

# COLOSSIANS 2:16-23

## THE CHASE: OUR DESIRE FOR ENOUGH & JESUS' PURSUIT OF US

SCRIPTURE & SERMON DISCUSSION GUIDE — APRIL 19

### OPEN

1. What have you been learning is “essential” for you to persevere through this hard season?

In this week’s passage, Paul continues his exhortation to the Colossians to resist the false teachers in their midst by coming to a deeper appreciation of their union with Christ. As you read notice Paul’s repeated pattern of introducing a question or command, followed by a particular element of the false teaching, and then his own evaluation. READ COLOSSIANS 2:16-23.

### DISCUSS

2. The false teaching facing the Colossians was *syncretistic*, meaning it blended together elements of various religious beliefs and practices. In particular, it emphasized a mixture of Jewish practices (v. 16) with pagan/mystical (v. 18) elements.
  - a. What do you think it is about our human nature that makes us vulnerable to syncretism?
  - b. Where do you see Christianity mixed with nonbiblical beliefs and practices in our culture?
3. Paul does not just talk about the *content* of the false teaching, but the *process* used by the false teachers:
  - Verse 8: “See to it that no one *takes you captive* by philosophy and empty deceit...”
  - Verse 16: “Let no one *pass judgment* on you in questions of food and drink...”
  - Verse 18: “Let no one *disqualify* you, insisting on asceticism...”
  - a. What do you notice about how this process “works”? How does it seek to motivate change?
  - b. Have you personally experience that kind of “leadership” or tried to lead others in that way?
  - c. What does this process miss about the nature of true spiritual growth in Christlikeness?
4. In verse 23, Paul pushes back on legalism (and all “self-made religion”) saying it is of “no value in stopping the indulgence of the *flesh*.” When Paul talks about “the flesh” here (as he does at length in Romans 7-8 and Galatians 5), he is not just talking about our physical bodies but rather the sinful self-centered aspect of our being.
  - a. What do you think distinguishes legalism from discipline or self-control?
  - b. What are the limits & even pitfalls to a focus on behavior modification (through legalism)?
  - c. What does Paul indicate is the means of spiritual growth (we’ll look at this more in Colossians 3)?
5. Why does Paul tell us that Jesus is better (i.e., enough or essential) than Judaism, pagan mysticism, legalism, or any other belief or practice we could try to blend with Christianity?
6. What truths from this passage about your union with Christ do you need to rest in and rely upon to “walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith” (Colossians 2:6-7)?

### PRAY

Meditate on Paul’s words in Galatians 5:1 & 13 as you enter into a time of prayer: “For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery ... For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.”