

- SEPTEMBER 26 -
COLOSSIANS 1:24-2:8
LEADER GUIDE

Small groups at Faith Fellowship are designed to provide the context and resources to help every person at Faith Fellowship take their next step as disciples of Jesus, even if their first step is their next step. Consider these questions and ideas to help you take your next step as a disciple.

Interact with the Passage

Read Colossians 1:24-2:8 this week by using the H.E.A.R. method in your ESV Scripture Journals. Engaging the text in this way will help you better understand and discuss the Scripture with your small group.

- **Highlight:** Read and observe everything in the passage.
- **Explain:** Based on your reading, discover what the passage means in its context.
- **Apply:** Understand how the meaning of the passage affects your life.
- **Respond in Prayer:** Pray God's word back to him, asking to believe, share, and put the Bible into practice in your life and relationships.

Feel free to interact with the Scripture at your own pace throughout the week. Remember to interact with the Scripture and think through the discussion questions before you're small group meets. In small groups, we'll discuss what we learned from the Scripture the previous week as well as our answers to the discussion questions together.

Leader Notes

Below you will find a brief commentary on Colossians 1:1-14. Consider also the main idea as well as these three key outcomes for your group.

- **Main Idea:** The mystery of God—the gospel—proclaims the good news of salvation through Jesus, roots us in the future hope of His return and coming glory, and compels us toward spiritual maturity in Christ.
- **Head Change:** To know what it means to have Christ in us and how that truth impacts our lives.
- **Heart Change:** To feel encouraged to pursue Christian maturity.
- **Life Change:** To act in a way that reflects that Christ is in us.

Leader Extras

Remember to use your commentary *Colossians and Philemon for You*. We hope that this helpful resource will aid you in your preparation and study..

Also, be sure to end the session with the "Faith at Home this Week." Encourage your group to take the next step of tracking their time spent this week by filling out the time budget provided for you.

Leader Notes - Colossians 1:24-2:8

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,

My sufferings (v.24): Paul's present imprisonment (Acts 28:16, 30)

Filing up what is lacking (v.24): Paul was experiencing the persecution intended for Christ. Carl F.H. Henry once quipped that good news is only good news if it gets there in time. Similarly, Martin Luther said, "It wouldn't matter if Jesus died 1000 times if no one ever heard about it." Basically, what Paul was saying is that, "Christ's sufferings are not complete, in the fullest sense, until you hear and respond, and if it takes my suffering to bring that to pass, I'll gladly go through it."

The sake of His body (v.24): Paul's motivation for enduring suffering was to benefit and build Christ's church

25-26 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.

Stewardship (v. 25): A steward was a servant who managed his master's household, supervising the other servants, dispensing resources, and handling business and financial affairs. Since the church is God's household (1 Timothy 3:16), Paul assumed the task of caring for, feeding, and leading the churches, for which he was accountable to God.

To make the Word of God fully known (v. 25): this refers to Paul's single-minded devotion to completely fulfill the ministry God gave him, which was to preach the whole counsel of God to those to whom God sent him.

Mystery (v.25): this refers to the truth, hidden until now, revealed for the first time to the Saints in the New Testament. Such truth includes the mystery of the incarnate God (2:2-3), Israel's unbelief (Romans 11:25), lawlessness (2 Thessalonians 2:7), the unity of Jew and Gentile made one in the church (Ephesians 3:3-6), and last things (1 Corinthians 15:51). Of all the mysteries God has revealed in the New Testament, the most profound is the one specifically identified in Colossians 1:27.

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.

Gentiles...Christ in you (v. 27): That believers, both Jew and Gentile, now possess the surpassing riches of the indwelling Christ is the glorious revealed mystery of which Paul writes.

The hope of glory (v. 27): The indwelling Spirit of Christ is the guarantee to each believer of future glory (Romans 8:11; Ephesians 1:13-14; 1 Peter 1:3-4)

28-29 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.

Mature in Christ (v. 28): to be complete – to be like Christ. This spiritual maturity is defined in 2:2.

Struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me. (v. 29): "toil" refers to working to the point of exhaustion. The Greek word for "toil" gives us the English word "agonize" and refers to the effort required to compete in an athletic event.

Leader Notes - Colossians 1:24-2:8 (continued)

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,

Great a struggle (v. 1): The word means “striving” and comes from the same root as in 1:29. Both the Colossians and Laodiceans were among those for whom Paul struggled so hard in order to bring them to maturity.

Laodicea (v. 1): the chief city of Phrygia in the Roman province of Asia, located just south of Hieropolis in the Lycus River Valley

²⁻³ 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 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Full assurance of understanding us (v. 2): “Understanding” of the fullness of the gospel, along with inner encouragement and shared love, mark mature believers who, thereby enjoy the assurance of salvation.

All the treasures (v. 3): The false teachers threatening the Colossians claimed to possess a secret wisdom and transcendent knowledge available only to the spiritual elite. In sharp contrast, Paul declared that all the richness of truth necessary for either salvation, sanctification, or glorification is found in Jesus Christ, who Himself is God revealed.

In the light (v. 12): Scripture represents light intellectually as divine truth (Psalm 110:130), and morally as divine purity (Ephesians 5:8-14). The Saints inheritance exists in the spiritual realm of truth and purity where God himself dwells (1 Timothy 6:16). Light, then, is a synonym for God's kingdom (John 8:12; Revelation 21:23; 22:5)

⁴ I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments.

No one may delude you us (v. 4): Paul did not want the Colossians to be deceived by the persuasive rhetoric of the false teachers, which assaulted the Person of Christ.

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.

Absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit (v. 5): Because he was a prisoner, Paul was unable to be with the Colossians physically. That did not mean that his love and concern for them was any less. Their good order and steadfast love brought great joy to him.

Open It Up

- What's your favorite mystery book, TV show, or movie? Why is that one your favorite? This week, we are studying verses in Colossians that talk about the mystery of God. The good news is we don't have to look far to figure out the mystery—it's already been revealed to us through Christ.

Discussion Questions

- What stood out to you in your interactions with Colossians 1:24-2:5 this week?
- Even though he's in prison, how does Paul describe his attitude in verse 24? Is that your typical response to suffering? What do you think empowered Paul to be able to rejoice in prison?
- Paul counted it a joy to suffer for Jesus because Jesus suffered so much for him. How could Jesus's suffering for you shape the way you personally view pain and hardship?
- Paul rejoiced in prison because he knew he was joining in the sufferings of Christ. When he says the afflictions of Christ were "lacking," he doesn't mean Jesus's suffering on the cross wasn't enough to save us. Instead, he's talking about the suffering of the Church—we endure tribulation until the suffering of believers ends when Christ returns. Jesus suffers alongside us and grounds our hope that one day it will all come to an end. How does Jesus's return bring you hope in times of suffering?
- Read Colossians 1:25-27. Paul knew God had called him to take the gospel to the Gentiles—to those who were outside the Jewish faith. Verses 26 and 27 remind us that the gospel isn't for an elite group of people. It's for all people who put their faith in Jesus, Jew and Gentile alike. What difference does it make in your life knowing that God chose to bring you into His family? How could that truth impact the way you treat believers you don't naturally click with?

Leader Extra: Read more about about how the Gentiles have been brought into the family of God from the following verses: (Acts 10:34-35, 44-45; Acts 11:15-18; Galatians. 3:26-28; Ephesians. 3:1-6)

- **Did the believers in the early church think Gentiles could be part of God's family at first?**
- **How did Peter's experience change their minds?**
- **Why would Paul encourage the church to be one in Christ? How might have unity been difficult for Jews and Gentiles?**
- **How do we still face disunity today? What do these verses have to say about it?** God desires a unified and diverse people. As members of His family, we should strive to be unified as one. Each of us partakes in the mystery—Christ is in each of us. We can be united through Him.
- Read Colossians 2:1-5. Verses 2 and 3 talk about the love, understanding, wisdom, knowledge, and unity that come with knowing Christ. How might each of those things help someone stand up against false teaching?
- How have you grown in discernment since you first followed Jesus? What do you do to discern if something is true?
- Paul ends this section by mentioning that the Colossians have a firm faith. What does it mean to have a firm faith? What does a firm faith have to do with Christian maturity?

- As we grow in these truths—that there’s hope beyond suffering, Christ is in us, and we should be discerning—we will become mature followers of Jesus. What are some practical ways you could pursue growth in your faith?

Wrap Up

Paul’s words in this passage remind us of the hope found in the gospel message. In Jesus, we know there’s an end to suffering—one day He will return and renew all things. Through Jesus, we’ve been given understanding to the mystery of God. People of all nations can put their trust in Him and He lives in every believer.

With these truths in mind, we can embrace the challenge Paul gives to the Colossians to pursue maturity. We can stand firm in our faith and grow in knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. We can begin by internalizing the truth that Jesus is in us—we don’t have to strive to earn salvation or God’s approval. Instead, we obey from a place of love and an intimate relationship with God.

This week, take a moment to sit in the truth of the mystery of God. Ask Him to transform how you perceive the Christian walk and empower you to pursue maturity in Him. Let’s thank Him for all He’s done for us as we close this session.

Faith at Home this Week

- **Home:** In order to better steward our time for kingdom work, we need to know how we spend it each week. This week, make a time budget in order to visualize how you spend the time that God has given you. Consider the time budget you were given in the worship service or small group time.
- **Hospitality:** Think of a friend or neighbor that you know is suffering and going through a hard time. Consider sending them a meal through Grub Hub or Uber Eats this week. Be sure to send them a message that you are praying for them and there for them should they need you.
- **Hammers:** Set aside time this week to connect with Jesus. Fill your time with Him with prayer, Scripture reading, and reflection.