

## Do you hate religion?



Yes, it's a provocative question, no doubt. I was hoping to get your attention, and maybe it worked. You are probably wondering where I am headed with this question. Keep reading and find out!

The word "religion" evokes widely varying responses from people based on their understanding of religion, definition of religion, and personal experiences.

I remember, as if it was just yesterday (even though it was actually 50 years ago!), standing around the playground with my classmates during recess. Somehow, the subject of religion came up, and everyone shared "what they were." "I'm a Methodist," one friend said. Another said he was Catholic. All around the circle, each person "said what they were." I was frustrated. Why? Because I felt like I "wasn't anything." Why was that? Well, I grew up in a non-denominational Bible church. Non-denominational, that was the problem. What would I call myself? I couldn't say, "I'm a non-denominational." That would sound weird, and I probably could not have explained what that meant exactly. Later in life, I was glad I didn't necessarily fit into a simple category. It allowed me to explain in more detail what I believed, as opposed to someone making an assumption, right or wrong, about what I believed based on a label. I could say more about that, but that won't be the focus of this article. I am also not against someone attending a church that is part of a denomination as long as that church accurately teaches the Bible. In a semi-humorous way, non-denominational churches are part of the "non-denominational denomination." 😊 (No need to respond to that comment with any serious concern. I realize it isn't really a denomination and that the churches don't all fall under one clear-cut doctrinal umbrella.)

Another very memorable part of the conversation I had with my grade school friends was when I mentioned that I went to church every Sunday morning, every Sunday night, and every Wednesday night, and that I actually really enjoyed it. They were all in shock! Who in the world would want to go to church three times a week? Crazy. I did not understand their response until I was a bit older and happened to visit churches of different denominations. The ones I attended were dry, rigid, ritualistic, sterile, and honestly, kind of creepy. That's the environment and experience that came to my friends' minds when I mentioned loving going to church! I totally get it now, but I didn't back then.

So, let's talk about religion. Here are a few interesting quotes from people who are not exactly favorable to the concept:

"Religion was invented when the first con man met the first fool." – Mark Twain (allegedly).

"Religion is the root of quite a lot of evil.... I am against religion because it teaches us to be satisfied with not understanding the world." – Richard Dawkins.

# Question of the Month

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“A delusion held by one person is a mental illness, held by a few is a cult, held by many is a religion.” – Robert Todd Carroll.

“It is difficult to imagine a set of beliefs more suggestive of mental illness than those that lie at the heart of many of our religious traditions.” – Sam Harris.

“Religion is a mental illness.” – a neuroscientist at Stanford University.

So, how do they *really* feel? I think it’s pretty obvious.

Many of you have probably already heard me state this but it bears repeating. I am not a religious person. Seriously. Let me put that in perspective for those who don’t know what I mean. I believe religion is man’s idea of God. The reason we have so many different religions is that there are so many different people, and they all have their own ideas of who God is, what He wants from us, and what happens when we die. I don’t have time to find out what everyone else thinks of God. On the other hand, I think the Bible is God’s idea of God, and that fascinates me to no end. So, while I say I am not religious, I am a Christian, and I believe the Bible from cover to cover. Now, I know that Christianity is considered one of the world’s religions, so I guess in that sense I am a religious person. However, I like to make the distinction between man’s ideas of God and God’s ideas about Himself.

I also completely agree that a lot of terrible things have occurred in the name of religion. Some have even happened “in the name of Christianity.” However, there’s a very important point. You don’t judge a belief system based on the behavior of those who violate its principles!

It is without question that more human life has been taken in the name of atheism (i.e., atheistic regimes) than any other belief system. Here are just a few examples:

- Stalin: 20 million
- Mao Tse-tung: up to 70 million
- Fidel Castro: up to 141,000
- Ho Chi Minh: up to 100,000
- Pol Pot: 2 million
- Kim Il-sung: 1.5 million
- Hitler: 11 million

Some will respond by referencing the number of people killed during the Spanish Inquisition, the Crusades, and the Salem Witch Trials. Two major points to note in response:

1. While certainly not a good or minor issue, the actual numbers were far fewer.
2. Whatever connection is alleged between Christianity and these horrific events, these killings were carried out in stark contrast to the clear teachings of Scripture. They were certainly not as a result of following any biblical commands to commit such atrocities.

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Again, we don't judge a system (Christian or otherwise) based on the behavior of those who violate its principles.

Yes, a lot of evil has been perpetrated in the name of religion, but not in direct relationship to Christianity as defined by God's word. So, if someone tells me they are not big on religion, I am right there with them. However, I always take the opportunity to explain the difference between religion, which is man's idea of God, and Christianity or the Bible, which is God's idea of God! Furthermore, Christianity is not simply a set of rules and regulations; it's a relationship—a relationship with Jesus Christ, the Son of God. And it's a relationship by choice, not by force or coercion.

So, do I hate religion? I don't believe I need to be overly dramatic by making that pronouncement to everyone I meet. In reality, I am not impressed by, or interested in religion, and ultimately, it distracts people from the truth of the Bible's Gospel message. However, we can easily use the topic of religion to bring clarity to Scripture and true saving faith, so let's do that every chance we get!

If you have any questions about this or any other issue, please don't hesitate to [contact us](#)!