

Legalism

Titus 1:10-15

For there are many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision group. Titus 1:10

They must be silenced, because they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach—and that for the sake of dishonest gain. Titus 1:11

Even one of their own prophets has said, “Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons.”

Titus 1:12

This testimony is true. Therefore, rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the commands of those who reject the truth. Titus 1:13-14

To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted.

Titus 1:15

They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.

Titus 1:16

Liberalism threatens the discipline and the sense of purpose of the church.

Legalism destroys the morale and the spirit of the Lord's army.

He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit;

for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. **2 Corinthians 3:6**

The problem of legalism: the cause, the consequences, and the cure.

1. The problem of legalism is evident in its definition.

Definition of Legalism:

A strict or obsessive conformity to a law or moral code for the purpose of self-exaltation.

In reality, Christianity is not a religion; it is a relationship.

Jesus encountered liberals and legalists.

Sadducees

- Liberals of Jesus' day

Pharisees

- Legalists
- Demanding, selfish, proud

- No life after death
- Ridiculed miracles
- Reduced religion to a series of do's and don'ts

*Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. **Matthew 23:1-2***

So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.

Matthew 23:3-4

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It is not Jesus plus something else that saves us—it is Jesus only.

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Church policies should be rare and never equal with Scripture in authority.

The problem is when we don't distinguish between opinions, convictions, and Scripture.

Our opinions can become a standard by which we gauge the spirituality of others.

2. What is the Cause of Legalism?

The problem of legalism: the cause, the consequences, and the cure.

1. Selfishness

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2. A poorly trained conscience

To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted.

Titus 1:15

3. A natural reaction against liberalism

4. Dogmatic interpretation of obscure passages

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman

who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. 2 Timothy 2:15

A General rule for Scripture Interpretation

Literal if possible, figurative if obvious.

**In doctrine, unity;
in matters of opinion, liberty;
but in all things, love.**

3. Serious Consequences from practicing legalism

The problem of legalism: the cause, the consequences, and the cure.

Outspoken against sin, but living a different lifestyle.

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Rules don't restrain disobedience; they stimulate it.

*For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death. **Romans 7:5***

Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules:

Colossians 2:20

“Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!”? These are all destined to perish with use, because they

*are based on human commands and teachings. **Col. 2:21-22***

*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. **Colossians 2:23***

4. What is the Cure for Legalism?

The problem of legalism: the cause, the consequences, and the cure.

Legalism must be confronted quickly and boldly.

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Legalism is most effectively dealt with, when we emphasize our freedom in Christ.

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Romans 12:21

Do not let your freedom be an occasion to offend others.

You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.

Galatians 5:13

Let others see a freedom and a grace in your life that is attractive.

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 2 Cor. 3:17

Two ways to avoid legalism in your own life

1. Develop a proper balance

- Stand firm in the truth of the Bible
- Recognize what is a matter of opinion
- Allow for flexibility

2. Develop the proper concept of God

- God as a tyrant that punishes disobedience?
- OR, is God a Father anxious to forgive you?

There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect

*in love. We love because he first
loved us. **1 John 4:18-19***