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Connecting people to community, service, and growth.



UNITE

colossians

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Colossians Background

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Colossians Background

The City of Colossae

Colossae was located in a primary region for the growth of the early church. Located near other key cities within the early church, Colossae has received less notoriety, likely because it is a location that Paul did not personally work in, nor plant a church in. As with other cities in this region, there is a strong presence of the emperor cult, as well as other Roman Pagan sects. The most prominent in Colossae is the Cult of Cybele, which was known for its ascetic practices and fertility rituals. We do know that in 61 A.D. a massive earthquake rocked the region. Other cities in the area suffered tremendous damage. We can be fairly certain that this letter would have been written prior to the earthquake. If this is true, it may explain why the church in this city fell from prominence in terms of the spread of the church.

Paul's relationship with the Church

Paul's relationship with this church is unique in that he did not establish this congregation. We don't know how or when the church in this city was started, but we know that Paul was interested in the health of this collection of believers. Paul's approach to this church is unique to his other writings. He speaks of his ministry and qualifications in more grandiose language than we find elsewhere. This leads many to believe it was one of the last letters Paul ever wrote. This conclusion seems favorable because to talk about himself and his ministry within his own lifetime would require knowledge of his accomplishments to have spread.

The message of Colossians

The message of Colossians is quite simple: Jesus is bigger than (fill in the blank). This is a message that translates beautifully to our current setting. What's most helpful about Paul's message, is that he speaks to the power of Jesus in a way that connects the dots directly to day to day life. He connects the supremacy of Jesus to everything from family relationships to the mission of the church.

Tips for interpreting a letter

1. A letter cannot mean to us what it never could have meant to the original audience.
2. Whenever our context is similar to that of the original audience, the application for us is the same as it was for them
3. We must accept that the author of a letter is not always answering the questions we want to ask.

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Sunday Morning Classes

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Week One: Exalting Christ leads to Radical Sacrifice

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

²⁸ He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. ²⁹ To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.

Key Theme: God will stop at nothing to make his greatness known- he will even use people.

Key Questions:

- If Paul rejoices in suffering, what does that teach us about his view of Jesus?
- If Paul understands his suffering to advance God's mission, was does this teach us about how God utilizes us to reach people?
- What results did Paul expect from his work for the sake of the gospel?
- What is the unique role suffering or hardship plays in shaping your faith?
- Who are people you know that are willing to become happily inconvenienced so that others can find Christ?
- What are the habits and routines of the person who is preparing him or herself to be used as God sees fit?
- In your daily routines and habits, are you already in a position to be influential to people who are far from God? What is the first step you must take to make a big deal about Jesus in these relationships?

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Week Two: Christ Alone results in Radical Faith

Key Verses: ¹¹ In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ, ¹² having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.

¹³ When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, ¹⁴ having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

Key Theme: Because God is extremely powerful, you don't have to be.

Key Questions:

- If we're not called to conform to religious regulations, what must we conform to? Give a real world description of how this looks in our actions and attitudes?
- How did the cross cancel legal indebtedness?
- Would your neighbors describe you as a person who embraces freedom to love extravagantly? What are some of the things that hold you back in this?
- Spend some time considering some the powers and authorities that once ruled your life but have now been made a public spectacle?
- Think about some of your closest friends at Westover. How can you help them grow in their faith by better living into the freedom of their baptism?

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Week Three: Living for Christ starts with Radical Love

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

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

¹⁶ Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Key Theme: Unity is based on Christ's perfection, not our preferences.

Key Questions:

- What virtues does God seek to plant in us? (see vs. 12-14) Why?
- What happens in a church when its people "put on" love?
- What does unity look like? Can a church be unified if its people have different visions for what unity means?
- The peace of Christ is more than the absence of conflict, so what does it mean to pursue peace?
- If you were helping a non-believer understand what it means for Christ to dwell among us, what would you tell them?
- No one will come to Jesus because we have good manners. But Paul identifies that our ability to love will bring people to Christ? In what ways can our love be greater than things like "being polite?"

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Week Four: Sharing Christ invites Radical Community

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

¹⁰ My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.) ¹¹ Jesus, who is called Justus, also sends greetings. These are the only Jews among my co-workers for the kingdom of God, and they have proved a comfort to me. ¹² Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured. ¹³ I vouch for him that he is working hard for you and for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis. ¹⁴ Our dear friend Luke, the doctor, and Demas send greetings. ¹⁵ Give my greetings to the brothers and sisters at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house.

¹⁶ After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea.

¹⁷ Tell Archippus: "See to it that you complete the ministry you have received in the Lord."

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

Key Theme: Jesus picks terrible teams to make extraordinary things happen.

Key Questions:

- Who was Onesimus? (See also Philemon)
- Why does Paul make a point to say that Onesimus is "one of you"?
- What do you think the instructions were about Mark, Barnabas' cousin?
- From what you see in the list of names, how does/should conflict effect relationships in Christian community?
- What did Epaphras do on behalf of the Colossian church? Why would Paul have to vouch for him?
- What do these verses demonstrate about sharing Christ?

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**Wednesday
Night**

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Week One: Colossians 1:24-29

Why are we doing what we're doing?

Intro - NACC Project – Do something for the people that actually serves them, not just entertains them. If we were to go in and feed everyone, give backpacks, and Christmas presents, but failed to share the truth of Jesus with them, it would be the opposite of loving them as Christ would: we'd be withholding the most important thing from them. Think about doing something that reflects what Jesus did while he was here – when he met people's physical needs, it was always to provide an avenue through which he could address their primary need, which is having a relationship with God. So, as you plan, keep Jesus' tactics in mind – if part of your booth, activity, or station entertains or feeds, make sure it's leading toward addressing their primary need for God.

Read - Colossians 1:24-29.

Background on Paul – All historical evidence, both Christian and secular, points to the fact that Saul of Tarsus both hated Christians and did more than any other persecutor to attempt to destroy the early church. At one point in his life, historians across the board agree that the trajectory of his life took a radical turn. Christians point to a particular story to explain this, but if we were to observe Paul's life from a strictly objective point of view, how could we explain a person turning from adamantly opposing the church to becoming its most prolific champion?

Study - Read verse 29 again.

- Is there a difference between the energy Paul discusses that Christ gives and energy we use to fulfill worldly desires? If so, what is the difference? Are both equally powerful?
- “To this end I strenuously contend...” What end is he referring to? What does being fully mature in Christ look like? Paul said he's working for others to become fully mature in Christ, how can we make a difference in others becoming fully mature in Christ?
- What would your life look like if you were expending all the energy Christ gives you on helping others become fully mature in him?

Keeping these things in mind, we're going to brainstorm a booth, activity, or station for the kids and adults around NACC with a twofold purpose: bringing them in and keeping them engaged with something fun or intriguing, and ensuring that they leave one step closer to Jesus, even if that step seems small to us or they are unaware of their progress.

Brainstorm for the remainder of the period.

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Week Two: Colossians 2:1-3

Encouraged in Heart, United in Love, 50 Dollars in 50 Minutes

Intro - Review last week's discussion and decision about booth or activity, making sure to keep the end of sharing Christ in mind.

Read - Colossians 2:1-3

Study -

- What is a church that is united in love capable of? What does that Church look like?
- What barriers might we need to overcome as a church to becoming united in love for this study with the goal of serving NACC in the name of Christ? (classes that want to pick their own studies, not wanting to leave the building, thinking that the study doesn't apply to them, etc.)

Remainder of class time – Classes will go to get supplies for their booth.

50 dollars and 50 minutes – Each class will have \$50 to spend on supplies. If classes decide they want to spend more, they must raise it amongst themselves. Remember, we will have fun going to gather supplies, but the primary goal is figuring out how each class can best use their money to serve the people at NACC through Christ.

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Week Three: Colossians 3:12-17

Let the message of Christ dwell among you

Intro - Let the message of Christ dwell among you

Read - Colossians 3:12-17

Study -

- Has there been a time you went to serve others in some way and ended up being blessed by God more than you blessed others? If so, what did that look like? What barriers might we need to overcome as a church to becoming united in love for this study with the goal of serving NACC in the name of Christ? (classes that want to pick their own studies, not wanting to leave the building, thinking that the study doesn't apply to them, etc.)
- Are we prone to thinking of other churches as separate from us or as part of the same body? How might things look different in Austin and the world if all churches that confess Jesus Christ as Lord viewed themselves as part of the same body?

Prayer Time – 15-20 minutes – Pray for people at NACC. Pray for us to be effective tools through which God can work. Pray for the things we're actually assembling. Pray for our eyes to be open to what God might be planning to teach us.

Assembly – Put together the supplies that your class picked up during the last class period. Prepare to run your booth or activity, assign jobs or tasks, and make sure you're keeping your end in mind, which is that people will walk away one step closer to Jesus.

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Special Notes for Huddle Leaders

1) A super easy planning form

On October 8 you will be provided with a simple form that will allow us to collect information about your ideas for a booth. We will compile this info and send an email to all Huddle leaders before week two so that everyone knows what's going on and we can avoid overlap.

2) 50 for 50

Our goal is for each Huddle to use \$50 to create the best 50 minutes possible for the kids at NACC. Each huddle will be asked to raise (at least) \$25 from the kids. The other \$25 will come from our Share the Joy matching fund. This is how you'll get your money to spend on supplies. Please let kids know a.s.a.p. that they will be raising (at least) \$25. Once you have \$25, please turn it into Christian. Anything over \$25 will be matched, as well.

3) Shopping night logistics

You'll meet in your huddle room, do the devotional material, then head to the store. Students who can drive will be able to drive themselves. We're asking Huddle Leaders to be chauffeur's of kids who don't drive. Anyone who still needs a spot will be able to find room in the one van not being used by Middle School kids. *Anything not able to be found at Walmart will be purchased by Westover staff. This cost will be deducted from the funds your group raises.

4) When to be @ NACC

Our special event will take place on Wednesday, October 29 at NACC (1734 Rutland Dr, Austin, TX 78758). Please arrive as close to 5:30 as possible for setup (your supplies will be there already). The event will begin at 6:00 and will wrap up at 7:45. We will use from 7:45 to 8:15 for clean up and processing.

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Care Groups

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What is Dwelling in the Word?

Dwelling in the Word is a formational approach to reading that focuses on listening closely to the text, as well as the members of our Christian community. It is rooted in the belief that God's Spirit speaks to us on a spiritual level, and not just an informational level- both through his Word and through other believers who have been given the gift of the Holy Spirit through baptism. It is a slow and methodical process of listening to the text and listening to each other. The goal is not to memorize the passage, but to have the Word of God impress itself upon our heart. Another way to think of it is that you are hoping for God's Word to enter your life in a way that leads you to submission.

How to Facilitate Dwelling in the Word:

- 1) The leader provides a brief introduction to the practice of Dwelling in the Word, giving people an idea of what to expect, and stressing that this is a listening exercise to try to help the Word of God "read their hearts."
- 2) The leader invites and prepares the group to listen to the Spirit's nudging through spoken or silent prayer.
- 3) Before the passage is read, the leader should instruct hearers to be aware of what word or phrase captures their attention or use one of the questions below for reflection.
- 4) Ask a volunteer to read the text aloud and indicate there will be a moment of silence following the reading to reflect on a word, phrase, or question.
- 5) After the time of silence, ask participants to get with a partner. Each will be given 90 seconds to share their response to the reflection question based on the text. After 90 seconds is up indicate that it is time to switch.
- 6) Once both partners have shared their reflections, participants will move into groups of 6-8. This time, each participant will share their partners response with the rest of the small group.
- 5) Repeat the process of reading, silence, and small group discussion for as long as time allows, or until questions have been exhausted.

Reflection Questions:

What word or phrase "stops you cold" - catches your imagination or dominates your thoughts?

What was surprising? What questions did you have about the text?

What would you like to ask a Bible scholar about the text?

How does this text help you interpret your world better?

What is God doing in this text? What are God's followers doing in the text? What is the Good News for us?

What is God saying to us through this passage? How are we being changed or transformed in our personal and corporate life?

How is God sending and equipping us to be witnesses?

What does following Jesus look like (feel, smell, taste, sound) in the text?

How does this text inform us about what following Jesus looks like for us here and now?

Is God asking for a reply from you in this text?

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Week One

Key Text:

“The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.” Colossians 1:15-20

Reflection Questions:

- What word or phrase “stops you cold” - catches your imagination or dominates your thoughts?
- What was surprising? What questions did you have about the text?
- What would you like to ask a Bible scholar about the text?
- How does this text help you interpret your world better?
- What is God doing in this text? What are God’s followers doing in the text? What is the Good News for us?
- What is God saying to us through this passage? How are we being changed or transformed in our personal and corporate life?
- How is God sending and equipping us to be witnesses?
- What does following Jesus look like (feel, smell, taste, sound) in the text?
- How does this text inform us about what following Jesus looks like for us here and now?
- Is God asking for a reply from you in this text?

Week Two

Key Text:

“Soust as you Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow or deceptive philosophy, which depends on humand tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ. For in Christ all the fullness of the Diety lives in bodily form, and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority.” Colossians 2:6-10

Reflection Questions:

- What word or phrase “stops you cold” - catches your imagination or dominates your thoughts?
- What was surprising? What questions did you have about the text?
- What would you like to ask a Bible scholar about the text?
- How does this text help you interpret your world better?
- What is God doing in this text? What are God’s followers doing in the text? What is the Good News for us?
- What is God saying to us through this passage? How are we being changed or transformed in our personal and corporate life?
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Week Three

Key Text:

“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.” Colossians 3:1-4

Reflection Questions:

- What word or phrase “stops you cold” - catches your imagination or dominates your thoughts?
- What was surprising? What questions did you have about the text?
- What would you like to ask a Bible scholar about the text?
- How does this text help you interpret your world better?
- What is God doing in this text? What are God’s followers doing in the text? What is the Good News for us?
- What is God saying to us through this passage? How are we being changed or transformed in our personal and corporate life?
- How is God sending and equipping us to be witnesses?
- What does following Jesus look like (feel, smell, taste, sound) in the text?
- How does this text inform us about what following Jesus looks like for us here and now?
- Is God asking for a reply from you in this text?

Week Four

Key Text:

“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversations be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.” Colossians 4:2-6

Reflection Questions:

- What word or phrase “stops you cold” - catches your imagination or dominates your thoughts?
- What was surprising? What questions did you have about the text?
- What would you like to ask a Bible scholar about the text?
- How does this text help you interpret your world better?
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