

GROWING IN GOD

PODCAST



GIG242 – Religion or Relationship

Hi, I appreciate you being with me today in this podcast. Actually, I just finished recording a podcast which is dealing with our awareness, called *Will You Be Aware?* I felt really burdened after I completed that to follow up with another message, which I would like to title, *Religion or Relationship*. I think it is important to understand the amount to which our lack of awareness is based upon our religious upbringing, or our religious teaching, that which we understand about religion – whether you are talking about Christian faith or even other things. Of course, I am primarily speaking to the Christian faith in this podcast, and so we will keep it focused on that. But I think it is something we need to come to grips with, especially in this time that we are in, because this issue of our unawareness is really concerning. We know that in the coming of Christ, He comes as a thief, but that is based on people's unawareness. If we develop an awareness of Him, an understanding of His voice, then He is not a thief coming by surprise in the middle of the night.

So, how do we get out of this turmoil? I think one of the ways we free ourselves is by getting to the place where we really do understand and grow into a relationship with Christ, with the Father, with the Holy Spirit. It is not about a religion, it is not about doctrines; it is about a relationship. Part of the problem when we delve into religion is that religion really teaches us, almost foundationally, to close off to new things. In this message on awareness, we realize that God is going to do new things, especially in the end-time; He declares that He is going to do new things. And yet, we look at the results of our religious training and we can see the depth to which that training encourages us, or demands us, many times, to close off to anything new. So, it really does become a dilemma for people to try to develop awareness and try to develop openness, and yet at the same time realize that that is probably going to fly in the face of teaching or doctrines that you have encountered in church, or in your religious training in seminary or Bible school.

We see this problem, that religion does not tend to teach us relationship; it tends to teach us doctrines and concepts which build walls around the teaching itself. We know that Yeshua could not have been the Messiah, because He came from Nazareth – just ask the Pharisees of the time that He lived in. When people would evaluate Him, they would say, "We know the Scripture, so this cannot be the Messiah. He comes from Nazareth, and no good thing comes from Nazareth; therefore, this cannot be the Messiah." The words say that that is the way it is, and therefore, that becomes part of the bricks which develop the walls around the religious faith of the time that Christ appeared in. We see that through the Gospels over and over again. But in this day, we must develop the ability to see new possibilities. We know that with God nothing is impossible; yet religion says almost everything is impossible. Everything is wrong that does not line up to the orthodoxy that has been developed over time by the great leaders and rulers of the religions that have been developed; and so, we do everything a church does, and religion does everything in its power, to protect orthodoxy. Awareness is something that we can develop, but it requires an attention, an observation, and an openness; and you are going to, at some point, run into a real problem with the orthodoxy of the time.

Let's look at John the fifth chapter and we will get a good example of what I am talking about. John 5, beginning at verse 8, says, "Jesus said to him, 'Get up, pick up your pallet and walk.'" He is just healing this man who was unable to walk. Verse 9 says, "Immediately the man became well, picked up his pallet and began to walk." What a wonderful thing! We see Jesus healing this guy here. We see that many times with Yeshua, the works that He did, which of course He declares were being shown to Him by the Father. And what an awesome thing, we should all just rejoice and break out into worship. But let's look at what really happens because of this miracle that healed the man.

It says, in verses 10-16,

Now it was the Sabbath on that day. So the Jews were saying to the man who was cured, "It is the Sabbath, and it is not permissible for you to carry your pallet." But he answered them, "He who made me well was the one who said to me, 'Pick up your pallet and walk.'" They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Pick up your pallet and walk'?" But the man who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had slipped away while there was a crowd in that place. Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, "Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you." The man went away, and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. For this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath.

This for us in our day seems amazing; and unfortunately, this kind of concept has been used to promote anti-Semitism against the Jewish people, and to raise conflict with orthodoxy in the Jewish community. But here is this wonderful miracle that took place. Instead of being able to rejoice in it or to ponder it, they reacted out of their doctrines. What if they just stopped and pondered it, and said, "Wait a minute. Maybe it is not Yeshua who is wrong; maybe our concept of the Sabbath is what is wrong here. Let's try to evaluate what is really going on."

Verse 17. "But He answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working.'" Christ is over here in a relationship with the Father. That is what I want to bring out in this podcast and try to make clear for us, is that Christ, on one hand, was totally doing everything He did, saying everything He said, teaching what He taught, out of a relationship with the Father. He was not going by orthodoxy. He was not looking at what was considered right and wrong by religion. He was reacting and responding to the Father. He was flowing with the Father. He knew the Father, and religion never knows God; it is just teaching about God. And even if it is teaching about God out of the Holy Scriptures, out of the Bible, it does not mean that people have necessarily understood.

We see that some of the greatest travesties that have taken place in history, especially where the Jewish people are concerned, have been by the Christian fathers who taught hate and anti-Semitism against the Jews, and taught against Israel as the home of the Jewish people. Now, they were using the Bible to do that. So just because somebody is reading the Bible or teaching out of the Bible does not mean that there is an understanding. Christ had the Scriptures, true; He read the Scriptures, true; but He knew the Father, and so the two were not in conflict. What He read in the Scriptures, and what He heard and what He saw, were not in conflict. However, I would beg to say that there is quite a bit of conflict that we face today, even born out of the teaching of the Scriptures. I will give you kind of an interesting fact about that. I will read from a Google search; this is AI, so who do you attribute it to? I do not know. It says, "There are more than 45,000 distinct Christian denominations worldwide, as of 2024." We look at this and say, "Wow, where does this come from?" It goes on, "This fragmentation is due to differences in beliefs, practices, and historical developments within the religion. While estimates vary, some sources

suggest that by 2025, there will likely be around 49,000 denominations.” So, it does not sound like this is getting better; and I would venture to say that probably all of these denominations are based upon what they consider absolute foundational biblical teaching and study of the Scriptures over time, with their church fathers and other scholars who have been a part of founding that specific denomination.

The point here is that if all it takes is reading the Bible to have understanding of exactly what God is saying and what He is wanting, then I do not think we would be at this place of having all of these thousands of denominations surrounding us at this time. So it is fair to ask, can we look beyond this? I wish that these who had been observing this miracle take place could have looked beyond just the walls they had built around their orthodox denomination at the time, because Christ was standing right before them and they were not able to see Him. He said at one time to them, “You search the Scriptures because in them you say you will find life, but these are they that teach of Me.” But they would not come to Christ. So, even though they were the scholars of the time, very learned men, very intelligent in the realm of human wisdom and understanding, they were unable, when Christ appeared, to hear Him and to understand Him, and to follow Him and to walk with Him. And it is tragic.

There is a lot of criticism today in the Church about these Scriptures that I am reading. There is a lot of criticism in the Church today about the Jewish people, about what we find spoken of about Judaism in the New Testament. And yet, I think what we need to do is take the Scriptures as our teacher and example, and say, “These things were spoken to us as an admonition, that we not fall into the same trap.” If we look around, we may already be in the same trap as these men. These were not necessarily bad people. They were people who were not aware, because they had no relationship with God; and to hear and to understand comes through, and from, this relationship. All they cared about was finding out who had told this man to pick up his pallet and walk, because that man was teaching people to violate the Sabbath, as they understood it. They had read very carefully the principle of the Sabbath from the Scriptures, and they had tried to design practices from the Scriptures that would allow people to keep the Sabbath and honor the Sabbath. And yet, the Sabbath rest of God was standing right before them in the person of Yeshua, and they were unable to see, hear, or comprehend what it was.

Let’s go on to verses 14-16.

Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, “Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you.” The man went away, and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. For this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath.

What is going to happen in this day and age when people come along and they are violating your orthodoxy? Is there going to be persecution of Christian against Christian? Well, certainly we know there will be accusations of heresy; we have seen it through history, and, unfortunately, I believe that we are going to see it again. It is terrible, because it divides the body of Christ; and if there is one thing that was said by Yeshua Himself about the body of Christ, it is that we should all be one, as He and the Father are one. But the body of Christ is never going to become one as Christ and the Father were one until we have a relationship as They had a relationship. And that is what Christ was pointing to in John the seventh chapter.

So, we have to push and press in to this thing of awareness, this thing of knowing Him. Verses 19-20 say,

Therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father

does, these things the Son also does in like manner” [if we are going to be aware, we have to be in a relationship]. For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and the Father will show Him greater works than these, so that you will marvel.”

I want to read out of John the sixth chapter, starting with verses 44-46. Christ is speaking here, and He says, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the prophets, “And they shall all be taught of God.” Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me.” This is an amazing statement – those who came to Christ had heard and learned from the Father. We must learn the voice of the Father. We must understand. We must come to the understanding; that is the learning part. It is one thing to hear Him, it is another thing to learn, to know what it is He is saying, to understand. We can read the Bible and we can have it be totally out beyond our ability to grasp what is being spoken. That is where the Holy Spirit comes in, in the relationship with the Holy Spirit who comes to us from the Father. So this is what Christ was saying: “Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me. Not that anyone has seen the Father, except the one who is from God; He has seen the Father.”

You say, “Well, I have not seen God. I have never seen Him.” That is not the issue, is it? Christ is not making an issue out of the fact that they had not seen the Father. What He is making an issue of is that “everyone who has **heard** and **learned** from the Father....” So there is an ability to hear and learn from the Father, to develop this awareness, to hear His voice; to know what He is speaking, what He is teaching, without having to see the Father face-to-face. Certainly you can say that about Moses. Moses definitely came to know the Father, but when he asked to see Him face to face, the Father just showed Him His backside; that was enough. But I would say Moses definitely learned of the Father, and heard directly from the Father. This is what we are looking for. If we are going to develop an awareness, it is going to come because we, as prophets, learn it. This is what Samuel did. Samuel heard the voice of the Father speaking to him. Then, as he grew, he learned what that voice was saying; because at first he did not know it was the voice of the Father, and he did not know what it was saying to him. But he learned that. That is what being a prophet is all about. And that is what we become in the body of Christ as the sons who come to hear and learn from the Father.

This is phenomenal, phenomenal teaching. Christ goes on to say, in verses 49-52,

“Your fathers ate manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh” [oh boy, here we go again]. Then the Jews began to argue with one another, saying, “How can this man give us His flesh to eat?”

We know from reading the Scriptures, if you are really going to be biblical, that you do not drink blood, and you do not eat the flesh of a human. So what Christ is saying here is absolutely blowing up their brains, because of their orthodox understanding of what the Scripture, the Word of God, is telling them. He is absolutely a heretic, teaching against everything that they understood. The reason I am saying this is because I think this history can repeat itself. I think God can move. I think as Isaiah prophesied, “Behold, I will do a new thing. Will you be aware?” In the days of Yeshua, God did a new thing. He brought forth the Word made flesh, and He gave it as true food and true drink in the body and blood of Christ. All of that, in the mind of the orthodoxy of the time, was absolutely heresy and against the teaching of the Word of God. There was no way to bring these things together and to justify it. And so, all of this begins to happen.

Let's jump to verses 63-65.

"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are Spirit and are life. But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him. And He was saying, "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him from the Father."

See, you have to hear and learn from the Father if you are going to be able to flow in the thing that God is doing. If you are going to really have awareness of what the truth is and what the voice and the teaching are, then there has to be this development of hearing the voice of the Father. And, again, when we look at religion, it does not tend to teach us relationship. It does not teach a relationship with the Father. It does not emphasize that you have to come to know the Father, you have to come to know His voice, you have to be taught from Him. That is part of what the prophecy said in Jeremiah: "They are not going to teach everyone his neighbor to know the Lord. You are all going to know the Lord, from the least to the greatest." That has to be the emphasis of church, that has to be the emphasis of religion. And if it is not, then what we are doing is building denominational walls based on doctrines, so that we try to protect our understanding and do not let anybody violate that. And that is what was happening in these verses that we are reading.

Somehow we have to come to the place where we are teaching the relationship. You have to come to know the Father. It is not me knowing the Father and teaching you about the Father. That is what Jeremiah said: There is going to be this new covenant. If you say, "I am in the new covenant. The new covenant that is being talked about in Jeremiah is talking about Christ, it is talking about Communion, Him giving His body and His blood, the bread and the wine," then do not stop reading the new covenant there. Part of the new covenant is that "every man is not going to teach his neighbor, saying, 'know the Lord' – you are all going to know Him, from the least to the greatest." Now, when I go to most churches, somebody is teaching everybody there how to know the Lord. I have done this myself. Are we missing something? We need to be teaching a relationship so that everybody comes to know the Lord, not teaching them about the Lord. And I think that this is what it is all pointing to. They had a problem with this statement. They could not hear it, they could not understand it; it has to be granted by the Father. It has to be learned from the Father, that you can come to walk in the new thing that God is going to do. Otherwise, you will call it a heresy.

Verses 66-69 say,

As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore. So Jesus said to the twelve, "You do not want to go away also, do you?" Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God."

What they connected with was Yeshua – they were not with Him, they were not being His disciples, because of the teaching. So when we look at this reality that we have, what was it? 45,000 denominations – are people in those denominations because of the teaching, or are they in those denominations because they know the Father? Which is it? It must be that they are being taught of the Father, they are knowing the Father. This is what we have to come to really challenge ourselves about. I wish in my heart that we could come to the place where we really have the ability to see and know the Lord born out of knowing the Father, being drawn by Him. We are not to be teaching every man his

neighbor, saying, "I want you to know the Lord." We are to all know Him, from the least to the greatest. This is what we should be reaching for.

God, bring us out of religion into a relationship with You. Maybe there is a time when, because we are babes, we are being given milk, being fed the milk of the Word by somebody. But that better not be an end in itself. If it is not bringing you to a place of maturity, with the end result being that you are taught directly by the Father, then something is very wrong, and we need to see it change. We cannot live through these days unaware of the voice of God and what He is trying to speak to us.

Amen.