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5 MINUTE LESSONS ON THE KINGDOM OF GOD

What Religious Box Are You In?

Are we more concerned with loving people, or being right? It's easy to get into arguments over differences of opinion, doctrine, or interpretation, but when love is spoken through actions, it communicates on a whole different level. People put their denominational box over people and a lot of times that just pushes away the people they are trying to reach.

By some estimates there are approximately 34,000 different protestant denominations and sects. In the approximately 500 years since Protestantism's origin with Martin Luther (usually dated 1517), this number translates into an average of one new Protestant denomination or sect developing every week! Even the original "reformers" — Martin Luther, John Calvin and Ulrich Zwingli — did not agree on doctrinal matters and labeled each other's teachings heretical (Scripture Alone? Joel Peters).

David B. Currie stated, "Since attending seminary I had looked for, but had never been able to find, a systematic theology that dealt with all the data of Scripture. Every single one had fudged certain verses or ignored others in order to make its system work. This had bothered me immensely."

Have you thought of how many times Jesus said something or even His Apostles, that does not fit into our own doctrinal creeds? I can think of many verses.

In the last 12 months of [giving out angel jewelry to strangers](#), I have come to recognize that each person that I talk with is coming from a different religious experience or upbringing. I call this religious training from our youth the "religious box" that we carry. Everything is filtered through the lens of our religious upbringing. As I have ministered to hundreds of people in the last 12 months, I've come to realize that God is looking at them as individuals rather than through the perspective of their religious box. When Jesus was ministering to the woman at the well, He asked a simple question, "*Will you give me a drink?*" From there she tried to bring the conversation to her religious box. "*How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman? For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.*" Jesus, through a gift of the Holy Spirit, told her everything she had ever done. For her, it was life changing. "*Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?*" (John 4:6-29)

Each day that I go out to share God's love, I realize that I may be talking to a person that is in a Baptist box, a charismatic box, a Nazarene box, a Catholic box, a Mormon box, a Jehovah's Witness box, a Seventh-day Adventist box, a Presbyterian Box, etc. And of

course, each religious box claims that they have the truth and unless you join their box you can't be telling the whole truth. The problem is that our own traditions have made the Word of God of none effect (Mark 7:13). When Jesus told the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37 NCV), I was thinking to myself of how the Samaritan and the Jew both had to let go of their religious biases in order to express the true spirit and intent of the Scriptures, which was love for God and love for their neighbor (Matthew 22:36-40). The priest and the Levite couldn't let go of their religious biases so they allowed their prejudices to hinder them from helping the man. In reaching out to people everyday, realizing they are coming from different places religiously and otherwise, my prayer is that they may experience God in such a way, that they discern it and perceive it as love, kindness, giving and goodness (Galatians 5:22-23, 1 Corinthians 13:4, John 3:16). I've learned to step back and listen to how people perceive the good works that they have seen. And almost always it's a revelation of love and kindness that they have never experienced in the world and to them it is so shocking (Matthew 5:16).

Our evangelism training has turned into trying to bring people into our own religious boxes, rather than into a revelation of the true nature of God (1 John 4:8, 16). I've learned to step back and let people tell me what they have discerned as they see and experience the good works of God. By listening to their feedback, I see what they are experiencing and I find I don't have to do a Bible study on God's love, or God's goodness, or kindness, or any of these things. They tell me what they perceive. It's amazing to see God do this work instead of my denominational box persuasion being projected on them. So when they see the good works of God being manifest to them, they experience God in action and deeds, and not just in words that often condemn or belittle.

I am amazed that even children respond to God's love in deeds and action. Yesterday, a young girl recognized me from a few days prior when I had given her a little homemade bracelet and one of my angel keyrings. She eagerly ran over to open the door for me, proudly displaying the angel keyring on her backpack. She was so delighted that she could open the door for me and it was a very touching experience. She had responded to the love I had shown her the day before.

A day or two earlier, I encountered another little girl and her grandmother at the craft store, Hobby Lobby. I playfully asked them, "Where is your horse?" noticing that the little girl was wearing cowboy boots. The grandmother spoke up and said, "Oh, she does have a horse." Then I asked, "Do you ride in rodeo competitions?" She said, "No, but she showcases her horse using an English trotting style." To make a long story short I gave the grandmother and the little girl (that I found out was in 6th grade) one of my [homemade angels](#) which touched them both deeply. I then turned away to minister to others in the store. About 20 minutes later, as I was exiting the store, the little girl found me again. She threw her arms around me and thanked me for the gifts that had been given to her and her grandmother. She was deeply touched and her expression of affection touched me deeply also. So when giving is done with the goal of glorifying the Father foremost in our heart, it's amazing what you will see God do for others. And

in seeing these good works and the effects on others, it also strengthens your faith in Jesus Christ.

“And God gave us this command: Those who love God must also love their brothers and sisters.” (1 John 4:21 NCV)

“But Jesus said, ‘Let the children come to me. Don’t stop them! For the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to those who are like these children.’” (Matthew 19:14 NLT)

There is no religious box that is perfect. See related lesson: [Are You a ‘Know It All’?](#)

Questions

1 Read Luke 10:30-37 (NCV).

“...a man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, some robbers attacked him. They tore off his clothes, beat him, and left him lying there, almost dead. ³¹It happened that a priest was going down that road. When he saw the man, he walked by on the other side. ³²Next, a Levite came there, and after he went over and looked at the man, he walked by on the other side of the road. ³³Then a Samaritan traveling down the road came to where the hurt man was. When he saw the man, he felt very sorry for him. ³⁴The Samaritan went to him, poured olive oil and wine on his wounds, and bandaged them. Then he put the hurt man on his own donkey and took him to an inn where he cared for him. ³⁵The next day, the Samaritan brought out two coins, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, “Take care of this man. If you spend more money on him, I will pay it back to you when I come again.”

³⁶Then Jesus said, ‘Which one of these three men do you think was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by the robbers?’

³⁷The expert on the law answered, ‘The one who showed him mercy.’

Jesus said to him, ‘Then go and do what he did.’” - Luke 10:30-37 (NCV)

What kept the priest and Levite from loving his neighbor?

2 Our religion has become more about believing some facts in a church creed than in observing (that is in doing) the commands of our Lord.

True or False

3 When the emphasis of our religion becomes caring for others, showing mercy and compassion, doing to others what you would want done to you, then you have become the living Bible (the spirit and intent of God's Word).

True or False

4 God did not call us to be a Baptist, Nazarene, Presbyterian, etc. He called us to have a personal relationship with Him where He is our best friend and we look to Him for everything.

True or False

5 We can have a personal and close relationship with God regardless of what religious box we are in.

True or False

6 Read Matthew 4:4.

"But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." - Matthew 4:4

Correct doctrine and teaching is important, but the Bible must be approached with acknowledging every Word from the mouth of God.

True or False

We want to hear from you!

We would love to hear your feedback on these lessons and how you use them in your own study or in discipling others. If you have any thoughts, stories, testimonies, comments, or questions we would love to hear them!

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Answer Key

1 Read Luke 10:30-37 (NCV).

What kept the priest and Levite from loving his neighbor?

Their religious bias that had made the Word of God of none effect.

2 Our religion has become more about believing some facts in a church creed than in observing (that is in doing) the commands of our Lord.

True

“...instruct [others] in the practice of all I have commanded you. I’ll be with you as you do this, day after day after day, right up to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:20 The Message Bible)

3 When the emphasis of our religion becomes caring for others, showing mercy and compassion, doing to others what you would want done to you, then you have become the living Bible (the spirit and intent of God’s Word).

True

“Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you. This is the essence of all that is taught in the law and the prophets.” (Matthew 7:12 NLT)

“Do to others as you would like them to do to you.” (Luke 6:31 NLT)

4 God did not call us to be a Baptist, Nazarene, Presbyterian, etc. He called us to have a personal relationship with Him where He is our best friend and we look to Him for everything.

True

“And this is the way to have eternal life—to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth.” (John 17:3 NLT)

“²³Enoch lived 365 years, ²⁴walking in close fellowship with God. Then one day he disappeared, because God took him.” (Genesis 5:23-24 NLT)

5 We can have a personal and close relationship with God regardless of what religious box we are in.

True

“And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.” (Jeremiah 29:13)

6 Read Matthew 4:4.

Correct doctrine and teaching is important, but the Bible must be approached with acknowledging every Word from the mouth of God.

True

“All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord’s Supper), and to prayer.” (Acts 2:42 NLT)