

About Religion

I was watching a show called “Under the banner of Heaven.” It stars Andrew Garfield. I know him as spiderman. I did see a portion of him in a movie playing evangelist Jimmy Baker. I didn’t really have an opinion of him as an actor. Yet, this movie moved me. He gave an Oscar winning performance in my mind. It was the story about the history of the LDS that intrigued me. I was not religious until my 33rd year. I didn’t care about that stuff. The Mormon church is portrayed in this series a certain way. How would I have felt about religion all those years ago if I had watched this at that time? Religion does not look pretty in this film.

I have little opinion of the LDS church. Some call them a cult. I know people that said I was entering a cult when I attended mainstream church 23 years ago. A cult to me is defined as taking something and changing it, worshiping it, and losing yourself in it. Now that statement is a slippery slope. We should be dedicated to our faith, church, and family. A dedication to a country or hobbies is a good thing. Yet, we don’t want to twist the thing we started with into something else entirely.

I have been a Christian for over 23 years now. Am I in a cult? I say it’s a yes and no answer. The yes, is that some people take the word of God too far. Many times, their secret sin drives the Bible they believe in. people highlight certain scriptures while conveniently leaving others out. Some of the religious rulers in Jesus’ day were dedicated men. I do believe they earnestly wanted to follow God to the best of their ability. Yet, they added laws to the Jewish lifestyle. They made traditions that strayed from the intent of the word of God. They most likely had good intentions, but it left a burden on the people. In a way, they fought against self pride by becoming self pride. Using religion and certain scriptures to justify their lives.

What does God have to say? Matthew 10:39 “*Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.*” For these past 23 years I have tried to let go of the world. Yet, some part of the world is calling me back. Questions have come to me. Didn't God make the world we live in? Didn't God's word come to change us? What is the line between being me and a child of God? The honest answer to avoid becoming part of a cult is seeking God. Don't seek holiness and righteousness. God does not want you to lose what He made. Instead, He wants you to be what He made and not your version of that.

My pastor said the same thing last weekend. Be the version of you that God made. Don't be a version that you made. Usually, a self-made version gets off track and can succumb to cults and dark places. Places we were never made to venture. The Pharisees of the Bible were good men that got off track. I was off track all those years ago. I do think God has tried hard to put me back on track. Perfect? Hell no! Humans love to stray. They love to fall off the wagon. I suppose it's human nature. Yet, God is lovingly enough to pick you up and place you back where you should be.

From the LDS to many protestant and catholic churches people have changed the word to fit who they want to be. They change Gods laws just enough to make it harder on some and easier on themselves. Cults come from changing what God meant for Good into a prideful thing. In that LDS series was a quote. It said that they were searching for a way to have many women. To be more sexually active than God intended them to be. It wasn't about what God wanted but about what men wanted. So, the men made new scripture and new laws. Of course, these rules did not apply to women.

When your life becomes more about the world then you might be off track. When your religion becomes more about you then you might be off track. Jesus knew what He meant when

He asked us to lose our lives. It was to point us in the right direction. To where? To the real you. The person that God made. Do you really think God gave us bodies only to be sexual beings? That those sexual desires would define us? Are you just a doctor or an artist? A God who is vast and timeless might be more than one dimensional. The Bible says He made us in His image. What does that mean? People love to say (the image) looks holy, powerful, and God like. What if the word image meant multifaceted, multi dimensional, and multi talented? Maybe what God was driving at is character over divine power.

What if it would take a lifetime to know ourselves? Once you see the real you through Gods eyes, things change. Then you start pursuing yourself though Gods eyes. Being the best version of you. Seek God and find you. It's not rocket science. Yet, it does take throwing away the lesser version that you have constructed. Die to self! Because, it's never been about religion, has it? It's always been about our relationship with the "person building" God.