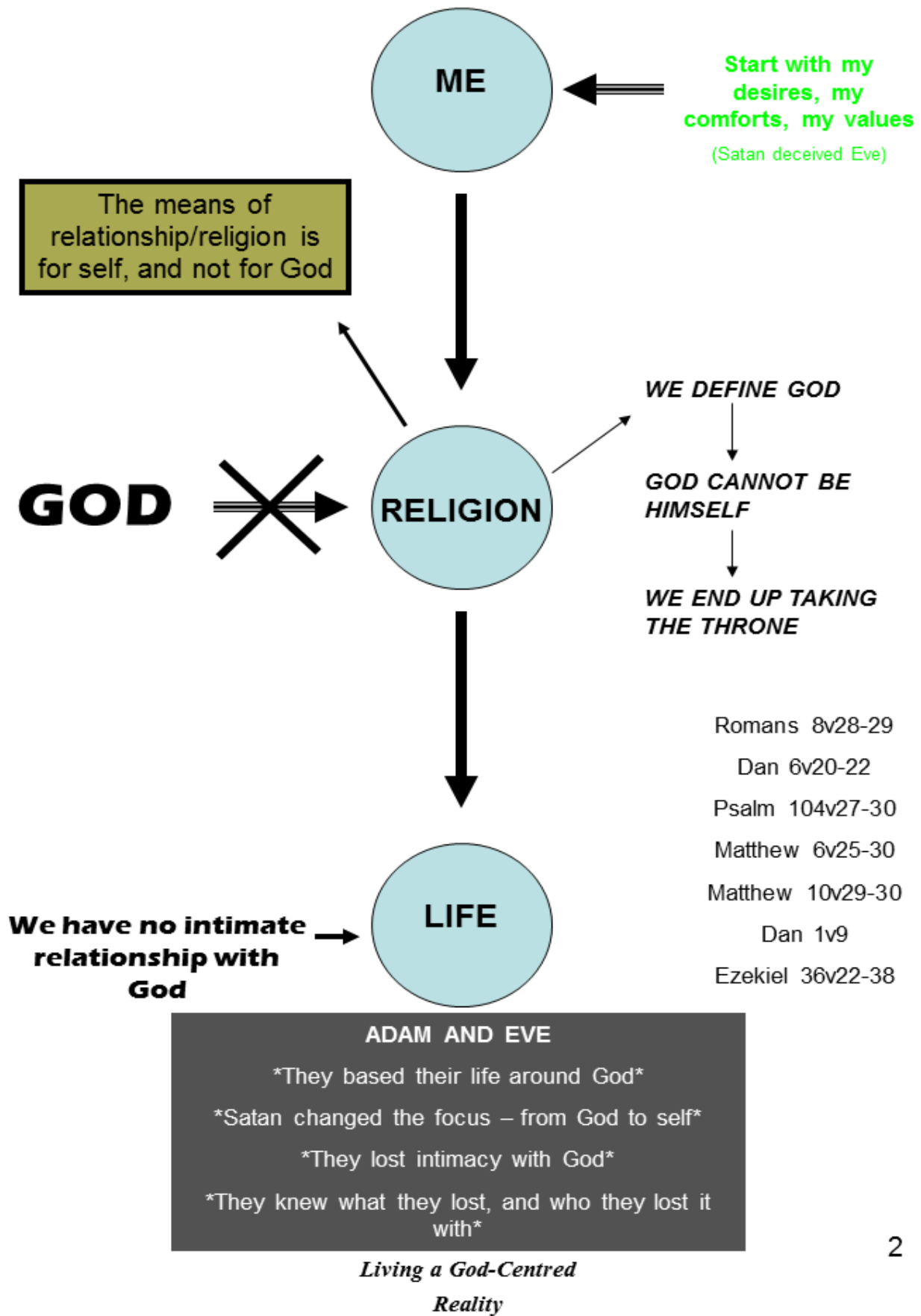


Living a God-Centred Reality



The basis for God-centred living:

The ideas of 'God-centred living' can be understood from three different texts:

"Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" (Exodus 3v13-14)

"Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law." (Proverbs 29v18)¹

"So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, 'To the unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything... Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead." (Acts 17v22-25, 29-31)

PURPOSE:

The purpose of the document is to, as best as possible, provide a basic answer to living a life that is based on the objective revelation and truth of God. It seeks to establish a basis for application, and does not offer conclusive answers. While there is no direct scriptural principle for this outline, it is based upon scriptural inferences and principles derived from the text. The text is the explanation, or accompaniment of the graphics which will be directly referred to.

The self-revelation of God is the most important knowledge that any human being could ever have. If the words of Jesus "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14v6) are true, then then is it imperative for the true knowledge of God to be sought, as much as possible, aside from the twisted ideas of man.

We will look at two different 'starting points' in the quest to make sense of reality: that which starts with the objective truth revelations of religion², and that which starts with the self-centred premise.

¹ Please note that in some translations the phrase "prophetic vision" is translated as simply "vision". This has been used to promote the idea of 'vision', and loses the revelation that is intended originally.

² It is important to understand that there are many sincere people from different walks of faith, who follow the tenants of their faith to its logical conclusion. They base their life completely around religion, and draw their decisions from their religious convictions. For example, the Hindus, the devout Muslims etc. The idea of this exercise is not to disprove their walks, but to work from the conviction that the God of Israel, revealed through Jesus Christ, is the One True God.

Living from God-centred place:

If we look at page 1 of the graphic we see the first circle, namely **RELIGION** which links to **ME**, followed by **LIFE**. This is the logical flow of the God-centred life. For the Christian, we identify **RELIGION** with the God of Israel. What is very important to understand at this point, is that this knowledge of God, although in some parts intrinsic to man (see Romans 1v18ff), it is not natural for man to apprehend the fullness of the character of God. Thus the question of Moses is completely logical and necessary: “*What is His name?*” To understand this question better, we must see that, to the people of the Old Testament the idea of “*name*” was the description of the person. It defined the person. So Moses went to Egypt with a description of God, and not just a name. We see that God defines Himself as self-existent and eternal. God is therefore to *reveal Himself to us*, and not us constructing or building Him to our needs and desires. Scripture is full of descriptions of God: His dislikes, His pleasures, His plans, His intentions. It is vitally important that we begin to understand these, as they go a long way to ‘fleshing out’ this One True God that we worship. We begin to understand the motives behind certain commands. We also begin to see our failures in relation to God, and not simply things we have done wrong.

The whole process of this revelation should lead us to a clearer picture of God and His work in history. We begin to see that God is indeed faithful, and indeed able to bring about His plan. We see that, despite man’s intentions, God is always in control. This grows in us the trust in God and faith that He will do as He has promised. This allows us to fully trust in Him when He makes commands that go against our understandings or desires. *This is the beginning of faith.*

So we now put into the block of **RELIGION** a known person, God. Having now understood who is revealed, and what is revealed about God, we move on to the next block – **ME**. The truth is that, with the revelation of God, comes the need to respond correctly. How do I choose to respond? Do I respond true to the known aspects of God? The clearest picture we have is the Apostle Paul. There is such a radicle change of direction. This is the foundation of Romans 12v1. Based on the good and gracious work of God, I *must* change how I view life; how I view finances; how I view relationships; how I view time and how I view sin. *All of these are affected. When God revealed His holiness to Isaiah (Is. 6), Isaiah responded by applying the same ‘woe’ to him that he had been calling down on the people of Israel in Is. 5.* This is indeed the only manner in which we can define righteousness – *in light of the revelation of who God is and what He desires*. What follows must be obedience, and it is this obedience that leads us to the application of the previous two steps. We then see the effect of the revelation of God, and my response displayed in **LIFE**.

In John 17v3 we see the remarkable description of eternal life – “know ... the only true God, and Jesus Christ”. When we respond correctly to the revelation of God, we have a relationship with God that is defined by Him. To give an example, a new father and mother are responsible, in many aspects, to define the terms of relationship with their new child. They will determine what the child will eat, where it will play, etc. They do this because they have a far better understanding of what is conducive to life with regard to their child. This is the same with us and God. God being our Father determines the relationship, *and that is our joy and fullness of life*. As we do this, we begin to enjoy God in terms of His faithfulness and goodness. We begin to know the love that God has for us through experience. We begin to find the depth to faith and trust, because, not only has God moved in history, God has also moved in my story. That is the **LIFE** that we start living. This has always been the intention of God – to restore us back to the relationship enjoyed by Adam and Eve. This is how we are meant to live.

Living from self-centred place:

Looking at page 2, we see a different place to start from – **ME**. We begin with our desires and pleasures. We “exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things” as this suited our purposes. We see this so clearly in the story of the Fall of Man (see Gen 3). Eve was tempted by the idea of being equal with God in the knowledge of good and evil. The idea of being *the centre of the universe* certainly does appeal to us. We see this further promoted in virtually every advert on Television. So, we start with ‘what works for me’. We define those values, using them as a measuring stick to determine our answers for life. We understand what we are not prepared to consider or suffer.³ Part of the problem with this, is that we become slaves to our own destructive desires (think of a drug addict): longing to escape what is killing us, yet so desperately yearning for those desires to be fulfilled.

Once we have established **ME**, we move to **RELIGION**. Our means of engaging with **RELIGION** is purely self-centred. It is the idea of ‘what can I get out of this’; ‘how can this serve me’? Some folk have distorted the central teachings of Christianity, to show that God is there as a servant to us. This is the root of the popular ‘*prosperity Gospel*’. ‘*God is there to bless me*’ is the prevailing mindset. Those folk who come to understand the central demands of Christianity soon have to reject it as the *only* answer for life, because it asks too much of the person who subscribes to it. So it is easier to either merge certain ideas of the various religions into a nebulous idea of love and fate, or to disregard all forms of religion, and pursue a materialistic life. No matter which of these responses a person chooses, God will not pander to these wishes. God will not be in a covenantal relationship with us based on these views. *God will not submit to our lordship*.

From this defunct view of **RELIGION** we then move to **LIFE**. This is a **LIFE** with no intimacy with the One True God. This is a **LIFE** where we have to provide sensible answers for the problems we face, and overcome obstacles with our limited strength (despite the view that life will work out).

³ The irony in all this is that the individual is almost always forced to conform to a given standard. Either we conform to the standard of God, or we conform to the standard of the peer group we are in. We never truly decide who we are. Most guys belong to the peer group simply because that is where they feel the most accepted.

CONCLUSION:

Bob Dylan, a famous singer, wrote a song with the title “You gotta serve somebody”. The idea of the God-centred life is based on submission to the person of God. That conflicts with our desires. The truth is that it is only in God that our desires find their healthiest expression, and most joyous fulfilment. Only in submitting to God is it possible to find the words of Jesus - “that your joy may be full” (John 15v11), to be a reality.

Gotta Serve Somebody

You may be an ambassador to England or France
You may like to gamble, you might like to dance
You may be the heavyweight champion of the world
You may be a socialite with a long string of pearls

Chorus

But you're gonna have to serve somebody, yes indeed

***You're gonna have to serve somebody
Well, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord***

But you're gonna have to serve somebody

You might be a rock 'n' roll addict prancing on the stage
You might have drugs at your command, women in a cage
You may be a businessman or some high-degree thief
They may call you Doctor or they may call you Chief

You may be a state trooper, you might be a young Turk
You may be the head of some big TV network
You may be rich or poor, you may be blind or lame
You may be living in another country under another name

You may be a construction worker working on a home
You may be living in a mansion or you might live in a dome
You might own guns and you might even own tanks
You might be somebody's landlord, you might even own banks

You may be a preacher with your spiritual pride
You may be a city councilman taking bribes on the side
You may be workin' in a barbershop, you may know how to cut hair
You may be somebody's mistress, may be somebody's heir

Might like to wear cotton, might like to wear silk
Might like to drink whiskey, might like to drink milk
You might like to eat caviar, you might like to eat bread
You may be sleeping on the floor, sleeping in a king-sized bed

You may call me Terry, you may call me Timmy
You may call me Bobby, you may call me Zimmy
You may call me R.J., you may call me Ray
You may call me anything but no matter what you say