

2:16-23 Discussion Questions

Outline of Pastor Mike's Sermon

1. A question on cultural tradition

A. Legalism: Conformity to a set of rules in order to earn God's favor which often results in a sense of spiritual or ethic completeness and even superiority.

B. Elevating human traditions over Christ

2. A question on over-spiritualized devotion

A. Asceticism: Pursuing spiritual experiences by means of exercises of effort and self-denial.

B. Emphasizing a particular kind experience of God

3. A question on boasting in failed things

A. Following rules and practices in order to get an experience or make ourselves better doesn't actually help us live in victory over the flesh. Instead, it just feeds the flesh (i.e. pride and self-centeredness).

B. Instead we pursue Jesus, not a feeling or a sense of spiritual superiority. As we pursue Jesus with love, then we will follow His law and find spiritual wholeness in Him.

Application

A. Don't be too naïve and undiscerning about false and deceptive philosophies and ideas that lead us away from Jesus and what he called us to.

B. Don't make our preferences an authoritative tradition that we force on others.

Discussion Questions

1. Paul begins this passage with another 'therefore,' and so what he says now is continuing to build on what we saw last week. What was the main idea of last week's passage (2:6-15)?

2. In v. 16 Paul says "don't let anyone pass judgment on you in questions of food or drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath." "Food," "drink," "festival," "new moon" and "Sabbath" are all most likely references to aspects of the Mosaic law. The law was good but it was only a shadow and Jesus is the fullness of God's revelation (v. 17).

a. Why do you think that Paul's audience was tempted to try and use obedience to the Mosaic Law as a way of to prove their spiritual maturity and to judge one another?

b. Jesus fulfilled the Mosaic Law and then gave us His law to follow, and so the laws about rituals, holidays, ceremonies, and food in the old covenant no longer had to be followed.

1. What kinds of "laws" or traditions—which are not part of Jesus' perfect law—do you feel pressured to conform to?

2. What kinds of traditions are you tempted to judge others by?

3. In v. 18 Paul shifts his focus to "asceticism." See the definition for asceticism above in the summary of Pastor Mike's sermon. While there is a lot of similarity between asceticism and legalism, one big difference is that where legalism is about proving or earning one's spiritual maturity by keep rules, the asceticism that Paul is talking about is about chasing spiritual experiences through rigorous spiritual discipline.

a. Are you more tempted to try and make yourself look good by following traditions and rules, or seeking after spiritual experiences that make you feel good? Why is that?

b. How does the gospel address your struggle with either legalism or asceticism?

4. The ascetics that Paul is dealing with seemed to be trying to use pagan spiritual practices to achieve spiritual experiences (e.g. visions) that were exciting and made them feel spiritual.

a. What kinds of non-Christian practices do people bring into the church for the same purposes?

b. Where do you see people trying to pursue spiritual experiences by means of something other than what Jesus and his Apostles taught us?

c. What does Paul say is the result of these kinds of practices? (v. 18)

d. Why does Paul contrast these practices with "holding fast to the Head" (v. 19)?

e. What does connecting to the Head produce? (See v. 19).

f. What does this imply about what happens when we pursue these spiritual experience using practices that do not come from Jesus?

5. Each of us is regularly tempted to fall into either the trap of legalism or asceticism. How do we safeguard against them? What has God used in your life to help you overcome either of these?

6. What particular forms of cultural traditions and over-spiritualized devotions have you encountered at KHC? How can you help address them?