

Small Group Discussion Guide

"The Substance of Freedom: Avoiding Counterfeit Christianity"

Scripture Focus: Colossians 2:16-23

Opening Prayer & Ice Breaker (10 minutes)

Ice Breaker Question: Have you ever purchased something that turned out to be counterfeit or not what you expected? How did you feel when you discovered the truth?

Key Sermon Takeaways (Review Together)

1. **Substance Over Self-Righteousness** - Christ is more than religious rules about food, drink, and holidays
 2. **Relationship Over Religious Rituals** - True worship comes from the heart, not empty practices
 3. **Liberty in Christ Over Legalism** - Freedom in Christ replaces bondage to regulations
 4. **Authentic Worship Over the Appearance of Works** - Genuine faith versus man-made religion
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Discussion Questions

Section 1: Understanding Counterfeit Christianity (15 minutes)

1. **What does "counterfeit Christianity" mean to you after hearing this sermon?** How might it show up in modern church culture?
2. **Read Colossians 2:16-17.** Paul mentions food, drink, festivals, and Sabbaths as "shadows" while Christ is the "substance." What are some modern-day "shadows" that Christians might focus on instead of Christ?
3. **The sermon mentioned that counterfeit Christianity "costs the very life of those who believe in it."** What do you think this means practically? What's at stake?

Section 2: Examining Our Own Hearts (20 minutes)

4. **Substance Over Self-Righteousness:** Have you ever caught yourself (or others) judging someone's faith based on external behaviors rather than their relationship with Christ? Share an example if comfortable.
5. **Read Hebrews 4:8-11 (referenced in the sermon).** How does understanding Jesus as our "Sabbath rest" change the way you view your relationship with God? Does this bring freedom or feel uncomfortable? Why?
6. **The pastor shared about his experience buying a counterfeit North Face jacket.** What are some "spiritual counterfeits" you've been tempted to trust in instead of Christ alone? (Examples: good works, church attendance, family heritage, moral living)

Section 3: Relationship Over Ritual (15 minutes)

7. **Read Colossians 2:18-19.** Paul warns against "worship of angels" and being "puffed up" with visions. What are contemporary equivalents of these distractions that pull people away from Christ as the head of the church?
8. **The sermon stated: "True revival begins in the heart of our congregation long before it becomes an event on our calendar."** How does this challenge your understanding of revival or spiritual growth? What needs to happen in your heart before corporate worship?
9. **Discuss this quote from the sermon:** "It's not our religious practices that make us righteous." How does this truth both comfort and challenge you?

Section 4: Living in Liberty (20 minutes)

10. **Read Colossians 2:20-22.** Paul asks why believers submit to "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch" regulations. What are some unspoken "rules" in Christian culture that aren't actually biblical commands?
11. **The sermon mentioned that the only reason to abstain from something we're free to do in Christ is if it causes a brother or sister to stumble.** How do we balance Christian liberty with concern for others? Can you think of a practical example?
12. **Read 2 Timothy 2:15.** The pastor emphasized studying Scripture to avoid legalism and counterfeit teaching. How consistent is your personal Bible study? What barriers keep you from regularly reading God's Word?

Section 5: Authentic Faith (15 minutes)

13. **Read Colossians 2:23.** These false teachings have "an appearance of wisdom" but are "of no value." Why do you think people (including ourselves) are attracted to rule-based religion rather than grace-based relationship?
14. **The sermon shared 1 Corinthians 10:13 about God providing "a way of escape" from temptation.** The pastor said, "If you like the heat of the burning building and you don't take the fire escape, don't be surprised when you get burned." What does this mean for our daily battle with sin?
15. **Reflect on this statement: "Counterfeit Christianity will unravel at every seam."** Have you ever seen this happen—either in your own life or someone else's? What was the result?

Personal Application (10 minutes)

Take a few minutes of silence for personal reflection, then share as comfortable:

- **Identify one area** where you might be trusting in religious activity rather than relationship with Christ
- **Name one "regulation"** you've been following that isn't actually biblical (cultural Christianity vs. true Christianity)
- **Choose one practice** to deepen your relationship with Jesus this week (not a ritual, but genuine connection)

Practical Action Steps:

1. Commit to reading Colossians 2:16-23 daily this week, asking God to reveal any counterfeit elements in your faith
2. Memorize 2 Timothy 2:15 or 1 Corinthians 10:13
3. Journal about this question: "What does authentic worship look like in my daily life?"
4. Identify one believer you can encourage this week who may be struggling with legalism or feeling spiritually inadequate

Closing Discussion (5 minutes)

Read together from the sermon video: *"What we do in here can change the world out there. We celebrate freedom in here so we can carry freedom out there... This is the body of Christ, a chosen people with a holy purpose brought to life by Jesus and sent out by Jesus."*

Question: How does understanding the "substance" of our freedom in Christ equip us to impact the world this week?

Prayer Time (10 minutes)

Prayer Focus:

- Thank God for the true freedom we have in Christ
- Confess areas where we've trusted in counterfeit Christianity or religious performance
- Ask for wisdom to discern truth from falsehood
- Pray for revival to begin in our own hearts
- Pray for those who don't yet know the substance of freedom in Christ

Closing Prayer: Have someone close by praying Colossians 2:6-7: *"Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving."*

For Further Study

- Read the entire book of Colossians (4 chapters) this week
 - Study Galatians (Paul's letter on freedom from legalism)
 - Read Romans 7:14-25 (Paul's struggle with sin)
 - Explore Hebrews 4 (entering God's rest)
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Leader Tip: This is a challenging topic that may bring up guilt or defensiveness. Create a safe space where people can be honest about their struggles with legalism or spiritual performance. Emphasize God's grace throughout the discussion and remind the group that recognizing counterfeit Christianity is the first step toward authentic faith.