

# LOSING YOUR RELIGION—FINDING THE GOSPEL CENTERED LIFE<sup>©</sup>

## LESSON ONE: THE GOSPEL GRID

*“Many years ago I was driven to the conclusion that the two major causes of most emotional problems among evangelical Christians are these: the failure to understand, receive, and live out God’s unconditional grace and forgiveness; and the failure to give out that unconditional love, forgiveness, and grace to other people... We read, we hear, we believe a good theology of grace. But that’s not the way we live. The good news of the Gospel of grace has not penetrated the level of our emotions.”* **David Seamands, (Author and Christian Counselor)**

### I. TWO MAJOR CONCEPTS: God’s holiness and our sinfulness

**Isaiah 55:6-9:** Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."

**Jeremiah 17:9-10:** The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve.

*“Man never attains to a true **self-knowledge** until he has previously contemplated the face of God, and come down after such contemplation to look into himself. For (such is our innate pride) we always seem to ourselves just, and upright, and wise, and holy, until we are convinced, by clear evidence, of our injustice, vileness, folly, and impurity.*

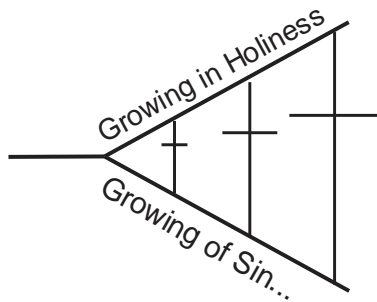
*For, since we are all naturally prone to hypocrisy, any empty semblance of righteousness is quite enough to satisfy us instead of righteousness itself... ..so long as we keep our mind within the confines of human pollution, anything which is in some small degree less defiled, delights us as if it were most pure.*

*So long as we do not look beyond the earth, we are quite pleased with our own righteousness, wisdom, and virtue; we address ourselves in the most flattering terms, and seem only less than demigods.*

*...men are never duly touched and impressed with a conviction of their insignificance, until they have contrasted themselves with the majesty of God.”* John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion

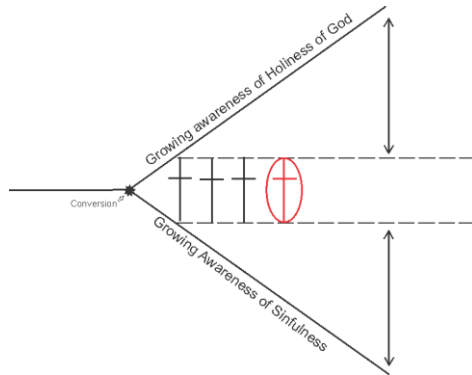
*“A conscience which is not fully enlightened both to the seriousness of its condition before God and to the grandeur of God’s merciful provision of redemption, will inevitably fall prey to anxiety, pride, sensuality, and all other expressions of that unconscious despair...”* Richard Lovelace, Dynamics of Spiritual Life

## II. A TRUNCATED VIEW OF THE GOSPEL



### III. GAP FILLING WITH “ANOTHER GOSPEL”

*I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. Galatians 1:6-7*



Filling the gap by boasting/defending

Filling the gap by excuse making/accusing

SIX WAYS OF MINIMIZING SIN/ADJUSTING THE RECORD/ “Another gospel”

“Christians by and large, are neurotic about purity, obedience and holiness. It is probably the main reason we’re not very pure, obedient and holy. And in order to maintain our witness, we have to learn to fake it.” Steve Brown

O, you dear idiots of Galatia, who saw Jesus Christ the crucified so plainly, who has been casting a spell over you? I will ask you one simple question: did you receive the Spirit of God by trying to keep the Law or by believing the message of the Gospel? Surely you can't be so idiotic (stupid) as to think that a man begins his spiritual life in the Spirit and then completes it by reverting to outward observances? Has all your painful experience brought you nowhere? I

simply cannot believe it of you! Does God, who gives you his Spirit and works miracles among you, do these things because you have obeyed the Law or because you have believed the Gospel? Ask yourselves that. Galatians 3:1-5 (J. B. Phillips Translation)

Q. What is the painful experience Paul is talking about?

# Adjusting the Record “Another Gospel”

## Losing your Religion Handout Week 1

### **DEFENDING**

I find it difficult to receive feedback about weaknesses or sin. When confronted, my tendency is to explain things away, talk about my successes, or justify my decisions. As a result, people are hesitant to approach me, and I rarely have conversations about difficult things in my life.

### **FAKING**

I strive to keep up appearances and maintain a respectable image. My behavior, to some degree, is driven by what I think others think of me. I also do not like to think reflectively about my life. As a result, not many people know the real me. (I may not even know the real me.)

### **HIDING**

I tend to conceal as much as I can about my life, especially the "bad stuff." This is different from faking, in that faking is about impressing. Hiding is more about shame. I don't think people will accept or love the real me.

### **EXAGGERATING**

I tend to think (and talk) more highly of myself than I ought. I make things (good and bad) out to be much bigger than they are (usually to get attention). As a result, things often get more attention than they deserve and have a way of making me stressed or anxious.

### **BLAMING**

I am quick to blame others for sin or circumstances. I have a difficult time "owning" my contributions to sin or conflict. There is an element of pride that assumes it's not my fault and/or an element of fear of rejection if it is my fault.

### **DOWNPLAYING**

I tend to give little weight to sin or circumstances in my life, as if they are "normal" or "not that bad." As a result, things often don't get the attention they deserve. They have a way of mounting up to the point of being overwhelming.