

# Religion or Love?

By Greg Albrecht

Excerpted from *Unplugging from Religion...Connecting With God*



**H**ave you ever wondered why many people who identify themselves as Christians can be some of the most obnoxious people you will ever meet? Why is it that most non-Christians think of all Christians as opinionated, judgmental and critical? What about John 13:34-35? *A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.*

How will you know if you live next door to a Christian? How will you know if you work with one? What's your first clue? Will it be how persistently they attempt to convince you that you aren't good enough, and that you will never measure up until you allow them to evangelize you into their particular denominational name brand of Christianity?

Will you know someone is a Christian if they can outclass you with clever arguments, or impress you with their knowledge of the Bible by quoting proof-texts at machine gun-like speed?

Will you be convinced of someone's Christianity when they make dogmatic predictions about the future, speak in tongues or invite you to a healing crusade? Is the sign of Christianity the constant condemnation of those who don't belong to the right religious club? Is patronizing name-calling the sign of

God's love, epithets such as "pagans," "the unsaved" and the ever popular "the world"—the one that God loves and Jesus died for? Is the sign of Christianity hostility to those who don't march to some denominationally-composed drumbeat?

It's religion that masquerades as Christianity that puts up highway billboards that supposedly pass on messages from God—messages like "Don't make me come down there." That's fear religion misrepresenting God. I don't think God is amused with such scare tactics. I believe he looks at this manipulative message and says, "I already came down there. Haven't you folks read the gospel? Don't you know it's good news?"

It's religion, not love, when a congregation, denomination or movement convinces its followers that they can be spiritually validated by taking its pills and potions. It's religion, not love, when human performance is placed at the center of our relationship to God. Jesus is the center of God's love—human performance is the center of religion.

It's religion that convinces its slaves to perpetually try to vindicate themselves by human deeds. It's religion that turns its captives into mean-spirited, judgment-dispensing religious drones, attempting to make everyone else in the world just as miserable as themselves.

God's love, when we accept it, lifts us out of the bondage of the religious salt mine, and transforms us from miserable critics of the world at large into Christ-followers, who reflect his love to a sick and dying world.

God's love convicts us that we are in no position to condemn others, but merely to gratefully accept his grace, and as he chooses to use us, to allow him to shine his light to others through us.

*Unplugging from religion* means unplugging from the judgment and condemnation which is part and parcel of the religious game—a determination we inevitably make about others who fail to measure up to the same standards that religion has us slavishly attempting to meet.

*Connecting with God* comes after we lose our religion, unplugging from its control, by his grace, and allowing God to free us from all of its devices and contrivances.

*Connecting with God* means to live in Christ, to live with Christ as the center of our lives. *Connecting with God* means that our life flows out of him and from him.

When we are connected with God we are Christ-centered. When we are connected with God we exist, we live and we have our being in him and because of him. □

Excerpted from pages 80-82 of *Unplugging from Religion...Connecting With God*, by Greg Albrecht. *Unplugging from Religion...Connecting With God* is available at [www.ptm.org](http://www.ptm.org).