

*Love God
Hate Church*

MOVING PAST THE DOS & DON'TS

MIKE MOORE

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For more information, contact:

www.mikemooreonline.com

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FOREWORD BY BILL JOHNSON

My friend Mike Moore has the most unusual gift of hospitality I've ever seen. And that is saying something, since I live among champions in that area. In fact, we first met because of his kindness to me and my sons while we were visiting Texas for a few days. He left a permanent mark on my life.

Hospitality may seem insignificant to many - but not Mike's version. For him, it's a practical way of bringing the love of God found in Jesus into the day-to-day experiences of people he meets. Thousands of people have come face-to-face with the kindness of God in Mike's home - *tasting and seeing* that God really is good - all because he discovered a secret found in Genesis 28: *God's house is where God is*.

Does the title of this book offend you? I hope so. It offends me. And if you understand God's definition of the word, *church*, it probably does offend you. Of course Mike would never lift up his voice against what

God values, but since “church” has come to mean so many things other than what God intended, titles like the one of this book are useful.

Love God, Hate Church is aimed at one deadly target: anything that claims to represent our heavenly Father but contradicts Him by actions, values, and controls that violate the nature of His heart. It’s the same target that Jesus confronted, day in and day out, in dialogue with the Pharisees—that unseen element exalted by some that keeps a few people powerful while the rest grovel at the feet of those who rule. The leaders of these movements are the antithesis of the Father; they misrepresent the Kingdom of God completely.

I, too, hate these expressions that some mistakenly call “the church.” They seem to declare that if we are good enough, keep the rules well enough, and follow their lead with enough focus and devotion, then perhaps we’ll qualify for God’s acceptance. That undermines the true gospel. But even then, we don’t live in reaction to error. We live in response to truth—and more importantly, the One who is Truth.

Mike’s passion for the authentic is visible in every part of his life. And perhaps that’s why there was a cry in his heart to write such a book as this, so that people would take another look at the authentic.

I share Mike’s passion for authenticity completely.

Here's a simple but profound truth found on these pages: *if you want to change your behavior, change what you believe. That's where it all starts. And if you want to change what you believe, start with God.* That is so powerful and true. Especially when one realizes that God is the perfect Father. All true knowledge starts with God, Himself.

Mike Moore is a man who has experienced the freedom that comes from really knowing the heart and love of God as a Father. From that place, he longs to take the reader, and the countless visitors to his home, into the authentic expression of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Only this message - and this Father - can truly make one free.

- Bill Johnson

Pastor, Bethel Church, Redding, CA

Author of *When Heaven Invades Earth*

Introduction

A MUST READ

My name's Mike Moore.

I love God.

I can't stand religion.

I don't hate the church in a literal sense. And I am differentiating between the institutional church and the body of Christ.

Jesus stated in Luke 14, "If anyone comes to me and doesn't hate his father, mother, brother, sister, wife, even his own life, etc., he can't be my disciple." Jesus was speaking of priority, not to literally hate everyone and everything around you.

However, when any church anywhere puts rules, regulations, laws, terms, conditions, or restrictions before God's love, forgiveness, mercy, compassion, and grace, I think Jesus would say, "Go ahead and hate that church."

I'm really disappointed with the way the church tries to control not *what* we believe as much as *how*

we believe and *why* we believe it. Can the church guide us? Sure - if it's not into modifying behaviors or managing its own image.

I didn't always believe this way. I was raised Catholic on the South Side of Chicago. As I matured and graduated college, there was a huge disconnect between how I thought God viewed me and the way He actually did. I thought that if I did all of the right things (attended church, didn't steal, didn't take another man's wife, didn't kill anyone, etc.), that I was doing OK. I read the Bible, taught classes on it, and even shared my beliefs with others. Yet, inside, I wasn't happy. I felt like God wanted more.

But I couldn't do any better. So I gave up.

I gave up until I realized that it wasn't God's fault if I viewed Him the way I did. What if the church got it all wrong? Or only half-right?!

If you feel the way I do about any of these topics, then maybe we should talk.

The problem with the world today is that if you want to get to God, you might think you have to go to a building, say this, do that, believe this, and don't believe that - or else God's gonna hate you, and you won't be accepted.

Are there sincere people in churches? Absolutely

there are, both in the pulpit and in the pews.

The problem is that the way the game is set up today, you have to go through rules and institutions if you want to get to God.

I say that's crazy.

God doesn't need you to make an appointment.

God'll see you right now!

God doesn't need you to come with someone else's opinion about how you should think, feel, believe, or not believe.

God is the ultimate come-as-you-are.

And why shouldn't He be that way?

After all, He created you just the way you are!

And He loves you just the way you are!

So this is a book for people who want to have a spiritual life but aren't all that crazy about what they've seen or experienced in some of our religious institutions.

Who am I?

Someone who's not too different from you.

Someone who's not just trying to figure the whole thing out.

Someone invested in the process and not the outcome.

Why we're here. How we're supposed to be. And

what the deal is with God.

I'm not a religion guy.

Actually, I'm a businessman. I have a forty-year track record of success in the business world.

As a speaker, I've had the privilege of addressing audiences all over the world on the subject of spirituality, religion, and God. As a businessman. Not a cleric.

Jesus Christ's my guy. I dig Him.

I get Him.

And I hope to connect you with Him in a way that maybe you've never seen before.

This is a book of plain speaking, not empty philosophizing.

If you're sick and tired of being sick and tired, if you don't like other people defining your spirituality for you, and if you want to find a path to God that's truly your path, I might be able to help.

All I can say is, if you read these pages and you aren't shocked, outraged, moved, and called to a new love of God, then one of us failed.

Which one of us?

Mike

Part 1

UNLEARNING GOD





WHAT'S ON YOUR SLEEVE?

A few weeks ago, a friend of mine said to me, "You kinda wear God on your sleeve, Mike."

I thought that was pretty funny, so I said, "As opposed to what? What do you wear on *your* sleeve?"

He looked confused. "I'm not sure what you mean."

"I imagine you say that I wear God on my sleeve because I talk about Him all the time. So what do you talk about all the time? Whatever that is, that's what you wear on your sleeve."

My friend had no idea what he wore on his sleeve. Most of us don't. But believe me: we're all wearing *something* there.

Maybe you're always talking about how much money you make and your yachts and summer homes, or your fancy degrees and publication history, or how

great and smart your kids are, or what a fantastic collection of clothes/art/stamps you have. Or maybe you take pride in your poverty. I think it's time we all became acutely aware of what we're wearing on our sleeves so that we can actually have a discussion about it.

When I said that to my friend, the conversation got real. I slowly began to realize that my God and the God he was seeing were two different Gods. The God he grew up with was not the same God I was talking about. And that made me sad - that my friend didn't know the God of my understanding, a God of infinite grace, love, and freedom.

"I've got news for you, my friend," I said. "Could be good news, could be bad news, depending on how you look at it. But here it is: You're going to have to unlearn God."

Most of us grew up with a God of rules and regulations, dos and don'ts. God was used as a stick - a punishing rod. "Do right, and God will bless you. Do wrong, and God will smite you down." So, basically, make good choices, and you get a reward; make bad choices, and you get punished.

That is not the God of the universe. God doesn't ever want us to confuse our behavior with His blessings. He's basically telling us, "Don't think of me as a vending machine—that you can press the button

and there's your reward. You can make all kinds of mistakes, and I may still bless you. You can do something awesome, and not be blessed in the way you expected. I'm your God. I love you. I've taken away all your sin—that is why Jesus died for you. That's my gift. Now go enjoy life and love other people."

That's not the God many of us are familiar with. If that describes you, then you've got to unlearn the God you grew up with. It's imperative that you do.

In the groups I work with, I often ask people to describe the face of God. I say, "He's looking at you right now. What does His face look like?"

The responses I get are interesting. "Well, His eyes are really sad. Like He's a tad disappointed." That's the one I get most of the time—God is looking at them with vague disappointment.

"Okay, so He's a tad disappointed," I say. "Now if He were to say something to you right now, with that disappointed look, what words would come out of His mouth?"

Nine times out of ten, these people tell me God would say to them, "You can do just a little bit better."

That's most people's view of God: that He's a tad disappointed and thinks we can do just a little bit better. That's the God they grew up with. Meanwhile I'm sitting here going, "Are you kidding me? That is not

the God that runs the universe!”

When I envision the face of God, He’s got passion and fire in His eyes—and excitement! He sent Jesus to take away all our sins, and He’s dying to be in relationship with us. He wants to pour His Holy Spirit on us to give us wisdom beyond our years. He wants to fill our heads and hearts with thoughts and feelings we would never have without Him, about how *He* sees us, not how other people see us or how we see ourselves. That’s the God I’m talking about.

I don’t follow a God who’s only focused on rules and regulations for me to follow—who’ll punish me or send me to hell if I don’t do the right thing. My God isn’t a giant cosmic killjoy. That’s not why I get out of bed in the mornings. I get out of bed every day fired up with passion because my God is a life-giving God of passion. That’s what He wants for me.

If I wear God on my sleeve, that’s why. Because I’m excited about worshipping a God who fills me with His love, so I can go out and share it with everyone I meet. And so I can help people unlearn their God—and meet mine.

What one thing do you need to unlearn about God?

2

FREE THE DAVID

On the South Side of Chicago, where I grew up, our whole neighborhood was Democratic. I was a Democrat, too. Do you know why? Because my mom and dad were Democrats. If you grew up on the South Side, you were a Democrat. That's just the way things were.

I grew up thinking Republicans were the enemy, simply because that's the way I was raised. But I didn't know *why* I believed that. I was just parroting what my parents said about politics.

It was the same with my belief system. I was a Catholic because I was raised that way. It's one thing for a kid to inherit someone else's beliefs, but for me, it didn't stop with childhood. Even as an adult, I was bound to this strict Roman Catholic way of thinking.

For years, I thought of God as “The Great Punisher,” an arbiter who would judge me every single time I screwed up. Why was I so quick to adopt everybody else’s opinions, instead of taking the time to figure out what *I* believed?

As Socrates said, “The unexamined life is not worth living.” And I agree: it’s not.

Have you ever thought about how a sculptor creates a sculpture? Most of these guys have an idea in their head, and then they go get a block of marble. “Whatever I’m seeing in my head,” they say, “I’m going to put it in this block of marble.”

But Michelangelo said, “Not me.” He would sit in a chair and look at a block of marble for weeks—sometimes even months—at a time, until he saw what was trapped *inside* the marble.

“Every block of stone has a statue inside it,” said Michelangelo, “and it is the task of the sculptor to discover it.” He chipped around and discovered the statue inside—and then he freed David from the block of stone.

The goal is to be freer at the end of this book than when we first started. That’s the journey we’re embarking on together: to bust free from that rigid block of stone. I want to free you with the thoughts and ideas I’m going to be sharing with you in these pages. I want you to be free to unlock the treasure you

have inside of you, so that people can meet the real you—not the imprisoned one who says, “Let’s make sure we follow all the restrictions, rules and regulations, and commandments.” Or, “Let’s make sure we have all the right behaviors and look good doing it.” I want your heart to desire a real relationship with God.

The idea of “freeing the David” inside of me was crucial in my own life. What did I need to chip away to free the real person who was inside me, the person *God* saw? My whole life, I’d felt like He was judging me for all the things I was doing or not doing, but what I didn’t realize was that He had already judged Christ for every sin I ever committed. “I punished Christ for everything,” God said. “And if I punished Him for everything, there’s nothing left for you.”

Only then did I begin to understand that my job was to receive that gift, get on with my life, and bring God’s true love, mercy, and forgiveness to the world.

Are you ready to free your David?