

RELIGIOUS SPIRIT

(adapted from “Freedom From the Religious Spirit” edited by C. Peter Wagner)

Intro

The Religious Spirit is one of most clever/deceptive/seductive agents of Satan

- “I believe that this pernicious spirit has succeeded in keeping most of us ignorant of its devices through the years.” (p9)
- “It is so slippery that it will wiggle out of almost any attempt to confront it. If you address the pride, the fears and insecurities will rise up to attract sympathy. If you confront the fear, it will then change into religious pride masquerading as faith.” (Joyner, p41)

Also known as the Pharisaical Spirit – it is the “*leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees*” (Matt 16:6)

- It is this spirit that Jesus rebuked the most – and did so quite angrily (Matt. 23:15, 25, 27-28)

It is said that they are so difficult to get rid of that Jesus never did or tried

- However, I believe that’s what was cast out of Saul/Paul on the road to Damascus

Works on our minds – instead, we must be “*transformed by the renewing of our mind that we may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*” (Romans 12:2)

- It is extremely subtle, difficult to detect, always operating under the guise of partial truth
- Key is the Word and sound teaching to help get people’s mind’s straight
- The religious spirit will twist the Word slightly or use it out of context

It is a high-level demon with many cohorts – e.g. fear, intimidation, manipulation and control

- on the order of a principality over groups or areas (e.g. Sedona)
- Invades groups of people as well as individuals

It is a counterfeit of the “true love of God” (Joyner, p36)

- Promotes the rituals over relationship with God – formulas (witchcraft) over following God’s lead – tradition over truth - doing over being – obligating God’s reciprocity based on our religious activity (Matt. 15:6-9)
- Counterfeits the Holy Spirit, and works closely with the other 2 primary spirits of this age, Anti-Christ and Jezebel (opposes the Elijah spirit and seeks to emasculate the church)
 - Prophetically, we see Anti-Christ over Crown King, Jezebel over Prescott, RS over Sedona
 - They work together as a team so as to create confusion, chaos

The central motivating factor behind the religious spirit is pride in its self-righteous acts (Matt 15:1-3)

- It seeks to lift us up in pride and thereby keeps us from hearing the voice of God and we wind up listening to the wrong voice(s)
- Or, we think we already know better than everyone and don’t even seek God’s voice
- Revelation should yield humility and submission to God, not self-exaltation

It is often founded upon a zeal for God

- “*they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge*” (Romans 10:2)
- the RS uses their very zeal to draw them off the path of truth – and even provides signs and wonders to justify their zeal to others

- justification is the primary defense mechanism of the R.S. – it must always be right

Idealism is another subtle tactic of the RS

- tries to impart onto others standards beyond that which God has required or which the individual is not capable of achieving at the time
- not the principle of mercy and grace, but rather condemnation for falling short (Romans 3:23, 8:1)

The RS leads to the bondage of legalism and perfectionism – but only Jesus is or can be perfect

- this person becomes unteachable, and bounces back and forth between superiority and inferiority (double-minded)
- leading to guilt and shame and condemnation

It produces a counterfeit gift of discernment of spirits

- which thrives on seeing what's wrong with others rather than on seeing what God is doing in people
- creates destruction and division – e.g. *“the letter of the law kills, but the Spirit gives life”* (2Cor 3:6)

Rooted in suspicion, territorial preservation, insecurity

- but not in love/compassion
- tears down instead of building up – puffs up self at expense of others

The Religious Spirit leads people to be judgmental and unable to forgive or extend mercy – nor room for grace

- therefore, it is very divisive, seeking to destroy relationships
- it also wants to destroy a person's dreams, hopes, callings, etc.
- it also wants to steal your joy by making you feel that you can never measure up to God's expectations
- discouragement is its principle aim

Corporate

“The spirit of religion is an agent of Satan assigned to prevent change and to maintain the status quo by using religious devices.” (p12)

- primary strategy is to promote the idea that doing religious things is what saves you
- then it works to preserve the status quo through adhering to what the Bible calls the tradition of elders (Matt 15:2, Mark 7:5)
- seeks to substitute religious activity for the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives (*“form... denying its power”*) 2Tim 3:5)

That's why change (new things) are resisted so strongly – the traditions of men

- Casts a spell over the leaders of such groups – *“O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth?”* (Galatians 3:1)
- Manipulates the leaders into opposing God's plan for new times and seasons

It is the spirit over all cults

- Links up with the spirit of politics (eg. Popes and Kings)
- Wants us to worship anything/anyone but Jesus (e.g. the signs instead of the source, angels instead of God, the fruit instead of the tree)

Five primary strategies (from Daniel 7:25)

1. To slander God's name and character ("*He will speak against the Most High*")
2. To oppress God's people through fear and discouragement ("*and oppress His saints*")
3. To delay the emergence of the new times and seasons ("*and try to change the set times*")
4. To promote the creeping rise of liberalism ("*and the laws*")
5. To persecute the saints outrightly (*The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time*)

Wheat & Tares (Matt. 13:24-30)

- Religious spirit plants a false kingdom among God's Kingdom to hinder God's plan of redemption
- Appear identical on outside – it's what's inside that counts – appear disguised as “angels of light” – counterfeits, imitations

The “nature” of the religious spirit (Chris Hayward):

- “Do as I say, not as I do.” (Matt. 23:3)
- “Let me hand you another brick” (Matt. 23:4)
- “Ain't I great!” (Matt. 23:5)
- “Move over, that's my spot!” (Matt. 23:6-7)
- “We've never done it that way before, and we're not going to start now!” (Matt 23:13)
- “Come into my parlor,” said the spider to the fly.” (Matt. 23:14)
- “Oh, that I were made judge in the land.” (Matt. 23:15)
- “Here, swallow another camel.” (Matt. 23:23-24)
- “Hand me another rock to throw.” (Matt. 23:29-31)

Individual

Individuals often don't know they are under the wrong spirit whose primary goals are to:

- keep people from being saved
- keep saints from reading the Word or praying
- keep saints from being filled with the Spirit
- keep saints from doing anything for the Kingdom of God
- keep saints doubting that they actually hear God or to deceive them with false prophecy (double-bind)
- keep saints feeling separated from or abandoned by God

Tries to wear us out mentally

- weakens us by consuming time/energy
- must war against it as we completely submit to the Holy Spirit

Keeps us focused on the evil in/around us

- we become what we are beholding (2Cor. 3:18)

There is a blindness that comes over people who are infected by the RS

- cohort is the spirit of stupor (Isa. 29:10-12 & Romans 11:6-8)
- or a spirit of passivity which quenches the Holy Spirit and causes inertia

- their hearts are hardened – therefore, pray for a softening and an awakening

However, the Religious Spirit likes to work both sides of the fence, so if you resist passivity through zeal, it can infect us with a spirit of “striving”

- striving is when we do things in our own way by our own strength, trying to force things to happen
- whereas the Bible says to “wait on the Lord” to go before us and open the doors to make the “crooked places straight”

It cuts believers off from knowing God and receiving His love

- It strips believers of the power and direction of the Holy Spirit by keeping us in the flesh
- It cuts off the flow of God’s truth and receiving His forgiveness
- It moves people to depend on reason and intellect rather than the Spirit

It perverts our view and understanding of God, seeing Him as:

- Unloving, harsh and judgmental
- Distant and detached
-

The Religious Spirit will appeal to self-worth, self-esteem, self-actualization, self, self, self – New Age ideas

Symptoms (Rick Joyner, Robert Heidler)

1. See primary goal as tearing down what they believe is wrong – see what’s wrong, not what’s right - legalism
2. Unable to accept a rebuke from those “less spiritual” – “listen to God, not people”
3. Overwhelming feeling of guilt that can’t live up to the Lord’s standards -- perfectionism
4. Leadership style that is bossy, overbearing, intolerant of weakness/failures of others
5. See themselves as closer to God than others
6. Take pride in their “spiritual maturity” – believe they are on the “cutting edge” of what God is doing
7. Have a mechanical prayer life
8. Glory more in what God has done in the past than what He is doing in the present -- tradition
9. Suspicious of new movements, except if it’s their own
10. Tend to view all supernatural manifestations as evidence of God’s handiwork and approval
11. A need to figure things out, intellectualize the spiritual, explain God, instead of serving Him
12. Independent, self-sufficient
13. Symptom: delighting in self-abasement (which will appear as a religious commitment/duty)
 - the “martyr syndrome” – a deadly delusion – “suffering for the gospel”
 - we may suffer, but we don’t seek or exalt the suffering, we just endure and persevere

Symptoms (E. Leo Lawson, Jr.)

1. Focus on externals/application rather than underlying principles (Mark 7:5, Matt. 15:3)
2. Say one thing, do another (hypocrites) – Mark 7:6
3. Prioritize tradition over God’s Word and accuse others who do not go along with tradition (Matt. 15:6)
4. Don’t spend much time in the Word – “know it already” (Mark 7:8, 9)

5. Ritualistic in prayer/worship – Mark 7:13
6. Hearts not aligned with God’s Heart – Mark 7:6-7, Isa. 29:13-14

From Romans 11:5- NASB):

1. Always seeking grace and victory (redemption) but never obtaining them (Romans 11:7)
2. Do works of righteousness but never sense God’s acceptance (Romans 11:5-6)
3. Go to church but leave more dulled/hardened than before (“the rest were hardened” Rom. 11:7)
4. “See not” and “hear not” what other saints get out of the pastor’s message (Rom. 11:8)
5. Lured by lusts/appetites away from obedience to God (Rom. 11:9)
6. Feel enslaved to sin (“bend their backs forever” Rom 11:10)
 - “veil” is lifted from the eyes when delivered from the Religious Spirit – replaced by spirit of revelation (Eph 1:17)

Another symptom is when the person is one way to the outside world, and totally different at home (where no one can see)

- “people pleasers” can be vulnerable to the Religious Spirit

Symptoms (Christ Hayward) from 2Samuel 15

- Seek to gather those around them who will applaud them (v1)
- Look for ways to gain the attention of others (v2)
- Look for ways to subvert divine order (v2-3)
- Seek to demean and slander legitimate authority, inferring that they would be a better leader (v3-4)
- Feign humility while inside bloated with pride (v5)
- Try to steal the hearts of the people (v6)

Exposing it in Others

We must be cautious and careful in accusing others of having a religious spirit – hard to “prove”

- Individuals caught up in the RS are very resistant to change
- Confrontation seldom works
- Pray for that person to receive divine revelation while binding up the RS in Jesus’ name (Matt. 16:19, 18:18)
- Counter every lie with Scriptural Truth
- Worship (of God) brings in His Presence which drives away the religious spirit
- Make it a practice to “die daily” to self

Repent, Renounce, Break

- Repent of generational iniquities, personal openings/cooperation with the R.S.
- Renounce, rebuke, reject the R.S.
- Break every hex, curse, vow, spell, ritual, incantation, covenant, blood covenant, sacrifice, blood sacrifice, soul tie, all legal rights

Dress yourself in the Designer’s wardrobe:

- The Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 13:14)

- Your new self (Col 3:10)
- A garment of praise (Isa. 61:3)
- Clothed in humility (1Peter 5:5)
- Compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness patience and love (Col. 3:12,14)
- Faith, love and hope (1Thess. 5:8)
- The armor of light (Rom. 13:12)
- The full armor of God (Eph. 6:12-18)

Concluding Scriptures

“If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one’s religion is useless. ²⁷Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.” (James 1:26-27)

“But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: ²For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, ⁴traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!” (2Timothy 3:1-5)

- *“...led away by various lusts, ⁷always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁸Now as Jannes and Jambres [Pharaoh’s magicians] resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; ⁹but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was.” (2Timothy 3:6b-9)*
 - Just as these magicians were able to replicated some of the miracles, so to in these end-days will signs and wonders be done through the religious spirit (Rev. 13:13)