

Memory Verse: 3:2

Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

Review: Think Like a Christian

Lesson 5 **Spiritual Self-Defense**

Don't Get Sideswiped

Have you ever been sideswiped in a vehicle, you know it takes you unaware? You often hear people say, "That car came of out now nowhere."

Often in our Christian walk we too, can get sideswiped. In most cases, we don't collide with other automobiles. Instead, we get sideswiped by individuals who hit us with a list of "do's and don'ts" and we find ourselves getting sidetracked because we don't know what to think or do.

Real Life Example:

Paul warns us that there are some people who will do the same thing to us spiritually. You think you are moving forward in the Christian life when suddenly someone attacks you spiritually. They tell you something you are doing is wrong.

Read Colossians 2:16-23

Paul gives us a course of spiritual self-defense; he shows us how to protect ourselves from thoughts, ideas, beliefs, and attitudes that put us at risk spiritually.

Discussion

Think for a moment about conflicting beliefs and opinions in the area of religion and spirituality. Of course, everyone knows that different denominations believe different things---but for the most part, our differences are insignificant as they have nothing to do with our salvation.

What are some modern-day examples that would be similar to the things Paul listed in Colossians 2:16? List some:

Think also about the rules we impose on ourselves as Christians. Make your list and check it carefully and prayerfully. Consider writing your motives for doing what you do. The questions is: Is it valid or not?

Deeper into the Word

In the culture of our text, Jewish Christians were in the habit of observing special days and seasons. Some observed the Sabbath. Some of the Gentile Christians didn't observe these special days and

debated over what kind of foods that could be eaten. Some believed you shouldn't eat food sacrificed to idols. Quite frequently the meat sacrificed to idols was sold in the meat market at a discounted price.

As a result, early Christians struggled with questions. Some of those were:

- *Is it okay to eat food sacrificed to idols?*
- *Is it okay to work on the Sabbath?*
- *Is it okay to eat pork?*
- *Is it okay if you don't observe the Jewish holidays?*

Interestingly, Paul didn't choose sides on the debate. Read Romans 14:5.

These so called "religious police" showed up in Matthew 15:2. What was the real issue?

How many times have you been told, if you were a real Christian you wouldn't be doing.....?

How can we be fully convinced, based on Romans 14:5, in our own mind about what is right?

Why do we find ourselves reducing Christianity to a set of rules?

Why won't this work?

Case Studies

Purpose: To help us focus on Christ rather than on rules.

As a group let's advise the following people on how they should make the right decision in each of their situations (source: Preaching Today-Small Group Questions).

- Marcus is a New Christian. A more mature believer asked if he had ever been baptized properly. This believer insisted that Marcus's baptism did not count unless he had been baptized by an ordained priest.
- Georgie belonged to the Goth movement when she became a Christian. She now has a lot of tattoos and piercings. She has decided to embrace the Baptist faith at a local church. She is having trouble fitting in because her tattoos are a constant subject of many discussions.
- Troy loves to dance, but his church teaches that dancing is wrong.

What do we think?

How do you protect yourself spiritually?

Don't let anything or anyone stand in the way of your relationship with Jesus. Don't let people judge you---Christ is your judge.

Avoid these pitfalls. The Christian life is not about rules---it's about maintaining a relationship with Jesus. This is our spiritual self-defense.