

# UNSTUCK Religion

## Three Steps To Good Religion:

1 Samuel 4:1-5

- ❶ Admit that we need **God's help**.
- ❷ Call on God to **help us**, and give him **our problems**.
- ❸ Have **faith** that God will **fix our problems**.

## The Result Of Good Religion:

1 Samuel 4:6-11

- ▶ We will be **frustrated**, **disappointed** and **upset** at God.

## How To Know If I'm Stuck In Religion:

Isaiah 59:1-2 Proverbs 28:9 Micah 3:4 Proverbs 1:22-33

- ▶ I'm doing the right **rituals** with the wrong **lifestyle**.
- ▶ My focus is on what I **get**, not the **Giver**.
- ▶ I'm **angry** at God when I don't get **what I asked for**.

## What God Really Wants:

1 Samuel 2:27-35 & 7:2-6 Matthew 26:36-46 Mark 12:28-30 1 Samuel 15:22-23  
Micah 6:6-8 2 Chronicles 7:14-15 Exodus 19:5 Jeremiah 29:13

- ▶ Instead of getting **religious**, I need to get **right with God**.
- ▶ God would rather be with those who **fear him**,  
than with those who want to **use him**.

# Growth Group Homework

For the week of October 11, 2015

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## GETTING TO KNOW YOU

1. If you were to organize the topics/categories/themes of your prayers on a pie graph, what would it look like? For example: 50% prayer for other people, 20% praising God, and 30% asking for blessings.
2. Which prayers have been hardest to deal with not having a clear answer from God? Can you think of any prayers you're glad he didn't answer?
3. Looking back at your notes from this week's teaching, was there anything that particularly caught your attention, challenged or confused you?

## DIGGING DEEPER

1. Many of us can relate to feeling frustrated with God when he doesn't answer our prayers the way we hoped he would. It's also easy to be disappointed with God when he doesn't solve a problem that he could easily solve. One of the things we know from Scripture is that God still wants to hear from us, even when we're frustrated or disappointed with him. How do the following verses demonstrate approaching God in frustration or disappointment but in a way that honors God?

### Lamentations 3:17-33

- <sup>17</sup> I have been deprived of peace;  
I have forgotten what prosperity is.
- <sup>18</sup> So I say, "My splendor is gone  
and all that I had hoped from the LORD."
- <sup>19</sup> I remember my affliction and my wandering,  
the bitterness and the gall.
- <sup>20</sup> I well remember them,  
and my soul is downcast within me.
- <sup>21</sup> Yet this I call to mind  
and therefore I have hope:
- <sup>22</sup> Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed,  
for his compassions never fail.
- <sup>23</sup> They are new every morning;  
great is your faithfulness.
- <sup>24</sup> I say to myself, "The LORD is my portion;  
therefore I will wait for him."
- <sup>25</sup> The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him,  
to the one who seeks him;
- <sup>26</sup> it is good to wait quietly  
for the salvation of the LORD.
- <sup>27</sup> It is good for a man to bear the yoke  
while he is young.
- <sup>28</sup> Let him sit alone in silence,  
for the LORD has laid it on him.
- <sup>29</sup> Let him bury his face in the dust—

there may yet be hope.

<sup>30</sup> Let him offer his cheek to one who would strike him,  
and let him be filled with disgrace.

<sup>31</sup> For no one is cast off  
by the Lord forever.

<sup>32</sup> Though he brings grief, he will show compassion,  
so great is his unfailing love.

<sup>33</sup> For he does not willingly bring affliction  
or grief to anyone. *[NIV]*

### **Job 1:13-22**

<sup>13</sup> One day when Job's sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house, <sup>14</sup> a messenger came to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys were grazing nearby, <sup>15</sup> and the Sabeans attacked and made off with them. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!"

<sup>16</sup> While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, "The fire of God fell from the heavens and burned up the sheep and the servants, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!"

<sup>17</sup> While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, "The Chaldeans formed three raiding parties and swept down on your camels and made off with them. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!"

<sup>18</sup> While he was still speaking, yet another messenger came and said, "Your sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house, <sup>19</sup> when suddenly a mighty wind swept in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house. It collapsed on them and they are dead, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!"

<sup>20</sup> At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship <sup>21</sup> and said:

"Naked I came from my mother's womb,  
and naked I will depart.

The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away;  
may the name of the LORD be praised."

<sup>22</sup> In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing. *[NIV]*

### **Nehemiah 1:1-10**

#### *Nehemiah's Prayer*

<sup>1</sup> The words of Nehemiah son of Hakaliah:

In the month of Kislev in the twentieth year, while I was in the citadel of Susa, <sup>2</sup> Hanani, one of my brothers, came from Judah with some other men, and I questioned them about the Jewish remnant that had survived the exile, and also about Jerusalem.

<sup>3</sup> They said to me, "Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire."

<sup>4</sup> When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven. <sup>5</sup> Then I said:

"LORD, the God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments, <sup>6</sup> let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's family, have committed against you. <sup>7</sup> We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses.

<sup>8</sup> "Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, <sup>9</sup> but if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.'

<sup>10</sup> "They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great strength and your mighty hand. *[NIV]*

How could your daily prayers change if you were to approach God with the same level of honesty as in the verses above?

2. We heard this weekend that engaging in religious rituals can be just as unhealthy as not engaging in any at all. One of the things we learn from the religious leaders of Jesus' day is that you can know God's word intimately yet still not have a relationship with him. Thousands of years later we can still confuse religious rituals over relationship with God. Can you think of any modern day examples of putting religious ritual over relationship similar to the verses below?

### **Matthew 15:1-20**

#### *That Which Defiles*

<sup>15:1</sup> Then some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked, <sup>2</sup> "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don't wash their hands before they eat!"

<sup>3</sup> Jesus replied, "And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? <sup>4</sup> For God said, 'Honor your father and mother' and 'Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death.' <sup>5</sup> But you say that if anyone declares that what might have been used to help their father or mother is 'devoted to God,' <sup>6</sup> they are not to 'honor their father or mother' with it. Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition. <sup>7</sup> You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you:

<sup>8</sup> "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.

<sup>9</sup> They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules."

<sup>10</sup> Jesus called the crowd to him and said, "Listen and understand. <sup>11</sup> What goes into someone's mouth does not defile them, but what comes out of their mouth, that is what defiles them."

<sup>12</sup> Then the disciples came to him and asked, "Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this?"

<sup>13</sup> He replied, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots. <sup>14</sup> Leave them; they are blind guides. If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit."

<sup>15</sup> Peter said, "Explain the parable to us."

<sup>16</sup> "Are you still so dull?" Jesus asked them. <sup>17</sup> "Don't you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? <sup>18</sup> But the things that come out of a person's mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. <sup>19</sup> For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. <sup>20</sup> These are what defile a person; but eating with unwashed hands does not defile them." *[NIV]*

#### **Matthew 23:23-24**

<sup>23</sup> "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. <sup>24</sup> You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel. *[NIV]*

#### **Matthew 23:25-28**

<sup>25</sup> "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. <sup>26</sup> Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.

<sup>27</sup> "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean. <sup>28</sup> In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness. *[NIV]*

What do you think motivates people who pursue the rituals of God over a relationship with God?

3. It can be rather shocking to learn that the blessings God has in store for our life don't often line up with the blessings we are most interested in receiving. How do the godly blessings listed in the following verses align with or conflict with your understanding of what godly blessings look like?

#### **Psalm 29:11**

<sup>11</sup> The LORD gives strength to his people;  
the LORD blesses his people with peace. *[NIV]*

#### **Matthew 11:28-30**

<sup>28</sup> "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." *[NIV]*

#### **Romans 15:13**

<sup>13</sup> May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. *[NIV]*

## Ephesians 2:4-9

<sup>4</sup> But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, <sup>5</sup> made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. <sup>6</sup> And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup> For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— <sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast. *[NIV]*

Which of the above verses is most meaningful to you and why?

## TAKING IT HOME

Looking back at this week's teaching and homework, are there any changes you'd like to make to your prayer life in the next few weeks?

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Prayer Requests:



### Growth Group Community Service Project at Interfaith

Groups are needed to assemble a "Family Toiletry Bag" with 2-3 days worth of living essentials. This project date is flexible and can be done in the comfort of your own home. The completed kits are distributed through *Interfaith Services*, our partner who works with homeless families or individuals who need help from time to time. More information and a list of items needed can be found at:

<http://northcoastcommunityservice.org/events/interfaith-toiletry-bags-oceanside-2/>