

Series: Reintroducing Jesus  
Text: Luke 5:33-39  
May 3, 2015: Gospel Community Study Guide

*This Study Guide is based on a sermon by Dr. Joshua Mack. You will find the link to the sermon here.*

<http://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=511151132161>

<http://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?sid=511151147204>

### **Getting Started:**

People like rituals.

A ritual is a solemn ceremony or religious act that a person performs. These rituals can be performed for all sorts of different reasons and in all sorts of different ways.

When you start looking around you at what's happening in Africa, you begin to notice that rituals are everywhere. Africa is filled with rituals.

What are some typical rituals that people perform where you are from in order to deal with the problems in the world or get right with God?

### **Into the Bible:**

One ritual people perform is fasting.

People have been fasting for a long time. They were even fasting in Jesus' day. This was one of the three key activities of the religious elite in his day. They prayed, fasted twice a week, and gave tithes and offerings.

It is not surprising that when they came to evaluate Jesus they wanted to check out the way he prayed and fasted. They were shocked to discover that he wasn't having his disciples fast the way they did.

Have someone read Luke 5:33-39 or summarize the story in their own words. What question or objection are they making about Jesus?

### **The Big Idea:**

This is really amazing when you think about it. This particular story is found in a section of Luke where he is telling us the problems the religious leaders had with Jesus. And here is one of their main issues: They didn't think Jesus was religious enough.

TALK ABOUT MISSING THE POINT!

Here they were reading their Bibles, going to church, fasting, I mean, they were serious, and yet when God breaks through into this world to provide the salvation they were longing for, they objected to it, and the reason they gave was that it wasn't spiritual enough.

**It's very possible for rituals and religious activity to lead you away from Jesus instead of towards him.**

What are some ways you have seen that happening?

### **Digging Deeper:**

If you were going to identify one of Satan's best strategies to keep people from really being transformed by the gospel would you bring up traditional rituals and religion?

It's clear from Jesus' response to these religious individuals that he saw this as a very real threat. The way these people were fasting was a demonstration they were missing Jesus and Jesus was concerned that their religious activity and rituals would keep them from seeing Him.

Look at the parables he tells and then the proverb he shares and see if you can explain the warning he is giving to religious people by answering the following questions:

What is the point of the parable about the new and old garments and the new and old wineskin?

What is Jesus saying will not mix?

What is the warning he is giving in verse 39?

This threat didn't end with the religious people of Jesus' day.

Turn over to Colossians 2:16-23 and answer the following questions:

What are the two things that Paul says the Colossians must not do?

The Colossians were under attack from false teachers. As you look at verse 16 and 18, what kinds of things were the false teachers using to distract people from Christ?

This passage reminds us that it is very possible to be very religious and serious about rituals and completely miss the gospel and miss Christ!

Look at verse 21. What were the false teachers saying to the Colossians here? What does Paul say about what they were teaching in verse 22 and 23?

Did you catch the shock of the statement Paul is making? He's saying that a lot of religious activity is really worldly!

### **Relating it to Real Life:**

I am not an expert on African religion, obviously, but I don't think it takes one, to see that what's at the heart of the typical African approach to solving the problems we face in this world is the performance of certain prescribed rituals, that's what people expect, RITUALS ARE A BIG DEAL IN AFRICAN CULTURE, and as a result, if you look at a lot of people's Christianity, it's very focused on rituals.

Before they were Christians, this was their approach to the problems in life, rituals. And after they are Christians, they go to churches, where it sort of becomes the same thing again, just with Jesus added on top. You know how, people go big for you have tithe a certain amount, or wear a certain outfit, or not touch dead people, or follow prescribed fasts. It's like the mindset is, if it's religious it is probably good, and if it is in anyway associated with the Bible, it has to be good for us, as Christians. But it's actually a little more complicated that because, we are seeing, as Luke introduces Jesus to us and in particular, starts explaining the heart of the controversy he was having with the religious leaders of his day, it was a different approach to rituals that was part of what got Jesus killed.

Looking back at Luke 5 and Jesus' response to those who were objecting to him, what can we learn from this about how we as his followers should think about and evaluate rituals and traditions so they don't actually keep us from Jesus? How should we think about things like fasting and tithing and other religious rituals now that we are Christians?

### **To Think About:**

Religion can be a way of avoiding Jesus. Religious activity can even keep us from Jesus.

Read the following quote and answer the questions that follow:

“Christians come to see that both their sins and their best deeds have all really been ways of avoiding Jesus as savior.

They come to see that Christianity is not fundamentally an invitation to get more religious. A Christian comes to say: “Though I have often failed to obey the moral law, the deeper problem was why I was trying to obey it! Even my efforts to obey it has been just a way of seeking to be my own savior. In that mindset, even if I obey or ask for forgiveness, I am really resisting the gospel and setting myself up as Savior.”

To “get the gospel” is turn from self-justification and rely on Jesus’ record for a relationship with God. The irreligious don’t repent at all, and the religious only repent of sins. But Christians also repent of their righteousness. That is the distinction between the three groups—Christian, moralists (religious), and pragmatists (irreligious).”

How can someone’s good deeds be a way of avoiding Jesus?

What does it mean that Christianity is not a way to get more religious?

What does it mean to turn from self-justification?

What do Christians repent of?

What did you learn about Jesus from our study? The gospel? In what ways were you encouraged? Do you have any more questions?