

## Recognizing a Spiritual Con

### Colossians 2:16-23

And, in fact, Colossians 2 helps Christ-followers to **recognize three ways a believer can be spiritually conned.**

- **BELIEVERS CAN BE CONNED WITH LEGALISM.**

*Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. <sup>17</sup>These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.*  
Colossians 2:16-17 (New International Version)

**Definition:** “Legalism is any attempt to help God out with extra rules and regulations.” Dr. Larry Osborne

#### The Extra Rules

- What you eat or drink (Old Testament dietary laws—See Leviticus 11)

*Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, “Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. <sup>15</sup>Nothing outside a man can make him ‘unclean’ by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him ‘unclean’.” <sup>17</sup>After he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about this parable. <sup>18</sup>“Are you so dull?” he asked. “Don’t you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him ‘unclean’? <sup>19</sup>For it doesn’t go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body.” (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods “clean.”) Mark 7:14-19 (NIV) See also 1 Corinthians 8:8; Romans 14.*

- The Celebration of certain days (the Jewish religious calendar, the Sabbath Day—See Exodus 5:15; 31:13-17; Hebrews 8)

- **BELIEVERS CAN BE CONNED WITH MYSTICISM.**

*Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. <sup>19</sup>He has lost connection with the Head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow. Colossians 2:18-19 (NIV)*

Mysticism = the pursuit of spiritual truth through subjective experiences, apart from God’s Word or God’s Spirit

“. . . what he has seen” = best scholarship = “mystical visions”

- **BELIEVERS CAN BE CONNED WITH ASCETICISM.**

*Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: <sup>21</sup>“Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!”? <sup>22</sup>These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. <sup>23</sup>Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence. Colossians 2:20-23 (NIV)*

Ascetic = someone who lives a life of rigorous self-denial in order to become more spiritual.

**TAKEAWAY:** Don’t get conned into doing things for God because of rules in order to gain His approval. Instead obey and honor God because of your love relationship with Him.