



Homes of H.O.P.E. Prayer and Study Guide #6
Based on sermon: “Lord, Save Us from Your Followers”
Preached Jan. 24, 2009

Introduction

1. Famed Atheist Richard Dawkins blames religion for most of the world’s woes. “Imagine no suicide bombers, no 9/11, no 7/7, no Crusades, no witch-hunts, no Gunpowder Plot, no Kashmir dispute, no Indo/Pakistan partition, no Israel/Palestine wars, no Serb/Croat/Muslim massacres, no Northern Ireland ‘troubles’. Imagine no Taliban blowing up ancient statues, lashing women for showing an inch of skin, or publicly beheading blasphemers and apostates.”

Does Dawkins have a point?

2. When people on the streets are asked what words come to mind when they hear the word, “Christian,” are they justified when they say words like “judgmental, hypocritical, self-righteous, pushy, dangerous, irrelevant, and obnoxious”? If so, why do we have this reputation?

3. Discuss Ghandi’s statement: “Everybody in the world understands what Jesus was teaching, except for Christians.”

4. Is there a difference between religion and Christianity? What is the difference?

5. Read Matthew 5:20. What did Jesus mean when He said this?

6. Consider the following ways religion ruins everything. Which ones have you experienced personally?

Religion ruins everything when it focuses on externals instead of internals. (See 1 Sam. 16:7; Matt. 15:19, 20)

Religion ruins everything when it sacrifices righteousness in favor of rightness.

Religion ruins everything when it substitutes tradition for transformation, rules for relationships, and the letter of the law for the spirit of the law. (See Matt. 15:8)

Religious people never die (to self), they just keep nailing others to the cross.

7. Do you agree with this statement? “When your faith doesn’t change you, you simply change your faith to accommodate your unchanged heart.” Explain your answer.

8. How does legalism (salvation by strict adherence to external rules, etc.) make a mockery of the cross?

9. Read John 10:10 and 2 Peter 1:3, 4. What is Jesus really offering us?

10. Some Christians are afraid of going “soft” on sin in an attempt to right the wrongs of the past. How do we as Christians maintain high moral standards and love sinners without legitimizing their lifestyle?

11. Consider this statement from an atheist: “Religion is here to give some people comfort and we don’t want to take it away from them. It’s like knitting—people like to knit. We’re not going to take their knitting needles away; we’re not going to take away their churches. But what we have to do is get it to a place where religion is treated at the level it should be treated—something fun that people get together and do on weekends and really doesn’t affect their lives as it has so far.”

If Christians keep silent in the so-called culture wars, what is the danger that the church would become like the statement above? (“something fun that people get together and do on weekends and really doesn’t affect their lives...”) In what ways is it like this already?

12. How should Christians impact the culture? Even if we get it right, will the world love us?

13. What is the power of an apology? Do Christians owe an apology to anyone? Who? And how would this be done?

14. How can you make sure that your Christian experience isn’t merely “religion”?

Pray together about what the Holy Spirit has revealed to your group. Remind members to pray for the Community Conversations Live meetings and encourage them to invite someone. God bless you!