



(Skit video taped earlier)

Well, that scene reminds me of a song that's been playing on the Christian radio station lately. See if you agree . . .

More Like Falling In Love

By Jason Gray

Give me rules; I will break them.
Show me lines; I will cross them.
I need more than a truth to believe.
I need a truth that lives, moves, and
breathes
To sweep me off my feet

Song "More Like Falling In Love" by Jason Gray used by permission.

It's got to be
More like falling in love
Than something to believe in,
More like losing my heart
Than giving my allegiance.
Caught up, called out.
Come take a look at me now.
It's like I'm falling, oh.
It's like I'm falling in love

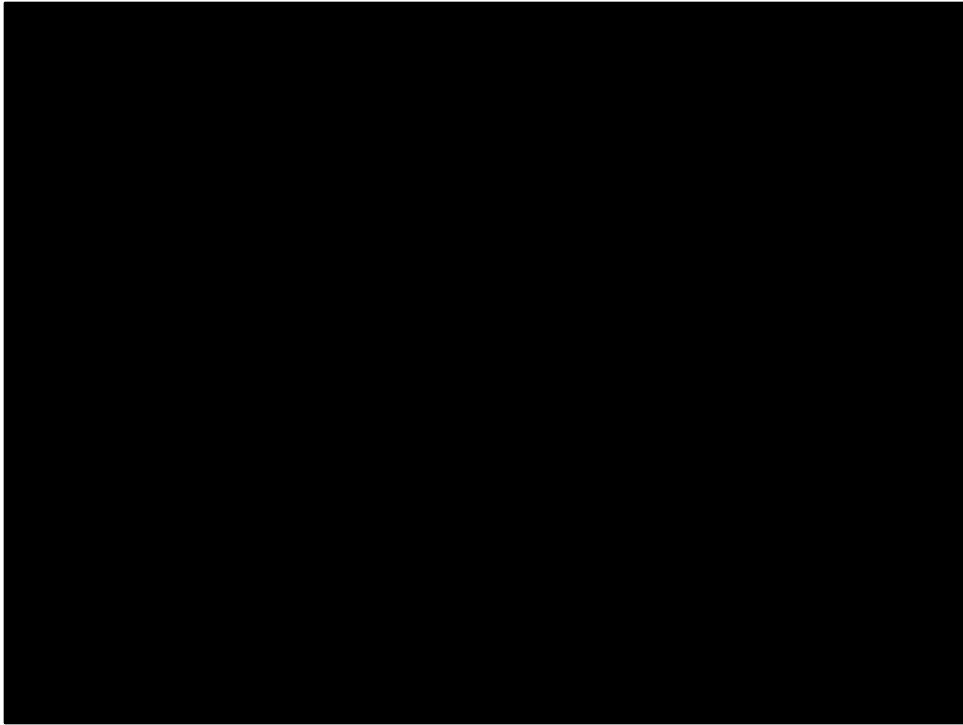
More Like Falling In Love
By Jason Gray



Isn't it funny? We hate to be told what to do and what not to do; but when it comes to religion, we think we need a list of "do's" and "don'ts". We WANT to know what we're allowed to do and what we're not allowed to do so we can get on with living our lives while being good little Christians—that's religion. But Jesus came to give us freedom from those lists of religious behaviors. He came to free us from the shame and guilt that drives us to work harder and harder to please some abstract god out there somewhere. Instead, he wants his followers to walk with him, live with him, desire to know him, love him, imitate him, and work in his kingdom to meet the needs of his children and point them to a relationship with God. Relationship is much more than religion (parts of this paragraph from Jessup).

Take a look at this clip . . .

More Like Falling in Love, a sermon by Brian Miller, delivered at Common Ground, Sunday, July 25, 2010. Some ideas came from an outline by Dan Jessup called *Relationship, Not Religion* published in [Great Talk Outlines for Youth Ministry 2](#) from Youth Specialties.



(video from RecycleYourFaith.com, low quality preview available at <http://media.preachingtoday.com/mini-movies/14823/The-God-Of-The-Shack>; full interview available at <http://www.recycleyourfaith.com/2009/09/04/the-paul-young-interview/>)

Challenging thoughts are they not? It would be much easier in some respects to try to follow a list of do's and don't's . . .



. . . At least that way you know exactly what is expected of you. Here is a list of ten things you must never do (like the Ten Commandments), and here is a list of things you should do (like the beatitudes from Matthew 5). That sounds simple, and it appeals to a lot of people. Okay, check, check, check . . . I've never done those horrible things . . . And then we get to the one about coveting your neighbor's stuff, and we say: "Uh oh, I've got problems here." We get to the one about never putting anything before God and again we say: "Oh no, I'm in trouble." Then Jesus blows it out of the water in the Sermon on the Mount when he says: even if you are holding anger in your heart against someone, you are subject to judgment.

That's when we start to realize that religion is . . .



. . . futile. In some form or fashion, the aim of all the other religions in the world is working your way to God, working your way to redemption, cleaning up yourself enough to be acceptable to God. But when we look at all the lists of things we are supposed to do to be religiously perfect, we inevitably come to the conclusion that the religion rat race is futile. We can never be good enough. We can't keep all of those lists, and anybody who says they can is either lying or acting or severely delusional.

Along comes Jesus to say: Relationship, not Religion. We've looked at this passage many times before; it's that important. Jesus says . . .

Matthew 22:37-40

³⁷“You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.” ³⁸This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹A second is equally important: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” ⁴⁰The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.”

Some of you might say, “I knew you were wrong about this. Jesus gave us a list right there. Love God with your heart, soul, and mind and love your neighbor as yourself. And he says they are commandments, and then he mentions the entire law. See, you’re wrong. Jesus gave us a list of things to do.”

And I would say, “Look again. Jesus is talking about a relationship—first to God and then to all of God’s children. Relationship.”

You might come back at me with the question, “So why do we have the law. Why does the Bible talk so much about what we should and should not do?” And that’s a good question, a fair question, but we have to understand the purpose of the law. Paul said . . .

Romans 3:19-20

¹⁹Its purpose (the law's purpose) is to keep people from having excuses, and to show that the entire world is guilty before God. ²⁰For no one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law simply shows us how sinful we are.

There is nothing bad about the law. It keeps us safe, it keeps our neighbors safe, and it helps us realize that we need to put God first, but God never intended for us to use the law to work our way to him or to work our way to heaven. The purpose of the law apart from providing a framework for civilized living was to show us that we can't keep the law perfectly. Its purpose is to point us to Jesus.

(continue reading from Romans 3 next slide)

Romans 3:21-22

²¹God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law . . . ²²We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ.

Faith is a relationship word. It means trust. In order to trust someone, we have to have a relationship. In order to have faith, we have to have a relationship.

Jesus words ring throughout the centuries. I want a relationship with you. Love me, love God with all your being and love your neighbor as yourself. If you throw yourself into this relationship, you won't have to worry about all the lists of right behavior. I will work in you to make you holy. You won't have to worry about that part. Surrender your heart to me (that's another relationship term, by the way), and I'll do the rest.

Now let me attempt to answer two questions you might have before I move on. First, why do we still have . . .

2 Questions

- Why do we still have the law if following Jesus is about a relationship?

. . . the law if following Jesus is about a relationship. Again, there is nothing wrong with the law. It gives us a framework for living. The law is meant to keep us from pain and to keep us from inflicting pain on others. It's a guidebook for holy living. So we have to understand the law in that context. The law is not meant to be something we follow and work through in order to work our way to heaven. All of us will fail if we go down that road.

Incidentally, when it comes to keeping the law we need to remember that Jesus . . .
(more notes next slide)

2 Questions

- Why do we still have the law if following Jesus is about a relationship?

. . . made it a lot simpler (and yet a lot deeper) when he said: love God with your whole being and love your neighbor as yourself. That's the ten commandments in summary. But Jesus' command takes us deeper. We have to remember that we are in relationship with God and with all of our neighbors. Living in right relationship will call us to go even beyond the ten commandments. It will call us to holiness and sacrifice. It will lead us to limits and responsibility and to living for something and someone beyond ourselves. That's what it means to live in relationship.

The second question I want to address is: Why do some Christians JUDGE . . .

2 Questions

- Why do we still have the law if following Jesus is about a relationship?
- Why do some Christians judge people against the law (and a whole bunch of other stuff) if following Jesus is about relationship?

. . . people against the law (and a whole bunch of other stuff) if following Jesus is about relationship? First, let me say that God is the judge. I am not qualified (nor is anyone else) to tell anyone that God will condemn them for their behaviors. That's between each person and God. We need to stay out of God's business in that regard.

However, I do think we have the responsibility in relationships to caution, to warn, to beg, each other to stand back from the edge of the cliff. My family loves to hike. If we are hiking on some mountain cliff, and I fear that one of my children (or Holly for that matter) is getting too close to the edge. I'm going to warn them. And in fact, if they don't listen I'm probably going to grab them and pull them back. When we are in relationships . . . (more notes next slide)

2 Questions

- Why do we still have the law if following Jesus is about a relationship?
- Why do some Christians judge people against the law (and a whole bunch of other stuff) if following Jesus is about relationship?

. . . we do those things for each other. Relationship requires that we help each other, warn each other of dangers ahead, and try to help our brothers and sisters draw closer to God.

So I think many times when people have this question, they are confusing a loving sister or brother trying to warn of dangers ahead with judgmentalism. But like many of you, I have witnessed people who act as judge and jury for others. I think those people need to spend more time with God. They may be caught up in religion instead of relationship or they may have forgotten and slipped back into religion. So I encourage you: Let's let God be God. And I encourage anyone here who may have been hurt by the judgment of others to look to God for grace and assurance. Following Jesus is about relationship. So let me try to sum . . .

Summary

- Following Jesus is about relationship, not rules.
- Obedience comes out of a desire to follow Jesus' ways.

. . . all of this up for us.

--Following Jesus is about relationship, not rules. But how do we live? How do we show our love? How do we follow? First, we surrender our lives to God. We give God our hearts, our lives. We give God control. We love God with heart, soul and mind.

→Obedience follows. Obedience comes out of a desire to follow Jesus' ways. And please notice the difference. It may seem subtle, but it's not. Notice the relationship emphasis. We obey because we DESIRE to follow, not because we HAVE TO in order to work our way to heaven.

--Finally, WORKING in God's kingdom . . . (more notes next slide)

Summary

- Following Jesus is about relationship, not rules.
- Obedience comes out of a desire to follow Jesus' ways.
- Working in God's kingdom comes out of a desire to point people to God.

. . . Comes out of a desire to point people to God, to help them enjoy the same kind of relationship we enjoy with God. And SERVICE comes out of a desire to take care of God's children—all of God's children regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, nationality, etc. All humanity is made in the image of God. We're all family, all in relationship, so we take care of each other.