

Contrast Chart: Pharisaic Religion vs. True Christianity

This expanded contrast chart represents a continuum, with all-out Pharisaic Religion on the left and pure untainted Christianity on the right. Christians the world over are “doing church” at both ends of this spectrum and at every point in between. Though few churches are *completely* pharisaical, or completely non-pharisaical, all definitely lean toward one set of values or the other. These traits or emphases can be found in individuals as well, and individuals lean one way or the other. Our goal as Christians should be always to move in the direction of authentic Christianity and to move our congregations in that direction as well. That does not mean that everything on the left side of this list is entirely bad (though some are). But when it excludes the right side, or favors the left side over the right side, it is a wrong emphasis. This is a good tool for evaluating where your church falls on this scale. It will help you identify those things that need to change as well as to lobby for those changes. We recognize that there is a substantial amount of redundancy in this list. This is intentional, in order to maximize communication on these points.

PHARISAIC RELIGION emphasizes:

- The Word (Scriptures)
- Power of man (manpower)
- Human intelligence
- Head knowledge
- Control (of people, facilities, money, doctrine)
- Sophistication
- Debate (apologetics/hyper-literalism, facts)
- Conformity and uniformity (top down)
- Seeking God with all of your mind
- Partiality (based on money, talent, status), elitism
- Favor with men
- Self-exalting positions, titles, authority structures
- Public giving (name-on-bench syndrome)
- Head faith
- Exegesis/Word-parsing
- Homiletics, professional speaking circuits
- Talent/skills, accomplishments/qualifications
- Self-confidence
- Personal reputation (building it, seeking it)
- Physical attractiveness
- Maintaining an image (righteousness, maturity)
- Law as a taskmaster
- Doing/Performing
- Walking by sight
- Living by the Book
- Human traditions
- Calendar Christianity/Holy Days of Obligation
- Eldership based on credentials/titles/degrees
- Salvation by personal performance, works

TRUE CHRISTIANITY emphasizes:

- The Word (Jesus)
- Power of God
- Wisdom of God/Human foolishness
- Heart knowledge
- Submission (to one another in the bond of peace)
- Childlikeness
- Testimonies (relational and experiential truth)
- Unity with freedom of conscience
- Seeking God with all of your heart
- No partiality
- Favor with God
- Servant leadership
- Private giving (don't let the left hand know...)
- Heart faith
- Prophecy, Meditation/Insight/Revelation
- Spirit-led (unrehearsed) speaking/teaching/sharing
- God's power glorified in human weakness
- Confidence in God
- God's reputation (protecting it, proclaiming it)
- Inward beauty/Letting go of externals
- Maintaining transparency (admitting faults, failings)
- Law as a tutor
- Being/Loving
- Walking by faith
- Living by the Spirit
- God-given traditions (breaking bread, baptism, gospel)
- God-ordained prophetic Feasts
- Eldership based on proven character, maturity
- Salvation by grace through faith and repentance

PHARISAIC RELIGION emphasizes:

Religious ambition
Budgets, buildings, salaries, amenities
Seminary education/degrees (man-taught)
Churches/Cathedrals
Judgment
Building the local congregation
Knowing the Bible
Fortress mentality (us against them)
Magic or formula prayers
Elementary principles of the world
Boards and councils
Independence, self-sufficiency
Faith in facts or doctrines
Career clergy/priests
Knowing the Scriptures
Programs
Professionalism
Organization
Credibility in the community
Public integrity
Formal oration, rehearsals
Cleverness of speech
Argument
Initial general repentance
The Church as quadriplegic (talking head)
Formal support groups
Obedience as means to salvation
Salvation as an event only
Outward compliance leading to self-righteousness
Feeds and breeds pride
Consumption/Prosperity
Covetousness/Acquisition (more is better)
Striving for acceptance, self-effort
Busyness/Over-commitment/Achievement
Appearance of success
Compromise with the world
External conversion
Outward image that impresses man
Imitating the world
Performers and performance
Pastor-teacher as point-man
Knowing *about* God (dogma/creeds/orthodoxies)
Earthly principles
Bible as textbook
Academic teaching

TRUE CHRISTIANITY emphasizes:

Surrendered ambition
Benevolence, caring for the poor, missions
Education by the Holy Spirit (1 John 2:27), discipleship
Homes/Parks/Rented quarters
Mercy
Building the Kingdom of God
Knowing the Author of the Bible
Non-combatant mentality (loving your enemies)
Conversations with God
Counterintuitive principles of the Kingdom
Elders and deacons (as brothers)
Mutual dependency, admission of needs
Faith in relationship
Priesthood of all believers
Living the Scriptures
Relationships
Brokenness, Authenticity
Organism
Credible community
Personal integrity
Informal sharing, spontaneity, authenticity
The cross of Christ
Personal testimony
Ongoing specific repentance
The Church as fully functioning body
Organic relationships (bearing one another's burdens)
Obedience as evidence of salvation
Salvation as an event and a process
Inward transformation leading to outward compliance
Feeds and breeds perseverance
Contentment in all circumstances
Thankfulness (less is more)
Striving to enter His rest
Peace/Quietness/Confidence in God's achievement
Admission of weakness
Hating the world
Internal conversion
Inward transformation that pleases God
Imitating Christ
Participants and participation
Jesus as point-Man
Knowing God (relationship/revelation/intimacy)
Heavenly wisdom
Bible as love letter
Experiential learning

PHARISAIC RELIGION emphasizes:

Dividing over non-essentials/Factions/Sects
Competition (for members, recognition, standing)
Political involvement, changing the world
Gaining followers
Fruit of self-effort: accomplishments, success
Professional qualifications
Shadows
Old Wineskins
Doctrinal salvation (believe these facts)
Fund-raising strategies
Personal ministry (“my ministry”)
Natural talents
Strategic planning, programs
Clergy/laity distinction, hierarchies
Deceptiveness of riches
Law
Earthly kingdom
Creeds/Confessions/Orthodoxies
Education
Glorifying the self (achievement, standing, success)
Earthly prosperity
Tithing
Lording it over the brethren

TRUE CHRISTIANITY emphasizes:

Unity of heart/mind, peace, fellowship
Cooperation in the Great Commission
Evangelism, changing hearts
Following Jesus
Fruit of the Spirit
Godly character or calling
Substance
New Wine
Relational salvation (give yourself/sins to Jesus)
Trusting God to fund what He authorizes/commissions
The ministry of the Holy Spirit
Spiritual gifts
Fasting and prayer, unpredictability of the Spirit
Unity and equality in the Body, brotherhood
Value of spiritual wealth
Liberty
Heavenly Kingdom
Mystery of Godliness/Gospel
Experience (with God)
Dying to self (ambition, wealth, lusts)
Eternal inheritance
Sacrificial and cheerful giving (as God supplies)
Serving the brethren

NOTES