

What does Jesus think of religion?

Luke 18:9-14, Luke 11:37-54



1. An obvious question? Religion now and then

2. A religious hero story with a shocking punchline

Pharisee: member of a religious sect promoting holiness and separation from “sinners” and “non religious” people. Everyone looked to these men as examples of extreme religious purity. They were the religious heroes of Jesus’ day.

3. How does religion work?

4. Woe is you!

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- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
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- 6.

Expert in the law: lawyers whose job was to teach the Old Testament (Israel’s law) to the people. Well educated and highly respected as experts in God’s law.

5. Religious leaders oppose and murder Jesus while maintaining their “religious purity”

6. Even a pharisee can be saved!! Philipians 2:3-9

Connect Group discussion questions:

1. What is the natural attraction of religion?
2. How would you explain the difference between genuine Christianity and Christianity misunderstood as a religion?
3. What are the features of Christianity as popularly misunderstood in religious terms?
4. What facets of our church meetings could we change to undercut these false religious ideas?
5. Check out Acts 15:5. What does this tell us about the difficulties involved when a religious legalist embraces Christian faith? How does the church leadership respond? (Acts 15:6-21) What principles would help us respond to legalism in our own day?
6. To what extent would you agree with the statement “The gospel of God’s grace is irreconcilable with religion”?
7. Why does Paul react as he does to Peter in Galatians 2:11-21 ? What is at stake here?

"Lord Tennyson once told of the traveller from the orient who visited a European Church for the first time. The traveller mistook the organ for the church's god. The report he made reminds us of the misconceptions among our near neighbours about 'what goes on in church'. We went into one of their temples to see their worship. The temple is only open sometimes and they keep their god shut up in a great gold box at one end of it. When we passed inside the doors, we heard him grumbling and growling as if out of humour at being disturbed in his solitude. As the worshippers came in they knelt down and seemed to supplicate him and try to propitiate him. He became quieter for a while, only grumbling for a few moments, but then he got louder again, and the whole body of the people stood and cried to him together and after a while persuaded him to be still. Presently he began once more and then, after praying all together several times, they deputed one of their number to stand up alone and address him earnestly on their behalf, deprecating his anger. He spoke so long without an interruption that it seemed the god had either fallen asleep or been finally persuaded into a better temper. BUt suddenly, at last he broke out with greater passion than ever, and with such tremendous roarings that all the worshippers rose from their seats in fright and ran from the temple."

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