

Colossians: It's All About Jesus!

**8-Week Life Group Curriculum
Fall 2021**

**Cottonwood Creek Church
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September 11, 12 – 17

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Colossians 1:1–14

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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?

Colossians: It's All About Jesus!

Lesson 2

Jesus Is the Center of Everything! Colossians 1:15–23

Christology is the study of the life, work, and person of Jesus. The life of Jesus consists of much of what He did in the Gospels. The work of Jesus includes doctrines like the atonement and resurrection of Jesus, focusing on what He accomplished in his life, death, and resurrection. The person of Jesus is the study of his character and nature.

What does it mean that Jesus is fully God and fully man? Further, why is this important? As we read the Bible, over and over again it is abundantly clear that God's people could not save themselves. Only God possesses the power and ability to save them. This gives reason for Christ's divinity. At the same time, there must be a perfectly obedient man who would suffer in the place of humanity, to serve as a true substitute. This gives reason for Christ's humanity. Therefore, salvation only comes through Jesus.

Many scholars believe that among the Colossians there were false teachings about Jesus that were popping up, and Colossians 1:15–23 is Paul's loving and truthful correction to them. Paul understood that if you get Jesus wrong, then you get the Gospel wrong. This passage gives us proof that every Christian needs good Christology.

What Does It Mean That Jesus Is the Center of Everything?

Jesus Is THE PERFECT IMAGE OF GOD

Colossians 1:15a, *The Son is the image of the invisible God...*

There are six major Christological statements in the next few verses that build to a dramatic conclusion. The first of these is the truth that Jesus is the mirrored representation of the invisible God. As humans, we were created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26–27), meaning that we were made to have a connection with God and called to reflect God. But since the day sin entered the world, the image we bear has been twisted.

Paul is using this reality to highlight the significance of Jesus: that Jesus is the perfect Image of God means that Jesus is the one who is going to bring about the new creation of those image bearers (see also: John 1:1–18; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Hebrews 1:3). To put it the way Paul does in Romans 5:12–21, Jesus is the second-Adam. This means that as Jesus is the perfect image of

God, when He saves us we are made new and transformed into Jesus' likeness. When we are saved, we don't go back to being like Adam, but we are conformed into the image of the second-Adam. This truth reminds us that Jesus restores us back into who we were created to be!

Jesus Is SUPREME OVER ALL THINGS

Colossians 1:15b, ... *the firstborn over all creation.*

This second truth has led some to believe that Jesus was created. But it's important to see that "firstborn" is not a reference to Jesus being created but to his position over creation. The key word is "over," that he is "firstborn over all creation" means that he is supreme over all things. Jesus outranks all things. In fact, the point of this phrase is to distinguish him from creation, not tie him to creation. Combined with the context of the following verse, we see that Jesus was before all things and is King over all things. Even though Jesus humbled himself and took on flesh, He is still the God who is worthy of all praise, adoration, and glory (Philippians 2:5–11).

Jesus Is THE ORIGIN AND PURPOSE OF ALL THINGS

Colossians 1:16, *For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.*

Jesus is the creator of all things. The fact that all things were created "in him... through him and for him" means that every aspect of creation was His idea. All things find their origin and purpose in Jesus Christ for He has created them for His purposes and His glory. Jesus is the center of everything because there is nothing that has been created that can flourish apart from Him and everything is destined for destruction unless it is redeemed by Him.

Discussion Question:

- Which one of these first three attributes of Jesus stands out to you most and why?

Jesus Is THE SUSTAINER OF ALL THINGS

Colossians 1:17, *He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*

As Jesus created all things intentionally, he also holds all things purposefully. The picture of God as one who is detached from the in-workings and out-

workings of the world is false. This verse explains that Jesus didn't just create and walk away, but that He created and is currently sustaining His creation. In the face of brokenness, sometimes we may feel like Jesus is far away from our world. But this verse assures us that nothing is happening apart from His sustaining. Therefore, even when the darkness seems to prevail, we can stand firm knowing that God is working for His glory and our good (Romans 8:28). Every breath that we take is testimony of the sustaining power of Jesus in our lives and the presence of His constant grace.

Jesus Is THE RULER OF ALL THINGS

Colossians 1:18, *And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.*

First, Jesus is the head and ruler of the church. As such, the church exists to make much of Jesus. We are the many ligaments and members that make up the body (1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4:1-16; Romans 12:3-8). Each of us should join together as the Lord has equipped us to submit to Him and serve Him.

Jesus is also the ruler over all the dead, the only one who can give them new life. In Jesus death and resurrection, he defeated death. This should be a great comfort to us for death is no longer the final word. This should also be a great challenge for us as we believe that those who remain apart from Him will not have life.

To put these ideas together then, as we join the body of Christ: Jesus is the head and the source of life. Those who have not joined his body remain headless and dead in their sin.

Jesus Is THE RESCUER OF ALL THINGS

Colossians 1:19-20, *For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him,²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.*

The Word became flesh and dwelled among us, and as a result, God saved us (John 1:1). Jesus had to be God, for only God can save. Jesus had to be man, for we needed a perfectly obedient substitute. And therefore, we believe that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life, and that no one can come to the Father unless it's through Him (John 14:6). Rather than remain headless and spiritually dead, Jesus restores things as they should be.

Why can't God just forgive everyone? Why go through this elaborate plan of salvation? In order for God to maintain his perfect holiness, every aspect of the life, work, and person of Jesus was necessary to bring us salvation. Jesus had to be all of this to forgive us of our sins. If Jesus is anything less, then we could not be saved.

Discussion Questions:

- Which one of these last three attributes of Jesus stands out to you most and why?
- What do we learn about God by studying the person and work of Jesus?

Therefore, Jesus Is WORTHY OF ALL DEVOTION, SERVICE AND WORSHIP!

***Colossians 1:21–23**, Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. ²² But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation— ²³ if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.*

It is true that we can live our lives however we want to live, but if Jesus is all of the truths we just unpacked: Then we will be miserable unless we live a life devoted to him. Failing to surrender our lives to Jesus means that we will continue to live in a broken image of God, continue to rule our lives and search for purpose, and continue to remain dead in our sin. But these verses proclaim that because this is who Jesus is, and as a result he was able to bring us the good news of salvation, we therefore can live our lives in steadfast worship to Him alone.

Discussion Questions:

- How can this group encourage one another to stand firm?
- What does it look like in your life to give Jesus your full devotion, service and worship?

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,³ in 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.⁵ For 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?

Colossians: It's All About Jesus

Lesson 4 **Jesus Is Our Truth!** **Colossians 2:8–23**

When someone says that truth is relative or there is no absolute truth, it means that they believe there is no standard of truth. In this case, truth can vary depending on circumstances, situations, and opinions. There are a variety of problems to this way of thinking. For instance, if there are no absolute truths then that statement cannot even be absolutely true. Or further, what if one truth calls another truth a lie, can both still be true? It quickly gets confusing!

This is where following Jesus leads us to differ drastically from culture because He is truth (John 18:37). As we come to Colossians 2, Paul begins addressing some false beliefs that are lingering throughout the Colossians church. But we will see that even though these lies were being promoted as truths, they fall short of Jesus, the only truth.

Our World PROMOTES LIES

Colossians 2:8, *See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.*

Our world will tell us over and over again that there are many different ways to live. But notice that Paul stresses the importance of not falling victim to outside worldviews. A worldview is the all-encompassing perspective on everything that exists and matters to a person. A worldview is how someone thinks about and operates in this world.

Our world lies and intentionally deceives us into thinking things that are false have the potential to be true. But as Paul warns, those ideas can take us captive. False ideas about God can destroy communion with the One true God. False ideas about humanity can leave us searching for fulfillment in a variety of messed up ways. Everything outside of the confines of God's truth is hollow, deceptive, human-driven, and false-spirit driven. The world is constantly trying to shape how we think and if we aren't careful they will teach us to believe all sorts of lies about God.

Discussion Questions:

- What are some of the lies our culture promotes?
- How equipped do you feel to discern false beliefs from the truth?

We Must STAND FIRM ON THE TRUTH:

Though the world wants to knock us off balance by deviating from God's truth, we must learn to stand on Jesus, our rock and our foundation because:

- **Only Jesus Has THE POWER TO SAVE**

***Colossians 2:9–14**, For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, ¹⁰ and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority. ¹¹ In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ, ¹² having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. ¹³ When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, ¹⁴ having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross.*

In this passage, Paul circles back to Christology to bolster His Gospel stance. He argues that the fullness of God was in bodily form and this is the only way that we can be back in His fullness. To solidify his point, he brings out the Old Testament practice of circumcision to remind these believers of the sufficiency of Christ's work to bring salvation. Circumcision was the physical sign of God's covenant with His people in the Old Testament, showing Israel's special relationship with God. This passage is one of many in the New Testament that explains Jesus as the fulfilment of God's covenant to His people. Rather than talk about the need for physical alterations and external actions, Paul says every person needs a spiritual transformation to be a part of God's people. Only Jesus can do this. Every other pursuit is hollow and deceptive. In salvation, Jesus takes our dead, uncircumcised heart and resurrects them. Therefore, baptism is mentioned in the same context to bring out this reality.

Toward the end of these verses, Paul highlights the fact that we stood rightfully condemned before God and we were cut off from the people of God. Jesus alone can cancel the charges brought against us. Jesus alone can nail them to the cross. Every other lie from the world attempts to fix the problem of sin through some variation of human effort, but they can't. Only Jesus erases the problem through His effort.

- **Only Jesus Is WORTHY OF WORSHIP**

Colossians 2:15, *And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.*

Jesus humiliates what once condemned us and now reigns as the triumphant king. Jesus makes a public spectacle of all other worldviews because he proves them false. He proves that they do not possess the power that he possesses. There are five basic questions a person can ask to determine someone's worldview: 1) Who or what is God? 2) Who or what are we? 3) What happens when we die? 4) How do we know what is right and wrong? 5) What is the purpose of life?

If you trace out any other worldview, belief system, or philosophical train of thought, each one is insufficient to be totally true. Only Jesus can answer these questions sufficiently, therefore He alone is worthy to be praised.

Discussion Questions:

- How does the truth of Jesus differ from some of the lies culture promotes?
- How bold are you when it comes time for standing up for the truth?
- **Only Jesus Is ENOUGH**

Colossians 2:16–19, *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.¹⁷ These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.¹⁸ Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you. Such a person also goes into great detail about what they have seen; they are puffed up with idle notions by their unspiritual mind.¹⁹ They have 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.*

We don't need to add to the work of Jesus, He is enough. Where Paul seems to be addressing outsiders in the previous verses, now he addresses the Jewish insiders who were adding and twisting the Gospel. He argues that not only can deceptive worldviews infiltrate Christianity from the outside, sometimes they can rise from within when people lose sight of Jesus' sufficiency.

A shadow gives you an outline of a figure, but it is not the figure itself. These verses tell us that all the Old Testament rituals, festivals and Sabbaths have been fulfilled in Jesus (Matthew 5:17–20). Jesus is the substance where there used to be only a vague shadow. As much as we want to be careful against outside philosophies, we also need to be careful about insider mutations of the good news. If we make the Gospel into a works-based system, or we

become more infatuated with fanciful ideas and intellectual pursuits, we lose track of what it really means to follow Jesus. Paul goes as far to say that those who are deceived in these ways have lost connection with the head (think back to Lesson 2!).

- **Only Jesus Is WORTHY OF PURSUING**

Colossians 2:20–23, *Since you died with Christ to the elemental spiritual forces of this world, why, as though you still belonged to the world, do you submit to its rules: ²¹ “Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!”? ²² These rules, which have to do with things that are all destined to perish with use, are based on merely human commands and teachings. ²³ 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.*

We pursue truth when we pursue a relationship with Jesus and guide others to Jesus. These verses remind us that when we died with Christ, we died to the lies of the world. The rules, empty philosophies and worthless pursuits masquerade as worthwhile pursuits. But as we are deceived, we end up wasting our time and creating a false humility that fails to overcome the sinfulness of the flesh. If we minimize Christianity to a set of regulations rather than be transformed by Jesus, then we will remain deceived. But when we pursue a relationship with Jesus, He promises to transform our hearts. It is only in this relationship where we will experience true grace, freedom and life.

Discussion Questions:

- Can you think of any “rules” or “regulations” today that might have the appearance of wisdom or humility, but in reality lack much spiritual value?
- What are some areas of life where we can get distracted and take our focus off Jesus?
- Where is the Lord calling you to stand firm?

Colossians: It's All About Jesus!

Lesson 5

Jesus Unites Us With Him!

Colossians 3:1-11

What does it mean to be united with Jesus? In the first half of the book of Colossians, Paul has given special focus on the person and work of Jesus to unite us with Him. Now he turns his attention to the implications and practical outworking of this Christological foundation. Paul has made it clear that we are either dead in our sin or dead to our sin (Romans 6:1-14).

When we think of being united to Jesus in His death and resurrection, it's easy to think of the future implications, that we will one day be joined with Him forever. But Paul begins addressing what this uniting means holistically: both as a present reality and a future hope. When we believe in the death and resurrection power of Jesus, we are united with Christ in these three ways:

Jesus' Death & Resurrection:

Unites Us in Jesus' LIFE: Revives Our HEARTS AND MINDS

Colossians 3:1a, *Since, then, you have been raised with Christ...*

Paul is writing to these believers and assuming that they too have already been raised with Jesus. When we believe in Jesus, He immediately gives us life. This new life in Jesus is a prerequisite to being able to do everything that follows. In other words, the only way we can do what we are about to read is to first be given life in Jesus!

Colossians 3:1b-2, ... *Set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.*

As we have been raised, Jesus changes both our heart and mind onto "things that are above." In the Old Testament, it is clear that when left up to our abilities, our hearts and minds do not naturally draw themselves to the Lord. Jeremiah says that our hearts are deceptive and dead above all things (Jeremiah 17:9). Deuteronomy describes us as ones who have no eyes to see the Lord, no ears to hear the Lord, and no mind to understand the Lord (Deuteronomy 29:4).

This is why we need the resurrection because it gives us a heart and mind to love Him (Ezekiel 36:26–27)! The only way that we can love the Lord our God with all of our heart and mind is if Jesus transforms both of them through His resurrection power (Deuteronomy 6:4–8; Matthew 22:37–40). We needed a heart and brain transplant and Jesus does both.

What does it look like to then set our hearts and minds on Him? It means we are called to seek Him and His ways above every other way. We choose to deliberately live out the transplants that we have been given.

Discussion Questions:

- How can the resurrection of Jesus impact your daily life?
- List some examples of setting your heart and mind on things above.

Unites Us in Jesus' DEATH: Commands Us to KILL OUR SINFULNESS

Colossians 3:3–4, *For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*

In verses 2–4, the past, present, and future aspects of being united in the death and resurrection of Jesus are in view. In the past, we were given a new heart and mind. In the present, our life is hidden and secure with Christ. And in the future, we will appear with Him in glory. In light of our new life in Jesus, we are called to put to death our sinful nature:

Colossians 3:5–9, *Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. ⁶ Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. ⁷ You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. ⁸ But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. ⁹ Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices...*

Though Jesus' work has transformed us, sin is still a reality in the life of a believer. In other words, Jesus has already saved us and allows us to live in him, but we must fight our flesh (through his power) until all things are made new. If we carry the heart and mind analogy a little further: the new heart and mind we receive in Jesus is still sitting next to the old heart and mind. Part of our failings in loving God with our heart and mind is we fail to see the decrepit and decaying nature of our own hearts and minds and we continue to listen to them. But those dead organs only lead to a dead life, which is why Scripture calls us to be killing those fleshly desires in us.

John Owen famously said, “Be killing sin or it will be killing you.” This is true! Paul argues that our sin is why the wrath of God was on us and why we needed Jesus to take our place. The question for us: why would we keep listening to our old selves? There is no denying the captivating nature of sin. It’s appealing. It’s attractive. But we have to remind ourselves that sin is a liar always set to destroy. Jesus has given us a new heart and a new mind. In him we are called to “keep on killing” what will always lead to death.

Discussion Questions:

- If sin brings death, why do we let sin linger?
- How can this group encourage one another and hold one another accountable to “put to death the earthly nature?”

Unites Us in Jesus’ LIKENESS: Both INDIVIDUALLY AND COLLECTIVELY

Colossians 3:10–11, ... And [you] have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. ¹¹ Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

We are called to strip off the old self, but in the process, we are also told to clothe ourselves with the new self that we have been given in Jesus. Rather than conform to the image of Adam, we conform to the image of our Creator (Second Adam). The text then reads that our new self “is being renewed” in this life, meaning that the Christian life is a work in progress! Our call is to look more like Jesus every day.

The Christian life is one of patience, diligence, and steadfast faithfulness. Each day we must kill the dead heart and mind inside of us and seek the things above. We allow the Lord to change us, shape us, and mold us back into His image. And this process takes time. But the beauty of the Gospel is that God’s act of grace to us is not a one-time event. The entire time he is working on us, He is forgiving us and redirecting our hearts and our minds. Being united in His death and resurrection means that we can share in the likeness of Jesus.

But this isn’t only on an individual scale, it’s also on a collective one. When we are united in Jesus, we see that no matter who we are, what status we have, or what race we identify with, Jesus unites us with Him together. In Christ, there is no dividing lines of racial hostility. In Christ, there are no socioeconomic separations. In Christ, we have more in common with our believing brothers and sisters around the world than we do with our

unbelieving next-door neighbors. Jesus unites us under His Lordship, and we are His Kingdom people called to do His work together.

This means that we are unified in a love and care for one another. This also means that we are unified in purpose and mission. We are all working together to make much of Jesus. We are called to labor and strive together as we love one another the way Christ has loved us. Jesus' death and resurrection unites us with Him and with fellow believers.

Discussion Questions:

- What are some areas in your life that don't look very Jesus-like?
- What are the practical implications of being united with your brothers and sisters in Christ?

Colossians: It's All About Jesus!

Lesson 6

Jesus Transforms Our Relationships! Colossians 3:12–16

In our last lesson, we ended with verse 11 which reads, “In Christ, there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.” This serves as a transition into the next section as Paul unpacks what this begins to look like practically in our relationships. Jesus transforms us and as a result, He transforms how we interact with others. The Christian life is one that thrives in community. And though relationships are hard work, God’s transforming work in our hearts is on full display as we honor Him in our interactions and relationships with others.

We Are Called to LOVE ONE ANOTHER Like Jesus LOVED US!

Colossians 3:12–13, Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³ Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

Jesus is our standard for relationships. In the same way Jesus has given you grace, forgiveness, patience, and care so we are to mimic in how we interact with others. When Jesus saved us, He chose us and set us apart from the rest of the world. Our world and our flesh look at relationships from a self-centered perspective, which is the exact opposite of our call as followers of Jesus. How then should we interact with others?

- **With COMPASSION and KINDNESS**

Compassion is a gracious sensitivity toward others that manifests in genuine care for them. It’s being aware of the needs of those around you to be able to respond with love. Paul says elsewhere that “Love is patient, love is kind” (1 Corinthians 13:4). He also says, “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32). Grace, kindness, and compassion are all tied together because of Jesus’ work in salvation.

Honestly, to love compassionately apart from God doesn’t make sense. Why should we give someone love they don’t deserve? And for the unbeliever, it’s this line of thinking that can lead to walking away from a marriage, or justify treating people you like differently than people who have wronged you, or

offer conditional love to others. But when our standard for love changes, our practice of love changes. God must be our standard of compassion and kindness toward others.

- **With HUMILITY and GENTLENESS**

To be compassionate, we must be humble. We must stop thinking about ourselves and our perspective and attempt to seek understanding with self-control. Just like the previous point, Paul says elsewhere, “[Love] does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud” (1 Corinthians 13:4b). Additionally he adds, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:3–5).

We love to think the best of ourselves. In doing so, we become experts at defending and justifying our actions while giving ourselves an incredible amount of grace. But then we can look at someone else and only see their worst. Without Jesus’ transforming work in our lives, we will remain prideful in our view of others.

But we are called instead to have the same mind as Jesus in our relationships with others. If Jesus, the Creator of the cosmos, Name above all names, King of kings, and Lord of lords humbled himself, who are we to walk in arrogance? Loving others with humility forces a perspective change: What’s it like to live in their shoes? And when we combine that with gentleness and meekness, we become self-controlled and selfless, ready to help in every situation.

- **With PATIENCE and FORGIVENESS**

The climax of loving others like Jesus is ultimately in how we model his patience and forgiveness. We are called to forgive as the Lord forgave us. When faced with bitterness and unforgiveness, the question we must ask is: How has Jesus forgiven me? Apart from understanding the debt we’ve been forgiven, forgiveness can be impossible. But as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13:7, “[Love] always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.”

Loving others like Jesus is a call to active, lifelong patience. It’s a call to bear one another’s burdens, put up with annoyances, and continue to love always. In our sinfulness, we desire to love in ways that are convenient, pleasant, enjoyable, and personally beneficial, and when one of those is not present, we’re done. But God calls every believer to love patiently when it’s hard,

frustrating, discouraging, tiresome, and burdensome. Why? Because the goal of loving others is not for our happiness but for our sanctification. In the end, Jesus wants us to look more like him in how we love others. Paul ends this thought with:

Colossians 3:14, And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Discussion Questions:

- How can our life group love each other like Jesus has loved us?
- What are some of the differences between how Jesus defines love and our culture defines love?
- How should we approach difficult relationships?

To Love One Another Like This:

- **Jesus Must RULE OUR HEARTS**

Colossians 3:15, Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

For Jesus to rule our hearts we must be overwhelmed by Him to such a degree that He takes over our heart and establishes His reign in our lives. In many ways this is like a kingdom take-over: from self-rule to Jesus-rule. When this takes place, you begin to live as a citizen of the Kingdom of God, a kingdom marked by peace, unity, and thanksgiving.

Our world is chaotic, hate-filled, and selfish which is why there is no peace. Christ has given us peace with Him, so when He rules our hearts, we display His peace to others. This is why we are called to be peacemakers. If we rule our own lives, then peace is only pursued if it is beneficial to us. But if Jesus rules our lives, peace is always pursued. How can Jesus rule in my heart?

- **Jesus Must SATURATE OUR WORSHIP**

Colossians 3:16, Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.

The message of Christ is the Word of Christ, and the peace of Christ is given to those who dwell continually in His Word. If we want Jesus to rule in our hearts, then the Word of God must take top priority in our lives so that we have no other response except worship. We often think of “worship” in terms of singing, but worship is a lifestyle pursuit of Jesus and what better way to know Him and love Him and follow Him than to get in His Word.

Biblical illiteracy runs rampant in our churches which is why godly love for one another is often absent. But notice, the encouragement to get in the Word is not just an individual pursuit but one that should be done in community. The commands are to teach, admonish, sing psalms, hymns, and songs with gratitude together. In other words, if we want the peace of Christ to rule in our lives so Jesus can take over how we operate in our relationships, then we must be saturated with the worship of Christ through the Word of Christ together.

If we think of church time/group time as obligations that help save us or make us super saints, then we've missed the point. Each gathering is an opportunity to worship the risen Jesus together through the proclamation of His Word. And regularly doing so transforms our love for God and our love for others.

Discussion Questions:

- What does it mean that we are called to be “peacemakers?”
- What is corporate worship and how important is it in the life of a believer?
- What are some ways we can worship together?

Colossians: It's All About Jesus!

Lesson 7

Jesus Is Lord Over All of Life!

Colossians 3:17–4:1

In church-culture, it may seem like a given that Jesus should be Lord over all your life. But when we truly evaluate our day to day, we see how easy it is to segment out portions that we submit to Jesus's leading and portions we tend to keep for ourselves. Sometimes we live as though we have masks for different areas of our life. We are one way around these people, another way at work, another way at church, another way with our family, and so on. The hope in this lesson is that each of us would evaluate: Is Jesus Lord over my whole life?

Jesus Should Be WORSHIPPED IN EVERY AREA OF LIFE!

Colossians 3:17, *And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

Whatever we do can be worship to the Lord! But how does this begin to work itself out practically? The great reformer Martin Luther explained it this way: "When a father goes ahead and washes diapers or performs some other menial task for his child in Christian faith, God, with all his angels and creatures, is smiling, not because that father is washing diapers, but because he is doing so in Christian faith."

If this mundane task can be redeemed for the glory of God, then this builds a case that anything we do can be worship. The reason this sits odd for many of us is because this blows up our typical understanding of worship as a segmented weekend service. Many of us have grown up in a "sacred vs. secular" context, where there is church stuff and then there is life stuff. But according to Romans 12:1–2, worship is living in faith and obedience to Jesus in the everyday. This means that everything we do can be an expression of faith and obedience to God. Whatever we name, we can reclaim as worship because Jesus is to be Lord over your entire life!

Discussion Questions:

- Everything we do can be worship to God. What are some ways this impacts your daily life?
- Are there areas in your life that need to be reclaimed by Jesus?

How Can Jesus Be Worshipped Like This? A Few Examples:

- In **MARRIAGE: Show RESPECT & LOVE TO ONE ANOTHER**

Colossians 3:18–19, *Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.* ¹⁹ *Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.*

Beginning in verse 18, Paul gets specific and offers these believers a few everyday arenas where we can worship the Lord in everything we do. The first of these is in marriage. Do we see marriage as an opportunity to worship King Jesus?

When wives submit to their husbands, they worship the Lord. Let's be clear: this verse is not communicating inferiority or blind obedience. This Greek word for "submit" is actually used in other places to describe Christians modest and cooperative demeanor with others. Instead, the idea here is that wives should behave in such a way that helps produce kindness and love from the husband. This is a call to respect their husbands, not as a superior, but as someone you love and cherish! In fact, the last phrase "as is fitting to the Lord" means that the Lord defines what this respect and love should look like.

When husbands love their wives, they worship the Lord. The verse goes further and explains that the opposite of love is to be harsh. Paul unpacks his teaching on marriage further in Ephesians 5:22–33. In that passage he explains that a husband should love his wife like Christ loved the church: selflessly and graciously. A godly husband is not domineering, intimidating, or tyrannical. But rather, is constantly looking for more ways to serve her and build her up.

Discussion Question:

- What are some ways you can love your spouse the way Christ loved the Church?
- In **FAMILIES: Create A HOME OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH & ENCOURAGEMENT**

Colossians 3:20–21, *Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.* ²¹ *Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.*

Paul progresses from marriages to families. Part of loving the Lord in every arena of life is that kids would be obedient to their parents. This command goes all the way back to Exodus 20 and has always been a way to please the Lord. In the Colossians context, children were regarded as their father's

property and they did not have a very high status in the family or surrounding community. In some ways it was odd for Paul to address children in this way. But the fact that he did solidifies children's value in the eyes of the Lord, and that they too have an opportunity to worship God with an obedient life.

Additionally, this is inadvertently a command for parents. As parents submit to the rule and reign of Christ in their lives, they would honor the Lord in their parenting of the kids. This helps us make sense of verse 21. While this verse serves as a head nod to the Father being the spiritual leader in the home, the command is not limited to the Father. Again, in the context Fathers were the legal property owners of children, so in many ways it is appropriate to see this as an encouragement to both parents in our context.

Parents have an opportunity to worship the Lord as they seek to encourage their kids. When parents embitter, provoke, irritate, or nag their kids, naturally the children end up discouraged. While this doesn't mean parents should shy away from discipline not discipline, it carries with it an idea of parenting without exasperating, monotonous rules and regulations with no forms of encouragement, grace or love. When parents show grace, model Jesus' love and forgiveness, offer gentle rebukes, correction and discipline, and laugh and encourage their kids, they worship the Lord.

Discussion Question:

- How do these truths impact your role in your family?
- In **WORK: Be DILIGENT & SERVE THE LORD ALWAYS**

Colossians 3:22–4:1, Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord.²³ Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters,²⁴ since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.²⁵ Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs, and there is no favoritism.¹ Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven.

The third example area where Jesus is to be Lord is in our work. We are all called to the work of the Lord. Originally work was part of God's design for Adam and Eve back in the garden of Eden (Genesis 2:15). Though sin has affected our work, Jesus can redeem it to be a worship-filled endeavor.

In the passage, slavery was a political and economic system, not a racial system. It was drastically different than the slavery that comes to mind for

most Americans. Slaves found themselves paying off debts or in some forms of servitude, doing menial tasks day in and day out. In other words, Paul is addressing a people who were stuck in their humble circumstances and service-oriented jobs. And what is his encouragement? They can still worship the Lord by obeying their masters because ultimately they were working for the Lord. But they weren't alone. Masters were to treat their workers with respect, fairness, and love because they too were ultimately working for the Lord.

It doesn't matter who you work for, how much money you make, or the kind of lifestyle you have: we all work for the Lord. Therefore, our work can always be worship as work at it with all of our heart. Jesus is Lord over all our lives, in everything we do, may we worship Him!

Discussion Questions:

- How would your work change if Jesus was standing beside you while you worked?
- No matter the stage of life, we all work! How can your work be worship?

Colossians: It's All About Jesus!

Lesson 8

Jesus Is the One We Demonstrate and Serve! Colossians 4:2-18

As we come to the end of this book, it's tempting to dismiss this last section of verses as information that was only pertinent to the Colossians. Between the list of names and their specific relationship with Paul and these believers, they could be quickly addressed and deemed unvaluable to the 21st century believer. But if we believe that every Word of the Bible has been breathed out by God and is useful for teaching, rebuke, correction, and training in righteousness, then we must unpack them as such (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Paul forces our Christian boots to hit the ground in this final charge. With a series of examples, he encourages every believer to live in a way that demonstrates and serves Jesus. When we believe that life is truly all about Jesus, we have to understand that we represent Jesus at all times.

You DEMONSTRATE Jesus to EVERYONE YOU MEET:

Whether we choose to acknowledge it or not, every person we meet will see the Jesus we proclaim. This means that we have to see every person we come in contact with has a chance to come to know Jesus. Paul begins his end by urging these believers: Because this is the Jesus you proclaim, represent him wherever you go. This means that we should:

- **Pray for OPEN HEARTS**

Colossians 4:2-4, *Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. ³And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. ⁴Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.*

Remember when we talked about the state of our dead hearts and minds? A person does not possess the ability to revive themselves. Only God can do that. This makes the work of the Spirit so important in the conversations we have with others. We can't save anyone. We can't argue someone into heaven. The Spirit must go before us and prepare the hearts and minds of an individual to receive the good news.

On one hand, this takes the pressure off of having the perfect Gospel sales pitch. On the other hand, this puts the pressure on our faithfulness to constantly being available and willing to demonstrate Jesus with our actions

and words. The truth is the Lord can use anyone when the His Spirit is moving. Our call is to humble ourselves and pray for those people we meet that their hearts would be open to hearing and responding to Jesus.

- **Make the Most of YOUR TIME WITH PEOPLE**

Colossians 4:5, *Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity.*

Because every person we meet is a Gospel opportunity, we must learn to make the most of every opportunity. As we live our lives on display to the world, our walking in wisdom allows us to seize opportunities for outsiders to see the joy of the Christian life. We must realize that after believing in Jesus, there is never a moment when we aren't Christians. To live foolishly and worldly gives greater potential to misrepresent Jesus to a lost and dying world. As we act wisely, we model Jesus's servant heart as we display his compassion, grace and forgiveness in everything we do.

- **Speak With TRUTH & GRACE**

Colossians 4:6, *Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.*

While the previous point addressed the importance of our actions in demonstrating Jesus, this point drives home the importance of our words. What we say, text, email, and post on social media is an opportunity to preach Jesus. Sometimes we let our thoughts and opinions fly without any consideration of how they represent the Lord. But our call is to have "seasoned" speech, using words that are acceptable and inoffensive.

The book of James addresses the contrasting potentials of our words. Our tongues are like bits in the mouths of horses (James 3:3), the rudder to a ship (3:4), and a small spark that sets a forest on fire (3:5-6). Which is why every believer should be urged to be quick to listen and slow to speak (1:19). Our words are powerful. Though their potential for bad is great, so is their potential for good. Our words can help clarify and direct people to the truth. Truthful responses offered with a "salt seasoned" spirit help us demonstrate the grace and truth of the Gospel.

Discussion Questions:

- Why is it important to pray for open doors?
- What are some ways you can make the most of your time with "outsiders?"

- How would your conversations change if you wore a constant name badge that said “I Follow Jesus”?

You SERVE Jesus EVERYWHERE YOU GO:

The book heads toward the conclusion by seemingly rattling off a number of people in Paul’s final words to the people. But when we read about these people, we learn that each of them served Jesus wherever they went. They lived out what it means that life is all about Jesus. What do we learn from these individuals about serving Jesus?

- **Be An ENCOURAGEMENT**

***Colossians 4:7–9**, Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. ⁸ I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts. ⁹ He is coming with Onesimus, our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you. They will tell you everything that is happening here.*

Sometimes encouragement is one of the most undervalued attributes of the Christian life. The challenge of Tychicus and Onesimus is that they served Jesus by encouraging fellow believers in their walk with Jesus. Sometimes we hear from people, “I want to serve Jesus but I’m not a teacher and I can’t sing or play an instrument.” But one of the best ways we can serve Jesus is by being an encouragement to others.

This world is hard. For the Colossians, they are a minority group in a pagan culture. They didn’t need a guy playing the guitar so much as they needed someone to come alongside of them and say “The Lord loves you, keep going, stay faithful to his Word, hold fast to your faith, the world will always be opposed to you but Jesus is worth living for, and you’re doing a great job!” We need people who serve Jesus through the ministry of encouragement all over our churches and communities.

- **WORK & PRAY HARD**

***Colossians 4:10–15**, My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.) ¹¹ Jesus, who is called Justus, also sends greetings. These are the only Jews among my co-workers for the kingdom of God, and they have proved a comfort to me. ¹² Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always*

wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured. ¹³ I vouch for him that he is working hard for you and for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis. ¹⁴ Our dear friend Luke, the doctor, and Demas send greetings. ¹⁵ Give my greetings to the brothers and sisters at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house.

In the example of these guys, these two ideas of working and praying go hand in hand. Aristarchus, Mark, and Justus were coworkers for the Kingdom of God who comforted and encouraged Paul. In fact, Paul saw them as equals because they worked alongside of him. It's a false idea that pastors are the only workers of the church. We are all coworkers together. We can serve the Lord by embracing our call to work hard for the Lord.

The next individual mentioned is Epaphras. He is described as a servant of Jesus, who wrestles in prayer for his fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, as he stands firm working hard for the Kingdom. What an incredible way to be described! It doesn't matter who you are, we can all strive to be like Epaphras: a faithful servant, a prayer warrior, and a hard worker all in the name of Jesus.

- **Pursue the OPPORTUNITIES FOR MINISTRY AROUND YOU**

***Colossians 4:16–17**, After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea. ¹⁷ Tell Archippus: "See to it that you complete the ministry you have received in the Lord."*

Archippus was encouraged to complete the ministry he had received from the Lord. Ministry in this context simply means the place he was called to serve Jesus. We tend to over-spiritualize "ministry." But as we make the most of the opportunities around us, every one of us has a ministry to which we've been called. This is yet another example of Paul going against the false idea that some people are called to ministry and others aren't. If we profess Jesus as Lord then we are ministers and servants of Jesus. The Lord has placed each of us strategically in our families, workplaces, and the like to demonstrate and serve Him in every area of life.

- **SERVE JESUS: NO MATTER THE COST**

***Colossians 4:18**, I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.*

This is an appropriate ending for our study through Colossians. If we truly believe that life is all about Jesus, then any other way to live is not worth

living. Paul practiced what he preached: He knew it was all about Jesus and that caused him to serve Jesus no matter the cost.

In the book of Colossians:

- Jesus calls us to know Him and live for Him (1:1–14);
- Jesus is at the center of everything (1:15–23);
- Jesus gives our life purpose (1:24–2:7);
- Jesus is our truth (2:8–23);
- Jesus unites us with Him (3:1–11);
- Jesus transforms our relationships (3:12–16);
- Jesus is Lord over all of life (3:17–4:1);

And if we believe all of those to be true, then we must understand that the rest of our life should demonstrate and serve this Jesus, no matter the cost (4:2–18).

Discussion Questions:

- How often do you view yourself as a servant of Jesus?
- How does this mentality change your everyday interactions?
- How has the Lord worked on your life through this study in Colossians?