

Colossians: The Supremacy of Christ (Col. 2:16-23) - "Missing Jesus"

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[0 : 00] Amen. Amen. Thank you, Brendan and worship team. Good morning, church. Good to see you.! Thank you. I appreciate that. It's good to be back. Our family, or at least a portion of us, we were in North Carolina last week and got to visit one of our daughters and it was good. And I'm thankful that we have zero humidity in Spokane. It's wonderful. It's a good thing. We can enjoy summer.

We're in a study. We're going through the book of Colossians and you guys have a copy of the scriptures. Go ahead and turn open to chapter 2. We're going to finish up chapter 2 this morning, looking at verses 16 to 23. Thank you, Kamesh, for bringing the word to us last week. It's a blessing.

And we love to serve on a team with qualified and excellent communicators of God's word. It's a grace to forth. Amen? So let me pray and then we will get into our study this morning. Join me. Lord Jesus, we just got done singing about you being our greatest treasure. And we want that to be the case. And so Lord, as we have come in here this morning, I don't know where every person is in relation to their affections for you, but Lord, we would ask that our gathering this morning would have a sanctifying work in each of our lives. And Lord, that we would leave here with our affections redirected towards you if they're off. If there's sin that needs to be confessed, that we would do that, that we would repent and enjoy just communion, sweet communion with you this morning. We're so thankful that you've promised to never leave or forsake us. We're thankful that you are called our helper. And as a result, we've got nothing to fear. So Lord, would you minister and refresh your people through the gift of the body of Christ, your spirit, and the text this morning.

And we will give you thanks for what you accomplished in each of our lives. In Jesus' name, amen. So I do have a title for the message this morning. I don't always do this, but this is, yeah, just feeling generous this morning. So if you want to put a title on your note sheet, I've entitled the message this morning, Missing Jesus. Missing Jesus. And I want to begin by sharing, I have this reoccurring nightmare. It's an annual thing. I don't know why I have the same nightmare at least once a year. But it's that our family visits Disneyland, and we spend like the day in the park. And for some reason, I usually wake up realizing we didn't go on any rides. And it's the same nightmare every time.

[3 : 04] And I am, I'm committed to the next time I have the Disneyland dream that I'm going to get on Pirates of the Caribbean or something. But I wake up in a panic, like, how could I spend the entire day I got distracted and then got on zero rides. I miss the heart of the Disneyland experience. Now, segue into what we're going to talk about this morning.

I think Christians can do that with Jesus. I mean, fundamentally, when we receive Christ, when we become Christians, what do we get? We get God. Like, relationship has been restored. We now have friendship with the living God. And this is precisely the fear that Paul addresses this morning that the Colossian church, man, he's afraid they're going to miss Jesus. It's like they're in the park, but they're not riding any rides. You call yourself a Christian, but you're still missing Jesus. They get caught up. They get distracted by what Paul terms empty philosophies of false teachers in this section. And I think what happens is, as a result, they miss the joy of just simply walking close with the Lord. Or as Kamesh said last Sunday, miss just being captivated by Christ your entire life. And so let's consider the text this morning, looking at verses 16 to 23, as Paul cautions the Colossians not to miss the Lord.

He writes, beginning in verse 16, Therefore, let no one pass judgment on you in question to food or drink or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to

come. But the substance belongs to Christ. Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by a sensuous mind. And not holding fast to the head from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God. If with Christ you have died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations? Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch, referring to things that all perish as they are used, according to human precepts and teachings. These have an appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh. So Paul here, he gives us a very diverse smattering of wrong ideas that were present in Colossae.

It's sort of like a theological Jackson Pollock painting, right? Where there's just paint smattered up on a palette. Different ideas. It's this strange blend of spirituality, of this is how you approach living out the Christian life that is offered by these false teachers. And Paul puts them really in three primary categories for us, in ways that we can err in our approach to just simply walking with Jesus in this life. And the problem with all three of these, essentially, is they will rob you of joy because you will be in the park, however, without getting on a single ride. So this morning, what I want us to do is look at these three broad categories, and really, it's an opportunity for us to examine ourselves. Anytime we come to God's Word, it's like, Lord, what do I need to receive from you in this?

[7 : 23] And is there a hint of any of these in our approach to walking with Jesus in this life? And if so, then we have opportunity to repent. Amen? So let's begin looking at the first categories in verses 16 and 17.

Paul says again, therefore, let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. The first way that we can err as believers in our approach to faith is by walking in a spirit of legalism.

Legalism. A word that's not actually in the Scriptures, but certainly the concept is throughout, in particular, the Gospels. Paul begins here first with, he says, therefore.

And we see that, we've got to ask the question, why is it there? What is it there for? Therefore. Therefore. And so he's saying, based upon your new life in Christ, you are new in Christ. In fact, back in 13, he says, hey, you've been made alive with him. You have been forgiven of all your trespasses. You're a new creation. So based upon the fact that you are new in Christ, don't let these false teachers judge you as to whether you're spiritual based upon some external work, either in things that you avoid or things that you participate in. And specifically, what Paul is talking about here is adherence or avoidance of ceremonial laws that were associated with the old covenant. And he says, first, hey, there's things that to avoid. Don't let people judge you on this. Food and drink. And so under the Mosaic law, and you can read about it at a later time, Leviticus 11, Deuteronomy 14, they give us these extensive lists of foods for God's covenant people to avoid.

[9 : 31] So if you want some barn owl stew, it's not on the menu. Eagle pie, not on the menu. Vulture kebabs, not on the menu. Very interesting list. And God's ancient people, God says, I want you to avoid these foods. He also wanted them to participate in festivals, new moons, and Sabbath. And so these are the holy days. And it's just, it's a reference in the Mosaic law broken down into those yearly gatherings. Festivals, those were the yearly gatherings. And new moon, those were the monthly gatherings. And then Sabbath, those were the weekly gatherings, observances for God's ancient people.

And so the question for us then is, why as New Testament believers is it unnecessary for us to avoid certain foods? If this was true for God's ancient people, why is it different for us? And this is what Jesus says in Mark 7, verses 18 and 19, he said to them, then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from the outside cannot defile him, since it enters not into his heart, but to his stomach and is expelled? There, thus he declared all foods clean. So this is a fairly graphic verse on the digestive system, basic anatomy, physiology. And really, what's Jesus' point here? It's that the stuff that comes into us isn't the issue, it's the stuff that comes out of us, it's the stuff that comes out of the heart, right? That's what makes us unspiritual. And he goes on then in Mark 7, verse 21, where he says, for from within, out of the heart of man comes evil thoughts. Out of the heart comes sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery. And so what Jesus is saying is actually it's not the food that you eat that makes you unclean. It

doesn't make you more spiritual or less spiritual, which isn't to say we adjust our diet and make like ding-dongs the top of like the food pyramid. And then why is it unnecessary to keep particular holy days? So we deal with the food issue. What is it about? And consider specifically like the Sabbath day. And as we read scripture, there's evidence in scripture that Christians began to meet the first day of the week instead of Saturday, they began to meet on Sunday because of the resurrection. In fact, the apostles demonstrated this in Acts 27. Luke writes, on the first day of the week, when we gathered together to break bread. So we have this pattern, we see it in the New Testament. As early as the second century, Justin Martyr, he writes this about when Christians gather. He says, Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly. Because it is the first day on which God made the world and Jesus Christ our Savior on the same day rose from the dead. And then we have just church history, tradition, 150 years later, Constantine, Emperor Constantine in 321 decreed Sunday as the day of Christian worship. Probably more out of a pagan ideology than genuine faith. He was very big on the sun God. But regardless of when Sunday worship began, there's actually freedom here for New Testament believers. And Paul says it this way in Romans 14, 5. He says, one person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike.

And he says this, each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. And so when we come to the New Testament, what we find is the biblical principle, regardless of the day in which you gather to corporately worship is what? Hebrews 10, 25. Don't forsake the gathering, right? Gather, come together, worship the Lord together, regardless of the day, regardless of the weather.

[13:38] And I would say probably the leading reason why folks struggle to walk close with Jesus throughout their lives, I think primarily it has to do with the fact that Christians will sometimes isolate themselves. They won't gather with other believers. Church isn't really a priority.

And certainly we're talking in the category of legalism. I'm not saying that you have to be at church every Sunday to be a good Christian, but man, if you're not gathering with God's people, you're not being encouraged. There's no accountability and you have nobody to model your life after.

We learn faith through watching others that are walking close to the Lord. And it's inspiring. When I know somebody else is willing to serve in a way or sacrifice in a way, when I learn about the spiritual disciplines of another, the Lord uses that in each of our lives. And I would just say, man, this is a priority. It's a privilege, church. It's a privilege to gather and begin our week worshipping the Lord. Amen? So it's good to be here this morning. Now, maybe you're a little curious.

It's like, why do we have freedom in food that we can eat in the day that we get to worship? Like, why were there dietary and holy days given in the Old Testament that are no longer applicable to us? And maybe you've read like some of those lists in the Old Testament, Leviticus 11, right?

And you're a little, maybe you're like a little outraged, like, man, they couldn't eat camel stew? What in the world? You know, is God arbitrary between the Old Testament and the New Testament? I say, not at all. Not at all. Because the essence of really the Old Testament, the book of Leviticus spells this out very clearly is what? Be holy. I'm holy. That's Leviticus 11, 44. And then we have that restated. It's the same thing. 1 Peter 1, 16, be holy, for I'm holy. And so these diets, these dietary laws and holy days, they were given to Israel to teach them this principle. I want you to be holy. I want you to be a distinct people. In fact, all of life for Israel was this lesson to be holy. Leviticus 19, 19, don't wear fabrics with mixed materials. Wow, there's no 50-50 cotton poly blend going on in Israel. And it was meant to teach them. It was a teaching opportunity. Hey,

[16:21] God wants your whole heart. He doesn't want a mixed heart, a half heart. So everything was there to teach God's people to be distinct, right down to the warp and woof, these sowing terms of life.

I want your whole heart. I think also these dietary laws and festival gatherings, they were there to help preserve separateness for God's people. Difficult to entwine yourself with a godless nation when your diet is so very different, right? Very hard to go over to, you know, the Amorites' house for a social, you know, and they've got their Traeger fired up with their barbecue camel or, you know, wrapped in bacon. And it's like, well, we don't eat that stuff. And so it was a way that God preserved their separateness and distinctness. And thirdly, what Paul writes in verse 17, he says, these are shadows.

Those are just shadows of things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. So these were all to prepare to foreshadow the arrival of Jesus. You don't have to adhere to the Jewish ceremonial laws any longer. Jesus is the fulfillment of these Old Testament shadows. And so if you look back to the

Old Testament, everything points to Jesus. It all points to the Lord. And it prepares us for the Lord. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 5, 7, I believe, he says, you know what? Jesus is our Passover lamb. You're like, oh, that's interesting. Passover lamb. And then you read about it in the Old Testament, you read about the Passover, and all of a sudden it's connecting the dots of what salvation is, of what it means, of what's just like the blood on the doorpost that caused the angel of death to pass over Israel. Jesus, his blood causes God's wrath to pass over us. Like, I understand this theological word propitiation now. Like, wrath has been averted from my life? This is the best.

I can now have communion, friendship with holy God. And so the Old Testament, it teaches us. It foreshadows Jesus' arrival. It prepares for that. Now, here's maybe a more practical question for us this morning as we think about legalism. How does this apply to us? How can we get caught up in legalism? It's different than adhering to Old Testament dietary laws. I don't know that I've ever interacted with anybody at 4th that's struggling on that front. So what does legalism look like for us? Maybe some of you come out of a Catholic background. And it's tough to break, I think, that mentality. That, you know, it's a very clean, it's a very tidy system.

[19:18] The sacraments, they are the measurement of whether you're doing okay with God. So you go to confession, you participate in the mass, you're depositing grace into your account. And it's very transactional, and it just smacks of legalism. Maybe some of you, you think about time spent with the Lord reading the word, and some of you may have a hint of legalism here. You go to the word not because you're looking to commune with the Lord, not because your heart posture is, Lord, whatever you say, I want to be yielded. But you're going to check a box and go, okay, I did it, I'm okay. Now, I think having a plan and a something where you have things in place where you're like, I know what I'm gonna read tomorrow.

I know what I'm gonna read the next day. I think that can be a help. And I don't believe that's legalism, but I think it's a matter of the heart. Where is the heart on this issue? Am I going to God's word to hear his voice? Or is it simply out of guilt, right? That I just, I need to do this for God to be okay with me today. Legalism can show up. Or how about measuring our spiritual maturity based upon the scales of do's and don'ts outside of God's word? And there was an era where this was probably more prevalent, right? Spiritually mature Christians don't, and you just fill in the blank. They don't, whatever that is. And things that we're adding to what God says clearly in Scripture. Here's one. I'm mature because I don't drink alcohol. That's legalism. Conversely, I'm spiritually mature because I can do so in moderation. That's also legalism. And just on this issue, there are a number of good reasons not to drink. It can become a stumbling block for many. I was out driving Uber last night. I stopped by. I saw our police chaplain who was down, camped out in downtown, and he's like, Jay, come by. I got a hot dog for you. So I'm like, I will come by for a free hot dog. And I just was chatting with Bob. And he said, yeah, it's like, I mean, it was 7 p.m. And he's like, we've already had 15 DUIs today. It was seven. Seven. And I know, I mean, there's good reasons not to drink. Let me give you a few. Number one, if you're under 21, it's illegal, okay? If you try to sneak an open beverage in a vehicle, which four guys tried to do last night to me, and I said, guys, you have a choice.

And so they dispense of their alcohol, and then they got an Uber. But if you're under 21, it's illegal. Romans 13 says, obey your governing authorities. Another reason not to drink, Romans 14, 1 Corinthians 8, talk about loving a weaker brother enough that you would abstain from a liberty that you believe that you have. You're like, man, it's a spiritual choice. I don't want this individual to stumble. I'm going to, I am going to not partake because of that person's weakness or propensity. Maybe they're a recovering alcoholic. Third reason, maybe you recognize your own vulnerability, and you recognize that you are prone to drink more than you ought to drink.

And the Spirit of God has convicted you on this. And you recognize that you drink maybe to self-medicate. And the Lord has spoken to you on that. It controls your actions more than it ought to do. And I think Ephesians 5.18 is crystal on this. Don't get drunk. On the other side of the coin, Jesus, I mean, maybe you feel like you have the liberty to do so. I mean, Jesus, his first miracle, okay? John 2. He turned a non-alcoholic beverage into a fermented drink.

[23:54] Secondly, 1 Timothy 5.23, Paul says to Timothy, use a little wine for the sake of your stomach, okay? So wine for medicinal purposes. And certainly these can be abused. These like, no, no, it's my medicine.

I think we, you know, let's be honest. Thirdly, Psalm 104.15 says, wine which makes a man's heart glad. So it was given for enjoyment in moderation. Now, here's the principle Paul leads with us on

the issues of liberties, okay? This is what I want us to take away. Galatians 5.13.

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. Our liberties aren't there just to indulge the flesh.

And I would say freedom, Christian liberties, they never demand their rights. Spiritually people, motivated by love, actually they're okay deferring.

So we have to be people yielded to the text, but we have to be people yielded to God's spirit. Okay?

That's the first area, legalism. You can miss Jesus because you live in a very legalistic approach to faith. Let's go on. Verse 18. Paul says, let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions puffed up without reason by a sensuous mind. Second way we can err in our approach to walking with the Lord in this life is by embracing mysticism, mystical forms of worship. This is a very strange companion to legalism, okay? That's what I'm saying. There's some very fascinating texts. And by the way, Paul doesn't go into a lot of detail. What? What? What? He just mentions it.

[26 : 07] These false teachers were promoting a very mystical approach to God through, talks about visions here, they go on in detail about visions, and the worship of angels. We're going to come back to asceticism, okay? We're going to skip that for now, but we're going to get there.

So, these false teachers in their minds, they were possessing secret knowledge, special knowledge.

And it says they're puffed up without reason as a result. There's a lot of mystical ways that you can decide you're going to walk with God in this life. I was talking with an individual just recently. They're working with an individual who has decided, you know what? They are an earth angel in this life. Wow. Very special role they play, dispensing goodness and light. Very mystical.

Special knowledge. And they're puffed up. I had an Uber conversation a few years back with a woman who told me that God speaks to her directly. And she doesn't therefore need to read the Bible.

Or attend a church. And it's a very mystical approach. Like, yeah, I got this special hotline with God. And my response to this conversation was just bringing up the principle, right, of Hebrews 10, 25. I was like, you know, God's word actually says just don't forsake the gathering. What do you think about that? Well, that doesn't apply to me. Okay. That's a mystical approach. Church, what's the problem with mysticism that Paul is confronting here? What's the problem with it? At the core, it's a de-emphasis upon truth that's already clearly been revealed in scripture. That's the problem. Like, objective truth is trumped by experience or it gets tossed out the window altogether. And maybe you've met Christians like this, right? Where God's word is just this moving target. And it's based upon how I feel or really what I want.

[28 : 36] When we first moved here, we lived on the South Hill. And then we found out who was in that neighborhood group and we're like, we're out of here, man. I mean, we heard two shields in charge of this thing. We're bailing. We're going. We're going to the north. Man, those Southies.

We met an individual while we were living on the South Hill. And they invited us over for a meal, campfire and a meal. And of a very charismatic persuasion of faith. And talking with the wife, she was beginning to share with me about her son that got divorced, remarried. And she's like, yeah, he was in a bad marriage. And, and well, what was it? Well, she just didn't love him right.

And, and so the, this woman said, yeah, I told him like, you should divorce her because God wants you happy. Like, and I was like, well, we're guests here. I mean, there's, I could have gone to Matthew 19. I could have gone to first Corinthians seven. I mean, there was places I could go and maybe further the conversation. Malachi 2 16, God hates divorce. I mean, there's a lot of things I could have said, but in my brilliant mind, I just responded with, huh. That's, that's kind of as far as I got. But I'm just saying, if you're, if you, if you're at a campfire and you say something, and if somebody responds with, huh, there's a good chance you said something profoundly stupid. And I hadn't, I, I was like, I don't know. I don't know where to go from here.

Very mystical. Oh, I'll make up verses. God wants you happy. Um, and that's not to say church did experience as evil. It's our, the subjective isn't bad. Like it just has to be measured by God's truth. Okay. Like experientially, we walk with the Lord.

We possess his spirit. I think the spirit of God prompts us all the time to call someone, to have a response, a word, a prayer for someone. Like we have to be people yield to the text and to the spirit. But our, our experience, it can mislead us, which why everything has to be filtered through God's word. I mean, if you ever felt like you had a day where God left you, just you're in the desert.

[31 : 23] You're just like, I am forsaken. And then you got to go, you know, to, to Hebrews 13, five, where it says, that's impossible. He says, I will never leave or forsake you. Oh, that's what, that's what God said. That's the thing that needs to inform my experience right now.

I mean, the apostles experience on the day of, of Christ's crucifixion, their experience where they all fled, it was wrong. They thought they were defeated. God just won their salvation. Like you guys can, can experience heaven. You get to have eternal life. I have paid so that you can be forgiven. This is, this is good Friday. And they didn't think it was. Their experience was not accurate to the occasion, to what was actually occurring.

So I think we have to be careful church. Everything has to be filtered through God's word. Amen. Amen. We are, I know it says fourth memorial, but we are a Bible church. Okay. We love God's word. It's a special revelation to us. What's the draw to the mystical today? What's the draw? Aside from the fact that it's easy, it's lazy, right? I just feel things and then I, then I go and do, right? I don't have to search God's word. I think that the major draw is what I already mentioned above. Second Peter 2.10 mentions men in the last days will indulge the flesh, despise authority. Second Timothy three, they'll be arrogant, disobedient to authority. I think the draw to the mystical approach to walking with God is that the mystical experience allows the individual to be the authority in what's true. God's word now is this moving target. Truth is found in myself, in my private vision, not in special revelation already given. Hence, I don't need the church. All they do is preach the Bible and judge people. Mystical allows an individual to simply indulge their flesh and still get God. I have a special agreement with Jesus. Holiness is optional.

I made up this term. I don't know if it's a good one. Pinata Christianity. We'll see if it sticks. Right? I don't need to obey. God just gives me candy. Right? Primarily heaven when I die.

God. And it's interesting here because what Paul talks about is you guys are into worship of angels? Now, probably these false teachers had in their mind that angels were like these good luck charms, spiritual vending machines to bend God's blessing to their will. And actually, in Jewish folk tradition, historians have found writings that describe different angels to pray to depending on what favor you're requesting. Angels are popular today, aren't they? They show up everywhere. They're in film, commercials, selling underwear. Angels give you what you want, right? And they do it without demanding what? Commitment, obedience in return. Angels are like Santa Claus with wings.

[34 : 58] I like angels. They don't expect anything of my life. They just give me stuff. And I would just say instead of placing undue attention towards angels, we ought to consider their example of service and worship and worship and worship and worship. And I love the scene, the end of the Bible in Revelation 22, I think it's verse 9, where John wants to bow down and worship and the angel says, hey, don't.

I am just a fellow servant. Model your life in that regard and worship God. And I think they're a great example of that. All right, that's asceticism. We are flying, you guys.

Let's get into it. We're going to skip verse 19 and end there, but look at verse 20 to 23. If with Christ you die to the elemental spirits of the world, why as if you were still alive in the world do you submit to regulations? Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch, referring to things that all perish as they are used according to human precepts and teachings. These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgences of the flesh. Third way we can get it wrong, get faith wrong, we looked at legalism, we looked at mysticism, and here by embracing asceticism. I'm not talking about aesthetics. That's a good thing. Aesthetics is bringing beauty to a place. That's a good thing.

God's a creator. We bear his image. We sub-create. It's a good thing. God delights in that. Read Exodus 31, 1 through 6 if you're into the arts and you want to think like, God gave some people a holy ab, a bezalel, gifts of craftsmanship. It's a good thing. Aesthetics. We're talking about asceticism. I understand that I have a little bit of a list, okay, but these are different things.

Asceticism, it actually comes from a Greek word that translates to exercise. These are like spiritual athletes. Asceticism, it's leading a life of self-denial as a measure of true faith.

[37 : 33] It's the wrong approach. And Paul actually, really a great question here. Verse 20 says, if with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, elemental spirits, these could be demonic forces or just worldly principles. Either way, they work in concert with one another.

He says, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations that are not from God? You're majoring on stuff that isn't going to last. Stuff that's going to perish as they're used.

So this life of self-denial, and some of you, if you want an example, monasticism, not all ascetics are monks, but all monks are ascetics. They practice this life of renunciation, of denial, right? And remain celibate. And the list goes on.

Verse 23 says, severity to the body. Paul's point is like, that's a waste. You're not closer to God because you've deprived yourself of sleep, or you've given up the use of electricity. It has an appearance of wisdom. At least in Paul's day. And I understand, this is such a strange section of scripture because this is not typically where we struggle.

Like, we live in a very hedonistic culture, so this is like, wow. Some of you are like, man, I'm obeying the Lord. I'm not an ascetic. This is good, right? You got a point. Like, good job.

[39 : 18] Yeah, where did this wisdom originate from? Paul says in verse 22, according to human precepts and teachings. And probably something that grew out of Greek dualism, maybe this kind of Gnostic notion of the immaterial being that which is good, and everything that's material, the flesh, that's evil.

And so the only way to be spiritual now with God is to deprive the flesh. Free the spirit from the prison of the body. Probably the most famous ascetic in church history, Simeon Stylitis, 5th century, lived in the Syrian desert. This guy spent 40 years in a cave chained to a stone to show how much he loved Jesus.

Really? He would bury himself in his garden up to his neck in the dirt over an entire summer.

See how much I love Jesus? I'm willing to bury myself up to my neck. And the thing that he's really best known for, he spent 37 years of his life atop a pole, a styloid, a post, kind of where he gets his name, 50-foot pillar, to show how much he loved Jesus. Very strange.

If I hear of any of you, like, installing 50-foot posts in your backyard, me and Scott will personally come and we are not going to dedicate that unto the Lord.

[40 : 59] What's the danger for us? I think for us on this one, I think just it's wrong thinking about the physical stuff. Like, when God created the heavens and the earth, what did he say? Were they bad? No, they were what? They were good. They were good. Yeah. And certainly there are times when we abstain from things to focus on the Lord, to seek his face on some issue, or we do it out of worship. And yet, listen to what Paul says to Timothy in 1 Timothy 4. He says this in verse 4, everything, for everything created by God is good. And nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving. So church, the whole of life is that God wants us to bring glory to him in everything, in everything that we participate in, in everything that we enjoy. We glorify him in our eating.

We glorify him in our sexuality. We glorify him in the way that we utilize our finances. We glorify him in the way that we work and labor hard unto him. The way that we serve. That which we laugh at. Faith is to touch everything, friends. And actually, there's joy when we live that way. Like, God is not a killjoy. Well, God's so restraining. I want to live in this sort of certain way.

But God's saying it's not the best. He's the author. He knows. That would be like a fish arguing with a person. Hey, I think life outside the water will be the best. No, you'll die. Like, there's a limitation for how fish function really well. And God has given us limitations that he's spoken clearly in his word.

But there's so much for us to enjoy. And when we do all these things in his glory, there's joy. Life is good. I think centrally, the problem, church, with these three false spiritualities, legalism, mysticism, asceticism, the major problem is this, verse 23, they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh. These are not going to help you in your sanctification, walking close with the Lord. Why? They attempt to make one spiritual outside the essence of what is really at the heart of Christianity. And this is the central point.

[43 : 37] Don't miss this. It's actually about a daily relationship with the Lord. And they missed it. They missed Jesus in their attempt to be spiritual. And let's go back and hit this final verse in the middle, verse 19. Paul says it this way, not holding fast to the head. Who's the head? Jesus.

You're not holding fast to Jesus. From whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God. So what does it mean to be spiritual? It means walking closely with the Lord. And at the center of it, it's a friendship. It's a relationship. It's a relationship. It's a friendship anchored in truth. It's a friendship where we are actually postured, say, I want to be submitted to the Lord today. I want to be yielded to His voice. I want to stay close to Him. When I'm convicted of sin, I quickly repent of that sin. And I turn back to the Lord.

And as we do this church, the whole body becomes healthy. Because we're actually now an abiding people. And fruit grows. And one of the fruit of the Spirit is joy. It's joy. You're a legalist.

[45 : 06] There's not a lot of joy. It's not there. Mysticism? You'll think you're kind of cool for a while. No joy. Asceticism? You're never cool. And there's no joy.

So I guess the question for us is this. What have we done today to draw near to the Lord? What have we done today? And I would just pose the question to us every day. What's one thing I can do today to draw near to the Lord? Because the essence, man, is do I relate to the living God? Am I walking with Jesus? And you know what? You've already done something to draw near to the Lord today.

Because you've gathered with His people. You've already done something. Praise God. You're not here for legal. You're here to hear His voice. You're here to use your gifts, to minister to others, to be an encouragement. And the Lord may even surprise you and encourage you.

So you've done something to draw near to Him. But I think that's where the joy is. It's just, it's communion with the Lord. Last father's day, my girls and son, I forget. I have a lot of girls and son. And son. They got me a little fishing boat, a little like inflatable. And I used to have a fishing boat, a little, not the, you know, but it's pretty sweet. It's got like two and a half people in this thing. It's, it's telling you what. I hadn't like been on like one of these little fishing boats, you know, with one of my kids for a lot of years. And they were like, dad, you need to get back into it. And it was like so fun. We went out to Loon Lake, carried this thing. It was a little bit of work. We got out there. And I just remember having the best afternoon, just fishing with my kids. I was like, oh, I love this. It's so good. Why haven't I fit? I'm a fisherman. Why don't I, why don't I do this more? And I think it can be like that with the Lord, where we're just, sometimes we get out of practice of just drawing near to him, spending time with him, talking to him, thanking him. I just want to encourage this church. I don't want the summer to continue to go and we're further away from him. It's beautiful weather. Go take a walk, take a hike. And throughout the hike, just talk to him. I would encourage you to go on that hike and begin to thank him for everything that you see. You know, oh, I see a grasshopper. Thank you.

I saw a deer with velvet. Like, that's cool. Thank you, Lord. That's cool. Save him for me. You know, like, I mean, just like, commune with the Lord and spend time with him. And when you do that, it's not for guilt. And I'm going to give you permission. I might be in trouble with Scott, but like, I know you're like on a get through the Bible in a year, but maybe you need to read less.

[48 : 04] Scott's a recovering legalist. So, I mean, five chapters, Jay. No, I mean, maybe, maybe you read a couple paragraphs, a couple paragraphs. I mean, and you're like, I heard from the Lord and I need to talk to him about some things. But I think when we go to the word, it's the posture of like, I'm not reading just for information. I'm reading to commune. I'm reading to commune. I heard a statistic and I think John Piper was sharing. He said, you know what? Just as many PhDs in theology have extramarital affairs as men in the world. Shocking. Because you can know a lot about God, but you've never communed. We have to be people that draw near and understand that at its essence, it's about relationship. And I would say, fundamentally, if there's one thing that will cause us to draw near to the Lord better than anything else, it's repentance. And I would say, if you're feeling far from the Lord today, talk with the Lord. Ask Spirit of God, convict me if there's something I need to repent of. Because I want to turn from that so that I can turn towards you.

And I would say there's nothing that will refresh and bring joy back to your soul and your relationship than to draw back near to the Lord. Amen? Father, thank you for this text. It's actually far more practical than we would think as we read about things that maybe are a little odd to us in the culture in which we live. But Lord, I want to pray that you would show yourself faithful and you would meet with us as we draw near, that you would respond in like manner. You have promised that you would, and so we're going to take you at your word. Lord, I pray that we would be a people that could encourage one another in this. Not to check boxes or out of legalism, but because we actually care for one another's souls. And Lord, I know that it's very easy when we walk in isolation to not really share maybe the things that we're learning from you, where you're at work in our lives, but I pray that we would continue to grow and to be those sorts of people.

so that we could actually be a church that could have partnered and covenanted with one another. Lord, it's a very, very godless culture in which we live. Just thinking about that, driving over the course of this weekend and just seeing a lot of stuff. Just worldly principles.

The promises of happiness and joy in places that are just antithetical to you. And Lord, it's easy to just forget that joy is found in communing closely with you. So Lord, refresh us with your presence today. I pray that we would refresh one another in just a sweet time of fellowship as we grab some

food together. And Lord, we just thank you for Fourth Memorial. What a gift it is to us. And Lord, we want this to be a gift to Spokane and those that live in this neighborhood. We want good news to go forth. And so we pray, Lord, we pray for a harvest. It's in your name we pray, Jesus. And all God's people said, Amen.