

Lesson Nine
Colossians 2:16-19
Nothing But Jesus

Candles, icons, yoga, and more! What do these things have to do with following Christ? Absolutely nothing and yet, modern Christians are being told that the use of these so-called spiritual aids and ideologies are beneficial in growing closer to God. King Solomon said in the book of Ecclesiastes that there is nothing new under the sun and *today more than ever*, we understand the truth of his statement. The heresies that plagued the Colossian church have never really left us; they've simply been repackaged and resold with a modern twist.

The famous English preacher Charles Spurgeon once said, "It is a remarkable fact that all the heresies which have risen in the Christian church have had a decided tendency to dishonor God and to flatter man." In the remaining verses of chapter two, Paul exposes three elements of the Colossian heresy for what they really are: manmade attempts at spirituality. In this lesson we will see that Paul attacks legalism and mysticism by showing that salvation through Jesus Christ does not need to be supplemented by any ritual, mystic belief or human effort.

Day One – Correct in Christ
Read Colossians 2:16-18

1. Christians have every reason to feel confident and secure in the work that Jesus accomplished for them on the cross. Unfortunately, there will always be those who want to add religious practices to salvation. List the admonitions that Paul gives to believers in verses 16 and 18.

2. Judgmental people tend to carefully scrutinize the actions of others. What does the Bible say about judging others?

Matthew 7:1-5

John 7:24

Romans 14:10-12

3. How can you apply Romans 14:13-18 to help keep you from falling into the trap of judging others and being used by the enemy?

4. Rather than judging others because their beliefs or convictions are different than ours, how are we to act according to Romans 14:19-21?

Day Two – Free in Him

Read Colossians 2:16-19

1. The false teachers were judging the Colossian believers by trying to pressure them into following certain Jewish religious practices. Today, we call this form of spiritual intimidation legalism and formalism. Use a dictionary to define what these terms mean.

Legalism:

Formalism:

a. Compare the similarities of these two practices.

2. The formalism practiced by the Colossian church cheated them by creating a counterfeit spirituality. In what ways does Colossians 2:18-19 say that this can occur?

3. In what ways can believers be legalistic in regard to food, drink, and the keeping of holidays or the Sabbath?

a. How have you or someone you know struggled with being legalistic in these areas?

4. A legalistic person can make others feel like less of a Christian because their standards and expectations are difficult to meet. How is legalism described in Matthew 23:1-7?

a. What do you think motivates someone to be legalistic?

b. How can this type of behavior affect relationships?

5. The opposite of religious legalism is liberty. Read 1 Corinthians 8:9-13 and Galatians 5:13-14 and tell in your own words how we are to exercise freedom in Christ.

a. Give some real-life examples of ways that you can put these verses into actions.

"A life centered on Jesus and what He did on the cross has no place for legalism."

David Guzik

Day Three – Reality in Him
Read Colossians 2:17-19

1. Colossians 2:17 reveals that the Jewish rituals concerning food, festivals, and the Sabbath were only a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ. A shadow is not real, but it does point to the fact that something tangible exists. How do the following verses describe Jesus as the tangible substance behind each of these “shadows”?

Food (Bread)

John 6:27-40, 51

Festival (Passover)

1 Corinthians 5:7

Sabbath (Rest)

Matthew 11:28-29

Mark 2:23-28

2. In Jesus, God has provided everything we need. Use the above verses to summarize this wonderful truth and what it means to you personally.

3. Both legalism and formalism can lead to spiritual pride by promoting a false sense of humility. How can boasting about visions and experiences cause someone to appear humble when in actuality they are full of pride?

4. What do you discover about true humility from the following verses?

Romans 12:3, 16

Philippians 2:3-4

1 Peter 5:5-6

a. Share how you might begin to apply at least one of these verses to your life.

5. Colossians 2:18 condemned the practice of a type of mysticism that accepts angel worship and extra Biblical visions. How does scripture refute these practices?

Worshipping angels

Matthew 4:10

1 Timothy 2:5

Relying on visions

Ezekiel 13:1-9

a. Why are these practices dangerous to the spiritual health of Christians?

b. Believers should never rely upon angels or visions for help or direction. What does Hebrews 4:16 instruct us to do instead?

“Beware that you do not lose the substance by grasping at the shadow.” Aesop

Day Four – Connected to Him

Read Colossians 2:19

1. In Colossians 2:19, Paul turns his attention to the relationship between Christ and believers. This is one of several passages in the New Testament that describes the church as the body of Christ. How does verse 19 describe our relationship to Christ and other believers?

2. It is possible to be in the church, but not be attached to its source of life. Paul pinpoints this as a problem when he says that as a church body they were not holding fast to the Head. Jesus Himself taught on the importance of staying attached in John 15:4-5. What did He say?

3. What conclusions can you make by comparing Colossians 2:19 and John 15:4-5?

4. What does Jesus promise to those who remain in Him according to John 15:8-11?

5. How can you make sure that you are firmly holding fast to Jesus?

Psalm 1:1-3

Isaiah 59:1-2

1 John 2:5-6

a. Which of these areas of “connection” need strengthening in your life?

b. Write a prayer asking the Holy Spirit what changes need to be made in order to firmly reconnect with Him.

