

### Volume 5, Day 1: Secular or Sacred

In one scene of *Les Misérables* I found deep spiritual meaning. When an ex-convict who had been released from prison was invited into the Bishop's home for a meal and a good night's rest, conversation at the dinner table ensued. The criminal told the Bishop and his wife that he was imprisoned for 19 years for only having stolen a loaf of bread out of desperation to feed his hungry family. The bishop said to him, "Man can be unjust. " The convict shot back, "Man not **God**?"

I can't count how many times I have blamed God for things not happening to me as they should, that is according to my way of thinking. Since watching that scene, I have gone back and repented of many accusations that I have made toward God which had nothing to do with Him. But the Bishop sets another tremendous spiritual idea before us in the next two scenes.

The convict arises in the night, loads the family silverware into his knapsack. When the Bishop catches him in the act, the convict knocks him out and runs away with the silver. In the morning the French law-enforcement guards bring the criminal back to the Bishop's residence with the stolen silverware. Surprisingly when the guard told the Bishop, "He said you gave it to him," the Bishop replied, "Yes." He then turned to the ex-con and asked, "Why didn't you take the silver candlesticks too, they're worth a lot of money?" In the background, the Bishop's wife muttered, "Thank God, You caught him!"

The revelation for me was that the Bishop acted in a loving manner like Jesus Christ. The Bishop's wife, acted like most Christians I know who are happier to get their material valuables back, even if it means the criminal goes back to prison for the rest of his life! The Bishop's final words to the ex-con were, "With this silver I have bought your soul ... Now, I give you back to God."

Consider this. It is the kindness of God that leads men to repentance onto salvation not his judgment. In John 3:17 Jesus said, "I didn't come to condemn the world but to save it! Look for the sacred in everything, good or bad, and you will see God everywhere!

Find confirming scriptures and aligning experiences.

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### Volume 5, Day 2: Mercy Forgiveness Grace = Redemption

After watching the stolen silver scene in Les Miserables where the Bishop offered not just mercy and forgiveness but added grace (more silver), I decided to reread the whole Bible with sacred eyes. I have been a student of the word of God for decades. But rereading the entire Bible from the perspective of God's mercy, forgiveness and grace which are byproducts of his unconditional love for every human being, changed many of my misperceptions of God. My new perceptions changed my lifestyle as well.

I discovered that the Old Testament was not about judgment, condemnation and pure justice. It was about right living. I found in story after story, especially the sordid stories, that God's grace was at work. I began to see the entire Bible as the most amazing love story ever. Consider the stories of Job and Joseph who encountered enormous adversity and misery. Yet they knew and loved God in a deeply personal way. They didn't shake their fist at God in complaint, like I was so prone to do. They saw God at work promoting the glory of His love and participated with Him despite their own personal pain and misery. They were confident in God's purposes.

When God encountered the first murderer, Cain, He showed him mercy and actually withheld his due punishment. God even placed a mark of protection on Cain's forehead warning all that God would do seven times worse to them than they did toward Cain. It is not that God doesn't get angry about our evil and mean wrongs toward one another. It is that God made us to love us and that we would love God and each other. Just as we, who are not God, love even our wayward children, He loves all of His children, even the wayward ones.

Your parents may not have been good at all, but don't consider God as an **imperfect** parent such as human parents may be. By simply believing that God Himself, in the person of His Only Begotten Son, Jesus, paid the penalty for you. Forgiveness is simply letting God "pay it forward" (the penalty for your sin [crimes against relationship]) to Jesus.

My Confirming Scriptures and Aligning Experiences:

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### Volume 5, Day 3: Casting Condemnation (Blame)

Human nature is consistently self indulgent, self promoting and controlling. When others don't act in a manner that I consider to be appropriate, I will likely resort to all kinds of manipulation and coercion in order to get them to behave how I believe they should. The problem with this **god complex** is that even though I wouldn't claim to be God, I act as if I am! I've observed this in every human I have ever met. And it was confirmed in large measure while substitute teaching for three years and encountering over 5000 students, all of whom acted in this **self appointed god** manner. And I watched this create division and relational carnage everywhere I taught.

I encouraged the students to employ the golden rule in their lives as it could bring them more peace and harmony with others. But thanks to one 8th grade class, I was able to see a solution to a lot of the problems that I observed in the public school system. The golden rule is, "treat others the way you want to be treated." But most of us have never really thought clearly how it is that we want to be treated. In a single word we are all looking for is **acceptance**. Mostly we get rejection because we don't measure up to someone or everyone else's demands of us.

In the scene in Les Miserables where the Bishop actually lied to protect the criminal from re-incarceration we see the redemption of a criminal. Had the Bishop approached the criminal in the same manner as his wife, the rest of that man's life would have been wasted. In the end, the redemption was evident in the life redeemed by the Man of God. Jesus' method was, and still is, complete acceptance of any and all people, even in their most criminal behaviors. Jesus' acceptance of sinners actually incited the religious leaders of His church to anger great enough to crucify Him.

Accepting a person despite their wrongful behavior, does not condone their behavior. Condemnation belongs to God alone! Find your own literary or other creative work which will let you relate and apply this grace to others and change both yours and their life.

My Confirming Scriptures and Aligning Experiences:

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#### Volume 5, Day 4: Fool me once. Shame on you!

My brother, Willie called me the other night asking me to loan him fifty dollars to get his car out of the repair shop. He knows that I am very clear with everyone asking for a hand out that I will not give money or stuff to them. He watched me flat out deny a man money just a couple of weeks ago.

Be aware, however, that sometimes the Holy Spirit tells me to write a huge check or pay for towing and repair for someone. Unless the Holy Spirit directs me to do anything, I will not do it. So in that context, my first inclination was to say “No.” to Willie. But the Spirit said to do it anyway. So with some skepticism, I agreed to meet Willie the next morning to loan him the money. As I drove to my next meeting, I texted his wife to let her know about the loan. Having received no reply, I met Willie and handed him the cash. He assured me that he would repay me in a couple of weeks.

Willie introduced me to his friend Dannie sitting on the bench beside him. As Dannie and I talked, I could tell that he was finding spiritual value in my words. I described how we don’t need to ask God for more faith. He gave us all at least a mustard seed amount of faith. Jesus said, “... if you have faith the size of a grain of mustard seed, you can command mountains to move and it will happen!” That small suggestion to seek to have the same faith as Abraham rather than asking God for more seemed to bring new understanding to Dannie.

As I left Willie, Deb’s response came through loud and clear. Willie has a gambling problem and **no responsibility** for auto repairs. I instantly realized that the transaction had nothing to do with Willie and everything to do about a divine appointment with Dannie! I refused to put shame on Willie and encouraged his wife later on the phone not to shame Willie, but release Him to God’s care and healing. She was moved to tears as we prayed for the “long-suffering” of God to be ours as we wait patiently for His Holy Spirit to heal Willie. Actually Willie’s deception produced two divine appointments. Instead of shaming others, I will release them from my condemnation to God’s love and grace which are truly healing.

My Confirming Scriptures and Aligning Experiences:

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### Volume 5, Day 5: Fool me twice. Shame on me!

“Yes, shame on me!” Not because I was too weak to resist or too foolish to recognize another’s manipulation. Rather, when I am fooled in either the first round or the second or subsequent rounds, it is a clear indication that I am not fully tuned in to the Holy Spirit within be.

John 16 declares that the role of the Holy Spirit is to convict men of sin, righteousness and judgment because they have not believed unto salvation. This chapter also reveals that the Holy Spirit’s role for believers is to guide us into all truth, including recognizing the motives of others.

Unfortunately, most Christians when others deceive them as to **why** they need help in order to get that help, they want to hold the other person responsible and will even try to shame the other party in order to get them to stop their manipulations. Yet, if we see clearly how Jesus treated the adulterous woman, for example, we find that Jesus did not heap shame on her. Rather He humiliated the religious, self-righteous for their hypocrisy. God is far more disgusted with self-righteous, boastful persons than one who sins and admits it and asks for forgiveness.

You likely remember that Jesus was not only beaten beyond recognition and nailed to a cross but also crucified naked. Jesus bore not only the penalty of our evil, but also suffered our shame. Therefore, as “Christ-ians” we should love like Jesus does, not blaming or shaming others into compliance with our standards for living, but showing them God’s grace so that they can be compelled by the love of God into a love affair with Him. And to be sure, the best solution to addictive behavior is developing a strong enough love for God that you are compelled not to hurt your **lover!**

My Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

human nature is:  
self-indulgent  
self-promoting  
self-Sovereign

### **Volume 5, Day 6: Pursuit of Equity Brings Equilibrium**

It is natural for humans to strive to achieve equity for all in their particular circles of influence. Yet equity seems to be nearly impossible to achieve regardless of how much intentionality and effort we put into its pursuit. Interestingly, equity is not the final answer. Its pursuit is simply one ingredient in global or universal equilibrium.

We tend to think that equity can and should be achieved. Yet we can see clearly that it has never occurred in any community over the centuries of mankind's existence on earth. Once we understand that the final answer is equilibrium, we can put equity in its proper perspective. The only time equity is fully realized is in the context of each person's value in relationship.

Physically, mentally and emotionally we cannot ever be equal. Each person's DNA (genetics) is unique. There are no two identical people. Even identical twins have myriad differences. There are no two snowflakes alike. There are no two blades of grass alike. The context in which equity exists is relationship. And every relationship is spiritual in nature. The spirit within a person actually chooses the values placed on all things in their sphere of influence. And only in the spiritual choice to place equal value on every relationship can equity be found.

Personal appearance, athleticism, acumen, intelligence, sensibility and attitude make value unique for each individual. Those with high IQs tend to have more lucrative careers than those with low IQs. Highly athletic persons might become Olympians while others could never be. Therefore equity in pay or social status cannot occur. However, in the context of relationship, all are of equal value to the creator. And although circumstances or vocational achievements will not be equal, our diversity creates an opportunity for equilibrium to be attained by virtue of harmony in relationship which comes through choice.

The ultimate choice is place equal value on everyone as together with them we create communities of the highest value. My personal equilibrium comes by my own choice to love all others.

### **Volume 5, Day 7: Equilibrium ~~or~~ Equity**

“For every action there is an opposite and equal reaction.” “Opposites attract.” “Water seeks its level.” “Positive charges flow to the negative charges.” “What goes up, must come down.” “All sports are competitions.” “No pain, No gain.” Our greatest lesson are learned by failure. On and on we could spin. In short, All oppositions tend to bring equilibrium and balance.

We talk about the balance of nature. Rain and sunshine. Planting and harvesting. Daylight and darkness. Ebb and flow of tides. Water cycles. Death brings life. And so on. Even the tilt and rotation of the earth are necessary to sustain temperature and weather balance in order to support life. And beyond the atmosphere, the heavenly bodies with mass and energy bring equilibrium to earth and enable it to support human life. Then there is space and time. These participate in producing equilibrium by affecting phenomena at exactly the right time and place. Yet none of these natural forces are equal, but they are in balance, a very delicate and intricate balance.

As intelligent design would have it, no two forces are equal; no two individuals are equal; no two heavenly bodies are equal; no two molecules are equal; no two atoms are equal and so on. The most intelligent of all designs is that of mankind with the unique characteristic of spiritual connection with others in relationship. The creator is the most relational of all beings. And all humans, made in the image of God Himself have the opportunity and ability to create and sustain relationships. And, to be sure, with an up-close-and-personal relationship with God, humans can develop other-caring relationships that truly transcend each one's tendency to be selfish enough to takes advantage of others for personal benefit.

Equilibrium and equity is achieved when love is so strong for another that selfless abandon occurs. God's Spirit, when embraced and received into one's bosom, enables otherwise selfish beings to live and love for the benefit of others!

My Confirming Scriptures and Aligning Experiences:

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