

Colossians

Knowing Jesus changes everything



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Hints and Highlights

1. The city of Colossae was a struggling city in present day Turkey. The city was cosmopolitan with large Greek and Jewish communities. The church most likely began during Paul's Ephesian ministry recorded in Acts 19, where "all Asia heard the word of the Lord". One of their members Epaphras (4:12) was with Paul when he wrote this letter.
2. Plan a party this week so your group is more than just a "one hour a week event".

Introduction *(choose the option that best fits your group, or create your own)*

Option 1:

Ask each person in the group what are three most significant events in their life. What impact did these events have in shaping who you are?

Option 2:

Debate who is the greatest athlete ever in sports. Ask what them to describe what difference this athlete made for his or her team.

Option 3:

Have each person describe the three most significant people in their lives. What difference did these people make in your life?

- What are some things in life that have a far reaching impact?
- How are they different from the every day things of life?

The apostle Paul has written a letter that shows something that so changed him he could never forget it. For him knowing Jesus changed everything.

Diving In

Read 1:1-2 (Greetings)

1. How would you describe how Paul begins the letter? What are some things we can learn about Paul? What are some things we can learn about the Colossian church?
2. Why do you think he wishes them grace and peace? How would you describe these two things? Why do you think they are difficult to obtain? Where do they come from? How does Paul have authority to write a church he had never visited? Why do you think he writes them?

Read 1:3-8

1. Why does Paul thank God? Why do you think Paul became so personal toward a group of strangers? How do you think he felt about the Colossians? What is their reputation?
2. How does Paul connect the idea of hope with the faith and love of the Colossians? What gave the Colossians hope? What is "the hope laid up for you in heaven"? [*Hope of eternal life with Christ*] Why would this hope lead to faith and love? Do you find the thought of eternal life to be hopeful? Why or why not?

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Hints and Highlights

1. Epaphras seems to be a trusted leader and possible founder of the Colossian church.
2. Faith, hope and love require looking beyond yourself.
3. The prayer in verses 9-14 centers around gaining the knowledge of God. The goal ("so that") is that they would walk in a manner worthy of the Lord. This is lived out in 4 ways:
 1. Bearing fruit
 2. Increasing in knowledge of God
 3. Being strengthened in all power
 4. Giving thanks to the Father
4. "Redemption" means purchasing or buying back for a price. Jesus did not buy us back from Satan. Rather, he bought out our debt of sin and enabled us to change Kingdoms.
5. Note Paul prays that they would be filled with knowledge of his will, not just knowledge. Paul wants them to experience knowing Jesus and his will to the point of overflowing.

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3. How does Paul describe the Gospel? What are some things we can learn about the Gospel? What impact does it have? What is the essence of the gospel? [*The good news that we can have a relationship with God.*] What does it mean that the gospel bears fruit and grows? How can mere words cause such an effect?
4. How would you describe Epaphras? Who is he? Why do you think Paul mentions him so prominently in this letter?

Read 1:9-14

1. What do you think motivated Paul to pray for these strangers? How would you describe the emotion of this prayer? What are the main things he is asking? Take a moment and write down the things that he prays (see side bar). Why do you think he prays for the things that he does? What strikes you as unusual or different from prayers you may have prayed?
2. Why do you think that knowledge is at the center of his prayer? What does he want them to know? Why do you think he uses the word "filled"? What does it look like to be filled with the knowledge of God's will? How do you fill yourself with this knowledge? How does this help you walk in a manner worthy of the Lord? What does Paul mean by "walking" worthy of the Lord?
3. What are some of the results of being filled with this knowledge and walking? What would it look like to bear fruit in good works? To increase in knowledge of God? To be strengthened with all power? To give thanks to the Father? Why do these things result from knowing God more deeply?
4. What are some things that the Father has done for believers? Look at the verb tenses in vv. 12-13, what are some things you notice? How do we qualify to share in an inheritance? How are we delivered from the domain of darkness? Where did He transfer us? What do you think this means? Can you do these things yourself? Why or why not? How do you think Jesus' kingdom differs from the domain of darkness? How would you define redemption? Forgiveness? Why do you think we need this?

In Summary

1. Why do you think Paul prayed the way he did for the Colossians?
2. What are some things we can learn about knowing Jesus?
3. What difference does knowing Jesus make?

Making Application

Knowing Jesus changes everything.

1. Think for a moment. How important is spirituality to me? How important is my relationship with God?
2. How hopeful do I feel? What gives me hope? What are some ways that knowing Jesus can give me hope?
3. What are some ways I can increase my knowledge of Jesus? What am I going to do to go after this knowledge this week?

Let's thank God that knowing Jesus changes everything about us.