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A couple of months ago I received this text message from a young person who attends our church.

So I've heard people use [Colossians 2:16-17](#) to pardon all of the rules about dietary restrictions and the sabbath in the Old Testament. What do you think about that?

Here are the verses referenced:

So don't let anyone condemn you for what you eat or drink, or for not celebrating certain holy days or new moon ceremonies or Sabbaths. For these rules are only shadows of the reality yet to come. And Christ himself is that reality. ([Colossians 2:16-17](#), NLT)

Here is my reply (some of this has been condensed a bit for clarity and space):

In this passage Paul is simply referring to the battle he fought most of his life as a follower of Jesus. Some Jewish Christians believed you must embrace the Jewish religion before you could become a Christian. This generally involved what you ate and keeping all the Jewish holy days.

I would also add to that circumcision – which Paul spoke of just a few verses before these.

... He was not saying eat what you want and ignore the Sabbath; he is saying don't fall into the trap of thinking you have to become a Jew first.

That being said, I don't believe that what you eat or don't eat is a Salvation issue. It is a health issue ...

I then shared about how they didn't have the science to back up things we know about health so God turned them into laws because He wanted them to be healthy – because your life is better when you're healthy. I went on:

Those that use this text to say that the 7th day Sabbath was done away with are simply trying to justify Sunday worship. They claim the law was done away with so it is not longer necessary. However when you press them on the law being done away with by asking if you can then steal something from them, the truth comes out that they believe that only the 4th commandment was done away with which is neither logical or correct.

This reply came back:

Interesting ... I'm just trying to figure what other religions believe. I wish there weren't so many denominations. I wish we just believed the same thing. It would make life much less complicated.

I replied:

It would be less complicated but kind of boring.

Their reply:

I guess. Less fighting though.

My reply:

There are many things in the Bible that are a bit confusing which leads to differences in understanding. The most important thing to realize however is that God is not looking for people who believe all the right stuff and have the Bible figured out. He is looking for people who will take the time to get to know and love Him. Christianity is not really a set of beliefs – it is a relationship with Jesus that enables us to trust Him enough to follow Him.

When we understand this then the differences in belief becomes less of a problem. Believing the right things is only important as it helps us understand God more and helps us love others better. It's important, but it's not the main thing.

And here is the important question that inspired this sermon series:

Well if all of this extra fluff really doesn't matter in the long run, then why am I even Adventist? If all that matters is showing God's love, then I am more inclined to go to a nondenominational church. They don't worry about the fluff. They just want to love God. And I want to do that too.

This is an incredibly important question. What really matters and what is fluff?

In my messages here for the past eight and half years, I've mostly focused on what I believe really matters – a deep relationship of love and trust with Jesus.

We, as Adventists, tend to act like believing the right stuff is the most important thing in the world and have neglected the most basic truth. This truth is that being Christian is not about checking off all the right boxes, but about having a life-changing relationship with God.

As I look back over these years, I can see that it might be easy to assume that nothing else matters.

There is a time when nothing else matters. But, there comes a time when lots of other things matter as well. It's not because it will make God love and accept you any more, but because you can only live your best life when you're living it in harmony with God's plan.

God didn't create Scripture, along with the lessons found there, the laws given, and warnings spoken to make your life complex and difficult. He is not testing you to see if you're paying close attention to all the rules. He gave you all this to make your life simpler.

He created you and me, so He should know what will make us happy and give us peace. He knows what it takes for you to live your best life. All His instructions are designed with this in mind.

First Aid

Let's pretend you come upon an accident that has just happened. You're the first person to stop. This is what you observe:

- Two cars were involved.
- One person is getting out of the least damaged car with lacerations all over his face and head, clutching his stomach. He then stumbles over to a grassy spot on the side of the road and kind of collapses there. You can see he is still alert, but in substantial pain.
- The passenger of that same car got out and seems to be okay. She goes over to check on him.
- The other car was more damaged. The driver is sitting there slumped over the steering wheel, not moving.

Where do you begin? To check on the person still sitting in the car not moving, right?

So you quickly head over there. As you come close you notice:

- Face lacerations
- A shoulder that looks displaced
- A fair amount of blood trickling down her arm along with blood around her mouth and on the floor below her.
- She doesn't appear to be breathing

These thoughts run through your head pretty quickly – you know how thoughts just pile on each other in a split second; almost like you’re thinking them all at once:

- This was a nice looking person that isn’t going to look so good from the look of the face lacerations;
- that arm could be permanently damaged if we don’t get it back in the socket quickly;
- how much blood is she losing – is a vein or artery cut or damaged:
- she’s not breathing!

What do you do next?

At that moment, the only thing that really matters is that she’s not breathing! Why? Because if she doesn’t start breathing soon, she’ll die – then looks, arm use, or blood loss make no difference.

At that moment, they’re just fluff because you’re dealing with a life or death situation. So you ignore the other things and start doing what you can to get her breathing again.

Once she is breathing and stable, then the other things grow in importance and are not longer just fluff, because they affect the quality of her life.

This is true in our spiritual life as well.

If you haven’t given yourself to Jesus and are not connected to Him, it doesn’t matter what day of the week you worship on, what you believe about eternity, how much money you give to the church, what you believe about living the right way, and so on.

If you are not alive in Jesus, nothing else matters – it is all fluff.

The problem is we often assume that once it’s fluff, it’s always fluff. But, things change. Once you’ve accepted Jesus into your life, then the quality of your life in Him becomes important. And God makes it clear that you will only live your best life if you live the way you were designed to live.

God’s greatest desire is for you to be with Him for eternity. Almost as great, is His desire for you to live your best life.

When you’re not alive, nothing else matters! But, once you are alive, how you live makes a big difference – both for you and for those around you.

Ultimately, nothing in Scripture is really fluff. Paul wrote:

All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17, NLT)

This series is about figuring out if what we believe is important or fluff. And, about how some things that may feel like fluff at one point in our relationship with Jesus, actually become important to help you grow closer to Him.

The Cadaver Lab

Two medical students went off to school to study for medicine. One of the first things they were introduced to was the anatomy lab. In this lab there was a heavy silence. It was kind of cold, and things were really dead there!

But these med students were anxious to make a good showing, so they analyzed the situation. They noticed that there was a good deal of unity there in the lab. There didn't seem to be any fights going on; no one was vying for the highest place. They were all in the same position.

As the med students considered the situation, they become convinced that what these patients needed was improved health. They tried introducing the patients to a new diet, but nobody seemed to care about eating. They told the patients about the benefits of exercise, but no one seemed interested. These students determined there must be an even deeper problem.

They wondered if the problem was a lack of fellowship. But that turned out to be a dead-end street. The patients refused to be sociable. They tried to develop a statement of mission—it was ignored. They considered a lack of resources may be the problem and took up an offering—no one gave.

In the end, the med students discovered to their dismay that the people in the lab all had a common problem. They were not breathing ... they weren't even alive.

How About You?

As we move through this series, there are a couple of verses we'll keep coming back to. The first was part of this week's assignment in [Psalm 139](#):

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.

([Psalm 139:23-24](#), NLT)

We should be praying this daily. If you will make this your prayer, you can be sure God will answer you. He will keep directing you along the right path. He will continue to point you in the right direction.

And the other verse is this bit of wisdom found in [Proverbs 3](#):

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. ([Proverbs 3:5-6](#), NIV)

When God does direct you along the right path and point you in the right direction, you need to trust Him enough that you actually do what He is asking you to do.

Your relationship with Jesus will not thrive if you don't value His instructions enough to follow them. You will actually learn more about God and draw closer to Him through one instance of acting on what He says than you will in a year of study on the topic.

These two attitudes are what will keep you moving in the right direction:

1. Looking to God for direction and instructions.
2. Following those directions and instructions as He reveals them to you.

We will keep coming back to these. My challenge to you is to start putting this into practice today. Ask Him for guidance, and then follow it. You will never look back on this and regret it.

Closing Song – “Blessed Assurance” **auto advances to 3**

Assignment

Spend a bit of time this week considering [Colossians 2:6-23](#). Notice especially what it says about life and death, circumcision, the cross, the ceremonial law, man-made rules, and Jesus.

- This week, read [Colossians 2:6-23](#) through at least once each day – try reading it in a couple different translations.
- What do you find comforting in this passage?
- Is there anything in this passage that makes you uncomfortable? Why do you think that is?
- Verse six says: ... *Just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow Him.* What does this passage teach you about following Jesus?
- What was nailed to the cross (verse 14)? How does this affect your life?
- What is the most important message you see in this passage?
- How will what you have learned affect the way you live your life? Why?

Notes

Text you find in [this color](#) is a link to more information. It may take you to the Bible verse in context and/or in several different translations utilizing [BibleGateway.com](#). In some cases, it may take you to a website where there is additional information. And, it may take you to a PDF copy of previous sermons in this series.

Scripture References

Psalm 139 (NLT): *O LORD, you have examined my heart and know everything about me. ²You know when I sit down or stand up. You know my thoughts even when I'm far away. ³You see me when I travel and when I rest at home. You know everything I do. ⁴You know what I am going to say even before I say it, LORD. ⁵You go before me and follow me. You place your hand of blessing on my head. ⁶Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too great for me to understand!*

⁷I can never escape from your Spirit! I can never get away from your presence! ⁸If I go up to heaven, you are there; if I go down to the grave, you are there. ⁹If I ride the wings of the morning, if I dwell by the farthest oceans, ¹⁰even there your hand will guide me, and your strength will support me. ¹¹I could ask the darkness to hide me and the light around me to become night – ¹²but even in darkness I cannot hide from you. To you the night shines as bright as day. Darkness and light are the same to you.

¹³You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb. ¹⁴Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous – how well I know it. ¹⁵You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb. ¹⁶You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.

¹⁷How precious are your thoughts about me, O God. They cannot be numbered! ¹⁸I can't even count them; they outnumber the grains of sand! And when I wake up, you are still with me!

¹⁹O God, if only you would destroy the wicked! Get out of my life, you murderers! ²⁰They blaspheme you; your enemies misuse your name. ²¹O LORD, shouldn't I hate those who hate you? Shouldn't I despise those who oppose you? ²²Yes, I hate them with total hatred, for your enemies are my enemies.

²³Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. ²⁴Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.

(Psalm 139, NLT)

Proverbs 3:5-12 (NIV): *Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; ⁶in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.*

⁷ Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil. ⁸ This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones.

⁹ Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; ¹⁰ then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.

¹¹ My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline, and do not resent his rebuke, ¹² because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in. (**Proverbs 3:5-12**, NIV)

Colossians 2:6-23 (NLT): And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. ⁷ Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness.

⁸ Don't let anyone capture you with empty philosophies and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the spiritual powers of this world, rather than from Christ. ⁹ For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body. ¹⁰ So you also are complete through your union with Christ, who is the head over every ruler and authority.

¹¹ When you came to Christ, you were "circumcised," but not by a physical procedure. Christ performed a spiritual circumcision – the cutting away of your sinful nature. ¹² For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead.

¹³ You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. ¹⁴ He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ In this way, he disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross.

¹⁶ So don't let anyone condemn you for what you eat or drink, or for not celebrating certain holy days or new moon ceremonies or Sabbaths. ¹⁷ For these rules are only shadows of the reality yet to come. And Christ himself is that reality. ¹⁸ Don't let anyone condemn you by insisting on pious self-denial or the worship of angels, saying they have had visions about these things. Their sinful minds have made them proud, ¹⁹ and they are not connected to Christ, the head of the body. For he holds the whole body together with its joints and ligaments, and it grows as God nourishes it.

²⁰ You have died with Christ, and he has set you free from the spiritual powers of this world. So why do you keep on following the rules of the world, such as, ²¹ "Don't handle! Don't taste! Don't touch!"? ²² Such rules are mere human teachings about things that deteriorate as we use them.

²³ These rules may seem wise because they require strong devotion, pious self-denial, and severe bodily discipline. But they provide no help in conquering a person's evil desires.

(**Colossians 2:6-23**, NLT)

2 Timothy 3:14-17 (NLT): But you must remain faithful to the things you have been taught. You know they are true, for you know you can trust those who taught you. ¹⁵ You have been taught the holy

Scriptures from childhood, and they have given you the wisdom to receive the salvation that comes by trusting in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. ¹⁷ God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work. (2 Timothy 3:14-17, NLT)

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