



## Welcome to Unity's Interactive Worship Service

**Today's Topic: Empty Your God-Box**

Power Point notes available at:

[www.unityofbakersfield.org](http://www.unityofbakersfield.org)

### Empty Your God-Box

What's a God-Box?

A God-Box is a box that we have put all the ideas, concepts, and experiences we have gathered during our lives about who and what God is.

Rev. Leo Booth, an Episcopal Priest, coined this idea in his book, The God Game: It's Your Move.

### Empty Your God-Box



He writes: "My childhood image of God was a mixture of the "Bogeyman God," and the distant "Passive God" who was rather like my father. As long as I behaved, as long as I was the Good Son, then the punishing Bogeyman God would be kept at bay.

### Empty Your God-Box

If I behaved and minded the Churches's teachings, I could keep the Passive God safely at a distance, appeased, so that, like my father, he would not be called on to punish me. So it is not a surprise that when I became a priest this core belief carried over into my priesthood. I taught people to live a spiritual life in order to avoid being sent to Hell, rather than to nurture and create a healthy relationship with God.

### Empty Your God-Box

Tragically, for me, fear was the basis of my faith, and it formed the base, the foundation, of my own God-Box.

Any beliefs that limit or restrict where and how we can find God create a God-Box. When we think we can find God only in church, in liturgy, in ritual, or when we think we can see God only in rainbows, sunsets, and flowers, we begin to build a God-Box.

### Empty Your God-Box

If we rely on God as a Fixer/Rescuer, we diminish not only God, but ourselves, because we become spiritually dependent rather than spiritually empowered.

The God-Box contains the religious baggage we have collected as we move from one religion to another seeking to find a relationship with God, such as the collection of confusing messages and unhealthy beliefs about spirituality, God, and religion since our childhood.

### Empty Your God-Box

The God-Box keeps us from being able to come to a new understanding of spiritually, and of God, no matter how hard we try to change. The God-Box generates rigidity and exclusivity, perfectionism and judgmentalism, religious codependency and helplessness, denial, and abusive thinking. The God-Box stops creative change, personal empowerment, and the process of maturing spiritually to create an adult relationship with God.”

### Empty Your God-Box

Here’s a thought: What’s in your God-Box?  
When was the last time you beat yourself up over something you did? If God loves you just the way you are, even with the mistakes, why did you beat yourself up? We do it because of our conditioning by our families, churches and society. In our God-Box we hold a belief that mistakes were bad and there must be a punishment. If there is no punishment then there is no salvation, no redemption, no love.

### Empty Your God-Box

Nowhere in his teachings does Jesus tell us to fear God, to fear each other, but instead to love God and each other. In fact, when asked about the greatest of all commandments of the Jewish people, he responded:

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” (Luke 10:27)

### Empty Your God-Box

In today’s world there are two sides of the religious coin: loved based and fear based.

Which one packs the places of worship? How many people do you know, right now, that have a God-fearing belief in their God-Box? And those who have discovered Jesus’s doctrine of the original blessing of love would they return to fear based worship?

### Empty Your God-Box

Tom had a special gift for creating all kinds of things. He was always busy taking things apart and discovering new and better ways to use them. You could always find Tom in the library reading and researching for new ideas or in the school workshop creating new things. Tom loved being at school and was one of the last kids to leave. It was as if he didn't want to go home.

### Empty Your God-Box

At home Tom's gift was never recognized. Instead, his father taught him it was a waste of time, that people were out to get him, to always look over his shoulder and trust no one. When Tom was twelve, his father left him and his mother. With his heart torn to pieces, Tom thought to himself, “Dad was right, you can't trust anyone to be around for you, not even him.”

### Empty Your God-Box

And then he thought, "Dad left because of something I did, I wasn't a good enough son, God sent him away to punish me."

In Bible class his teacher told him that God was watching him and taking down every little thing he did wrong. That if he did not behave himself, he would have to explain it to God on judgment day and spend eternity in the fires of hell.

### Empty Your God-Box

After classes he would often hear the other teachers talk about his mother and multitude of sins she was committing by staying a single parent and dating a series of men. With pressure from the church his mother re-married and his new step-father being a god-fearing man took the family to church every Sunday. He would often use the passages of the bible that gave him the authority to physically beat Tom and his mother every time they got out of line.

### Empty Your God-Box

When Tom complained of the beatings to the pastor he was told it was God's will and it was for their own good. It was his father's duty to keep them from going to hell. So Tom grew up not being able to trust anyone and had little regard for authority figures in his life. By the time Tom graduated high school he had lost all will to create. As an adult, Tom could never find peace or satisfaction with anything that he did.

### Empty Your God-Box

He no sooner entered into a relationship then he was out of it. Wherever he went and whatever he tried, Tom would fail. Whenever asked, "what happened?" he would pass it off as someone else's fault, or God was punishing him for past wrongdoing. Tom eventually turned to controlled substances to find peace and acceptance. Tom never knew a loving God and at the age of 27 he committed suicide.

### Empty Your God-Box

The local paper ran the story and quoted the pastor who did the memorial service as saying, "This was a tragic death of a man so young. The tragedy is he will never see his family in heaven."

What I have learned over the years is this: When people die by their own hand and others say how tragic it is, it's not the death that I find tragic, but the events and experiences in their lives that lead them to make that decision in the first place.

### Empty Your God-Box

Everyone who wishes to know a loving, supportive, compassionate God can do so. We just need to empty our fear based God-Box that contain these two unhealthy core beliefs about our relationship with God:

1. We are born inherently sinful.
2. We suffer in this life because it's God's will.

## Empty Your God-Box

Jesus on born in sin: "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." Luke 18:16

Jesus on God's will: "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Luke 12:32

Jesus on boxing God in: "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." John 4:24

## Empty Your God-Box

