

July 19/20, 2025

"New Life Over Dead Religion"

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**Beyond the
Weekend**

SPEND DAILY TIME WITH GOD AS YOU READ, THINK, PRAY + ACT.

2025 Focus: 50 Key Truths

Each Friday, explore a key truth about our Christian faith and how we can live in light of this truth.

Day 1 [Mark 2:18-20](#) | Religion Without Relationship

Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? They cannot, so long as they have him with them. But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast." Mark 2:19-20

It is early in Jesus's ministry. The Pharisees are trying to figure out who Jesus is and what he is about. All they see is that he heals people and claims authority that belongs only to God. As the religious authorities of the day, they want to figure out what is going on. So, they go after him for not keeping their rules. As he answers their questions, Jesus uses an illustration of a bridegroom. He is telling them that the kingdom of heaven is here. Instead of mourning and fasting, they should be feasting and celebrating! What they were longing for arrived in him. But the Pharisees do not see it. They completely miss who Jesus is and the relationship he offers.

We, too, can miss the relationship Jesus offers and emphasize ritual instead. We attend weekend services but do not seek the presence of Christ. We show up and sing the songs, but our minds are elsewhere. We listen to the sermons but never ask the Spirit to change us. Songs are sung, sermons are preached, but the Bridegroom is absent from our hearts. When we take Jesus seriously, he gives us a new relationship with him that changes us from the inside out. A relationship that is more than ritual.

TODAY: Pray and confess how you have fallen into ritual without heart. Ask God to help you follow him more closely.

Day 2 [Mark 2:23-28](#) | Tradition Without Truth

One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?" Mark 2:23-24

The Pharisees continue to ask who Jesus is and what his disciples are doing. Jesus's disciples pick and eat grain on the Sabbath. The Pharisees cry that it's a violation of God's commandment to keep the Sabbath day holy ([Exodus 20:8](#)). By picking heads of grain, they were "working." But God's Sabbath is a rhythm of rest to remind humanity they are created for more than work. The Sabbath day is designed for delight and to recalibrate hearts toward God. Jesus confronts the religious leaders, saying they've missed the heart of God behind this commandment. They have turned it into a lengthy list of rules. They made the Sabbath a legalistic burden, rather than the blessing God intended.

We can miss God's heart just as the Pharisees did. We all have opinions, ideologies and traditions that we impose on Scripture. We examine Scripture without letting it examine us. We treat Scripture as a therapist rather than the Word of God. As followers of Jesus, we must allow Scripture to transform every aspect of our lives ([2](#)

[Timothy 3:16](#)). Scripture is meant to teach, examine and correct us. If the Bible never contradicts us but only agrees with us, we are not following Jesus. Instead, we are following a god we find in the mirror.

TODAY: Memorize [2 Timothy 3:16](#), "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness." Ask God to reveal any parts of your life where you need to allow Scripture to examine and correct you.

Day 3 [Mark 3:1-6](#) | Self-Righteousness Without Heart

Then Jesus asked them, "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save a life or to kill?" But they remained silent. He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. Mark 3:4-5

The Pharisees seek to trap Jesus. They do not care about the man with a shriveled hand. They just want to see if Jesus will break their rules. Their dead religion knows nothing of mercy, only rules and rituals. Jesus is angry about their hardened hearts and grieved because he wants to save them. Jesus wants these religious leaders to draw close to God. But they cannot understand the heart of God, even while Jesus stands right in front of them.

Missing the heart of God is a warning for all of us. We can behave perfectly, know all the right doctrine and Scripture, but have a heart far from God. We may be quick to correct people in our lives, but slow to comfort or encourage. We may expect perfect behavior from our kids, but we can't show them how to live a life filled with grace and love. It's easy to value performance over people. Jesus invites us to a better way—one that reflects his heart and character.

TODAY: When do you need to show more compassion? Where do you need to lead with mercy? Remember the compassion and mercy you have been shown through Jesus. Watch this video of Ada Bible Worship singing "[Holy Forever](#)" and use the lyrics to prompt you to worship and "Sing the song of ages to the Lamb."

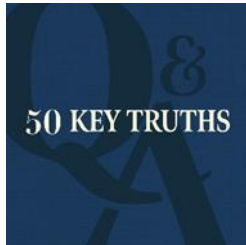
Day 4 [Hosea 6:6](#) | A Heart Reformed

For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings. Hosea 6:6

The prophet Hosea delivers God's messages to Israel around 700 BC after Israel fell to the Babylonians. The first three chapters of Hosea are about his family. They are symbolic of the spiritual adultery of God's people. The rest of the book conveys various messages about Israel's sins and God's offer for Israel to return to him. Speaking to the unrepentant nation, God tells them that going through the religious motions is not acceptable. God's desire is for his people to love him and live out of that love in obedience. He is not about sacrifices but mercy. God has always been after his people's hearts.

Hosea's words speak directly to us today. Jesus came to give us new life, not a dead religion. There are four realities that can reorient our hearts: 1) Jesus is the Bridegroom who brings joy, not guilt. He came to replace the shame of religion with the joy of relationship. 2) Jesus is the new wine who does not patch up our old lives but gives us new life. He makes all things new. 3) Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath, who gives rest, not a burden. Jesus is our rest and joy. 4) Jesus is the Lamb of God who died to put an end to dead religion. He heals us from death and destruction.

TODAY: Which of the four realities do you need to remember most? Journal about how you can use it to prepare for this weekend's service. Ask God to meet you and prepare your heart for the worship and message.



Day 5 [Colossians 1:21-22](#) | Question 28: Reconciled to God

Question: What does it mean to be reconciled to God?

Answer: Reconciliation means our relationship with God is restored; we are no longer his enemies but his friends.

But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation. Colossians 1:22

Paul writes to believers in Colossae, reminding them of their new standing with God. In the ancient world, the term "reconciled" refers to the restoration of broken relationships. It is often used to restore peace between warring nations or feuding families. Paul explains that Christ's physical death accomplished what seemed impossible—bringing enemies of God into a state of friendship with him. The Colossians had experienced a complete transformation in their relationship status with God. Through Christ's sacrifice, they moved from estrangement to peace and unity with God. What makes this reconciliation remarkable is that God initiated it while they were still his enemies, demonstrating incredible love and grace.

This same reconciliation can transform our understanding of a relationship with God today. We no longer approach God as fearful enemies, hoping to avoid his wrath. We come as reconciled friends, living in peace with him through Jesus Christ. Through faith in Christ, we are free to walk with confidence before God. We have gained access to God's grace by faith, in which we now stand. Reconciliation means we are no longer alienated from God but brought near to him. The barrier of sin that separated us from God has been removed through Christ's sacrifice, restoring the relationship that was lost.

TODAY: Thank God for reconciling you to himself through Christ's death. Approach him confidently as a reconciled friend. Let the truth of reconciliation influence how you relate to others and seek to be a peacemaker in broken relationships around you. Learn more about reconciliation and salvation in our We Believe document [HERE](#).