I'm Profoundly Annoyed at Religion...
I'm profoundly annoyed at religion. Statements like “The Bible says this or that.” “You are wrong on this” or that doctrinal point. And the classic “My faith tradition has the ‘Truth’ and yours does not.”

Most of these statements lead to arguments, silly fights, and religious faces that twist and are contorted as they try to explain why their belief system is right and yours is wrong.

They are used in a whole slew of meaningless arguments that lead nowhere fast.

Now at this point, I should balance the statements I have made just to be sure some of my religious zealots and critics suggest I have become a heretic, lest they get the wrong idea of what I am suggesting here, but I won’t. I will say it again, “I am getting profoundly annoyed at religion.” I am also troubled as I am sure you are, at the divide in various levels of society around the world that have people fighting each other, where innocents are killed or worse for the lack of simple respect for the other.

Jesus Christ has stated, and it is clear that most readers of the Word, including me have yet to fully comprehend it’s meaning. The Bible listens in on a conversation Jesus was having with a religious scholar. The conversation is found in Mark 12:28-31 Message Version...

28 One of the religion scholars came up. Hearing the lively exchanges of question and answer and seeing how sharp Jesus was in his answers, he put in his question: “Which is most important of all the commandments?” 29-31 Jesus said, “The first in importance is, ‘Listen, Israel: The Lord your God is one; so love the Lord God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence and energy.’ And here is the second: ‘Love others as well as you love yourself.’ There is no other commandment that ranks with these.”

Makes sense, but how difficult this concept really is, or is it? Perhaps, just perhaps the problem we all have is found in the statement “Love others as well as you love yourself.” I won’t get into a therapeutic discussion here, but I would like to share a story that happened a few days ago.
Leaving my office located in Greenwich Village, New York City, I no sooner placed the key into the door of my car, when a large man, an African American male, who was speaking in a booming voice as he approached me and the vehicle I was about to enter.

He seemed very troubled, and at first, I thought he was going to ask me, or perhaps was asking me for some money, as my brain was not fully engaged in what the gentleman was actually saying. Simply put, I presupposed what the man wanted and my brain engaged mistakenly on what he was saying. I wasn’t really listening. I wasn’t really caring. I wasn’t really seeing.

On blind reflection of past situations, I stated to him that "If you are looking for money, you have come to the wrong guy, since I am kind of broke myself." This my friends was a complete lie. I am embarrassed to publicly say this, but it was simply a bold face lie. I was not paying attention to the man right in front of me, his need, or the emotional situation he was reacting to. Nor was I paying attention to the statement Jesus had stated "Love others as well as you love yourself."

Thankfully the man who was approaching my car didn’t hear my statement. He kept repeating, "No one wants to deal with or pick-up a black man. I’ve been trying to hail a taxi for twenty minutes. Even a black cab driver doesn’t stop." He was clearly deeply hurt by what had been taking place as he continued to speak to me and stated "I’ve been living on Bank Street and West 11th Street for over 30 years, and still can’t get a cab to stop and give me a ride."

As our conversation continued, I simply asked "Where do you need to go?" and he replied, "Marshall’s on 6th Avenue. I hope I can get a cab to stop on Seventh Avenue and take me there." Recalling a reading of "Love others as well as you love yourself" and a recent seminar I had attended a day before our mutual encounter, I was moved to tell the gentleman "I’ll give you a ride." To say the least he was visibly startled, as was I as the words left my mouth, he composed his thoughts, and a smile came across his face.

The ride took only about 9 minutes, but it was full of joy, respect for each other and a short conversation on how much God loved the two of us. I offered him a bottle of water, and he offered me a short story of his life, and a hand of friendship.

It is astounding how in a "chance meeting" one can become a friend, if even for a 9 minute ride. As he exited the car on the bustling corner of 22nd Street and 6th Avenue, I asked him his name and he broadly smiled shook my hand again, with a powerful grip and said "Orville." I told him my name, and off we both went into the vapor of busy life that is New York City.

The question that remains in my thoughts today is, did I pick Orville up, or did Orville and God give me a chance to pick me up? In my reading’s I came across this thought from the writing’s of Richard Rohr, a priest who adopted it from "Eager to Love: The Alternative Way of Francis of Assisi" - "This concept of remaining or abiding (John 15:4-5) moves religion out of esoteric realms of doctrinal outer-space where it has too long been lost. There is no secret to moral behavior required to knowing or pleasing God, or what some call "salvation," beyond a loving person in mind, heart, body and soul yourself. Then you will see all that you need to see!"

Thank you Orville for the lift.

Best regards - Tony Romeo

Upcoming "Concerts for Peace"

Saturday evening, June 6, 2015 / 8:30PM - REACH-NYC will sponsor a benefit concert that has just been added to "Concerts for Peace" to help finish and edit a film dealing with Alzheimer's disease produced by Greenwich Village Filmmaker and resident Hannah Reimann.
"My Father’s House" Documentary, is a loving and intimate film that documents the life of Ms. Reimann’s father. The concert will feature the talent of Hannah Reimann, vocal, piano and Dulcimer, accompanied by folk guitarist Michele Temple, who will be joining her at this special event. The familiar songs that touched a generation in the 1960’s and early 70’s and original compositions will move your soul. The concert will be held on Saturday evening, June 6, 2015 at 8:30pm. You will want to be there on this special evening dedicated to those living with Alzheimer’s and their caregivers. Special guests will also be on the evening’s program. As always, this concert has Free admission with donations encouraged to provide funding with all proceeds going to complete "My Father’s House.” You will not want to miss this special event. Invite your friends and neighbors.

Hannah Reimann, at the piano, will feature the intimate combinations of voice, piano, guitar/voice and guitar/mountain dulcimer from Joni Mitchell’s rich 1968-1975 period of songs including Big Yellow Taxi, Blue, Both Sides Now, A Case of You, Help Me and many other hits.

The evening will also feature Ms. Reimann’s own compositions. Critics have praised Hannah Reimann including: “An extraordinary voice...” - XM Satellite Radio
"An uncanny interpreter of Mitchell’s music." - New Yorker Magazine.

On Sunday, June 21, 2015 at 3:00PM, The Flute Choir of New York will be performing under the direction of the French Flutist Nicolas Duchamp, that will feature 10 flutists. This will be a unique concert that will thrill all those who attend. An afternoon of the most relaxing music ever to be performed in the 1881 sanctuary of Historic Manhattan Seventh-day Adventist Church. Scroll down for the official invite for each performance.

Scroll down for more details and official invites to these fine programs...

We hope you can help us by joining us at one or all of these brilliant events and tell your friends about what is happening and invite them to join you. You can also help support the work of REACH-NYC by making a donation payable to “REACH-NYC” and posting it to: REACH-NYC, P.O. Box 651, North Salem, NY 10560. Your tax deductible contribution will be acknowledged immediately by a personal thank you and receipt for your records.
Thus far “Concerts for Peace” and your donations have benefited the following local non-profit organizations helping New Yorkers in need. We applaud the work of the following... Sister Friends Galleria Supporting Low Income Women and Their Children, Covenant House, City Harvest, The Teachers of P.S. 15 on New York’s Lower East Side and the Children in their care, Mary’s House, Joseph’s House, and The New York Memory Center.

We would also like to thank our partners and the members of Historic Manhattan Seventh-day Adventist Church who are reaching out to the community. It is their generous gift of allowing these concerts to take place in their historic sanctuary that has been a true blessing.

May God continue to bless each of you with peace.

Best regards, Tony Romeo - Executive Pastor / REACH-NYC

P.S.: Please help our ministry grow with a fully tax deductible donation to support us in the work we are doing here in New York City. You can mail your tax deductible contribution, making out your check to "REACH-NYC" and posting it to: REACH-NYC, P.O. Box 651, North Salem, NY 10560. You can also make a safe donation by clicking on the "MAKE A DONATION" button below. A Great Big "Thank You" to all our supporters around the world who helped us this past year. REACH-NYC is recognized by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) corporation. You will receive a personal thank you and receipt for your records for any contributions you wish to make.

Join us for a Spirit filled morning of great music and the sharing of the Word. We gather for worship on Saturday morning's at 11:30 a.m. in the 1881 landmark sanctuary of Historic Manhattan Seventh-day Adventist Church, 232 West 11th Street, NYC. Located just 1.5 blocks West of Seventh Ave. South and one and a half blocks East of West 4th Street, in the beautiful West Village.

PARKING: If you are traveling by car and cannot find a parking space on the street, we recommend a discount indoor parking garage located on West 12th Street. Travel down Seventh Ave. South and on the corner of West 12th Street, make a left turn. The indoor parking garage is located immediately on your left. The discounted parking fee is good on Saturday’s from when you arrive until 7 PM.
CONCERTS FOR PEACE

HANNAH REIMANN SINGS JONI MITCHELL

SATURDAY JUNE 6, 2015
8:30 PM

IN THE 1881 LANDMARK SANCTUARY OF
HISTORIC MANHATTAN SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH
232 WEST 11 STREET, NYC
1.5 Blocks West of 7th Ave. South and 1 Block East of West 4th St. Reception with the musicians.

ADMISSION IS FREE - DONATIONS ENCOURAGED. ALL PROCEEDS GO TO COMPLETE
"MY FATHER'S HOUSE" DOCUMENTARY - AN ALZHEIMER'S MOVIE BENEFIT CONCERT.
A REACH-NYC SPONSORED EVENT
CONCERTS FOR PEACE

SUNDAY
JUNE 21, 2015 - 3:00 PM
THE FLUTE CHOIR OF NEW YORK
TEN OUTSTANDING FLUTISTS
WITH NICOLAS DUCHAMP DIRECTOR

IN THE 1881 LANDMARK SANCTUARY OF
HISTORIC MANHATTAN SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH
232 WEST 11 STREET, NYC
1.5 Blocks West of 7th Ave. South and 1 Block East of West 4th St. Reception with the musicians.

CONCERTS ARE FREE WITH ALL DONATIONS GOING TOWARDS LOCAL COMMUNITY PROJECTS IN NYC
IN SUPPORT OF NON-PROFIT GROUPS HELPING PEOPLE IN NEED.
A REACH-NYC SPONSORED EVENT
Donations to REACH-NYC help us in our efforts to reach out to the people of New York City. REACH-NYC is recognized by the IRS as a tax-exempt corporation, and all contributions are fully tax-deductible.*

Contributions can also be made by check payable to: "REACH-NYC" and mailed to: REACH-NYC, P.O. Box 651, North Salem, NY 10560

Thank you for helping the REACH-NYC ministry!

*A receipt will be sent recognizing all contributions for tax purposes.