



Bad Religion

WHEN FAITH LOSES FOCUS


Corresponds to the 4/23/23 sermon

Matthew 23:13-22

Big Idea: When we care more about having a following than being a follower we have strayed into bad religion.

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

Read the following Scriptures together and then use the questions below (or any you wish to add) to discuss the text and unpack its meaning.

 Have someone in your group read **Matt. 23:13-22**

- Why did Jesus accuse the Pharisees of shutting people out of the Kingdom of heaven?
- Who were the Pharisees creating followers of? Do you see this happening today?
- The Pharisees were splitting hairs and missing the point. What does the perspective of gold, the temple, gifts, and the altar tell you about the things they valued and their distorted priorities?

GETTING PRACTICAL

It's easy to look at the Pharisees and religious leaders of today and cast harsh blame for their legalism. The truth is legalism can be a natural tendency. It comes from a desire to prove our own goodness. When we establish legalistic rules, we tell others to follow a standard that we have created. Let's take a few minutes to discuss where religion has gone bad in being legalistic and where some of those tendencies might live in each of us.

1. Where have you observed legalism or even been impacted by it in your own life?
2. Where are areas that you see legalism in some churches today? What problem does this create?
3. How do you see Jesus responding to legalism? How do you think he would respond to some of those issues you identified about the modern church?
4. How can we avoid legalism but still stand by truth?
5. What are some areas that you can be too rigid and prone to your own style of legalism?

TAKING IT HOME

In this series we want to spend time reflecting on a single idea each week. Spend time praying, journaling, and meditating on the topic. Allow the Scriptures and the Spirit to speak to you about this week's topic. We hope that your time with the Lord will lead to confession, encouragement and being formed in the likeness of Jesus.

Some of us need to forgive harsh legalistic experiences we have had with religious people. Others might need to evaluate where they tend to be too harsh. Spend time this week asking God to reveal the impact legalism has had in your life. Seek to be restored through prayer, the community of Jesus, and the Word of God.