

Cherishing Jesus Christ and the Bible

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Introduction

This was originally entitled, *“The Objective And Subjective Relationship with God and the Bible.”* But I knew that title would probably run everybody off. I am not even sure I would have read it. But, that is still the thrust of what follows.

Objective material is information that is readily available for scrutiny, analysis or verification. The Bible is **objective** material - written in words anyone can examine. It is filled with clear declarations on many matters. For example, the Bible declares God created the heavens and the earth. Additionally, He did this in six days (Gen 1:31). This is objective material. Whether one believes this or not is an entirely different matter.

Subjective material is information that is not readily available for scrutiny, analysis or verification. When one says, *“The Lord led me to this job,”* or *“The Lord told me this or that,”* these are **subjective** claims. The only way one can absolutely reject such assertions as valid is if the claim directly contradicts some objective Bible declaration. For example, if the job was to become a call girl, or if someone declares he/she knows the exact day and time of the return of Christ, we would know the Lord did not convey such messages as they are both contrary to the Bible's objective material. But absent such refutation, subjective claims can not be absolutely affirmed one way or the other.

Perhaps to your surprise, I am going to make the case **for** ... valid subjective interaction with the Author of the Bible. In fact, it is essential to salvation. Wow! But this aspect of one's relationship with the Creator is fraught with devastatingly intense dangers. Error here is not an option ... at least not a viable one. But, let's first start with the necessity of ...

The Objective Relationship with God

“From childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2Tim 3:15). A saving relationship between an individual and the Creator of the heavens and the earth is based upon knowledge - specifically, information from the Bible itself. It is there ... He tells us things in black and white. The word of God is the indispensable tool in establishing this relationship. *“In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth”* (Ja 1:18). *“For you have been born again ... through the living and abiding word of God”* (1Pet 1:23). The decision to use the Word of God in establishing the relationship with one's Creator is one that He has made. We have no vote on this and any opinion we might have about this is irrelevant. But, is the Bible the beginning and end of God? This is a ridiculous question, but bear with me. The incident below was the catalyst for the writing of this article.

A lady with whom I work came in one morning all excited after hearing an interview with the author of a book that had as its theme, *“God winks.”* The point? God looks down upon us, and our funny or awkward situations are *“winks”* from Him. A big old, benevolent Daddy doting over His beloved offspring ... winking at us as we progress through life. In as much graciousness as I could muster, I said, *“Look. I am not against subjective experiences with God. In fact, it is an integral part of our relationship with Him. But, all 'events' must be weighed against the Bible if we are to gain some sense as to God's potential involvement in particular incidents in our lives.”* After she then presented more of this *“God wink”* theology, I took my turn. *“Well, think of it this way. Let's assume we wrote down every word you have ever spoken and let's assume everything you said was totally true. Once we finished writing it all ... would that be all of you?”* She said, *“No.”* I then said, *“Those words would be*

an extension of you, and totally reliable, but it would be ridiculous to say with the last period, 'You are finished and can't do anything else!' So it is with God. He declares He is the author of the Bible, and it is as solid as is He (Ps 119:89, Lk 16:17, etc.), but it is just a starting point. He will never violate or contradict what He has said ... but to limit Him to just the Bible? He is bigger than it, but we need it to help us understand His values, attitudes and priorities so we can more accurately interpret His involvement in the life experiences we have." I know she listened, but I also know she likes her "God winks" theology. There is a great warmth in "seeing" God as our Big Buddy. But errors, or excesses, concerning God's current activity in our life does not negate the reality and necessity of ...

The Indispensable Subjective Relationship with God

"If anyone does not love the Lord, let him be accursed. Maranatha" (1Cor 16:22). This is one of the most overlooked, mistranslated, and errantly taught verses in the entire Bible. Yet, it is one of the most important. Anyone failing at this - by God's assessment - is doomed. And one cannot be found in compliance with this through simple objective data. The following paragraphs are worth your time.

"Overlooked ..."

Have you ever heard any preaching on this verse? Any teaching - thorough teaching - on it? Do you have any idea what this verse means, according to God's definition, and if you are in compliance? Have you studied it yourself? Below ... is a start.

"Mistranslated ..."

... or at least weakly translated. It is not easy to translate from one language to another for a host of reasons (I wrote a couple of articles on this: "*Textural Criticism and the Bible*" and "*Translations and the Bible*"). But I think we can do a better job than the renderings below.

"If any man loves not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema. Maran atha" KJV, 20+ revision of the original 1611 translation from The Zondervan Parallel New Testament in Greek and English, 1975.

"If anyone does not love the Lord - a curse be upon him. Come, O Lord!" NIV

"If any one does not love the Lord, let him be accursed. Maranatha." NASB.

The Koine Greek wording is actually very simple. *"Ei tis ou philei ton kurion eto anathema. Marana tha."* (Punctuation, capital letters and spaces added).

"Errantly Taught ..."

If one does not have a proper understanding of the syntax involved in this verse, or the meanings of the words, it is not possible to properly teach this passage. Our task now begins.

"Tis" is an indefinite, singular pronoun. "Anyone" is a good translation as it points to an individual person - and yet, as an indefinite, every person is a potential candidate to whom the forthcoming material applies. So, "if anyone," any person, anywhere on the planet, in any time period does not "philei"

"Philei" is the present tense verb of "phileo." A verb describes the action of the subject. As a present tense, that action is continuous. And what is the action "anyone" (our subject) is to be doing? The only way to know that ... is to have a proper definition of the word, "phileo." If this meant, "read about," you already know what it means to read about someone. If "philio" meant "talk about," that

would need no explanation. So, how is *“phileo”* translated and are these translations adequate in getting the meaning of the Koine Greek to us?

All the translations cited above use the word, *“love.”* While all lexicons do list that as one possible option, there are a host of other possibilities from which the translator can choose. *“Phileo”* can also be translated, *“to kiss, to cherish, to be fond of, to delight in, to regard with affection.”* Noun forms, *philos(m), philia(f), philema(n)*, mean, *“a friend, fondness, a kiss.”* The word *“love,”* is too broad a brushstroke. One can love a hot dog or one's only child - and that ... is the same thing?

As you can see from the potential definitions of *“phileo(v) and philos/philia/philema(n)”* this word is loaded with the emotional, affection element of *“love.”* It is the word for intense endearment. *“Phileo”* is really the warmth of love for which everyone craves. Emotional responses are ignited by the object. Plug in the varied potential meanings for *“phileo”* listed above in 1Cor 16:22. For me, *“cherish”* makes the most sense. *“If any one does not cherish”* To capture the present tense, continued motion, maybe *“If anyone is not cherishing ...”* Who? What?

“Ton kurion” ... “The Lord.” This phrase is in the accusative case which means it is the direct object of the verb, *“phileo.”* The subject's action, *“phileo”* is directed squarely towards *“the Lord.”* So, if *“anyone”* (our subject here) is not found in present, continuous action, of cherishing the Lord ...

“eto.” This is a masculine verb so as to agree with the masculine of *“tis”* - *“anyone.”* But in Koine Greek, the masculine gender does not always mean male. A good example is the use of the word, *“anthropos”* (masculine). Normally, it does mean male/man, but in 1Peter 3:4 it means *“person”* - encompassing male and female. So, even though several of the words in this passage are in the masculine gender, it would be error to exempt females from the declarations in this verse. Equal rights you might say.

Next, *“eto”* is a present tense imperative verb from *“eimi”*. This means continuous action by Someone (capitalized deliberately here) and as an imperative has the force of a command. To be translated, *“let him be”* or *“be upon him”* misses the force of this imperative. This is not a wish or finger-wagging threat of some sort that might fall out of the sky sometime. It is a warning of a coming reality where Someone's will is going to be imposed upon someone else. The person who does not cherish the Lord is to be acted upon by Whoever is behind this imperative, *“eto.”* A more accurate rendering of this little Koine Greek word is, *“he/she must be ...”* Must be ... what?

“Anathema” ... “accursed.” In my lifetime, there have been some who would like to destroy me. You can probably say the same. But if they do not have the ability to cause that reality ... no harm comes. I am not thrilled about such attitudes toward my well being, but as long as I am not placed in their hands, or foolishly supply them opportunity to carry out their desires, I don't really have much to worry about. But this will not be the reality here. The Will behind *“eto”* (you already know what I am going to say) ... is God Himself. There is no worse fate that can befall *“anyone.”* But can He impose that will?

“Marana tha” - “The Lord comes.” This is a statement, a declaration. It also serves as a warning as the rest of the Bible informs us that He is coming as the eternal Judge (Isa 45:22-25, Mt 25:31-46, Rev 20:11, etc.). No one can stop Him and no one can say, *“What are You doing?”* (Job 9:12 and Isa 45:9) ... and even cause a millisecond of hesitation. That includes Satan, other fallen angels, and all of us. Also know that none of these doomed individuals will be exacting their wrath upon anyone else. *“The Lord sat as King at the flood. Yes, the Lord sits as King forever”* (Ps 29:10). Sitting is a posture of relaxed dominance and control. He alone is the Inflicter of any and all eternal punishment - and it will be meted out based upon His determinations and value system. *“It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God”* (Heb 10:31). No one - man or angel - can escape His hands and none of them will be punishing anyone. The Lord is coming – as Judge to judge.

A More Detailed, Even Practical, Examination of “Cherishing”

You already know the meaning of “*phileo*.” But, isn't cherishing ... beyond words? Can words explain or capture the dynamic of this phenomenon? That's the point! That's the point of this article. Cherishing has grown into the realm of *subjective* experience - primarily feelings - with someone (or something). The relationship still maintains some degree of measurable objective activity - words and actions that can be objectively cataloged - but cherishing is a dynamic that goes far beyond any black and white data.

A Problem

In fact, several problems. Among the myriad of flaws which riddle us ... here are some more. First, in the previous paragraph, you noticed I said, “*someone (or something)*” in reference to cherishing. So, the problem is - indeed the problems are - it is very easy for us to cherish ... wrong *things*. And we can also wrongly cherish *people* ... including ourselves (observe below). The following is from my free ebook, “*Love and the Bible*.” So, I guess I am plagiarizing myself :)

Evil Phileo Uses:

Pharisee's cherishing public praying (Mt 6:5).
Cherishing father or mother more than Christ (Mt 10:37).
Cherishing son or daughter more than Christ (Mt 10:37).
Pharisee's cherishing the place of honor at banquets (Mt 23:6).
Pharisee's cherishing the chief seats in the synagogues (Mt 23:6).
Pharisee's cherishing respectful greetings in the marketplaces (Mt 23:7).
Pharisee's cherishing the title, “*Rabbi*” (Mt 23:7).
Cherishing one's own life (Jn 12:25).
The world cherishing its own (Jn 15:19).
The cherishing of lying (Rev 22:15).
The cherishing of practicing those lies (Rev 22:15).

The noun, “*philos(m)/philia (f)*” can be compounded with other words ... thus marrying an emotional endearment to those things, too.

Evil Philos/Philia Compound Word Uses:

Cherishing silver/money/covetousness - *philarguria* and *philarguros* (1Ti 6:10 and Lk 16:14, etc.).
Cherishing of one's self - *philautos* (2Ti 3:2).
Cherishing of pleasures - *phileedonos* (2Ti 3:4).
Cherishing strife - *philonikia* and *philonikos* (Lk 22:24 and 1Cor 11:16).
Cherishing preeminence - *philoprotuo* (3Jn 9).
Cherishing worldly “*wisdom*” - *philosophia* and *philosophos* (Col 2:8 and Acts 17:18).

These evil cherishings create a particularly dangerous situation. If we develop a cherishing for things that damn us, we are in big trouble. One's love has passed from the realm of will into the realm of emotional attachment. Only the intervening power of God can demolish these intense emotional bonds. Such a state is worse than catching a lethal disease. That kills the body, but lethal cherishings eternally damn us. “*Blessed is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves*” (Ro 14:22). Look through those lists again. Each “*problem cherishing*” is worthy of a sermon - or a series of sermons.

But That is Not the End of Our Trouble ... Sorry

It is also very easy to cherish figments of our imagination. Recently, (2/12) there was a dramatic dog rescue in the Denver Colorado area. The dog had fallen through river ice and the entire rescue was captured live via overhead helicopter. The next day, the two rescuers and dog came on a local morning show. The female anchor was down at the dog's face asking the rescuers all kinds of questions about it, rubbing its cheeks, saying, "*You're so gorgeous!*" along with all kinds of cooing. She was enthralled with this dog, thrilled it was alive, and was projecting a very intense, emotion-laden, cherishing upon this "*gorgeous*" animal. It then proceeded to bite her in the face. She stumbled off calling for the other anchor to take over. She imagined this dog was as enthralled with her as she was with it.

People cherish all kinds of objects/people because of what *they think they are* - only to totally misread the object of that affection. Do you suppose anyone ever does this towards a member of the opposite sex, some ideology ... or a presidential candidate? What about some religion? What about ... an invented Jesus?

Matthew 7:22-23

"Many will say to Me on that Day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons and in Your name perform many miracles?'" With eternity stretching before them, these people know exactly to Whom they are talking ... and are in panic. Each "*Your*" in this appeal is an intensive in Greek. They exited this life absolutely certain they had served Jesus Christ while here. They also know they cannot re-enter this age (it has concluded) and when their discussion ends they must proceed to their eternal destination. His response to them? "*I never knew you. Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.*" This is stunning. And when He says "*Many*" that means ... many. And look at the works they are presenting - prophecies, exorcisms and miracles. He calls these works "*lawlessness.*" They had served a fabricated Jesus - a figment of the imagination.

It is highly possible "*many*" *did cherish* ... their imaginary Jesus. In fact, the more I contemplate this exchange, this is surely the reality for most of them. They had aggressively served their fabricated Jesus and were convinced this "*one*" had done marvelous, benevolent, positive things through their "*ministry.*" They cherished "*him/it.*" Notice, "*one,*" "*him/it*" - purposely lower case.

These "*servants*" did not know Him because they did not sufficiently expose themselves to the **objective** material describing the nature, temperament, priorities and agenda of the Jesus of the Bible. Of course, maybe they did have sufficient exposure to the real One, but did not like what they saw ... and opted for "*another.*" Again, lower case "*a*". But in this tragedy, they were surely "*helped.*"

Satan and Accomplices

If your first thought is dark, obscene, tortuous demon possession, you are seeing one snapshot of Satan and accomplices (Mk 5:1-20). But as you keep reading, the accounts involving Elymas or the fortunetelling slave-girl provide another, more "*benevolent*" snapshot (Ac 13:8-12 and 16:16-19). But this photo gallery is still far from complete. The Bible teaches that "*Satan disguises himself as an angel of light*" (2 Cor 11:14). This is startling and a cause for great alarm. Satan imitates God and/or the things of God. He presents himself as a *spiritually illuminating force* designed to make us think we are in contact with our eternal Creator. This is worth close attention.

As I began working on this part of this article, several pages developed. So, that material has now become its own article entitled, "*Satan, Fallen Angels, Us and the Bible.*" If you choose to read it, I do not think you will regret the time spent ... which is your only cost. But, for our purposes here ...

I will not be surprised if we learn that Satan operated in the role of "*angel of light,*" or more accurately translated, "*messenger of light*" ... 99.999% of his time. For starters, all false religions are

“doctrines of demons” (1Tim 4:1). Demons teach. Satan teaches. They often do so through *“men”* who are *“deceitful workers ... servants (who) also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness”* (2 Cor 11:13-15). Furthermore, Satan has the ability to reinforce his *“God presentations”* by supplying subjective experiences designed to make adherents believe they have had some kind of encounter with, or wink from, their Creator (See Rev 13:3,12-15).

Satan probably supplied supernatural, subjective experiences for our Matthew 7 *“many”* - as that is reflected in their appeals to the actual Jesus of the Bible. Satan provided this *“good stuff”*... in order to keep them clinging to their phantom Jesus. The evil of a creature knowingly doing such things, when one's eternal fate hangs in the balance, is hard to grasp. But, even with this supernatural, deceptive activity going on, the *“many”* are not innocent. It would be error to minimize the willingness of a *“fleshly mind”* to invent and promote errant theologies with an errant *“god”* (Col 2:18). People love inventing God after their *“own image”* - so a ruse of this sort would not be an extremely difficult task for Satan and his. People want God to be ... the way they want God to be.

I am not exempt from such fabrications. I am very capable of inventing my own God ... after the likeness I desire. This warning in Matthew, coupled with my own corruptness, became the catalyst for the song quoted below. Additionally, as I have gained some understanding of Satan's superiority in knowledge and cumulative experience (which informs and refines his attacks), this song never loses relevance. Each time I play it, and each time I hear it ... it is fresh and its request is present tense.

Give Me The Jesus of the Bible

Robin Calamaio, Open E Tuning (23), Copyright 1980

*“Give me - the Jesus - of the Bible - or let me die.
For I don't - want - the Jesus of - my own making. No.*

*That I may - know Him - and the power - of His resurrection.
For I need - the Jesus - who walked out of His grave.
The One who has the power to save me.*

*For I don't - want - the Jesus - of - any man's imagination. No.
I want the real One.*

*So give me - the Jesus - of the Bible - or let me die.
For I don't - no, I don't want - the Jesus of my own making. No.
Or any man's - imagination. No.*

I want the real One.”

Even if God grants this request so I am fortunate enough to know, serve and worship the Jesus of the Bible, He will still *“be marveled at among all who have believed”* (1Thes 1:10).

Cherishing the Lord

“And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (Jn 17:3). A certain amount can be known about God by an accurate *“reading”* of nature (Ro 1:18-21). But unfortunately, our veil of sin limits our ability to know the Creator in enough detail so that a valid cherishing of *Him* can develop. The objective material from the Bible describes His

“personality,” agenda, priorities ... and is the only source for that needed material. Cherishing the Lord finds its roots in detailed knowledge about Him, and then accurately reaches beyond that data.

Interestingly, God never commands *“anyone”* to cherish Him. But, if absent, that one *“must be accursed.”* God *does* command we *“agapao”* Him, but never *“phileo.”* The reason for this is actually quite simple. *“Agapao”* is an act of the will that one can choose or refuse (I discuss this in great detail in the ebook, *“Love and the Bible”*). But commanding an emotion of cherishing? No, that is beyond one's will.

Time

Cherishing anyone, or anything, develops on a time-line. Knowledge progresses into an appreciation for what is discovered, and then, if it is going to happen, cherishing follows. Unfortunately, as seen above, this process can end in great misfires. No Pharisee cherished the title, *“Rabbi”* the first time he heard the word. He first learned about the position, then grew in appreciation for what such a title meant (its power) and then a great desire grew for it. All cherishings - good or bad - go through this type of process. This takes time and interaction with the eventual object of one's cherishing. So, how much time?

In the example of the Pharisee cited above, it might have taken years. But sometimes, a cherishing can occur in a flash. When my eldest daughter was born, the moment I held her - instant cherishing. Twenty-five years later and counting (now, thirty-four), same song. This cherishing was preceded by some objective knowledge (I knew a baby was on the way), but the experience of holding her exploded that relationship beyond that knowledge. It happened again with daughter number two.

Concerning my relationship with God, after six months of Bible reading (the last six weeks being quite intense), I called upon Him. I was in desperate straits with no idea how to extricate myself from my created morass. But, there was one primary verse that directed me during that time: *“And to man He said, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding'”* (Job 28:28. Read that entire chapter). As I desperately longed for His perspectives, I determined to do whatever I knew to be His will and also turn from everything I was convinced He defined as evil. In so doing, that brought me to cliffs that, in a sense, *“forced”* Him to act on my behalf if I was to have *“ground”* for the next step. What I mean, is that my decisions toward Him landed me in various predicaments - and if He was going to support my efforts (which He did) it required His Hand being *“obvious.”* After this initial series of deliverances, I told an area pastor my story ... a blow-by-blow account (I had done something that sparked his curiosity towards me). Once I finished, he knew the outcomes I had experienced were consistent with action by the Living God on behalf of a foolish sinner (now saint) in providing avenues out of multi-layered, sin entanglements and quandaries. After I finished, he said, *“Well, I just don't want you to think God is always going to be so obvious.”* I said, *“Oh, I know that.”*

God allowed me to record my early reactions, interactions - cherishings - of Him. They are in my early Christian songs. While some of the peripheral theology was off, or naive, the main heart thrust was not. Many of those songs are as fresh to me today (forty plus years later) as when I wrote them. In light of my sin (of which I see but a fraction) it is astounding how good God has been to me. He helps me even when I do not know it. Of that I have no doubt. He is fully steadfast - always faithful - even when I do not reciprocate (2Ti 2:13). When such realizations come, how can I not cherish Him? Incidentally, I am on the verge of recording many of those songs that you can hear/have for free if you are so inclined (By the end of 2019, I should have 88 of those songs uploaded with commentaries).

When reading these last paragraphs, did any doubts arise within you about my claims of God's Hand in my experiences? If doubts did arise ... we are making progress. I related entirely subjective understandings of events that no one can verify as either true or false. And when you consider there are

evil angels who imitate God ...you cannot know if I do cherish the Lord or if I am cherishing a figment of my imagination.

Cherishing the Lord: A Cardinal Element of the Faith - Essential to Salvation

The last seminary I attended (Emmanuel School of Religion) had its roots in the Stone/Campbell movement of the early 1800's. It is referred to as the Restoration Movement - an attempt to restore Christianity to its essential elements. The goal was to define what doctrines and practices are *cardinal elements* of the faith - which cannot be compromised - and what areas are non-essential ... and variance of opinion on those matters tolerated. The goal was to create places where Christians of all stripes could fellowship and work together under one roof. This would create a stronger group of believers in a given locale.

Eventually, the movement broke into three parts with very little interaction continuing between them. They could not agree on the essential elements of doctrine, practice, polity or even salvation. Fights over organizational hierarchy, the meaning of scripture's silence (thus the non-instrumental branch), baptism method and meaning, and even baptism's role in salvation, shattered the movement. My point? In all I studied and read of their 150+ years of grappling to define the base of the Christian faith, not once did I ever hear this verse even referenced - much less discussed or taught (Master of Divinity, 1992). "*If anyone does not cherish the Lord, he must be accursed. The Lord comes.*" (1Cor 16:22). One can get every Biblical doctrine and practice correct, but if God determines that one does not cherish Him - what is that one's end?

Actually, I never heard this passage discussed in Southern Baptist circles either (Associate of Divinity, 1986). Nor was it discussed in the Presbyterian Church of America (Whitworth Bible College - 1 year and then the school closed). All of these are (one past tense) evangelical, academic institutions that supply pastors and other staff to their respective churches. All three of these Christian sects focus on salvation theology (Soteriology) - as well as varied, practical witnessing programs (e.g., Evangelism Explosion and Christian Witness Training). Additionally, many of the worship services (not to mention revival weeks) revolve around presenting the gospel message. "*If anyone does not cherish the Lord, he must be accursed. The Lord comes.*" (1Cor 16:22). How is this not central to Christianity? It is as essential as essential can be. So, why is this passage, and thorough teaching on it ... ignored?

Too Messy

If a group has decided their primary mission is the salvation of souls ... how *can* they teach this? There is no formula, or some spiritual "*to do*" list, where "*cherishing the Lord*" can be checked off. Besides, all the formulas already include a huge wild card - "*believing in the Lord.*" And to now add "*cherishing Him*" into the mix? This makes matters entirely too messy and all control over being able to present a simple formula on how listeners can get right with God is completely lost. Therefore, this passage is ignored. So even though this verse is a *cardinal element* to one's salvation, an *essential ingredient* to one's eternal well being and glory to come, it lurks as a veiled, yet huge, unknown continent ... even an unknowable continent. "*Let it remain so.*" Well, that just won't do.

Salvation Formula Doubts

Some who have developed a particular gospel presentation method, know that submission to the prescribed formula ... still somehow lacks. For example, James Kennedy developed Evangelism Explosion which spread all over the USA and abroad. Yet, I once heard him say, when referring to the congregation, that maybe 5% of them were truly saved. So, only 5% of them said, "*Yes*" to the salvation formula of Evangelism Explosion? It was presented to all of them who had been there any

time at all - followed by a “Yes” response! A statement like this indicates to me that he instinctively knew a saving relationship with God cannot be reduced to a series of steps followed by a close. Beyond that, I have no idea what he thought. Others who teach some salvation formula know, that for some reason, even if one fully submits to the presented prescription, it doesn't always “take.” Usually, they identify the culprit as that pesky “*belief in the Lord*” element. Their “converts” did not “*really believe*” ... or believe enough, or something, in that moment when they had yielded to the presentation. “*Perhaps they weren't really sincere about the whole deal anyway.*” At any rate, there is nothing wrong with the formula - just something wrong with the one who supposedly submitted to it. Other protectors of their formula insist that those who went through it actually are saved - just temporary backsliders and glory is still coming. The formula is just fine and works - end of story.

Next time you get the chance, ask the person who is presenting some salvation formula about his/her own conversion. You will probably be treated to a tale ... that is nothing like the formula they promote. Conversion is as individual as is the person. While the gospel itself actually is an **objective** presentation, one's response and interaction towards that information is anything but. Yet, these same individuals push some formula for how one **should respond** so as to “*be saved*” even though that is not what they themselves experienced. Why? I don't know. Ask them, and tell me what they say.

Cherishing the Lord involves a mix of objective *and* subjective interaction - specifically, the Bible *and* life events. I think of it this way. I am one dad, with two daughters. In some ways, I have worked with them in a similar fashion. “*I am your Dad, and here is what that means.*” This constitutes the *objective* part of the relationship as it is the same for them both. But once past these commonalities, each relationship has been entirely different. I am not different ... they are - in temperament, interests, and abilities. Additionally, each relationship has also been affected by different outside situations and challenges. These things make up the *subjective* part of the relationship. No objective material is jettisoned or violated (I am still the same Dad), but it must be applied toward a moving target - an unfolding life on a time-line ... uniquely. As a result of both the objective and subjective elements, my relationship with them has naturally, and out of necessity, become tailor-made. If they do grow to cherish me, it will arise from both the common elements *and* the individual elements of my interaction with them.

God is involved in every detail of our lives (Ps 139) with specific goals for each of us - in works and behavior (see Eph 2:10, and Phil 2:12-16). Because of this, each one's relationship with Him will be even more customized than the “*hit and miss*” tailor-made relationship I developed with my daughters. As our “*Dad,*” some of the grounds from which cherishing arises will be common among us. But our unique make-up and situations thwart any formula for the attainment of this cherishing dynamic. As we interact with our Creator, and gain glimpses of His intense benevolence toward us via the cross, cherishing Him is inevitable. Of this, I am convinced. But ... each one must work this out.

Temperament

I mentioned temperament in the previous paragraph. People are wired differently. For example, some individuals are knowledge-driven and others are much more emotion-driven. No one is exclusively one way or the other, but I doubt if anyone falls exactly in the middle of this spectrum - thus being assessed, “*normal*” - whatever that might be. I am of the conviction that our general proclivity on just this matter alone influences our relationship with God, and more specifically ... His relationship toward us. Personally, I think I am more on the information/knowledge end of things. I want, and need, facts. I also need the information that leads to those facts, including the contrary knowledge that argues against those facts. I need to weigh all information in order to feel confident that what I embrace is accurate. That is the way I am. Do I need a hug once in a while? Yes, but one hug can sustain me for quite a while. On the other hand, some people must have constant connection to

people around them. They live to touch and be touched. They fill every waking moment with relational activity. This is just the way ... they are. It is rather ridiculous to think that God, who obviously traffics in uniqueness (every snowflake is still believed unique) would have a relationship with any of us that is not tailor-made ... with our personal temperament also integral in the mix.

I think it is important that each Christian have some sense where they fall in this spectrum. Both ends contain strengths, but without counterbalance each end can end in grave error. I think you will find the forthcoming material of interest and I hope it will lead to some personal introspection. For starters, the fact you have read thus far is probably a pretty strong indicator that your pendulum swings toward the knowledge end of the spectrum. You, too, like/need knowledge. So, some is coming. Onward.

Churches Have Temperaments

Birds of the same feather do flock together. People gravitate toward church fellowships that have a general temperament closest to their own. Good or bad, right or wrong, that is just the way it is. As a consequence, some churches are very knowledge oriented and others are much more emotion-based. The conduct of the worship service usually provides a clue (a big one) as to where they fall. But, this inclination also permeates their Bible studies, fellowship activities and outreach. Here too, there would be benefit in the group, as a whole, identifying where they fall on this spectrum. Here is why.

One of the ironies that I believe will be unique to this age is that strengths can also become weaknesses. For example, while the Bible teaches that knowledge is good, it also says that if I *"know all mysteries and have all knowledge ... but do not have love, I am nothing"* (1Cor 13:2). This is probably one of those massive Bible understatements. Of course, being the knowledge guy that I am, I found it imperative to gain a biblical understanding of what He means by *"love (agapao)"* ... and then proceeded to write an ebook on it - as well as some ancillary articles ... this being one. In fact, what started me on this search was some obvious false teaching (knowledge) when I stumbled upon John 3:19 - where *"men loved (agapao) the darkness rather than the light ..."*. But, in an attempt to balance myself out, I have decided to always give my work away ... as an act of *"agapao."* (You will have to read my ebook on love to figure out what I mean. I think that is ... manipulation :).

While knowledge alone is dangerous, lack of it, or error in it, is equally dangerous. The doomed *"many"* of Matthew 7:21-23 were very social people - and their spiritual gatherings obviously reflected that. Along with prophesies (which ultimately proved to be errant knowledge), they conducted demon exorcisms, and in His name also *"performed many miracles."* Personal relationships? Intimate social interactions? These people were all over each other. And in their exchange with the Lord, there is no indication He considered them part of the *"deceitful workers"* of 2Corinthians 11:13, or the frauds and charlatans of 2Peter 2 (whole chapter) or of Jude's letter. These *"many"* appear very sincere ... but they were errant in knowledge - at an eternal cost. This really shocks me to contemplate. And I contemplate this by putting myself in their position. So, the irony here is that it is a strength to genuinely connect with people, but in the absence of accurate knowledge - disaster awaits.

Plastic Connections

Over the years, it has been interesting to see the attempts churches have made to address their sensed lack of balance in these matters. Have you ever been in a knowledge oriented church where this is part of the *order of worship*? A leader announces, *"Now it is time to tell the person to your left 'Jesus loves you!'"* or *"Shake the hand of the person behind you and say 'Bless you in the name of the Lord!'"* or some similar exhortation. These exercises are, more often than not, an extension of the personal, social awkwardness of those particular church *"leaders."* They are magnifying their own traits through

these displays with this ... scheduled “bonding.” Oh, well.

“Work out your salvation with fear and trembling ...” (Phil 2:12).

That is truly the bottom line. Each of us must secure and work out our own relationship with God. But this is not a free for all. He sets the terms for the establishment of a relationship with Him and that is where the *objective* material in the Bible becomes indispensable. It is there we learn that our personal sin problem must first be dealt with (expunged) and that problem can only be remedied by Jesus' work on the cross. God has determined that life is required for our personal sin's debt toward Him - and it is only the blood of the Christ that can solve our problem. That is why Jesus referred to Himself as “*The Way*” and one must enter by “*the narrow gate.*” “*No one comes to the Father, but through Me*” (Jn 14:6 and Mt 7:13). We must come through Him ... His payment on our behalf ... in order to establish a living relationship with the living Creator. That's objective material. But, ...

God has a Subjective Relationship ... With Everything

What a statement. He is actively and intimately involved with everything He has created - including all non-living material. He created it all and not one subatomic particle is unfamiliar to Him. When He recreates the heavens and earth, He will be acting on **every one** of those particles ... and even the “*void*” between them. Nothing is, or will be, left untouched. That is subjective activity in real time.

Concerning Christians, “*we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them*” (Eph 2:10). This is real time subjective activity by God as He is working on us, in us and around us - sometimes clearly seen, at other times strongly suspected, and at other times hidden, which I suspect will be revealed to us at The Judgment.

Concerning unbelievers, we are told, “*those who are outside, God judges*” (1Cor 5:13). “*Judges*” is a present tense verb which means *current*, personal, real time, subjective activity by Him towards them. But more is to come because everyone, Christian and non-Christian alike, is heading toward *The Judgment* - a personalized, subjective encounter with one's Maker (Rev 20:11-15). No one will question “*Who*” is being encountered.

While in this age, we must be cautious when interpreting our experiences and God's activity in them. This last sentence is critical because ... as discussed earlier, God, and His chosen angels, are not the only extraterrestrials supplying supernatural experiences in this age.

Conclusion

Well, you already get it. Our relationship with God is, and must be, both objective and subjective. But both must be balanced in such a way that a real relationship with the real Creator is really there. Where that saving balance between objective and subjective knowledge lies ... is an individual matter “*worked out*” between each Christian and God. May the fruit of your effort “*end*” with you cherishing Him. After reading all this, it is a bit difficult to see Christianity as ... a religion.

Interested in the [Bible's Plan of Salvation](#), or [what the Bible says about death](#)? If so, you can find each FREE Ebook (and others) at [freelygive-n!](#)

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