

7 “Good” Behaviors Christians Do That Are Actually Sinful to God

By System Import | Sermon | March 13, 2026

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In our walk of faith, it is easy to confuse cultural niceties or religious habits with true righteousness. We often adopt behaviors that look holy on the outside, are praised by the church, and feel "good" to our natural minds, yet they are actually offensive to God because they stem from the wrong heart posture. Jesus saved His harshest critiques not for the "sinners," but for the religious elite who had perfected the art of looking good while harboring hidden sin.

We often call these "respectable sins." They are the wolves in sheep's clothing of our character. They disguise themselves as virtues, but underneath, they are rooted in pride, fear, and a lack of trust in God. Today, we are going to unmask seven of these behaviors. We are going to hold them up to the light of Scripture to see why what looks "good" to man can actually be sinful to God.

Number 1: Worrying Disguised as "Concern"

We often frame worry as a sign of love. We say, "I'm just worried about my children," or "I'm just concerned about the future of the church." It feels responsible. It feels like we care. But the Bible calls chronic worry a sin. Why? Because at its core, worry is a functional atheism. It is acting as if God does not exist, or as if He is not good enough or powerful enough to handle your situation.

Jesus commanded us three times in Matthew 6, "Do not worry." When we worry, we are essentially saying, "God, I don't trust You. I believe my problem is bigger than Your power." We trade the peace of God for the illusion of control. True concern leads to prayer and action; sinful worry leads to anxiety and paralysis. It is an insult to a faithful Father.

Number 2: People-Pleasing Disguised as "Kindness"

We are taught to be nice, to be peacemakers, and to serve others. But there is a fine line between biblical service and the idolatry of people-pleasing. When we cannot say "no," when we burn ourselves out trying to make everyone happy, or when we compromise the truth to avoid conflict, we are not being kind; we are being idolatrous. We are fearing man more than we fear God.

Galatians 1:10 asks the piercing question: "Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ." You cannot serve two masters. If your "goodness" is driven by a desperate need for validation or a fear of rejection, it is not love; it is self-preservation. God calls us to be truthful, even when it hurts, and to seek His applause alone.

Number 3: Legalism Disguised as "Holiness"

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This is the trap of the Pharisees. It is the belief that we can earn God's favor by following a strict set of rules. We might pride ourselves on not drinking, not smoking, dressing a certain way, or attending every service. While discipline is good, when it becomes the basis of our standing with God, it becomes "filthy rags" Isaiah 64:6.

Legalism is sinful because it rejects the sufficiency of the Cross. It says, "Jesus' sacrifice wasn't enough; I need to add my own good works to it." It breeds judgment toward others who don't follow our rules and pride in our own hearts. True holiness is a fruit of the Spirit, born out of love and relationship, not a checklist born out of fear and pride.

Number 4: False Humility Disguised as "Modesty"

We often think humility means putting ourselves down, refusing compliments, or hiding our talents. We say, "Oh, I'm nothing," or "I can't do that, I'm not good enough." But this is not humility; it is actually a form of pride. It is self-obsession. Whether you are boasting about how great you are or whining about how terrible you are, you are still focused on you.

True humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less. It is agreeing with what God says about you. If God says you are gifted, called, and capable through Him, then denying that is not modesty; it is unbelief. It is calling God a liar. The slothful servant in the Parable of the Talents Matthew 25 buried his talent out of fear and false humility, and the Master called him "wicked and lazy."

Number 5: Gossip Disguised as "Prayer Requests"

This is perhaps the most common sin in the church. We gather to "share burdens," but it quickly turns into sharing secrets. "We really need to pray for Sally; did you hear what happened...?" We cloak our desire to discuss other people's business in spiritual language.

The Bible puts gossip in the same list as murder and sexual immorality Romans 1:29-32. Why? Because it murders a reputation. It tears down the Body of Christ. When we share information that is not ours to share, even under the guise of prayer, we are betraying trust and sowing division. God hates "one who sows discord among brethren" Proverbs 6:19. True prayer speaks to God about the person; gossip speaks to others about the person.

Number 6: Hoarding Disguised as "Stewardship"

We are called to be wise stewards of our money. We should save, plan, and be prudent. But this

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can easily cross the line into greed and a lack of trust. When we stop giving, stop being generous, and accumulate wealth solely for our own security, we are not being "good stewards"; we are being like the Rich Fool in Luke 12.

He built bigger barns to store his surplus, thinking he had secured his future, but God said, "You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you." Hoarding stems from a fear of scarcity, a belief that God will not provide. Biblical stewardship is about flow—receiving from God and releasing to others. When the flow stops, the water becomes stagnant. Gripping our finances tightly is a sin that denies God's ownership of everything.

Number 7: Busyness Disguised as "Ministry"

In our culture, busyness is a badge of honor. We run from meeting to meeting, serve on every committee, and exhaust ourselves "for the Kingdom." We think God is impressed by our calendar. But often, our busyness is a way to avoid intimacy with God. We are like Martha, "distracted by all the preparations," while criticizing Mary, who simply sat at Jesus' feet Luke 10:38-42.

Jesus told Martha that Mary had chosen the "better" thing. Work without worship is idolatry. Ministry without intimacy is just noise. When we are too busy to pray, too busy to rest, and too busy to love the people right in front of us because we are "doing things for God," we have missed God. He doesn't need our labor; He wants our hearts. Constant, driven busyness is often a sin of self-reliance and an inability to rest in His finished work.

Conclusion

These behaviors are tricky because they look so close to the real thing. Concern looks like love. Stewardship looks like wisdom. Ministry looks like service. But God looks at the heart. He is calling us to a deeper level of discernment, where we examine not just what we are doing, but why we are doing it.

Let us repent of these "respectable sins." Let us trade our worry for trust, our people-pleasing for God-fearing, our legalism for grace, and our busyness for abiding. When we do, our "good" behavior will actually become godly behavior.