Should I Hate Religion?

1. Millions of people \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ with the idea that it’s ok to love Jesus but hate religion.
2. The problem is that Jesus \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ hate religion. He hates \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ religion.
3. Missing this important \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ can lead to erroneous beliefs.

# What Is Religion?

*“An organized system of beliefs, ceremonies and rules used to worship a god or a group of gods.”*

* Simply a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ term for any set of beliefs about a god or gods.
* Carries no inherent evaluation of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of those beliefs (or the behaviour of those who hold them).

1. Religion has become the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for all the things people don’t like.
2. Religion – by definition – \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ do any of those things.

# False Religion

1. Jesus often clashed with the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

* The Pharisees \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ kept the law.
* People often have this \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ relationship in mind.

1. In Luke 11:37-52, Jesus criticized the Pharisees for:

* Tithing, but neglecting justice and the love of God,
* Love the most important seats in the synagogues, and
* Loading people down with burdens they could not carry.
* It was never about being \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
  + Mark 12:38-40
  + Matt. 15:8
  + Rom. 7:12
  + Matt. 5:17-18

1. Jesus \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ other aspects of the “organized system of beliefs” (religion) the Jewish people had:

* Jesus went to the synagogue (Luke 4:16).
* Jesus taught in the synagogue (Mark 6:2).
* Jesus considered the Old Testament to be God’s Word (Matt. 15:3; Mark 7:13).
* Jesus observed Jewish religious traditions such as:
  + Passover (John 2:13),
  + The Festival of Tabernacles (John 7:2, 7:10), and
  + The Festival of Dedication (John 10:22).
* When Jesus was preparing for the end of His earthly ministry, He told Peter that he would be the rock on which He would build His church (Matt. 6:18).

1. Jesus told His \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to “*make disciples of all nations*” and to baptize people, “*in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*” (Matt 28:19).
2. There is no need to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Jesus from religion that is true.

# Are We Splitting Hairs?

1. Assuming religion is a bad thing can lead people to incorrect \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ that affect their relationship with Jesus.

* The nature of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_,
* The \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of the Bible, and
* The importance of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

“While it seems popular to think Jesus came to build an army of sorts for God, and to then organize his followers to build him an empire on earth, I personally don’t subscribe to such a concept. In fact, I think Christ came to do the opposite; I believe he came to end empire thinking and bring each of us back to a personal, individual experience of God. . . . The thoughts and questions that God stirs my heart with — and the answers I find — are never going to be the same as everyone else, because my relationship with God is personal. Contrary to this is organized religion. Religion creates a corporate identity. When we buy into religion we end up speaking, sounding, even looking like everyone else within that corporate branded identity. Same thoughts. Same beliefs. Same well-defined doctrines.”  
(Mick Mooney)

* He abandons the notion of objective \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
* He values his own insights over God’s \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
* He believes a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ identity is a bad outcome of religion.

1. A core aspect of a Christian’s \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is our connection to the body of Christ.
2. True religion \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ God.

# Three Key Points

1. Jesus doesn’t hate religion – He hates false religion.
2. Religion and relationship with Jesus are a false dichotomy. Christianity is a religion *centred* on relationship.
3. The assumption that religion is a bad thing can lead people to incorrect conclusions that affect the nature of their relationship with Jesus – including a lowered view of the nature of truth, the authority of the Bible and the importance of the church.

Opener

* How would you define religion – not just Christianity, but religion in general?
  + (use the definition we used earlier.)
* What kinds of words do you think come to mind when people think of religion?
  + (talk about any positive or negative associations your child mentions and explore why people have such different thoughts about religion.)

Going Further

* Sometimes people say they hate religion but love Jesus. What do you think they mean by that?
  + (If your child is old enough/mature enough, play the Jefferson Bethke video. It’s got a couple of mature themes; maybe pre-teen. Search Jefferson Bethke Why I Hate Religion – it’s about 4 minutes)
  + (Listen to how he describes religion and discuss how that differs from the definition you discussed.)
  + (For younger kids, just list some of the things Bethke says religion is and discuss how those are bad things – but those things don’t define religion)
* How do you think Jesus sees religion?
  + (Emphasize Jesus hates false religion – give examples from clashes with the Pharisees – but that true religion glorifies God)
* If a person says they hate religion but love Jesus, what impact do you think that might have on their faith?
  + (use the Huffington Post quote as an example to discuss how this view can lead someone away from Jesus).

Application

* How would you respond to that writer’s concern that in organized religion everyone has the same beliefs and well-defined doctrines?