

How to Identify Legalism

Jesus told his listeners that he'd come to set them free of the religious burdens of the Jewish system. These burdens even the Jewish leaders were not able to carry themselves.¹ Jesus said his burdens are light², so light that they can be summarized in 3 points:

- Love him,
- Listen to him &
- Obey him.

That's all.

Along with religion comes legalism, and both these need to be eliminated so that we can come into the freedom and liberty of the Gospel of the Kingdom.

» **Religion** is doing things to please God – it makes you feel good.

» **Legalism** is setting up rules and laws to please God – it placates your conscience and fear.

Both these are to protect our salvation because our perceived angry God is always looking to punish us. We feel if we do things, we'll protect our salvation, or at the least we'll appease God for our sins.

THIS IS A MISTAKE. We've been called to liberty and freedom.³

The religious spirit is just as happy if we are legalistic while we are eliminating religion. This bondage still keeps us from the liberty we have in Christ.

So, if we are casting out demons and freeing Christians from demonic oppression, why do we allow the religious spirit to bring us into religion and/or into legalism. Both are bondages and we are to be free of all bondage in the Kingdom – except the bonding to our King⁴.

We know what religion is and we're in the process of casting off all religion. Good. But do we know how to identify legalism? Legalism is easy to observe in organisations like the SDAs or the JW's, but unbeknowns to us, every person is controlled by legalism at one level or another.

Here's some characteristics that I've observed in myself and in others that help to pin-point the presence of legalism. Legalists some of these at differing levels of intensity:

1. Manifest statement that conflicts with their belief.
2. Grimace at a conflicting statement.
3. Become angry with a conflicting statement.
4. Become enraged with a conflicting statement.
5. Become flustered with a conflicting statement.
6. Immediately check their bible with a conflicting statement.

1 – Matthew 23:4

2 – Matthew 11:28-30

3 – Galatians 5:1; Romans 8:21; 2 Corinthians 3:17; James 1:25; 2:12 (1 Corinthians 8:9; 10:29; Galatians 2:4)

4 – Romans 1:1; Galatians 1:10; Ephesians 6:6

7. Immediately challenge a conflicting statement with scripture.
8. Interject before the end of a conflicting message.
9. Vehemently challenge the speaker of a conflicting statement.
10. Use the expression, "But the bible says..."
11. Become verbally aggressive with the speaker of a conflicting statement.
12. Become physical aggressive with the speaker of a conflicting statement.
13. Walk away from a conflicting statement.
14. Shout abuse at a person speaking a conflicting statement.
15. Shout over the top of the person speaking a conflicting statement.
16. Use OT references to justify their stances.
17. Prefer OT references to justify their stances.
18. Endorse actions rather than the Spirit.
19. Endorse ceremony over than the Spirit.
20. Love ceremony.
21. Don't assess everything with their spirit.
22. Regularly refer to the Old Covenant.
23. Live by the 10 Commandments.
24. Stick to the letter of the law.
25. Only eat kosher food.
26. Keep the Sabbath.
27. Demand the celebration of holy days.
28. Look down on those who don't celebrate holy days.
29. Regard those who differ from them theologically as back-slidden.
30. Can't handle changes to the way things are normally done.
31. Wants to force the nation to operate on Christian values and standards.
32. Can't handle things of the Spirit.
33. Feel they let God down if they don't do things a certain way.
34. Berate themselves if they aren't able to meet certain religious expectations.
35. Are easily accused by the enemy.
36. Very easily condemn themselves.
37. Are easily condemned by the enemy.
38. Are easily condemned by others.
39. Don't live in liberty and freedom.
40. Work hard at being holy.
41. Point the finger at the sin in other people's lives.
42. Always want lawbreakers to pay for their crimes.

43. Get excessively angry when felons go free.
44. Always try to justify themselves.
45. Expect others to justify themselves with their reason.
46. Want God to justify why he does things in their lives.
47. Do things by the state and federal laws.
48. Can't bear to see someone break the traffic rules.
49. Become strongly negative against tax cheats.
50. Look to the legal system to protect them from anything untoward.
51. Look for loop-holes in the law to exonerate their instances of law-breaking.
52. Transfer onto all believers a restriction God has placed on them personally.
53. Transfer onto all believers an activity God has given on them personally.
54. Can't handle those who drink alcohol or smoke cigarettes.
55. Adhere to specific healthy eating regimes or foods.
56. Can't stand others who are free than them.
57. Can't handle others who are under less restrictions in life.

This is the first in a series of teachings to help us get totally out of legalism.

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