

What's the Problem with Religion? Small Group Guide

Warm-up Question: (Choose one, make up your own, or skip this part all together, depending upon the nature of your group.)

1. Did you grow up in a religious home? Explain.
2. What is one regular routine that really helps you?

Read the following passage: Matthew 5:17-20.

Religion has often exacerbated the tribalism, hatred, and self-righteousness that lives in every human heart. But Jesus knew the answer was not to abolish religion, but to recover true religion. Religion as Jesus imagined it is founded on love for God and love for people. It rejects hypocrisy. And it embraces a wholehearted dependence on God.

Questions for Discussion (Choose several that are relevant for your group):

1. Some people identify themselves as secular, non-religious people. Others identify as spiritual, but not religious. And still others embrace one of the world's major religions. In what sense is it fair to say that, regardless of these various labels, everyone is religious?
2. Some Jewish Christians insisted that Gentile believers needed to obey the Jewish food laws, get circumcised, keep the Sabbath, and follow other key regulations in the Law of Moses. The apostle Paul recognized that this was not the sense in which Jesus intended the Law to guide the lives of Gentile believers. What does Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5:21-48 indicate about the kind of life the Law was intended to produce? How does this connect with what Paul writes in Romans 13:8-10?
3. Read Matthew 5:21-24. In what sense is it misleading to say that religion is just about "me and God?" How should our "religion" impact our relationships?
4. Read Matthew 6:1. Why do you think we so often want to look better than we really are? Why won't it work to go to the opposite extreme and tell ourselves, "I don't care what anybody thinks?" How do we combat the temptation to project a false self to others?
5. Read Matthew 6:9-13. What are some things this prayer can teach us about the heart of true religion?
6. What is one way you would like to better live out religion as Jesus defined it?

Pray