

God desires right relationship, not just right actions.

Romans 2:17-29 (NLT) - You who call yourselves Jews are relying on God's law, and you boast about your special relationship with him. ¹⁸You know what he wants; you know what is right because you have been taught his law. ¹⁹You are convinced that you are a guide for the blind and a light for people who are lost in darkness. ²⁰You think you can instruct the ignorant and teach children the ways of God. For you are certain that God's law gives you complete knowledge and truth.

²¹Well then, if you teach others, why don't you teach yourself? You tell others not to steal, but do you steal? ²²You say it is wrong to commit adultery, but do you commit adultery? You condemn idolatry, but do you use items stolen from pagan temples? ²³You are so proud of knowing the law, but you dishonor God by breaking it. ²⁴No wonder the Scriptures say, "The Gentiles blaspheme the name of God because of you."

²⁵The Jewish ceremony of circumcision has value only if you obey God's law. But if you don't obey God's law, you are no better off than an uncircumcised Gentile. ²⁶And if the Gentiles obey God's law, won't God declare them to be his own people? ²⁷In fact, uncircumcised Gentiles who keep God's law will condemn you Jews who are circumcised and possess God's law but don't obey it.

²⁸For you are not a true Jew just because you were born of Jewish parents or because you have gone through the ceremony of circumcision. ²⁹No, a true Jew is one whose heart is right with God. And true circumcision is not merely obeying the letter of the law; rather, it is a change of heart produced by the Spirit. And a person with a changed heart seeks praise from God, not from people.

Study Guide

We spoke last week about the Old Covenant and how one of the things that it shows us is that just working on the list of things to do or not do is not something that has worked or ever will work because it misses the point of life, which is to pursue relationship with God.

The temptation to default to the list is a strong one though. Why do you think it is difficult for us to simply pursue relationship with God? How have you struggled with it? Does it feel too vague sometimes? Too confusing?

A big part of the struggle can simply be knowing where to start. Read 1 John 4:7-21.

That's a good place to start. Loving God, loving others, and abiding in His love. What does it mean to you to abide in God's love? What does it mean to love God? What does it mean to love others like God loves us?

We also spoke last week about how, in marriage, love is not simply a feeling, it is the constant decision to love. If we treated our love for God the same way, what are some practices or patterns that could help you remember to choose to love Him each day? How do you do that? How can you do that?

Take some time to pray with each other that we would all grow in our capacity to love God and pursue relationship with Him.