

## A Checklist Religion?

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by Terry Bennett

Let's see...Attend worship services on Sunday morning. Check. Sing. Check. Pray. Check. Partake of the Lord's Supper. Check. Give. Check. Attend worship services on Sunday evening. Check. Attend worship services on Wednesday evening. Check. All requirements for the week have now been met.

Have you ever seen someone try to reduce Christianity to a checklist religion? Do this. Don't do that. Check. Check. Check. Seeing Christianity as simply a series of physical actions required may seem to some to be a system of efficiency. In this manner one can worship God in a rote manner without truly investing himself, and then get on with his life.

Too often such an attitude may be seen in one who was "raised in the church" (had parents who were Christians) and simply adopted the religion of his parents. I have spoken to too many young people over the years in this situation. They have grown up in what appears to be a godly home. They were baptized into Christ. Yet when they get out on their own, they quickly fall away because the "actions required" are not fulfilling to them. Still others may continue attending worship services yet never become fully engaged in the work of the Lord. They may question, "Do I have to attend every Sunday?" "Where does the Bible say that I have to come on Wednesday night?" "How much do I have to give?" What they are really asking is, "What is the minimum I have to do in order to make it to heaven?" What causes this? Many times such people do not seem to have truly been converted. They understand the actions but do not truly know God.

Jesus emphasized that we are to love the Lord with **all** our heart, **all** our soul, and **all** our mind (Matthew 22:37). We are to love the Lord with everything we have — with every fiber of our being. This is a love of fervor, of zeal, of enthusiasm. This is a love that we are compelled to share with others. It is something that we absolutely cannot keep bottled up inside. Others can see it in us. We want them to know the love that we have for the Father — and the love He has for us. We want them to understand the importance of the sacrifice given by a risen Savior. Others should be able to see in us the love that we have for our brethren (John 13:34-35; 1 John 3:16). Our lives should cause others to ask a reason for the hope that lies within us (1 Peter 3:15). This does not occur merely because of the commands we obey but even more because of the loving attitude with which we obey them. Our love for Christ provides the basis for obedience. In John 14:15, Jesus says, *"If you love Me, keep My commandments."* John later states, *"And His commandments are not burdensome"* (1 John 5:3).

The apostle Paul emphasized the importance of the love of God: *"Though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, it profits me nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing"* (1 Corinthians 13:2-3).

Attempting to follow God's commands without a true, fervent love for Him may provide one with a false sense of security regarding his standing before Almighty God ... but it is little more than checking empty boxes off a checklist.

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