



Week 9: Colossians 1:18b

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 – March 6, 2011

This week's text is the second half of verse 18. It's from this verse that we derive the subtitle for our entire series, "Colossians: Jesus is First". Paul says "that in everything he (Jesus) might be preeminent." We'll look at Jesus' role as the firstborn from the dead, his position with regard to new creation, and his sufficiency, supremacy, and preeminence in all things. The big question this week will be, "Where do I need to put Jesus first?" – Josh

*The following questions are the 1:10 Homework for the week of March 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 1:18b.

Start by praying for the Holy Spirit to guide you.

Then read through Colossians 1:15-20 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. Have you ever finished first in something at any time in your life?
2. If you could choose a time to be first (first in line, for example), what/ where/when would you choose to be first?

Digging Deeper

1. Read 1 Corinthians 15:20-22. What hope can you take from Jesus being the “firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep”? Or as our passage in Colossians 1:18 says, the “firstborn from the dead”?

The idea of Jesus being the “firstfruits” indicates that he is the first of many others who will one day also be raised from the dead. The Greek term for firstfruits refers to a first sample of an agricultural crop that indicates the nature and quality of the rest of the crop; therefore, Christ’s resurrection body gives a foretaste of what those of believers will be like.

During the message we said that by saying Jesus is the “firstborn from the dead”, Paul was declaring Jesus to be the first to rise from death to resurrection life. Firstborn = superior in rank, unequalled. In a certain sense it is saying that just as Jesus is the founder of creation, firstborn of all creation (v. 15-16) — so he is the founder of new creation, firstborn from the dead (v. 18). Cross reference with Hebrews 2:10 where Jesus is declared to be the “founder of salvation.”

Just as all men in Adam will die, so all men in Jesus will be raised and never die. Just as Adam’s sin affected all mankind, so Jesus’ obedience affects all believers.

The hope we can take, then, is that Jesus will raise those of us who have trusted him alone for salvation to resurrection life. This world is temporary. It’s barely a blip on the timeline of eternity.

2. How does Jesus’ resurrection affect your view of dying someday?

It’s not really dying, it’s passing on to resurrection life with Jesus. We can have confidence in death that Jesus will raise us to new life!

You might turn over to 2 Corinthians 5:6-10 where Paul says that while we are here on earth, “at home in the body”, we are “away from the Lord” (v. 6), but that when we are “away from the body”, we are “at home with the Lord”. The implication is that Paul is saying when he dies (and when we die as believers in Christ), his anticipation is that he will be immediately present with Jesus up until the day of the resurrection.

For the believer, dying is not moving from life to death, but from death to life!!! Jesus’ resurrection is a proof of what we have to look forward to. Paul speaks more of his anticipation of being with Christ in Philippians 1:21-26. While writing this he is sitting in prison, with the possibility that he could be killed (but he anticipates God will free him for their sake).

If you back up to verses 18-19, you see that Paul’s greatest hope is for Christ to be glorified, for Jesus to be first in life and in death. He hopes that if he should die, he would die well and in a way that honors Jesus Christ.

3. Are you afraid to die?

This will probably spark some good discussion.

My bet would be that many in your group will say something like “no, I’m not scared because I know where I’m going... but the unknown part of dying makes me nervous...”

It’s normal for us to fear death, but we ought not to—that is if we TRULY know Jesus.

It’s quite possible, if not probable, that some in your group will fear death because while they may know the truth of the gospel, they may not know Jesus. They may not have truly given their lives to him. It would be good to hit this point hard, that one must surrender to Jesus and trust him alone for their salvation.

One possible text to read through and camp out in might be Hebrews 2 where Jesus is declared to be the founder of salvation, the one in complete control, the one faithful to keep his promises and rescue those who have turned to him in true faith.

2 Corinthians 13:5 (NLT) – “Examine yourselves to see if your faith is genuine. Test yourselves. Surely you know that Jesus Christ is among you; if not, you have failed the test of genuine faith.”

4. **Read Acts 26:22-23.** In Acts 26 Paul is on trial and giving a defense to Agrippa. In his defense, Paul launches into his testimony of how he came to faith in Jesus (starting in v. 12) and goes on to tell about how this has affected him and what he’s been doing since coming to faith. Here in v. 22-23 Paul basically says, “I’ve only been preaching that what Moses prophesied, Jesus fulfilled.” Paul says that Jesus’ resurrection “proclaims light”. How has Jesus “proclaimed light” into your life? Has it affected you? How?

Just looking for ways that God has revealed Jesus to us. How has he made the gospel real to you? — This should be an exercise of joy, telling stories of how God has saved us and is changing us. Use it as an opportunity for those in the group to give testimony either to how Jesus saved them, and/or what Jesus is doing in their lives now. What “evidences of grace” are they seeing in their lives on a week by week basis?

****** OK, so looking back at this... this question was really poorly written. If people are stumped or feel like it was a confusing question, it’s because it was! ☺ Here’s what I was going for: The bible teaches that God is the one who saves us (Eph. 2:1-10), he is the one who “proclaims light” into our lives by the gospel — tell stories in your group of how he’s doing this. — it might be fun to read through Acts 26 and see Paul’s testimony of how God saved him and is using him and changing him.*

5. List some reasons why Jesus deserves to be preeminent—first—in everything.

You’ll be able to come up with a good list.

6. How does a person begin to put Jesus first in everything?

The first step is ALWAYS repentance. Repentance from our sin and our own sufficiency. Repent means literally a “change of mind” or a “turning” — it’s turning from ourselves to Jesus. From our sin to Jesus’ righteousness.

Beyond that some important pieces would be gaining an understanding of our identity in Christ and living that out. Our identity is not “what we do” but “who we are” — putting Jesus is first is living it out.

Share ideas and examples of ways you’ve been able to put Jesus first. Ideas on how to move that direction.

Maybe you would even confess ways you fail to put Jesus first, and let others in the group speak into your life on how you can grow in that area.

Up Close

1. List some areas where you’ve seen progress in your personal life in putting Jesus first.

Give some specific things, even small things... avoid the generalizations like, “well, I’m doing better with my anger lately...” — — that’s great! But get specific!!!!

Prod people in your group to give a specific example of how they didn’t sin in their anger recently... For instance, ask “give an example where you recently struggled with and/or sinned in your anger...” — then ask, “you say your growing in that area, do you have any specific examples of how you curbed your anger this week? Or how you avoided sin in your anger? Or maybe just a time where you caught it sooner than before and repented of it more quickly?”

If you can lead your group to be more specific, they will begin to grow deeper in community and vulnerability with each other.

2. List one or two areas where you need to grow in putting Jesus first.

Again, avoid generalizations as much as possible. Prod people for some specific action steps.

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.