



Week Four: Jesus vs. Religion – Study Guide

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It's easy to fall into the trap of following rules over fostering relationships and to lose sight of what's really important. We tend to go beyond even the laws of the land, state, and government and make up our own rules that eventually become tradition. If Jesus is to work in and through us, then we need to start giving that up and giving Him some wiggle room. In this study, we will look at how Jesus is saying that it's not rules over relationships but it's love over law—and some rules are meant to be broken.

Where Am I Today?

- 1) The dangers of legalism can't be understood without knowing that Jesus has authority over everything. We don't need to control our religious experiences as much as He wants to be in control of them. What legalistic traditions or ways of thinking may have kept you from fully enjoying your relationship with God, or sharing Him with others?

Into the Bible

- 2) Jesus often used stories and parables to illustrate how His wisdom was far greater than the knowledge and traditions of the religious leaders. Read **Psalm 16:11** and **Luke 5:33-35**. How do we see that being in God's presence is something to celebrate, more than worrying about what is going on around us? What did Jesus mean when He said that one day the bridegroom would be gone?

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- 3) It is comforting to know that God's love for us goes beyond tradition and legalism. Read **Luke 6:1-5**. How was Jesus comparing a physical need of food to our spiritual need of Him? In this passage, how is God saying that we have freedom to experience His provision, whenever needed, no matter the day of the week or the time of day?
- 4) Read **Luke 6:6-11**. Here we see Jesus take another opportunity to unapologetically go against the grain of the Pharisees' legalism. The intent of the law of the Sabbath was mercy and compassion (healing and restoration), and the Pharisees attempted to set a trap for Jesus. How does Jesus' act of healing the man's hand in front of the religious help us understand the importance of getting past our own legalistic views so that our friends can experience God?

How Does This Apply

- 5) As a Jesus follower, it is not about what you can or cannot do, but about what you get to be a part of when you have a relationship with Him. Legalism ends when Jesus begins to show you a glimpse of His power. What distractions may be keeping you from experiencing Christ's presence?
- 6) God's love is greater than any tradition, rule or church practice. In what ways have you experienced God's unconditional love during times of your life you wouldn't have expected it? How could overcoming legalism begin to positively affect your relationships with others?

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- 7) Jesus wants you to introduce others to Him. Once you get past the trap of rules and tradition, you can worry less about what people think and focus on what He wants to do in you and through you. What opportunities are right in front of you now, after choosing to make relationships more important than rules?

Continue Learning on Your Own

- 8) God wants to fill the void where religion and rules have possibly left you feeling empty. Church is full of people, and if you stay anywhere long enough, you will likely experience some sort of disappointment. Read **I Kings 8:27** and **Hebrews 10:25**. How can you begin to trust that God wants to be the ultimate source of acceptance and belonging in your life, while staying connected to a local church?