

## Introduction

The Christian faith is about a relationship, not religion. As Christians, we sometimes confuse the two and allow religion to damage and poison our relationship with God. We participate in some church-related traditions out of duty. However, that participation means nothing if we are not growing deeper in our relationship with God. When we do ‘church things’ because we want folks to know we are Christian, want God to bless us or change His mind on something, we have created the idol of religion. One such ‘church thing’ is speaking Christianese. Reciting familiar sayings such as “God is good all the time, and all the time, God is good” is a catchy way to showcase our Christianity to others and speaks nothing to a relationship with God.

Pastor Evans outlined some of the ‘isms’ that exist in the church. He defined an *ism* as beliefs that are demonically inspired, yet camouflaged as church norms. Christians often allow these *isms* to govern our Christianity. Some *isms* include:

**Traditionalism** – things that we do only because we are used to doing them. Often, these things sound right because they have been passed on through generations, but they not biblically-based.

**Ritualism** – an external activity that make us believe we will receive benefits by merely participating in an act. A common example of this is saying grace before meals.

**Legalism** – pursuing God’s rules at the expense of a relationship with Him. The Ten Commandments can be an example of this. While the commandments can give us limits on our behavior, they do not provide us the power and instruction on how to live within those limits. This comes solely from our relationship with God.

When adding these invisible things to our faith, they can also sneak into our hearts, our families, and our communities. Paul warns the people of Corinth that this behavior encourages demons to sit at God’s table, even in the church. If we have an authentic relationship with God, we do not sit at both His table and the tables of demons. Remember, our relationship with Him will bring about a change in us; our relationship with religion will destroy us.

## Getting Started

Reflect on the past week and remember the spiritual fervor you had on Sunday. Did you feel the same way about God as the week progressed? What did your actions and conversations with others reflect?

## Let’s Get Personal

In his sermon, Pastor Evans mentioned that sometimes Christians will base their decision to attend church on the person who is preaching that week. This can be because some folks want a temporary high from a weekly worship service that they feel only certain ministers can provide. As faithful Christians, our church attendance should be based on the Passion we have for Christ, not a mortal person. Has this ever been true for you? What can you do to check your motives when it comes to attending church regularly?

## Take the Next Step

Read James 4:1-10 this week. List five ways you can draw closer to God. Share your list with a friend or prayer partner. What changes have you incorporated into your life as a result of your list?

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**Renew Your Mind**

*You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.*

*1 Corinthians 10:21*

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