

# DISCUSSION GUIDE

Week 5: Jesus Is Enough to Free Us

Main Idea: Because Jesus is enough to free us, we refuse systems that promise control but deliver bondage.

Colossians 2:16–23

“So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him.” (Colossians 2:6).

## **OBSERVATION: WHAT DOES IT SAY?**

Gather in groups of three to five people and discuss the Observation and Interpretation sections.

Observation Exercise 1: Don't be judged on these things

Read Colossians 2:16–17. What specific areas did Paul say believers are not to be judged on? How did he describe those practices in relation to Christ?

*Suggested Response: Paul mentioned food and drink, religious festivals, New Moon celebrations, and Sabbaths. He described them as a shadow of things to come and said the reality or substance is found in Christ.*

Observation Exercise 2: Don't be duped by those claiming spiritual authority

Read Colossians 2:18–19. What kinds of practices or attitudes did Paul describe, and what did he say had happened to those who promoted them?

*Suggested Response: Paul described false humility, the worship of angels, and detailed accounts of visions. He said such people were puffed up by their unspiritual mind and had lost connection with the head, who is Christ.*

Observation Exercise 3: Don't be enslaved by dying things

Read Colossians 2:20–23. What slogans or commands did Paul quote, and how did he evaluate these regulations?

*Suggested Response: Paul quoted commands like “Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch.” He said these rules concerned things that perish with use and are based on human commands and teachings. He acknowledged that they had an appearance of wisdom but said they lacked value in restraining sensual indulgence.*

## **INTERPRETATION: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?**

Interpretation Exercise 1: The shadow and the substance

In Colossians 2:16–17, why did Paul call the food laws and sacred days a “shadow”? What does it mean that the reality is found in Christ?

*Suggested Response: By calling them a shadow, Paul was saying these practices pointed forward to something greater. They were temporary and anticipatory, not ultimate. Christ is the fulfillment they anticipated. Once the substance has come, the shadow no longer defines one’s standing with God. To treat the shadow as binding is to misunderstand where fullness and legitimacy now reside.*

Interpretation Exercise 2: Losing connection with the head

In Colossians 2:18–19, why did Paul say those promoting visionary experiences and ascetic humility had “lost connection with the head”? What was at stake in that loss?

*Suggested Response: Paul’s concern was that these teachers were moving spiritual growth away from union with Christ and toward elite experiences or severe practices. To lose connection with the head means to detach from the source of life and growth. What was at stake was not minor disagreement but the source of spiritual vitality itself. Growth comes from Christ, not from intensified regulation or mystical elevation.*

Interpretation Exercise 3: Appearance of wisdom but no power

In Colossians 2:20–23, why did Paul say these regulations lacked value in restraining sensual indulgence even though they appeared wise and disciplined?

*Suggested Response: Paul was distinguishing between external severity and internal transformation. Rules that focus on physical restriction may create the impression of control, but they cannot change the desires of the heart. The regulations addressed behavior at the surface level while leaving the deeper*

*problem of the flesh untouched. What appeared spiritually strong lacked the power to produce true freedom.*

## **APPLICATION: HOW DO I RESPOND?**

Question 1: Paul talked about being judged, disqualified, or pressured by spiritual standards that look impressive. What part of this feels most personal to you right now?

*Suggested Response: Some may resonate with the fear of being judged or not measuring up. Others may notice how easily seriousness or discipline becomes a way of proving something. Encourage participants to reflect on where they feel subtle pressure to validate their standing.*

Question 2: Paul said certain practices are a shadow, while the reality is found in Christ. Where are you most tempted to cling to the shadow instead of resting in the substance?

*Suggested Response: Participants may mention routines, knowledge, moral restraint, or comparison. The goal is not to dismiss spiritual habits but to uncover when they function as reassurance apart from Christ rather than expressions of trust in Him.*

Question 3: Paul described regulations that had an appearance of wisdom but lacked power to restrain the flesh. Why do you think we are drawn to what looks spiritually serious, even when it does not produce real change?

*Suggested Response: Some may recognize that visible discipline feels measurable and controllable. Others may notice that intensity can create a sense of security. The discussion should surface reasons that appearance can feel safer than dependence.*

Question 4: Because Jesus is enough to free us, we refuse systems that promise control but deliver bondage. What would it look like for you to live in that freedom instead of rebuilding standards that measure you?

*Suggested Response: This may include releasing comparison, resisting self-imposed verdicts, or practicing discipline without using it as proof of worth. The emphasis is not on abandoning structure but on refusing to let structure define identity.*

Question 5: How can we, as a group, guard one another from drifting into a culture of comparison and performance?

*Suggested Response: This may include resisting language that ranks maturity, celebrating steady faithfulness, and reminding one another that growth flows from connection to Christ. A healthy group culture reinforces substance over shadow and protects members from subtle forms of spiritual pressure.*