

# PLAIN TRUTH<sup>®</sup>

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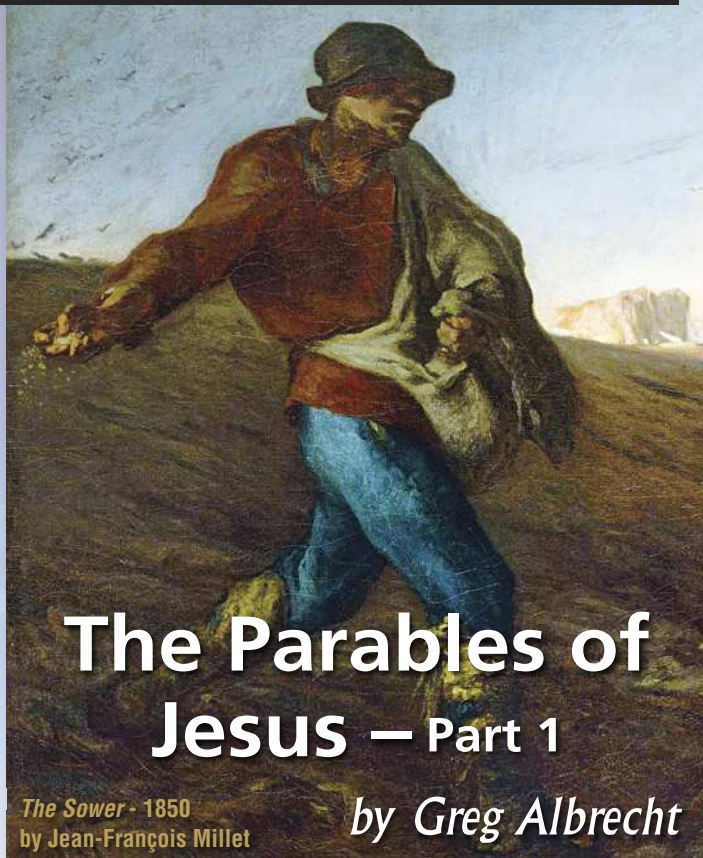
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## CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION<sup>®</sup>

*By telling stories, Jesus isn't somehow putting sugar in a spoon to make the medicine go down a little easier. These stories are the medicine. These stories are an extension and explanation of Jesus' revolutionary ministry. These stories show us that things are not as they appear. Our tidy, well-packaged ideas about spirituality, faith and reality shatter when confronted by Christ and the God he represents.—Ronnie McBrayer, *Leaving Religion, Following Jesus**



## The Parables of Jesus – Part 1

*The Sower - 1850  
by Jean-François Millet*

*by Greg Albrecht*

**W**hile the parables of Jesus absolutely enshrine him as *the undisputed master story-teller*, he was not the first to use the literary genre of parables.

Parables were already widely used within Greece and Rome, as well as Judaism. One of the most memorable biblical parables is found in the Old Testament, long before the time of Jesus, given by the prophet Nathan to King David. Nathan wove a parable around a

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solitary lamb, owned by a poor man. The "bad guy" in the story is a rich man, who, though he had his own flock, robbed the poor man of his only lamb. The parable was so compelling that King David reacted with anger, condemning the rich man. After David took the bait—hook, line and sinker—then Nathan delivered the punch line: "You are the [rich] man" (2 Samuel 12:7).

Of course, all the teachings of Jesus were originally spoken. These stories we call parables had an actual audience. Understanding any parable begins with the original setting, with Jesus as the master story-teller, teaching the audience to whom he spoke, who

in turn knew and understood the elements of the parables in ways that are not immediately recognized by us today.

Story has always been one of the most effective means of teaching. Long lectures and discourses filled with facts and information don't normally captivate audiences and classrooms. But stories in movies, song and literature enchant and

enthrall. Stories entertain, educate, involve and motivate—the parables of Jesus do all of that and more.

But parables are not just stories—they are probably best understood as *expanded analogies*. Parables are expanded analogies designed to convince, inform and persuade. The parables of Jesus upset his enemies, because his persuasive parables opposed the institutionalized religion of that day (truth be

known, Jesus' parables are often out of sync with 21st century religion, even within Christendom). As works of art, parables delight those who seek to follow Jesus while upsetting those who pridefully sit astride religious high horses.

### Read Yourself Into the Story

*The intent and focus of any given parable is not always easily apparent or perceived.* Parables are comparisons, but for many reasons Jesus does not always make the comparison obvious. Obscure, veiled and hidden meanings of parables are addressed in the well-known statement in Matthew 13:14-17 where Jesus, quoting Isaiah, said that he gave parables so people would see but not really see—hear but not really comprehend. There are layers of meaning in parables, and the spiritual



## Living a Life of Love

**G**od doesn't need us to love him, but he not only takes pleasure in sharing the essence of who he is, **he produces his very love in us**, empowering us by his grace to pass that same love on to others, in thought and action.

We are loved, not because we are particularly lovable, but because **God is love**. We often make the distinction that love is not merely one of many attributes of God. The Bible clearly defines God as love. **Love is the essence of who God is.**

Some miss the point when they think that doing good things and behaving in a moral or appropriate way is the same as sharing God's love. Our good deeds do not transform us into becoming like God. Good behavior is not one and the same as God's love.

***It misrepresents, distorts and limits God to say or think that love is God.*** The word "love" and the broad definitions it is given by our culture and society is not one and the same as God.

The love that we see or that we experience from others may be human love or it may be the love of God which he is producing in their lives. The love we see, speak of, sing and wonder about might be entirely from God, or it may be from human origins—***so we must be careful not to dogmatically say that love is God.***

But, we can absolutely say that **God is love**. Apart from Christ who lives his life in us, we are not, as human beings, a smaller version of God. We are not, apart from God's grace, capable of producing and creating the love of God.

**God is love** and his love is a directional, outgoing dynamic.

God's love not only flows to us, by his grace, but his love eternally exists and is eternally expressed within Father, Son and Holy Spirit—that same love is then given to us and lived in us through our risen Lord Jesus Christ.

**What does God's love look like—how can we observe the love that Jesus lives out in our lives and the lives of other Christ followers?**

**Here are some examples:**

God's love is real, it is sincere. God's love is not an act or a religious face or mask we put on.

God's love is generous and hospitable. God's love is gentle, kind and affectionate.

God's love survives all struggles, braves all battles and endures all suffering.

God's love binds all wounds, heals all heartaches and bears all insults. God's love shares all things and gives its all to all.

God's love cares for all people because all people are God's creation. No one is beyond or outside of God's love. He loves everyone—the whole world.

God's love believes the best. God's love springs from faith rather than from worry, doubt and dismay.

God's love hopes for the best. There is no night so long that it does not eventually give way to a new day, there is no storm so dark and dismal that the sun will not eventually break through and there is no road so difficult that those who travel with Jesus cannot find their way home.

God's love wants the best and rejoices when good things happen—as opposed to human hatred where grievances and bitterness

cause us to desire evil outcomes in the lives of others.

Grace, not sin, is the focus of the love of God.

The dimensions of God's love far transcend the outrage at sin that Christ-less religion feels which leads it to invent, fabricate and believe in a hell of eternal conscious torment.

God's love does not deny hellish consequences suffered by humans, but God's love insists that hell results from the consequences that humans endure because of their actions, or the actions of others.

God's love says that painful consequences humans suffer are choices humans have made and endure, whether those choices be their own or some other human who has inflicted suffering on them—but God's love never condemns or demands pay-back.

No sin, no behavior can separate us from the love of God.

God's love has no limits or boundaries—all are welcome to walk with Jesus in love on the road we might call **the Jesus Way**. There are no qualifications or conditions—no background checks. **The love of God is offered freely to one and all.**

When we are **Living a Life of Love** the love of God overflows out of us, into the lives of others, so that we are passing on God's grace—we are ministering to others in the name of Jesus. □

—Greg Albrecht

*Join us for the complete message "Living a Life of Love" at the audio teaching ministry of Christianity Without the Religion, the week of October 9, 2016.*

healing Jesus imparts helps those layers become more obvious.

Parables vary from simple and brief formulations to longer and more complex, and the “lesson” is not always front and center because Jesus seems to have deliberately created his parables to engage the imagination and pique curiosity. *Parables invite listeners to interact, reflect and be involved in arriving at a meaning, which may differ from person to person, given their experiences and stage of life and spiritual maturity.*



For example, *The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector* is a great example of how readers are invited into the story. It’s also an example of the ingenious and clever teaching of Jesus.

The first reaction of the reader is to imagine himself/herself as the tax collector, with the reader thinking, “I’m like the tax collector, humble and unafraid to admit my sins, not like that pompous, spiritually arrogant Pharisee.”

But this very identification with the tax collector automatically means that the reader starts acting and behaving like the Pharisee! The more we, as Christ-followers, *read ourselves into this story* we begin to realize it’s not a matter of whether we are like the tax collector OR the Pharisee—the hard, cold and harsh reality is that we are like BOTH of them.

Much can be learned from reading ourselves into the characters of the stories Jesus tells in his parables. When we ponder *The Parable of the Good Samaritan*, and read ourselves into the story, we start asking questions which open up a world of relevant lessons for our lives as Christ-followers. Our immediate inclination and knee-jerk reaction is to *read ourselves into the story* as the “good guy” and hero.

If we go further and choose another character in this story it’s almost as easy to imagine ourselves as the victim. We all can recall times when we were abused and in our hour of need experienced a

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religious professional who seemingly had no interest in helping us.

The last choice to identify with one of the characters in this parable is one some never take, because it can get ugly. If we read ourselves into the conduct and behavior of the religious professionals, then hard questions will provoke some deep reflection into our own lives and behavior. We ask ourselves, 1) Why didn’t the religious professionals stop to help this man? Have I ever behaved in a similar way? 2) When the religious professionals decided not to stop, they probably had a justification for failing to do so. They probably had perfectly good reasons. What might they have been—and have I ever had perfectly good reasons for not helping someone in need?

The parable is a teaching tool that pulls the original listening audience and all reading audiences since into a situation into which the listener

or reader must identify. And when we **project ourselves** into the original audience we become convicted and then become uncomfortable, so as we read we may even find ourselves scrambling to **protect ourselves**. As the stories compellingly involve us, we find some of them confounding and perhaps even confusing, and we always find that these Jesus stories are powerful enough to knock us off any religious high horse we may be riding.

### Three Categories

Just as the task of dogmatically interpreting a parable for anyone and everyone (so that one “size” fits all) is virtually impossible, it is difficult to precisely categorize parables. In the following brief list of three broad categories, several parables could be cross-listed as examples of another category. Parables differ a great deal, and each must be carefully studied and considered on its own merits. It has often been said that parables are earthly stories with heavenly meanings, and while there is some truth to that description, we must also remember that parables are often very much about life on earth. Here are three broad categories of parables:

1) **Similitudes**. A similitude is a concise story, usually told in the present tense (a few are told in the past tense) with familiar experiences easily recognized by the initial audience. Those who first heard a similitude identified emotionally with the story—they had no doubts about the story as a true depiction of life as it is lived and experienced. The woman who finds a lost coin (Luke 15:8-10) is an example.

The word “simile” is the root of “similitude.” Strictly speaking a simile is a comparison often deploying the words “like” and “as.” The “kingdom parables” in Matthew 13 begin with the formulaic “the kingdom of heaven is like...”

2) **Narrative Stories—Fact and Fiction**. A narrative story may be based on a believable event, in the

sense that it is an illustration from everyday life. It goes without saying that a seed grows of itself (Mark 4:26-29), that children play games (Matthew 11:16-19) and that sheep wander away from the flock (Matthew 18:12-14). Fictional narrative stories based in reality, as a category of the parables of Jesus, are told in both the past and the present tense.

Fictional narrative stories are true to life and believable (somewhat like “once upon a time” stories) and are normally told in the past tense. A judge administered justice because of the repeated pleas of a widow (Luke 18:1-8), a farmer sowed wheat only to discover his enemy had scattered weeds among his planting (Matthew 13:24-30).

The truth conveyed in a narrative story is the object. In fictional narrative, Jesus does not pretend to present the details as verifiable, documented facts—rather he directs our attention to the lesson.

Narrative parables go beyond mere comparisons, as they offer a plot and its development (*The Prodigal Son* and *The Good Samaritan* are two examples as well as *The Great Banquet* in Luke 14:15-24). Sometimes narrative parables conclude with a resolution, while at other times they have are open-ended, with no clear resolution.

**3) Example Stories.** Example stories might also be thought of as illustrative stories as they focus more directly on the character and conduct of an individual, and in that way they are different from fictional narrative stories. Four example stories are found in the Gospel of Luke, and individuals are all featured: *The Good Samaritan* (Luke 10:30-37), *Lazarus and the Rich Man* (Luke 16:19-31), *the Pharisee and the Tax Collector* (Luke 18:9-14) and *The Rich Fool* (Luke 12:16-21).

### Three Teaching Methods

Teaching techniques and themes run through the various categories



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that the methodology behind juridical parables creates conclusions that are “thoughts that wound from behind”—they do not directly incriminate or accuse the reader, but they can lead to self-incrimination and self-condemnation.

Examples of juridical parables include *The Parable of the Two Sons* (Matthews 21:28-32), *The Wicked Tenants* (Matthew 21:33-45; Mark 12:1-2; and Luke 20:9-19) and *The Two Debtors* (Luke 7:40-47).

**3) Aphorisms.** An aphorism is a concise, terse, pithy statement of truth. Jesus often uses aphorisms to provide a conclusive wrap-up to a longer teaching. Some may ask what these mysterious aphorisms mean, and the answer must always begin with the context in which Jesus uses them. The meaning is contextually derived. Remaining true to many of his other upside-down teachings, the aphorisms of Jesus are often paradoxes. Here are some examples:

*The last will be first and the first will be last* (Matthew 19:30 and 20:16).

*Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it* (Matthew 10:39; Luke 14:26, 17:33 and John 12:25).

*Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs* (Matthew 7:6).

*Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul* (Matthew 10:28).

*...let the dead bury their own dead* (Matthew 8:22).

*...do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing* (Matthew 6:3). □

**Editor’s Note: “The Parables of Jesus—Part 2” is coming in our next issue!**

of parables as well as all of Jesus’ teaching. Here are three:

**1) Interrogatives.** Jesus was a master of asking questions. The academic community has long spoken of the “Socratic Method” as perhaps a superior way of teaching—soliciting active listening and learning rather than the lecture method of spoon-feeding facts and information. Examples of interrogatives used in parables include “to what can I compare this generation?” (Matthew 11:16 and Luke 7:31) as well as questions about the cost of building a tower and a king counting the cost of going to war (Luke 14:28-33).

**2) Juridical.** Juridical parables invite the reader to judge the situation depicted, and then either directly or indirectly challenge the reader to *read himself into the story* and personally apply that judgment. Jesus places the contemporary reader in the jury box, just as he invited the original listeners to consider evidence and listen to the story, so that a judgment is presented which demands a response and opinion. As we read and ponder parables today, we find that we are not only considering a fictional character in a parable, but somewhat like King David listening to Nathan the prophet, parables have a way of involving us.

One interpreter/commentator said



# “No” to Wrath and “Yes” to Love – Part 1

BY GREG ALBRECHT

*For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing but to those who are being saved it is the power of God...—1 Corinthians 1:18*

*For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.—1 Corinthians 2:2*

**O**n September 11, 2001, in a despicable, outrageous attack on civilians, terrorists spurred on by religious convictions killed nearly 3,000 people. The emphasis in some anniversaries of this horrible mass murder tilts toward vengeance and retaliation, and there are times when some of this rhetoric can be heard in places where people gather to ostensibly worship God.

As Christians, not only do we follow Jesus, but *he lives within us*. The Prince of Peace exemplifies praying for our enemies and turning the other cheek. His teaching overturns the human idea of justice as an eye-for-an-eye and a tooth-for-a-tooth.

We’re beginning a two-part series titled “No” to Wrath and “Yes” to Love. In this first article, we’re going to focus on passages in 1 Corinthians 1:18 and 2:2. As we read these two passages we are left with absolutely no doubt that Paul was relentlessly Christ-centered.

Many, if not most, Christians when they are asked, “Why did Jesus die on the cross?” will give an answer something like this:

*To die for our sins.* This of course, as far as it goes, is a biblical answer.

But the answer doesn’t end there. Most Christians will continue to explain why Jesus died on the cross by parroting back phrases they have been taught, such as:

- “He died for our sins so we wouldn’t have to.”
- “He took our place.”
- “He substituted for us.”

Many have been taught that the “wrath of God” was the reason why the cross was necessary. God was angry and upset—someone had to pay for the evil of sin. This idea is called *the penal substitutionary theory of the cross of Christ*.

Let’s break that down:

- **Penal**—penal is of course the root word of penalty. You may be familiar with the word “penal” as it is often used in conjunction with time an inmate must serve, to pay for his or her sins, in a *penal* colony or prison. *Penal* has to do with justice being served, either in a place of confinement or by a *penalty* paid commensurate with the crime committed. Another place you frequently hear the word “penal” is in the phrase “penal code.”

- **Substitute**—that’s a little easier. A substitute is something or someone who takes someone else’s place. In terms of our discussion, it has to do with a sinner who deserves a *penal-ty*, but Jesus substituted Himself for us and paid the *penal-ty*. So we have the *penal substitutionary theory* as to the significance of the cross of Christ.

But the *penal substitutionary theory of the cross of Christ* introduces some questions:

1) The cross of Christ was violent. *The penal substitution theory* (taught in the majority of churches) explains that the violence unleashed at the cross of Christ was the pouring out of God’s wrath on Jesus instead of us. Jesus took our place—He was our substitute.

**First question or problem:** *The penal substitution theory* pits God the Father against God the Son—a bad cop against a good cop. But many Scriptures affirm that the one God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in complete unity and harmony.

2) The *theory of penal substitution*

explains that while God is one, because he loves us, he put himself under his own law. Jesus died on the cross because God the Father could not let sin go unpunished. Because Jesus didn’t want to send us to hell, he paid the penalty himself.

**Second question and dilemma:** Is God actually a God who seems to need to see justice paid in the way we humans need justice? *Does God love laws more than he loves us?* The Bible speaks of a God who does not need or demand payback or vengeance. Indeed, Jesus overturned the idea of “an eye-for-an-eye and a tooth-for-a-tooth.”

Beyond that, by definition, the God of the Bible is not beholden to anything—if God **must** do

*Many have been taught that the “wrath of God” was the reason why the cross was necessary. God was angry and upset—someone had to pay..*

something, then the something God must do is greater than God. *God is not God if he must obey his own law.*

God is not God if he does not have the power to forgive and let sin go unpunished. *God is God because he is greater than anything he creates*—God is God because he has no needs. God is God because he does not need to see retribution to satisfy what some believe to be his sense of justice.

3) The very term *penal substitution* invites us to think of God the Father as the judge in a courtroom, a hanging judge who is sworn to uphold the law. We imagine that when we appear in the Father’s courtroom we are doomed—but Jesus, who is also God, as our advocate, stands up and volunteers to take our place.

**Third question or problem:** Is this picture of God completely accurate? There is no doubt that there are biblical references which lead us to consider a heavenly courtroom, but there are many other biblical references which cause us to be amazed at the love of God.

The Bible does not exclusively

define God as law or God as judge. Yes, the Bible speaks of him as a judge, and it certainly explains his law. But that is not the primary revelation of God. **The primary definition of God in the Bible is love.** Love, according to the Bible, is not merely one of God's attributes—love is God's core spiritual DNA. God does not only have love—**God IS love.** So to live with our primary image of God the Father as a hanging judge is to seriously damage our understanding of the nature of God and the relationship he offers to us.

4) The *theory of penal substitution* explains that God is so holy and so pure that sin outrages him. Sin offends him. His sense of honor and holiness

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is offended, so God's wrath needs to be satisfied.

**Fourth question and dilemma:** Do we worship a God who needs to be satisfied—a God who cannot rest until he is vindicated? How does this idea align with the teachings of Jesus when he speaks of God as a Father who endlessly forgives?

How, in short, is a God who needs to be satisfied the same as the God of grace? Is the God of the Bible a God of retribution? A god who demands the child-sacrifice of his own son to satisfy his wrath is more like a primitive pagan god than the God of love of the Bible.

Thus, we have at the very least four basic reasons to doubt whether the theology of penal substitution is an accurate explanation for what precisely happened on the cross of Christ. Beyond that, I would say that as an explanation for the significance of the cross of Christ, the *theory of penal*

*substitution* is fatally flawed.

According to the Bible, God came to us in the person of Jesus, the Son of God, with good news of his love. We humans responded to this love with violence—we killed the one who came to reveal the fullness of the love of God.

Rather than responding to our violence with retaliation—rather than killing those immediate humans who were carrying out his torturous death—Jesus responded by saying, "Father, forgive them."

Jesus turned the other cheek. He accepted, received and absorbed the wrath of humanity and returned love and forgiveness.

**Notice that! Whose wrath was poured out on Jesus?**

Human wrath! The wrath of humanity—specifically at that time Roman soldiers and the religious leaders behind their actions—killed Jesus.

But Jesus responded to human wrath, hatred and violence with love and forgiveness. Jesus responded to our continuing cycle of hatred and violence, much of it spawned by religion in the name of God, by saying "**No" to Wrath and "Yes" to Love!**"

The cross itself then becomes a symbol for a way of life. When we fully accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior, he saves us from a life of violence and death, transforming us into a new life. He saves us from our sins of violence, hatred, religious pride, animosity and lust—and then ***lives his life of love and forgiveness within us.***

The primary way of understanding the cross of Christ within Christendom today is that God needed the violence and bloodshed of the cross so that his wrath would be satisfied!

But the truth of the gospel is that the wrath and violence came from humans who rejected God's love and grace—and, turning what seemed to be defeat into victory,

***...turning what seemed to be defeat into victory, Jesus absorbed and accepted the torture/violence and transformed it with the singularly greatest act of love of all time.***

Jesus absorbed and accepted the torture/violence and transformed it with the singularly greatest act of love of all time.

So instead of thinking of what God was doing on the cross as his way of satisfying his law and his justice, we need to realize that Jesus was healing us.

Indeed, we are told we are healed by his stripes. Jesus was taking our wrath, taking our evil, and transforming it, by grace, into the love of God. The cross of Christ says "**No" to Wrath and "Yes" to Love!**"

Repaying an eye-for-an-eye merely continues spiritual blindness and death. It is a perversion of God's divine nature to assume he must be "satisfied" by vengeance and retaliation. Wrath describes the hostility of mortal human beings toward God's grace. The cross of Christ says "**No" to Wrath and "Yes" to Love!**"

Jesus did not sentence anyone to a hell of eternal torture while he was dying on the cross. He did not threaten those who were beating and torturing him with payback—he didn't tell them that one day they would pay for what they were doing. Jesus forgave not only those who were physically present—but all humanity for all time.

God the Father was not punishing Jesus, God the Son, on the cross. Rather, in an act of sacrificial love, God saved us from ourselves, from our violence, from our religion, from our spiritual captivity, from meaningless lives of death—and, returning good for our evil, offered us his love, his forgiveness and his grace.

We can see why Paul said that he resolved to know nothing except Jesus Christ and him crucified. ***Correctly understood through the lens of God's love, the cross of Christ is the very foundation of the good news of the gospel!*** □



## “That’s more than I wanted to know...”

**B**renda Smith (the daughter of my late mentor, Fred Smith) told me something her father Fred used to say: “The reckless ripping off of a mask is the kiss of death for friendship.” I thought about that and in the process of writing a book, I decided I should write a cautionary chapter, “Ugliness in a Nudist Colony.” I remember what Jesus said, “Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you” (Matthew 7:6).

I got the title for that chapter from a fairly edgy daily talk show we used to do. It didn’t last very long because Christians don’t do “edgy” very well. While the talk show had a serious purpose to it, we did a lot of comedy (Christians don’t do that very well either!).

Someone told our producer about a “Christian” nudist colony in our area, so we decided to send some of the staff to check it out. We sent two guys whose wives wouldn’t let them go unless they (the wives) went with them. I suppose the wives had visions of erotic scenes with sexy women running around naked, and that was just not something they could sanction... at least not unless they were there.

Their fears were misplaced. It turned out to be an interesting and controversial segment, but do you know the most interesting thing about the reporting from the nudist colony? It was how ugly the nudists were. It’s not that Christian nudists are particularly more ugly than the average Christian with clothes on. It was just that those things that make ugly less ugly (i.e. clothes) were set aside.

My friend, Tony Campolo, once asked me what I thought was the best birth control method for older couples. I allowed that I didn’t know. He laughed and said, “nakedness.”

Just as clothes have a purpose, so do masks. Fred was right about the “reckless ripping off of a mask.” Doing that at the wrong time, in the wrong place, and with the wrong people is not only the kiss of death for friendship, it can cause great damage.

When Christians first understand that they are loved and forgiven unconditionally, and experience the freedom and joy that truth gives them, they have a tendency to quickly take off their masks. We’ve all heard the testimonies of new Christians and, if you’re like me, you’ve probably winced at some of the things that were confessed. It is important that Christians (while still being authentic) recognize they need to be “careful out there.”

I think masks can kill you. But it is one thing to tell the truth and it is quite another to tell the whole truth before its time, to tell inappropriate truth to people who are inappropriate, and to tell the whole truth to people who don’t want to hear it and can’t handle it.

We live in a time when secrets are hard to keep. With social media, cameras around every corner—YouTube, email hackers and viral tweets—town gossips have a much bigger platform.

If you don’t want everyone to know what you say, write and do, don’t say it, don’t write it and don’t do it. It will come back to bite you. Just ask those whose lives were

destroyed by a Google search, an online revelation or a camera about which they weren’t aware.

If you’re a sinner, a cheater, a liar, a prostitute, unfaithful, have hurt people or have stolen (and we’re all one of those), you have to be careful about what you say and where you say it. Some things just aren’t appropriate for some people. I teach seminary students to be authentic; but at the same time to be careful about disclosing too many details.

Sometimes there are people who don’t need to see what is behind our masks. When Jesus said that we shouldn’t throw our pearls before swine, among other things, he was talking about necessity.

There are people who are so into lying that they lie when the truth would have actually served them better. And just so, there are people who tell the truth—the whole truth—when silence would have served them better.

Your casual acquaintances don’t need to know your sins. Your mother doesn’t need to know that which would shock and disturb her. Your co-worker doesn’t need to know every stupid thought you’ve had or stupid thing you’ve done. There are levels of relationships that grow and flourish with authentic self-revelation, but remember that you don’t have to tell the world everything.

“That’s more than I wanted to know” is the reaction of a benevolent stranger to our authenticity. Others will beat you over the head and try to destroy you with it.

He asked me to remind you. □

—Steve Brown



## Quotes & Connections



"Gentleness is given to those who have learned that God will not have his kingdom triumph through the violence of the world, for such a triumph came through the meekness of a cross."  
—Stanley Hauerwas, *Hannah's Child: A Theologian's Memoir*

"Love means loving the unlovable, or it is no virtue at all."  
—G.K. Chesterton

"Christianity is NOT a religion; it is the proclamation of the end of religion. Religion is a human activity dedicated to the job of reconciling God to humanity and humanity to itself. The gospel however, the Good News of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, is the astonishing announcement that God has done the whole work of reconciliation without a scrap of human assistance. It is the bizarre proclamation that religion is over—period."  
—Robert Farrar Capon

"When we have come so far that the founder and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:1-3) would not be welcome as a member of the organization that bears its name, then you know we have wandered too far down a twisted rabbit hole."  
—Neil Cole

## Searching for More? Dig Deeper With... Thought-Provoking, Inspiring Christ-Centered Reading

- *Red Letter Christians*—Tony Campolo
- *Stricken by God*—Jersak & Hardin, editors
- *Where Is God When It Hurts?*—Philip Yancey

### And Don't Forget!

- *A Taste of Grace*\*—Greg Albrecht\*
- *A More Christlike God*—Brad Jersak\*

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