshua sacrificed himself for the church. Yes, Yeshua is the "boss" of the church. But every part of his being is oriented towards loving, and protecting, and edifying her. He always puts her needs above his own. To the extent that he sacrificed everything he had, he left it all behind and came here to live and then deliberately chose to die in immense suffering and isolation from his own father. For her.

Ephesians 5 and 1 Peter 3 do spell out the roles of husband and wife pretty clearly for us. The man is the head and the woman is the body. Just like Yeshua and the church. The two become one, each fulfilling different roles but working together as a unit.

Over the years I've heard quite a bit of teaching about how wives should submit to their husbands. And I think that's correct, they should submit, (not obey). As the head, the husband has the responsibility to make the final decision. But only after considering his wife's needs and desires. And the wife should make sure she has

communicated those clearly to him. But in the end, the husband has the responsibility to make the decision, and the wife has the responsibility to submit - whether she agrees with it or not. (It's not really submitting if you only submit when he's right, is it.)

But...

Ephesians 5 also makes it very clear that the husband should be sacrificing himself for his wife in the same way that Yeshua sacrificed himself for the church. Not necessarily by literally dying in agony, but in essence, dying to his own desires for the benefit of his wife.

Husbands should be putting their wives first. Always. In everything.

Everything.

There is no point at which Yeshua would put himself before the church. There is no point at which a husband should put himself before his wife. Every decision has to be for her benefit.

Even the little ones. In fact, especially the little ones. What movie to watch? The romantic comedy or the war movie? It depends on the wife of course, and if she would prefer the war movie then that's fine. But most women I know would prefer the romantic comedy. It's a no brainer. There is no decision to make. She must come first.

There is no compromise here, "This time we'll watch the girlie movie, but next time we'll watch the war movie"... There should be sacrifice, not compromise. "This time we'll watch the girlie movie, but next time we'll watch the girlie movie!"

Always.

If there are two desserts to choose from what do you do? Let her choose first? You know she likes strawberry right... but she knows that you do too, so she chooses the caramel so you'll get the strawberry... Such a lovely wife. You're a lucky man. But give her the strawberry.

It's actually a trick question.

This is not rocket science. Sacrifice is painful. You know when you're sacrificing. You'll feel it. And you know when you're not. (Be honest. You know.)

If you are a husband you need to be sacrificing all the time. Always making the decisions which are the best for her, which put her needs and desires first. And doing it quietly, whether she is aware of it or not.

This is a huge challenge for any husband. It's not easy. But it is God's way for husbands. Do you want to be the best husband you can possibly be? Then follow Yeshua's example and sacrifice yourself for her. Always.

Do you want to be the best Christian you can be? Then make the sacrifice. Put the rest of your church first. You have a right to put yourself first, but you're choosing not to. You're choosing to sacrifice yourself for their benefit.

That's what makes it Love, not Right.

Yeshua

Yeshua is the obvious example to follow.

He was always “right”, especially in the sense of obeying the Law. 100%. The son of Yahweh, eternal ruler of all creation. And yet... he sacrificed all that to come here as a man, because he loves you.

That is totally awesome love. Enduring decades as a boy, subject to human parents. Living in obedience to a fallible mother and father. Growing up like all of us, with siblings, puberty, learning the family business. (Funny, his dad showed him how to make a chair, he could have shown his dad how to make a tree).

So humble, so controlled, so driven by his passion to achieve a single goal. The salvation of all mankind by submitting to mocking, ridicule, false arrest, unmerited punishment. From the very people he came to save. And abandonment by the father he had loved from eternity past. Being immersed in the sin they both hated and abhorred.

He was lectured, abused and murdered by the Pharisees and Priests who claimed to know him best, and who should have recognised him first. Rejected by his own family, and his own people.

Why bother? Only one possible reason.

Love, not Right.

Yeshua fulfilled the Law that was handed down to Moses. Knowing that it cannot be just ignored, he submitted to it. And having fulfilled that Law, it was crucified alongside him on the cross. Taking away its power of death and its power to judge every human who had lived since its inception, he did what nobody had been able to do before him. Even though, as son of God he was immune, he was above the law. “The son of the king doesn’t need to pay taxes. But here is mine anyway.”

Yeshua opened the gates so the grace of God could flow to frail humanity.

Grace, not Law.

While we were still enemies of God, wicked unrepentant sinners, Yeshua became the propitiation for our sins and brought us into a relationship of peace with God the father. The father who had wanted to forgive us for all our wrong doing since Eve ate the fruit in the garden 4,000 years before. But who had been unable to do so because the price of death had not been paid. Chained by his own holiness and his own commitment to justice, but now freed by the sacrifice of his own son. (Not to mention his own suffering as he turned his back while abhorrent sin was poured on his own beloved son). And now, billions of humans live in an age of forgiveness. Free for all who believe. The envy of those holy people who lived under the Law and longed for forgiveness, only to find that the blood of lambs and calves cannot forgive their trespass, being only enough to cover it up temporarily until the day of Yeshua’s victory.

Forgiveness, not Judgement.

Yeshua, the ultimate example of self-sacrifice. Never afraid of confrontation when it was needed, never afraid of doing what was required no matter the cost. No matter the ridicule. Betrayed by even his friends and companions while he completed the salvation of his enemies.

God demonstrated his love for us in this. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us, the ungodly. God didn't just send a messenger to say, "Love you". He sent his son to show it - by his life and by his death. Yeshua didn't bring the message. He was the message.

Love, not Right.

Identify with Yeshua

Hebrews 13 has a section in the middle telling us how Yeshua endured suffering outside the city gate in order to make his people holy. “Outside the gate” was a place of shame. That’s where lepers were sent. That’s where unclean things were burned. Being sent outside the gate to die was a declaration of shame and disgrace.

But Yeshua did it. For us.

So Hebrews 13:13 is very full-on then... “Now then, let’s go out to him, outside the camp, bearing his reproach.” Let us go outside the gate and identify ourselves with Yeshua. Even though by doing so we are identifying with his reproach. Identifying with his shame and humiliation.

Even so. Let us go.

I find an interesting parallel in modern society. Those who live inside the city are the “cool” people, they are the “in” crowd. Those who live outside it are the rejects, the losers. There is a lot of social pressure on us today to be part of the “in” crowd. To be cool. In fact even churches try hard to be cool themselves so they are more attractive to the worldly. (Funny, the Bible says the gospel is offensive to them, but we do all we can to be not offensive). A lot of Christians spend a lot of time and money maintaining their connection to the in crowd. We dress like them. We walk like them. We talk like them. And sadly, we even think like them.

Here is the challenge...

Are you willing to walk outside the city gate, in full view of everyone, and to walk up to where Yeshua is suffering and declare to everyone watching, “I’m with him”?

Why not? Do you love the world more than you love Yeshua?

Are you willing for everyone to think of you as a loser? Weird? A freak? A reject? An enemy?

If you are, then praise God. Push open that gate, walk out to the boos and hisses of the cool crowd. And stand proudly with Yeshua.

But if you’re not willing, then how do you think that makes Yeshua feel? After everything he sacrificed for you. Can you imagine him looking at you standing in the crowd, not willing to step out. While he suffers. Like he looked at Peter when he denied him.

Can you see his face? His eyes staring at you. His heart breaking with disappointment.

You know the really weird thing... even then Yeshua loves you. Even then he forgives you.

Even then he still willingly sacrifices himself for you.

This is why he died for you. Even though you know that but you still won’t step out.

Everything God does in your life is designed to mould your character into the character of his son. Everything is for your benefit. It’s bad grammar, but in a nutshell, God doesn’t really care what you do, God cares what you be. He doesn’t care so much about your actions, he cares about your character. When people see you, he wants them to see Yeshua.

Watchman Nee said it very beautifully. “2,000 years ago Yeshua lived a perfect life.

And now he wants to do it again – in you”. Yeshua is alive in you. Yeshua wants to

live a perfect life again, in you. But it's not about what Yeshua wants to do in you, it's about who Yeshua wants to be in you. Yeshua wants to conform your character to his.

Dallas Willard said it like this, "Become who Yeshua would be if he were you."

God wants us to be different from the world around us. He wants us to be a light on a hill, the salt of the earth. He wants us to not conform to the culture around us. He wants us to be willing to stand out, to be different, to love one another, so that the world will know that we are his disciples. Yeshua told us to be different. And the stakes are high: either we are different and because of that they know that we are his disciples, or we blend in and they don't.

It's time to step out, to be willing to be seen with Yeshua, outside the gate. It's time to identify with him, to identify as his. It's time to Love, not Right.

Seriously

Have you ever read this poem by Wilbur Reese?

*I would like to buy \$3 worth of God, please.
Not enough to explode my soul or disturb my sleep,
But just enough to equal a cup of warm milk or a snooze in the sunshine.
I don't want enough of him to make me love a black man or pick beets with a migrant.
I want ecstasy, not transformation.
I want the warmth of the womb not a new birth.
I want about a pound of the eternal in a paper sack.
I'd like to buy \$3 worth of God, please.*

How much God do **you** want to buy?

In Revelation 3 we read Yeshua's letter to the church in Laodicea: "These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation. "I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm – neither hot nor cold – I am about to spit you out of my mouth.

You say, 'I'm rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realise that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked."

This is pretty intense. Yeshua would rather we were cold than lukewarm!
That's really in your face. How committed to Yeshua **are** you? How committed am **I**?

Where would we be if Yeshua was only as committed to us as we are to him. Where would we be if only 25% of our sin was paid for? Or even 90% for that matter. (Although that's kind of the point of the gospel isn't it.)

Yeshua wants us to be at the hot end of the scale, not lukewarm.

In 1 Corinthians 3 we read how at the judgement our work will be tested by fire. If it is just wood, hay, stubble it will be burned. If it is gold, silver, precious stones, it will survive and we will receive our reward.

Btw: this is not about salvation, your salvation is secure. It's about your reward based on your actions.

I remember reading a book once about a man who had a dream after reading this passage. He stood as his life works were carried out and piled up in front of him. Then, after the fire he looked at the pile to see what was remaining, but there was nothing there but ash.

Close your eyes and imagine your pile of works, and the fire...

Imagine looking down and seeing nothing but ash.

D.L. Moody is famous for saying “The world is yet to see what God can do through one man fully committed to him”. He was challenging us, and himself.

You know whether you could be more devoted to God. You know if you’re only lukewarm.

Some years ago Watchman Nee wrote a whole book about this called “The Normal Christian Life”. It’s about a life lived 100% for Yeshua. A life filled with joy and power. A life like that of the apostles Paul, or Peter.

Yet he concluded that this is “normal”. This is the kind of life that every Christian is supposed to lead. It’s not for the elite few. It’s God’s plan for all of us. If we would only commit ourselves to him 100%.

Of course that’s not going to be the easy life.

Yeshua said that before you start building a tower you should count the cost. Before you go to war you should check out your enemy. There will be a cost.

But there is also a massive cost to NOT being committed to Yeshua. Nobody wants to end up with just a pile of ash.

We can so easily get caught up striving for money, for food, for houses, worried about “stuff” and how we will provide for our families. And we do need some of these things. But even so, Yeshua told us “**first**, seek the kingdom of God, and then all these things will be added to you”.

\$3 worth of God is not enough. Spend all you have.

However hot you are for Yeshua, crank it up a notch.

Don’t settle for lukewarm. Don’t settle for mediocrity.

Live a full-on Christian life, 100% devoted to Yeshua.

Live a normal Christian life.

Live Love, not Right.

Teamwork

In “The Bigger Picture” I wrote how the great commission is a team command. It’s not just a command to you as an individual, but to us, as the body of Christ. The command to “Love one another” is the same.

Of course you, personally must do everything you can to love others. Especially if it’s not happening in your church, you must be willing to be the first. But there is a very real sense in which “love one another” can only be fulfilled by the church all working together in unity. And in which the church working together can achieve much more than the sum of its parts all working alone.

We need to work together to love one another. Encouraging each other, especially when it’s difficult. Helping each other overcome issues when there are disagreements. Sacrificing, giving, sharing, loving each other in the other’s love language.

Just as two or three runners can spur each other on to greater feats than either could achieve running alone. So too, if you work together with your church, learning to function together as a real unified body, you will be able to love others significantly better than you will ever be able to do as a lone wolf Christian.

Marriage is not easy. It involves sacrifice. It brings opportunity for character development. But it is precisely because your inner self is more exposed in such a deep relationship that these opportunities come.

Church, real church. Love, not Right church, is going to be like that too. You will collectively take risks to build your relationships, and those risks will bring about some friction, and some opportunities for failure. But those are precisely the times that we need to work as a team to turn them into opportunities for growth, and precisely the times that if we do work together we will achieve something that none of us could ever have even dreamt of if we had only worked alone.

Roger Bannister wouldn’t have broken the four minute mile if he had continued to coach himself and had always only run by himself - as he used to in the early days. It was only when he became part of a team, working with others who had different gifts and talents, but all working together on that same common goal, that he was able to achieve something which the world had considered to be impossible.

In the end it was his name which went into the record books, but he acknowledged that it was actually a team achievement, and he always gave credit to his coach and his training and running partners who helped make the achievement possible.

You cannot be a mature Christian unless you are part of the church. You must find your part in the body of Christ, and you must be the best of that part that you can possibly be. You must realise that you are completely dependent on the rest of the body, and that you are not the most important part of it.

Then, and only then, you will be able to fulfil Yeshua’s commandment and really love one another the way he loved you.

If you have to be the only one, then do it. Be the first. Make the move. Make the effort. Sacrifice yourself. But your aim is to get more people involved. This can only work if the whole team is on board and willing to make the sacrifices that are necessary.

Only a team, only a body, can successfully live out Love, not Right.

A Final Word

Let's allow Yahweh to have the final word.

You probably recognise these passages. They're not about romantic love. They're about the self-sacrificing choice to love others, and to consider them more important than ourselves. They're about the kind of love that Yeshua lived out for us. They're about the love we're supposed to have as the church, the body of Yeshua.

As you read through. See what you hear about how important love is. About what, if anything, is more important than love. About how successful you can be even if you don't have love. Even if you don't do the one thing you've been commanded to do. Even if your preaching is world class, or your music is top 100, or you can foretell the future. Even if your prayer is deep and powerful. What do you have, if you have all that, but you are ignoring that one command? If you are not choosing to love one another with everything you have.

1 Corinthians 13

Even if I speak with the tongues of people, and of the messengers, but I don't have love, then I've become a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. And even if I have prophecy, and I perceive all the secrets and all knowledge, and even if I have all faith to remove mountains, but I don't have love, then I'm nothing. And even if I should hand out all my belongings bit by bit, and even if I hand over my body to be burned, but I don't have love, then I'm not benefited anything.

1 John 4

Beloved, let's love one another, because love is from God, and everyone who loves has been born from God, and they perceive God. The one who doesn't love hasn't perceived God, because God is love. The love of God was manifested among us in this, that God sent his only born son into the world, so that we should live through him. In this is love, not because we loved God, but because he himself loved us, and sent his son, a propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God loved us in this way, we also ought to love one another.

Now What?

So now you have to put it all into practise. That's the hard bit. Now you have to break your "I'm right" habit, and build a new habit of asking God to give you what you need to become "I'm loving".

It will be a journey for you. It's a journey for me. Neither of us are there yet. It's a journey for our churches. But now, neither will judge the other for their lack of progress along the way. Neither will condemn the other for having a different opinion.

Get your church to try out "The Way of Agape" and watch it transform your relationships. Especially the ones which are struggling at the moment. The ones where they aren't as deep as they should be because of your judgement of each other.

Learn each other's love languages, and start communicating in the language of the other person instead of just in your own. Learn to hear theirs, so you recognise what they're saying even if they're not saying it in your language.

Always be willing to be the one who is loving. Be willing to be the one who sacrifices. Be willing to be the one who takes the first step towards really changing the relationship. Be the one willing to take the risks. Be willing to be the one who has the conflict when it's needed.

Let Yeshua transform your character. Let him live a perfect life again. In you.

Let him Love, not Right.

Thank you for reading this little book. I really do hope it helps you.

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