

## RELIGIOUS SCRUPULOSITY

The history of religion can be traced back for thousands of years. Religion is a benchmark for many individuals. It not only provides guidance but also enriches individual's lives and guides them. Religion provides a sense of joy, comfort, and structure for individuals. However, OCD can intertwine with an individual's belief system and cause their life to become a hapless end of compulsive joyless behaviors. The way that a person prays and conducts their religious rituals becomes an endless sense of unhappiness and void. Individuals with scrupulosity turn pleasurable aspects of religion into compulsive rituals that lead to an endless road of confusion and grief.

Religion intrinsically provides guidelines and laws to live by but average individuals conduct their lives in such a way that the incorporation of these laws enriches their lives. However, individuals with religious scrupulosity carry out compulsive behavior that skew from the laws that other observe. For example, Judaism has strict laws about eating kosher which include guidelines about mixing meat and milk. An individual with religious scrupulosity might constantly doubt and get thoughts that they are breaking the dietary laws of Judaism. One case that I came across involved an individual that became so obsessed with dietary laws that he refused to eat period and had to be hospitalized. As well, an individual of the Roman Catholic faith may obsess for hours that they have somehow committed an act of blasphemy either through something they thought or that they might have acted out. They may believe that they are condemned to hell for eternity. Individuals may spend hours and hours making trips to confession in "order" to feel a sense of forgiveness. But, unfortunately these individuals suffer with endless thought that drives them to an anxious state of mayhem. Many individuals mull over and over in their minds whether they have recited a pray properly or if they have followed a law to perfection. However, individuals with religious scrupulosity fail to realize that there is no such thing as perfection. Actually according to many religions, perfection can only be achieved by G-d. It is common for religious scrupulosity to develop out of seamlessly nowhere. Religious holidays such as the Sabbath entail fear and doubt into these individuals. Instead of the enjoyment that religion brings to the average person, individuals find no salvation or enrichment in their faith. However, they live in constant fear of committing a sin or doing something incorrectly. An individual could live an assimilated lifestyle one day and then all of a sudden develop an overly obsessive sense of religion. These individual thrust himself or herself into religion headfirst and all of sudden develop an urgency to practice religion to "perfection". Individuals become so riddled with doubt that it develops into fear that creates a sense of entrapment within their own mind. Their lives become so rigid that any act they perform just isn't "right" Compulsive ritualistic behavior can be performed either through compulsive act or by means of mental ideations. One illustration of a compulsive act is that a person while praying might say the words in the scripture but then get thought they have misread a portion and start the portion from the beginning. Such an individual can spend upwards of two hours reciting the same portion. Another example is that an individual while holding a holy scripture might get the thought that his hands are impure and that he is desecrating the Holy Scripture. It is also common that a person might have a "magical" number of times that they must say a word correctly in order to move on to the rest of the portion. As well, while reading the word G-d a person might think of the devil or an

inappropriate sexual or aggressive act. In this case, the individual might find themselves with a spiked level of anxiety and a sense of helplessness.