

# Grace Notes

## Jesus vs. Religion

1.26.12



**“The reality....is found in Christ.”**

(Colossians 2:17 - niv)

Tullian Tchividjian (pronounced cha-vi-jin) is the Senior Pastor of *Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church* in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. A Florida native, Tullian is also the grandson of Billy and Ruth Graham. In a recent blog (which I thought was extremely well-written), he wrote:

A lot of attention has been paid to [Jefferson Bethke's video, *“Why I Hate Religion, But Love Jesus”*]. Jefferson is a great, humble, teachable brother who loves the gospel. But the response to his video has been varied. Many love it. Others hate it. And still others have raised a caution flag—uncomfortable with the way “religion” is often contrasted with the gospel.

I've watched the video - along with close to 17 million others as of this writing. It's clear that Bethke is using the term “religion” to mean “legalism.” And, in that light, I couldn't agree more with his message. (Well, except that the first words out of his mouth are, *“What if I told you Jesus came to abolish religion.”* Nothing could be farther from the truth. Jesus, Himself, said, *“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.”* Matthew 5:17) But, based on Bethke's humility, obvious passion for Christ, and age (he's only 23), I can set that statement aside. I know what he means. To help critics better understand his heart, Bethke writes:

[This is] a poem I wrote to highlight the difference between Jesus and *false* religion. In the scriptures Jesus received the most opposition from the most religious people of his day. At it's core Jesus' gospel and the good news of the Cross is in pure opposition to self-righteousness/self-justification. Religion is man centered, Jesus is God-centered. This poem highlights my journey to discover this truth.

*“.....my journey to discover this truth.”* I love that imagery. Jesus promised the Holy Spirit would *“guide [us] into all truth”* (John 16:13) as we journey through this life. Bethke has discovered what millions of believers still have trouble seeing: our right standing before a Holy God is based on “the reality of Christ”, not on how good or moral we are. Author/pastor, Tim Keller, writes, *“Religion says, ‘My motivation is based on fear and insecurity’, while the Gospel says, ‘My motivation is based on grateful joy.’ Religion says, ‘My identity and self-worth are based mainly on how hard I work. Or how moral I am,’ while the Gospel says, ‘My identity and self-worth are centered on the one who died for me, I am saved by sheer grace.”*

And what is “grace?” Professor, Paul Zahl, describes grace this way: *“Grace is love that seeks you out when you have nothing to give in return.”* Philip Yancey adds, *“Grace is God's gift of unconditional love - free of charge, no strings attached.”*

That's freedom. That's Jesus Christ.



**Soli Deo Gloria, Nick**