

# Keeping Christ in the Christian Life

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The secret to following Jesus is not to try hard to keep all the rules or expectations, but to live in deep connection with Jesus himself.

In the Christian life, many of us will struggle with “churchiness” or “religiosity” – going to church, doing all the Christian things, but not really having our hearts in it. That’s what the Apostle Paul was teaching in Colossians 2:6-23.

***[Related: [How to Grow in Your Faith](#)]***

## Following Jesus Is Not About Meeting the Expectations of Others

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It’s easy to become a people-pleaser as a Christian, to begin caring so much about what other people think about you that you lose the heart of your faith.

**Colossians 2:16-18** So don’t let anyone condemn you for what you eat or drink, or for not celebrating certain holy days or new moon ceremonies or Sabbaths. For these rules are only shadows of the reality yet to come. And Christ himself is that reality. Don’t let anyone condemn you by insisting on pious self-denial or the worship of angels.

Expectations others put on us, unless they are biblical, shouldn’t be the guiding stars of our Christian experience.

## Following Jesus Is Not About Keeping Religious Rules

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It’s easy to have a checklist of rules and to lose Jesus while we keep all the rules or even go above and beyond them, thinking we’re “holier” because of it.

**Colossians 2:20-23** So why do you keep on following the rules of the world, such as, “Don’t handle! Don’t taste! Don’t touch!”? Such rules are mere human teachings about things that deteriorate as we use them. These rules may seem wise because they require strong devotion, pious self-denial, and severe bodily discipline. But they provide no help in conquering a person’s evil desires.

Only Jesus himself can set us free from sin – a work he does in us from the inside-out. There’s nothing wrong with being disciplined, but when it starts taking Jesus’s place in your life, something’s wrong.

***[Related: [Should Christians Today Fast?](#)]***

## Following Jesus Is About Cultivating a Deep Connection to Him

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“It’s not about religion, it’s about relationship.” Over time this may start sounding cheesy, but it’s a basic truth of the Christian life.

**Colossians 2:7** Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness.

It is easy to make Christianity about church and about rules because those are the things we so readily see and experience. But when we remove deep relationship with Jesus from our faith, we have taken Christ out of the Christian life.

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*Article for this topic by Daniel Martin.*

**See Also:** [Christian Living](#), [Sermonlink](#)

### **Talk About It**

1. *What is your initial reaction to this topic? What jumped out at you?*
2. *Read Colossians 2:16-19. Identify the behavioral expectations the Colossian Christians were being condemned about. According to these verses, what is wrong with that approach?*
3. *Make two lists. First, list some biblical expectations for the Christian life. Second, list some non-biblical expectations that are often associated with the Christian life. What do you learn from this comparison?*
4. *Why do you think some religious people like to create behavioral expectations for others?*
5. *Read Colossians 2:20-23. Why does keeping the rules seem like a wise approach to following Christ? According to these verses, what is actually wrong with that approach?*
6. *Read Colossians 2:6-7. What do you think it means to “let your roots grow down into Christ”? What would that look like in practice?*
7. *Cultivating a deep connection with Christ involves certain intentional practices like prayer and Bible reading. How can we keep those practices from becoming a new set of expectations or religious rules?*
8. *Write a personal action step based on this conversation.*