

TWO WAYS WE MISS JESUS

It's been said that we often times miss Jesus by the distance between our heads and our hearts. There are truths that we understand about Him through concepts that we fail to embrace in a way that truly changes us for His glory. One of the ways we miss Jesus is license. We gather this idea that because grace is free, and I'm not saved by good works, I can continue to live unchanged. We can also miss Jesus by legalism. Which is the idea that I must work by doing moral deeds to earn the love and acceptance of God. We must understand the dangers of these two ways we miss Jesus, and rediscover the power of a life rooted in Him.

Romans 6:1-14 a warning against license
Galatians 3:1-14 a warning against legalism

License

Fundamentally, when Jesus was crucified for sin and raised from death, He delivered us from two things. He delivered us from the penalty of sin and the power of sin over our lives.

The penalty of sin is death and condemnation under the wrath of God which Jesus paid at the cross. (Col. 2:13-15, Hebrews 9:24-28)

The power of sin holds us captive to follow the desires of the flesh and satan, from which Jesus set us free in His resurrection. (Galatians 2:20, Philippians 3:10-16)

Since Jesus has delivered us in this way, when we believe the gospel, we are not free to live how we want, we are free to live how we should. We ought to see ourselves as having died to

our sins and made alive to be changed by God and His word. (Col. 3:1-10) Sadly, many miss Jesus in this way thinking that His grace only has to do with the penalty of sin, and not much to do with how I am to live my life obediently free from the power of sin.

Discuss: What are some beliefs or lifestyles that would-be evidence that some one is missing Jesus in this way?

License worldviews

“I know this is wrong, but God is a forgiving God.”

“God’s word and authority is negotiable.”

“Accepting Jesus is enough, I never consider how His word applies to all of life.”

Legalism

Legalism is a form of religious performance, as an effort to feel accepted by God. A person feels as though they are really “good” and loved by God, or really “bad” and not loved by God based on the way they are able to obey God’s commands.

This subtle deception of Jesus and the gospel usually begins with grace; however, it adds to grace by fundamentally believing that, “I was saved by grace, but I now must grow in Christ and live by my works.” This is something the gospel speaks directly against. (Galatians 5:1-7)

Two problems with legalism

1. When we perform well, we become prideful and tend to look down on those who aren’t performing as well as we are. (Luke 18:9-12)
2. When we don’t perform well, we doubt ourselves, are

fearful of God, and feel the need to make up for our wrong before we can come back to Him. (Romans 8:13-15)

Discuss: How does legalism lead to joyless, unmoving “religious” living?

Legalism worldview

“I obey God to be loved by God.”

“I must clean myself up before I can come to God.”

“Those who are not as moral, evangelistic, or productive as me are not as important.”

“I compare myself to others in order to make myself feel better about where I stand with God.”

Gospel change

When we are seeing Jesus and the gospel correctly, we begin to want to obey God because our desires have been changed by God's love. So, Jesus expects us to obey Him, just not as an effort to earn acceptance. He wants our obedience to flow from a love for Him and His way of doing things. The gospel works inside our hearts by reminding us of all that God has done and giving us a new perspective on what He is calling us to. (Titus 2:11-12, 1 John 4:18-19, John 14:15)

We see Jesus rightly when grace motivates us to obey His commands. Instead of focusing on what we can do for Him, focus on what He has done for us, until we think differently about what He is commanding us to do.

Discuss: How is gospel change more empowering than legalism and license?

In the times when you are missing Jesus, which of these two ways are more evident in your life?

How are you purposely putting yourself in a position for gospel change?

What are some changes you should make in light of these ways we can miss Jesus?

Pray

Ask God for His help to change from the heart by the power of the Spirit