



CHRIST THE KING

LIVING IN LIGHT OF HIS GLORIOUS GOSPEL

A STUDY ON COLOSSIANS

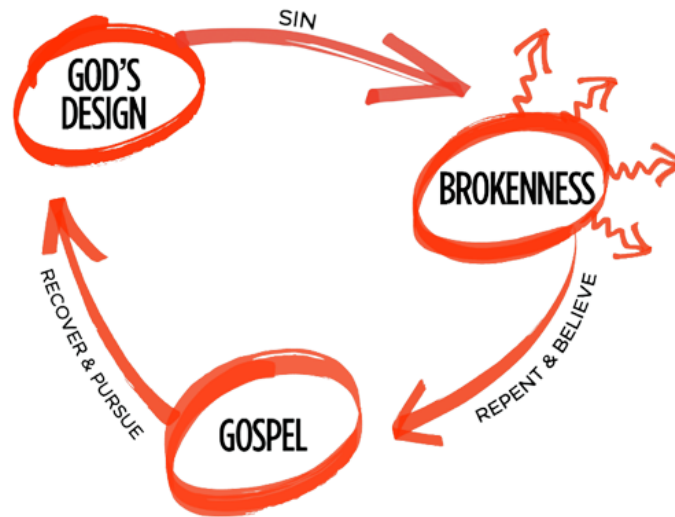


MeadowBrook
CHURCH

life
group

*Life together for the
Kingdom of God*

The Gospel



Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins. (Ecclesiastes 7:20 ESV)

For the wages of sin is death... (Romans 6:23a ESV)

²⁰ For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. ²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it-- ²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. (Romans 3:20-25 ESV)

³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, ... ²⁰ But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. (1 Corinthians 15:3-4, 20-22 ESV)

¹⁰ For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. ... ¹³ For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." (Romans 10:10, 13 ESV)

¹² But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. ¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:12-14 ESV)

"Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; (Isaiah 55:6 ESV)

Life Group – Colossians 1:1-8 – March 3, 2019

The Ministry of the Gospel

CONNECT

Has there been a time recently where you got so excited about something and could not wait to share it? What was the thing you were excited about? How did you communicate it to others?

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: Colossians 1:1-8

(Additional Passages: Jn. 10:22-42; Rom. 1:16-17; Mt. 22:34-40, 28:18-20; 2 Tim. 2:2; Jonah)

- How is Christ revealed as supreme in this passage?
- What do we learn about ourselves in this passage?
- How is the transforming power and message of the gospel revealed in this passage?
- What specific action is God calling us to through this passage?

SERVE: Apply the Text

- As you have heard the Gospel, proclaim it.
- As you have understood the grace of God in truth, explain it.
- As you have been prayed for, pray for others.

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Who is God placing on your heart to share the gospel with this week? Pray for their faith to be found in Christ so they may experience secure hope and genuine love. Confess any lack of faith you have in the power of the Gospel message to save the lost.

When we come to Jesus in faith, we come surrendering our wills and lives to him. Our faith in Christ produces a love for him which is revealed in a committed effort to obey his commands—particularly his commands to love God, love others, and make disciples of all nations. Confess areas where you have not submitted fully to the Lordship of Christ. Ask God to reveal areas in your life where you are not fully submitting to his Lordship.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Seek to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with someone this week.



For the Family: Read Colossians 1:1-8 this week together as a family. Talk about what it means for Jesus to be the Son of God, our Lord, and the foundation of our faith, hope and love.

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son,
(Colossians 1:13 ESV)

Life Group – Colossians 1:1-8 – March 3, 2019

The Ministry of the Gospel

How is Christ revealed as supreme in this passage?

- **Jesus is the Son of God.**

“Perhaps, in a letter that elevates Christ, Paul wants at the outset to anchor the person of Christ firmly to God the Father. As supreme as Christ is in the work of both creation and redemption, his identity and his work cannot be understood apart from his relationship to God his Father.”¹ Jesus’ nature will be further discussed in subsequent lessons, but it is important to know that Jesus is the second person of the Trinity, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father. Since the beginning of the Church, there have been movements to diminish the deity of Christ and his equality with the Father. Some have argued that Jesus was created as a lesser divine being (Arianism and Semi-Arianism), some have argued that Jesus took on a spiritual deity at his baptism (Adoptionism), some have argued that he is actually the Father in a different form (Modalism), and some simply argue that he was a good teacher and nothing more (secularism).² These resurface periodically in the church under different guises, and none of them are viable options for the believer. The Divinity and Nature of Christ is firmly anchored in the Father. To diminish one is to diminish the other because “[Jesus] and the Father are one” (John 10:30). The deity of the Father is perfectly expressed and revealed in the person of Jesus Christ and his Spirit-inspired Word.

- **Jesus is our Lord.**

Jesus is the Son of God and our Lord. He calls the shots, not us. When we come to Jesus in faith, we come surrendering our wills and lives to him. Our faith in Christ produces a love for him which is revealed in a committed effort to obey his commands—particularly his commands to love God, love others, and make disciples of all nations. We become his ministers, as Epaphras did, living by his word and carrying out his will on this earth until he returns to gather his church and establish his kingdom.

- **Jesus is the object of faith, the foundation of our hope, and the source of our love.**

Paul was writing to warn the Colossian church of a potential false teaching that was seeking to penetrate their ranks and diminish the deity and importance of Jesus. So Paul reminded them of the importance of Jesus to matters regarding their faith, hope, and love for one another. The Colossians heard the word of truth concerning Christ and believed it to be true, giving Jesus their very lives. Their faith was grounded in the hope that Jesus had paid the penalty for their sins and the promise of eternal life to be realized fully after his return. Their faith was not in their works or righteousness, but in Jesus’. Jesus was the one who lived a life in accordance with God’s commands and satisfied the need for just punishment of sins. Jesus was the one who made it possible for the Colossians and all believers throughout history to have relationship with the Father. Lastly, Jesus is both the model and source of what Christian love is to be. Without Christ, we have no hope, no reason for faith, and no strength to love others properly. Jesus is of vital importance to every aspect of the Christian life. Without him, it all falls apart.

- **Jesus’ Gospel is powerful.**

Jesus’ power is not just revealed in his life, death, and resurrection, but in the very message given to the church to proclaim about Jesus. The good news of Jesus, often referred to as “the Gospel”, is the power of God for salvation to both the Jews and the rest of us (Rom. 1:16-17). God works through the church’s proclamation of the gospel to bring people to himself. He could have done that countless ways, but in his perfect wisdom, he has chosen to work through the prayers of the saints and their proclamation of the gospel to advance his kingdom. And he has done just that! The gospel of Jesus Christ has gone out into the world and is bearing fruit in the most unlikely of places. This is a testimony to the validity and power of Jesus Christ and the salvation he offers. Jesus is powerful, and his power is displayed in the world when the gospel is

¹ Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 2008), 83.

² For further reading on how the church dealt with these heresies, see the Nicene Creed and C.S. Lewis’ “Lord, Liar, Lunatic” argumentation for the deity of Christ.

proclaimed. Sinners are redeemed. Addictions are broken. Lives are restored. Jesus is still revealing the supremacy of his power today through the ministry of his gospel.

What do we learn about ourselves in this passage?

- **In Christ, we are saints and brothers through our faith in Jesus.**

For those who have turned from their sins and believed in Christ, we are given a new identity and a new family. While we were once sinners, we are now holy saints washed clean by the blood of Jesus. While we were once longing for a sense of belonging, we now have found our place in the family of Christ. We have been enabled by the Spirit to walk in this holiness, and been given a family of believers, the local church, with whom we are to journey through this life. Both are vital to our Christian life. The enemy will constantly seek to remind us of our old identity and isolate us from the local church, but we must resist his attacks. Our identity is found in Christ, not our past, and Jesus has graciously established the local church to be the community where believers love, serve, support, and challenge one another as we collectively pursue Christ.

- **We are to be gospel proclaimers at every point in our journey towards Christian maturity.**

The Gospel was bearing fruit from the day the Colossians heard it. They took seriously the call to make disciples, even when they did not have everything figured out. Whether one has been walking with the Lord for just a few weeks or decades, we are called to be gospel proclaimers, communicating the truth of the gospel to others. If we cannot articulate the gospel message, even at the early stages of our walk with Jesus, we must question whether or not we have truly believed it and been transformed by it. For those of us who have experienced the joy of fellowship with the Father made possible through faith in Jesus Christ, we should desire for others to experience the same fellowship as well—for the glory of God and for the good of others.

How is the transforming power and message of the Gospel revealed in this passage?

The gospel's transforming power is seen in how the Colossians were transformed by the word of truth that they heard, believed, and understood. Sinners became saints. The hopeless found hope. The once fruitless now bore fruit. The once divided were now demonstrating deep love to one another. The transforming power of the Gospel is radical, going down to the root of who we are. The Colossians had experienced the transformation given by the Father through the Son and effected by the power of the Spirit working in each of their lives.

What specific actions is God calling us to through this passage?

- **As you have heard the Gospel, proclaim it.**

None of us would be believers if someone had not proclaimed the gospel to us. Proclaim the gospel then to your kids, your friends, your co-workers, your clients, your students, your patients, your neighbors, the other parents involved in your sports leagues, the waitresses and waiters who serve you regularly at your favorite restaurant, etc. There is not a shortage of people in need of hearing the gospel, but will there be a shortage of gospel proclaimers at MeadowBrook? Will there be a shortage of gospel proclaimers in your Life Group?

- **As you have understood the grace of God in truth, explain it.**

Those who believe in the gospel are going to need guidance into the fullness of the grace and truth found in God's Word. We need to disciple and train those who come to faith, not leaving themselves to face the onslaught of attacks the enemy loves to bring against new believers. Set them up for success by explaining to them the things of God.

- **As you have been prayed for, pray for others.**

Paul, the missionary of missionaries, knew the necessity of intercessory prayer. We must be praying for others as we minister to them. Only the Spirit can bring about lasting change in an individual, so we must continually be praying for those to whom we are ministering. We should be praying for their faith to be fixed on Christ, their hope in his gospel and his return to be solidified, and their love to be genuine for all the saints and the lost in this world. God has works mightily through the secret intercessory prayers of others.

Life Group – Colossians 1:9-14 – March 10, 2019

Living a Life Pleasing to Our Lord

CONNECT

What tests your patience in this world? Are you currently dealing with any of those situations?

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: Colossians 1:9-14

(Additional Passages: Ps. 119:105; Ruth 4; Exo. 6:6-8; Heb. 10:1-18; Jn. 14; Jas. 1:5-7, 3:13-18)

- How is Christ revealed as supreme in this passage?
- What do we learn about ourselves in this passage?
- How is the transforming power and message of the gospel revealed in this passage?
- What specific action is God calling us to through this passage?

SERVE: Apply the Text

- Pursue the knowledge of his will through prayerful engagement of the Scriptures.
- Apply the Scriptures to your life, sharing the gospel all the while.
- Find your strength in Christ.
 - o Endure to the end.
 - o Practice patience with joy.
- Embrace the heart of gratitude.

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Who is God placing on your heart to share the gospel with this week? Pray for their faith to be found in Christ so they may experience deliverance, redemption, and the forgiveness of sins. Confess any lack of faith you have in the power of the Gospel message to save the lost.

Ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding as you read and study the Scriptures and seek to apply them to your life.

Ask God to strengthen you with all power according to his glorious might so you might endure in the faith in every circumstance and practice patience with joy.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Seek to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with someone this week.



For the Family: Read Colossians 1:9-14 this week together as a family. Talk about what it means for Jesus to be our deliverer and redeemer. Talk about how we come to know to know what he wants us to do and how we are to do it (by his Word and in his strength).

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

In whom [Christ] we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:14 ESV)

Life Group – Colossians 1:9-14 – March 10, 2019

Living a Life Pleasing to Our Lord

How is Christ revealed as supreme in this passage?

Our salvation originated in the Father was revealed and accomplished through Jesus Christ and is achieved and kept secure by the Holy Spirit. Jesus is central in our salvation. The Father reveals himself in his Son, and in everything the Spirit does in this world, he seeks to glorify Jesus. To diminish Jesus in any way is to diminish the scope and power of our salvation. Through Christ, we experience four important aspects of our salvation given to us by the Father in the Spirit.

- **Through Jesus, the Father delivers and transports us.**

“People who have not been rescued by God in Christ live in a power structure that is characterized by the forces of chaos, evil, and judgment... God has accomplished this rescue by transferring us from this dominion of darkness into *the kingdom of the Son he loves*.”³ The Exodus and the return from exile serve as physical pictures of the spiritual reality of the New Testament church. We are born as citizens of the kingdom of the world under the dominion of the enemy. We are enslaved, kept in darkness, unable to change ourselves, and awaiting the coming judgment of the Lord. However, when we turn from our sins and turn in faith to Christ, we experience deliverance from the darkness and are transferred into his Kingdom of Light. He is our deliverer. Apart from Christ’s death and resurrection we would still be in darkness, but his gospel is the good news of the Kingdom. His Kingdom is established forever, and though it is only experienced spiritually now, in the future, his Kingdom will be experienced physically forever in the new heavens and the new earth.

- **Through Jesus, we experience redemption and forgiveness.**

The wages of sin is death, and all have fallen short of the glory of God and under constant threat of experiencing His righteous wrath and just judgment... if it were not for the grace and lovingkindness of our God. The Father, in his love for the world, sent his Son to fulfill all righteousness and pay the penalty for our sins. Jesus, thus, becomes our redeemer, the one who paid the price. To redeem means to purchase. By His death and resurrection, Jesus met the holy demands of God’s Law. Satan seeks to accuse us and imprison us because he knows we are guilty of breaking God’s Law. But the ransom has been paid on Calvary, and through faith in Jesus Christ, we have been set free.”⁴

- **Jesus is the source of our guidance and strength.**

Jesus is the Word revealed from the Father and given to us by the Spirit. In his word, the Spirit “fills us with knowledge of his will,” so the Word would be “a lamp to [our] feet and a light to [our] path” (Psalm 119:105). Through his Word, the Spirit “strengthens us with all power according to his glorious might.” Our wisdom and strength are to be found in Jesus Christ. He is the one we are fix our eyes upon as we run this marathon of life. By his Word, we can be confidently move forward in the will of God relying on his strength given to us by Christ through the Spirit within us. The key to walking in a manner pleasing to the Lord is the same as the key to eternal salvation—the grace of Jesus Christ. Everything he expects of us, he gives to us in himself. What a glorious King we have! *Why do we struggle to find our wisdom and strength in Jesus?*

What do we learn about ourselves in this passage?

- **We need to be filled with wisdom.**

Human beings left to themselves are simply foolish. We simply do not naturally come to correct conclusions on our own about life, God, and morality. Looking at our culture today through the lens of God’s Word, it is not difficult to see many people living lives and coming to conclusions of utter foolishness.

³ Moo, D. J. (2008). [*The letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*](#) (p. 104). Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co.

⁴ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). [*The Bible exposition commentary*](#) (Vol. 2, p. 115). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Therefore, experience is good only if it has been informed by God's Word. If we want to live wisely in this world and obtain understanding, we need to be filled with the Word of God. In the Word, God's will is clearly revealed. We do not need more revelation. We need Spirit-given understanding of what has already been revealed by the Father in his Word.

- **We need to be strengthened.**

Along with being naturally foolish, we are naturally weak regarding breaking the chains and patterns of sin in our lives. No amount of self-discipline can break the shackles of sin and produce a life worthy to the Lord. If we could not achieve our salvation in our own strength, it is foolish for us to think we are able to live out our salvation in our own strength. We are always in need of inner strength that comes from without, strength coming from Jesus Christ himself. We then apply this strength as we diligently pursue the Lord in all areas of our life. This does not let us off the hook regarding discipline, rather the strength Jesus gives us enables us to be effective in our disciplined pursuit of a life pleasing to the Lord.

How is the transforming power and message of the Gospel revealed in this passage?

Through the substitutionary sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven our sins and delivered from the domain of darkness into the Kingdom of light. In this current spiritual Kingdom, Christ empowers us with his wisdom and strength, so being fully equipped, we can live fruit-bearing lives pleasing to the Him until he returns to establish his eternal Kingdom.

What specific actions is God calling us to through this passage?

- **Pursue the knowledge of his will through prayerful engagement of the Scriptures.**

The Spirit works in us through the Scriptures. It is through these Scriptures He inspired where He introduces us to Jesus and fills us with his wisdom and strength. So, we need to diligently and prayerfully read and study the Scriptures. MeadowBrook has a church reading plan to help you get started. Jump in where we are this week and begin to prayerfully study the Word of God.

- **Apply the Scriptures to your life, sharing the gospel all the while.**

Don't just read the Word, but apply the Word. As you apply the Word to your life, you'll begin to experience the peace brought about through living in accordance to God's will. All the while, seek to share gospel with those who need the same life transforming work God has done in you. Remember, no one has ever been saved simply by observing Christian behavior. The gospel literally means "good news" and news is always proclaimed. God has determined in his wisdom to bring people into his Kingdom through the verbal proclamation of his gospel. Despite what the popular saying attests, *it is necessary* to use words to share the gospel. Your life backs up your message. Your life *is not* the message. Jesus is the message and people need to hear the good news of his gospel. So tell them!

- **Find your strength in Christ.**

No one can do this Christian life on their own, so find your strength in Jesus. As Jesus gives you strength, he intends for it to applied in at least two ways as revealed by this passage:

- **Endure to the end.** Persevere in the faith. Do not falter regarding correct doctrine or holiness, but protect yourself from the false teachings of this world and set yourself in truth revealed in righteous living.
- **Practice patience with joy.** In this world, there are many struggles constantly testing our patience and seeking to rob us of all joy. Let Christ's strength enable you to practice patience, not begrudgingly, but joyfully. *What are situations in your life where God is calling you to practice patience with joy through this passage of Scripture?*

- **Embrace the heart of gratitude.**

If nothing else (and there is plenty else), we have infinite reason to be grateful for the salvation God has given us. In the good and the bad, let's give thanks to the Lord for he is good and his love endures forever!

Life Group – Col. 1:15-23 – March 17, 2019

Who Is Jesus?

CONNECT

Have you ever been in an awkward moment where someone caught you forgetting who they were? Knowing who someone is is vital information. In Matthew 16:13-17, Jesus asks His disciples the vital question for every person: “Who do you say that I am?” The Apostle Paul boldly, concisely and correctly answers this here.

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: Col. 1:15-23

(Additional Passages: Jn. 1:1-3,14; Rom. 8:7; 1 Cor. 12:12; Eph. 2:1-7; Phil. 2:5-11; Heb. 1:1-4)

- How is Christ revealed as superior in this passage?
- What do we learn about ourselves in this passage?
- How is the transforming power and message of the gospel revealed in this passage?
- What specific action is God calling us to through this text?

SERVE: Apply the Text

- Share the truth about who Jesus is with others.
- Share your testimony of how Christ transformed you with others.
- Guard correct doctrine regarding Christ in your own life.

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Think of the people groups and individuals in this world that still are, as we all once were, “alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds” (v. 21).

Pray for greater intentionality and effectiveness in reaching these with the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ! If we are indeed “fishers of men,” (Matt. 4:19) what is keeping us from ‘catching’ more, so to speak?

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Share the basic doctrinal principles you have been reminded of by studying this passage, as well as the importance of coming to a proper understanding of the term “firstborn” (as well as “image” and “fullness”). If appropriate, again share your own testimony of how the Lord saved you, just as He saved the Colossians (v. 21-22). It may already be very familiar to the hearers, but it always brings glory to God!

For the Family: Read this passage in Colossians this week together as a family. Demonstrate with this text how Christ is absolutely central in both creation and redemption, and how true reconciliation with God is not possible apart from His substitutionary death and resurrection.

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. (Colossians 1:15 ESV)

Life Group – Col. 1:15-23 – March 17, 2019

Who Is Jesus?

How is Christ revealed as superior in this passage?

- **He is “the image of the invisible God” (v. 15).**

What does it mean that Christ is an “image?” The false teachers that Paul was countering were insisting that Jesus was little more than an “image,” in the sense that we think of when we hear this word. Since they believed that all physical matter was evil, they reasoned that Christ must have been an appearance, not a real man. But a study of the Greek word “image,” as used in the original text will show that both representation *and* presence are indicated. So, Christ not only represents God, He *is* God! And being God, who or what is superior to Him? A few verses later in the passage, Paul writes that “all the fullness of God” (v. 19) dwells in Christ. The word translated “fullness” is the Greek word *pleroma*. It was a technical term in the vocabulary of the gnostic false teachers. It meant “the sum total of all the divine power and attributes.” Paul used this important word eight times in the Colossian letter, so he was meeting the false teachers on their own ground.² The Gnostics were liars, for “who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son.” (1 John 2:22)

- **He is “the firstborn of all creation” (v. 15).**

The word that may seem strangest to us in this passage is “firstborn,” since it would seem to mean that Christ is a created being. However, this term actually means “of first importance, of first rank,”² which makes perfect sense, with Scripture attributing the designing of all creation to the second Person of the Trinity. Verse 17 says He is “before all things,” meaning He existed prior to creation, and that “in him all things hold together,” meaning that He actively sustains the entire cosmos! Did anyone in first century Israel suspect this about Jesus when He was seen walking their streets only appearing to be a mere man? When He performed miracles, observers knew He was special – but surely few realized He was their very Maker!

- **He is superior to all categories of angelic beings, “whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities” (v. 16).**

There is a general consensus among scholars that the terms used here refer to spiritual beings.⁵ This passage declares that Christ, since their Creator, is superior to all created things whether physical or spiritual. The physical world cannot rebel against God (although it was “subjected to futility” according to Rom. 8:20), but all beings in the spiritual realm are either rebelling against or obeying Him. For the angels that sinned, 1 Pet. 3:22 describes all these as “having been subjected to him,” after His ascension and seating at the right hand of the Father (also see Jude 5,6).

- **He is “the head of the body, the church” (v. 18).**

In Greek usage, the word *head* meant “source” and “origin” as well as “leader, ruler.” Jesus Christ is the Source of the church, His body, and the Leader. Paul called Him “the Beginning,” which tells us that Jesus Christ has priority in time as far as His church is concerned. The term *beginning* can be translated “originator.”⁶ In terms of the familiar analogy of the head (Christ) and the body (His church), the “head” is obviously the superior part!

- **He is the Reconciler of “all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross” (v. 20).**

Jesus Christ’s life and death are the superior means of salvation because they are the *only* means of salvation! In the book of Hebrews we read: “for it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins...[Christ] does away with the first in order to establish the second. And by that we will have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” (10:4, 9-10) God’s plan of salvation

⁵ Melick, R.R. (1991). *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon* (Vol. 32, pp. 214-235). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

⁶ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 2, pp. 115-119). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

continues to unfold across the ages, and the sacrificial death of Christ and His resurrection were the “key moment,” so to speak. But full restoration of the universe is yet to come!

What do we learn about ourselves in this passage?

Along with all things, we were created *for Him*, not for ourselves! Consequently, we must ‘consult the Designer’ as to what His designs are for by seeking this knowledge in His Word. This applies to every aspect of our existence! And as Christ’s church, we look to Him as being in control of everything: all creation and its redemption – which again, is not yet finished! As such, we must trust in His sovereignty, wisdom and power as we obey His every command and doctrine as recorded in the Scriptures (rather than trust our own judgment coming from our own limited perspective) when it comes to doing the counterintuitive, countercultural and especially the dangerous (whenever we do face real danger). We shouldn’t fear, but instead remember what our Lord said at the end of the Great Commission: “I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:20).

How is the transforming power and message of the gospel revealed in this passage?

The power of the gospel to transform lives is undeniable in verses 21 and 22. The Colossian believers are described as changing from “alienated and hostile in mind” (v. 21) towards God to being perfectly presentable to Him, *by Him*! What can explain this 180° turn? Paul wrote elsewhere with similar wording that the lost are “darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart” (Eph. 4:18). Thus, whenever we read the word “alienated,” we should never diminish its meaning to suggest sinners are so much as “accidentally disconnected” (from the life of God). Other translations of verse 21 use the word “enemies,” and rightly so. The Gentiles were *enemies*, which means they were “actively hostile to God.” Even though they had not received a divine law, such as God gave to Israel, these Gentiles knew the truth about God through creation and conscience (Rom. 1:18).⁷ God has never budged and never will, in terms of His faithfulness and goodness. It is mankind that has gone astray (Eccl. 7:29, Jer. 17:9), although mankind continues to plead its own innocence. But God takes some that are His enemies and saves them, effectively making them His own children (1 John 3:1). It is especially clear in this Colossians 1 passage on the preeminence of Christ that He could have easily saved Himself from the death of the cross, but He still willingly died in our place. Remember that at His arrest, He asked “do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?” (Matt. 26:53); but still, He said of His own life, “no one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.” (John 10:18) What a Savior we know and love – and we love Him “because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

What specific action is God calling us to through this text?

Ultimately, we are being called to play a very significant part in Christ’s reconciliation of all things – our responsibility with the gospel. We all have the “ministry of reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5:18) from Christ. And we must continue in the faith, for if we are truly His, we *will* continue (Col. 1:23). After all, saints “who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart...and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness” (Rom. 6:17-18). In Psalm 51, as David is confessing his sins to the Lord, he utters something interesting as he anticipates the restoration he is seeking. As he pleads to have the joy of his salvation restored, he states “then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you” (Ps. 51:13). Do you see the connection between having obtained forgiveness and then feeling compelled to share the way of forgiveness with others? When we see the transformation described in Colossians 1:21-22, we’re reminded of what we used to be, compared to what we are now. When we truly begin to grasp the greatness of this, our astonishment and gratitude must naturally lead to a desire to see others discover the Reconciler as we have.

⁷ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). The Bible exposition commentary (Vol. 2, pp. 115-119). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Life Group – Colossians 1:24-2:5 – March 24, 2019

The Labor of Gospel Ministry

CONNECT

How do teams become champions, businesses make profits, or marriages become stronger? Does it happen without hard work?

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: Colossians 1:24-2:5

(Additional Passages: 2 Cor. 4:18; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Acts 5:41, 14:22; 2 Cor. 1:3-11; Mt. 5:10-12)

- How is Christ revealed as supreme in this passage?
- What do we learn about ourselves in this passage?
- How is the transforming power and message of the gospel revealed in this passage?
- What specific action is God calling us to through this passage?

SERVE: Apply the Text

- Rejoice in the sufferings.
- Make the Word of God fully known, regardless the cost.
- Rejoice in the faith and maturity of others.

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Who is God placing on your heart to share the gospel with this week? Pray for their faith to be found in Christ so they may experience the glory of Christ's salvation. Confess any lack of faith you have in the power of the Gospel message to save the lost.

Pray for the persecuted church around the world. Pray for strength and endurance in the midst of persecution. Pray that their persecutors would come to know Christ through their witness.

Pray for growth in Christian maturity for both yourself and your Life Group.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Seek to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with someone this week.



For the Family: Read Colossians 1:24-2:5 this week together as a family. Talk about how Jesus is the supreme reward of the gospel. Explain how each benefit of the gospel is a means to the end of knowing and enjoying him more fully.

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things were created through him and for him.

(Colossians 1:16 ESV)

Life Group – Colossians 1:24-2:5 – March 24, 2019

The Labor of Gospel Ministry

How is Christ revealed as supreme in this passage?

- **Jesus is our message.**

“Him we proclaim.” Paul uses this simple phrase to highlight the centrality of Jesus to the gospel message. Jesus is the cornerstone upon whom some stumble and are crushed and upon whom some build their entire lives. He is the message, and he is the reward. Each aspect of the gospel, i.e. the escape from hell, the forgiveness of sins, the regeneration of the Spirit, the life transformation, the gift of eternal life, etc., is a means to the end of our enjoying of Christ as our chief reward. He is the end. Everything else is simply the means he has given us so we might enjoy sweet fellowship with him forever. If we are not careful, we will shift the focus from the infinite joy of knowing Christ to a message of self-preservation. When we do that, we cheapen the gospel message and struggle to be a part of genuinely growing God’s Kingdom, leading some into false conversions and false assurance.

- **Jesus lives in believers through the indwelling of His Spirit and is our hope of glory.**

Jesus is our hope in this life and in the next. He promises to be with his followers always. He keeps this promise through the indwelling of his Spirit. At the moment of a person’s salvation, the Spirit comes and permanently takes up residence within them. Through the Spirit, Christ is always with us and guiding us through his Word, testifying within us that we are sons of the Father and co-heirs of his glorious inheritance. Apart from Christ, we’d have no hope of any change in this world or life in the next. He is our hope of glory, and he never leaves us.

- **Jesus is the image to which the Spirit is conforming us.**

Through the ministry of the Word and the union with Christ, the Spirit works to grow people in Christian maturity, in Christlikeness. As we diligently pursue God, the Spirit uses the Word of God to shape and transform us into the image of Christ, “from one degree of glory to another” (2 Cor. 4:18). So as we read the gospels (and the rest of the Scriptures), we are seeing the image into which we are being transformed. Jesus is the model we follow. Maturity in Christ is simply looking more like Christ. We love as he loved, serve as he served, confront sin as he confronted sin, suffer as he suffered, give as he gave, endure as he endured, and so on. Every standard the Father calls us to, has been fulfilled by Jesus Christ as our example to follow by faith, relying on the Spirit to empower us to walk in maturity. And we know one day God will bring us to perfect maturity in Christ when we are resurrected in our new glorious bodies. In that day, we will be perfectly Christ-like and able to enjoy our fellowship with him without any constraint.

- **Jesus possesses all the treasures of wisdom and understanding.**

We have no need to look further than the Bible to understand the treasures of wisdom and understanding regarding God and godliness. Satan has always been seeking to draw people away from the orthodox faith by promising secret knowledge for a better life. He did it with Eve in the garden, and he has done it ever since. However, God has perfectly revealed himself in the person of Jesus Christ and the Scriptures. The Scriptures (Genesis—Revelation) are inspired by God and true in every aspect without even a hint of error. We do not need new revelation or secret knowledge, because Jesus possesses all the treasures of wisdom and understanding and we have his Word. The Spirit had already inspired the Old Testament which pointed to Christ, and Jesus sent his Spirit so that the apostles might record accurately in the New Testament everything we need to know to apply the gospels to our lives as we await his glorious return. There will always be those trying to draw people away from the Scriptures to a secret knowledge or attack the validity of the Scriptures, but in the Scriptures Christ is revealed and glorified and in him is all that we would ever need.

What do we learn about ourselves in this passage?

- **In Christ, we share in Jesus’ sufferings.**

Paul writes of the sufferings he and all believers must endure during this time on earth. God says in Acts 14 that as disciples of Jesus Christ it is “through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of

God" (Acts 14:22b). Jesus promised persecution to his followers in his gospels, and throughout the epistles the Spirit draws our attention to the fact believers "share abundantly in Christ's sufferings" (2 Cor. 1:5). Read how the faculty at The Moody Bible Institute explain verse 24:

"In discussing his own ministry, Paul rejoiced in his sufferings for the church in that they filled up what was lacking in Christ's afflictions. Though exalted, Christ continued to endure afflictions through His persecuted followers (Acts 9:4) So, in one sense, Christ's afflictions are not over (they are lacking), although these afflictions are not atoning. Thus, Paul's work as a minister has meant sufferings, which he gladly endures on behalf of the church. He endures his share since God gave him the task (stewardship) of preaching the Word of God."⁸

Thus, Paul was simply embracing joyfully the sufferings that in part all believers experience. This world is not our home, and our role is to suffer in this world for the sake of Christ and his church. It is through this suffering we experience that Christ's love is revealed. Many around the world come to faith as a result of the witness of a suffering Christian. In our suffering (for his name's sake), we share in the suffering of Christ and God uses it to strengthen and expand his church.

- **In Christ, we are given Jesus' ministry.**

Christ has given every believer the charge to go and make disciples of all nations. We are to continue his ministry of proclaiming the good news of salvation and training others to walk in light of their salvation during our time on earth. We have been given the gospel to steward it well and proclaim it to others. We are meant to proclaim both the way of salvation and walk alongside others in their journey toward Christian maturity. The Great Commission is not fulfilled when someone prays the Sinner's Prayer, but once they become a committed disciple walking in obedience to Christ's commands and making other disciples. Will we be found to be faithful stewards at Jesus' return?

- **In Christ, we are called to work hard for the Kingdom in Jesus' strength.**

Carrying out Jesus' ministry is hard work. Jesus never promised it would be easy, but he promised to strengthen us. Making disciples will require time, effort, and sacrifice on our part, but it is well worth the sacrifice. *Are you being lazy in gospel ministry?*

How is the transforming power and message of the Gospel revealed in this passage?

Sinners → Saints. Babes in Christ → Mature in Christ, empowered by Jesus to carry out the ministry of the gospel no matter the cost. Earthly bodies, marked by suffering → Glorified bodies free all the effects of sin.

What specific actions is God calling us to through this passage?

- **Rejoice in the sufferings.**

Our joy in suffering comes from three sources: First, we are counted worthy to share in the same sufferings of our Lord (Acts 5:41). Second, our suffering is for the benefit of the church. Lastly, our suffering on Christ's behalf will be rewarded in Heaven by Jesus himself (Matt. 5:10-12). This is not a cheap surface imitation of joy, but a deep inner expression of joy that invariably exudes out from us.

- **Make the Word of God fully known, regardless the cost.**

Be ministers of the gospel. Proclaim the gospel to those dead in their sins and in need of good news. Walk with them in the journey toward Christian maturity. It will take time and effort, and may even incur persecution, but the joy in Christ is far superior than the temporary pleasures of this world. Whatever the cost, let's make the Word of Christ fully known to as many as possible, one person at a time.

- **Rejoice in the faith and maturity of others.**

As we see people come to know Christ and grow in maturity, rejoice! We should be constantly rejoicing over the faith and maturity of our family in Christ. It is a joyous thing to see others following the Lord.

⁸ Michael Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham, eds. *The Moody Bible Commentary*, (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 1870.

Life Group – *Colossians 2:6-19* – March 31, 2019

Transformed Because of Christ

CONNECT

What are some “pieces of wisdom” your parents used to tell you growing up? (e.g. “If you want to make friends, you’ve got to be a friend.”)

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: *Colossians 2:6-19*

(Additional Passages: Matt. 7:24-27; Rm. 6:1-11; Jn. 1:1-5; 1 Thess. 1:2-5; 2 Cor. 5:6-10)

- How is Christ revealed as superior in this passage?
- What do we learn about ourselves in this passage?
- How is the transforming power and message of the gospel revealed in this passage?
- What specific action is God calling us to through this text?

SERVE: Apply the Text

- Spend time with God in his Word, daily.
- Do not be deceived by the philosophies and lies of the world.
- Confess your sins to the Lord and he will be faithful and just to forgive you.
- Test everything you hear by Scripture.
- Hold fast to Jesus.

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Who do we know that is not currently walking in the Lord, but choosing the ways of the world?

Take time to praise God for sending Jesus. Praise him for dwelling among us and allowing for his Spirit to dwell in us. Ask that we would, in turn, be a people who live in the freedom of the gospel.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Share about the joy and life that you experience in Christ with someone this week. Point them to the truth of the gospel.

Who are you praying for opportunity to share the gospel with this week?

For the Family: Read *Colossians 2:6-19* this week together as a family. Talk through what it looks like to “walk in him”. Walk through the gospel with them and explain how it is the foundation for how we live. Explain how it can be difficult to walk in the truth and freedom of the gospel, but be sure to highlight God’s sovereignty and how “[we] have been filled in him”.

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. (Colossians 1:17 ESV)

Life Group – *Colossians 2:6-19* – March 31, 2019

Transformed Because of Christ

How is Christ revealed as superior in this passage?

- **He is our model (v.6-7).**

As believers in Jesus Christ, we have been given the Holy Spirit so that we might “walk in him”. John MacArthur states, “To walk in Christ is to live life patterned after His”⁹. Apart from the power and workings of the Holy Spirit, we would not be able to carry out the process of sanctification, thus rendering us incapable of walking in the ways of Christ. This was our situation before we placed our trust in Jesus. With the help of the Holy Spirit, we are able to walk as Christ walked, live as Christ lived on this earth, and reveal the character of God as He did. When approaching difficult, or even mundane, situations or tasks, we can look to scripture and see how Jesus handled life and ask the Holy Spirit to allow us to emulate him.

- **He is the fullness of God in bodily form (v.9).**

Christ is the incarnate God. This is what separates him from mankind. One cannot claim he was just a good teacher, because Jesus taught he was the Son of God and the giver of salvation (John 5:19-27). All things were created by him (Jn 1:2) and all things are held together, or sustained, by him (Col 1:17). Everything that God is - his character, nature, and power – is in Christ. He is God made flesh. This notion that God would put on flesh and dwell among his creation was foreign, and even considered outrageous, in the Greek culture. According to Greek philosophy, “matter was evil; spirit was good. Thus, it was unthinkable that God would ever take on a human body”¹⁰. Because this was a major false teaching of the day, Paul made sure to address the issue by emphasizing the incarnation of Christ and encouraging the Colossian church to not be “captive by philosophy and empty deceit”. *Discuss with your Life Group some common philosophies of our culture and what the Bible says about them.*

- **He has all rule and authority over all creation (v.10).**

Because Jesus created all of creation, he has complete rule and authority over it. Jesus even proved his authority on this earth by the signs and miracles he performed (look at Lk. 5:18-25). If this is true, that Jesus has all power and authority over us, his creation, and he promises life, deep relationship with him, joy, peace, etc., how does that change how we view our life? *Discuss with your Life Group the hope that is found in this truth – that Jesus is sovereign over all – and how this impacts the way we approach difficult situations.*

- **He is the provider (v.19).**

Verse 19 talks about how Jesus, who is the Head of the body, nourishes, knits together and grows the body. He is the one who provides all it needs to fulfill his will, which cannot be thwarted (Job 42:2). It is foolish and prideful of us to think we are the ones who make ourselves mature, wise, or prosperous. We have a responsibility to seek growth and to plant seeds. However, in the end it is God who allows for growth and prosperity (1 Cor. 3:7; Mk 4:26-28).

What do we learn about ourselves in this passage?

- **In Christ, we have been filled (v.10).**

Because the gospel of Jesus Christ came to us, not only in word, but with power and the Holy Spirit (1 Thess. 1:5), we have been filled, made whole, complete. The moment we became believers, God gave us a permanent gift (Jn. 14:16), a seal that guarantees our inheritance (Eph. 1:13-14), his Holy Spirit. It is through his Holy Spirit that we have been given every resource for spiritual maturity, making us complete here on earth. We have also been made complete by our new position before the Lord. No longer are we marked by sin, unable to approach the throne. Christ has imputed his righteousness to us, making us complete before the Lord. *Discuss with your Life Group how this impacts your day to day life.*

⁹ John MacArthur. *The MacArthur Bible Commentary*. 1738.

¹⁰ Ibid, 1738.

- **In Christ, we are circumcised (v.11-12).**

Circumcision was an Old Testament sign of faith in God for the people of Israel. It represented the depths of mankind's sinfulness, our need to be cleansed of the heart (Duet. 30:6; Rom. 2:29) and how God, in his great love and power, removed sin from our identity. Therefore, God commanded the Israelites to perform this ritual that they might be identified as one who is clean and in right standing with God. Now that Christ has come, paid the debt of sin we owed, cleansing all who put their faith in him, he gave us a new way to publically declare this truth – baptism.

- **In Christ, we have life and forgiveness (v.13-14).**

We were dead in our trespasses against the perfect, almighty God and could do nothing to change (Eph. 2:1-3; 2 Cor. 1:9). But Christ chose to come to this earth, lived in such a way that glorified and pleased the Father - the way we were called to live. Out of his great love for us Jesus was crucified, taking on the full wrath of God, the punishment for our sin. When he rose three days later, he was able to extend freedom, life, and forgiveness to those who believe. The very life that Jesus has, he gives freely to whoever would surrender themselves – their lives on earth, their desires, their time, etc. – to him (2 Tim. 2:11-13). When we recognize our total depravity apart from Christ, turn from our sins and follow after Him, God is faithful and just to forgive us. This forgiveness brings freedom; no longer are we bound by the chains of sin, but are alive with Christ, victorious over sin and death.

- **In Christ, we have victory (v.15).**

Christ won the battle for our soul when he defeated the enemy by taking all our sins on the cross and raising from the grave just three days later. As children of God, we have been given complete freedom from the captivity of the enemy and sin. We get to share in Christ's victory. No longer do we have to give into temptation (1 Cor. 10:13). No longer do we have to feel guilt and shame for our past. No longer are we identified by our choices, but we're identified before God by the choice Christ made on the cross (Gal. 2:20). We are redeemed. We are free. *Talk with your Life Group about the implications of being freed by Christ. Explain to them how you have experienced victory in your own life.*

How is the transforming power and message of the gospel revealed in this passage?

Only because of the work of Christ could we experience true, lasting joy and freedom in this life and the life to come in eternity. He is the only way we can be cleansed of all our sin, be in right standing with God, have victory over the enemy, and do kingdom ministry in the Spirit. Now as believers, we can rightly praise Jesus for who he is – the Creator and Sustainer of all things – and walk in the same manner as he walked. *Take some time to praise God through prayer for who he is and what he has done for us.*

What specific action is God calling us to through this text?

- **Spend time with God in his Word, daily.** In order for your relationship with the Lord to grow stronger, being in the Word is essential. It is in the Scriptures where we get to know the character of God and the promises of God and can learn how to walk in him.
- **Do not be deceived by the philosophies and lies of the world.** There are several hot topic issues and viewpoints the enemy wants us to believe in. Remain steadfast on the Word of God. Do not be ashamed for what God calls holy and right.
- **Confess your sins to the Lord and he will be faithful and just to forgive you.** When we confess our sins to the Lord and talk with him through our struggles, he is faithful to forgive and provide a way of escape, that you may be able to endure it (1 Cor. 10:13).
- **Test everything you hear by Scripture.** There are so many false teachers today and heresies that attempt to touch our emotions. Compare everything to Scripture. Do not let people add to the Bible by saying you need to do or say or ascribe to things that Scripture does not affirm.
- **Hold fast to Jesus.** When you go through seasons of hardship, remember who Jesus is – he is the Head of the Body, the One who will provide nourishment, and the One who will sustain and grow us.

Life Group – Colossians 3:5-11 – April 7, 2019

Gospel Transformation, Part One

CONNECT

Ask your group this question and note (and enjoy) the variety of responses: “When is it time to throw out old clothes which still fit?”

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: Colossians 3:5-11

(Additional Passages: Eph. 2:1-10; Gen. 3; Rom. 3:10-18; 6:1-14; John 11, 17; Rev. 21-22)

- How is Christ revealed as supreme in this passage?
- What do we learn about ourselves in this passage?
- How is the transforming power and message of the gospel revealed in this passage?
- What specific action is God calling us to through this passage?

SERVE: Apply the Text

- **Avoid the allure of legalism.**
- **Set your minds on things that are above.**

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Who is God placing on your heart to share the gospel with this week? Pray for their faith to be found in Christ so they may experience the glory and intimacy of Christ’s salvation. Confess any lack of faith you have in the power of the Gospel message to save the lost.

Examine your heart and life for any practice of legalism. Ask God to forgive you and turn from your self-willed efforts. Cast yourself upon Christ in faith.

Meditate on and praise God for the truths revealed about Heaven.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Seek to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with someone this week.



For the Family: Read Colossians 2:20-3:4 this week together as a family. Talk about how we cannot overcome sin in our own strength, but can with a Savior. Talk about the beauty of experiencing closeness with God the Father through the Son.

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead that in everything he might be preeminent.

(Colossians 1:18 ESV)

Life Group – Colossians 3:5-11 – April 7, 2019

Gospel Transformation, Part One

How is Christ revealed as supreme in this passage?

- **Christ is the basis and goal of our new identity.**

Paul is transitioning into the practical application section of his letter, but God wants us to remember our practices must be grounded in belief in the theological truths of the front half of the letter. Though having discussed at length the work of Christ in the life of a believer, Paul again draws attention to the fact that his moral exhortations are grounded in the death to self and spiritual resurrection one experiences when a person professes genuine faith in Jesus Christ and the work he did on our behalf. At that moment; in coming to Christ we have “put off” our Adamic identification and it’s servitude to sin. We have “put” on Our “Christic” identification and it’s power over sin. We have been brought into a new realm of existence, a realm in which the “old self,” characterized by Adam and all that he represents, no longer dictates our thinking or behavior. We have then, made a decisive break with the “old self”: we are no longer identified with Adam. His sin and death no longer rule us.”¹¹ This new identity given to us by Christ is being “renewed in knowledge after the image of its Creator,” after Jesus Christ. As we come to know God in the person of Jesus Christ we become like him. “This knowledge [of God] human beings lost in the fall into sin (Gen. 2:17; 3:5, 7; see Rom. 1:28) and [our] incorporation into Christ makes possible once again.”¹² The command to do is first applied in the command to know. The Triune God is an intimate God, and it is through our knowledge of him we become like him. We are only able to know him through the work Jesus accomplished for us (Jn. 1), and Jesus is the perfect image of the Father (Heb. 1), the image the Spirit is conforming us into through the ministry of sanctification (2 Cor. 3:17-18). Therefore, Jesus is both the grounds and the goal of our new identity—all to the glory of the Father.

- **Christ is all and in all.**

This short conclusion sums up the message of Colossians. Christ is all that matters, and he dwells relationally within all his disciples while also holding all his creation together. Jesus is supreme. He is where we find our worth, purpose, and meaning. He is our Lord and the King of his new Kingdom which abolishes all divisions and unifies all people.

What do we learn about ourselves in this passage?

- **We used to walk in wickedness.**

Remembering our past before Christ is beneficial in many ways. It humbles us and reminds us of the glorious salvation we have in Christ. It stirs up compassion in our hearts for those still living enslaved to their sin. It also, as it does in this passage, serve as a reminder of our new and better identity in Christ. Through having experienced the superiority of life with Jesus, we foolishly dabble in our old ways. The time is now for us to put all of them away. They are our *old* practices. We *used* to walk in wickedness, but now we have the power to walk in righteousness, a far better walk. The old has passed away. We are no longer enslaved to our sin. *Why continue practicing things that destroy?*

- **In Christ, we have a new identity, lifestyle, and community.**

The old has passed away, behold the new has come! In Christ, we have been born again and given new identity. Once we were enemies of God; now we are sons of the Father and co-heirs with Christ, indwelt by the Spirit. We are no longer defined by our failures and shortcomings, instead by Christ and his righteousness. Our lives have been “hidden with Christ in God,” and we have new life and vitality breathed into us by the Spirit. Satan has no more accusation to make against us, because our identity is totally wrapped up in Christ. We are in him, and he is in us. This new identity is revealed in a new lifestyle, no longer mirroring the practices of this world but mirroring the works of Christ. Because of our new identity and power found in the Spirit, we are able to put to death sin, loving God and our neighbor well. The gospel transforms us, plain and simple. It begins with an inner working in the heart and is revealed in a life reflecting Christ in all we do.

¹¹ Moo, D. J. (2008). [*The letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*](#) (p. 268). Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co.

¹² Ibid, 269.

If this was not good enough, Christ has also given us a new community, focused on and unified by him. The Christian life is marked by a new individual and corporate identity. We are made new and are baptized into the body of Christ—the Church. This new community is not defined by worldly divisions, rich or poor, black or white, democrat or republican, traditional or contemporary. It is defined by Christ. The church is simply those who know and love Jesus. Followers of Christ, they commit to gather with love and serve others who know and love Jesus. They live their life in Christ led by Christ-following under-shepherds. In the church, our new identity and lifestyle should be most on display as we live in unity with those vastly different than ourselves.

How is the transforming power and message of the Gospel revealed in this passage?

The gospel sets us free from our old futile ways and enables us to walk in newness of life with other believers from all walks of life. Our walk is empowered by daily knowledge that mirrors the image of Christ.

What specific actions is God calling us to through this passage?

- Put sin to death.

This is a violent metaphor that expresses pain and effort. Killing naturally means blood loss and tears, here it means even more. As Alexander Maclaren said: ‘It is far easier to cut off the hand, which after all is not me, than to sacrifice passions and desires which, though they be my worst self, are myself.’”¹³ The lists contained in this chapter are “representative, not exhaustive” and can be characterized by failure to live up to the Great Commandment to love both God and others.¹⁴ There is no sin that cannot be forgiven in Christ, however forgiveness does not mean a reversal of consequences. Sin destroys, and it must be taken seriously and put to death in the power of the Spirit.

○ Put to death sins against God.

Paul begins his discussion referring to sins he sums up with idolatry, i.e. a love for creation over the Creator. In some way, all sin flows from idolatry and is against God. These sins and the heart they represent clearly show someone who is not loving God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength. Another desire has taken control of the heart rather than a desire for God. Sinful sensuality and materialism dominate Paul’s focus. Sexual immorality, impurity, passion, and evil desire encompass every aspect of sexual sin including thoughts, imagination, desires, and actions. Basically, Paul echoes in different words what Jesus said about adultery in the Sermon on the Mount. If one even glances at a woman with lust in his heart, he commits the sin of adultery. Sexual sin must be choked out and put to death in the power of the Spirit. In a culture inundated with sensual messages and temptations, hard work matching the intensity of the phrase, “put to death” is required. Sin is never a thing to joke about. Sexual sin, actually mere seconds, destroys lives and families. Your current effort to destroy sin might be lacking, however you can most certainly know Satan’s efforts to destroy you are not. We must put sin to death. Lastly, Paul broadens his discussion to include covetousness or greed. “The mention of it at the end of a list of sexual sins is highly significant, for it is intimately associated with them. It is really another form of the same evil desire, except that it is fixed on material things. Often when sensuality loses its hold, materialism takes its place.”¹⁵ Materialism is just as dangerous and destructive as sexual immorality, though be it in different ways. What is most dangerous is that destruction is hidden until it is too late. Many will go through life worshipping material objects rather than God and experience the wrath of God for all of eternity. If they are genuinely in Christ, they may forfeit vast amounts of eternal reward and realize that their life’s work was of no lasting value. Materialism, likewise, must be put to death.

○ Put to death sins against others.

The second list is representative of failing to love your neighbor as yourself. These sins reveal a lack of love for their brother, ultimately leading to a problem with God, who is love. These sins must also be put to death.

¹³ R. Kent Hughes, *Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon*, 303.

¹⁴ Rydelnik and Vanlaningham, *The Moody Bible Commentary*, 1872.

¹⁵ Hughes, 303.

Life Group – Colossians 3:5-11 – Apr. 14, 2019

Gospel Transformation, Part One

CONNECT

Ask your group this question and note (and enjoy) the variety of responses: “When is it time to throw out old clothes which still fit?”

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: Colossians 3:5-11

(Additional Passages: Rom. 6-8; 2 Cor. 5:17; Mt. 5; 1 Cor. 6; 2 Cor. 3:17-19; 1 Jo. 4:7-21)

- How is Christ revealed as supreme in this passage?
- What do we learn about ourselves in this passage?
- How is the transforming power and message of the gospel revealed in this passage?
- What specific action is God calling us to through this passage?

SERVE: Apply the Text

- Put to death sin.
 - Put to death sins against God.
 - Put to death sins against others.

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Who is God placing on your heart to share the gospel with this week? Pray for their faith to be found in Christ so they may experience the glory and intimacy of Christ’s salvation. Confess any lack of faith you have in the power of the Gospel message to save the lost.

Examine your heart and life for any practice of sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, covetousness, anger, wrath, malice, slander, obscene talk, lies, partiality, and racism. Ask God to forgive you and in the power of the Spirit put those sins to death.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Seek to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with someone this week.



For the Family: Read Colossians 3:5-11 this week together as a family. Talk about our new and better identity, lifestyle, and community in Christ. Talk about the destructiveness of sin and the need to actively put it to death in our lives in accordance with our new identity.

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, (Colossians 1:19 ESV)

Life Group – Colossians 3:5-11 – Apr. 14, 2019

Gospel Transformation, Part One

How is Christ revealed as supreme in this passage?

- **Christ is the basis and goal of our new identity.**

Paul is transitioning into the practical application section of his letter, but God wants us to remember our practices must be grounded in belief of the theological truths in the front half of the letter. Though having discussed at length the work of Christ in the life of a believer, Paul again draws attention to the fact his moral exhortations are grounded in the death to self and the spiritual resurrection one experiences when a person professes genuine faith in Jesus Christ and the work he did on our behalf. At that moment “our “Adamic” identification, with its servitude to sin, we have “put off” in coming to Christ; and it is our “Christic” identification, with its power over sin, that we have “put on.” We have been brought into a new realm of existence, a realm in which the “old self,” Adam and all that he represents, no longer dictates our thinking or our behavior. We have, then, made a decisive break with the “old self”: we are no longer identified with Adam, and his sin and death no longer rule us.”¹⁶ This new identity given to us by Christ is being “renewed in knowledge after the image of its Creator,” after Jesus. As we come to know God in the person of Jesus Christ we become like him. “This knowledge [of God] human beings lost in the fall into sin (Gen. 2:17; 3:5, 7; see Rom. 1:28) and [our] incorporation into Christ makes possible once again.”¹⁷ The command to do is first applied in the command to know. The Triune God is an intimate God, and it is through our knowledge of him that we become like him. We are only able to know him through the work Jesus accomplished for us (Jn. 1), and Jesus is the perfect image of the Father (Heb. 1) and the image the Spirit is conforming us into through the ministry of sanctification (Rom. 8:29, 2 Cor. 3:17-18). Therefore, Jesus is both the grounds and the goal of our new identity—all to the glory of the Father.

- **Christ is all and in all.**

This short conclusion sums up the message of Colossians. Christ is all that matters, and he dwells relationally within all his disciples, while also holding all of his creation together. Jesus is supreme. He is where we find our worth, purpose, and meaning. He is our Lord and the King of his new Kingdom which abolishes all divisions and unifies all kinds of people.

What do we learn about ourselves in this passage?

- **We used to walk in wickedness.**

Remembering our past before Christ is beneficial in many ways. It humbles us, and reminds us of the glorious salvation we have in Christ. It stirs up compassion in our hearts for those still living enslaved to their sins. It also, as it does in this passage, serves as a reminder of our new and better identity in Christ. Though having experienced the superiority of life with Jesus, we all still, in our foolishness, dabble in our old ways. But the time is now for us to put all of them away. They are our *old* practices. We *used* to walk in wickedness, but now we have the power to walk in righteousness, which is far better. The old has passed away. We are no longer enslaved to our sin. *So why continue practicing things that which destroys?*

- **In Christ, we have a new identity, lifestyle, and community.**

The old has passed away, behold the new has come! In Christ, we have been born again and given new identity. Once we were enemies of God; now we are sons of the Father and co-heirs with Christ indwelt by the Spirit. We are no longer defined by our failures and shortcomings, but by Christ and his righteousness. Our lives have been “hidden with Christ in God,” and we have new life and vitality breathed into us by the Spirit. Satan has no more accusation to make against us, because our identity is totally wrapped up in Christ. We are in him, and he is in us. This new identity is revealed in a new lifestyle no longer mirroring the practices of this world but mirroring the works of Christ. Because of our new identity and power found in the Spirit, we are

¹⁶ Moo, D. J. (2008). [*The letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*](#) (p. 268). Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co.

¹⁷ Ibid, 269.

able to put to death sin and love God and our neighbor well. The gospel transforms us, plain and simple. It begins with an inner working in the heart and is revealed in a life reflecting Christ in all we do.

If this was not good enough, Christ has also given us a new community focused on and unified by himself. The Christian life is marked by a new individual and corporate identity. We are made new and are baptized into the body of Christ—the Church. This new community is not defined by worldly breaks, rich or poor, black or white, democrat or republican, traditional or contemporary, but it is defined by Christ. The church is simply those who know and love Jesus committing to gather with, love, and serve others who know and love Jesus under the direction of under-shepherds who are following Christ. In the church, our new identity and lifestyle should be most on display as we live in unity with those vastly different than ourselves.

How is the transforming power and message of the Gospel revealed in this passage?

The gospel sets us free from our old futile ways and enables us to walk in newness of life with other believers from all walks of life as we are being renewed daily in knowledge after the image of Christ.

What specific actions is God calling us to through this passage?

- Put to death sin.

“This is a violent metaphor that expresses pain and effort. Killing naturally means tears and blood, but here it means even more. As Alexander Maclaren said: ‘It is far easier to cut off the hand, which after all is not me, than to sacrifice passions and desires which, though they be my worst self, are myself.’”¹⁸ The lists contained in this chapter are “representative, not exhaustive” and can be broken up into failures to live up to the Great Commandment to love both God and others.¹⁹ There is no sin that cannot be forgiven in Christ, but forgiveness does not mean a reversal of consequences. Sin destroys, and it must be taken seriously and put to death in the power of the Spirit.

○ Put to death sins against God.

Paul begins his discussion referring sins he sums up with idolatry, i.e. a love for creation over the Creator. In some way, all sin flows from idolatry and is against God, but these sins and the heart they represent clearly show someone who is not loving God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength. Another desire has taken control of the heart rather than a desire for God. Sinful sensuality and materialism dominate Paul’s focus. Sexual immorality, impurity, passion, and evil desire encompass every aspect of sexual sin including thoughts, imagination, desires, and actions. Basically, Paul echoes in different words what Jesus said about adultery in the Sermon on the Mount. If one even glances at a woman with lust in his heart, he commits the sin of adultery. Sexual sin must be choked out and put to death in the power of the Spirit. In a culture inundated with sensual messages and temptations, this requires hard work matching the intensity of the phrase, “put to death.” Sin is no joke. Sexual sin destroys lives and families over seconds of fleeting pleasure. You currently may not be actively trying to destroy sin, but know for certain sin is actively trying to destroy you. We must put it to death. Lastly, Paul broadens his discussion to include covetousness or greed. “The mention of it at the end of a list of sexual sins is highly significant, for it is intimately associated with them. It is really another form of the same evil desire, except that it is fixed on material things. Often when sensuality loses its hold, materialism takes its place.”²⁰ Materialism is just as dangerous and destructive as sexual immorality, though be it in different ways. What is most dangerous is that the destruction is hidden until it is too late. Many will go through life worshipping materials rather than God and experience the wrath of God for all of eternity, or if they are genuinely in Christ, they may forfeit vast amounts of eternal reward and realize that their life’s work was of no lasting value. Materialism, likewise, must be put to death.

○ Put to death sins against others.

The second list is representative of failing to love your neighbor as yourself. These sins reveal a lack of love for their brother, and ultimately a problem with God, who is love. These sins must also be put to death.

¹⁸ R. Kent Hughes, *Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon*, 303.

¹⁹ Rydelnik and Vanlaningham, *The Moody Bible Commentary*, 1872.

²⁰ Hughes, 303.

Life Group – Colossians 3:12-17 – April 28, 2019

Gospel Transformation, Part Two

CONNECT

Ask your Life Group this question: Is our tendency as churchgoers to bear with one another with love or to begin visiting other churches when we are wronged? Why? What is difficult?

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: Colossians 3:12-17

(Additional Passages: 1 Cor. 12-13, 1 Jn. 4:7-21; John 13, 14:6; Mt. 18:21-35; 2 Tim. 3:16-17)

- How is Christ revealed as supreme in this passage?
- What do we learn about ourselves in this passage?
- How is the transforming power and message of the gospel revealed in this passage?
- What specific action is God calling us to through this passage?

SERVE: Apply the Text

- Put on Christ.
- Let the peace of Christ reign supreme over any source of contention.
- Let the word of Christ dwell in you, training you in wisdom and moving you to praise.
- Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Part of the prayer Jesus taught his disciples focused on us forgiving those who have sinned against us. Take time in the quietness of your heart and forgive them, asking God to help you walk in the freedom of forgiveness.

Examine your heart and life if you lack practice of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, perseverance with others, forgiveness, and love. Ask God to forgive you and in the power of the Spirit put on these virtues of Christ.

Pray for the unity of MeadowBrook and that the peace of Christ would rule in our hearts.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Seek to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with someone this week.



For the Family: Read Colossians 3:12-17 this week together as a family. Talk about our position in Christ. Talk about how we are to live in love and harmony with other believers as a result. Talk about the importance of God's Word in our lives to accomplish that goal of love and harmony.

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. (Colossians 1:20 ESV)

Life Group – Colossians 3:12-17 – April 28, 2019

Gospel Transformation, Part Two

How is Christ revealed as supreme in this passage?

As one reads these virtues believers are to put on, it is good to be reminded that Christ perfectly embodied each of these virtues. He is supreme in all of them, having been the perfect expression of each. Along with that truth other truths about Christ stand out revealing his supremacy.

- **Christ is the initiator of forgiveness.**

A central theme in this list of both vices and virtues is the unity of the body of Christ, the church. The church is interesting because it is made up of people who have been bought with the blood of Christ and been made holy, though they still struggle with sin. The church, as we see it as those without omniscience, contains both true believers and false ones. Both the ongoing sin struggles in the lives of believers and the presence of “weeds” among the “wheat,” as Jesus’ parable puts it, lead to strife and disunity. People are wronged and tend to hold onto grudges. This text reminds us of the supremacy Christ showed in his forgiveness of our sins. When we forgive someone, we should always search ourselves for any fault we could have committed against them and ask for forgiveness ourselves. Typically, both are at fault in some way and are in need of forgiveness from one another. Christ on the other hand needs no forgiveness having never sinned once in thought, attitude, or action. Yet by his grace he forgives us. He leads out in forgiveness as the supreme example of forgiveness and expects us to follow his lead. In fact, if we cannot forgive someone and persist in unforgiveness, the Bible would say we haven’t truly experienced the forgiveness of the Father and remain unsaved (Matthew 18:21-35). Christ initiates forgiveness with us so we would initiate forgiveness for others.

- **Christ the source of peace.**

Christ reveals himself as supreme by being the source of true peace. Peace is something people desperately long for. Christ brings about peace in every area of life. He restores peace in our relationship with God, self, others, and creation. Whether its conflict in marriage, family, parenting, work, church, friends, the peace of Christ can unify. His peace is powerful when we allow it to reign in our hearts. As a church, the only hope for peace is for each member to let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts. As his peace rules in our hearts, his love flows out from us to one another. Christ can provide the peace you are searching for.

- **The word of Christ is the source of true wisdom and the foundation of our praise.**

God’s word, from Genesis to Revelation, is the word of Christ. It is 100% truthful in every claim it asserts. When the Bible speaks, God speaks. It is inerrant, it is infallible, and it is authoritative. The Scriptures guide us into true wisdom and knowledge. The world offers its wisdom, but it is foolishness compared to God’s wisdom revealed in his Word. God’s word is also the foundation of our praise. We praise God for the truths that we read and understand in his word. To separate the worship of God from the Word of God is foolishness, yet so many evangelicals today do so. Much of the popular Christian music we hear on the radio or in thousands of churches on Sundays is based on someone’s personal, subjective feeling. Conversely, Christian music should be based on God’s objective truth because it is timeless and applies to all people. If we are not careful, our “worship” will flow more from emotion rather than the fact God’s word is dwelling richly in our hearts and is overflowing with wisdom and worship.

- **Christ is the mediator for intimacy with the Father.**

The last two words in this section of Scripture, “through him,” are powerful words. These two words reveal Christ as the mediator between us and the Father, a truth validated throughout the Scriptures. Jesus validated this himself in John 14:6. Christ in his love made a way for us to experience the intimacy with God the Father in the fellowship of the Spirit that Christ himself has known for all of eternity past. All the good things about the gospel are to this end: that we as God’s creation may share in the beautiful intimacy and fellowship the Trinity has enjoyed for all of eternity. Through Christ we can thank the Father himself for sovereignly bringing all of this about in his love and perfection.

What do we learn about ourselves in this passage?

- **In Christ, we are God's chosen, holy and beloved.**

Those who come to faith in Christ have been chosen by God. God has set his special covenant love upon them in a way that is unique from the rest of mankind. He makes us holy and blameless without even a spot of sin, and he call us his beloved. The Bible says God rejoices over his chosen, holy, and beloved people with loud, exuberant singing such as this can only remember from a distance. This memory is only revealed in shadows of glory seen in creation today. In a list of virtues, it can be easy to stir up shame in our hearts over our failures, and then engage in efforts to try and earn God's love. This is not his intention! In Christ, there is nothing we could do to make him love us any more than he does and nothing we have done that makes him love us any less. We pursue righteousness from a position of holiness and love, not from a position of someone trying to obtain it. Christ has attained everything and given it freely to us through faith in him.

- **In Christ, we are a part of his body, the church.**

When we come to faith in Christ, we are baptized into his body, the church (1 Cor. 12:13). We have been given a new identity in Christ and a new people to which we belong. This body is both universal, containing all believers from all times, and local, a specific church like MeadowBrook or, in a historical context, the church at Colossae. This identity comes with great benefits and great responsibility. We are to gather together regularly under the authority of the under-shepherd God has placed in the church (Pastor Randy) and serve each other in love and unity. We should stir one another toward a deeper love for God and others. This deeper love should be evidenced by good works that glorify God. Not all who love and participate in church necessarily love Jesus, but all who love Jesus love his church because his church is where they experience the love of Christ tangibly. Church life also allows Christians to hear the word of God preached and worship with others who love God above all other people or things.

How is the transforming power and message of the Gospel revealed in this passage?

The love and perfect harmony that has existed forever in the relationship between God the Father and God the Son in the fellowship of the Spirit is now shared with us through faith in Jesus Christ. No we are enabled by the peace and word of Christ to put on love which binds everything together in perfect harmony and walk harmoniously with other members of the body of Christ.

What specific action is God calling us to through this passage?

- **Put on Christ. (*Spend lengthier amount of time focusing on these virtues in discussion*)**

Each of the virtues listed, Christ perfectly demonstrated. Now through the Spirit he lives in us and is working to reveal virtues we must continually model. Talk through each of these, highlighting the preeminence of love and recognizing that, "significantly, Paul focused on the individual who is to have patience, rather than the one who caused a problem. The place to begin in any group tension is with oneself rather than others."²¹ *For further study on love defined by the Bible rather than the definition our culture has embraced, see 1 Corinthians 13, which primarily speaks to the love among believers in a church.*

- **Let the peace of Christ reign supreme over any source of contention.**

In any conflict, either disruptive sin or the peace of Christ can reign. The choice is yours.

- **Let the word of Christ dwell in you, training you in wisdom and moving you to praise.**

- **Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.**

Let's purpose not to only be kind and loving, but to let people know it is because of Jesus' work in us we are kind and loving. Don't just expect people to guess you are doing something in Jesus' name. Tell them you are saying or doing an act of love in the name of Jesus, giving thanks to the Father for the opportunity to serve as his ambassador to a lost and dying world.

²¹ Melick, R. R. (1991). *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon* (Vol. 32, p. 299). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

Life Group – Colossians 3:18-4:1 – May 5, 2019

The Daily Impact of the Gospel

CONNECT

Which of the following television families best represents your current family dynamic?

- The Camdens (7th Heaven - faith based family)
- The Cleavers (Leave it to Beaver - All American Family)
- The Arnolds (The Wonder Years - Dad rules the house)
- The Conners (Roseanne - Mom Rules the house)
- The Simpsons (Simpsons - Kids rule the house)
- The Bradys (The Brady Bunch - blended family)
- The Huxtables (Cosby Show - appears perfect on the surface but big problems loom underneath)
- The Waltons (Little House on the Prairie (Can such a perfect family really exist?))

- Live out each role in which God has called you in a way that brings glory and honor to Him, so that the lost world around you might come to know the love of Christ.
- Meditate on God's word. Memorize Colossians 3:23 and strive to apply this principle in every aspect of your life.

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Ask God to reveal any areas in your marriage, home, or workplace in which you are not being a good reflection of Jesus. If so, pray through Colossians 3:23 and ask God to change your heart so that He will be glorified in everything that you do.

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: Colossians 3:18 - 4:1

(Additional Passages: Col. 2:17, Eph. 5:21-33, 1 Cor. 11:3, Ex. 20:12, Eph. 6:1-9, 1 Peter 3:1-9, 1 Peter 2:18-25, 1 Cor. 10:31)

- How is the superiority of Christ revealed in this passage?
- What do we learn about ourselves in this passage?
- How is the transforming power and message of the Gospel revealed in this passage?
- What specific action is God calling us to through this text?

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Let your words and your actions reflect the love of Christ in your home and in your workplace. By simply modeling the love of Christ to others, He will be glorified, and the light of the gospel will shine in the darkness that surrounds us as we speak of the goodness of Christ's work in us.

For the Family: Read Colossians 3:18-20, Ephesians 5:22 - 6:4, and 1 Peter 3:1-7 this week together as a family. Have a discussion as to why God's word goes to such great lengths to point out how the family unit is supposed to look when functioning properly. Encourage one another to live in a way that brings glory and honor to God the father in whatever we do.

SERVE: Apply the Text

- Study God's word to gain a better understanding of your role as a husband, wife, child, employee, or employer.

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, (Colossians 1:21 ESV)

Life Group – Colossians 3:18-4:1 – May 5, 2019

The Daily Impact of the Gospel

How is Christ revealed as superior in this passage?

Throughout the book of Colossians, Paul paints a picture of Christ as being supreme and sufficient in all things. He notes that Jesus is not only the Creator, but also the recipient of creation as He took on human form. Not only was Christ the invisible image of God he became the visible image of God as he put on a fleshly body. The Father gave the Son authority of all things both in Heaven and on Earth. Not only was Jesus the head of the church, but he also reconciled all things unto Himself through his death on the cross.

As His children, we have been given the task of making Him known throughout the nations. The power of the gospel should radically impact us and enable us to be a reflection of Jesus in our everyday lives. This includes our home lives, but also our work lives. For a true believer, there should be no compartmentalization of life. God calls his children to be a direct reflection of Himself in everything that we do!

What do we learn about ourselves in this passage?

3 things that should be a display of the Gospel:

1. My Home Life

Our home life should be a direct display of the gospel. God designed marriage to serve as a reflection of the relationship Jesus had with the church. The relationship between a husband and a wife should serve as a mirror image of the relationship between Christ and the Church. Just as God appointed Jesus to be the head of the church, a man is to be the head of his wife.

Husbands are called to love their wives as Christ loved the church. It is important we note husbands are not commanded to rule their wives, rather just to love them. How does a husband love his wife as Christ loved the church?

- **Love Her First** - This means we don't wait for our wives to meet our desires and demands before we love her. 1 John 4:19 says, We love because He first loved us. It is important we love our wives regardless of our emotional state.
- **Love Her Sacrificially** - Romans 5:8 reminds us that despite the enormous amount of sin in our lives, Christ showed His love for us through His death on the cross. True love will often require us to put our own wants and desires aside so we can seek the wellbeing of others.
- **Love Her Permanently** - Jesus will not leave His bride. Similarly husbands are not to leave their wives. Romans 8:35-39 reminds us that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. A husband's love for his wife should be so strong that nothing can come between them.

Wives are called to submit to their husbands. The type of submission here does not signify weakness, nor does it require the wife to be dominated by her husband. Rather, it calls for her to subject herself to his leadership and to honor him and serve him in response to his deep love for her. Wives are to pray earnestly for their husbands, as well as seek his prayers for herself. She will submit herself to his leadership out of respect for him and partner with him in creating a godly household that seeks to serve the Lord Christ and bring honor to his name.

Children are called to always obey their parents, not only because it is the right thing to do, but because it also pleases the Lord. Ephesians 6:1-3 reminds us the commandment to honor your father and mother is the first commandment that comes with a promise. Those that choose to honor their parents are promised prosperity, as well as a long life on earth. Obedience, an exercised attitude and posture, leads to a life that honors the Lord. We need to look no further than Jesus as an example of total obedience. Not only did he submit Himself to the authority of his earthly parents, Mary and Joseph, but He also completely submitted himself to God's authority. Despite the fact He and the father were one, he still submitted Himself completely to the authority of God.

2. My Work Life

Just as our homes should be a direct display of the gospel, so should our work and professional lives. While many might find it easier to compartmentalize and separate work from home, God does not see view it that way. As Paul was writing to the church, he was not condoning slavery, rather he was calling for a heart change in the lives of the individuals to whom he was writing. Paul wanted the readers to understand that it was not a matter of slave or free, but rather about living in a way that would point others to the reality of Christ so their hearts would return to Jesus. Our workplace is an incredible mission field in which God has called us to bear witness for Christ. What needs to change in our hearts and in our minds that would enable us to see our workplace as God does?

- Try to view your job as a **gift from God**.
- Understand you live in a fallen world in desperate **need of salvation**.
- Conduct yourself in a manner that **reflects Jesus rather than promoting yourself**.

Regardless of whether you are a slave (employee) or a master (employer), God's word gives us specific instructions as to how we are to act. Both Colossians 3:22-25 and Ephesians 6:6-8 encourage believers to honor and respect their earthly masters. We are to serve our employers as if we were serving Christ, and we are to strive to please them whether they are looking or not as we obey God's word. It is important to realize we are not just working for compensation here on earth, but we will also receive a reward from God. Colossians 4:1 reminds employers to be fair to their employees, as it is important to remember they too have a master they are serving- in Heaven.

3. My Whole Life

It is not enough to merely honor God with our home lives and our work lives. While this provides a good start, God demands His children serve Him with their whole lives. For the believer there can be no separation of their "spiritual" and their "secular" lives. God views all of life as spiritual, and everything that we do should come from a heart of worship. 1 Corinthians 10:31 tells us that whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, ALL to be done for the glory of God.

How is the transforming power and transforming message of the gospel revealed in this passage?

While God does not *need* us to bring others to a point of salvation, He *gives* us the incredible opportunity to take part in the furthering of His kingdom. Once we as believers understand the importance of honoring God in our homes, our workplaces, and in every other area of our lives, God will be able to use us to reveal His superiority to those around us. Whether we want to admit it, one day each one of us will stand before God and give an account for the way we represented Him in our homes and in the workplace.

What specific action is God calling us to through this text?

- Study God's word to gain a better understanding of your role as a husband, wife, child, employee, or employer.
- Live out each role in which God has called you in a way that brings glory and honor to Him, so that the lost world around you might come to know the love of Christ.
- Meditate on God's word. Memorize a verse like Colossians 3:23 and strive to apply this principle in every aspect of your life.

*Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for People.
(Colossians 3:23 NLT)*

Life Group – Colossians 4:2-6 – May 12, 2019

Fundamentals of Gospel Ministry: Prayer and Evangelism, Part One

After laying out his case for the superiority of Jesus Christ in the lives and faith of the Colossians, Paul concludes his exhortations to them with a challenge to remember the fundamentals of gospel ministry: prayer and evangelism. Paul assumes the Colossians will both know and engage God's Word enough to be able to pray according to the will of God revealed in his Word, to declare God's grace displayed in the gospel to outsiders, to walk in wisdom according to his Word, and to answer any questions outsiders might have regarding the gospel and God's Word. So, let's break from the normal lesson flow today and next week to examine what God's Word has to say about these two fundamentals of gospel ministry and apply some of the truths as we go.

What characteristics of prayer does Paul highlight in these three verses?

² *Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.* ³ *At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison--* ⁴ *that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.* (Colossians 4:2-4 ESV)

- **Pray continually and steadfastly.**

Too often our prayer are occasional and not persistent. Often, we pray only in crises of life. Rarely do we pray with the fervency and persistence of someone like Daniel who, in faith, fasted and prayed for 21 days before receiving and answer. Biblical praying is persistent praying. Warren Wiersbe captures well God's intention in designing prayer to be done in this manner:

"This is not to suggest that God is reluctant to answer prayer and that we must "wear Him out" by our praying. Quite the opposite is true: God enjoys answering our prayers. But He sometimes delays the answer to increase our faith and devotion and to accomplish His purposes at the right time. God's delays are not always God's denials. As we continue in prayer, our own hearts are prepared for the answer God will give. We find ourselves growing in grace even before His answer comes... It has well been said that the purpose of prayer is not to get man's will done in heaven, but to get God's will done on earth. Prayer is not telling God what to do or what to give. Prayer is asking God for that which He wants to do and give, according to His will (1 John 5:14-15). As we read the Word and fellowship with our Father, we discover His will and then boldly ask Him to do what He has planned. Richard Trench (1807-1886), archbishop of Dublin, said it perfectly: "Prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance; it is laying hold of His willingness."

- **Pray watchfully.**

We should also pray alertly as one who is on watch. Our prayers should not reflect the tired thoughts of a jumbled mind, but should be clear and alert to what is happening. Praying with the watchfulness of a guard protecting a city, ever alert to what is around him, clear and focused in his thoughts. This kind of praying does not happen naturally nor is it routine. "Routine prayers are unanswered prayers."²²

- **Pray with gratitude.**

Thanksgiving is key to praying well. So often our requests are deeply personal and surrounded with hurt, confusion, and longing for change. If we don't engage in prayer with deep reverence for the Father and thankfulness for all that he has done for us through his Son, we may lose sight of the beauty of prayer and turn it into a time to complain and grow bitter. Praying with thanksgiving "sees clearly the obstacles and difficulties but recognizes that God is able to work. The circumstances need not affect one's joy."²³

²² Ibid.

²³ Melick, R. R. (1991). [*Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*](#) (Vol. 32, p. 322). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

- **Pray specifically for others.**

Vague prayers are easy and do not require much faith. It is the specific prayers, like Paul is asking for from the Colossians, that exercise our faith and can lead to the labor of prayer we see often in Scripture. Pray specifically for members in your Life Group, pray each Sunday for Randy as a group for his preaching, pray for the other ministers, pray for the missionaries we partner with by name (email mike@mbchurch.com, he can get you a list). The best ministry your Life Group could do each week is to pray for those advancing the kingdom of God around the world and in your Life Group specifically, asking God to open specific doors for the gospel to go forth. This requires knowing not only names of our missionaries but specific barriers that stand in the way of them proclaiming the gospel of God.

- **Pray for the gospel to go forth.**

To paraphrase Charles Spurgeon, we spend too much of our time to keep sick Christians out of Heaven than praying for lost people to get in! Are our prayers centered on us or the kingdom, on our comforts or the gospel going forth at any cost? Prayer is meant to be so much more than just a tool we could use to ask God to give things or situations we desire. Prayer is God's appointed means for unleashing his power through evangelism. Read John Piper's reflections on the importance of prayer in advancing God's kingdom through the ministry of missions and evangelism:

"Prayer is designed to extend the kingdom into fruitless enemy territory... Prayer puts God in the place of the all-sufficient Benefactor and puts us in the place of needy beneficiaries. So when the mission of the church moves forward by prayer, the supremacy of God is manifest and the needs of the Christian troops are met... We are totally ineffective as missionaries in ourselves. We may have many human strategies and plans and efforts, but the spiritual effect for the glory of Christ will be nothing. But according to John 15:5, God does not intend for us to be fruitless but to 'bear much fruit.' So he promises to do for us and through us what we can't do for ourselves... Prayer humbles *us* as needy and exalts *God* as all-sufficient."

Take some time to put these truths into practice by praying together as a group.

A couple of suggestions for the church...

- Pray for our church as we are preparing for a season of intentionally engaging our neighborhoods and circles of life with the gospel.
- Pray for KidQuest as many will hear the gospel for the first time.
 - o Pray for the adult leaders.
 - o Pray for the student leaders as God may use this week to call them into vocational ministry.
 - o Pray for the children that they hear and believe the gospel.
- Pray for the upcoming mission team going to Uganda at the end of the month.

Life Group Prayer Points

Life Group – Colossians 4:2-6 – May 19, 2019

Fundamentals of Gospel Ministry: Prayer and Evangelism, Part One

After laying out his case for the superiority of Jesus Christ in the lives and faith of the Colossians, Paul concludes his exhortations to them with a challenge to remember the fundamentals of gospel ministry: prayer and evangelism. Paul assumes the Colossians will know and engage God's Word enough to pray according to the will of God revealed in his Word, to declare God's grace displayed in the gospel to outsiders, to walk in wisdom according to his Word, and to answer any questions outsiders might have regarding the gospel and God's Word. So, let's continue our break from the normal lesson flow today to examine what God's Word has to say about evangelism in gospel ministry and practice what that would look like. ***Teacher: Take at least 15 min. of group time to partner up with each person practice sharing the gospel.***

**What characteristics of evangelism does Paul highlight in these two verses?
(Briefly highlight, so your group can practice)**

⁵ *Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time.* ⁶ *Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.* (Colossians 4:2-6 ESV)

- **Our lives must match our message.**

Our lives *are not* the message, but our lives validate the message. Just to be clear, no one, on the basis of us being kind and respectful to others, will come to believe in Jesus as the Son of God, who lived for our righteousness, died for our sins according to the Scriptures, was buried, and on the third day rose from the grave according to Scriptures. They must hear the message so they can believe it and call on the name of the Lord to be saved. If we do not walk in wisdom, i.e. do not fear the Lord and walk according the commands of his Word in justice, righteousness, equity, and love, people will not listen to our message. Another disclaimer: you will never perfectly walk in wisdom toward outsiders, so be authentic about your shortcomings and share the gospel. The day you feel good enough to share the gospel will never come if you are looking solely at your works. Find your righteousness in Christ and walk in the power of his Spirit, and share the gospel message!

- **It is our duty to seize the opportunity to evangelize.**

"An important aspect of wise living is to use the (short) time God has given us to best effect. In Colossians, because of the focus on "outsiders," this will refer specifically to making the most of the "open doors" (cf. v. 3) that God gives us to evangelize." – Douglas Moo

"Every opportunity is to be snapped up like a bargain. The word 'opportunity' may have simply the sense of 'time': the clause is probably an instruction to regard time *as* opportunity for witness, and to use it eagerly as such." – N.T. Wright

"No one ever shares the gospel by accident. We may not be expecting to share the gospel, but it never happens accidentally. It requires intentionality." – Matt Queen

Are we snatching up our time and opportunities to share the gospel with others?

- **Our speech must be gracious.**

When communicating the gospel with a non-believer, we must exude grace in the way we communicate. This does not mean we do not confront sin, for if one is not confronted with the reality of their sin they will never be able to receive the good news of the gospel. It means we are highlighting both the grace of God toward them in this moment, for they are hearing the news of his free gift of salvation and the way to intimacy with their creator. It also means *we are gracious* in the conversation, for no matter how mature in Christ one is, we are nothing apart from Christ. Even with those who are militant toward us and blasphemous to our Lord, we must let our speech be gracious. The Lord will vindicate us. It is not our place to vindicate ourselves. Who knows, that person may come to Christ through the witness of someone else.

- **Our speech must be seasoned with salt.**

Salt gives life flavor. Salt had a few uses in Paul's day, but here he is referring to its use for seasoning. We have literally the best news that has ever been shared in history or ever will be shared. This good news has changed the lives of billions of people for all eternity all over the world throughout history, and oddly we sometimes share the gospel as if it were a dreary weather forecast we are unsure of. This is not glorifying to the Lord. I take solace in the story of Jonah, who I think had the worst "gospel" message. He hated the people and barely even told them the message. That being said, God used it and worked through it. Most definitely, God is more concerned with your heart to share the gospel and your obedience to do so rather than your skill, but that does not mean we are to be content with boring, mediocre gospel conversations. We are to do everything heartily unto the Lord. This requires practice, both with fellow believers desiring to get better at their sharing and in real life evangelistic conversations.

- **We must be ready to answer people's questions regarding the gospel and the motivation for our lifestyle.**
(Don't be afraid, if you don't know something, gotquestions.org is a good resource to use)

Sharing the Gospel

(The content below may look daunting, but when it all comes together it isn't as bad as it looks)

Know the message:

³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, (1 Corinthians 15:3-4 ESV)

²⁰ For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. ²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it-- ²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. (Romans 3:20-25 ESV)

⁹ because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. ¹¹ For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." ¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. ¹³ For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." (Romans 10:9-13 ESV)

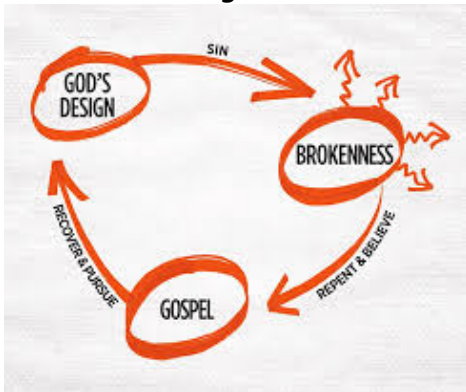
For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:21 ESV)

Define the Terms: (These are terms, if you are in Christ, you should know already, but they will not)

- **God:** The Triune God, Father, Son, Spirit. Co-Equal, Co-Eternal, distinct in roles yet equal in value. The Father is not the Son or the Spirit and the Son is not the Spirit. Don't assume someone who says "I believe in God" believes in the God of the Bible.
- **Jesus:** The God Man: 100% God 100% Man. Born of a virgin. Begotten ("uniquely God's Son—sharing the same divine nature as God—as opposed to believers who are God's sons and daughters by adoption (Ephesians 1:5). Jesus is God's "one and only" Son.—gotquestions.com), not Created, equal with the Father, the perfect representation of the Father while submitting to the father. He is Lord, Master, Savior, and Rescuer.
- **Sin:** A rejection of God and his design. It leads to brokenness. Man's biggest problem.

- **Hell:** A place where unbelievers, those who do not repent and believe, suffer God's just punishment for all of eternity in torment, darkness, and bitterness. It is eternal because of the person sinned against, God, not necessarily because of the act in and of itself. As the authority increases, the severity increases.
- **Grace:** God's unmerited (we do nothing to deserve it) favor and kindness toward us.
- **Mercy:** God's compassion toward us. We are born enemies of God with no hope, but God shows compassion toward us by not immediately giving us what we deserve—hell.
- **Repent:** To turn from their sins, recognize their error, and change their course and to turn to Jesus in faith.
- **Faith:** To believe the truths of the gospel message. A worldview changing belief that permeates all of who you are, leading to an initial decision of total commitment or surrender of the will. This decision typically occurs in a prayer that comes from the heart, not that follows a specific word.
- **Salvation:** Forgiveness of sins (Cleansed), gift of the righteousness of God (clothed), adoption as God's sons, kept secure and empowered to grow in righteousness and walk in victory over sin, eternal life with God in Heaven all for the purpose of us knowing God intimately in relationship with him.
- **The indwelling of the Spirit:** At the moment of salvation when someone places their faith in Jesus, the Spirit of God comes and takes up residence in them to empower them to recover and pursue God's design.
- **Their situation:** An easy way to see where they are is to ask, "If when you die, God were to ask why should He let you into Heaven, what would you say?" If it is a works based answer or something other than faith and surrender to Jesus Christ, then proceed to share the gospel.

Share the message:



Invite them to respond to the gospel with repentance and faith: (Don't skip this step)

¹⁴ Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, ¹⁵ and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." (Mark 1:14-15 ESV)

Fulfill the Great Commission:

¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20 ESV)

We have not fulfilled the Great Commission when someone receives Christ, but when we walk them through baptism in a local church, connecting them to a local body of believers as we walk with them through their first step of obedience, and when we teach them to walk in the accordance with the Word of God.

Life Group – Colossians 4:7-18 – May 26, 2019

Snapshots of Gospel Ministry

CONNECT

If you've ever played on any organized sports team, you may know what it's like to be the star – the center of attention. But it's more likely you know what it's like to be less than that. Still, no matter which position you play, your position exists for good reason: it is needed on the field or court. You know that Mr. or Ms. Spotlight couldn't do it without everyone else working together. It works the same way when you're a Christian!

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: Col. 4:7-18

(Additional Passages: Acts 1:15-26; Rom. 12:3-8; Phile. 1:8-20; Heb. 12:1-2; Jas. 5:16-18)

- How is Christ revealed as superior in this passage?
- What do we learn about ourselves in this passage?
- How is the transforming power and message of the gospel revealed in this passage?
- What specific action is God calling us to through this text?

SERVE: Apply the Text

- **Fulfill your ministry in faithfulness despite circumstances.**
- **Pray fervently.**

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Although somewhat ceremonial prayers may have their place in corporate and family worship, we often find a whole different breed of prayer in the Scriptures that seems to be characterized by straining and intensely pursuing a certain outcome, pleading with the Lord over a situation. Epaphras is one faithful brother who prayed this way for his local congregation in Colossae (Col. 4:12). We really shouldn't wait until we feel the Lord is placing a certain burden on our hearts before we pray this way – all we need to do is look around us locally and globally and we will soon find people who would benefit from this type of prayer!

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Who comes to mind when you consider loyal and persevering Christians who have been there to offer themselves, with or without credit for doing their part? You might make a point to pray for them to continue doing even more and reach out to them to express your love and appreciation.

For the Family: Read the closing of Colossians together this week. Discuss how we observe effective teamwork among these faithful Christians, and how there is a beautiful harmony among them despite their varied backgrounds, ethnicities, careers, homelands, giftings and even living situations (Gal. 3:28).

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister. (Colossians 1:23 ESV)

Life Group – Colossians 4:7-18 – May 26, 2019

Snapshots of Gospel Ministry

How is Christ revealed as superior in this passage?

It is rather difficult to build a case on the superiority of Christ based upon these verses alone, since they do not speak directly to our key emphasis in Colossians. However, the superiority of Christ may be seen in a different way here: Christ is elevated as superior in terms of *priority* for the people whose names are mentioned here. To avoid confusion with all of them, consider three groups in which each person belongs: those who were being sent; those who were sending greetings; and those who were receiving the messengers and greetings. The first two names – Tychicus and Onesimus – were those being sent to Colossae from Rome. The last two names – Nympha and Archippus – were those in Colossae on the receiving end. Every name in between is a sender of greetings, everyone from Aristarchus to Demas. Some of the people mentioned here in the closing of Colossians are rather obscure to us, and others are prominent figures in the New Testament, such as Luke the Gentile physician who penned the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts. For all these individuals (except Demas, who as we will soon discuss abandoned the faith), Christ was the supreme priority in each of their lives and they proved it by playing their respective parts in kingdom work.

What do we learn about ourselves in this passage?

Some of us as believers will inevitably receive more recognition than others in this life. Regardless, we should labor just as diligently as those receiving more notoriety. In John MacArthur's book on the Apostles, *Twelve Ordinary Men*, he explains that in the four lists we see of them in Scripture, the men are named in almost the same exact order each time. MacArthur explains there is a noticeable pattern in the Gospels of three groups of four members, that "appear to be listed in descending order based on their level of intimacy with Christ."²⁴ He further explains that in general, the men most familiar to us are the ones who were in the closest group (Simon Peter, the "Sons of Thunder" and Andrew), and those we know the least about are in the most distant group (James, son of Alphaeus; Simon the Zealot; and Judas, son of James). However, they were each specifically chosen by the Lord and were among the original twelve. None of these will lack for recognition in the end, as we see each of them commemorated equally in the New Jerusalem: "And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb" (Rev. 21:14). So, prominence does *not* equal importance!

The Apostle Paul explains every member of Christ's church has an important role to play. We see these roles in 1 Corinthians 12, and expose on the spiritual body of Christ. Here, Paul explains that in fact, the less prominent members are the most vital: "On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty" (1 Cor. 12:22-23). A body can still basically function with disabled hands or a marred face, but cannot survive without functioning organs like our heart, lungs, kidneys, and liver. So if you lack a spiritual gift that would bring you more public recognition, don't be discouraged! Another thing we are reminded of in this passage is that there are (or will often be) "false brothers" (2 Cor. 11:26) among us, and these are *not* harmless. In the first two (out of three total) mentions of him in the Scriptures, we wouldn't assume anything was wrong with Demas (Phile. 24, Col. 4:14). However, Judas the Traitor may come to mind, when Demas turns out to be a defector in 2 Tim. 4:10: "For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me (Paul) and gone to Thessalonica." We must realize Judas Iscariot, as vile as he was didn't really *look* vile. When Christ identified Judas as His betrayer, the other

²⁴ MacArthur, John (2002). *Twelve Ordinary Men* (pp. 36). Nashville, TN: Nelson Books.

disciples weren't convinced at all (John 13:21-30). But he was an expert at hiding his true motives, having fooled everyone except the Lord Jesus, who knew the entire time (John 6:64).

Even though one of them was a much worse betrayer than the other, Judas Iscariot and Demas both illustrated well that "no one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other" (Matt. 6:24) and furthermore, that "a healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." (Matt. 7:18-19)

How is the transforming power and message of the gospel revealed in this passage?

The transformation of the gospel is revealed here in both the giving and receiving of forgiveness! According to Philemon 10, Onesimus was a runaway slave. In Rome, that meant he lost whatever respect he may have had previously and could have been severely punished by Roman law. For that reason, Paul urged the church to accept Onesimus. The response Paul desired also included forgiveness of Onesimus's personal sin against Philemon. Paul expected Philemon to respond positively; apparently, he did.²⁵ One of the principles the Lord Jesus taught very plainly was that it makes no sense to receive divine forgiveness from God, and then turn around and deny ordinary human forgiveness to your fellow man (Matt. 6:14-15). In the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Matt. 18:23-35), Jesus illustrated this point by putting things into perspective using an earthly scenario we can easily understand. What's the takeaway? It is this: if you don't forgive, don't consider yourself forgiven! It is interesting to note Paul also called Onesimus "faithful and beloved." Onesimus had been a believer only a short time, yet he had already proved himself to Paul.²⁶ Gospel transformation was evident in this man, a former thief! In the life of John Mark, transformation was evident in a different way. Although he might have appeared to be a defector like Demas at one time (Acts 13:13), he was not able to remain this way for long before the Lord saw his return to the mission field with Barnabas (Acts 15:36-41). Paul initially had doubts about John Mark, but there is clear proof the two reconciled (2 Tim. 4:11). Tradition indicates Mark wrote the Gospel of Mark and conducted a missionary endeavor to Egypt, where some think he founded the church at Alexandria.²

What specific action is God calling us to through this text?

- Fulfill your ministry in faithfulness despite circumstances.

Aristarchus was from Macedonia and was one of Paul's traveling companions (Acts 19:29). He was originally from Thessalonica (Acts 20:4) and willingly risked his life in that Ephesian riot (Acts 19:28-41). He sailed with Paul to Rome (Acts 27:2), which meant he also experienced the storm and shipwreck Luke so graphically described in Acts 27.³ He even remained with Paul in prison to help him, even though he was probably not an actual prisoner of Rome himself! What does it take to become like Aristarchus and avoid the 'detour' that John Mark took for a while from Christian service? Perhaps that's what Archippus needed to realize, as the Apostle wrote to him, "see that you fulfill the ministry that you have received in the Lord."

- Pray fervently.

Epaphras had come to salvation from Paul's work in Ephesus, and returned home to Colossae where he founded the church (Col. 1:7-8). He constantly interceded on behalf of the new Christians. He prayed fervently (v. 12 – "laboring fervently"). The word used here means "agonizing." It is the same word used for our Lord's praying in the Garden (Luke 22:44). We get the impression prayer was serious business with Epaphras! This Greek word was used to describe the athletes as they gave themselves fully to their sports.³ Never let the enemy persuade you to feel prayer doesn't work, or that it doesn't accomplish very much. As maturing Christians we should know better!

²⁵ Melick, R. R. (1991). *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon* (Vol. 32, pp. 326-333). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

²⁶ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 2, pp. 148-154). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.