



# The Tri-Cities Edifier

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## What Is Religion To You?

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I was asked recently, “What is religion to you?” and had to think about it for some time before giving an answer. After some deliberation I finally came up with the answer.

Religion to most everyone is confusing. Have you ever thought about how many different religions there are? Some people worship God, others follow the doctrines of men, some relate to the weather for direction, others give their allegiance to animals, and yes, some people worship themselves. Some believe in one god and others are convinced that there are many gods. Even the way in which people worship varies greatly. In the name of religion, people have sacrificed their very children by putting them in fire (2 Kings 17:31). Worship for some meant engaging in fornication with temple prostitutes (Numbers 25:1-3), while others renounce all relations for their entire lives. Religion is confusing!

The apostle Paul dealt with religious people as his travels took him through Athens, Greece, a city “*given over to idols*” (Acts 17:16). Using their religious practices as an opportunity to preach the gospel, Paul says, “*Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious;*

*for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an alter with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you*” (Acts 17:22, 23). Paul preached to them about the one, true God and then His only begotten Son, Jesus.

As religion goes, even Jesus has been the object of great confusion. Who was He? Even while He walked the earth, people offered differing opinions of His nature. Jesus asked His disciples who people were saying that He was. “Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets” (Matt. 16:14).

Was Jesus just a good man or perhaps a prophet? Instead of asking “What is religion to you?” a more direct question might be “What is Jesus to you?”

Jesus made claims that other religions would not dare to make. He claimed to be the only way to God. “*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one gets to the Father, except through Me*” (John 14:6). Either He is or He isn’t.

Jesus also claimed to be the solution to man’s problem with death. “*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live*” (John 11:25). Man has searched for the Fountain of Youth in many ways. All men who have no hope fear death. Jesus claims that through Him, man can live after death. Do you believe that?

Perhaps the most disturbing claim to people is that Jesus said He was deity, or God in the flesh. When asked by the elders, chief priests and scribes if He was the Son of God, Jesus answered, “*You rightly say that I am*” (Luke 22:70). This infuriated some of the people to the point of putting Him to death. The claims made by Jesus demand an answer. Savior or sinner? Christ or crazy?

What is Jesus to you? Peter answered that question with, “*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*” (Matthew 16:16). Other people today give that same answer, yet they do not live their lives in accordance with what Jesus has said. “*But why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord’ and not do the things which I say?*” (Luke 6:46). Jesus demands total allegiance. He is the authority for everything we do. Some people will follow Him as long as it doesn’t make them change their current lifestyle or do something uncomfortable. After a hard teaching, many of Jesus’ disciples turned away and followed Him no more (John 6:60-66). Jesus asked the apostles if they too, wanted to leave. “*But Simon Peter answered*

*Him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life'" (John 6:68). Peter recognized that even though Jesus may teach and demand some difficult things, there was nowhere else to go, no one else to turn to.*

The religious world is a confusing place. We can find whatever we want to satisfy our spiritual curiosity. Whether it be going to worship once a year or worshiping yourself every day. However, our answer to who Jesus is will not only have eternal consequences, it will show in how we live our daily lives.

Jesus is my Savior. He paid the price for my sin on the cross; a punishment I deserved. Jesus is my Lord. He has authority and say so for everything I do in my life. Jesus is the truth that I believe. No other religion makes sense to me. God has given me everything I need to believe that Jesus is His Son through His word. Jesus is my way. He alone has the words of eternal life.

What is Jesus to you? Maybe we should be asking our friends and neighbors that question!

## **"The Power Of Saying "No!"**

Brian Meade

There are some in our world who struggle to say "No" to anyone or anything. They are always saying yes out of a sense of "people pleasing" or maybe even a sense of wanting to be one who takes on anything needed done. Then there are some out of weakness or fear can't seem to say the word no. But for a Christian, this problem can be what ultimately does us severe harm to our spiritual life. A Failure to say no can lead us away from God. Christians are to be like our Master, Jesus Christ.

Jesus was firm in holding his ground in saying no to the Jews in Mark 8:10-13, "And immediately he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the district of Dalmanutha. The Pharisees came and began to argue with him, seeking from him a sign from heaven to test him. And he sighed deeply in his spirit and said, "Why does this generation seek a sign? Truly, I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation." And he left them, got into the boat again, and went to the other side." Jesus did not give them a sign, and He had His reasons for such a refusal. He knew the hardness of their hearts (Mark 3:5; Luke 11:24-26). He knew it was not going to make a difference in their attitude and mean-spirited behavior toward Him, so His denial of a sign to them makes sense. But how can we follow the example of our Savior in saying "NO" to people and things when called upon to do so?

By looking to the examples of the Bible to see men who failed to say no, and following those who did. Many times, we see the consequences of the choices they made, both good and bad.

### **Men Who Did Not Say No.**

In Genesis 25:29-34, Esau could have said no to his brother Jacob, when Jacob asked for him to sell his birthright for the food that he had prepared, but didn't. He could have told him that his birthright was much too important to sell it for something so temporary as one morsel of food. Later on when Isaac would have given him the blessing of the birthright, he could not because his brother already received it. And because of this, Esau is an example of trading eternal rewards for temporary pleasures (Hebrews 12:15-17).

In Exodus 32:1-5, the people of Israel came to Aaron, while his brother Moses was on the mountain with God. They saw he had delayed, and very quickly decided to request Aaron, "Come, make us a god who will go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him." (Exodus 32:1) Aaron had a choice to make, as he could and should have said no to this request to sin by idolatry. It showed a weakness on Aaron's part to give in to their request without a protest to wait on Moses or simply say no to their unfaithfulness to God. Not only that, Aaron took the lead in forming and making the golden calf and proclaiming the feast to it (Exodus 32:2-6). This decision would have great consequences for the people when Moses would return from the mountain (Exodus 32:19-31). Verse 28 tells us that about three thousand men lost their lives that day on account of this sin.