

Losing your religion 1

What is it really about?

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2 Timothy 3:5 (NIV) “... having a form of godliness but denying its power”

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NIV)“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.”

1. RELIGION VS. RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

1.1. Religion (Self Effort, Works)

- Goal: Reach out to God, try to work your way into heaven.
- Means: Diligent service & works, with hopes of a reward (heaven).
- Power: Good, honest effort through self-determination.
- Control: Self-motivation and self-control.
- Results: Apathy, failure, chronic guilt, eternal separation from God.

1.2. Salvation Through Faith In Jesus Christ (Personal Relationship)

- Goal: Trust fully in Jesus, then live to please Him.
- Means: Confess sins, repent, yield self to Jesus.
- Power: The Holy Spirit does God’s work in and through us.
- Control: Allow the Holy Spirit to control & direct our lives.
- Results: Love, joy, peace, freedom, victory, power, eternal life in heaven.

John 14:6 (NIV) “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one may come to the Father except through me.”

Galatians 1:6-7 (NIV) “I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ.”

2. TWO MOST COMMON INGREDIENTS OF TOXIC RELIGION

2.1. It focuses on the external rather than the internal.

Matthew 23:25 (NIV)“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence.”

2.2. It promotes spiritual pride.

Luke 18:9-10 (NIV) “To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else Jesus told this parable: “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.”

Luke 18:11 (NIV) “The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.”

3. THREE THINGS ABOUT THE FOLLOWING SCRIPTURE:

Romans chapter 3:20-22 (NIV) “Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God’s sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin. But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.”

3.1. Observing the law.

Romans 3:20 “Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by observing the law.”

3.2. Need for a Savior.

Romans 3:20 “...no one will be declared right just by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.”

3.3. Righteousness with God comes by faith in Christ alone.

Romans 3:22 “This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.”

Luke 18:13-14 (NIV) “But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’ “I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

Sermon Discussion Guide

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OPEN YOUR GROUP WITH A PRAYER. THIS IS ONLY A GUIDE – SELECT THE POINTS YOU WANT TO DISCUSS.

1. Are you trying to make your own way to heaven or do you trust that Jesus has already made the way for you?
2. If you are honest with yourself - do you think that you have spiritual pride like the Pharisee in Luke 18 or are you more like the tax collector?
3. Do you have a relationship with God or are you more focused on living a religious lifestyle?