

COLOSSIANS 1:1-5A

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father. We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. — Colossians 1:1-5a

1. How many times is Jesus mentioned in these verses? Why would Paul mention him this many times?
2. Why would Paul use the terms “saints and faithful brothers” to greet the church? How was this significant for the church then? For the church now?
3. The hope laid up in heaven is the root of the Colossians’ love. How can we grow our hope so that our love others will increase?

Practice spending some time in prayer for the following people in line with verses 3-5. Here are some other specifics you can be praying for this week:

We support a church in Uganda called University Community Fellowship. In addition to thanking God for them, please pray:

- For new volunteer leaders. Because of the effects of the intense Covid lockdown, they've lost a lot of key leaders. There are many ministry gaps that need to be filled.
- Praise God for new people that have been coming to church even with the strict lockdown.
- For their new church plant that just started in January.

We also support a missionary family in North Africa. Please pray:

- For endurance and perseverance for the church and for the new believers. In January, they had nearly a record of new baptisms in one month.
- For patience in relationships with other missionaries.
- For safety. There are lots of protests and lots of despair as the economic situation continues to deteriorate.

COLOSSIANS 1:5B-8

Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf and has made known to us your love in the Spirit. — Colossians 1:5b-8

1. What phrase sticks out to you in reading and listening to these verses?
2. What is “the gospel” that Paul refers to at the end of verse 5? What are some things we learn about the gospel message from these verses?
3. How have you seen the gospel message bearing fruit in your life? What fruit still needs to grow?
4. It’s important for Paul to rehearse who they heard the gospel from. Spend some time sharing the story about who you heard the gospel from.
5. Who do you need to start telling about the gospel?

COLOSSIANS 1:9-10

And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; — Colossians 1:9-10

1. What strikes you about how Paul prays for the Colossians?
2. How do you think God answers the request to be filled with the knowledge of his will?
3. When is a good time to pray this prayer?
4. Verse ten has four reasons for praying this prayer and give a great, simplified vision of the Christian life. Which one of these phrases challenges you right now?
5. Write down two names of people for whom you can pray these verses. How can you let these people know you are praying for them and encourage them with this verses?

COLOSSIANS 1:11-12

Being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. — Colossians 1:11-12

1. Last week, you thought of two people to pray this prayer (in verses 9-12) for and to let them know you are praying for them. Were you able to do this? If so, how was it? Continue that practice this week with the same two people or pick new ones.
2. Paul says that we are strengthened according to the might of God. How would this be different than being strengthened according to normal human means?
3. Last week we saw that the main result of Paul's prayer was so that they could walk in a manner worthy of the Lord (verse 10). Why is thanksgiving to God part of the process of walking in a manner worthy of the Lord?
4. When you think about your coming inheritance, what's one of the main images you have in your mind?
5. Practice. Share with your family or a friend a situation that is calling for endurance in your life, and then pray this prayer together.

COLOSSIANS 1:13-14

He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. — Colossians 1:13-14

1. Who is the “he” in verse 13? Why should we distinguish between the the members of the Trinity and their role in our salvation? Does this have any real value for us as Christians?
2. In Christ we have the forgiveness of sins. We have some pretty big divisions in our culture right now, and many conversations are emotionally charged. Does the reality of our forgiveness in Christ affect how we handle these conversations? How could this message of forgiveness in Christ be of practical benefit in our culture today?
3. What does life look like in the domain of darkness? How is the darkness seeking to bring you back to its domain?
4. What has been one key thing you’ve benefited from so far in our Colossians study?

COLOSSIANS 1:15-16

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 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. — Colossians 1:15-16

1. What does it mean for Jesus to be the firstborn of all creation?

COLOSSIANS 1:17-18

And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 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. — Colossians 1:17-18

1. Many of us know that Jesus has all power and authority, but many times those truths don't seem to actually change our minds. Why is that?
2. What is a decision point going in your life where you haven't been putting Jesus and his will first? What change do you need to make?
3. Much of our thinking about the church and about the function we have as individuals in the church stems from the truth that Jesus is the head of the church (for further study see Colossians 2:10, 19; 1 Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 1:22-23, 5:25). How does Jesus being the head of the church change the manner in which we speak and think about the church?
4. We all have people in our lives (including ourselves!) that need to grow in Christ. Out of all the things in verses 15-18, which truth about Christ do you wish someone in your life would embrace more? How can you help them and pray for them?

COLOSSIANS 1:19-23

For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister. — Colossians 1:19-23

1. Do you agree with verse 19-20 that God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things (including you!) through Jesus? How would this agreement play out in your life?
2. How does the blood of Jesus' cross make peace?
3. Verse 23 is not saying we can lose our standing of being reconciled before God. Instead, it is highlighting the need for our endurance and participation in following Christ. Just because Jesus has all authority and power, doesn't mean we neglect our responsibility in our faith. So, what kind of activity do think this verse calls us Christ-followers to do?
4. We all have different symptoms of the sickness of being alienated and hostile toward God. What did/does it look like in your life to be alienated and hostile in mind? What type of thoughts typify hostility in your mind towards God?

COLOSSIANS 1:24-2:5

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, 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, the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. 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. Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me. — Colossians 1:19-23

1. In verse 28, we see Paul's simple purpose for his life: to present everyone mature in Christ. Is it possible for us to embrace this same purpose but also have jobs, families, houses, etc.?
2. Paul talks of his suffering, stewardship, toil and struggle for the sake Christ's church. Even though Christ has all power and authority, we still have work to do. When have you toiled for the Lord and seen a great result? In what area of ministry to people do you think the Lord is calling you to more toil?
3. In verse four, Paul gives his clear reasoning for why he is saying these things about suffering, mysteries and the mission. What are the more challenging arguments against trusting in Christ that have the potential to delude you?

4. Practice: think through the people God has brought into your life: how could you contribute this week to one of those person's maturity in Christ? What idea could you help them embrace or how could you help them get more involved in church?

5. Anything else about these verses that stands out to you?

COLOSSIANS 2:6-7

Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. — Colossians 2:6-7

1. Share a story of the time in your life when you started walking with Christ. If you haven't started yet, process with your spouse, family or friends the things that might be holding you back.
2. Paul writes the phrase "as you were taught" in verse seven. Who has been an important teacher for you in your walk with Christ? What was significant about the way that person(s) taught you?
3. We often find it easy to thank the Lord for material things. But what does it look like to abound in thanksgiving for all of life?
4. Practice: When is the last time you thanked God for something that had nothing to do with being beneficial to you personally? Spend some time with your spouse, family or friends thanking God for things and people that have no benefit to you personally.

COLOSSIANS 2:8-15

See to it 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. For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him. — Colossians 2:8-15

1. In verses 10-15, Paul gives a bunch of truth statements about who we are in Christ (notice all the “in him” and “with him” phrases). Which one strikes you today?
2. Do you spend most of your thought life rehearsing the record of debt that’s been nailed to the cross or do you spend your thought life rehearsing your new identity in Christ? What does Paul spend the most time on?
3. In terms of the spiritual battle we face and the relentless, strategic attack of our enemy, what is the significance of verse 10 and 15 for our lives? Are we able to withstand the attacks and endure? How?
4. What is something you can do to create a daily reminder of your identity in Christ?

COLOSSIANS 2:16-23

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. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God. If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations—"Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch" (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings? These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh. — Colossians 2:16-23

1. In verse 19, how does Christian growth happen? What are some steps of growth you have taken in the past year (and its okay if they feel small!)?
2. Verse 16-18 and 21-23 have some first century cultural expressions of man-made religion (Sabbath, new moons, avoiding certain foods), which have the purpose of stopping the indulgence of the flesh and gaining God's favor. How has the twenty-first century church mixed self-made religion and false appearances of humility with following Jesus?
3. How do we actually stop the indulgence of the flesh?
4. Instead of putting them to death, how have you given in to the elementals spirits of the world? What things do you need to stop depending on for gaining God's favor?

COLOSSIANS 3:1-4

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. — Colossians 3:1-4

1. What are the two commands Paul gives in these verses?
2. What does it mean to seek the things above?
3. Why do you think we have to be commanded to set our minds on things above? How come this doesn't just automatically happen since we have been raised with Christ?
4. How can we tangibly remind ourselves each to set the course of our thoughts in the right direction? What habits do you have that set the course of your thoughts in the wrong direction?

COLOSSIANS 3:5-7

Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. — Colossians 3:5-7

1. Verse five begins with “Put to death therefore.” It’s important to remember the context of this command and ask: Why are we putting things to death? (See verses 2:11-15).
2. What habits do you need to change in your life in order to put these things to death?
3. Do you think it’s actually possible to put these things to death in your life, or are they always going to be there, waiting for an opportunity to tempt?
4. Is it possible for you to talk with a group about the issues in your life that relate to these verses (in particular: sexual brokenness and shame)? What level of accountability could a group provide in these issues?

Sexual brokenness is a reality for many people inside and outside the family of God. There is hope for restoration and healing, but it's a journey. But you are not alone in this journey, in fact it's one that we are all on together. Christian community is vital to healing. Join us as we intentionally seek to be disciplined in our thoughts, words, and actions on the the journey towards restoration. Contact Dave Emigh (demigh@rmcchurch.org) or Hallie Carl (hcarl@rmcchurch.org) to talk with us specifically about the process of healing and restoration from whatever kind of brokenness you are experiencing.

COLOSSIANS 3:8-11

But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all. — Colossians 3:8-11

1. How would you approach a Christian who seems to have an ongoing issue with anger, slander or deceit?
2. Has there been any surprising things included in the lists of verses 5-9? What thing in this list do you think the Holy Spirit may be leading you to intentionally work on?
3. In verse 11, Paul goes through some common terms the culture used to create distinctions in social, political, and economic status. If we were to write that list today, what would we put down? What people do you tend to think you are better than or that you would have a hard time with if they joined this group?
4. What difference does Christ being “all and in all” make in terms of these distinctions?
5. Verse 10 forces us to wrestle a bit with our identity as image bearers. Are we made in the image of God, or are we being made in his image? How are we to think about our image bearing in light of verses like this, but also verses like James 3:9?