

**Sterling Sermon Guide**  
**Colossians 2: The End of Religion**  
Moses Falco, June 4, 2017



**How to use this guide**

- The main purpose of this guide is to encourage groups and individuals to dig deeper into the topic of a sermon. This guide summarizes the sermon and provides discussion questions and suggestions of how to continue the conversation in order to apply the topic to real life.
- Listen to the sermon online ([sterlingmennonite.ca](http://sterlingmennonite.ca)) if you were not in church that Sunday or if you want to hear it again. If this sermon is not on the website, please contact our office.
- Re-read the scripture text and recommended reading.
- Select a leader in your group to guide your conversation and to lead you through this study.
- Use what is helpful for your group, but do not be bound by this guide. Let the Spirit lead you. You may be surprised where you end up.

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**Colossians 2: The End of Religion**  
Part 2 of a 4-part series

**Scripture Text:** Colossians 2:16-23

**Recommended Reading:** Colossians 2

**Prepare Your Heart:** Colossians 2:6-7

**Sermon Nugget:** In Christ, we have been given life, and life abundantly. Everything is focused and built on Jesus. In Him, everything is fulfilled since He is the fullest revelation of God. So if Jesus has set us free, then we no longer have to live bound by human religion or spirituality. We are called to live in Christ, and Christ alone. Paul is giving the Colossians a “get out of religion free” card and telling them that life lived in Jesus is way more fulfilling. What does that look like for us? In what ways do we still cling to religion rather than living in the freedom of Jesus’ life for us?

### **Paul's longing for the gospel**

It is Paul's hope that as many people are saved as possible. He wants as many people to know who Jesus is. From before Jesus to after His death and resurrection, the rules about inclusion as God's people had changed. Gentiles, not only Jews, are able to be a part of God's family.

In Colossians 2:1-5, Paul is trying to convince the Colossians to stay united in love while opposing teachings and doctrines that are not of Christ. In Colossians 2:8-10, Paul once again implores them to not be taken captive by other beliefs.

### **Discussion Questions**

- 1) There are so many different religions, philosophies, world-views, and even differences among Christians. How can we hold true to the gospel of Jesus? How do we distinguish between true and false doctrines? How would you describe the essentials of the Christian faith?
- 2) What role can/does community have in our discerning about what to believe and not to believe?

### **Continue as you have received**

In Colossians 2:6-7, Paul says that we should continue to live in Christ in the same way we have received Him. We should be rooted and built up in Him, strong in our faith, and thankful.

### **Picture This**

As you go for an evening walk, you come across a man who is pushing his car. After asking him why, he tells you that he ran out of gas and is pushing his car to the gas station. You take pity on him and decide to help him push. You arrive at a gas station 20 minutes later, out of breath. He fills up his car with gas and you get ready to walk home again. After you cross the street, you look back and are shocked to see the man pushing his car out of the gas station.



What Paul is describing here is similar to the man who ran out of gas and pushed his car. So often, religion feels like it is all about what we are doing. What are we doing to be better, to help people, to read and pray? But Paul is not telling us to do more. He is actually telling us the opposite.

We, as followers of Jesus, have received eternal life from Him free of charge. Colossians 2:11-15 (as well as Colossians 1 and many other passages) describe what Jesus has done for us. It is only through His life, death, and resurrection that we find our own life. We are transformed, renewed, and invited into the family of God when we take on Christ.

So, in the same way we received Jesus, we should continue to live in Him. It makes no sense for us to try to live the Christian life ourselves in the same way that it does not make sense for the man to push his car after filling up. The "gas" for us is Christ's life in us. Paul calls us to allow Christ to live in and through us on a day-to-day basis.

### Discussion Questions

- 3) What are some practical steps you have/can take to continue to live in Christ and allow Christ to live in you on a day-to-day basis?
- 4) What holds you back from allowing Christ to be your source for life?

### The End of Religion

Paul is quite critical of religion and institutions. In Colossians 2:16-23, he once again encourages the Colossians to not be caught up in religious festivals and rituals that really mean nothing. He says they have the semblance of wisdom, but they are false realities that do not lead to life. Only Jesus can do that.

As much as we may like to think that we are excluded from this critique, Christianity, as a religion, is in the exact same boat. Somewhere along the way, we once again took on the rules of religion that tell us “this is how to get close to God.” The gospel, however, is not about how we can get close to God, but how God has come close to us and chosen to indwell us.

Jesus was a regular breaker of human-made religious rules. He opposed rules about sabbath, cleanliness, hierarchy, eating, praying, and fasting, among other things. He is our prime example that sometimes religion gets in the way of living in Christ. We are free in Christ, not to simply do whatever we want, but to follow Him and to do good. Jesus never let human-made religious rules stand in the way of doing what was right.

#### Quote

“...the primary mission of Jesus was to tear down religion as the foundation for people’s connection with God and to replace it with himself - the Divine coming to us in our own context and our own form. This is what Jesus called ‘the kingdom of God.’”

- Bruxy Cavey,  
*The End of Religion*

### Picture This

Imagine you tasted an apple for the first time. It is juicy, crispy and delicious. You think it is the best thing you have ever tasted and you want to preserve it. So you take plastic wrap and wrap it up so it is protected. Now you can admire your apple. But You also want to share it with people so that they can taste it. When you give it to a friend, and they start to unwrap the apple, you stop them. You want to protect it, but you want to share. You tell your friend they must experience the apple through the plastic wrap.



It is a silly thought to have someone try to experience an apple through plastic wrap. But what religion has become is not much different. Jesus is the apple, and if you have tasted what Jesus is like, it is the best thing you can ever imagine. But religion takes Jesus and surrounds Him with rules and traditions that determine how and who can taste Jesus.

When we try to share Jesus with our young people or with people who have never tasted Him, they often try to take off the wrapping of religion and traditions, and we often stop them. That’s the way things have always been and we are uncomfortable changing it. We have, in some cases, replaced Jesus with religion.

Paul is encouraging the Colossians to hold on lightly to rules created by religion and institutions of religious power. Instead, he wants them to live in Christ. He wants them to continue the Christian life in the way they received it, where all the work is done by Jesus and we surrender our lives to Him to be our source and guide.

It is often difficult for us to give up something that we hold very close. But we have seen the life that comes when young people and new Christians are able to peel away the religion and traditions of Christianity to truly taste Jesus. The whole community benefits from this.

### **Discussion Questions**

- 5) Describe a time when you became frustrated with religion or Christian institutions. How did you address it? Did anything change?
- 6) What can we do in our communities to encourage young people and new Christians to peel away our human-made rules and traditions that keep them (and us) from experiencing Jesus?
- 7) What other thoughts, reflections, questions, or concerns does Colossians 2 raise for you?

### **Resources for Further Study** (available for loan from Sterling)

*The End of Religion* by Bruxy Cavey (NavPress, 2007). This book is a great resource to study what the difference is between religion and Jesus Christ and what we can do to live in Jesus rather than relying on religion to get to God.

*Colossians & Philemon* by Ernest D. Martin (Believers Church Bible Commentary, 1993).

*Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon* by Ralph P. Martin (Interpretation Commentary, 1991).

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*“For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid;  
that foundation is Jesus Christ.” 1 Cor. 3:11*