

Can You recommend Your Religion?

There are many religions in this world. The question that we need to ask is:
Can this religion be recommended by God?

Luke 18:9-17

INTRODUCTION

- Businesses have always depended on good customer reviews. - Mr. Falcón's barber shop: "If we please you tell others; if we don't please you, tell us"
- Today customer reviews are mostly online-based - how many stars and reviews usually determine whether or not a customer makes the purchase, takes a vacation, or stays in the hotel.
 - Enough negative reviews will ruin a business.
 - Enough positive reviews will make a business successful
- The same is true about man-made religions today. Online reviews are based on what religious institutions offer in terms of comfort:
 - nursery
 - food, coffee, donuts
 - gymnasium
 - counseling
 - swimming lessons
 - after-school day-care and programs
 - good music and bands
 - hip and relevant preaching
 - children's church
 - football, baseball, and/or soccer leagues

- Jesus had an incident where he was not able to recommend a religion. Actually, he condemned it. It was called the Pharisee religion: Luke 18:9-17
 - The Pharisee's arrogance was one of his many sins that made it where Jesus could not recommend his religion. (vs. 13 - I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other one; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.)
 - Jesus goes on to explain to the crowd that in order for the religion to be recommended the Pharisee needed to become childlike.

- In this lesson we want to ask if our religion can be recommended, but not from the worldly view.

*(Additional information: Paul could recommend his religion to Agrippa, yet Agrippa refused it. Acts 26:27-28)

BIBLE VERSE

Luke 18:9-17; "Now He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: 10 "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee stood and *began* praying this in regard to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, crooked, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.' 13 But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to raise his eyes toward heaven, but was beating his chest, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' 14 I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other one; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted." 15 Now they were bringing even their babies to Him so that He would touch them; but when the disciples saw *it*, they *began* rebuking them. 16 But Jesus called for the little ones, saying, "Allow the children to come to Me, and do not forbid them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. 17 Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all."

1

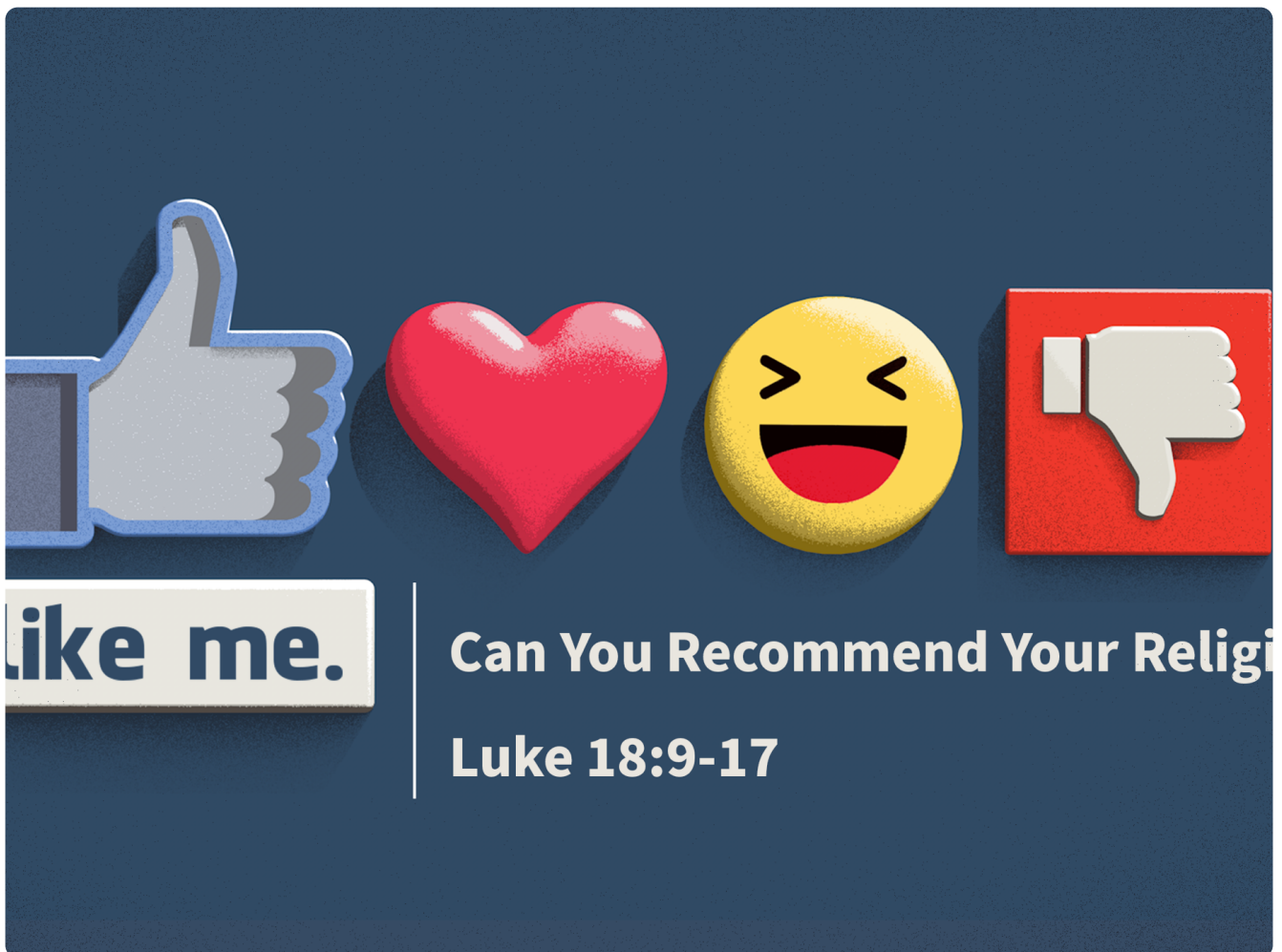
Does God's Word Recommend it? - 1 Thessalonians 4:15

EXPLANATION

- **Everything** we do must have God's approval and support. (1 Thess. 4:15; " For we say this to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will not precede those who have fallen asleep.")
 - He meant that what he was saying came from the Lord.
 - He could not say anything that did not come from God.
- Not all religion has the support of the **Lord's word**.
 - For example, the religion of the pompous Pharisee could not be recommended by the Lord. He was justified in his mind, but not in the mind of God.
 - He **felt** justified. But feelings don't matter. What matters is God's word.
- What about the **name one wears** in religion?
 - Can it be recommended by the Lord?
 - Whatever we do in word or deed we must do in the name of the Lord (Colossians 3:17)
 - We can recommend the name "**Christian**" because that is the name the Holy Spirit gave the followers of Christ. (Acts 11:26; prophesied in Isaiah 62:2)
 - χρηματίζω, chrēmatisō a divine calling by God, Holy Spirit... (Matthew 2:12; 2:22; Luke 2:26; Acts 10:22; Romans 7:3; Hebrews 8:5; Hebrews 11:7; Hebrews 12:25).

- What about the **worship** in which we engage?
 - Lord's Supper on every 1st day of the week (Acts 20:7)
 - Singing/fruit of the lips (Ephesians 5:19)
 - Teaching (Acts 20:7)
 - Giving of our means (1 Corinthians 16:1-2)
 - Praying (Acts 2:42)

MEDIA



APPLICATION

- Whatever religion you find yourself in, you should not be presumptuous as to believe that it is right or good enough just because. You must do your job and search the scriptures to see if those things which you practice are from the Lord's mouth! (Acts 17:10-12)
- **If our religion does not harmonize with God's word, then God cannot recommend it!**

2

Does Our Way of Life Recommend it? - 1 Corinthians 11:1

EXPLANATION

"Be **imitators** of me, just as I also **am** of Christ."

"As for the things you have learned and received and heard and **seen** in me, **practice** these things, and the God of peace will be with you." (Philippians 4:9)

- Paul believed in his religion so much that he not only recommended it but encouraged people to be imitators of him JUST as he was an imitator of Christ!
- The conduct of the Pharisee in our Luke 18 text would not do much to recommend his religion to others: arrogant - He was thankful he was not like other people: "swindlers, crooked, adulterers, or even like this tax collector." Sounds like he thought he was a winner and the others were losers. He definitely did not practice the Golden Rule.
- Can we recommend our religion by the way we treat other people?

- Matthew 7:12 - If we take unjust advantage of others, we cannot recommend our religion to others
- **Business:** Christians cannot separate their private lives, business lives from their religion
 - Our Christianity is our whole life, the entirety of our being (Galatians 5:14; "For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself.")
- **Relationships/tongue:** James 1:26; " If anyone thinks himself to be religious, yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this person's religion is worthless." If I mistreat people with my tongue, slander, lie, etc., then I cannot recommend my religion because my religion is worthless!

3

Does the Way You Support it Recommend it? Acts 4:19-20

EXPLANATION

"But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, make your *own* judgment; 20 for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard." (Acts 4:19-20)

- The support one gives to his religion will show how much we value it.
 - How much time, effort, participation, and money does he lend to it will speak volumes about whether he can recommend it or not.
 - Imagine a football player wearing a rival's jersey!
- Peter and John were told that under no circumstances not to speak about Jesus or His church. They chose to faithfully and dutifully recommend their religion by

speaking up for the Lord to the point that Peter was eventually murdered.

- These people would definitely recommend their religion by the sacrifices they were willing to make for the Lord.

4 Can You Recommend it the Way Your Religion Supports You?

EXPLANATION

"I can do all things through Him who strengthens me."

- One often recommends a thing because of the good one has received from it (service, warranty, i.e., insurance when disaster strikes)
- Paul was in prison when he wrote to the Philippians and joyfully said, "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me."
 - Many people would have given up long before ending up in prison if they had been Paul. (threatened, persecuted, beaten, imprisoned, shipwrecked, mistreated by Christians, etc.)
 - Paul had a different view. In each catastrophe, God had delivered him, and he was able to continue in the service of the Lord. He knew this time it would not be different. He could always count on the Lord to deliver him, even into eternity.
 - 2 Corinthians 4:8-10, 16; "*we are* afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; 9 persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed; 10 always carrying around in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our

body...Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer person is decaying, yet our inner person is being renewed day by day."

- The **worthies of the hall of faith** in Hebrews 11 suffered many trials, even death but they remained faithful because of the support they received from their religion - their God!
- Their religion would support them in their times of need and that is why they could recommend it to the entire WORLD!

5

Can You Recommend it for the Good it Will Do?

EXPLANATION

- Looking back at the self-righteous, selfish, self-centered, arrogant Pharisee answer these questions:
 - Would you want him as a next-door neighbor?
 - Marry into the family?
 - Be the parents of your children?
 - Be the parents of your grandchildren?
 - Would this person make a better wife or a better husband?
 - Manage your business?
- According to Paul, his religion would make a man and a woman a better husband/wife, and a better parent (Ephesians 5:23-25; "For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself *being* the Savior of the body. 24 But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives *ought to be to* their husbands in everything. 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as

Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her;").

APPLICATION

- Suppose YOU could convert every person in your community to the Lord and would adhere to God's Word and live by His standards, what kind of community would we have?
- This would be a community that you COULD and WOULD WANT TO RECOMMEND.
- **BUT IT STARTS WITH YOU, WITH HOW YOU LIVE, AND YOUR DEDICATION TO THE LORD AND HIS WORD.**

CONCLUSION

Plan of Salvation

Ethiopian Eunuch went on his way rejoicing (Acts 8). Why? He was saved and surely he was going to recommend his religion to everyone!