

**OVERCOMING BAD EXPERIENCES IN RELIGION**

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**Introduction: Have You Been “Burned by Religion?”**

A. Many people have been “burned by religion” that left them feeling *guilty, bitter, rejected, worthless, and in despair*.

B. Bad religious experiences are not unique to modern times (e.g., Matthew 23; Jer. 6:13-14).

C. Jesus Provides True Healing from the Scars of Bad Religion! (Mat. 11:28-30; 1 John 5:3).

**I. Overcoming with Christ: Authoritarian Leadership.**

A. Many religious leaders today care about their positions of power more than they do the people (e.g., Mat. 23:1-10).

B. True spiritual leadership according to Jesus (**Mat. 23:6-10**; 20:25-28; 23:11-12; **1 Pet. 5:2-3**; cf. 2 Cor. 1:24; 1 Pet. 5:4; Mat. 9:36).

**II. Overcoming with Christ: “Cold Legalism.”**

A. Many people have been turned off by religion because obedience has been emphasized to the *neglect of grace and love*.

B. Everyone, without exception, needs God’s grace to be saved! (Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 3:23; Titus 3:4-7; **Rom. 5:1 / James 2:24 / Titus 3:7**).

C. Genuine Christians will not merely judge and condemn each other, but will love one another by offering needed help and support (Phil. 4:13; **John 13:34-35**).

**III. Overcoming with Christ: “Blind Conformity.”**

A. Commonly in the religious world, people are expected to accept the teachings of the church, the leadership, or the preacher without question or careful study (John 9:24-34).

B. People who ask questions and desire the truth should be commended, not condemned! (**2 Tim. 2:15; Acts 17:11**; Eph. 3:3-5; 5:17; 1 Tim. 2:3-4; 2 Pet. 3:14-16).

**IV. Overcoming with Christ: Disappointment in a Leader.**

A. Sometimes people feel “burned by religion” because a church leader or other member disappointed them in a major way (e.g., embarrassing, public sin, offense, fell away, etc.).

B. Misplaced faith (2 Tim 2:16-18; Mat. 15:13-14).

C. For an Unshakeable Faith, Put Your Faith and Trust in God! (Jer. 17:5-7; cf. Ps. 40:4; 62:8; 118:8-9; **37:5-6**).

## V. Overcoming with Christ: Improper Church Discipline.

A. Unfortunately, church discipline (i.e., the withdraw from certain members) is too often not carried out in the right manner (Mat. 18:15-17; 2 Thes. 3:14-15).

B. When church discipline is done properly, God's will is fulfilled and *blessings* come as a result (2 Thes. 3:14-15; 2 Cor. 7:9-10; Heb. 10:26-31; 1 Tim. 1:20; 1 Cor. 5:1-8; 1 Tim. 5:20; 2 Thes. 3:6; Col. 1:18; 3:17).

C. If you have been the target of what seemed to be "unfair" church discipline, or have witnessed it happen to others, remember these things:

1. Even the most mature of Christians will make mistakes (James 3:2; Rom. 3:23).
2. Be honest (1 Tim. 5:21; James 1:22-25) and repent of any sin of your own.
3. If unfairly judged, testimony from others may be necessary (Acts 9:26-28).
4. Do your part to respond with wisdom and love (**2 Thes. 3:14-15**; 2 Cor. 2:8).

## VI. Overcoming with Christ: Strife and Division.

A. Since the beginning of the church in the first century, there have been divisions among churches too numerous to count (e.g., 1 Cor. 1:10-15).

B. Love for God and His Word is the answer! (John 14:15; John 17:17-23).

C. Love for God will also mean love for one another (**Col. 3:14**; Gal 5:13-15; Heb. 10:25; 1 John 4:21).

## VII. Overcoming with Christ: Unfriendly Cliques or Factions.

A. Unfortunately, there is a tendency for some churches to form cliques (e.g., James 2:1-5; 1 Cor. 11:17-22; Gal. 5:20; Rom. 2:11).

C. Love the approval of God, not the approval of men (e.g., John 12:42-43; **2 Tim 4:16-17**).

D. Seek friendships with brethren who are spiritual, not carnal (e.g., 1 Cor. 3:1-3; Mat. 12:46-50; 1 Cor. 12:12-27).

**Conclusion: No Matter What Bad Experiences a Person Has Had in Religion, May That Person not Blame God! (1 Pet. 5:6-7; Rom. 8:31-39).**