

**CLOSING THE GAP PART 2**  
**SPIRITUAL MATURITY IS NOT SIMPLY LEGALISM**  
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There is a life that is inherently religious...

There is a life that is inherently spiritual...

John 21:28-31a

One son struggles to submit, but in the end he follows the heart of his father. The other boy quickly agrees, but in reality his actions are superficial they are only words.

John 21:31b-32

**On the One Hand** - Jesus is saying these people are junked up and full of sin... they've made a mess of things... but the kingdom of God is open to them... and they are turning to God... They're hearts & lives are changing.

**On the Other Hand** – Jesus is says to the religious leaders... “Your righteousness is superficial... you’re like the boy who pretends to please his father but they are hollow words.” Jesus says: “**Your religious deeds are like empty words.**”

**Q:** The question is: Why does Jesus level such a strong accusation to people who've worked so very hard at being religious?

(Story)

Man applied for a job as a zoo keeper, “sorry the job has been taken, but we do have one other job... you probably don't want it, our guerilla died and we don't have enough money to buy a new one, but we have a guerilla suit that's just about your size.” He takes the job... gets good at it, starts to enjoy it. So every morning he went to the zoo. Put on his suit and snuck into his cage between the lion cage and the ant eater. Swinging back and forth... really getting into it. Then one day he slipped off the swing and landed in the lion cage... before he can even get up this lion is standing over him... he can feel the lions hot breath... and he begins screaming... Help, get me, out, I'm too young to die. Then suddenly he hears a voice coming from inside the lion. “Shut up man or we'll both get fired.”

The whole zoo, just a guys warring masks

~ See, Jesus gets on their case because he knows their heart... he knows that their good works are simply a pious mask... and in reality they have ignored God's heart.

- There is a life that is inherently religious...  
There is a life that is inherently spiritual...

*History*

With Jesus came this sweeping change in the theology of God's address...  
 God's earthly home was no longer the Temple... God resided in His son...

- But the Religious leaders had a different picture.

## (ILL)

To the Pharisees... God lived at 1600 West. Jerusalem Ave.

- The Temple is where God lived... and depending on your religious purity and good works you could be close to God.
- Gentiles couldn't come close.
- Sinners and tax collectors had no hope... they were left to pick up the spiritual scraps - at the pity of the religiously righteous
  - ↳ The religious leaders saw spirituality in terms of exclusion.

## (Story)

They saw their purity as a high mountain peak ascended through hard work.  
 When I was a boy I climbed Wasen Peak

- You make it... and now... after putting up with... a dry mouth...
- Blisters... and
- Heckling squirrels

Q: You know what you get to do? Sign a book...

- You get to sign the book. OH.... But you treasure it.

- ✓ You achieved this place... you earned the right to have your name in **the "Wasen Peak book of life."**
- ✓ And you look down the mountain and see all the people at the bottom of the hill. They look so little...
- ✓ We say "Look at the little people..."
- ✓ Is their name in the book of Life? NO...

- Why?

- ✓ Because they have not traversed stream & river.
- ✓ They have not fought the wild beasts of the Tucson Mt.
- ✓ They have not endured sun block running into their eye, or
- ✓ Put-up with the pasty taste of a Powerbars.
- ✓ They have not ascended the great Wasen Peak.  
 "I earned the right to put my name in the book of life."

## Joke

Put in deep, heady... theological terms the Pharisees were saying... "Nanny, nanny boo, boo, I'm better than you are!"

- ↳ But that's not how the Kingdom of God works.

- There is a life that is inherently religious... and it is a life defined by what is earned...

There is a life that is inherently spiritual...

Friends

There is a tendency in all of us to read scripture passages that speak of righteousness and purity... passages filled with the qualities of Jesus himself, and with good intentions we make them the strivings of our spiritual walk...

Subtly we begin to see our knowledge of the Bible as superior to others... we notice that our righteous acts are beginning to shine... and the temptation to separate ourselves... to measure our life against another is overpowering.

In that moment: we become laborers... saved by grace, but living by works.

- ✓ Prayer is chalked up as “holy” – Not a heart seeking intimate communion w/ God.
- ✓ Scripture memory becomes an ammo dump for assaulting lesser Christians – Not the building up of the church.
- ✓ Worship becomes a way to pat ourselves on the back, “Oh I’m so spiritual” – Not the praising and adoring of God in all his glory.
- ✓ Bible study becomes an obsession of the mind – Not a devotion to knowing the character and actions of God.
- ✓ And meditation... well meditation is useless because you can’t show it to anyone.
- ✓ Purity becomes a scorecard – Not a natural outcome of knowing and loving God.

*personal*

This is a trap and I hate it because it’s a faith stealer... and a Joy killer... it takes the good things of God and twists and distorts them into legalistic pride.

Gal 3:1-3

⇒ Labors never find true joy because in the end it’s a life that turns on you...

When we struggle with laboring to takes us down one of two roads:

a) We become judgmental critics of people around us...

What we notice most about others... is how they’ve failed... or

b) We become defeated... we can’t live up to the masks we created so many years ago... WE NEVER FEEL DESERVING OF THE GRACE WE RECEIVED.

(Movie)

Saving Private Ryan:

In the final scene \_\_\_\_\_ is now dying in a little town where a dozen or more soldiers have died so that Ryan might be saved... and Leutine \_\_\_\_\_ dying words are... “Earn this!” Ryan is cursed for the rest of his life... trying to deserve the sacrifices made for him.

The joy of his grace has been robbed... 50 years later Ryan is an old man... still trying to earn the grace given to him so many years ago.

⇒ This is the curse of the religious laborer... they do so much only to miss the one thing they really want... to be in a love relationship w/ God.

- There is a life that is inherently religious... and it is a life defined by what is earned... yet ends up being a life w/o love...  
There is a life that is inherently spiritual...

This was the life that Jesus cast vision for... this is the life Jesus called & invited people to.

Background One day some Pharisees picked one of their better lawyers to trap Jesus.

Matt 22:34-36 “Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”  
And of course they think they’ve got him trapped. What can he say... One of the Ten Commandments, part of the Sabbath law... They think that whatever law he choose they will have an example of how he has let some violator off the hook and thus failed to hold up the greatest law...

Matt 22:37-40 He nails them. Not by picking one of the hundreds of rabbinical laws... Rather, as the wisest teacher ever... he shows the intent of the law... he shows what it is to fulfill the law... Love God, Love others.

- There is a life that is inherently religious... and it is a life defined by what is earned... yet ends up being a life w/o love...  
There is a life that is inherently spiritual... and it is a life defined by love.

T>> What Jesus knew that others didn’t was that right behavior was never the goal of the spiritual life... Rather it was simply the buy product of connectedness with God.

John 15:1-3 You don’t bear fruit by trying hard... you do it by being connected to Jesus.

Background This is a striking statement. Jesus’ listeners would have become a little wide eyed.  
This was a very common illustration used in the OT and in the religious culture for centuries prior to Christ... but Israel was always seen as the vine.  
To be connected to God was to be connected into the practices and teachings of Israel’s religious culture.

Q: So what is Jesus saying...? “There is a **new** way to be apart of God’s community... and it’s through me.” AND it’s a relational thing!!!

John 17:1b-3a “Father, the hour has come. Glorify your son, that your son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life:” (new slide) “That they know you,”

- There is a life that is inherently religious... and it is a life defined by what is earned... yet ends up being a life w/o love...

There is a life that is inherently spiritual... and it is a life defined by love...  
**and knowing the Father**

Irony

The great irony is that... it is the spiritual life that begins to taste what the laborer worked so hard to get and couldn't.

John 15:5a

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit;"

Q:

What are the first 3 fruit of the spirit listed Gal 5:<sup>22</sup>? Love, Joy, Peace...

John 15:9

**Q: Who's love** are we suppose to stay in? Jesus' love.

✓ Have you got someone in your life that's hard to love? They're grumpy, short-tempered... They are soooooo drrrrrrraing to talk with...

Q: Do you have anyone like that in your life?

Q: Maybe you just can't get away from them... Are they sitting next to right now? Ha ha

~ Jesus says you stay connected w/ me and you'll become loving even w/ people that are hard for you to love.

John 15:11

**Q: Who's Joy** are we suppose to stay in? Jesus' Joy.

Q: How many of you got up in the morning and you were in a bad mood simply because it's morning.

(ILL)

There are 2 kinds of people: There are people who love to get up early in the morning... and there are people who hate... people who love to get up early in the morning.

~ Jesus says you stay connected to me... I will become your source of joy. You'll start to see beautiful things all round you... you might have to wait till noon until you can see them... but they'll be there...

John 14:27

**Q: Who's peace** are we suppose to stay in? Jesus' peace.

Q: Do you wake up each day with a deep sense that... whatever you face will work out... or do feel swept over by stress, anxiety...

~ Jesus says there is a life where peace reigns...

○ There is a life that is inherently religious... and it is a life defined by what is earned... yet ends up being a life w/o love...

There is a life that is inherently spiritual... and it is a life defined by love... and knowing the Father

<i>Application</i>	<i>Three Pictures</i>
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<b>Sistine Chapel – Adam &amp; God</b>	<p>The great desire of God is to be with you – God is closer than you think  Michel Angelo – Every muscle in God’s body is stretched out. His muscles are taught. His gaze is fixed on Adam.</p> <p>This picture reminds me that...</p> <p>⇒ God desire is to be with you and me... that’s his heart, to be with</p> <p>The Bible is not the story of humanities’ search for God... Rather it is the story of God longing to be connect with people.</p>
<b>Where’s Waldo</b>	<p>Sold over 40 mill – Wow... I knew Roger was writing some books... but.”  He’s there on every page But he’s not always easy to see. But it doesn’t mean that he not there.</p> <p>This picture reminds me of two things... that sometimes...</p> <p>⇒ God is closer than I might imagine... and</p> <p>⇒ Abiding takes patience... especially in Waldo moments</p> <p>~ In Waldo moments where God is hard to find... don’t worry.  Start your day of in Jesus</p>
<b>My Dad the coach</b> (Story)	<p>Dad’s just have a way of doing the impossible...  NASCAR</p> <p>Growing up dad’s seem to have magical abilities to fix things, to make them right. Every child feels a certain level of confidence when dad is helping.</p> <p>This picture reminds me that...</p> <p>⇒ Our God really can do the impossible through you and me.</p>
(Story)	<p>Dad teaching me to hit a baseball</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Pray in a new way... Pray as one connected to God.</p> <p>i.e. God I can’t love that person... but you can. Would you love that person through me.</p> <p>i.e. God I’m out of patients... but your not. Would you have patients in this situation through me.</p>

- There is a life that is inherently religious... and it is a life defined by what is earned... yet ends up being a life w/o love... There is a life that is inherently spiritual... and it is a life defined by love... and knowing the Father