

EPISODE: 418

TITLE: **The Beauty of the Gospel vs. Religion**

Many who avoid the Church do not reject Jesus or the Good News of the Gospel; they've rightfully shunned *religion* and a transactional way of relating to God.

Here are three key things to believe and consider about the Gospel vs. Religion...

1. **If you still feel that you have to work hard to please God and get things from him, you are laboring under religion, which is not Good News.** There is no grand, cosmic scale that God uses to keep track of your good deeds and church attendance. In Christ, you are a beloved son or daughter of the King of Kings and have full authority and privilege within God's perfect love. Nothing to earn or prove, the pressure is off!
2. **The Gospel is not advice telling you what you should or shouldn't do in your life,** it is Good News telling you about what's already been done for you! All other religions in the world have a leader who tells you that they have come to tell you how to live in order to get to God and get in his good graces. Christianity and the true Gospel, tells us that God himself, in the person of Jesus, came to find *you* and has already done for you all the things you never could have done. It is finished!
3. **Spend some time reading, praying through, and discussing these different categories in life** to see which you are living under—the Gospel of Jesus Christ or religion. In what area of your life are you still holding on to shame, guilt or unforgiveness with others? These may be an indicator of places where you are laboring under religion instead of enjoying amazing grace.

Check out: [everydaydisciple.com/coaching](http://everydaydisciple.com/coaching)

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Thanks for listening... we'll see you in the next episode!

*~Caesar*

## The difference between the Gospel and religion as it pertains to:

### Acceptance

- **Religion:** “I obey; therefore, I’m accepted.”
- **Gospel:** “I’m accepted; therefore, I obey.”

### Motivation

- **Religion:** Motivation is based on fear and insecurity.
- **Gospel:** Motivation is based on grateful joy.

### Obedience

- **Religion:** I obey God in order to get things *from* God.
- **Gospel:** I obey God to be more like God – to delight in and resemble him.

### Circumstances

- **Religion:** When circumstances in my life go wrong, I am angry at God or myself, since I believe that anyone who is good deserves a comfortable life.
- **Gospel:** When circumstances in my life go wrong, I struggle, but I know my punishment fell on Jesus and that while God may allow this for my training, he will exercise his Fatherly love within my trial.

### Criticism

- **Religion:** When I am criticized, I am furious or devastated because it is critical that I think of myself as a “good person.” Threats to self-image must be destroyed at all costs.
  - **Gospel:** When I am criticized, I struggle, but it is not essential for me to think of myself as a “good person.” or “right”. My identity and self-worth is not built on **my** record or **my** performance but on God’s love for me in and because of Christ.
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## Prayer

- **Religion:** My prayer life consists largely of petition, and it only heats up when I am in a time of need. My main purpose in prayer is control of the environment.
- **Gospel:** My prayer life consists of generous stretches of praise and adoration. My main purpose is fellowship with God. Hanging out with my perfect, always loving Abba, Daddy... because I GET to.

## Confidence

- **Religion:** My self-view swings things between two poles. If and when I am living up to my standards, I feel confident, but then I am prone to be proud and unsympathetic to failing people. If and when I am not living up to standards, I feel humble but not confident – I feel like a failure.
- **Gospel:** My self-view is not based on my moral achievement. In Christ I am simultaneously sinful and lost, yet accepted in Christ. I am so bad that he had to die for me, and I am so loved that he was glad to die for me. This leads me to deep humility and confidence at the same time.

## Identity

- **Religion:** My identity and self-worth are based mainly on how hard I work, or how moral I am – and so I must look down on those I perceive as lazy or immoral.
- **Gospel:** My identity and self-worth are centered on the one who died for me. I am saved by sheer grace, and I can't look down on those who believe or practice something different from me. Only by grace am I what I am.

# Religion vs. The Gospel Tim Keller

## Religion

I obey-therefore I'm accepted.

Motivation is based on fear and insecurity.

I obey God in order to get things from God.

When circumstances in my life go wrong, I am angry at God or my self, since I believe, like Job's friends that anyone who is good deserves a comfortable life.

When I am criticized I am furious or devastated because it is critical that I think of myself as a 'good person'. Threats to that self-image must be destroyed at all costs.

My prayer life consists largely of petition and it only heats up when I am in a time of need. My main purpose in prayer is control of the environment.

My self-view swings between two poles. If and when I am living up to my standards, I feel confident, but then I am prone to be proud and unsympathetic to failing people. If and when I am not living up to standards, I feel insecure and inadequate. I'm not confident. I feel like a failure.

My identity and self-worth are based mainly on how hard I work. Or how moral I am, and so I must look down on those I perceive as lazy or immoral. I disdain and feel superior to 'the other.'

Since I look to my own pedigree or performance for my spiritual acceptability, my heart manufactures idols. It may be my talents, my moral record, my personal discipline, my social status, etc. I absolutely have to have them so they serve as my main hope, meaning, happiness, security, and significance, whatever I may say I believe about God.

## The Gospel

I'm accepted-therefore I obey.

Motivation is based on grateful joy.

I obey God to get to God-to delight and resemble Him.

When circumstances in my life go wrong, I struggle but I know all my punishment fell on Jesus and that while he may allow this for my training, he will exercise his Fatherly love within my trial.

When I am criticized I struggle, but it is not critical for me to think of myself as a 'good person.' My identity is not built on my record or my performance but on God's love for me in Christ. I can take criticism.

My prayer life consists of generous stretches of praise and adoration. My main purpose is fellowship with Him.

My self-view is not based on a view of my self as a moral achiever. In Christ I am "simul iustus et peccator"—simultaneously sinful and yet accepted in Christ. I am so bad he had to die for me and I am so loved he was glad to die for me. This leads me to deeper and deeper humility and confidence at the same time. Neither swaggering nor sniveling.

My identity and self-worth are centered on the one who died for His enemies, who was excluded from the city for me. I am saved by sheer grace. So I can't look down on those who believe or practice something different from me. Only by grace I am what I am. I've no inner need to win arguments.

I have many good things in my life—family, work, spiritual disciplines, etc. But none of these good things are ultimate things to me. None of them are things I absolutely have to have, so there is a limit to how much anxiety, bitterness, and despondency they can inflict on me when they are threatened and lost.