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SERMON TITLE

Stay with Jesus

SERIES

DATE

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KEY SCRIPTURE

Colossians 2:8-10

SYNOPSIS

Don't just start with Jesus, stay with Jesus.

HIGHLIGHTS





☞ Stay with Jesus

Good morning, everyone! We're five weeks into 2026 now, and we've been on quite a journey together. We began with *A Fresh Start*—taking that crucial first step. Then we talked about what happens *After the Fresh Start*—when the excitement fades and reality sets in. We explored *Digging Deeper* with roots that go down below the surface. And last week, we talked about where those roots need to go: we have to *Start with Jesus*—because He's supreme over all and sufficient for everything.

But here's what I've noticed over the years: a lot of people are really good at starting with Jesus. They have a powerful conversion experience. They get baptized. They make commitments. They start strong. And then... somewhere along the way, they drift. Not dramatically. Not on purpose. They just slowly, almost imperceptibly, start getting pulled away from Him.

It's like when you're floating in a pool on a raft. You're just relaxing, enjoying the sun, maybe scrolling through your phone. You're not trying to go anywhere. But 20 minutes later you look up and you're on the completely opposite side of the pool. You didn't swim there. You didn't paddle there. You just... drifted. And now you're bumping into someone and they're giving you the look. That's how spiritual drift works. Nobody wakes up one morning and says, 'Today I'm going to abandon my faith!' No, you just stop paying attention, and before you know it, you're way off course.

So today, we need to talk about how to not just start with Jesus, but *stay* with Jesus. How do we keep from being pulled away? And how do we remain anchored in Christ when everything around us is trying to shift our focus?

☞ **Colossians 2:8-10** gives us a critical warning: **"See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ. For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority."**

Paul is saying, "Don't let anyone pull you away from Christ." Because there are forces—ideas, philosophies, cultural pressures, even religious traditions—that will try to take you captive. They'll promise you something better, something more, something deeper. But **they're hollow**. They're empty. And if you're not careful, they'll pull you away from the only One who is truly sufficient.

☞ **1: Watch Out—You Can Be Taken Captive**

The word *captive* here is interesting. It literally means to kidnap or carry off as plunder. It's a war ☞ term. It's violent. It's aggressive. And Paul's using it to describe what **false teaching** does to believers. It takes you prisoner. It drags you away from Christ.



Now, the Colossian church was being bombarded with all kinds of ideas. Some people were saying, "Jesus is good, but you also need these secret spiritual experiences." Others were promoting angel worship or special knowledge that only the elite could access. And Paul says, "All of that is hollow. All of that is **deceptive**. And if you buy into it, it will take you captive."

We face the same danger today. We might not be tempted to worship angels, but we're constantly being sold Jesus-plus-something-else. Jesus plus self-help. Jesus plus political ideology. The message is always the same: "Jesus is great, but He's not quite enough. You need this *too*."

We're like those infomercial ads. 'But wait, there's more!' Jesus saves you, BUT WAIT, THERE'S MORE—you also need this 10-step program! You also need to achieve this level of success! You also need to have your life completely together! And if you call in the next 10 minutes... No. Jesus isn't an infomercial. He's not the Sham-Wow guy. He's the fullness of God, and He doesn't need a sales pitch.

Once you start believing that Christ isn't sufficient, you become vulnerable to being taken captive by something else. You start chasing after things that promise fulfillment but deliver emptiness. You drift away from the One who is everything you need.

So Paul says, "See to it." Be on guard. Because the enemy doesn't usually come at you with obvious lies. He comes with *hollow and deceptive philosophy*. He comes with ideas that sound good, that feel right, that promise so much. But they're empty. And they'll lead you away from Christ. So, watch out.

☞ 2: Weed Out—Anything That Competes

Paul identifies what these false philosophies depend on: "human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ." *Human tradition* is man-made religion... Rules and regulations that people create to try to earn God's favor. Works-based righteousness. The belief that if you just follow the right system, perform the right rituals, check the right boxes, you'll be good with God.

Some have turned Christianity into spiritual frequent flyer miles. 'Let's see, I went to church twice this month, that's 200 points. I volunteered at the food pantry, that's another 500. I didn't lose my temper... well, I only lost it twice, so I'll give myself 300 points. Okay, I'm at 1,000 points—am I good with God yet? Can I redeem these for a miracle?' That's not how this works. That's not how any of this works.

Paul also mentions *elemental spiritual forces*. He's likely referring to the basic principles of the world—the philosophies and power structures that govern how the world operates apart from



God. Things like materialism, the pursuit of pleasure and power, status and control... The world's value system.

☞ Both of these—**human tradition and worldly philosophies**—are competing systems. They're alternatives to Christ. And Paul says they're hollow. They're empty. They can't deliver what they promise. Because they're based on human wisdom and worldly power, *not* on Christ.

Think about the subtle ways this shows up today. You hear messages like, "If you just work hard enough, you'll achieve the American dream." That's a worldly philosophy. It sounds good, but it's based on self-effort, not on Christ. Or, "You need to find your best life now. You deserve to be happy." That's the pursuit of comfort and fulfillment apart from God. It's also hollow.

Even within the church, we can fall into human tradition. "If you pray enough, read your Bible enough, or serve enough, *then* God will bless you." That's a works-based system. It sounds spiritual, but it's not rooted in the gospel of grace. It's rooted in performance.

Here's the test: If any philosophy or idea is not rooted in Christ, reject it. Don't let it take you captive. Don't let it pull you away from the One who is sufficient. Weed those things out.

☞ 3: Wake Up—You're Already Complete

Now here's the good news. Paul doesn't just warn us about what to avoid. He reminds us of what we already have. Verse 9: "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form." All the fullness of God—everything that God is—dwells in Jesus. Not part of God. Not just a representative of God. The *fullness*. Jesus is fully God. Completely divine.

And then verse 10: "And in Christ *you* have been brought to fullness." This is the key. **You are complete in Christ.** You don't need Jesus-plus-something-else. You don't need to add anything ☞ to what you have in Him. **In Christ, you have everything you need.**

It's like when you go to a buffet and you load up your plate. You've got mashed potatoes, fried chicken, mac and cheese, a dinner roll, and some green beans to make yourself feel better about your choices. Your plate is full. You can barely carry it back to your table. And then someone says, 'Hey, did you see they have prime rib over there?' And you're like, 'I literally have no room on my plate. It's full!' That's what Paul is saying. In Christ, your plate is full. You don't need to go looking for the spiritual prime rib somewhere else. You already have everything.

2 Peter 1:3 says it this way: "*His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.*" Everything we need.

☞ Not most things. Not some things. Everything. In Christ, you have **forgiveness**. You have **righteousness**. You have **peace with God**. You have the **Holy Spirit**. You have **eternal life**. You have **purpose**. You have **hope**. You have been brought to **fullness**.



So when the world tells you, "You need more," you can say, "I have fullness in Christ." When culture says, "You're missing out," you can say, "I have everything I need in Jesus." When false teachers promise, "We have secret knowledge that will take you deeper," you can say, "The fullness of God already dwells in Christ, and I am complete in Him."

Now, this doesn't mean you stop growing. It doesn't mean you've arrived. What it means is that your growth, your maturity, your transformation—all of it happens *in Christ*. You don't need to go outside of Him to find what you're looking for. You go deeper *into* Him. You stay *with* Him. Because He is the source of everything you need.

☞ 4: Walk On—Christ is Supreme

Paul ends this section by reminding us that Christ "is the head over every power and authority." This is important. The Colossians were being told they needed to appease spiritual powers. They needed to honor angels. They needed to fear certain forces. And Paul says, "No. Christ is *head* over all of that. He's supreme. He's in charge. And if you're in Him, you don't need to fear anything else."

We might not worry about angels, but we do worry about a lot of other things. We worry about the economy. We worry about politics. We worry about our health, our future, our security. We give power to things that don't deserve it. We let fear and anxiety control us. And Paul would ☞ say, "Christ is head over *all* of that. He's sovereign. **He's in control.** And if you're **anchored in Him**, nothing else has ultimate power over you."

So when you're tempted to fear, remember who's in charge. When you're tempted to give something else ultimate authority in your life, remember that Christ is head over every power. And when you're tempted to believe that you need something more than Jesus, remember that in Him, you have been brought to fullness. Walk on in Christ! You started with Jesus; now stay with Jesus! So practically, how do you stay with Jesus? How do you keep from being pulled away?

☞ First, **be on guard**. See to it. Pay attention. Recognize when something is trying to compete with Christ for your allegiance. Whether it's a philosophy, a pursuit, a possession, or even a religious system—if it's pulling you away from Jesus, reject it.

☞ Second, **test everything by Christ**. Ask yourself: Is this rooted in Christ, or is it rooted in human wisdom and worldly values? Does this point me to Jesus, or does it point me somewhere else? If it's not centered on Christ, it's hollow.

☞ Third, **remind yourself of what you have in Christ**. You are complete. You are full. You don't need Jesus-plus-anything. You have everything you need in Him. So when temptation comes, when the world offers you something that promises to fill the void, remember: that void has already been filled by Christ.



☞ And fourth, **connect with community**. You can't do this alone. You need other believers who will remind you of the truth when you start to drift. You need people who will challenge you when you're being pulled away. You need a church family that points you back to Christ again and again.

And, I know... staying with Jesus doesn't sound as exciting as chasing the next new thing. It's like marriage versus dating. Dating is exciting—new restaurants, butterflies, putting on your best outfit. Marriage is... Tuesday. It's doing the dishes together. It's watching the same show for the 47th time because you can't agree on anything else. But here's the thing: marriage is where the real depth happens. The real intimacy. The real transformation. And staying with Jesus is the same way. It's not always fireworks and mountaintop experiences. Sometimes it's just Tuesday. But that's where the real growth happens.

Here's what I want you to hear today: **Christ is sufficient**. You don't need anything else. And when you anchor your life in that truth, when you **stay with Jesus** and reject everything that competes with Him, you'll discover a freedom and a fullness that the world can't offer and can't take away.

So what's your next step? Maybe it's identifying something in your life that's competing with Christ and letting it go. Maybe it's rejecting a worldly philosophy you've bought into. Maybe it's simply taking a moment to thank God for the fullness you have in Jesus. Maybe it's recommitting to stay anchored in Him no matter what comes.

☞ Whatever it is, take the step. Because **staying with Jesus is the most important thing you'll ever do**. Don't let anyone or anything take you captive. Don't let hollow philosophies pull you away from the One who is everything. Stay with Jesus.

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