

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLICAL GRAPH REPRESENTATION OF MATHEW 22:34-40 AS BASIS FOR RELATIONAL PRINCIPLES IN NIGERIA SOCIO-POLITICAL SITUATION

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Abstract

Relationship refers to the way in which two or more people or groups regard and behave towards God and each other. There exist a relational vertical linkage of God and man that ensures cordial horizontal humanitarian relationship for a perfect graph gradient in Matthew 22:34-40. This will make for cordial, honest and conventional relationship with one another. Nevertheless, there seem to be a distortion in this graph which has brought a neglect or misunderstanding of the text regarding Biblical ethical code that defines human conduct for positive relationship in Nigeria Socio-political situation. This has given rise to hate, ethnic, religious and political violence leading to death. This paper therefore seek to unveil the indispensable co-existence of abscissa and ordinate in a viable Biblical interpersonal daily relationship and discover what caused the distortion in relationship. Historical Grammatical Method of inquiry and linear graph representation was employed to achieve the objective of this paper. The paper discovered that a depiction of vertical inclination, in a pure momentarily functional adherence to God as well as God's creatures being the horizontal has been distorted by sin. Understanding the biblical graphic representation in this text is the approach to achieve quality relationship based on love, which is prerequisite to human existence in satisfying the will of God in every aspect of human relationship and Nigerian Political situation. The paper suggest among others that Nigerians should reconnect to God who is the source of love to enjoy cordial interpersonal relationship and unity.

Introduction

The hullabaloo for love, peaceful cohabitation, unity and relationship has generated several concerns and debates. Relationship denotes the way in which two or more people or groups

regard and behave towards each other. It includes the way in which two or more people or things are connected, or the state of being connected. Edwards, Goldie, Elliott, Breedvelt, Chakkalackal and Foy (2016) postulate that relationship is the foundation of life. They maintain that human beings need the support of others to survive. Maslow (1943) adds that relationship goes more than providing support and services to being there in difficult times which provides multifaceted behaviour that allow human being to adapt to different social settings and requirements to get what is needed in life(Papa,& Bonanno,2008). Teaching close and caring relationships, with a desire to connect with others socially, emotionally and sexually produces genuine acceptability (Cacioppo, Maerzke, Petty, & Tassinary, 1988).

Today, it is a common knowledge that Nigeria and, perhaps the world, in general as noted by Banerjee & Sengupta (2009) is plagued with several problems ranging various forms of hatred, corruption, ethnic militia violence which has led to more than 10 million lives lost between 1945 and 1975. Ojukwu and Olaifa (2011) argues that Nigerian politics has become politics of war not of peace, of unfriendliness and abhorrence and defamation not of love and relationship, of mobocracy and disagreement, disunity and not of cooperation, consensus and unity, not of integrity and patriotism. They attributed the cause to be the gangsters of money bags using their economic power to tavern people from interparty contribution and participation. Olukotun (2014) and Ikechi-Ekpendu (2017) in agreement with Banerjee & Sengupta (2009) adds that over 1000 people lost their lives due to hate speeches, rancor, unacceptability and propaganda that led to political violence in 2015. Odeyemi (2014) stresses that ethnic groups are political, economic, and social action groups formed for a particular purpose usually are frictional and opposing. He adds that this type of scenario calls for conscious inculcation of unity, national identity, patriotism and true relationship.

Existing studies on the need for unity based on love and relationship in socio-political situation in Nigeria has been approached from the political, economic and religious perspective with insignificant attention paid to the biblical perspective of the law of love and relationship, which is an integral part of the entire discuss. It is against this background that this paper ascertain the problem it tends to address hence the necessity of studying Matthew 22:34-40 for the in-depth understanding the law of love and relationship discovering the root cause of decline in love and relationship in our society. The objective of this research is to convey what the text in view meant to its recipients in the first century A.D and what it means to the contemporary Nigerian community. This paper is an attempt to integrate biblical faith into socio-political situation of Nigeria, with a view of highlighting what Jesus meant when He described Love to God first and then to neighbor, discovering the graphical representation of this analogy and appreciate if there is a distortion in this graph if compared to Nigerian society. It looks at the content and context of the text, and establish its theology. This research significantly, contributes to the understanding and the interpretation of the text in line with exegetical and hermeneutical principles and serves as a great help for the harmonious development of the readers' faith in trusting the Holy Writ of God. Its value is accomplished to the scholastic system, in providing a rich resource into the need for love and relationship with God and man. To the Christian world, it elucidates the validity of the source of love, a fold relationship that is both horizontal and vertical, helps in the strengthening of Christian faith for better explanation of the text and provides a base for better relationship in Nigerian politics. Furthermore, this research employs the historical-grammatical method of biblical exegesis in the examination of the text in view, unveil the indispensable co-existence of abscissa and ordinate in a viable Biblical interpersonal daily relationship and discover what caused the distortion.

Definition of Terms

Graph – A graph can be defined as a mathematical relationship between two coordinates thereby ascertaining degree of variation and correlation between plotted point via gradient and root of the equation interpretation. It is worthy of notice that graph can be employ in to rendering viable Biblical illustration that will serve as a powerful working tool in unveiling desired Bible truth.

Graphical Representation – this is the actual practical display of plotted points of a given graph in a graph sheet. Relative to this work, the graphical representation is the exact practical display of the God’s precepts by humanity on God himself and His creatures via positive relationship principles for the benefit of Nigeria Socio-political situation. A linear graph [$y = mx$ and $y = -mx$]

Relational Principle – this is an act of developing a lasting cordial experience with God, human kind and natural environment.

Brief Exegesis of Matthew 22:34-40

The immediate content of the text is Matthew 22:34-40, this can be seen on the concluding argument of Jesus with the Pharisees about resurrection in verse 33. Verse 34 begins another unit of argument that has to do with live and relationship. The larger context of our text is obviously the entire chapter of Matthew 22 where Jesus was putting Sadducees to silence, in their diverse lifestyles though their understandings were not opened; and they were gathered together, not to return him the thanks of their party, as they ought to have done, for his effectually asserting and confirming of the truth against the Sadducees, the common enemies of their religion, but to *tempt him*, in hopes to get the reputation of puzzling him who had puzzled the Sadducees. They were more provoked that Christ was honored, than pleased that the Sadducees were silenced; being

more concerned for their own tyranny and traditions, which Christ opposed, than for the doctrine of the resurrection and a future state, which the Sadducees opposed. They had relationship problems amongst them. The question was, *Master, which is the greatest commandment of the law?* A needless question, when all the things of God's law are great things (Hos. 8:12), and the wisdom from above is without partiality, partiality in the law (Mal. 2:9), and hath respect to them all (Batchelor, 2009).

In this pericope (Matt 22:34-40) Matthew affirms that these two commandments are foundational to all sacred writings: "On these two commandments depend [hang] all the law and the prophets." This summary does not appear in Mark or Luke. Matthew has made a special point by deliberately adding "prophets"; he desired to include all writings sacred to his audience." The combining of "law and prophets" appears only four times in Matthew's Gospel, each time in a significant context. The first is 5:17, early in the Sermon on the Mount. Here Jesus claimed that his intention was not to set aside the law and prophets but to fulfill them. He then amplified a selection of the laws in 5:21-48, showing his interpretation of fulfilling the law and prophets. It is not clear from 5: 17- 20 whether Matthew intended that 5:21-48 or the total Sermon fulfilled the totality of the Hebrew Scripture. There is no question, however, that what follows must be taken as an interpretation of Hebrew Scripture. Jesus is presented in the Sermon as beginning a completion of former teachings. "Law and prophets" are joined together a second time in 7:12 where at the end of the "golden rule" the text declares: "for this is the law and the prophets." The recurrence of the phrase would prod the reader to reflect on what has been included between 5:17 and 7:12. The antitheses certainly addressed the relationship of one person to another-neighbor to neighbor. They addressed the issue of respect for persons (5:21-26), the relation of the opposite sexes (5:27-32), the concern for truth between parties (5:33-33, retaliation and peacemaking

(5:38-42), and love for enemies (5:43-48). While one's relation to God is alluded to in this section, the text addresses primarily the way the individual should treat her/his neighbor. The word used for neighbor is *plesion*. Meaning 1) a neighbor 1a) a friend 1b) any other person, and where two are concerned, the other (thy fellow man, thy neighbor), according to the Jews, any member of the Hebrew race and commonwealth 1c) according to Christ, any other man irrespective of race or religion with whom we live or whom we chance to meet. Jesus injunction is that the base of relationship flows from love to God down to neighbor (Moulton, 1978).

Biblical Graph Representation of Matthew 22:34-40

Basically scientific graph relates two variables at a definable angle of 90 thereby making interpretation easily via logical deduction as the gradient is ascertained. Hence the biblical graph representation of Mathew 22 34- 40 via the exegetical analysis presented in the previous sub heading is deduce from “law of love”. “Law of love” states that “the momentarily inclination to heaven’s received holistic moral ethics either in vertical relationship as connected to god or in horizontal relationship as connected to man is directly proportional to obedience [loyalty] via fruits of the spirit and inversely proportional to disobedience [disloyalty] via works of the flesh.”

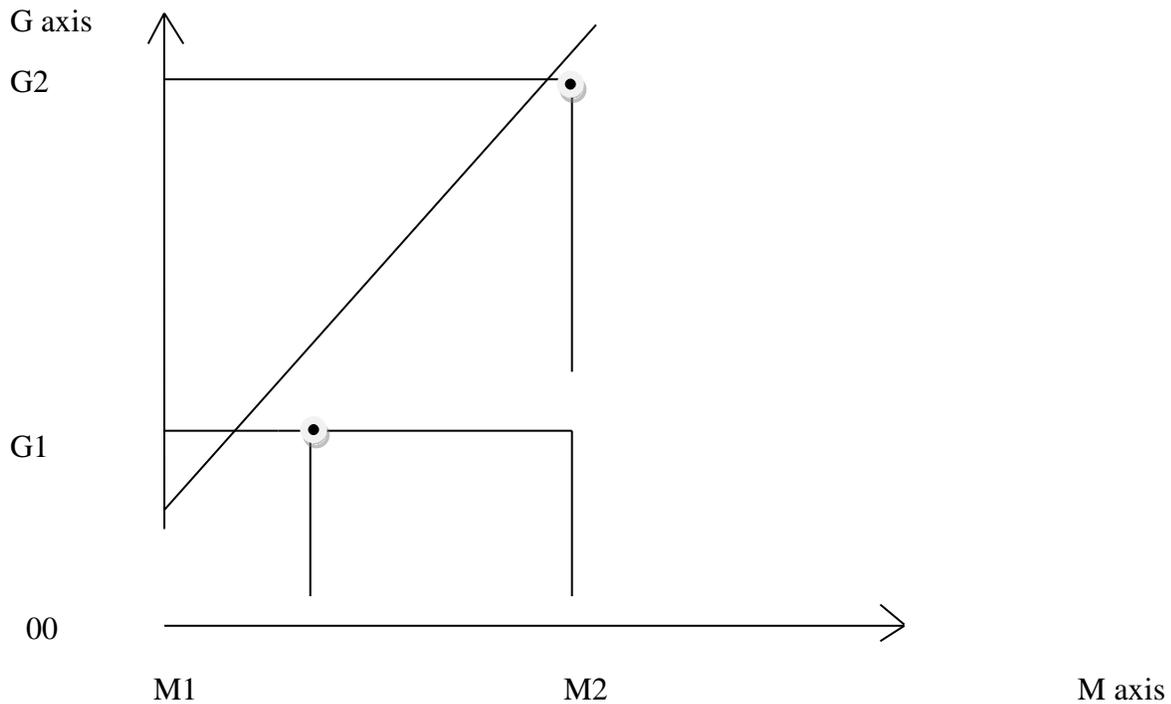
Hence mathematically, this can be represented thus, Holistic moral ethics \propto loyalty [obedience]
 Holistic moral ethics \propto 1/2 disloyalty [disobedience] Note – Holistic moral ethics = Decalogue = God. Loyalty [obedience] = keeping the commandments = man. Disloyalty [disobedience] = violating the law = Man

Therefore two realities hold

- a. God & man [keeping the commandments enhances relationship with God and man]
- b. God & 1/2 man [violating the commandments destroys relationship with and man.]

These can be expressed symbolically thus $G \propto M$ [$+$] $G \propto 1/2 M$ [$-$]. To remove proportionality constants must be introduced to the two respective deduced realities. Hence $G = l M$ where l is a proportionality sign of love as a measure of strength and weaknesses of one's relationship with God and humanity.

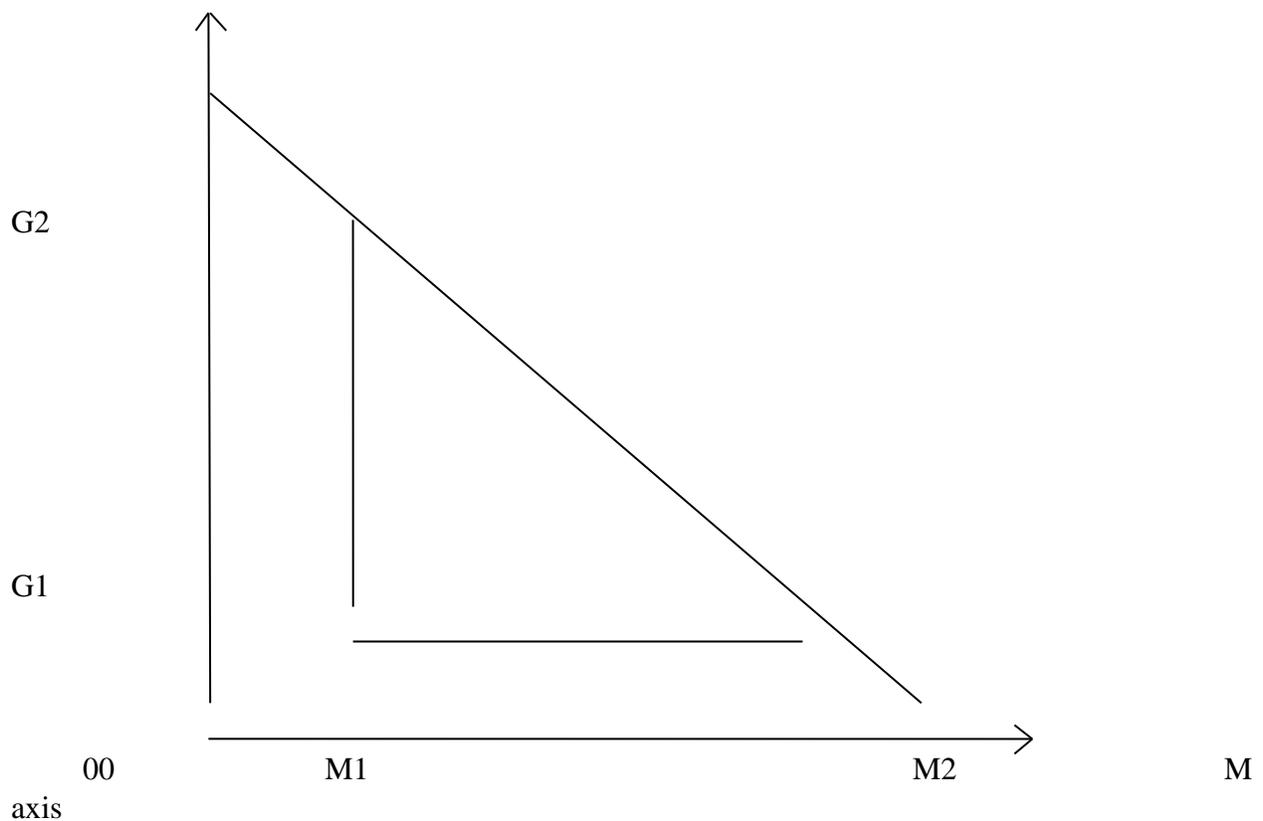
This presents a graph of G on the abscissa [vertical axis] versus M on the ordinate [horizontal axis] yielding a positive slope.



Therefore $l = \text{change in } G / \text{change in } M = G/M$

Hence $l = (G2 - G1) / (M2 - M1)$

For 2nd case $G = -S M$ where $-S$ is a proportionality sign of selfishness as a measure of self-centeredness leading to disobedience



Therefore $-S = \text{change in } G / \text{change in } M$

Hence $-s = G2-G1/M1-M2$

Biblical Deduction from the Graph

- A. L being love is the parameter that originates an inspired natural appetite to uphold the Decalogue in genuine friendship both to God and humanity. John 14:15 - If ye love me, keep my commandments. John 15:14 - Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.
- B. $-s$ being selfishness is the parameter that instigates man to rely on his strength to uphold the Decalogue in fake friendship both to God and man. John 15:4 - Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. For instance the rich young ruler that ask what can I do to inherit the kingdom of God. Luke 18 22-23 –

Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou
 one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou

shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich. Direct linkage is prerequisite to unflinching linkage to humanity in a viable relationship.KJV

C. In both 1st and 2nd cases the values G [G1-G2] is unchangeable depicting the unchangeable love of our God. Romans 5 8 - But God commends his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

D. There is variation in the value of M [1st case $M = M2-M1$ & 2nd $M = M1 -M2$]. Hence 1st case shows man's reliance upon God to be able tap genuine love and 2nd case depicts man's reliance upon himself to love God making void of humanity. John 4 19 -21 - We love him, because he first loved us. If a man says, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also.

1st case, the graph starts from the origin leaning on both the two axis depicting mutual relationship to both God and man. 2nd case, the graph devoid origin and starts at a point on the ordinate axis implying self-reliance to unfruitful relationship both to God and man

The cases above suggest that

- a. Jesus' 1st summary [love to God] tallies with the first four commandments [Exo 20 1-10 Cf Mathew 22 36- 37] and a direct quotation from Deut. 6 5-6. This unveils vertical connectivity with God.

Deut. 6 5 "And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might".

- b. Jesus' 2nd summary [love to man] tallies with the last six commandments [Exo 20 11-18 Cf Mathew 22 39] and a direct quotation of Leviticus 19 18. This unveils horizontal connectivity with humanity.

Leviticus 19 18 - Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself: I *am* the LORD.

The concept of Biblical Relational Theology

According to Ferguson [2004] “a biblical relational theology considers what the whole Bible says about Humankind’s relationship both with God and with one another”. He further stressed that, “the Bible reveals that God is the Supreme Spiritual Being who eternally lives in relationship with the other members of the Trinity, with heavenly hosts, and with the saints. Christians speak often about their personal Relationship with Christ. They also recognize their call as Christ-followers to live in *koinonia* (community with other believers) and to love their neighbors as they love themselves. Christians are people who deeply believe in loving relationships”. They seek to understand what Scripture says regarding what man should believe about a loving relationship with God and with others.

It is therefore expedient for followers of Jesus to embrace and advocate practical religion. Practical religion saves and convinces all while theoretical religion edifies few with little or no appetite to settle in the truth. It is worthy of notice that. Entrance of sin renders degeneracy thereby tending to a state of desire of genuine and superlative satisfying relationship not mere pharisaic consideration of the law. In view of this, let’s examine fundamental relational principles.

Relational Principles

A deep and earnest relationship founded upon genuine love is a powerful tool for witnessing. This can be clearly justified in Jesus' statement to the apostles A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all *men* know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another (John 13 34-35).

The cited verse has been misinterpreted by many Bible scholars to imply Jesus given a new set of laws but however it simply refers to redefinition of intimate and sincere relationship amongst God's children capable of attracting the heathen. This is indeed evident by the attributes of the first Christian church [Ephesus AD31- AD100] connoting desirability as it was in daily breaking bread together via definable love for one another [Acts 2, acts 5]

Apostle John elaborates and clarifies John 13 34-35 thus

Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning. Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth. He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now" (1 John 2 7-9).KJV

This indeed succinctly captures the basis for the outstanding summary of Jesus emphatically reverting Christians to wear the removed tool practical Christianity that is functional relationship [love]. This kind of agapé love is impossible for man to practice apart from fellowship with God. It is foreign to our nature. God alone is the source of agapé love. We receive the capacity to love (*agapao*) God and others when we are indwelt by Christ at the time of our initial salvation experience. The Apostle John makes this point in his first epistle. (Each occurrence of the noun *love* or the verb *to love* is a rendering of some form of the Greek noun *agapé* or the Greek verb *agapao*.). [Nelson, 2011]

From the above discussion, the paper establishes some key truths and principles that are contained in the above passage.

- a. God is the source of all love and relationship, linking to Him gives the capacity to love humans.
- b. Those in relationship with the source of love have relationship with fellow humans irrespective of ethnicity, tribe, religion or political party. .
- c. God is love; love is the essence of God's nature and character which produces efficiency and productivity.
- d. Jesus is the evidence of God's love for us that
- f. Believers have the capacity to love God and others with agapé love,

Socio-Political Situation of Nigeria

Nigeria today is facing a tense test of its time. Ominously, the importance of relationship that leads to unity cannot be overemphasized, not only will it boost the country's peace value and credentials in the committee of nations but will also strengthened the background for addressing and possibly resolving the various ethno-religious, socio-political and civil unrests threatening its socio-political progress. Nigeria's political situation appears very problematic with lack of entrenched peaceful and orderly system of power transfer.

Nigeria's political history is bedeviled with lack of faith, love for God, manipulations, partiality and lack of transparency in the electoral system due to widespread of political corruption to concentrate resources in the hand of a few. As such, Hazen and Horner (2007) refer to Nigeria politics as politics of allocation through which electoral victory is intimately tied to access to the state as an avenue for wealth creation, accumulation and conferment of status. Ginifer and Ismail (2005) adds that the concentration of wealth has led to militarized nature of politics, the use of violence. In Nigeria various political parties through their recruited armed gangs employ

violence against each other. This has made people to believe that the electoral victory belongs to the best party with the best armed group.

Nigeria is geographically a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural political entity where ethno-religious violence erupts often and often. Nigeria's population of about 160m people is practically divided between Muslims and Christians, and many of them get along. But relations have deteriorated in recent years, partly because of unpredictable disputes. Clashes are increasingly common and religious ghettos are forming in mixed cities (The Economist, 2012). Therefore in a country like Nigeria, it has become very easy for the members of the two major religions – Christianity and Islam – to recruit members as religious combatant who makes crises spread rapidly, most especially where one religion is dominant but with ethno-political dimensions added to it. This scenario is not only dangerous to the socio-political development of Nigeria but also worrisome because since the beginning of the present political dispensation, Nigeria has witnessed the outbreak of many ethno-religious conflicts. Examples of such conflicts in recent times include ; the intermittent clashes in Kano, Kano state; Hausa/Fulani-Sawaya in Bauchi state; Yoruba/Hausa community clash in Shagamu, Ogun state; Hausa-Yoruba clashes in Mile 12 and Idi Araba in Lagos state; Zango-Kataf in Kaduna state; Fulani- Irigwe and Yelwa-Shendam both in Plateau state; (Imobighe,2003). These and other ethno-religious crises have undermined prospects for socio-political development of Nigeria. Of importance is the threat of Boko Haram – an Islamic extremist; violence linked to this group's insurgency in northern and central Nigeria, have left more than 2,800 people dead since 2009, who not only have paralyses economic activity in the north but a threat to the survival of Nigeria's fragile unity(Adebita,2012).

SUMMARY

Graphical representation is a solution to moral deterioration in the socio-political situation of Nigeria based on Biblical moral code through appropriate and functional relationship to God first and man. Intentional recognition of moral law, acceptance of the Love of God which propels better relationship with fellow human, will reduce to the barest minimum self-centeredness, hatred, tribal clash, religious violence and corruption in the socio-political state of Nigeria and restore unity and sincere relationship. It is obvious that there is a distortion of the graph as seen in Matthew 22:34-40. If this graph is not distorted, Nigeria and the world would have been a better place.

Recommendations.

1. Fundamentally, the Gospel promises new life whosoever that believes. If Nigerian citizens especially the leadership embrace love for God, relationships will be nurtured and unity will be realized. He will equipped Nigeria to live out the wonder of this relationship as His light in a darkened world.
2. Nigerian politicians should engage in politics of love and cordial relationship and not of violence and crisis destroying the lives of those they will lead.
3. Religious groups either Christians or Muslims should exhibit the love of “God” and “Allah” which is the foundation to relationship.
4. Nigeria leaders should amend the distorted flow of relational graph by keeping to campaign promises, accept one another irrespective of tribe, religion or ethnicity.
5. Nigerian Christians in politics should lead by example, signifying Love—and the unity it attests to—is the mark Christ gave Christians to wear before the world. Only with this mark may the world know that Christians are indeed Christians and that Jesus was sent by the Father.

6. Every campaign for One Nigeria (love, unity and cordial relationship) should integrate it in the following perspective: Love is an act of the will; it is a choice made by the “lover” without regard of the merit or worthiness of the beloved (Rom. 5:8). Love respects and values the beloved (Rom. 5:10). Love focuses upon the needs of the beloved (Matt. 6:8; 6:32-33; Philip. 4:19). Love freely gives from its resources to serve (minister to) the needs of the beloved without demand of return (Matt. 10:8b; John 3:16; James 1:16-18). Love gives first (Gen. 1:27-31; Rom. 11:35).

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