

# The Parable of the Ten Virgins and the Religious Spirit

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## Part Three

### Discerning a Religious Spirit

We have taken a close look at the parable of the Ten Virgins and using Biblical references clarified the proper roles and symbolism. We have also examined the characteristics of the foolish virgins as well as looking closer at others whom Jesus said would not enter the kingdom heaven. By using these character traits, this part will encourage the reader to look introspectively to discern a religious spirit.

After having prayed and worked through this parable, it has been concluded that there could be as many as half of those who consider themselves friends of the Bride (in the Church), yet not be allowed entrance into the wedding feast. These people profess to be Christians, serve in the church, yet not knowing Jesus truly in their hearts. They may be serving in leadership, teaching, and even casting out demons, yet their hearts are still their own. They base their belief system on fear and pride, but do not know the love the Lord has for them. The religious spirit would have us serve the Lord to gain His approval, or even that of others, rather than knowing that approval comes through the cross. In this mindset or even demonic influence, the motive to serve is not love but acceptance.

A religious spirit is one that deceives a believer and is an evil counterfeit that seeks to substitute religious activity for the power of the Holy Spirit. Those with such a spirit do not serve in the Kingdom from a motive of love for the King but are driven by fear, guilt, and is based on a foundation of pride. Jesus said they would not enter heaven. How many people in the Church, who study the Word and practice righteousness in actuality do not know their Messiah. According to this parable – half of the people are not known by Christ.

These characteristics and behavior still hold true today for those who have submitted to this counterfeit spirit. The appearance of goodness and righteousness on the outside covers the true motives of their heart inside. According to the parable as many as half of the church may have this counterfeit spirit; a counterfeit so close in appearance; so clever in disguise - they themselves are not aware of this lack of relationship. They stand with the others to the very end believing their citizenship is in heaven. Could this mean that all who attend church and serve are not truly saved? The word tells us that this is the case:

#### Matthew 13:24-30

*“Jesus presented another parable to them, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven, may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went away. But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’ The slaves said to him, ‘Do you want*

*us, then, to go and gather them up?” “But he said, “No, for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them. Allow both to grow together until the harvest, and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.”””*

By assessing these characteristics, we can know examine ourselves. Below is a list of questions to help you to examine yourself and discern a religious spirit. They are not meant to look at and accuse others, please focus on your own spirit. Consider praying through these, asking the help of the Holy Spirit. If you sense His conviction, ask for His forgiveness and repent.

1. When you fast, do you do so in secret, or do you complain and give others the impression you are experiencing a hardship for your love of God?
2. When you fast or are sacrificing something, do you hope to give others the impression that you are a spirit minded person?
3. Do you require others to behave in a certain way, but for yourself think that “God will understand this time?”
4. Do you have a high set of standards that you live by and expect others to live by?
5. Do you harbor a secret sin yet judge others for the same sin you hide?
6. Do you secretly or outwardly judge others?
7. Do you sincerely act justly, love mercy and walk humbly before God? Or do you believe that by following the rules you are pleasing Him?
8. Do you believe your attendance at church, reading your Bible, participating in a ministry should impress others?
9. Do you consider your attendance at church, reading your Bible, participating in a ministry gives you favor with God?
10. Do you examine your heart and confess your sins daily? If so, are you honest before God, or do you make excuses?
11. Do you consider yourself as one who does not sin?
12. When in a social situation, do you assume that you are the most religious or spiritual person in the group?
13. When in a ministry setting, do you assume you are the most qualified person to take the leadership role?
14. When out in public, do expect that people will recognize you from church, and if so, do you also expect them to admire you for your spirituality?
15. When a question regarding spiritual things arises in a group setting, do you believe you are the most qualified to answer the question?
16. When in a church setting, do you find it your role to have a “Word from the Lord”?

17. If you have a title in serving at church, do you believe you should be admired and respected for that title?
18. Do you believe you are the most qualified for your position?
19. If someone new were to come to your church with a more extensive background in ministry service, would you be grateful they are now serving, or would you feel they need to earn their way once again?
20. Do you ever find yourself jealous of someone who is more popular, or is sought after for spiritual advice?
21. Do you feel you must keep up appearances that all is well in your life so to maintain your spiritual status as a leader in your church?
22. When someone else has a more effective ministry, or God is moving and advancing them, do you get jealous?
23. If you are jealous, do you ever speak about this person with others to criticize them? Did you ever conspire with others to discredit someone because you were jealous?
24. Do you ever gossip about others with the aim to raise yourself up to those you are speaking?
25. Do you grumble and complain when serving others?
26. Do you find fault with those you serve?
27. Do you flatter people for the sake of gaining an advantage?
28. If someone were to come along with the same ministry as yours, would you see them as a rival or co-worker in Christ?
29. When doing a good deed, do you hope someone will see you?
30. When doing a good deed, are you hoping this may elevate your stature somehow, before man or before God?
31. Do you ever try to give the appearance of your good character and spirituality with the intention to impress anyone?
32. When you worship God in a corporate setting, are you focused on the Lord and His goodness, or are you concerned with how you look while you are worshipping?
33. When you worship God in a corporate setting, are you judging how others may look while worshipping?
34. When praying in a group, do you try to impress others with your prayer as to give the impression you are someone who knows how to pray?
35. When someone else is praying in a group, are you thinking that you should be the one speaking because your prayers have more value before God?
36. When someone else is praying in a group, are you focusing on their prayer in agreement before God? Or are you already planning on what you will pray, even to impress the others?
37. Do you believe that doing good works earns you favor with God?

38. Do you ever look upon someone's hardship and think they must deserve their misfortune?
39. Do you believe that if someone is experiencing a difficult situation, they somehow must have lost favor with God?
40. Do you ever judge someone by their appearance? Are you ever critical of those who are less fortunate than you?
41. Do you consider yourself superior to those who are different than you?
42. Do you consider yourself superior?
43. Do you find your righteousness in Jesus alone, or do you believe you are a good person?
44. Have you ever compared yourself to someone who you thought was a sinner, and considered that you were closer to God because you are not so bad?
45. Do you spend time with the Lord out of love for Him? Or do you read your Bible because you should?
46. Do you ever think that you can earn your way into the presence of God?
47. Do you believe that you can attain the kingdom of God by works and being good, or simply by grace and faith alone?
48. Do you ever think that God loves you because you are good?
49. When you confess your sins, do you think you are not as bad as other people?
50. Do you ever believe that because you sinned, you are no longer welcome in His presence?
51. Are you defensive if someone confronts you about a sin?
52. Can you honestly say you serve in ministry because you love God?
53. Do you believe that if you strive to be moral, you will be good enough to enter into God's presence.?
54. When you worship God, can you honestly say that you know without Jesus, you have nothing to offer?
55. Can you sincerely say you know and love God, and that He knows and loves you?

After having spent time to ponder each question prayerfully, honestly and sincerely, please take the time to confess and repent if you have been convicted. Ask the Lord for forgiveness for replacing your righteousness for what Jesus did for you on the Cross. Pray that you will come to know Him in all love and fullness.

### **A Prayer to Know the Lord in His Fullness**

Ephesians 3:14-21

*"For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner*

*man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him [be] the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.”*

In the final section we will look at Bible verses to learn who does Jesus say that He knows. The purpose is to look at the character of those whom He says He loves and calls His own.