

## 5 Good reasons never to become religious:

### 1. Religion is all about rules, rituals and regulations

Religion says – do this at this time – do this each week at the same time – don't do this until you've first done that. Give this much, attend this often, pray these many times facing this direction, visit this holy place, revere this holy man, go through these certain rituals. Who wants to live like this?

### 2. Religion sucks the life and joy out of you – because you can never reach the standards

Religion keeps you feeling frustrated and sad – because you can never reach the standards you want no matter how hard you try. You feel constantly berated that you fall short of the mark or are not trying hard enough, doing enough, giving enough etc.

### 3. Religion is powerless – it can never help you change

The Bible itself says that rules can't actually do anything to change you. Colossians 2:21-23 “Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch! ... Such regulations indeed have an *appearance* of wisdom with their self imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.”

### 4. There are no guarantees with religion

You can work hard at your religion and ritual, but in the end, all you can do is cross your fingers and hope you've done enough to make it to heaven!

## 5. **Religion has nothing to do with Christianity**

Religion is all about what we **DO** in an effort to make it to God. Christianity is all about what Christ has **DONE** for us, in order to bring us to him.

Never become religious; but relationship? this is another thing entirely.

**Relationship** – the most significant aspect of life... today.

Relationship with **God** – most significant at all

**Privilege** – that the Lord creator of the universe should want to know me!! – and that in the person of Jesus, he died to reconcile me to himself so that I **CAN** be in a relationship with him, now and forever.

So as I conclude my time here – I want to urge you to highly prize and guard and cherish your relationship with God.

And here is the verse from the Bible, I want to leave you with this morning:

*You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. 2 And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others. 3 Join with me in suffering, like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. 4 No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in civilian affairs, but rather tries to please his commanding officer. 5 Similarly, anyone who competes as an athlete does not receive the victor's crown except by competing according to the rules. 6 The hardworking farmer should be the first to*

*receive a share of the crops. 7 Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this.*

- Paul gives three illustrations of people who are strong in their particular field...
- Be strong, says Paul –
  - a. like a **soldier**
- a soldier endures many tough challenges
- many of us have had family and friends who have served.. and some **here** have served with the defence forces.
- They join, knowing that it will be **hard**.
- Paul is saying – don't be **surprised** when tough times come
- When you're a soldier on the battlefield and someone begins shooting at you, you don't respond by saying 'was it something I said?'... no; you **know** it comes with the **territory**...
- But you're **focussed**... on pleasing the **commanding officer**... on **doing** your **job**, on **supporting** your fellow **soldiers**... so you don't pull **out**... you don't **weaken** your **resolve**... you don't get **distracted**...
- Now this is not the **only** analogy for the Christian life... but don't **miss this**... we are to please **Jesus** our commanding officer... with **focus** and **determination**... and not be surprised when it's tough!
- **Fascinating** how some churches present themselves and what they offer – so here is a church website – and they

promise that if you join them - you'll find a **casual atmosphere, today's music**, powerful **dramas**, high-**impact media** presentations, **messages** relevant to your **daily** life, a Starbucks-**esque** café where you can **relax**, **recharge** and **relate** in your **comfort zone**... coffee in hand...

- Now I **get** that... but it's fascinating isn't it when you contrast it to let's say, the US **Navy seal code**:
  - Loyalty to Country, Team and Teammate
  - Serve with Honora and Integrity On and Off the Battlefield
  - Ready to Lead, Ready to Follow, Never Quit
  - Take responsibility for your actions and the actions of your teammates
  - Excel as Warriors through Discipline and Innovation
  - Train for War, Fight to Win, Defeat our Nation's Enemies
- There is a tendency to 'market' the Christian faith today – which doesn't involve any discomfort – doesn't require any thing of you at all – and doesn't **match** what the Bible says about being **disciple** of **Jesus!**
- Be **strong**, says Paul to Timothy – says **God** to **you** – like a **soldier /**
- **And...**
  - b. like an **athlete /**
- an athlete if they are to win the prize has to compete according to the **rules**...
- ...any athlete preparing for the Olympic games next year is **focused, disciplined** in terms of **diet** and **training**... and yes – has to abide by the **rules** – stay on **course**... no

banned **substances** etc...

- We must follow Christ with the same **passion, determination, focus, discipline**... and we must reinforce to ourselves and those in our care that there are **consequences** of not doing things God's **way!**
- And third **example** – Timothy is to be **strong**...
  - c. like a **farmer**
- following Jesus is hard **work**... **ministry** is **hard work**... we need to be hard **working** – like a **farmer**.
- A **lazy** farmer, simply doesn't **eat**
- **Following Jesus** – staying **strong** in his **service** – will take hard **work** and **discipline** //
- Susan and I **both** grew up in families where going to church on Sunday was **never** an **option**...
- That's something **liberating** in that... because you **never** have to **decide**... “are we going tomorrow”?
- Are you breathing? // Answer – **yes**. So it wasn't a question of whether you **felt** like it, what the **weather** was like, what **sports** were on for the **kids**...
- And we were the same with **our** kids... “are we going to church and Sunday School tomorrow?” Yes!
- look – **listen** – here's a **tip** – don't **ask next Saturday** – because the answer is always **yes**... in **obedience** to the command not to forsake **meeting together** – and in obedience to the command that we must constantly **spur** one another **on** and **encourage** each other – we'll be

going...!

- **Focus, uncompromising... hard work – passion – discipline – like a soldier – like an athlete – like a farmer**
- Lord = please save us – save the church – from weak insipid version of Christianity which is take it or leave it – which is – I'll fit God in when I can and when I'm good and ready and on my terms
- Save us from a Christianity which is convenient...
- Where moral compromise is tolerated...
- Where Jesus is anyone else than Lord of all...
- You've heard of the old saying... If Jesus is not Lord OF all, he's not Lord AT all!!
- My brothers... guard this relationship... cherish it... value it... invest in it...
- There are loads of other things we highly prize and cherish in our lives...
- ...our families... if you're married – I hope you're cherishing your wife... and treating her as the most special woman in the world...
- We cherish our homes... maybe a car...
- Cherish our golf... and seek to get better at it...
- I don't know what ever else you might cherish...
- But brothers... make Jesus no. 1...
- Be serious about Jesus... don't muck around with him... don't fit him in when you can...

- ...the more highly you cherish that relationship....
- ...the more you're grow... the more you'll want to learn and the more you'll understand.... The more you'll want to serve... the more you'll want to tell others...
- ...like a soldier, an athlete... a farmer...
- Be strong... in the grace that is in Christ Jesus...
- Treasure Jesus... stay strong him... grow... serve.... Love... cherish him... make him what your life is all about...
- And you'll find everything falls into place around him...!

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Thanks – for 10 great years... support and encouragement... generosity...

...amazing privilege... as a minister – to be set free from working for a living... and financially supported by brothers and sisters in Christ to use the gifts God has given you for to teach the Bible, equip you for your ministry, to make and grow disciples... so – thank you!