

0 (1s):

Alright, Good morning. I'm so glad you guys are here today. Welcome online and in person. My name is Matt Wolf. I'm the lead pastor here at Rice Church Denver. And we're all about helping people follow Jesus. We wanna help you follow Jesus for you in turn to help others follow Jesus. Because following Jesus is the path to the fullest life and the only path to eternal life. And that's what we want for you. So, we are going to be in part three of our series, losing My Religion. It's okay if you've missed any. This will stand alone I think on its own. But in this series we're talking about the things about our Religion that actually would be a good thing if we do lose. And today we're gonna learn to move From Fences to Freedom fences to freedom. Because I think we want more freedom, don't we?

0 (43s):

A few people do I want more freedom? Do you want more freedom? Yes. Okay, there we go. Because a lot of people look at faith, they look at Christianity and think, man, those are not free people. A lot of people have grown up in a religious tradition, even in Christianity and they say, man, it's all about the rules, the rituals, their tradition. And it's constricting. There's too many rules. It's too much. So much So that I saw one statistic, at least 11% of people in our country are people who used to go to church. They were raised and they made it all the way through confirmation all the way through high school. And they're like, I ain't going back. And when I have conversations with those people, often it's because of how many weird little rules there were.

0 (1m 23s):

I think one person who embodies this idea, it was Lindsay Z. And she wrote in an article on the website The Ringer, an article and and she said this, she says, I was raised in this denomination, I'm not gonna say which one it is Christian denomination. She says, I was confirmed in the church. And she says this, when I was young, Religion felt like an infinite list of rules. too long to ever remember. You ever felt that way? And then she said this, this really stood out to me. God was something I always felt like I was doing wrong. I think too many people feel that way. I'm, I'm just wrong. I never can quite get it right.

0 (2m 4s):

There's all these rules, rituals, traditions. Do I stand up in the service? Do I sit down? Do I say the right words? Am I praying the right way? And all these different things come and they block people from true faith. They have a fence that gets up in the way. And what I'm hoping that we can do is move From Fences to Freedom because Jesus came So that we could have freedom. And he came to confront the people who made extra rules, extra rituals, extra fences that get in the way of us and God. So that's what we're talking about today. This series is all about the things that we need to lose in our Religion. That would be good because we're all have a tendency in our hearts to become more and more religious in these these things that we've learned.

0 (2m 44s):

And, we one, we learned that we're so often trying to pretend to be good people in Religion. Like we put on

this mask So, we learned in week one that we need to lose the mask. It's actually better to say I have problems, I have issues, I have sin and I need help. Okay? So lose the mask was what we learned in week one. In week two we learned that a lot of times religious people shut the door on other people to keep 'em out. They say, I'm in, you're out. I'm good, you're bad, I'm righteous, you're unrighteous. I'm going to heaven. You're going to hell. And actually it was never our job to begin with to decide who's in and who's out. So I, you don't shut the door. Show the way, show the way. That was week two and today we're gonna move From Fences to Freedom.

0 (3m 28s):

And in order to do that, we are going to look at a passage of scripture, a story about Jesus from Mark chapter seven, So, if you have your Bible open with me to Mark chapter seven, If, you have your smartphones. YouVersion is working. It didn't work. Last service. So you guys are special, okay, their server was down. But If, you go use the U version Bible app. You can find our rice church Denver event And. you can save that right on your phone so you can have notes. And there's even some links in there in the notes including links to this week's questions that you guys will discuss in your community groups. So, we are gonna be in Mark chapter seven, verse one. We read the Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus.

0 (4m 12s):

Now remember, these are the religious leaders of Jesus' days. These are the people that were all about following the rules, doing it right, looking good. They were the pastors, the teachers, the elders, the deacons, the great volunteers at their churches back in the day. And these all were the religious people, right? And in verse two it says, and they saw some of Jesus's disciples eating food with hands that were defiled. That is unwashed you. Okay? Verse three, the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders when they came from the marketplace.

0 (4m 53s):

They do not eat unless they wash and they observe many other traditions such as the washing of cups, pitchers, and kettles. Okay, as we're reading that, some of you're like, I like these guys very hygienic, okay? But they were not washing their hands or their pitchers and kettles in order to be sanitary, okay? They weren't in fact antibacterial soap did not exist back then, okay? They were not doing this in order to have clean hands and avoid germs. They didn't even know what germs were in. Instead this was something that was ceremonial. It was traditional. Now this is important for us to understand because I did some research on this and it actually wasn't until 1848 that the first doctor discovered that washing your hands was actually a better outcome for your patients.

0 (5m 40s):

1848. And it wasn't till the 1980s that hand washing became a normal practice for people. Okay? So back in the first century ad nobody was washing their hands because they thought it was hygienic. They were doing

it as part of their tradition. And I can say this because I have traveled to some countries and Maybe you have, and I went on a mission trip and the water was not safe to drink. If. you guys ever been to a country like this? The water's not safe to drink. And guess what? It's not safe. If. you wash your hands in it either unless you have some kind of antibacterial. So I noticed it because I went to a restaurant once and they were like, don't drink the water. I was like, okay, cool, I got that. They said, and don't even eat the vegetables on the side of your plate because it's been washed in the same water.

0 (6m 24s):

Oh, okay. So what these Pharisees are doing is not for hygiene, not to prevent germs. They're doing this 'cause it's ceremony. And what they would've done was something similar to, to Jews practice today, that they put both their hands up and then someone would pour water over their hands and it would kind of roll down. There was no scrubbing, there was no singing the happy birthday song twice, okay? It was just water going down ceremonially and Maybe. you guys were here for our Seder dinner. We hosted one a few weeks ago, And, we did this 'cause this was a ceremonial practice. And they, what they were doing was like, well Jesus, why aren't you and your disciples doing this ceremonial practice, this tradition, this thing that we've been doing for maybe years, hundreds thousand years?

0 (7m 6s):

But here's the thing, the Bible never commanded people to wash their hands before a meal. This is interesting. There was a beginning command. This is the interesting thing. There was a kernel of a command in the very beginning. An exodus when God said, priests who go into the temple are supposed to wash their hands because a priest was a representative for the people they were going before God. And because they were unclean, because they were sinful, they needed to wash their hands to ceremonial, say in their heart that we need to be cleaned in order to go into the presence of God. But then what happens, and this often happens with a command of God, the word of God that started in the beginning, there's a word of God, okay, here's clarity. This is what you're supposed to do.

0 (7m 46s):

Religious people like to make fences. And they say, well, if the priests are supposed to wash their hands when they enter the temple, maybe priests should wash their hands all the time. And then they say, well, if the priests are supposed to wash their hands, maybe everybody should wash their hands. 'cause we all want to be that holy. And now we should do it before every single meal just in case do. Do you see what's happened here? They've moved very far from the command of God away from that. And that's what I'm calling fences in this message today. You see my fence here? Okay, fence is just this an extra rule. Here's the command over here. And religious people are like, well just move the fence a little bit and then a little bit more and then a little bit more.

0 (8m 31s):

Because we wanna make sure nobody breaks God's law what he actually said. So let's put an extra fence

over here just in case. But what's the problem? There's a lot of real estate between there and here. And if we're setting up this fence and telling other people, you can't go anywhere near here. It keeps people even farther from God. I learned about this concept of offenses from a book by theologian Jerry Bridges years ago, and I don't even know if he invented the concept, but it was so helpful for me to understand religious people. Pharisees like to build fences. I think they start out with good intention. They're like, Hey it, it's good to be holy, so let's be extra holy and let's keep people from ever getting anywhere close to unholiness to sin.

0 (9m 15s):

So let's put that extra fence over here. But these extra fences keep people out unnecessarily. They get in the way of our true faith. See, look what happens as we keep reading in verse five says, so the Pharisees and teachers of the law ask Jesus, why don't your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with defiled hands? See, this is what religious people do. They push their rules on other people. You guys need to follow our rules too. They're the right traditions, the right rules. And Jesus replies in verse six, Isaiah the prophet was right when he prophesied about you. Hypocrites, as it is written, these people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.

0 (10m 1s):

They worship me in vain. Their teachings are merely human rules. Verse eight, you have let go of the commands of God and are holding on

1 (10m 13s):

To human traditions.

0 (10m 16s):

Here's God's command. You should have a pure heart. That's why the priests originally had to wash their hands before they entered the temple. So they made sure that they had confessed their sins and had a pure heart before God. And instead of now having a pure heart, they focused so much on this outward rule following that they have missed the whole point. They become accidental Pharisees. In the words of Pastor Larry Osborne, he has a great book on this. They didn't intend to become these religious pharisees who focus on just the outward rules. But that's what they became because of years and years of, you gotta keep the fence. This is where the fence is. Don't cross the fence, don't go over there. And this is what we can all become if we're not careful, we add extra fences and it misses the whole point.

0 (11m 0s):

That's what Jesus is saying. He's like, I want you to worship me. That's what Isaiah said. But you're just doing an outwardly following rules and your hearts are so far from me. And God wants our hearts. He wants a relationship with us. Not boring. Rule following. It's true. And just as as imagined a husband, and I'm making up this scenario, it's not about me, but well let's, let's use me and Melissa as an example. And Melissa's like, Matt, you're missing too many dinners at home. I want you home with the family for dinner.

That's a pretty reasonable request. And she's like, so let's, let's make sure that you're home three nights a week for dinner with the family. Okay? And that's not happening. I'm just making up this scenario. Okay, I can do that.

0 (11m 40s):

So imagine then I go home those three nights and I pull out my phone and I'm scrolling through it all dinnertime. How do you think Melissa will feel? I think she'd be like, oh mad. I'm so glad that you're here. No, because she wants me to not just be present, but to be present, right? To emotionally be there and available and, and if she, if she got mad at me, I'd be like, well hey, I'm following the rules. I'm here three nights a week. But that's not the point. That rule was just to have more time in a relationship and to develop that relationship. It is a very good thing to be at dinner with your families. Okay, that's a little bonus point.

0 (12m 23s):

but I would say this, we can focus on the rules and miss the whole point of it altogether. And that's what religious people do. Get so focused on the fence then don't realize, hey, that fence might have originally been there to help us get our hearts closer to God. But now it is a barrier to us and to others. That's why we need to learn to move From, Fences to Freedom. Okay, I have this fence up here. I might see it And, you think defense, right? Okay, but that's not what we're gonna say today because as we just saw, fences are offensive to Jesus. So I want you to chant with me. Offense.

0 (13m 3s):

Offense. Can you guys do that with me? Can offense. Offense, okay. It's offensive to Jesus to have fences. We need to move From Fences to Freedom. And that's what we're gonna learn today. Because Jesus actually truly came for us to have freedom. A lot of people don't realize this. They think Christianity is just another Religion wrong. It's not about the rules, it's about this relationship. We can have. Listen to what Jesus's very words are about why he came. In chapter eight, verse 31, it says to the Jews who had believed in him. So these people are coming out of this Jewish Religion with all sorts of rules. 600 plus rules. It says that Jesus said, If, you hold to my teaching. You are really my disciples.

0 (13m 44s):

Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free. Jesus came for our freedom, not for us to be strict, restricted by a bunch of rules, to free us to what's good. Paul would bring this up a little bit later in Galatians chapter five, verse one. He says, it is for freedom. Freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm then. And do not let yourselves be yoked, burdened again by a yoke of slavery. And he was speaking specifically about some religious rules. One in particular in that chapter. Do you know what it was? Circumcision. This was a pretty basic one. Most Jewish babies were circumcised at birth. Like that wasn't very hard thing for them to go through.

0 (14m 24s):

don't remember it. It would've been a little harder for adults to go through that ritual. But it's just like one time, right? That's not that big of a deal. You should have to do that. If you wanna follow Jesus? And Paul's like, no, no, no. That actually puts people under slavery, that fence. We are no longer under that fence anymore. Like we don't have to follow that rule to follow Jesus and if you're like, well, what rules do we need to follow? Jesus actually tells us we have a lot of freedom. Look at what he says later in chapter seven in verse 19. Mark says that Jesus declared all foods clean. This is pretty good. Did you know that we don't have to go and read every single wrapper at the grocery store to make sure that something is kosher in order to eat it as followers to Jesus.

0 (15m 4s):

This means that we can eat bacon wrap shrimp. I should get some amens from that. Okay, you can cook your eggs in bacon grease. Amen. Okay, we have the freedom to eat whatever we want. All foods are declared clean for us who are followers of Jesus. We don't have food rules that we have to follow. That's in Mark chapter seven, verse 19. But here's even more interesting. All of the Jewish law we are no longer under in the book of Hebrews, it says, when God speaks of a new covenant, because that's what Jesus said when he took the last supper. He says, this is the new covenant I establish not the old covenant, a new way of doing things. It means Hebrews tells us it.

0 (15m 44s):

He has made the first one obsolete. It is now out of date and will soon disappear. We're not under any of the rules of the Old Testament. Did you know that? We're not. It is for freedom. Christ has set us free. So we need to learn then to follow Jesus and His word. If we want true freedom. And this is where true freedom is found. And we need to stop building fences and move from fences to freedom. This is what I want you to do. And, and it is true that all of us can become accidental Pharisees. And I'm gonna tell you why here in just a second. Because there are four things, and there's maybe other ones, but at least four things that we set up as fences.

0 (16m 30s):

Sometimes with good intentions, some are even good in and of themselves. But when they become fences, they become a problem to us. They keep us and others from God. So you guys ready for the four things that become fences for us. Accidental Pharisees. Here's the first one. Traditions. Traditions. Jesus just talked about it. He's like you, you've taken here. Here's God's command way over here. And you've made these traditions that have added to it. Traditions in and of themselves are not bad. Jesus does not say they're bad. The problem is, is when we force our traditions and this is the only way to do things, it keeps us from God. There are a lot of traditions within Christianity.

0 (17m 10s):

Maybe, you grew up in a church that took the Lord's supper every single week. Do you know what Jesus actually taught us about communion in his word? He said, do this whenever you do it. So, so how often are

we supposed to do it? According to Jesus whenever you do it. Wait, is that once a week, once a month, once a quarter? He didn't say So. we actually have to decide. How often do we do this? There are some churches and people ask me this like, why don't you do communion every single week? And I said, we could. We could, but we don't have to. Okay? But that can become this tradition. Well, you gotta do that every single week. You've gotta every single week say the Lord's Prayer.

0 (17m 50s):

I had somebody ask me about this recently. Why don't we say the Lord's Prayer? We do say it every once in a while. I, I've said it here in the church, but do you know what Jesus actually taught us about the Lord's Prayer? He said, this is how you pray. Not what you pray. So we're supposed to learn from him how to pray, but that's not the exact words that we have to say every single time. So if we don't say it every single week perfectly, that's okay. It's okay. We have some freedom in our worship that the traditions, it's fine. But we don't have to force them on people and say that's the only way. We don't have to recite certain creeds. The, the, the traditions though they are okay. They're just that traditions. And let's not make a fence out of a tradition.

0 (18m 33s):

Okay? Let me tell you about one in particular that, that we've kind of broken a fence down here in our church. That we have women on our elder board here at a church. Okay, well people, they've got one. Amen. But some people are like, whoa, hey, whoa, I thought you weren't supposed to do it traditionally. No. Jesus had 12 disciples who were men in the early church. Most of the elders, we think maybe all of them were men. But there's not actually one explicit command in the Bible that says women cannot be elders. It's not in there, but it's a tradition. Okay? But that puts up a fence. And a lot of women say, Hey, I'm not represented at the highest level of leadership in this church. don don't know if I'm welcome here becomes an unnecessary fence. And we've decided we don't want that fence in our church.

0 (19m 15s):

We wanna move From Fences to Freedom. And let's actually look at what, what God says in his law, clearly, accurately. So the first thing is traditions can become fences. You guys got that second one. Preferences. Preferences. They might start as traditions, but we all have preferences for the way to do church, the way to do worship, the way to do whatever. It's our personal preferences. And guess what? That's how God made us. We're all unique And. we have our preferences the way we like things to go, but, but they're just that preferences and And this often shows up with music style, with music style.

0 (19m 59s):

Like, Hey, you know, I thought it's just supposed to be hymns. No, I want a band. Church is split over this kind of stuff. What? What's the style? But what it really comes here, let's be honest. It's preference. It's preference. And here's an interesting thing. The churches that are like, we gotta do the hymns. Those are the tried and true songs. The old ones are the good ones. Okay? Do you know what the actual, an actual

command in the scripture is? In Psalm 96 1 it says, sing to the Lord a new song. So if you're only doing the old ones, you're actually breaking God's command. Okay? But let's just say it's preference. Which style? What sound of music, what type of instruments you use or don't use. Let's just say it's preference and it's okay. And I want to make very clear about this because some of you're like, yeah, this church has freedom.

0 (20m 42s):

We're not stuck in the organ in him or whatever. Okay? But there will come a time that even our church might need to change and adapt. And I talk with people here in our church. They're like, oh, I love this church. I'm sure there's people that don't love it. Okay, that's fine. Don't tell me. But If, you do love your church. And then people will move away from Denver and they're like, man, it's so hard to find a, a new church. I can't find anything like arise where I'm at. I'm like, yeah, 'cause that's your preference. We do a lot of things here that might just be our preferences and let's just say what it is and let's not make it into offense. We might have to adapt sometimes. Here's another one that's interesting. I prefer to read my Bible every single morning. I think that daily Bible reading and morning Bible reading is one of the best things that you can do for your life.

0 (21m 22s):

And I teach people to do that. But does the Bible actually command us to read the Bible every single day in the morning? Nope. If, you read in the afternoon or the evening? Is it okay too? Well yeah, it is. I think it's a little easier in the morning. 'cause then you get busy with the day. And you forget. But If, you can figure it out. That's great. We're not actually commanded to do that. One thing we are commanded to do in the Bible that I don't do all the time is let us encourage one another daily. Man, there's been some days that I've gone by that I haven't encouraged people. Instead I've been critical in complaining. but I am commanded to encourage, but yet my daily Bible reading, which I'm like, look at that. Okay, you got daily Bible reading, you're a great Christian. Right? Wrong. That's not, that's just fence that we can put up.

0 (22m 4s):

Even though that's my preference, it's just a fence. And, and let's be clear about it. Can we do that? Let's be clear about what his preference and, and what we need to do is realize it's my preference. Because once you're honest and acknowledge this is my preference, then you can get yourself outta the way. In one Corinthians chapter nine, Paul says this, he says, though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone interesting to win as many as possible. And he goes on to explain how this works. He says to the Jews, I become like a Jew to win the Jews to those under the law. I become like one under the law though I myself am not under the law so as to win those under the law to those who not having the law, I became like one, not having the law.

0 (22m 50s):

So who he's ever, he's with, he's trying to reach 'em for Christ. And he gives up his own preferences because he has the freedom to do so. This is interesting. Our preferences should not be fences for

ourselves or others. So that's the second thing that become fences for us. Accidental Pharisees preferences. The third one, this is a tough one. You guys gotta pay attention to this wisdom. This is tough. The Bible has more than one category. Sin and not sin, okay? That's what people think. Here's right and here's wrong. Here's righteous and unrighteous. There's also a category of smart and stupid. And there's a lot of scripture including the proverbs that teach us what is the wise thing, what is the the smart thing to do.

0 (23m 33s):

But just because something is dumb, something is foolish, that doesn't necessarily mean it's sinful. So let's be honest about these categories as well. And, we need to be careful to not make something that's wise into a fence for other people. Paul teaches us about this concept in one Corinthians chapter six, verse 12. He says, I have the right to do anything. I'm free to do anything you say. But not everything is beneficial. Not everything you do is good for you, even though you can do it. I have the right to do anything, but I will not be mastered by anything. This is another thing. I have the freedom to do this thing, but if I become addicted, if it starts to control me, that's a bad thing.

0 (24m 14s):

But this is a matter of wisdom for ourselves. And, we need to be careful not to make it into offense for ourselves or others. A very common one to talk about is related to alcohol. There is a clear command in scripture to not get drunk on wine. So to avoid drunkenness is, is a command in scripture. That's how we should follow Jesus. Yet some people take that and they're like, okay, there's the command. So let me put up this fence. Don't even drink at all. Because then you might get drunk, you don't know your limits. You don't know how much you can have. But that's a fence. Look, look at all that real estate. And let me tell you guys this, Jesus didn't turn the water into Welch's grape juice, okay?

0 (24m 55s):

So even though it might be really wise for you and for other people to avoid alcohol altogether, that it's not a command And, you can have some wisdom in that area. Do you guys understand that this real estate, and there's some wisdom there. You, you should know how much you should drink, when you should drink or in certain situations because there are times that you're with people and maybe they're alcoholics, And, you should give up your freedom to help them. I once talked with a a man and he was, his career was kind of in a dead end and he needed to make a change. And he came to me and said, man, I got this great opportunity. I have an opportunity to buy this restaurant and I'm really excited about it.

0 (25m 35s):

It's gonna be great. And I was like, well, that's cool. This is what you've been thinking and praying about. He's like, yeah, but there's a bar in the restaurant. I said, okay, well that's, that's pretty common. Like that's big money maker for restaurants. He said, well, yeah. The problem is is I used to be an alcoholic and I've been 20 years sober. What do you think I should do? So, we talked about it for a while and I'm like, well hey, you've been 20 years sober. Could you stand behind the bar every single day and and, and hold onto your

sobriety? And he's like, yeah, I think I could. And I said, yeah, you're saying that right now, but just wait till somebody in your family has a bad health diagnosis. Do you think you could do it? Then he's like, you have the freedom to make this decision, but what's wise or not? And I didn't tell him what to do because I couldn't, wasn't commanding the scripture, but he made the decision.

0 (26m 18s):

He's like, in wisdom, I'm not gonna buy that bar. That's a wisdom thing, right? It's not sin or not sin, it's just is this wise or not? So alcohol can be one of those. Here's another one that that I wouldn't like to say I, I'd like to be a little bit clearer, but debt I taught a couple months ago when we were in our finance series that that debt, like in scriptures, we're told to flee from debt and we're told to pay off all our debts. Like those are the two clear commands. But can you have debt Dave Ramsey's? Like no, don't do it. Right? But that's actually might just be wisdom, okay? It might not be wise to have a lot of debt, especially bad debt. But it's not commanded in the scripture. You can't have debt, but people put up that fence, no debt or you're a sinner, you're bad, right?

0 (26m 58s):

People also do this. This is a tough one, living together before you're married, okay? Ooh, this is a tough one. Now I've taught on this. There is a clear command in scripture that you should not have sex with someone that you're not married to. Like that's what Jesus taught. And yet, should you live together before marriage? Ooh, used to be. That's fence If. You're doing that, you're a sinner. It's like whoa, whoa. That actually isn't in the scriptures. Might be unwise because once you start doing that, like it's hard not to break the commandment. Let's be honest. And there's just some other research out there that says, Hey, it's not the healthiest thing for your marriage. We've covered that before in some teaching, but we're talking wisdom here.

0 (27m 41s):

Not necessarily sin or not sin. You guys understand And, we need to be honest and not put up a fence unnecessarily. And I would like to make it clear and more obvious for you guys, right? but I, can we have freedom in Christ? And, and here's the fourth area, and this is even more complicated than wisdom. The area of convictions. Convictions. The Bible says we can and should have personal and family convictions. I hope and pray you develop some very strong convictions in your life. This is what I will do. This is what we will do, And, we will not budge good have your convictions, but your convictions are not a command from God.

0 (28m 24s):

And, you cannot force that on other people. In Romans chapter 14, verse five, Paul talks about this and he says, one person considers one day more sacred than another. Another considers every day alike. Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind. He says, it's actually good to be convinced of something and to be, I think this is the right thing to do. And what he's talking about is days. So, so for Jewish people, it

was like there's these holy days that you have to celebrate. Now Christians are like, well don't have to follow those anymore. I'm just gonna make treat every day and like normal. Well, which one's right? Paul's like, just have a conviction and go with it. But then don't force that conviction on another person. People still do that with days. Today I have people saying, what about Halloween?

0 (29m 5s):

Isn't it a demonic day that celebrates evil? You put on masks, it's all bad if that's your conviction, good for you. But other people are like, Hey, it's just kind of a fun thing that we can do and get to know our neighbors and love 'em a little more and give 'em candy. And if that's your conviction, good. And guess what? We can both have those convictions or anywhere in between. People do it with Christmas too. Like I'll celebrate Christmas, but not the pagan stuff. Okay? Or Easter, like not that evil bunny. Okay, that's fine. Let that be your conviction. But let's not force those on other people. And we can have our strong convictions. You can have convictions about a lot of things and I encourage you to develop some convictions. Here's some other ones. Like the Bible does command us to be modest in how we dress.

0 (29m 49s):

That's a scriptural command. But how long a woman's skirt should be like, it doesn't tell us the exact inches, right? A lot of people are like, it'd be so much easier if we, we knew exactly how long a skirt's length needed to be to be modest. I, but we, we don't have that. We're just commanded to be modest. So if you're looking for specifications about what type of swimsuit to wear, like, sorry, that's not in the scriptures. Like we have this biblical principle, this command to be modest, but the specifics of it, we have to have some individual convictions on this. This can be with parenting too. A lot of Christians fight over it. You gotta homeschool, you gotta have a private Christian school. No public school's the best way. Have your conviction good and stick with it.

0 (30m 30s):

Stick with your convictions. And, and this leads me especially in the area of convictions. But with all of this stuff, If, you are a parent. We need to be extra, extra careful with this stuff. 'cause too many parents have created up these rules and fences for their household and their kids start to think, well that's what you have to do to follow God. And they don't wanna follow those rules. So then when they leave the house, they leave God too. I'm not saying don't have rules in your household. You should, you must. And they might even be unique to your family. No other family in the church, no other family on the street is, has the same rules as you. That's okay. But you need to explain to your kids what your family rules are and why you have them.

0 (31m 10s):

And, you can say, this is how we do it. This is how the wolves do it in our house and this is why we do it, because of this experience, because of this thing that happened. And then you might even wanna say like, Hey, when you're an adult, you don't have to follow this same rule. This is not for your faith, this is for our family because we've learned that this is wise. We have a conviction about it. So we're gonna keep this as

our family rule, but it's not biblical. Let's just be honest about what these are. So, that we don't create an unnecessary fence. So that kids grow up in a church home, grow up with faith and then walk away from it. 'cause too often they're walking away from these fences that are put up arbitrarily. I love this quote from CS Lewis. One of my favorite things he's ever said.

0 (31m 51s):

There is no good trying to be more spiritual than God. I love that. In fact, someday I want to write a book called You Don't Have to Be Better Than the Bible or more spiritual than scripture. 'cause I think too often we do that And, we put these fences, let's just acknowledge their fences. They're fine for me, maybe for my family, but I'm not gonna force them on other people as if that's the only way to follow God. It creates a fence. And what we need to do is move From Fences to Freedom. It's for freedom. Christ has set us free. It's for freedom. Christ has set us free And. we definitely shouldn't be the ones forcing this on other people who are coming to faith. This was a big deal in the early church because as people were beginning to follow Jesus, a lot of 'em had come out of Judaism, but a lot of 'em were Gentiles.

0 (32m 38s):

They were not Jewish. So they had none of those rules, rituals, traditions coming up. So when they came to faith in Jesus, they believed that anyone wanted to follow him. And then there was a big clash. Well, which tradition should win out, which rules should win out? And they had a big council as they all got together to figure out what was going on. And in Acts 15, James, Jesus' brother, who'd become one of the leaders of the early church, stood up as they were arguing about this. He says, therefore, my opinion is that we should not put obstacles, not put fences in the way of the Gentiles who are turning to God. Let's not put up fences and prevent people from coming to true faith in Jesus. These fences too often are getting in the way of people new to the faith.

0 (33m 18s):

Don't put 'em up. We want to have freedom in Christ. So don't put somebody else under a yoke of slavery. So I hope that you've learned something today. I know it's a complex subject, something you're gonna have to think about with a hundred different applications for different situations. But we need to move From, Fences to Freedom 'cause it's for freedom. Christ set us free. So don't let traditions, preferences, wisdom, and even your own convictions become a fence for yourself or others. Because Jesus, what he actually truly taught us was that he was the only one who was truly holy, truly clean, truly perfect. He followed every one of the 600 plus Jewish laws in the Old Testament.

0 (34m 1s):

He's the only one who ever did it right And, you could never do it right enough. You're not holy enough, you're not perfect enough. But Jesus was, and yet still, he went to the cross. He was executed, punishment suffered consequences. Though he had done nothing wrong. And when that happened, it was the great exchange that when we put our faith in Jesus on the cross, our consequences of our sinful hearts get put on

Jesus. And he gives us that declaration of clean, of holy, of righteous, of

2 (34m 32s):

Good

0 (34m 33s):

Through faith. That's the greatest gift you could ever imagine. So then we follow Jesus. That is total freedom forever. Let's pray together. Lord God, I hope that we can all move From, Fences to Freedom. Lord God, you, you've challenged us in the series, you've challenged me And and I pray that I could lose the things from our Religion that are getting in the way, that we're becoming more religious, more accidental Pharisees, Lord God, free us. And I pray that you would make us clean today. We all have hearts that are sinful, And. we need your purification. You're cleansing through your blood on the cross. Forgive us again today and let us walk out truly in the freedom that we have in Christ.

0 (35m 17s):

Not burdened again by yo yoke of slavery or forcing that on other people. But instead, recognize what fences are So, that we can find true freedom in you. Now with eyes closed, I know that there might be some someone in here today who needs to make a decision to follow Jesus for the first time or maybe to come back because you've lap in your faith because you thought it was all about the rules. And, you didn't wanna follow that infinite set of rules. It's not. It's not about rules. It's about a relationship with Jesus who died on the cross to forgive you of your sins. And If you say a simple prayer. You can receive him as your Lord and Savior today and find that true freedom in him and a eternal life. So I'm gonna give you an opportunity to say a simple prayer to receive Jesus as your Lord and Savior.

0 (35m 57s):

So if you're already a follower of Jesus, say this prayer out loud to give courage to somebody around you who needs to pray it for the first time. Please repeat after me. Dear God, I'm a sinner. I need a savior. Savior me. Forgive me in faith I declare Jesus'. Lord, fill me with your spirit. Make me clean. Give me the gift of eternal life. Help me to follow you And find freedom in you. Now, with eyes closed, if somebody said that prayer for the first time, it meant that if Jesus today is your Lord and Savior or your returning for the first time in a long time, we want you to slip your hand in the air on the count of three and we'll come around and and give you a little book.

0 (36m 48s):

Two, encourage you in your journey. So on the count of 3, 1, 2, 3, put your hand high in the air If, you said that prayer and meant it today. And if you're online, go to rise Denver dot com slash follow. Lord God, we're just so grateful that you set us for freedom, that you have saved us, you've forgiven us. And Lord God, help us not be burdened by this yoke of slavery, but walk and the true freedom that comes with Jesus just for freedom. You have sin us free. Pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

3 (37m 19s):

Thank you so much for listening to the message today. I'm Matt Wolf, lead pastor at a Arise, Church Denver. And we're all about helping people follow Jesus And. we want to help you follow Jesus Because of that, if you're newish, even if you're just checking us out online, go down below in the description and fill out that form at [arise Denver dot com slash new](http://arise-denver.com/new). And if this message has impacted you at all, please go to [rise Denver dot com slash give](http://rise-denver.com/give) So that you can give back and help more people find out the message of Jesus Christ.