



Week 6: Colossians 1:15a

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. **16** 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. **17** And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. **18** 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. **19** For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, **20** and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

About This Week's Message – February 6, 2011

This week we finish what was intended to be a part of last week's message from Colossians 1:15a. We'll again look at our role as image bearers, but explore specifically how Jesus perfectly images God and models how we ought to live. The Gospel will hopefully be clearly presented this morning. The major theme of this week's 1:10 questions will be understanding that we do nothing to earn God's favor, but that it is graciously bestowed to us by God through Jesus. It's all about who we are in Jesus – not what we do, but what Jesus has done... our Gospel Identity. – Josh

*The following questions are the 1:10 Homework for the week of February 6, 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 1:15a.

Start by praying for the Holy Spirit to guide you.

Then read through Colossians 1:15-20 and Genesis 1 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. Describe Jesus. Whatever comes to mind, just describe what you know or believe of him. How did you see him as a child? How do you see him now? How did you see him before coming to faith, how do you see him now? (I know you did some of this last week... but do it again anyway ☺)

Digging Deeper

1. What'd you learn new this week? What were you reminded of that you might have known before, but the Spirit reminded you of or made clear to you? — Basically, how is the Holy Spirit working in your life?

This is just a good catch-all question to start your time together and review what's going on in the lives of people in your group. This question (or one like it) will be thrown in every few weeks, and it's one that you could ask in your group every week.

2. **Read Matthew 3:13-17.** What does God the Father say about God the Son?

He says that this is my son, with whom I am well pleased.

3. What about Jesus is the Father pleased with?

*I'll talk about this toward the end of the message on Sunday — but at this point, Jesus had yet to begin his ministry. He hadn't necessarily done anything "God-pleasing" to please God. Granted, he lived a sinless life, which is huge — but his life had been spent in a very ordinary way, living as a carpenter, as a single guy, swinging a hammer for a living. Here then is the key — **GOD THE FATHER'S PLEASURE WAS BASED UPON WHO JESUS WAS, NOT WHAT JESUS HAD DONE.***

Eventually, we want to make the link that God loves us not based on what we've done, but based on who we are in Christ.

If members of your group have children, a good parallel here might be to talk about your kids for a while. Your primary pleasure with your kids naturally comes from who they are as your children, not necessarily what they have done... — In fact, even when they sin and make wicked and/or foolish decisions, your love for and pleasure in them is unchanged. — If this is true of imperfect, sinful parents... imagine the way it is true of the perfect and holy God...

Along the same lines, if some in your group are step-parents or have adopted children, then you could also talk about God's love for us as his adopted children (Eph. 1:5, Romans 8:23) redeemed by Jesus...

4. What are some of the ways you try to please God?

You might try to pre-emptively connect the dots here that our motivation in living to please God is more often a heart-level ploy to earn God's favor and love, rather than a response to his love in Jesus. We all struggle with this to greater and lesser degrees.

5. **Read Isaiah 64:6 and Ezekiel 36:17.** What does God think about our “righteous deeds”, or the things we do to please him and attempt to earn his favor?

*They are like filthy rags” or a “polluted garment” in Isaiah 64:6 — this will be disgusting, but by “filthy rag” what Isaiah is describing here (and as is pictured in Ezekiel 36:17) is basically a used tampon. — Completely disgusting — but that’s what the Bible says our “righteous deeds” are like to God — they are **completely disgusting** to him. We are sinful and in that sin can do nothing right. So when we try to earn God’s love or do things to please God, we’re actually trying to earn what has already been accomplished and ignoring what Jesus has already done on our behalf — and that infuriates God.*

You might compare this to what Revelation 19:7-9 says about believers.

6. Is there a difference between doing “righteous deeds” to please God and doing “righteous deeds” because God loves us? Explain.

Originally, I had this questions here: “Why would God say this about our good deeds? Shouldn’t we live to please God?” and included this answer:

*“Yes we should live to please God — BUT HERE’S THE KEY — —> **We should live righteously IN LIGHT OF God’s love for us in Jesus, NOT TO EARN GOD’S LOVE BY OUR DEEDS.** — The problem is that if we’re brutally honest, at a deep heart level, all of us struggle with trying to earn God’s favor and love, rather than resting in Jesus’ finished work on the cross that frees us from the struggle for approval and grants us peace that passes all understanding.”*

Doing “righteous deeds” to please God is a vain pursuit. Our sin makes it impossible to please God. This is the motivation in view in Isa. 64:6 and Ezk. 36:17.

Doing righteous deeds because God loves us is spiritual growth and change. It's bearing fruit. Jesus has done all that is necessary to please God, we cannot add to it, and true believers are changed (2 Corinthians 5:17) and made new.

7. **Read Romans 8:29 and Colossians 3:10.** If you've become a Christian, what do these verses say about you?

You're being conformed, molded, restored back into the image of Jesus, just as God originally designed in Genesis 1:26-27. Your mirror is being put back together. As Jesus is the perfect image bearer of God the Father, now we, too, are able to rightly image God the Father again — in a way that isn't marred by sin — because of Jesus. Colossians 3:1-4 says that we are now "hidden in Christ" — when God looks at us, he sees Jesus.

A parallel passage to consider is Hebrews 10:14. It says that because of Jesus sacrifice on the cross, we have both been 100% perfected for all time and are simultaneously being made holy — we both fully bear the restored image of God in Jesus, and are at the same time being restored in our ability to rightly image Jesus. In one sense, you're already made perfect, but in another sense you're not yet fully there — but you're on the way!

8. If God is pleased with who Jesus is, and if as a Christian you are being renewed into the image of Jesus... then what is it about you that God is ultimately pleased with?

*The point to arrive at here is that God is ultimately pleased with **who we are — saints, new creatures, redeemed ones of Jesus** — not what we do. Colossians 3:1-4 says that our lives are now "hidden in Christ" — when God looks at us, he sees Jesus. Our identity, then, as God sees it is in Christ! Brothers and Sisters of Jesus! Children of God! — you cannot earn his favor, he graciously bestows it through Jesus.*

Up Close

1. In your 1:10 Group, how can you encourage gospel identity in one another? In other words, how can you encourage each other to fully believe and live in light of your identity in Jesus Christ?

The thrust of this questions is that we would learn to encourage one another to find our identity in Jesus, in his gospel... in what he has done for us and in who he makes us to be... not in what we do... what are practical things we can do to encourage each other in this? What are specific areas you as an individual need to be encouraged?

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.