

COLOSSIANS STUDIES FOR CELL GROUPS

SESSION 1

Read Colossians Chapters 1 and 2

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

- 1 A letter only tells one half of a story, and Paul's letters in the New Testament are no exception. As such, we need to try to determine what the other half of the story is: that is, what issues Paul was responding to in the Colossian church. Divide a large piece of paper into two and on the left hand side list the indications from chapters 1 and 2 of the problems that the church in Colossae was facing?

2:8 and 2:18, 2:23 false teaching, possibly based on asceticism and "extra-spiritual" revelation

2:8-15 further initiation into a deeper "knowledge" of God required

claims of the visitors to the Colossian church to being superior (2:16-17)

divisiveness (2:1-5; 3:9-17)

- 2 On the right hand side of the piece of paper now list the modern day equivalents of the issues you have identified. Keep this piece of paper for future sessions.

PART 2: THE SUPREMACY OF CHRIST

- 1
 - (a) What comes to mind when you think of the word "supreme"?
 - (b) In verses 15 to 18 what is Christ expressed to be supreme over?
- 2 Re-read 1:15-21. What does the passage have to say about the incarnate Christ? How does this affect your understanding of the relative importance of the "natural" and "spiritual"? How do you think we misunderstand this issue today?
- 3 What does the passage say about the link between God and Christ?
- 4 Revelation 16:16 onwards is often referred to as the "Battle of Armageddon". Read Revelation 16:16 to the end of that chapter and discuss why the word "battle" is perhaps not appropriate and what does this say about the supremacy of Christ?
- 5 Return to the piece of paper you produced at the start of this session. What issues that you have identified are dealt with by understanding the supremacy of Christ?
- 6 In what areas of life do you struggle with Christ being supreme? Pray for one another that you know that God is supreme over those areas.

SESSION 2: THE SUFFICIENCY OF CHRIST

Read Colossians 1:15 - 2:23

1. What does the word "sufficient" mean?
2. What does the passage say about what Christ has achieved for the Colossians? How was this done?
3. In 2:8-23, looking back at the list you made last week, what issues is Paul dealing with in these passages?
4. How do these issues manifest currently in:
 - 4.1 yourself;
 - 4.2 the church today?

What lessons can we learn from Paul?

5. Read 1 Corinthians 13:13 and 1 Thessalonians 1:3. In what sense could the faith of the Colossians be said to be complete?
6. Paul prays for the Colossians to "increase in the knowledge of God". If the faith of the Colossians is complete, why do you think he is praying this?
7. What does Paul say about false teachers? What is the only way to keep your freedom?
8. What are the objects of faith, hope and love in 1:3-6? Pray that God might help you in your faith in Christ, your love for the saints and the hope laid up for you today.

SESSION 3: RELATIONSHIPS IN CHRIST

Read Colossians 3:1 - 4:6

1. What relationships does Paul deal with in these passages?
(3:1-8 with Christ; 3:9-17 with the church; 3:18-21 with the family; 3:22-4:1 in work; 4:2-6 with the outsider)
2. What does "seek" or "set your mind" on the things above mean? Does this mean that earthly things are unimportant and not to be given attention?
3. Read 3:2-3 again. What comes first: dying and having your life hidden in Christ, or setting your mind on the things above. How might we get this wrong in our thinking today?
4. Why is the union with Christ said to be "hidden"? Will this always be the case?
5. Remind yourself from Colossians 1:12-14 of Paul's audience. How can you reconcile this with what is going on in their hearts in Colossians 3:5? What can you learn from this?
6. Looking at the passage, what characteristics is the church to have? How is this to be achieved? How does this link with sessions 1 and 2?
7. What does your answer to question 5 show about Paul's conviction of the power and centrality of Christ?
8. Compare Colossians 3:18-4:1 with Ephesians 5:21 - 6:4. Do you notice a pattern in the way in which Paul views relationships? Does this challenge (a) contemporary social values and (b) the prevalent view of the church with regard to relationships? How do these passages relate to the importance of keeping Christ central?

SESSION 4: REACHING OTHERS

Read Colossians 4:2-6

1. In what activity does effective spreading of the gospel begin, according to this passage?
2. How are we to pray? What words does Paul use and what do they mean?
3. What does Paul ask for prayer for? Do you think that this needs rediscovering today?
4. What "ought" Paul to do? What "ought" the Colossians to do? What is the difference? What do you think the reason for the difference is? What can we learn from this?
5. "Exuberant preaching of the gospel in the face of entrenched apathy is seldom successful". What is your reaction to this statement? If it is true, how are we to "make disciples of all nations"?
6. What instruction does Paul give in relation to answering "outsiders"? Do you see examples of this being done/not being done today? What can you learn from the instructions?
7. Pray that during the coming week God will give you opportunity to "answer" outsiders.