

## Don't Be Self-Deceived! (#3)

Joe Slater

You can feel irked at someone who deceives you, but who can you blame when you deceive yourself? If you think just hearing God's word but not doing it is enough, you deceive yourself. If you think you are religious but you don't bridle your tongue (control your speech), you deceive yourself. If you accept the world's wisdom while rejecting God's wisdom, you deceive yourself. If you live like you never need anyone's help, you deceive yourself.

Here's another one: *"If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us"* (1 John 1:8). Claiming to have no sin could indicate self-righteousness or simply a failure to realize what sin is. Some think only of obvious crimes like murder or robbery; to them, less noticeable errors don't matter. As long as they avoid the "big" issues, all is well. But that is self-deception! Only Jesus could rightly challenge, *"Which of you convicts Me of sin?"* (John 8:46). Only He *"was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin"* (Hebrews 4:15).

Even if we don't claim to be without sin, we may deceive ourselves into believing our sins have no consequences. Galatians 6:7-8 warns, *"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life."* Even in this life sin affects us adversely. The Lord warned Israel, *"Be sure your sin will find you out"* (Numbers 32:23). The prophet Hosea wrote, *"They sow the wind and reap the whirlwind"* (8:7).

Don't deceive yourself!

## Is Church Your Hobby?

Jesus told of a number of people that will be surprised on the day of Judgment. They were the ones that Jesus said never ministered to Him when He was hungry, or sick, or in prison. They replied that they never saw Him in that condition. His response was that in that they didn't minister to *"the least of these my brethren"* they did not minister to His needs.

I believe there may be another group of Christians that may also be surprised. These are the ones that made "church" their hobby. Jesus taught in Matthew 6:33 that we are to seek first the kingdom of God. In Ephesians 4:1 Paul writes, *"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called."* Your vocation is your "main" job. If you are a Christian, your main job is not your earthly work such as a carpenter, lawyer, business person, etc., it is your life in service to Christ. With that in mind, consider what we mean by having a "hobby". A hobby is enjoyable. We tend to put our money into our hobby. We spend as much extra time as possible in our hobby. But also notice, a hobby is never first in our lives. We only put money that we can spare into it. We only put time we can spare into it. It can never be first. So, if you let other things of this world, ball games, family, vacations, etc. come before the work and worship of the Lord, then your religion is a hobby.

Expect a surprise on Judgment Day!

--Bob Oliver (Via Athens, AL)

*Speak in such a way that others love to listen to you.*

*Listen in such a way that others love to speak to you.*

## RELIGION OR RELATIONSHIP?

It is popular in some circles to say, "Christianity is not a religion; it is a relationship."

Certainly, the truth that Christianity is a relationship with God the Father and with Jesus Christ, God's Son and our Lord and Savior, is often overlooked. However, Christianity is also a religion in the true sense of *religio*, a Latin word meaning bond, obligation, or reverence.

Our relationship with Jesus is as Lord. He has laid on us bonds and obligations, *religio*. He Himself asked, *"Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?"* (Luke 6:46).

Today's culture downplays authority, whether of police, parents, elders, or even of the Bible itself, which is the word of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. But the fact that all Scripture is "God-breathed" (1 Timothy 3:16) is an unequivocal assertion of Biblical authority over the lives of believers and the church.

Christianity, while it does involve a relationship with Jesus and God, is a faith with substance. It is not just a warm fuzzy feeling. Christianity is a religion founded on a relationship with One who is Lord and God.

--Cecil May, Jr. (via *Preacher Talk*)

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### Bring Back Masculine Men

- Men who fear God more than the words of mockers.
- Men who will stand up when others tell them to sit down.
- Men who don't just become dads, but desire to be fathers.
- Men who don't chase women but pursue righteousness.
- Men who are loyal to one woman and love her like Christ loves the church.
- Men who set the example for boys following behind.