

# To Love and Be Loved

Intimate Relationships vs. Religious Systems



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## Introduction

We wanted to develop a useful tool for you to carefully scrutinize the type of Christianity you embrace. Is your spiritual life based upon a personal, viable trust in God? Or, are you dependent on religious forms and ritual practices?

The Hebraic Restoration is built on *relational priorities*. That is, certain relationships are more vital to you than others. In the Restoration Diagram, below, everything in your relational sphere begins with how you relate to our Father and His Son, Jesus, in the way the Bible calls for. In priority, your walk of love-grounded obedient trust is the most crucial of all your relationships.

The Restoration Diagram  
Relational Priorities of the Early Church



Out of the depth of your relationship with the Father and Son all your other relationships exist. As you move outward from the center in the diagram past your home and home fellowship, the relationships diminish in relational priority. You only have so much time and opportunity to expend your life, and

the first three relational rings need to take precedence. Keep in mind that the quality of each subsequent relationship as you go outward in the diagram depends on the quality of the relationships nearer the center.

Let's return to our initial premise. NOWHERE does the Bible indicate that our God established a *religion*. On the contrary, His ongoing desire is to *relate* to His creation as chosen ones called-out by Him. In the beginning, He formed Adam in His own image to be able to relate to Him in a way uniquely different from the rest of His creatures. Eve was then created *from* Adam and *for* Adam, to share that same relational privilege.

Abraham, whose intimate walk with God is a model for the Hebraic Restoration, related to God in trust-filled obedience. So profound was his trust in the one true God that he abandoned all that he knew in Mesopotamia to journey to a land he had never seen. Such trust in God underwent the most severe testing: to offer in sacrifice his only son of the promise, Isaac.

Now that's trust! And that trust-based life that looked to God to bring forth life from a dead womb and to restore it to life if need be was credited to Abraham by God as righteousness (Genesis 15:6). This man's obedient trust moved God to enter into an eternal Covenant to call out Abraham's descendants to live in the land He promised to them..

Abraham is known as "*God's friend*" in James 2:23. No wonder the Bible reminds us of the relational connection with Abraham for all who trust in Jesus!

*The reason the **promise is based on trusting** is so that it may come as **God's free gift**, a promise that can be relied on by all the seed, not only those who live within the framework of the Torah, but*

also those with the **kind of trust Abraham had** — **Abraham our father for all of us**. This accords with the Hebrew Scriptures, where it says, “I have appointed you to be a **father to many nations**.” Abraham is **our father in God’s sight** because he **trusted God** as the one who gives life to the dead and calls nonexistent things into existence. (Romans 4:16,17).

Jesus, who was delivered over to death because of our offenses and raised to life, makes those who trust righteous. Have you ever asked yourself *why* Abraham would be called the father of all who put their trust in Jesus? Paul clues us in:

*But the words, “it was **credited to his account** . . . ,” were not written for him only. They were **written also for us**, who will certainly have our account credited too, because we have **trusted in him** who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead (Romans 4:23,24)*

Think about this trust level in regard to your own relational connection to Abraham in the spirit.

Other key figures mentioned in the Older Testament related deeply and personally to God.

- “**Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth**” (Numbers 12:3); “**The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend**” (Exodus 33:11a).
- “**I [the LORD] have found David son of Jesse a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do**” (Acts 13:22).
- “**Enoch walked with God, and then he was-**

*n’t there, because **God took him.**” (Genesis 5:24). “**By trusting, Enoch was taken away from this life without seeing death — ‘He was not to be found, because God took him away’ — for he has been attested as having been, prior to being taken away, well pleasing to God**” (Hebrews 11:5)*

Each of these examples is but a shadow of the relational intimacy our Lord shares with those inhabited by His Spirit through loving obedient trust! This is the union our Lord has always sought. If you relate to Him in the way He desires, you’ll live far differently than someone who just “practices religion”. You’ll have nothing in common!

### **Stop for a moment and consider this:**

How would your Father describe your relationship with Him? A church attendee? A busy committee/activity participant? A schedule-keeper for prescribed “Christian duties”? His trust-filled, eager to please child? Go ahead, describe yourself:

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## **It Takes Two To Relate**

Often overlooked when people discuss relationships is an obvious fact: You can’t have a relationship by yourself. As you relate, someone is relating back to you. This is crucial when you consider your relationship with the One True God: **There really is a loving Someone relating to you as well!** Don’t lose sight of this.

Relationships are person-to-person. They don’t demand a certain form or ritual to bind

them together. Relational interaction is an issue of a heart because we connect to others through our emotions. Someone to whom you are emotionally attached, including God, is someone you value in your heart. And, heart connectedness defies logical analysis.

Stop for a moment. Bring to mind the people for whom you care the most. Did your thoughts of them inspire feelings? When you think of our Father and His Son, Jesus, do you also experience intimate emotion, such as gratefulness, security, devotion, longing?

So many who call themselves “Christian” are enmeshed in religious forms and ritual, not unlike those who follow pagan religions. A god who is boxed in by prescribed rituals and forms is a creation of your mind or someone else’s! That kind of god is a “foreign deity” who has little or no involvement in your life apart from ritual gatherings. Such a deity concept is a far cry from the reality of intimate relationship with the Father and His Son, Jesus.

We have written many times about God’s relational command in the Older Testament to *love Him*. The Hebrew word for the love He commands is *ahav*. This word means you have a passionate devotion for Him, a deep yearning to be in His presence. Isn’t this the intensity of love that Jesus calls for when He relates the greatest commandment? “***Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.***’ ***This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments***” (Matthew 22:37-40). This is the kind of love that *takes action!*

The Hebrew letters for *ahav* mean “a window into the Father’s heart.” When you choose to lovingly relate to Him as He requires, our Father reveals Himself to you in

a dynamic and intensely personal manner. Has this been your ongoing experience? Please stop and answer this question.

## Religion Is Man-made

The concept of religion is so familiar to people, and evokes quite an array of emotional response when they think about their own experience. But religion is a man-made system. You can’t find God *establishing religion* in the Bible.

Through religion, man establishes institutionalism with its accompanying organization and management. (Today’s church can “thank” the Romans for their imposed domination that choked out relational connectedness.) Direction and control rather than the relational intimacy of extended spiritual family are the currency of religion.

At the top of the control paradigm is one individual, or a few, who manage many others. The few establish and enforce the rules (through creed or tradition) that govern the participation of others. Allegiance to a particular creed of belief or behavior binds each religious system together.

Keep this in mind: Religion in itself would not exist if people weren’t misled into believing that their distinct religious ritual and specific creed made them acceptable to God. And note: Religion can exist without any relationship with God.

Jesus criticized the religious hierarchy of His day for establishing a religion with man-made rules that left God out:

- “***They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.***” (Mark 7:7).
- “***You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life***” (John 5:39,40).

- “*Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are*” (Matthew 23:15).

How do you know you are in a religious system? When “rule keeping” is more highly valued than personal, intimate relationship with God.

Sadly, with the over 22,000 competing denominations and sects in Christendom today, man is still establishing *religions*. And each group believes they are more correct than the others.

The bounty of non-Christian religions in the world can exist *without* having the true God. As much as any false religion insists they worship a ‘god’ or “gods”, there is NO other God except the ONE TRUE GOD of the Bible.

We once had a conversation over dinner with a dozen Japanese Buddhists. These men openly acknowledged that Buddha was not from the beginning (as the true God is). They readily admitted that they pray to Buddha, but “Buddha doesn’t answer prayer.” Sounds silly doesn’t it?

Not to them! Because their *focus* was on the form and practice of their religion. They had no relationship with the one true God. But this is no different for many who call themselves “Christian” but are more committed to their creedal identity than to a relationship with God.

Jude offers fair warning against God-less systems that divide people over man-made creedal practices: “*In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires. These are the men who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit*” (Jude 1:18,19).

What a contrast with the fiery heart of Moses as he urged the Israelites, “*Therefore, choose life, so that you will live, you and your descendants, loving ADONAI your God, paying attention to what he says and clinging to him — for that is the purpose of your life!*” (Deuteronomy 30:19b,20a).

## What Did You Embrace: Relationship or Religion?

You may be wondering, “What does the issue of *false religions* have to do with Christians?” Simply this. First, there is no biblical foundation for “practicing religion” as a way of approaching the God of the Bible. He relates to people based on the condition of their heart and spirit:

- “*The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise*” (Psalm 51:17).
- “*For this is what the high and lofty One says — he who lives forever, whose name is holy: ‘I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite’*” (Isaiah 57:15).
- “*“Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?” declares the LORD. ‘This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word’*” (Isaiah 66:2).

The humble of heart who seeks to relate to God will always find Him. The humble of heart who trusts in Jesus as His Covenant requires will experience Him in relationship. This is what the Bible affirms. (Please read *The Gospel of the Covenant is the Pilgrimage to Salvation*, under **Hebraic Articles**, for more on the scriptural basis for a relationship with our Lord.)

To re-cap: Religion is a man-made creation, appealing to mankind because in it he can define his 'gods'. Religion never emphasizes a love relationship of obedient trust in the One True God of the universe. If there were such a relationship, there would not be over 22,000 competing denominations in Christendom. The proud intellect of man is behind religion and ALL of its various forms and practices.

God's commands were given to the Israelites in the Older Testament to describe how to *relate* to Him and to each other. His laws depicted for them the *freedom* and *boundaries* entailed in their relationships.

The commandments of God that point to *freedom* are designed to help people affirm and grow in their relationship with God and with each other. Jesus summed up the essence of all the freedom commands with the greatest commandment: to love. All the law and the prophets are summed up in LOVE.

The commandments that establish *boundaries* reveal areas that will harm relationships. These are the "prohibition" commands, such as "Do not steal, do not covet", designed to steer you from impinging on others and disrupting the relationship.

***"For in Christ Jesus...  
The only thing that counts  
is faith expressing itself  
through love"*** (Galatians 5:6)

The apostle Paul plainly proclaims to the Galatian believers that the only thing that counts is your faith — your relationship with God — expressing itself in love. And the love Paul is referring to is evidenced by action and change into Christ's character as He works in and through His people.

The apostle isn't saying that the fruit of

faith-based love is "one of the *many* things that counts." Think about that. Love is the outflow of your obedient trust relationship with our Lord.

The August 29, 2004, Parade magazine featured an article about a noteworthy high school football coach. The article, *He Turns Boys Into Men*, by Jeffrey Marx, commends Joe Ehrmann, a former NFL star in the mid '70's. Not only are Ehrmann's goals for developing boys into men impressive, but the article also reminded us of how destructive the Hellenist influence we've written against so many times is on men in the US.

As we were leaving Israel after completing our research, a Jewish follower of Jesus told us, "**You're going to the hardest place on earth for anyone to embrace the Hebraic foundations. Hellenism owns the Church in the United States.**" Those words have come back to haunt us many times as we've done seminars over the years. The all-too-frequent phone calls from unloved, unappreciated wives, and from men who are all-cranial with no evidence of loving gratefulness in Jesus have corroborated that statement.

When Bible knowledge consumes the head and nothing flows from the heart, people have missed the intimacy of relationship that our Father stresses throughout both testaments.

Sue and I don't know Joe Ehrmann's spiritual bent, but we were intrigued by his comment, "Masculinity ought to be defined in *terms of relationships*, and taught in terms of *capacity to love and be loved*."

We'd like to quote Ehrmann's five goals for developing men of character and integrity. (We've included applicable Scriptures next to each goal):

"1. Recognize the "three lies of false masculinity." Athletic ability, sexual conquest, and economic success are not the best measure-

- ments of manhood. (Matthew 11:29)
2. Allow yourself to love and be loved. Build and value relationships. (John 15:13)
  3. Accept responsibility, lead courageously and enact justice on behalf of others. Practice concepts of empathy, inclusion, and integrity. (Isaiah 58:6-23; Amos 5:24)
  4. Learn the importance of serving others. Base your thoughts and actions on "What can I do for you?" (Philippians 2:3,4; Matthew 20:26-28)
  5. Develop a cause beyond yourself. Try to leave the world a better place because you were here." (Psalm 15)

***“If we judged ourselves,  
we would not come  
under judgment”***

(1 Corinthians 11:31)

It's vital that you examine and judge your own faith practices. In the next few pages we compare different aspects of the *Hebraic, relational* way of interacting with God and each other, and *Hellenistic, religious forms*. Prayerfully go through the comparison to discern if you have been told the whole truth during your faith pilgrimage.

One of the main difficulties in any discussion about “faith” is to admit that you might be wrong. To get started, ask yourself:

- In what or whom have you put your trust?
- Is your faith based on the creed you were taught? Is it founded on the godliness and piety of your church authorities?
- Or, is your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of His Church? Is it *really*? If so, then affirm that reliance on our Lord in your heart.

If you relate to our Lord with wholehearted trust as He calls for, then you are

indwelled by His Spirit! Believe the promise of Jesus Himself:

• *“If you love me, you will keep my commands; and I will ask the Father, and he will give you **another comforting Counselor** like me, the **Spirit of Truth**, to be with you forever. The world cannot receive him, because it neither sees nor knows him. You know him, because he is **staying with you** and will be **united with you**...But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will **teach you everything**; that is, he will remind you of everything I have said to you (John 14:15-17,26).*

God intended for the Spirit to be given to every person who embraces the true Gospel. Peter's words were sweet music to his listeners at Pentecost: *“Turn from sin, return to God, and each of you be immersed on the authority of Jesus the Messiah into forgiveness of your sins, and you will **receive the gift of the Holy Spirit!** For the promise is for you, for your children, and for those far away — as many as ADONAI our God may call!” (Acts 2:38,39).*

The apostle John further defines the distinction between those who have the Spirit of Christ and those who don't: *“We are **from God**, and whoever **knows God** listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the **Spirit of truth** and the spirit of falsehood” (1 John 4:6).*

So it comes down to this. Do you really have the Holy Spirit dwelling within you? How else can you determine the truths of God if you haven't the Spirit of truth? His indwelling presence will guide you into the reality of relating to our Lord as He wants you to — in truth that translates into righteous living:

*“Jesus answered, **‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me’**” (John 14:6).*

*“Whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God”* (John 3:21).

*“Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”* (John 8:32).

As you go through the comparisons below, take the time to re-affirm in your heart your trust in Jesus. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you into the truth God wants you to live by. And be confident in our Lord’s promise to you. Insert your name as you receive His promise: *“If I, \_\_\_\_\_, lack wisdom, I, \_\_\_\_\_, should ask God, who gives generously to me, \_\_\_\_\_, without finding fault, and it will be given to me, \_\_\_\_\_”*

## **Followers of Jesus** **Hebraic Restoration** ***Relationship-based Trust***

Relating to God from your heart is based on understanding the Covenant relationships He establishes with man. His covenants delineate *how to relate* to Him. (Again, see *The Gospel of the Covenant is the Pilgrimage to Salvation*, under **Hebraic Articles** at the website.)

The Hebraic Restoration now underway throughout the world is founded on a living, trust-grounded relationship with our Lord. This walk is a heart issue independent of religious form and ritual.

### **Foundational Premise:**

- Begins with fear of God (Proverbs 1:7; Luke 1:50)
- Seeks growing intimacy with God (Ephesians 1:17-19)

(James 1:5).

Even asking him to give you wisdom in this matter is a sign of your trust in Him! And He won’t fail you.

If you are already transitioning from religion to relationship, it’s a move from mind to Spirit. The tentacles of your mind’s systematic rationale and attempts to box God into your intellect must be removed one at a time — and they don’t let go easily! As you grow in *reliance* on the Holy Spirit and in your *commitment* to experience His love and to share it with others, your relational connectedness with our Lord and with others will blossom and bear much fruit.

## **Western Christianity** **Hellenist/Roman Influence** ***Religious-based Systems***

The myriad of today’s Christian religious systems have their origin in Hellenism that entered Church in the second and third centuries. Roman organizational hierarchy then took over the structure in the fourth century.

These two influences have produced an emphasis on religious forms and ritual, and ecclesiastical control. (See Chapter 7: *Greek Philosophy In the Church*; and Chapter 8: *The Roman Conquest of the Church*, in our book online, *Restoring the Early Church*.)

### **Foundational Premise:**

- NO fear of God (Romans 3:10-18)
- Seeks religious forms and practices (Mark 7:6,7)

- Lives by the Spirit to glorify God (Philippians 1:9-11; John 15:4-8)
- Relies on the prophetic voice of God. Synagogues began in the homes of prophets during the Babylonian captivity. In the prophetic, God speaks through man to define His ways (Amos 3:7). The Hebraic Stream of Judaism was prophetic. For instance, 200 years before the Incarnation they taught “you must be born again.”
- Leads by godly example (Luke 6:40; John 13:14; James 3:13). Leaders first role modeled as a way of life the truths they shared. Leaders recognized by servant heart and righteous character (1 Timothy 3:2-7). Trained disciples to be like teacher in character as well as content (Matthew 23:11; Luke 6:40).
- Group discussion was key method to confirm truth for life application. (Acts 28:22,24,30,31; 2 Corinthians 13:1).
- The individual is highly valued. Discipleship is based on personal familiarity with disciple and permission to guide his life to glorify God (Proverbs 27:23; Romans 12:2,3).
- Appeals to the soul, that is, your mind, will, and emotions (Colossians 2:8).
- Relies on educated lecturer who appeals to knowledge acquisition without life application. This method was acquired from Hellenist philosophers in second and third century. (James 1:22-24)
- Teacher’s character and way of life are incidental rather than vital (see Hebrews 13:7). Rousing oratory and entertaining anecdotes are stressed. Since teacher is not personally known, motive for teaching is not clear (2 Timothy 3:2-5).
- Conveys content that appeals to the mind rather than wisdom that has been learned from applied knowledge (Matthew 23:3; 1 Timothy 1:4-7).
- Attendance at religious performances is the key factor. You can be taught *or* entertained without being personally known (John 10:25-27; James 2:14-18).

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**Analogy:**

Hebraic leaders are like Astronauts. They go out and experience what they later share with others. Their *experience* of wisdom gained from applied truth sets them apart.

- The Hebraic leader first lives out what

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**Analogy:**

Hellenist teachers are like Astronomers. They study and analyze from afar, but never undergo first-hand experience of what they speak about. Their knowledge never translates into applied wisdom.

- The **lecture** mode of the Hellenist

he will share with others. The **discussions** of a Hebraic teacher with his disciple are conducive to equipping them to walk out their trust in Messiah and obey His commands (Matthew 7:24). Their motivation emanated from personal experience with a heart devotion that encouraged obedient trust in God.

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## Hebraic Influence on Christian Maturity

Active — Appeals to the affective, demonstrative right side of brain

[Please indicate each item that identifies your experience and total them below.]

### Motive

- Love of God and others
- Life viewed as a pilgrimage leading to ultimate culmination
- Suffering seen as necessary for development of Christ-like character

### Process Oriented

- Stresses direct participation
- Emphasizes age and wisdom
- Role modeling, mentoring, and discipleship indispensable
- Leadership by personal example
- Character of leader essential
- Personal relationships imperative

### Biblical Application

- Doers of the Word
- Bible: reality that must be confronted
- Goal: to develop Christlikeness

### Ministry Activity

- Small intimate groups
- Leader as facilitator
- Cooperative, participatory planning

teacher appeals to the intellect and promotes philosophical debate. Much talk masks over the reality of inaction. Paul lamented this deplorable situation: “*All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas*” (Acts 17:21; James 2:14-26).

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## Greek Influence on Christian Religion

Cognitive — appeals to the intellectual, logical, left side of the brain

[Please indicate each item that identifies your experience and total them below.]

### Motive

- Pursuit of self-interest and knowledge
- Life viewed in circular terms, to some day achieve a higher state of existence
- Suffering to be avoided; people and activities weighed for self-gratification: “How does this person/event benefit *me*?”

### Program Oriented

- Heavy program prominence
- Emphasizes education
- Relies on speaking skills, oratory, programmed materials, information conveyance
- Leader’s personal life immaterial
- Personal relationships optional

### Biblical Application

- Belief without personal cost
- Bible: data that must be taught
- Focus on rules—do’s and don’ts
- Emphasizes distinct denominations

### Ministry Activity

- Large impersonal groups
- Leader-directed and controlled
- Organizational roles important

- Spiritual gifts shared
- Frequent scheduled and unscheduled gatherings

**Fruit**

- Love, acceptance, forgiveness
- Transparency encouraged
- Active participation
- "How you serve" vital
- Each believer trained to serve
- Produces mature believers

**Total** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Hebraic:  
Key Foundations to Your  
Faith Practice**

- Righteousness is a vital component for fellowship. Biblical fellowship is based on what is pleasing to God rather than ourselves. Righteousness through loving obedient trust assures your prayers will be answered in God's timing. Answered prayers produces testimonies that glorify God. (See Chapter 11, *The Home Fellowship: Promoting Righteousness*, in our book *Restoring the Early Church* online).
- The home is the key arena for spiritual development. Next to your relationship with God, marriage and family hold a priority that no other worldly involvements competes with. (See Chapter 9: *Marriage*, and Chapter 10: *Family*, in our book *Restoring the Early Church* online.)
- God is experienced as testimonies to His intervention and response to prayer are frequent.

- Acquisition of knowledge emphasized
- Reliance on scheduled gatherings

**Fruit**

- Mutual toleration
- Transparency discouraged
- Passivity and lethargy
- "What you know" vital
- Trained professionals utilized
- Produces spectators

**Total** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Hellenism:  
Key Considerations in  
Your Faith Practice**

- Commitment to creed. You participate with others who hold to the same creedal positions and expressions as yourself.
- You seek those who enjoy the same religious experiences as you do, i.e, lively worship, entertaining teaching, fun youth program.
- Religious gatherings are the primary means of spiritual development. Focus is on scheduled gatherings with other like-minded people. Little or no spiritual development takes place in your home. Wives and children are outsourced for others to train in spiritual matters. Husbands and fathers have little spiritual input other than grace before meals.
- Personal experience in which the loving concern of a wonderful Father is demonstrated is rare. Testimonies that glorify Him for answered prayer rarely occur.