

Galatians gives us a simple formula: The GOSPEL + SOMETHING = NOTHING. When time and energy serving our traditions carries the bulk of our time and heart, it is time to beg God to deliver us. If tradition's foothold is so strong that we lose our ability to pray, dream, and believe, then it is time to slit the throat of tradition. *We can then turn our eyes onto the fields, white for harvest:*

7. GOSPEL RELEVANCE FOR OUR DYING WORLD

There is a chasm in our culture. Most undecided Christ-followers perceive church people or "Christians" as religious to the point of being self-righteous. Even when this isn't true, most Americans still view becoming a Christian as getting behaviorally better. If we just could kick smoking, quit drinking, reject drugs, escape premarital and extra-marital immorality, go to church enough, wear different clothing, and change our language from crude to "christian-speak," then we would be good enough for God. Despite the fact that this flies in the face of the Gospel of grace, the "church" does little to defuse such fanciful notions. In fact, we even reinforce them, depending upon just how religious we are. Perhaps it is because we are struggling so much with our own identity in Christ, or busy perfecting our newfound Christian altar-egos, that we have so little to talk about with our "brothers in Adam."

The world is a dying place that needs Jesus. It doesn't need "church." KING FIRST. KINGDOM SECOND. and CHURCH is the outworking of the "King in me!" The world doesn't need perfect people to bring the gospel to it. It doesn't need people with all the right answers, ready to "dump the truck" rather than give salt-seasoned responses. The world needs people who care enough to introduce others to Jesus. Because He is all-powerful God He can and will take care of the rest. The world needs people who understand the power of God. Committed people who know that presenting Jesus is more powerful than presenting "me" or my "church." *In this way we "hold out the word of life!"*

SOME CONCLUSIONS:

It is my belief, and our secularizing numbers substantiate it, that America is the "lost mission field" of the twentieth century. As we launch into the 21st century, Jesus must be experienced and represented by courageous communities of Christ-followers who worship with all our hearts and who take responsibility for our lives, blemishes and all. We must be those who love one another fervently from our hearts, who use all of our gifts to bless the King and His Kingdom, and who uncompromisingly live above religion.

In these last days God needs people who take Him at His Word. He is my KING. His KINGDOM is me! The Church is the "called out" expression of God's richness dwelling within our hearts.

Dare to be courageous. Dare to engage. "Eye has not seen or has ear heard what God has prepared for those whose heart is perfect toward Him!"

MY THOUGHTS ABOUT THESE LAST FOUR "FIRST THINGS":



LISTEN TO THE [WHO IS GOD VIDEO HERE](#).

WHO IS GOD AND HOW DO I CONNECT WITH HIM?

There are a number of ways people can contemplate God. Here are a few. Which ones best help you to connect with the concept of a Supreme Designer?

1. In nature...from macro-astronomy to creatures and plants.
2. Through science...from species to atoms, DNA molecules to forces of nature.
3. Archeology...all we can infer from digging up old stuff.
4. Religious writings...places in history God may have authentically shown up.
5. Philosophical writings...stories of personal experience and observation.
6. Personal experiences...compelling evidence from those who are credible - or those whom we trust personally.

Who is God based upon your current personal thoughts?

What sources have provided primary avenues for your conclusions?

Do you feel like you know God? How and in what ways?

What would you assess as the level of your desire to please God?

The Bible tells us we can have a personal relationship with God. Through His Son we may talk to Him, hear from Him, and see Him at work in the world around us - and in the lives of others. To what depth do you believe this, and how do you believe you are experiencing it in your personal journey?

WHO IS OUR FATHER AND WHO HAS HE REVEALED HIMSELF TO BE?

God's personal name in the New Testament: ABBA, FATHER!

PSALM 84...Abba means "Daddy."

Read Mark 14:36; Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6

What do you learn about a personal relationship with God from these and the passages which follow?

Some things you and I can count on about our Father:

Matthew 7:6-11

He is our Protector and has our best interests at heart so that we can live without speculation.

How protected do you feel?

Hebrews 12:3-11

He disciplines us for our holiness so that we can have an example for our growth.

(He totally understands us...Hebrews 5:7-9) *How have you seen this in your life?*

Romans 8:31-39

There is nothing that can separate us from His love so we can live without fear.

How big of an issue is fear in your life?

Romans 8:26-30

He will continue to work with us and in us so we can be secure in His love.

What can separate you from God's love?

John 14:1-5

He is preparing a place for us so we can trust Him, reject anxiety, and invest our hearts in eternal things

(Matthew 6:25-34). *Does this excite you?*

Romans 9

Because He is God of all that exists He has rulership over everything. Our "free will" is submitted under the umbrella of His sovereign will. *Do you allow God to rule in your life?*

SOME OF LORD GOD'S REVEALED NAMES

What do each of these names and contexts help us to understand about the nature of our Creator? Elohim created the world. It is plural. Yahweh reveals Himself to humanity through His Names. Here are just a few. Elohim, Yahweh, and Yeshua (Jesus) are One (Deuteronomy 6:4).

EL ELYON.....“God Most High” Genesis 14:22, Isaiah 14:14

EL OLAM.....“The Everlasting God” Genesis 21:33, Isaiah 40:28

EL SHADDAI.....“The Almighty God” Genesis 17:1, Ruth 1:20-21

YAHWEH-JIREH.....“The Lord Provides” Genesis 22:14

YAHWEH-NISSI.....“The Lord is my Banner” Exodus 17:15

YAHWEH-SHALOM.....“The Lord is Peace” Judges 6:24

YAHWEH-SABBAOTH.....“The Lord of Hosts” 1 Samuel 1:3

YAHWEH-MACCADESHCEM.....“The Lord your Sanctifier” Exodus 31:13

YAHWEH-ROI.....“The Lord my Shepherd” Psalm 23:1

YAHWEH-TSIDKENU.....“The Lord our Righteousness” Jeremiah 23:6

YAHWEH SHAMMAH.....“The Lord is there” Ezekiel 48:35
