

Colossians: Jesus is First | Week 12

COLOSSIANS 2:1-7

1 For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, **2** that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, **3** in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. **4** I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments. **5** For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ. **6** Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, **7** rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

Introduction

>> **Begin by reading 2:1-7**

Paul struggles in ministry so that God's people might LEARN CONTINUALLY... (v. 1-2)

That might seem pretty dry at first glance... It might even sound somewhat incomplete if we don't unpack it. But my contention for you this morning is still this...

Paul labored, and struggled in ministry — “with all [Christ's] energy that he powerfully [worked] within [him]” — so that God's people might LEARN CONTINUALLY. That they would become *continual learners*.

Obviously I'm borrowing that phrase straight from our 5 traits of a fully devoted follower, because that's the language we use at Wawasee Bible when we talk about growing up in Christ to spiritual maturity.

Our Purpose = *to see people transformed into fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.*

So if the vision is that we might see people transformed into FDFs — if that is the final product we're pursuing — then we have to ask, “**What is a Fully Devoted Follower of Jesus?**”

We took some time about two years ago now and sat down and tried to reverse engineer that... and we came up with 5 traits that ought to be prevalent in the life of a Fully Devoted Follower of Jesus... (*and a FDF is basically saying, what does it look like to be a disciple, or what does it look like to really be a Christian*)

Preaching Notes – Colossians 2:1-7

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FROM “BECOMING A FULLY DEVOTED FOLLOWER” WORKBOOK:

Have you ever heard someone talk about becoming a Christian and they basically reduce it to getting some kind of eternal fire insurance? You know how it goes, “I became a Christian, I prayed a prayer, I trusted Jesus and now I’m not going to hell.” So many people (if they were brutally honest) see becoming a Christian like winning some cosmic “Get Out of Hell Free” card. As a result their faith does nothing to change their life! The scary thing about this is that the Bible teaches if your life never changes after becoming a Christian, that you’re probably not really a Christian at all. At Wawasee we say it like this, “*If your faith hasn’t changed you, it hasn’t saved you.*”

The purpose of our church is *to see people transformed into fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.* Before we dive into our study together, I want you to notice three things about that statement that are important for you now as a new Christian.

FIRST: The goal is that you’d become a *fully devoted follower of Jesus.* Not just someone who says they’re a Christian, but someone who follows Jesus daily and lives like it!

SECOND: It’s an issue of *transformation* not just information. You’re not there yet, but by God’s grace he will transform your life to be more and more like Jesus over time, not simply fill your head with bible knowledge.

THIRD: God is the one who will do the heavy lifting of transforming your heart. The only way this happens is by the power of the *Holy Spirit* and the *Word of God.* Your focus as a new follower of Jesus will be to study the Word to learn more about Jesus and to rely on the Holy Spirit to help you live like Jesus.

At the heart of all of this is Genesis 1:26-27

Genesis 1:26

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

Genesis 1:27

So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.

The thing that separates you as a human being from every other created thing is that you bear God’s image.

This might be one of the most important truths for you to grasp in your journey of following Jesus and becoming like him: You bear God’s image! The difference between humans and every other part of God’s creation is that that only mankind is said to be made in the image of God, in his likeness. Read through the first two chapters of Genesis, see if the bible says that about anything else God creates... (Hint: it doesn’t!)

Because God is more valuable than anything else, the fact that you bear his image makes you (and all of mankind) more valuable than any other part of creation. You were made to be like him, to honor him, to love him, to have relationship with him. But

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something tragic happens in Genesis 3. Adam and Eve sin against God and the way in which they bear God's image gets distorted. It's broken and corrupted by their sin. Instead of being friends with God, they are now afraid of him because they've become his enemy. Originally Adam and Eve were created to bear God's image perfectly, but when faced with temptation they failed the test, and as a result their sin and their corrupted image of God is passed on to us – ***not unlike the way AIDS and other diseases or genetic disorders are passed on from mother to child in the womb. – the difference being, this is at a core, spiritual level.***

Enter Jesus. Jesus, like Adam, began his earthly life without sin, imaging God perfectly (see Hebrews 1:3). Also, like Adam, he was faced with temptation (see Matthew 4:1-11), but unlike Adam, Jesus passed the test and never sinned (Hebrews 4:14-15).

Hebrews 4:14-15 (NLT)

14 So then, since we have a great High Priest who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe. **15** This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin.

Romans chapter 5 talks a lot about this. In verses 18 and 19 it says,
“Yes, Adam's one sin brings condemnation for everyone, but Christ's one act of righteousness brings a right relationship with God and new life for everyone. Because one person disobeyed God, many became sinners. But because one other person obeyed God, many will be made righteous.” (NLT)

Now if you've made a choice to trust what Jesus accomplished for you on the cross and follow him, you've moved to that second category of people, the ones made righteous. Because of *Adam* your ability to bear God's image was distorted by sin, but because of *Jesus*, your ability to bear God's image has been renewed and now you can grow in your ability to image God more accurately. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says it this way,
“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away, behold, the new has come.”

Remember, the goal of your life as a Follower of Jesus is to become like Jesus. **And the way you image God is the way in which you become like Jesus.** This happens as your ability to image God is restored by the power of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God working in your life.

At Wawasee we talk about it this way, A Fully Devoted Follower Learns Continually. Here's the idea, you continually learn about Jesus through his Word, and you continually learn to become like Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Of these five traits, there is one that is over-arching – Learn Continually

- You're to be continually learning to *Worship Passionately*
- You're to be continually learning to *Love Selflessly*
- You're to be continually learning to *Give Sacrificially*
- You're to be continually learning to *Live Missionally*

All of this begs the questions, “What should I be learning?”

Let's look at the text again... v. 1-2

that their hearts may be encourage...to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ.

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In Jesus is wisdom – Proverbs 2:3-6

The mystery is Christ. – False teachers in Colossae may have been saying that they were the ones who understood the mysteries of God’s truth — Paul says, no, it’s Jesus. If you ever have someone saying that they understand everything, and your only hope is for them to magically discern and reveal some mystery to you, you’re probably part of a cult and should run for your life. The mystery, Paul says, that was hidden for ages is knowable to everyone and that mystery is Jesus.

In this case it is—in my opinion—influential Jewish people, some who may have even become believers and joined the church, that are deluding the Colossian believers. We’ll get into this full on during the first week of May, but let me say for now that 2:16ff leads me primarily to this conclusion, as does some extra-biblical evidence that the influence of false teaching in Colossae was *not* Gnosticism as so many have taught for the last 100 years.

Compare 2:17 “these are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ” with the fact that Paul declares Christ to be a mystery who was hidden for ages until now (1:26ff, 2:2), and I believe and will try to show you in a few weeks that Paul is targeting Jewish influences (believers and unbelievers) who were deluding the Christians with regulations and rituals that were not beneficial to and even confusing to their faith in Jesus Christ and him alone for salvation.

The mystery, the substance of the shadow, is JESUS... and to take it a step further, the fact that God has come, incarnated, in the flesh, cross-culturally as a man... and has now sent his Holy Spirit to dwell not in the temple but IN US!!! This is the second half of the mystery, the riches of it 1:27, that Christ is IN US! The Holy Spirit dwells WITHIN BELIEVERS!

Learn ABOUT Jesus. (v. 3-5)

So you won’t be deluded and deceived.

PURPOSE: **BY THE WORD OF GOD**

2 Timothy 3:16 – All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,

WHY LEARN ABOUT JESUS?

v. 3 – “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

Proverbs 2:3

- yes, if you call out for insight
and raise your voice for understanding,
4 if you seek it like silver
and search for it as for hidden treasures,
5 then you will understand the fear of the LORD
and find the knowledge of God.
6 For the LORD gives wisdom;
from his mouth come knowledge and understanding;

SO IN KNOWING JESUS, WE KNOW GOD, WE KNOW OUR CREATOR!

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v. 4 – “that no one may delude you with plausible arguments.”

Have you ever gone into a store and you get to the register to pay for something, and you hand the clerk a \$20 or a \$50, or maybe even a \$100 bill? What do they do with it? They take their little magic pen and mark it to see if it's real, right? — I've always thought it'd be funny to take a highlighter with me to WalMart or the bank the next time I get change, and when they hand me my money, mark it up, hold it to the light, and ask for a different bill just to see what they'd do. — The problem is, there's a whole bunch of counterfeit bills that circulate and while they look real, and feel real, if you examine them carefully you come to the realization that they're in fact worthless. A sham. You look at it and it's plausible, and appears real... but it's not. And if you're a store owner and fill your register with counterfeit bills you only delude your wealth.

Paul says, don't let someone scam you with ideas and plausible arguments that aren't biblical. That are not the truth — it deludes you, or deceives you.

Over and over Paul talks about wanting the Colossian church to understand the gospel. To understand the truth fully...

1:9 – “filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding”

1:10 – “bearing fruit in every good work and **increasing in the knowledge of God.**”

1:25 – “to **make the word of God fully known.**”

1:28 – “Him we proclaim, **warning and teaching everyone with all wisdom**, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.”

2:2 – “to reach all the riches of **full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery**, which is Christ”

2:3 – “in whom are hidden all the **treasures of wisdom and knowledge.**”

2:4 – “I say this so no one can delude you with plausible arguments”

2:8 – “See that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.”

2:16 – “Therefore, let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath.”

3:1 – “seek the things that are above, where Christ is”

3:2 – “Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.”

3:16 – “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom...”

Before ever addressing what some of the false teaching or accusations that the Colossians were facing (starting in 2:16ff), Paul spends the first 3rd of the letter proclaiming Jesus, proclaiming the truth, explaining what it is they SHOULD believe.

In other words, Paul spends his time defining what he is *for* before ever addressing what to be against.

So many churches are flat out failing at evangelism and at influencing the culture because all of their energy and resources are poured into proclaiming what it is they hate and what it is they're against... Paul says in 1:28 that “**Him we proclaim**” – Here's what we're about – **JESUS! IT'S ALL ABOUT JESUS!!!**

Look at examples like the Westboro Baptist Church, led by a guy named Fred Phelps. You know a few weeks ago, I was driving to Chicago on a Sunday afternoon, and I have XM Radio and was listening to either CNN or Fox News, and there was an interview with Phelps' wife. As I listened to her get interviewed, everything she said in that interview, except for one or two comments, would be exactly inline with what we believe here, and what the Bible says. It struck me, that minus one or two comments (which I can't even

remember now), I could have printed the transcript of every comment she made concerning the nature and glory of God, about the Bible, about Jesus, about biblical doctrine... And if I read them to you from the pulpit this morning, you would all overwhelmingly agree with every statement.

The problem was, that little to nothing was said about the grace of Jesus and what they were for... it was overwhelmingly what they were against.

Learn the GOSPEL of Jesus (v. 6)

So you might be changed and saved...

PURPOSE: **BY THE WORD OF GOD & THE HOLY SPIRIT**

“as you received Christ Jesus the Lord...” – *How did you receive Jesus Christ?* — **BY FAITH!**

Definition of Faith:

Biblical faith is (1) believing God’s Word, and (2) acting upon it (3) no matter how I feel (4) because God promises a good result. – James MacDonald

Learn to IMAGE and LIVE LIKE Jesus (v. 6-7)

So you might have life abundantly...

PURPOSE: **BY THE HOLY SPIRIT**

John 10:10

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it **abundantly**.

In 2 Corinthians 3:18 it says, “So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect

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the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.” Paul tells us that as followers of Jesus it’s like a veil has been removed so that we can see and reflect God as we were intended. He goes on to say that this happens by the power of the Holy Spirit working in our lives.

THEREFORE.... – what’s it there for? — It’s not enough to just know the facts, you have to possess it as your own...

**Profession of Faith is not enough...
You must also have Possession of Saving Faith**

Do you know Jesus? Or only about Jesus?