



Week 2: Colossians 1:3-8

3 We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, **4** since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, **5** because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, **6** which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and growing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, **7** just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf **8** and has made known to us your love in the Spirit. (ESV)

About This Week's Message – January 9, 2011

This week's teaching will focus primarily on two things: 1) The Power of the Gospel, and 2) Bearing Fruit (how a genuine response to the gospel affects our lives). I plan to present the gospel clearly and the need for repentance. I will also probably use the phrase, "if your faith hasn't changed you, it hasn't saved you" fairly often. We'll likely take some time to explore the works of the flesh vs. the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:19-23. If I don't get to it, you may want to bring this passage up as part of your discussion. One thing I will also likely key on is the idea that simple behavior modification isn't the remedy. You can trim a tree and shape it to grow however you want, but you cannot change its fruit. For fruit to change, the gospel must penetrate our hearts and actually recreate us so that we can bear the fruit of righteousness. I may also take some time to talk about Epaphras this week. – Josh

*The following questions are the 1:10 Homework for the week of January 9, 2011.
Comments in the grey boxes will not be included on the 1:10 Homework your group receives.*

Getting Started

This week's study is based on Colossians 1:3-8.

Start by praying for the Holy Spirit to guide you.

Then read through Colossians 1:3-8 a few times before moving on.

With your group, you might want to begin by reading the passage aloud. Maybe you would have someone read beginning in v. 1 and read it imagining a group of people around them, the whole church, hanging on every word of instruction for them from Paul.

The following questions are just introductory discussion starters. Remember that throughout you don't have to cover every single question with your group. Let the Spirit lead!

1. When you hear someone talk about "change", what do you think of? Is it exciting? Scary?

2. What are some of the ways you've changed over the years? Since high school? Since getting married? Since becoming a Christian?
3. What are some markers of change in your life? Funny ones? Joyful ones? Painful ones?

Digging Deeper

In this section we'll get into the text, both Colossians and some jumps to other parts of Scripture. Remember, you don't have to cover EVERY question! You know your group. Depend on the Spirit to guide you.

1. In Colossians 1:3-4 Paul says he prays for the believers in Colossae because of the evidence he sees of God's grace in their lives, specifically their love for other saints. What evidences of God's grace are there in your life? In the lives of others you know and love? How is the gospel changing you/them? Be specific.

Think of ways you can talk about the "evidences of God's grace" in the lives of people in your group. This is just evidence of how the Spirit is working to change them as they repent of sin and strive to live more like Jesus. (Eph. 2:8-9)

I would encourage you to make this type of discussion commonplace in your group. Give testimony to the evidences of God's grace. Over time it will spark a great deal of community and worship as you grow to praise God for the ways he is working and rejoice with those in your group as God shapes and changes them.

2. "If your faith hasn't changed you, it hasn't saved you." – Pastor Josh uses this phrase a lot from the pulpit. Do you agree with it? How does a person really measure the assurance of their faith in Christ?

Don't let this turn into a critique of people in the church that someone might suspect hasn't truly believed. Instead, focus on the truth that we are to bear fruit.

For further study, look at 1 John 4:13-21

3. Who is someone you know or have come in contact with in your life that you have clearly seen the evidence of their faith in the way they live?

Again, don't let this go the other direction and turn into a critique of people that someone might suspect hasn't truly believed. Instead, focus on the truth that we are to bear fruit.

We're looking for encouragement here.

4. Why is it crucial that our hope be stored up in heaven? (v. 5) Answer this question, then go **read Matthew 6:19-21** and answer it again.

5. Pastor Josh mentioned that biblical hope isn't a "wish", but a confident assurance about something. When change and turmoil enter our lives, it's easy to forget the changelessness of our hope in Christ. How have you seen God's steadfast love and grace expressed toward you lately?

This question parallels well with number 1.

6. In verse 8, Paul talks about the Colossians' "love in the Spirit". What does he mean?

Verse 8 is the only time in Colossians that Paul mentions the Holy Spirit. By "love in the Spirit" Paul could be referring to how the Spirit regenerates our hearts after convicting us of sin and calling us to repentance. It is by the Spirit's work in our lives that we're able to love.

7. Paul talks about the gospel bearing fruit in v. 6. What was necessary before the gospel could grow and bear fruit in the Colossians?

They had to come to faith in Jesus Christ and be changed by the gospel. 1 Cor. 5:17

8. In v. 6, Paul speaks to the power of the gospel and how it is bearing fruit throughout the world.

Read Romans 1:16 and **read Matthew 24:14** Describe the power of the gospel.

Read v. 1:6 again, then **read Mark 4:1-20**. What do you think "bearing fruit and growing" means in this context?

9. Read **John 15:5, 16** and **Philippians 1:11**. What relationship does Jesus have to our bearing fruit and growing? In light of this, what needs to change for you to bear more fruit? Is it by simply trying harder that a person bears more fruit?

10. **Colossians 1:7-8; 4:12;** and **Philemon 23** are the only verses in Scripture that mention Epaphras. Read those verses and write down as many observations, thoughts, and impressions as you can about Epaphras.

Up Close

1. How has the gospel been “bearing fruit and growing” in your life since “you first heard it”? How have you seen the gospel grow and bear fruit in our church over the years? In the last year?

This question might give you a good opportunity to hear some testimonies from people of how they came to faith in Christ. It's also a great opportunity for you to share your testimony with your group and lead by example! 😊

2. Paul lists many reasons he is thankful for the church in Colossae. What reasons do you have to be thankful for your church? Your 1:10 Group?

3. How does Paul pray for the Colossians? Take some time in your 1:10 Group or on your own to pray in this same way for other people in your life. This could be your family, friends, coworkers, church leaders, etc.

Spending at least some time each week praying for each other will be huge in developing community and seeing growth in your group. Don't just skip over this. If you're starting a new group, it will probably be sparse at first, but set the pace early and establish prayer for each other as an important part of your time together.

Focus first on prayer for each other, but if you need additional ideas, prayer requests will be on the inserts each week after the 1:10 Homework.