



making disciples
growing disciples
being disciples

All in Jesus,
all for Jesus

Christ Church
Homegroups
Summer 2015

Over the next few weeks we are going to work our way through Paul's letter to the Colossians. It seems from various comments that he makes in the letter that Paul was concerned that these young Christians were at risk of being taken in by other teaching, which wanted to add something to the gospel. False teachers were urging them to add new rules, and to seek new experiences. Then they would have fullness of life. Paul writes to show them that the gospel gives them all that they need – if you have Jesus, you have fullness of life.

Paul had never been to Colossae, but while he was in prison (probably in Rome) he had learned from Epaphras about the church there and the pressure they were under. And he wrote to encourage them to hold to the truth of the gospel, to live out the gospel, and to share the gospel.

Paul's desire for these Christians was that they should be making disciples (sharing the gospel), growing disciples (keeping rooted in the truth of the gospel), and being disciples (living the gospel out in every area of their lives). And almost 2000 years later and 1000 miles away, that is what we need to be doing.

HOMEGROUP PROGRAMME for this series

w/b Mon 8 th June	Study 1 – Filled to overflowing
w/b Mon 15 th June	Study 2 – A man with a mission
w/b Mon 22 nd June	Study 3 – Well dressed
Wednesday 1 st July	Prayer Meeting
w/b Mon 6 th July	Study 4 – No man is an island
w/b Mon 13 th July	Study 5 – Pass it on

1. Filled to overflowing

WELCOME

If you were on 'Desert Island Discs' what would be your luxury item – the thing that you would most want to have?

WORSHIP

For the word of the Lord is right and true; he is faithful in all he does.' (Psalm 33:4)

Psalm 33 is a great psalm of praise to the God who saves his people. Use it together to praise God for his faithfulness to us.

WORD

On June 27 2009 in Shanghai an almost completed 13-story apartment building simply toppled over. There was no earthquake or typhoon to cause it. The collapsed building was in one piece, but rested on its side – it looked like a toy a child had pushed over. The problem? The foundations, or lack of them.

Good foundations are vital in building. And good foundations are vital in the Christian life. If your understanding of who Jesus is, of the gospel, and of what it means to be a disciples is wrong, then there is a real danger that your Christian faith will

be vulnerable to all sorts of false teaching. And so Paul begins his letter to the Colossians with some foundational teaching.

Read Colossians 1:1-14

After his initial greeting, Paul usually thanks God for the Christians he is writing to. In the case of the Colossians, he highlights 3 things that are very important to him. He thanks God for their: **faith** in Christ Jesus;

love for all God's people;

hope stored up for them in heaven.

- How are these three things connected?

Paul then encourages them to see that the gospel isn't just at work in them, but is working across the world – *the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world.*

- What is the difference (if any) between the gospel bearing fruit, and it growing?
- Can you see the gospel bearing fruit and growing at Christ Church? How?

Having given thanks, Paul then prays for the Colossians.

- What does Paul pray for?
- How important are these things to you when you are praying for someone?

What 4 things does a life 'worthy of the Lord' and 'pleasing to him' show?

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- Which of these do you find the biggest challenge?

God has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves.

- What difference has that made to you?
- When did you last tell someone about that?

Read Colossians 1:15-23

Jesus is '*the image of the invisible God.*'

- How does Jesus help us to know what God is like?

In our services on Sunday we are thinking about being disciples out in the world – at work and at leisure etc.

- How can what Paul says about Jesus in verses 15-17 encourage us in that?

WORK

In the Disney film 'Finding Nemo,' the character Dory has a very simple philosophy in life – *just keep swimming*. Paul's challenge in v.23 is to do exactly that – just keep swimming. Keep going, 'not moved from the hope held out in the gospel.'

How can we encourage each other to do that?

2. A man with a mission

WELCOME

What would be your perfect job?

WORSHIP

The word of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul. (Psalm 19:7) We are so blessed to have easy access to the word of God. Use Psalm 19 to lead you into praise to God for his word which guides and encourages us.

WORD

Paul knew, better than anyone, that being a Christian is not a bed of roses, and that Christian ministry involves suffering. In 2 Corinthians 11 he explains just what he suffered for the sake of the gospel.

Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. I have laboured and toiled and have often

gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked.

Hopefully none of us will ever know that kind of suffering for the gospel. But in all of that, Paul never gave up, he never lost sight of what he was suffering for.

Read Colossians 1:24-2:5

When Paul says that he is filling up ‘what is still lacking in regard to Christ’s afflictions,’ he isn’t saying that Christ’s work on the cross is somehow incomplete, but that Paul’s suffering becomes a means through which Christ can bless and build up his church.

- How can the sufferings of Christian leaders be a blessing to the church?
- How does this help us to ‘rejoice in our sufferings?’

Paul says that he was ‘strenuously contending’ – struggling – on behalf of the church in Colossae, the church in Laodicea, and even for those he has never met.

- In what ways can we struggle for our Christian brothers who we have never met?

The purpose of Paul’s labour and struggle is explained at the start of chapter 2.

- What is his purpose?
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Read Colossians 2:6-23

- What does it mean to ‘receive Christ Jesus as Lord’?
- How do the images **rooted**, **built up**, **strengthened**, and **overflowing** help us to understand how we should continue to live in Christ?
- What difference has Jesus’ death, and resurrection made to us? (v.13-15)

It seems that what the false teachers in Colossae were saying was that if you want to be a proper Christian, you have to avoid certain foods, or keep certain festivals. They may have been hooking back into the Old Testament law (*the shadow of things to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ*).

- Are there things that we are tempted to add to the gospel today?
- Why are these things useless?

WORK

Do you know any Christians who at the moment are suffering because of their faith in Jesus? It might be someone you know personally, or someone you have read about.

What could you do to encourage them?

3. Well dressed

WELCOME

What, if anything, would you like to change about yourself?

WORSHIP

God's love for us is unconditional and his forgiveness is complete. *As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.* (Psalm 103:12) Use the words of Psalm 103 to praise God for his greatness, his goodness and his forgiveness.

WORD

In a nightmare I have had occasionally, I am taking part in a big formal service in Chester cathedral, then look down and realise that I am wearing shorts and a tee-shirt – not the usual dress code for such occasions!

We know that certain clothes are right for certain occasions. There are times when we need to take off one set of clothes and put on something different. And that is just what Paul tells the Christians in Colossae that they need to do.

Read Colossians 3:1-11

When Paul says that we should set our minds on things above, not on earthly things, he doesn't mean that we should have no interest in life here and now, but that the way we need to have our perspectives on life shaped by Christ and his priorities, rather than by the world.

- If we do this, it will mean putting to death certain things. What are they?
- Why does Paul equate 'greed' with 'idolatry'?
- What clothes do we need to take off (rid ourselves of)?
- Why are each of these inappropriate for Christians?
- Which of them do you find it hardest to rid yourself of?

In verse 11 Paul lists the distressing divisions between people in the Colossian culture.

- How would becoming aware of Christ in other Christians help to eliminate those divisions?
- What does this mean for our fellowship at Christ Church?

Read Colossians 3:12-17

We are not only to get rid of the wrong clothes; we need to put on the right clothes.

- What should we be clothing ourselves with?
- How do we go about doing that?
- Which do you find the hardest to put on?
- What does it mean to let the message of Christ dwell in you richly?
- According to Paul, what is the main reason for singing psalms, hymns and songs from the Spirit?

In the last 3 verses of this passage, Paul refers to thankfulness / gratitude 3 times. He says that whatever we do, whether in word or deed, we should do it all in Christ's name, giving thanks to God.

- How do we do everything in Christ's name?

WORK

Is there something in the week ahead that you know will be hard to do in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God? Pray for one another about these situations.

4. No man is an island

WELCOME

If you could choose 5 people, either from the present or from history, to spend the evening with, who would they be?

WORSHIP

Psalm 23 is one of the best known and best loved psalms. Use the psalm to praise God for the way he loves and cares for us.

WORD

The Christian life is about being disciples. But that doesn't just involve our personal relationship with the Lord, and it isn't restricted to our serving the Lord in church. Being a disciple should be a 24/7 thing – we live out our discipleship at work and at home, among our families, work colleagues and friends. And that is where the challenge of discipleship is usually at its most acute.

That is nothing new. Having written to the Christians at Colossae about what God had done to make them disciples, and then about what that meant in term of their personal lives (Colossians 3:1-11), and their corporate life as a church (Colossians 3:12-17), Paul now turns to living as disciples in 3 key areas of life.

Read Colossians 3:18-4:1

- What 3 relationships is Paul concerned with here?
- Do you think these rules are still relevant today, given the changes in society since Paul wrote this?

It has been said that Paul wrote these commands to wives / husbands, children / parents and slaves / masters because our natural tendency is to do just the opposite of these.

- Do you think that is right?

Wives are to submit to their husbands 'as is fitting in the Lord.'

- How does 'as is fitting in the Lord' give a context to the word 'submit'?

Husbands are to love their wives and not be harsh with them.

- How would this affect the wife submitting?
- How does what we looked at last time (Colossians 3:1-17) give a context for this submitting and love?
- Paul tells children to obey their parents in everything, but what if the parent is telling the child to do something that is wrong?

- We tend to think of this in the context of parents of young children, but how does it apply to those who are older?
- What things can parents do which might embitter and discourage their children?
- How could the motivations of pleasing the Lord (v.20) and not discouraging others (v.21) strengthen family relationships generally?

The next relationship that Paul turns to is that between slaves and masters. Because we live in a very different society, we maybe miss the most striking thing about these verses, which is that Paul addresses himself to slaves at all. Despite the fact that in Roman society slaves had virtually no rights, here Paul writes to them as accepted members of the Christian community.

- What is implied about the way slaves normally worked for their masters and the way that masters usually treated their slaves?
- Do you think that the references to slaves and master here can be applied to modern employer-employee relationships, or maybe to teacher-pupil relationships? If so, how might what Paul writes here be applied in those areas?
- Of all the instructions Paul has given about relationships, which do you find most challenging?

All of the relationship advice Paul gives is contrary to our current world view. It would have been when he wrote it, but for different reasons.

- Why is it important that relationships within the Christian community should be different?

WORK

We might not all be married, we might not all have children, we might not all be employed, but still what Paul writes here about these relationships is a challenge. We live in a society where marriage breaks down at an alarming rate, where parents often neglect their children, and children ignore their parents, and where the workplace is often stressful to say the least.

These are issues which affect us as a church. So – are there things that we need to be doing? Are there ways in which we could support married couples? A special married's weekend or something like that?

Or maybe a parenting course?

Or is there something we could do to support people under pressure at work (without the thing we do causing more pressure!)

Over to you. But please, don't just come up with ideas – come up with ways in which you could make them happen!

5. Pass it on

WELCOME

Have you ever missed something because someone forgot to pass a message on to you?

WORSHIP

I will sing praise to my God as long as I live. (Psalm 146:2)
Psalm 146 is a wonderful description of just what good news the gospel is. Use this psalm to praise our wonderful God.

WORD

Francis of Assisi is supposed to have said 'Preach the gospel at all times, use words if you must.' But even though our lives should show the gospel ('Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify you Father in heaven'), no one ever becomes a Christian just by watching how a Christian lives. Our lives should attract others to ask why we do what we do, but at some stage they will need to hear the good news about Jesus for themselves. As one writer put it, 'Debating if what we say or how we live is more important in witnessing is like asking which leg is more important for walking.'

Read Colossians 4:2-6

Paul wrote this letter while he was in prison ('I am in chains' – v.3) He might have asked the church to pray for his release from prison.

- What requests does he make instead?
- Why?
- What does Paul mean by asking that 'God may open a door for our message'?
- What advice does Paul give about the way we live and talk with non-Christians?
- In what ways might you 'be wise in the way you act towards outsiders' and 'make the most of every opportunity'?

Paul obviously expected these Christians to be asked about their faith by non-Christians.

- Do you expect people to ask you about you faith?

If they do, do you know how to answer them? (v.6)

- How does what Paul says here bring together the importance of prayer, of proclamation, and of lifestyle?

- Which do you find the biggest challenge?

Read Colossians 4:7-18

It might just seem like a very personal list of names that we can skip over, but Paul writes about the way in which these people were important to the church.

- How did the following people serve the church:
 - Tychicus
 - Aristarchus, Mark & Justus
 - Epaphras

The conclusion of this letter is a reminder that the life of discipleship is always a shared life – you cannot be a faithful Christian without other Christians around you.

- What other Christians do you rely on?
- And what are you doing to support others at Christ Church?

WORK

This is the last homegroup for a couple of months, as we break for the summer holidays. What can you do as a group to continue to support and encourage one another during this time?



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Let your light shine before others
that they may see your good
deeds and glorify your Father in
heaven.

Matthew 5:16