

Colossians: It's All About Jesus!

Lesson 1

Jesus Calls Us to Know Him and Live for Him! Colossians 1:1-14

Welcome to the book of Colossians! The apostle Paul wrote this letter to a group of Jewish and Gentile Christians, reminding them of the centrality of Jesus in their every-day life. Even as Paul was in chains, he communicated the joy of living under the reign of King Jesus. The church in Colossae was struggling with what they believed, so Paul encouraged them with good Christology. But this theological correction did not stand independent of their everyday life, rather, he used it to inform and shape how they should live.

Often when we hear “theology” we default the discipline as simply an intellectual pursuit. But this letter argues repeatedly that right theology is the basis for right living. In other words, our views about God naturally effect how we live. Therefore, the letter to the Colossians is truly “All About Jesus!”

In Colossians 1:1-14, Paul encourages these believers in Christ before correcting their beliefs about Christ. As he does, these opening verses can serve as both an evaluation and a challenge for us.

Evaluation: Do Others KNOW THAT YOU KNOW JESUS?

Colossians 1:1-4a, Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, ²To God's holy people in Colossae, the faithful brothers and sisters in Christ: Grace and peace to you from God our Father. ³We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you,⁴because we have heard of your faith...

In this opening, we find out that these believers were called holy, which means set apart from the rest of the world. Paul praises God because they have lived out their faith in Jesus so much that word has spread all around the area. He does not treat their salvation as purely a past occurrence, but as a present reality that is clearly affecting how they live day to day. They knew Jesus and others around them knew that they knew Jesus.

Do the people around us know that we believe in Jesus? This doesn't necessarily mean that we should be standing on street corners with a bull horn so much as this is a call to live everyday as a light that points others to the Lord. Here are a few ways we can evaluate our lives in this way:

- **Do They See Your:**
 - **FAITH in God & LOVE for Others**

Colossians 1:4, *We have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all God's people...*

The Colossians faith is displayed in their love for Christ and their love for one another! It's no surprise that Jesus summarizes the law this way in Matthew 22:37–40. Faith is not just a one-time confessional statement that remains independent of life change. Rather, knowing Jesus means that we live out the reality that our greatest love is Jesus and our greatest display of His love is in our love for others.

Faith in God displays itself in a love one another. Within the context of this passage, this means that the church should be marked by unity of faith, vision, and love. In John 17:20–26, Jesus prays that future believers would be unified in their faith so that they would represent the unifying Gospel. When the church is divided, the world sees a divided Jesus. However, as the church is loving one another, there is no greater display of the work of Jesus.

- **HOPE in Heaven**

Colossians 1:5–6a, *The faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven and about which you have already heard in the true message of the gospel ⁶ that has come to you.*

The Colossians' hope in Heaven was the foundation for their love for God and one another. Their hope transcended the broken world around them and became the source for their daily Christian life. The source of our obedience should be a hope in Jesus that surpasses the troubles of this world and longs for the restoration and reconciliation: that God is going to fix all of this mess! And as we wait, we can taste and see that the Lord is good (Psalm 34:8).

As we live in a constantly broken world, we have a call to walk as people with hope. In our word and deed we should be constantly communicating that Jesus is the only one to fix the problems of this age. As the world struggles to make sense of the world, we should be able to guide them to the truth.

- **EVIDENCE of Transformation**

Colossians 1:6b–8, *In the same way, the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world—just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God's grace. ⁷ You learned it from*

Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, ⁸ and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.

Do people know us by our fruit? The concept of bearing fruit for the believer is all over the New Testament. Jesus says that we will be recognized by our fruit (Matthew 7:20). In one of the most extensive passages, Jesus says, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples” (John 15:5–8). If the seed of the Gospel has been planted in our lives, then we are called to produce the fruit of the Spirit in our lives (Galatians 5:22–25).

Discussion Questions:

- Have you ever met someone who had a faith in God that matched their love for others?
- In what ways should our future hope impact the way that we live and think today?
- What are examples of how you can show the evidence of God’s work in your life?

Challenge: Live a Life That REPRESENTS THE LORD!

Colossians 1:9–10a, *For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, ¹⁰ so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way...*

Paul thanks the Lord for the Colossians dedication to the Lord by praying for them. Paul prayed that these believers would grow in their relationship with the Lord. What this means for us is that no matter how we answered the previous evaluation question, there’s always more work to be done as we mature in Christ!

From the moment we were saved, we were called to bring honor and glory to God. We live a life that is worthy of Him and pleasing to Him when we walk in faith and obedience (Romans 12:1–2). This way of living out the Christian life is not a call to sustain our salvation, but a call to experience the fullness of our salvation. A life that represents the Lord then, is:

- **A Life Filled With:**
 - **A KNOWLEDGE of God That PRODUCES FRUIT for God**

Colossians 1:10b, ... *bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God...*

Though we have already discussed the fruitful life of a believer in the previous section, look at the reason for their fruit: it comes from their knowledge of God! If our knowledge of God fails to produce the fruit of the Christian life then we have fallen victim to a knowledge that only “puffs up” rather than one that is marked by “love” (1 Corinthians 8:1). Rather, our knowledge of God should fuel our worship and obedience to God.

- **ENDURANCE**

Colossians 1:11, ... *being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience...*

The second challenge for us is to endure, persevere, and keep going. God promises to give us the strength we need to fight every battle of every day. Though it is easy to get overwhelmed in life, walking in faith is knowing that even during uncertainty, God will help us take the next step of obedience. We need not worry about the troubles of tomorrow, for the Lord will give us the strength we need as we seek a relationship with Him (Matthew 6:33–34). We should be faithful to read, understand and apply His Word as we live fruitful life that is worthy of our calling in Him. The only way to do that is to build a relationship with Him. If we want others to know that we know Jesus, then we must stay connected to Jesus.

- **THANKSGIVING**

Colossians 1:12–14, ... *and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light.* ¹³ *For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves,* ¹⁴ *in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

Thanksgiving is a perpetual theme throughout this book because when we understand that we only have life through Jesus, we realize that all we have to give back is a life of thanksgiving and praise. He is the only one who can rescue us from the dominion of darkness. He is the only one who can give us redemption of sins. We should respond to His work with a life of grateful servitude to an always worthy King!

Discussion Questions:

- How do the things you learn about God effect the way we live?
- What does endurance in Christ look like in our current culture?
- Where are you being challenged to represent the Lord in your life?