

# GIVING GOD CONTROL OF YOUR RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

Living for Christ requires having the kind of faith in God that gives Him control over every aspect of your life (Proverbs 3:5-7). One element of giving God control of your life is giving Him control over your religious beliefs and practices. This lesson will focus on some basics about what this should look like.

## MATTHEW 21:23-27

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This question asked of Jesus is a good question you must ask concerning everything you believe and practice: By what authority am I believing and doing these things? In response, Jesus indicates there are only two options concerning the source of authority. Either it comes from Heaven (from God) or it comes from people. So, the authority (or approval) for believing and doing whatever it is you believe and practice in your religious beliefs and practices either comes from God in the Scriptures or through somebody else. Now, there are many ways for you to find human approval for a thing – human teaching, traditions, feelings, majority opinion, etc. However, none of these meets the criteria of being approved by God! Instead, you must demand book, chapter, and verse for the belief or practice to know that God is pleased with it!

## COLOSSIANS 2:4-23

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There were heretical teachings and practices being spread among the Colossians (involving a mix of human philosophies, human traditions, asceticism, claims of visions, and binding elements from the Old Testament). Those who taught this heresy would often sound convincing with arguments that seemed reasonable – but were false and contrary to the faith revealed by the gospel of Christ! So, Paul urged them not to be deceived and to continue walking in Christ, being rooted and built

up, and established in the faith of Jesus Christ they had been taught! Certainly, there are many false teachings and practices in the religious world today that threaten everything the gospel is trying to accomplish (Matthew 7:15-20; Romans 16:17-18; 2 John 1:7-11). Although they often take different forms than they did among the Colossians, they are no less dangerous! Any set of religious beliefs and practices that originate with people rather than God (even though it may mix in some elements from God) results in self-made religion/worship that fails to please God and must be rejected (Matthew 15:1-9)!

## COLOSSIANS 3:16-17

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Rather than succumbing to false religious beliefs and practices, Christians are to seek the things of God and be deeply devoted to the word of God. This forms the proper foundation for your religious beliefs and practices and enables you to grow in the faith. Singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs plays a significant role in this teaching. Whatever you do or say must be done or said in the name of the Lord Jesus. This is to do the thing by His authority (with His permission/approval). This approval can only be found today through the inspired writings of the New Testament (2:14; John 16:12-15; 1 Corinthians 14:37). You can, therefore, only know something is right, true, and approved by King Jesus when there is a direct command/statement from the King (i.e. love your enemies, Matthew 5:44), an approved example given by the King (i.e. taking the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week, Acts 20:7), or a necessary conclusion demonstrated by the King (i.e. teaching the gospel involves teaching the necessity of baptism, Acts 8:35-39). If you do not have such approval from King Jesus for whatever you believe or practice, that thing cannot be done in His name and must be avoided (i.e. infant baptism, instrumental music in worship, prayer of salvation, women preachers, etc.)!

## 2 THESSALONIANS 2:13-15

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Paul had just warned the Thessalonians about an apostasy (falling away from the faith) that would

happen and those who did not love the truth would not be saved (2:1-12). The Thessalonians, however, had believed and obeyed the gospel of Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 1:2-10; 2:13). Now, Paul urged them to stand firm and hold on to the traditions they had been taught by those with authority from God. So, despite the variety of religious teachings and practices in the world today, you must reject anything that contradicts the teachings and practices revealed by God in the pages of His word! No matter how appealing something may be or how many people may accept it or who may teach it, you must stand firmly planted in the truth that has been revealed in Scripture and not bend in compromise concerning it!

## 2 TIMOTHY 1:13-14

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As many had departed from the original beliefs and practices God had delivered and even more departures from the faith were on the horizon, Paul warned Timothy about those who would not teach what is true (1 Timothy 1:3-11; 4:1-5; 6:3-5, 20-21; 2 Timothy 3:1-9; 4:2-4). Clearly, God does *not* approve of every religious belief and practice – even when they are done and taught under the name of “Christianity.” Instead, Timothy was told to hold on to the pattern of sound teaching he had heard from Paul. This is the pattern/form of teaching that has been recorded in the pages of the New Testament Scriptures given through the Holy Spirit. Therefore, any belief or practice that contradicts and does not agree with this pattern must be rejected as coming from people rather than from God (Galatians 1:6-9; Revelation 22:18-19)!

## CONCLUSION

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Giving God control of your religious beliefs and practices will impact everything you believe and do religiously. While many beliefs and practices are held and practiced with little to no thought, letting God mold your beliefs and practices will cause you to make sure you have authority from God for everything you do and believe in your religion. Therefore, you must humble yourself to accept and obey these and all of God’s instructions about your religious beliefs and practices.

## DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

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What are the two possible sources of authority for what you believe and do?

What are some examples of how to get authority from people?

How do you get authority from Heaven?

How are false religious beliefs and practices dangerous?

What does it mean to do and say things in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ?

How do you know whether something pleases Jesus?

What must you hold on to if you want to please Christ?

How is God’s word like a pattern for what you must believe and practice?

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