

Colossians: It's All About Jesus

Lesson 3

Jesus Gives Our Life Purpose! Colossians 1:24–2:7

Why do we exist? Further, what is our purpose in life? There's no question that our culture struggles to answer these questions. But each vain attempt to answer these questions apart from Jesus inevitably leads them to further confusion and despair. As Paul laid out the centrality of Jesus in our last lesson, he now completes his thought: Because Jesus is the center of all of life, we will only find our true purpose in Him!

We Exist to MAKE JESUS KNOWN!

***Colossians 1:24–27**, Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. ²⁵ I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness— ²⁶ the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord's people. ²⁷ To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.*

We exist to make the name of Jesus known in and through us. Paul shifts his attention in this section onto his personal testimony of being a servant of Jesus Christ which serves as both an encouragement and a challenge to us. In verse 24, Paul is not saying that his suffering is completing the redemptive work of Christ (He just finished talking about the sufficiency of Christ and how Jesus is the only one who restores us!). Instead he is referring to the reality that affliction is inevitable for those who follow Jesus. Paul is actually expressing the extent of his unity in Christ.

Paul's example of serving Jesus is a reminder that whether pain or affliction come, we are joined with Jesus, and those sufferings only provide greater evidence of His work in our lives. We exist to make much of Him because He is the only true good news! God has been working since the beginning to bring about our salvation, and everything in this life fades in comparison to life in Jesus. Paul then gives us three ways we can make much of Jesus in our lives:

We Do This by:

MATURING IN OUR RELATIONSHIP With Jesus

Colossians 1:28, *He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ.*

One of the best ways to make much of Jesus is to grow up in Jesus! Just like a child grows from a baby, to a toddler, to a kid, to a teenager and beyond, so we are to grow up and mature in Jesus. We should speak more like Jesus. We should act more like Jesus. Maturing in your relationship with Jesus is a sure-fire way to continue to exemplify Jesus in your life.

As you grow, your maturity in Christ correlates with your representation of Christ because each day you look more and more like him. Paul continues this thought:

Colossians 2:2–3, *My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, ³in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*

Maturity in Jesus means living in the encouragement of Jesus. Namely, that we would be united with Jesus, learning the riches of getting to build a relationship with Him and live in His wisdom. Maturity in Jesus guides our hearts and minds to live for Jesus. Further, maturity in Jesus helps us keep focus:

Colossians 2:4–5, *I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. ⁵For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how disciplined you are and how firm your faith in Christ is.*

This world will lie to us and deceive us, but maturity in Christ helps us maintain our focus on the only one who gives us purpose. How then do we mature in our relationship with Jesus? This is the beauty of spiritual discipline! We can grow through our devotion to His Word, speaking and listening to Him in prayer, and regularly gathering together with His people. We are called to be trained up so that we can move closer and closer to representing Him to the world.

Discussion Questions:

- What does it mean to be fully mature in Christ?
- What role does biblical community play in a believer's spiritual growth?

- How effective is our group in assisting members toward maturity?
Where could we improve?

LABORING for Jesus

Colossians 1:24, *Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church.*

Colossians 1:29–2:1, *To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me. ¹I want you to know how hard I am contending for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally.*

Though we began with verse 24, it's important to see the verse in the broader context of this passage. Paul understands that that he would experience afflictions as a result of following the one who completely suffered for his sins. This is a reminder that the call to follow Jesus is a call to die to yourself. Though this may lead us to uncomfortable situations, strange places, or hard conversations, this is the only way we can make much of Jesus in our lives.

This means that no matter the cost, to make much of Jesus we must always be working for Jesus. Paul says that he “strenuously contend[s] with all the energy” to serve Jesus, knowing that his strength to do so comes from Jesus in the first place. As Jesus fills us up, so we need to be pouring Him out in our lives. To put it different, if maturing in Christ is storing up energy, then laboring in Christ is using the energy! We fail to make much of Jesus when we fail to labor for Jesus. The Lord has given us countless opportunities to serve him and we are called to labor for Him in everything we do.

LIVING in Jesus

Colossians 2:6–7, *So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, ⁷rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.*

What does it mean for us to live our lives in Him? Paul uses both the imagery of planting and building to solidify his point. First, we should be rooted in Jesus, that we should draw all of our nutrients from Him and be firmly established in Him. Second, we should build on that foundation. This carries with it the idea that so long as we are breathing, we are under the construction of the Lord. But this building is not in our strength, but the

Lord's strength so that we overflow with gratitude and thanksgiving. Our lives turn into a living testimony of the construction of God in our lives.

Discussion Questions:

- What does it look like to “labor” for Jesus in your life?
- Why do we get so easily discouraged/frustrated when we are inconvenienced or made uncomfortable for the gospel?
- What does overflowing with thankfulness look like practically?