

**Lesson Ten**  
**Colossians 2:19-3:1-4**  
***Religion Versus Relationship***

Thus far, Paul has shown us the error of legalism and mysticism. In the verses we will study this week, he will also reveal that asceticism is unacceptable because the work of the cross is complete. No human work can be added to the merit of Christ's death.

Today, Christians desperately need to become reacquainted with the Christ of the Bible. We live in a time when all religions are accepted as equal and leading to God, just as in the time in which Paul wrote to the Colossians. There are still many in the church who see Jesus as prominent, but not preeminent. When believers dethrone Him from His rightful place as the Head of the body by mixing in other teachings, the result is a weakened expression of Christianity that the world mocks as outdated and irrelevant.

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

1. As we learned in our last lesson, believers need to abide in Jesus in order to remain fruitful and vibrant, but they also need to stay connected to one another for healthy growth as a body of believers. In what ways does Hebrews 10:24-25 exhort us to interact with one another?

2. What do you learn regarding about how the body works together from the following verses?

Romans 12:4-6a

1 Corinthians 12:12-26

3. In what ways have you connected with other Christians and been nourished by them?

a. Are you currently nourishing and helping someone else to grow closer to Jesus? If yes, in what ways? If not, what could you do differently?

4. Acts 2:40-47 provides a wonderful picture of how the body can function together. Summarize how this group of believers built up one another.

a. What hinders you from personally experiencing this type of relationship with your brothers and sisters in Christ?

5. List several people who would be encouraged if you reached out to them in some way. Next to each name, write one tangible way that you will express Christ's love to them. Make a firm commitment to follow through with your list but be sure to keep your ideas reasonable so that you will not be overwhelmed or discouraged.

Note: Perhaps you are wondering how you can connect with others in a way that will glorify God. Consider using your home as a place to start serving. You can open your home for prayer and use that as a way to reach out to new people at church and help other believers get to know one another better. Or invite those in your neighborhood over for a simple meal. While secular entertaining is a bondage that demands perfection, spiritual hospitality is liberating. This attitude of true hospitality looks for ways to minister to the needs of others without worrying about whether they are impressed. It says the place where I live is truly a gift from God and I will use it as He desires in order to bless others.

**Day Two – True Religion in Him**  
**Read Colossians 2:20-23**

1. As Paul concludes his teaching on the believers' position in Christ, he chastises the Colossians for subjecting themselves once again to regulations that reflect the basic principles of the world. Why does verse 20 say we should no longer conduct ourselves in this manner?

2. In contrast, how does Galatians 5:1 exhort believers to live?

3. The saints in Colosse were encouraged to live a life of rigorous self-denial and abstinence from earthly pleasures. This practice is known as asceticism. Write the phrases from Colossians 2:21 that tell what this included.

4. How does 1 Timothy 4:1-5 address this issue?

5. List some ways that religious people practice asceticism today.

a. Why do you think that some people find self-denial appealing?

**Day Three – Sufficiency in Christ**  
**Read Colossians 2:20-23-3:1-4**

1. The Gnostics were not the first ones to try and enforce their own idea of religion. Compare Jesus' strong words in Matthew 15:1-20 with Colossians 2:20-21 and summarize what you learn.

2. Record all that you learn about God's idea of true religion from the following verses.

Isaiah 1:16-17

Micah 6:8

James 1:27

a. How do these verses encourage you to live out your faith?

3. Colossians 2:23 reminds the believer that the keeping of rules and rituals have no power to bring about lasting change and are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh because they do not cultivate dependence upon Jesus Christ. In contrast, what are we to do according to 1 Timothy 4:7-8?

a. Share what this means to you personally.

The Lord has done all that is needed to set us free and make us complete in Christ. Our amazing God deserves our whole-hearted devotion!

4. Sound doctrine should lead to sound living. This truth is clearly seen as Paul's emphasis in the opening verses of chapter 3 moves to the practical everyday living that should be the result of the believer's spiritual relationship with Christ. To help you understand the basis of this relationship, write down the phrases that describe you and your connection with Him from Colossians 3:1-4.

a. How does this encourage you?

5. According to verse 1 and 2, how are the lives of believers to reflect this intimate union?

*"Christianity is God reaching down to man in love through Christ; not man trying to reach to God by justifying himself through the keeping of a list of rules." David Guzik*

#### **Day Four – Heavenly Minded in Christ**

##### **Read Colossians 3:1-4**

1. When considering the practical applications of our faith, it is important to remember that it is of little good for us to know the truth if we fail to live the truth. There should be a very definite connection between our belief and behavior. How are you personally fulfilling the command in Colossians 3:1 to seek those things which are above?

2. As Christians, we have a great responsibility to live what we believe. Both of the phrases, *to seek*, and *to set*, refer to a continuous and habitual action regarding how we live and what we think. What do you learn about seeking from the following verses?

Isaiah 55:6

Jeremiah 29:13

Matthew 6:25-33

a. How is the Christian's seeking different from that of the world?

3. It has been said regarding Colossians 3:2, that you must not only seek heaven, you must think heaven. Why is the focus of your thoughts so important?

a. Carefully think back over the last week and do a thought check. Where would you say that your thoughts were most often focused?

4. Our minds need to be continually redirected if our focus is going to be set on things above. Why will practicing Philippians 4:8 help to redirect your thoughts?

a. How can this kind of directed thinking change you?

b. In what ways will you apply this way of thinking to a current situation in your life?

5. It is very easy to get caught up in the whirlwind of what the world considers important. Why are we commanded to *not* set our minds on the things of this earth?

Proverbs 23:5

Matthew 6:19-21

2 Corinthians 4:18

6. Colossians 3:4 promises that you will appear with Christ in glory and this should be an incentive for whole-hearted Christian living. How does the exhortation in 1 John 3:2-3 support this and what does it mean to you personally?

7. In what ways have you been challenged to make changes so that your life will more clearly reflect heavenly goals?

*"The key to living a risen life is to have a life centered on Christ."*

John MacArthur

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