**Legalism**

*Mindset (often subconscious):*

No sin = inherent worth, love from God

*Conclusion:*

I must not sin in order to gain God’s

love and approval.

*Emotional Result:*

Repression of emotions and denial of personal faults because failure means I’ll lose God’s favor.

*Behavioral Result:*

1) Perfectionistic, resulting in obsessively following rules to assure myself I am doing everything “right.” I’m often exhaustively working at “good deeds” and behavior, but without a sense of joy or peace

2) Highly critical toward others in order to make myself feel superior (and, therefore less sinful). Other people become the measuring rod by which I determine how much I am approved by God.

3) Tendency to hold to the “letter of the law” even when circumstances might call for mercy.

*View of God:*

God is a demanding taskmaster who is difficult to please and becomes angry and unhappy with me when I fail.

I *say* Jesus is Savior, but my emotions and actions reveal I am seeking to save myself through perfectionist self-efforts.

*Bottom line:*

Misunderstands who Jesus is and the purpose he fulfilled.

**Licentiousness**

*Mindset (often subconscious):*

No sin = inherent worth, love from God

*Conclusion:*

Focusing on sin only leads to condemnation and feelings of worthlessness. Sin is an archaic concept. God loves and accepts me because sin is an illusion or doesn’t matter.

*Emotional result:*

Repression of emotions and denial of personal faults in an effort to pretend sin doesn’t exist or matter.

*Behavioral Result:*

1) Difficulty owning up to personal shortcomings. Reluctance to name real societal problems caused by sin.

2) Defensive reactions toward others who believe in definitive concepts of right and wrong (perhaps because of wounds suffered from exposure to legalism).

3) In extreme cases, internal confusion and a lack of ethical boundaries.

*View of God:*

God is somewhat subjective to my experience and a vague concept of love that doesn’t have clearly defined expectations. I define what love is and, therefore, who God is.

I respect Jesus as a good man, but do not consider him Savior because there is nothing I need to be saved from.

*Bottom line:*

Misunderstands who Jesus is and the purpose he fulfilled.

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**Christianity**

*Mindset:*

Sin is inconsequential to inherent worth and God’s love for me.

*Conclusion:*

God loves me irrespective of what I do or don’t do. In fact, God purposely embraces me during failure to show unconditional love (Romans 5:8, 10; Titus 3:5).

*Emotional result:*

Security and confidence to openly acknowledge my faults. Ability to feel genuine gratitude for God’s mercy and compassion because I recognize my need for them.

*Behavioral Result:*

1) Readily honest and transparent with myself and others about imperfections. No need to prove myself. Don’t mind apologizing or receiving constructive feedback.

2) Readily merciful toward others when they make mistakes or offend. Slow to critique others.

3) Values ethical standards and recognizes they are discerned not just through the “letter of the law,” but by mercy.

*View of God:*

God is love (1 John 4:8). We understand what love is through Scripture, the Incarnation, and our love for each other (1 John 4:12, 19).

I say *and* believe Jesus is Savior.

*Bottom line:*

I understand Jesus’s work rescues me from futile perfectionist self-efforts, as well as the very real power of sin that tempts me.