

# RELIGION VERSUS THE GOSPEL

RELIGION: *If I obey then God will love me and accept me.*

THE GOSPEL: *I'm loved and accepted - therefore I obey.*

RELIGION: *Once I clean up my act I will draw near to God.*

THE GOSPEL: *Only by drawing near to God do I ever get cleaned up. My own efforts at trying to clean myself up are like filthy rags.*

RELIGION: *Heavy rules, little relationship.*

THE GOSPEL: *God's rules and Law are His loving expression in relationship.*

RELIGION: *Strong focus on avoiding the big sins.*

THE GOSPEL: *Strong focus on running after and loving God.*

RELIGION: *We obey to get things from God.*

THE GOSPEL: *We obey to become more like God.*

RELIGION: *Depends on what I do.*

THE GOSPEL: *Depends on what Jesus did.*

RELIGION: *Good advice.*

THE GOSPEL: *Good news.*

RELIGION: *Has good people and bad people.*

THE GOSPEL: *Has either repentant or unrepentant people. There is none righteous - on their own.*

RELIGION: *My motivation is based on fear and insecurity.*

THE GOSPEL: *My motivation is based on grateful joy in response to amazing grace.*

RELIGION: *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.*

THE GOSPEL: *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.*

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 that self-image must be destroyed at all costs.*

THE GOSPEL: *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.*

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.*

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

RELIGION: *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.*

THE GOSPEL: *My self-view is not based on a view of my self as a moral achiever. In Christ I am 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** ...leads me to deeper and deeper humility and confidence at the same time.*

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. I disdain and feel superior to 'the other.'*

THE GOSPEL: *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.*

RELIGION: *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 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.*

RELIGION: *It's really all about me.*

THE GOSPEL: *It's all about Jesus.*

*Much credit to Tim Keller and The Gospel Coalition.*