

Volume 1 – Day 1: Relationship Not Religion

The same dynamics of good relationship apply to both the theist and the atheist. The same things that hinder us from developing a deeply affectionate relationship with God come between us and deeply affectionate feelings for others. Although few realize it, we are our own greatest obstacle to good relationships with other people. Since every relationship is a two person choice, I dramatically improve my chances of enlarging my circle of friends by always choosing affection for the other person even if we disagree on many points of fact or opinion. “The greater the measure of affection which I offer to others, the greater the measure of affection I will receive.” -- J H Alan

So whether you are religious or not, I encourage you to look for the nuggets of relationship gold which will improve your sensations in life and experience of life. **Relationship gold** will produce enough improvement in your understanding and acceptance of others to make the time spent worthwhile. And if you have given up on God, hopefully you will give him a second chance, as an intimate relationship with Him could enormously improve your experience of life.

As your emotions reach new heights of pleasure and you experience less anxiety, guilt, shame and fear it will become easier and more intuitive for you to embrace those in your life who are the most difficult to accept. The best news is this. Your measure of personal peace and happiness can improve even if your circumstances and experiences do not. The key to all of this is choice, your choice. And it is less about the choices of your activities than it is the choices about what you believe. Let yourself believe different things and it will change how you feel.

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

DEEPER Every Day -- John Henry Alan

Volume 1 – Day 2: Living in Your History or Your Future

Have you explored recently the possibilities in your relationship with God? Is there a chance that there is more for you to love about God? For many Christians the world around, there is a far **less intimate relationship** between themselves and God than what God has offered them. Although, any human being can live a life quite successfully without being religious or even a theist, there is a much better way contained within the Holy Bible.

The Bible is the history of God's universe (HIS story). It is an articulation of God's paradigm for relationship with Him that, when fully understood, staggers the imagination. The history of the God who calls Himself "I AM", is rife with opportunity to live happy and fully contented lives within the confines of relationship.

The story is laced with unconditional love for His created beings which is demonstrated by His unfailing Grace toward them. God's grace, which is His *undeserved* favor heaped upon us, is the very proof that His love is perfect toward us. His love never ceases to flow to us. And His love, can and will transform us, if we will simply receive it and love Him in return. If you don't receive His love, you won't experience His grace. Even *you* offer grace to those you love.

If you grace someone with any ulterior motive, such as 'hoping for behavior changes,' it is not grace. It is rather manipulation. If you develop true affection for them, grace is the evidence. Divine Love generates a Divine Grace. You might say that the essence of grace is inexhaustible 'second chances.'

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Volume 1 – Day 3: Love Produces Grace

The God of the Bible is the epitome of relationship in every possible relational experience. That is, God is the best Father, Mother, Sister, Brother, Friend and Mate anyone could ever have. Jesus proclaimed in His preaching, that even though we look out for the best interests of our children, God is far better at parenting than we could ever be. He actually knows the motives of every human expression. And like the “best Dad ever”, His love never falters toward His children. His desire for them is that they become the best adults possible and reach their greatest potential. And His grace (**underserved favor**) toward His children never puts a limit on second chances. He will patiently pour everything He can into them.

The best definition of *grace* includes the fact that *Grace* is a by-product of *love that will never cease to flow toward the object of that love*, that is favor for the **undeserving**. When love is present, it will always offer to help one up who is down. So, like a mother who sits in the courtroom with her erring child, even if her child deserved to be punished, pleads for the shortest possible sentence. So, God as both Father and Mother has every intention of both helping the children become their best possible selves and of minimizing the emotional pain they must endure in life. The introduction of God Himself into the physical realm of man in the person of His Only Begotten Son, is the strongest evidence of God’s desire for an up close and personal relationship with mankind. The height or pinnacle of human experience can only be achieved in a personal relationship with God through His Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

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Volume 1 – Day 4: Forgiveness in Every Story

God's written history, the Holy Bible, includes nearly every kind of good and bad scenario possible in human experience. The whole story has been told, so that we can see that relationship is the most important thing to both God and His highest creation, mankind. When you look closely at each story, the unfailing love of God can be seen and with it the enormity of grace both in size and frequency which God expresses to us, His children. If there is any meaning at all, in the story of Jesus, His birth, His life, His death, His resurrection and His return to the Father, it is this. "Greater love has no one than this: that a man lay down his life for his friend."

The whole object of the Cross being the final event in Jesus' life, when He deserved the best end, was that God even made provision in Himself, to provide an innocent man who offered to take the penalty of another man's criminality, (that is yours and mine), so that justice was served on behalf of the victims of our crimes while we ourselves were released from that punishment. [The ultimate irony of all time was that a violent offender, Barabbas, was set free at the same time and in the same pronouncement of judgment when a completely innocent man, Jesus of Nazareth, was condemned to death.] What enormous love God must have for us in order to watch His Son suffer the most inhumane of all punishments devised by human kind to pay the penalty we deserved.

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Volume 1 -- Day 5: Freedom from Guilt and Shame

If you are a *Christian who lives in constant guilt and shame, you can surrender even those feelings to the God of the Cross.* After all, Jesus died, not only for the crimes themselves, but also for the guilt and shame associated with them. And in God's eyes, Jesus suffered enough of our shame that we did not have to suffer either guilt or shame again. When we succumb to the temptation of Satan to wallow in either our guilt or shame, he silences us and robs us of the very love, joy and peace God offered to us through this most kind of all acts on our behalf.

You can be free from both guilt and shame. You can know what it means to "live fully loved" by God and "enjoy His favor always." Let the Holy Spirit reveal the misrepresentations and misinterpretations of key passages of scripture which have come between you and a joyous laughter, not only at yourself, but also those around you. God is the author of love, joy, peace and all other positive emotions and has created a way for every man, woman, and child to experience them in abundance. When you see God's forgiveness and grace in each Bible story, instead of His wrath, you will find His unconditional love toward you.

There is FREEDOM just around the corner, unless you will not allow yourself to "rethink" truth. You do not need to leave your community of faith. You can experience a much more joyful and peaceful life than before and a much closer relationship to God than nearly everyone around you. Look for the love of God in every verse.

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Volume 1 – Day 6: Find Yourself in Every Story

Ponder how each story in the Bible may have *you* in it. Cast yourself into every part in each story to discover what God might want you to know about yourself. Your life will likely never be changed significantly by seeing others in the parables. But, if you use the stories as mirrors of your own tendencies and motives, you may make huge leaps in the direction of a better experience of life and love.

It is very important to realize how much we order our lives by relative truth rather than God's truth. After a long flight and deep interrogation by a seat-mate, the conversation ended with this question to me, "It seems to me that you believe that there is such a thing as absolute truth and that you have found it." I had very little time to respond, but the Holy Spirit's inspiration led to the following dialog.

"Well, James, I do believe in absolute truth and that I have found it." So, James, if you believe that all truth is relative, answer this question. "If you could embrace a body of *relative* truth that leaves you twisted, frustrated, angry and generally miserable, or you could choose *relative* truth that makes you happy, pleasant, peaceful and generous to everyone, which would you choose?" There was no time for an answer, nor was one needed. James' smile spoke volumes.

A few weeks later, I was awakened by the Spirit to these words from Him, "James was right." "About what?" I asked. To which He replied, "All people have and embrace relative truth because most of what you believe came to you from your relatives and their inner circle of influence." As I have pondered this ever since, I realize time and again that whenever I abandoned a relative truth in favor of God's truth on that particular issue, my heart changed in a very positive way.

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Volume 1 – Day 7: Love *IS* a Feeling

Don't be fooled into thinking that love is action itself. Myriad atrocities against man have been committed in strong, but misguided, faith. Also know that Jesus Christ would not have suffered the Cross out of duty or obligation. Jesus died because His love for me, His love for you, was so immense that He "... died for His friends." This love in action presents a quality of life that is far above anything that is natural. To know God or anyone else intimately, our spirits must touch and our hearts must touch. Then we will experience intimacy with them.

Why would we think that God is so awesome, majestic, powerful, intelligent, all-knowing, superlative and pure that He is untouchable? Why would we think that the most creative being in the universe would create human beings, in His image, just to treat them like mere animals and strike them whenever they behaved badly? Why would we think that a *good* Father would abuse us just because we might wander into the wrong places or simply balk at His commands?

Would we have children to treat them in that way? God gave us each a personal example of who He is, how He thinks and how much He loves, by the very act of procreation. As we multiply we establish families to nurture loving relationships with one another. Then we gather into communities to extend those loving relationships to a larger circle.

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