



Week 11: Colossians 1:24-29

24 Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, **25** of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, **26** the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. **27** To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. **28** Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. **29** For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.

About This Week's Message – March 27, 2011

This week we'll be keying in on Paul's statements in verses 28-29, where he says he proclaims Jesus and toils to present everyone mature in the end. Our focus will be on the "last day" and orchestrating and planning our lives in such a way that at the end, we might be found faithful. We'll look at some of the struggle along the way, and how Christ calls all who would follow him to suffer for the sake of the gospel.

*The following questions are the 1:10 Homework for the week of March 27, 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 1:24-29.

Start by praying for the Holy Spirit to guide you.

Then read through Colossians 1:24-29 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. Give a bullet-pointed list of your lifelong work resume. Schools, jobs, experiences, etc.
2. What do you dream about for the future?

Digging Deeper

1. **Read James 1:2-4 and 2 Corinthians 1:3-11.** How in the world can Paul rejoice in his suffering? Why does he?

Paul rejoices because 1) it is evidence of the fact that he is truly following Jesus, 2) in his suffering, God is shaping him and creating in him a dependence upon God, and 3) because by his suffering, other believers might be comforted.

2. How have you suffered for the gospel? (Be sure to examine how much of your suffering is due to poor choices, and how much is truly due to following Jesus.)

3. How can you be sure your suffering is truly because of the Gospel, not because you made dumb choices?

Trace it back... what led to your suffering? Is it the consequence of a choice to follow Jesus and be obedient? Or is it the consequence a choice to put yourself first and sin? Are you sure?

Often we understand this best by gaining counsel from other believers... especially those who are close to us and that we're vulnerable with. For example, then, a person should ask their spouse, or their close friends, or their 1:10 group to examine their suffering and help determine whether they think it is the result of following Jesus or the result of sin.

If your suffering is the result of following Jesus — REJOICE!!! If your suffering is the result of sin — REPENT!!!

Often times, our suffering can be the result of other people's sin, and/or circumstances we cannot control or understand — be sure to leave this possibility open. In these cases, we ought to turn in Jesus for help and comfort.

4. What are some trials in your life and ways you've suffered that (while they were not a result of following Jesus) God used to compel you to turn to and follow Jesus?

In other words, examine a time in your life where you suffered either because of your own sin, or because of someone else's sin, or because of uncontrollable circumstances. — How did God use that trial to draw you closer to him and shape you?

5. Are you able yet to look back yet and count any of those things as joy?

For some in your group, the trial in question #4 (or another trial in their life) might be something very painful... the death of a child, or a divorce, or losing a job... It's ok if it's still hard for them to count that trial as joy.

Remember and remind your group that counting suffering or a trial as joy doesn't take away from it being a hard and painful thing. Don't gloss over this hurt. Be empathetic, hurt with them and for them, but look for evidences of God's grace in their story... ways God either has already used or might be using that hard trial to shape them and draw them close... maybe they haven't been able to see it for themselves yet because of their pain.

It's only when we see God at work in something painful that we're able to rejoice and count it as joy.

*Romans 8:28 is a good verse to turn to — God is working all things **FOR GOOD** in the lives of those who love him. This verse doesn't say that the trial or sin or suffering is made good, it says that in the end God will use that hard thing **for** good in our lives.*

6. **Read verses 8-11 of 2 Corinthians 1 again.** Do you ever feel like throwing in the towel and giving up like Paul felt?

7. Do you question God's purpose in letting you suffer? Why does he?

God allows suffering so that we might turn to and depend upon Jesus... so that we might be shaped and changed to become more like Jesus... so that we can comfort others when they suffer like we have (and point them to Jesus!)...

8. **Read Philippians 3:12-16 and Hebrews 12:1-4.** What does the Bible say must be our focus if we're going to endure? How does this give you hope and strength to press on?

The end, the "last day" has to be in focus — keeping your eyes on the prize.

You might take some time and talk about your dreams for some of the "last days" in your life... What do you want the last day of your marriage to look like? The last day with your kids? The last day at your job? What do you want to leave behind as a legacy in each of those things after the last day? What do you want Jesus to say to you on the last day?

Up Close

1. Pick an area of your life... your marriage, your family, your vocation, your grandkids, etc. What was the first day like? What does the “last day” look like for you? What is it that you’re toiling for? What step(s) do you need to take immediately so that you might get there?

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.