

I WANT TO  
BELIEVE, BUT ...

Checkin in on ya!  
How are you doing?

Praying for you. 🙏

Back at work after  
the funeral.

Don't bother.

## Kill-Joy God

**Series:** I Want to Believe, but...

**Scripture:** Romans 3:20-24

Many people see a \_\_\_\_\_ God.

- There are just \_\_\_\_\_ many \_\_\_\_\_.

## Bad News of Religion

Religion focuses on the \_\_\_\_\_, rather than the \_\_\_\_\_.

- Matthew 23:25-26
- Religion will say that unholy people can \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ between a holy God with \_\_\_\_\_ human \_\_\_\_\_.
- Matthew 23:3-4

The laws God established are not to \_\_\_\_\_ us, but to \_\_\_\_\_ us to \_\_\_\_\_ a life of blessing.

## Good News of Jesus

- Romans 3:20-24
- Embrace the truth that you cannot \_\_\_\_\_ God's \_\_\_\_\_ by your \_\_\_\_\_.
- The purpose of the law is to show you your \_\_\_\_\_ for a \_\_\_\_\_.
  - v20
  - Until you see yourself as a \_\_\_\_\_, you won't see your need for a \_\_\_\_\_.
- Being \_\_\_\_\_ with God comes by \_\_\_\_\_ in Christ \_\_\_\_\_.
  - v22
  - Religion has \_\_\_\_\_ what God made \_\_\_\_\_.
- Psalm 16:6

**Start talking.**

- Growing up, what was one “rule” (family, school, or church) that you thought was silly, hard, or maybe even unfair? How did you respond to it?

**Start thinking.**

- Read Matthew 23:25–26. What’s the difference between cleaning “the outside of the cup” and letting God transform the inside? How do we sometimes fall into the same trap as the Pharisees?
- Read Romans 3:20–24. Why can’t we ever earn God’s acceptance by good works? How does this passage point us to our need for Jesus?
- Read Psalm 16:6. How can we begin to view God’s boundaries not as restrictions, but as gifts of love and protection?

**Start sharing.**

- Where have you seen “religion” (man-made rules) distort people’s view of God?
- How have you experienced God’s love and freedom through His commands, rather than restriction?
- What’s an area in your life where you’re tempted to “perform” for God instead of resting in His grace?

**Start praying.** Be bold and pray with power.

*Father, forgive me for the times I’ve tried to earn Your love through rules and performance. Remind me that I am made right with You only through Jesus, not by my works. Help me to see Your boundaries as blessings, and teach me to love You with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength. May my obedience flow not from duty, but from delight in Your love. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

**Start Doing.** Commit to a step and live it out this week

- This week, ask God to show you one area where you’ve been following Him out of duty rather than delight. Then pray for His Spirit to reshape your heart so that obedience flows from love.
- **Stop Performing** – This week, release the pressure to earn God’s acceptance. Remind yourself daily: “I am accepted in Christ, not by my works.”
- **See the Boundaries as Blessings** – When you bump up against one of God’s commands, pause and thank Him for loving you enough to protect you from what would harm you.
- **Choose Love Over Rules** – Instead of asking, “What do I have to do?” ask, “How can I love God and love people today?” and let that guide your actions.