

February 15, 2026 Study Guide

Mission Possible: Why I Hate Religion

Primary Text: Acts 17:1–15; 17:18–20

Opening Reflection

1. Have you ever had a bad day? What made it difficult?
2. In Acts 17, Paul repeatedly faces resistance. What do you think was the *bottom-line problem* behind all the conflict?

Big Idea: The core issue wasn't cultural difference—it was **religion without relationship**.

Understanding the Problem

Definition of Religion:

“Religion is a complex system of beliefs, practices, ethics, and cultural norms centered around appeasing some sacred, divine, or supernatural being.”

Paul encountered this mindset among:

- Romans
- Greeks
- Even Jews

Their focus? Appeasing the gods (or even God) rather than knowing Him personally.

Discussion Questions

3. In Acts 17:2–3, what does Paul actually do in the synagogue?
 4. How did the Bereans respond differently than the Thessalonians? (Acts 17:11)
 5. What does this reveal about the difference between outward religion and sincere pursuit of truth?
 6. Why do you think religion often resists the gospel?
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Religion vs. Relationship

Let's evaluate our own worship practices:

Church Element	Religion or Relationship?	Reflection Question
Call to Worship	?	Am I responding to God or just standing and reciting?
Confession	?	Am I honestly repenting or repeating words?

Church Element	Religion or Relationship?	Reflection Question
Assurance of Pardon	?	Do I truly receive grace or just hear it?
Praise & Hymns	?	Am I singing to God or performing?
Offering	?	Is this gratitude or obligation?
Sermon	?	Am I transformed or merely informed?
Benediction	?	Am I sent on mission or just dismissed?

Discussion Questions

7. Can good church practices become empty ritual? How?
8. When have you felt worship become routine instead of relational?
9. What changes worship from performance to relationship?

⚠️ What Religion Can Do

- Religion dulls the mind
- Religion lulls us to sleep
- Religion dulls our senses
- Religion bypasses the heart

Jesus addresses this in **Gospel of Matthew 15:8–9**:

“This people honors me with their lips,
but their heart is far from me;
in vain do they worship me,
teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”