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## One Way?

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## One Way?

A one way street is an agreed-upon but changeable arrangement for the sake of orderly traffic flow. When someone says "There is only one way to do this," or "Only these words can be used" they are often attempting to "direct traffic," but they are not referring to unchangeable realities. Jokes about "the right way, the wrong way and the Army way," can be applied to almost every human organization. Almost anything that involves the ways we describe experiences and beliefs allows for differences; seldom is there only one way for us to think, explain, or act.

Though there is only way to stop a car – by applying the brakes - no two people use the brakes in exactly the same way. Though we might each of us be in a relationship with One God, none of us responds to God in exactly the same way. Many people insist that the words and concepts they use are the only words that can describe a belief, a truth, or some reality. We understand that there are preferred, sanctioned, or – as with one way streets – socially accepted expressions that we use for the sake of human communication. But if we consider "one way" from God's perspective, laughter is an appropriate response. Who are we, as those whom God creates, to say that there is any limit to God's ways of relating with us?

Our choices and decisions are not usually between right and wrong, but about what is better or what is less good. God's inspirations within us are not cloned as if there was one appropriate choice for all people at all times; inspirations are particular specific gifts given to help us in our immediate present circumstances. God is always at work within us, promoting our choice of better options, but not preventing us from opting for an action that might not be in our best interests or those of others. If we look for the one unique way of acting that we can apply to all times and circumstances we will not be satisfied. God works with each and all of us within our many limitations of mind and heart, of understanding, experience and good or bad will.

God deals graciously with us as individuals, each with our unique characteristics, while drawing us into community with one another. Our best response is to open ourselves to God's unlimited love, not to limit, through erroneous categorical thoughts, God's ways of encountering us. We have reason to beware of imagining that everything is relative, as though none of our decisions mattered. But God's wisdom and rights to deal with us as God chooses is absolute.

So our concern is best focused on seeking to learn what God wants for us rather than on trying to gain control of our relationship with God.

If we attempt to force reality to fit our familiar categories, we close off some approaches that the Holy Spirit of God might use to engage us. With our very real freedom to choose, we can place limits on God's movements within our minds and hearts. For example, we can hold onto thoughts such as, "God cannot be present in this kind of incident, or that person, or those events that have been unpleasant or painful." But thoughts, with their accompanying feelings, come and go; they do not necessarily represent our commitments. Some ways of thinking might have been protective for us at one time but no longer serve us well in our present circumstances. We continually grow and change under God's guidance. The most effective means of facing any and every reality is with openness to God.

"One Way?" Not for God.