

What Does Religion Mean to You?

James 1:26-27

Introduction: Religion is defined as “the service and worship of God... commitment or devotion to religious faith or observance” [Webster]. Perhaps more specifically, it’s “the service or practice that stems from conviction” [Billy Moore].

Religion may be sincere or insincere; true or false; rewarding or vain (Matt. 15:9; Jas. 1:26-27).

What does your religion mean to you? Has it made a difference in your life?

I. It ought to give a sense of direction.

A. What direction are we taking? Two choices: the way of the world or the way of Christ (John 15:19; Jas. 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17). If we choose correctly, the world will hate us.

B. We all want the best for ourselves. We want good health, nice homes, a happy family, a sense of security. But at what cost (Matt. 16:24-27; Mark 8:34-38)? Are any of these good things worth pursuing to the neglect of Christ?

II. It ought to mean purity of life.

A. Example: Mary Magdalene (Luke 8:2). She was demon possessed; yet she became a diligent servant. She was at Christ’s crucifixion (Matt. 27:55-56). She anointed the body of Christ (Matt. 27:61); and she was the first to see the risen Savior (Mark 16:9).

B. Example: Zacchaeus (Luke 19:2-10). Notice verse 8. He considered others before himself.

C. We must likewise become pure in our lives (Titus 2:11-14).

1. Our hearts are purified in obedience to God’s truth (1 Pet. 1:22; Acts 15:9).

2. Our very thoughts should be good and pure (Phil. 4:8).

III. It ought to give us a spirit of victory.

A. There is a paradox here:

1. We become victorious by surrendering your life (Gal. 2:20).

2. If you give up your life, you will find it (Mark 8:35).

3. If we put Christ first, He will take care of us (Matt. 6:33).

4. Even Christ demonstrated this in His own words (Luke 22:42).

One of the hardest things a Christian must do is give up their own will.

B. We can be victors over sin and evil (1 John 5:4; 1 Cor. 15:57).

IV. It ought to define our lives.

A. It's our reasonable service and it is what the Lord expects from us (Rom. 12:1-2; Rom. 6:16).

B. Even our thoughts should reflect those things written in the Bible (1 Cor. 4:6).

Conclusion: What does religion mean to you? It ought to give you direction in life, it ought to mean purity, it ought to mean victory over sin of this world, it ought to define our very being. But is that what religion is to you? Do others even think of you as religious? If not, you now have an opportunity to turn your life around.