



Step 1:

Identify Your Number 1 Enemy



Your Number 1 Enemy

I don't go to church, how could you know my #1 enemy?

The reason you don't go to church is because of your number 1 enemy. The reason you might say something like, "I believe in God but not organized Religion," is because of your number #1 enemy. What is it? **You have been to church.** That's it. You don't go to church because you, maybe, have been there before. What did you experience? People acting opposite of who you thought they were supposed to be. Or, you experienced a list of rules and regulations that you could never live up to. Worse yet, maybe you felt the judgment and criticism of others because you couldn't be perfect like them. What did you conclude? "They're hypocrites." Or, "If that is church, I will never go back." Or, "I will never add up!"

Please allow me to continue with a very sincere, "I'm sorry." I am. I am sorry that your experience of church hurt your or disappointed you. That's not why Jesus came to earth. He came to love you, heal you and free you from the mess you might be in.

I need to be honest about people like me. I go to church and I'm not perfect. In fact, we who go to church are jacked up like everyone else. And I want to share a dirty little secret with you, if you meet someone who seems to have it all together, they are probably just better at faking it.

Read what Paul said in the Bible: [The God-setting-things-right that we read about has become Jesus-setting-things-right for us. And not only for us, but for everyone who believes in him. For there is no difference between us and them in this. Since we've compiled this long and sorry record as sinners \(both us and them\) and proved that we are utterly incapable of living the glorious lives God wills for us.](#) MSG Romans 3:22-24

That's us. All on the same page, utterly incapable of living a holy life. Boom.

Now imagine a group of messed up people going to a local church. What is the result? We become a group of messed up people together, unable to get it right all the time. That's the local church. The worst places are where they fake it and judge others. The best places are where they admit it and are transparent about it.

Before you stop reading, please allow me to share something with you. Paul's letter continues.

[Since we've compiled this long and sorry record as sinners \(both us and them\) and proved that we are utterly incapable of living the glorious lives God wills for us, God did it for us. Out of sheer generosity he put us in right standing with himself. A pure gift. He got us out of the mess we're in and restored us to where he always wanted us to be. And he did it by means of Jesus Christ.](#)

MSG Romans 3:22-24

We are jacked up. In fact we are so jacked up we can't help ourselves, so God did it for us.

Your Number 1 Enemy

I don't go to church, how could you know my #1 enemy?

How does God do it for us?

If you're a hard worker and do a good job, you deserve your pay; we don't call your wages a gift. But if you see that the job is too big for you, that it's something only God can do, and you trust him to do it - you could never do it for yourself no matter how hard and long you worked - well, that trusting-him-to-do-it is what gets you set right with God, by God. Sheer gift.

MSG Romans 4:4-5

We simply trust him to do it. You believe. You tell God, "Help me."

What happens next?

Now that we're no longer shackled to that domineering mate of sin, and out from under all those oppressive regulations and fine print, we're free to live a new life in the freedom of God.

MSG Romans 7:6

You are free from sin. You are free from the oppressive rules and regulations.

Can you do whatever you want? Yea right, nice try.

The invitation is for you to walk into that relationship with Jesus by saying, "Help me." The problem is that in your previous church experience, you might have been introduced to a thing we call Religion. Religion simply means: I am not going to ask God to help me, I'm going to try to help myself by striving and struggling to live a perfect life. Religion hurts people. Actually, it's much worse, Religion will gut people. It's so bad, God hates Religion. Check out what God says about it.

Quit your worship charades. I can't stand your trivial religious games: Monthly conferences, weekly Sabbaths, special meetings - meetings, meetings, meetings - I can't stand one more! Meetings for this, meetings for that. I hate them! You've worn me out!

I'm sick of your religion, religion, religion, while you go right on sinning. When you put on your next prayer-performance, I'll be looking the other way. No matter how long or loud or often you pray, I'll not be listening. And do you know why? Because you've been tearing people to pieces, and your hands are bloody. MSG Isaiah 1:13-15

That was you wasn't it? You were torn to pieces. Guess what, that made God mad.

Your Number 1 Enemy

I don't go to church, how could you know my #1 enemy?

I invite you into a personal relationship with Jesus. It begins with, "Help me." Live like that everyday and you can live in freedom, spiritual freedom.

Does church get it right all the time? No, because there are people like me in the church. I'm jacked up like you. Imagine if you ran the local church. How messed up would that be? Funny right? If you aren't laughing, then you missed my point.

Imagine a place, a church, that wasn't built on what people liked and disliked. Imagine a place that was on the mission of Christ. A place that is unapologetic, passionate and relentless in pursuing people in need of God. Would that inspire you? It does me.

I believe in God. He has changed my life. I invite you into that relationship with Jesus.

I believe in the local church - without Religion. When the local church gets it right, it's pretty cool. I invite you to find a local church. Take your jacked up self and hang out with other jacked up people and declare your dependence on God.

Your number 1 enemy is that, maybe, you have been to church before. Don't allow that to stop you from a personal relationship with Jesus. Don't allow that to stop you from finding a local church.