

# True Religion

JAMES 1 VERSE 27

Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

## INFORMATION

Merriam-Webster's online dictionary defines religion as "*an organized system of beliefs, ceremonies, and rules used to worship a god or a group of gods*" (note: *this is one of several related definitions*). Religion is often tied closely to another topic we have looked at, legalism. Notice that the beliefs and rules that God provides for us are very simple. Help the helpless and remain unstained by the wickedness of the world. The Bible provides additional guidance on identifying what is true religion.

James 1 verse 26 says "If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless." The practice of religion is not something that is done boastfully or with a proud heart. True religion is exercised in a quiet spirit and a steadfast hope for better things than what this life offers. We do this through our service to God (by helping the helpless).

Colossians 2 verses 20-23 tells us "If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations— 21 'Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch' 22 (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings? 23 These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh." The author here reminds us that true religion is not an outward practice of abstinence from things that do not defile us (food, drink, traditions and other physical things). The indulgence of the flesh mentioned here is more sinister than that and takes us back to our verse of the day. The world desires us to revel in sin, anything that separates us from God. Our hearts and minds need to be centered on something greater than this life and this world.

## WHAT IT MEANS TO OUR FAMILY

We should actively seek ways to help those in need. This can be people we see on the street, people we work with or people we come across in life. It can also be people we actively seek out, such as through contributions to charitable organizations or organizations we contribute our time to. God also desires us to remain unstained from the world. The question for us is how do we remain unstained? We do that by seeking God in every way, by praying and studying his Word and being familiar with his methods. Then, we can be safe from wickedness and know what path to choose in this world. The particular stains of the world will be a topic for another day.

# Relevant Passages

## **1 Samuel 15:22**

And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

## **Hosea 6:6**

For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.

## **Mark 12:28-31**

And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all? 29 And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: 30 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. 31 And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

## **Luke 11:42**

But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

## **Acts 10:34-35**

Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: 35 But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.

## **James 1:26**

If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.