

Faith Brings Freedom

Colossians 1:1-8

I. Introduction: False Teaching Abounds

1. The Apostle Paul is writing his letter to believers in the Colossae church around 60 AD, less than 30 years after Jesus' death, during his first Roman imprisonment. *He is writing to encourage them in their faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior.*

Yet the enemy of Jesus recognized that he had a new enemy in the bride of Christ, the church. *So, just as we see today, the enemy was doing all he could to diminish, distract, and destroy their faith and the church;* all that their testimony would not bear the life transforming fruit found only in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

2. Colossae, along with Laodicea, and Hierapolis, were part of a tri-city region called the valley of the River Lycus in Asia Minor, specifically in modern day Turkey. *It is about 100 miles from Ephesus and was rich in natural resources* (pasture - sheep/wool, dye's, food). *To varying degrees and a different times, these cities were part of important trade and defensive routes for many years.* Colossae herself had suffered great decline and in just a few short years would suffer a catastrophic earthquake.
3. Paul's letter to the Colossians bears some similarities with his book to the Ephesians and was written at the same time as his writing Philemon. *The first half of this book emphasizes doctrine, while the second half is a practical application of this doctrine.* The power of the letter is best summed up as speaking to our heads with a heart-level message!
4. It seems likely that Epaphras was sent out by Paul, perhaps from Paul's time in Corinth (**Acts 19:1-10**), and had established this still young church in Colossae. *Given the location and the contents of the letter, it seems sure that there were both Jews and Gentiles in*

the church and that some forms of Jewish legalism and an infant form of Gnosticism had infiltrated the body.

A. Jewish legalism was rigid adherence to the law and extra OT religious writings. In this, legalism not only missed God's intent and heart, but introduced false doctrine. Legalism in all its forms continues to war against and within the church today. Grace, Biblical love, and unity in Christ are often MIA. Too many are not faithful to teaching, much less walking out the entire counsel of God's word. Lastly, there are "foxes in the hen house" with unbiblical tenets spreading like a cancer in selling the sheep false promises of their special anointing, secret knowledge, wisdom, and power.

B. The Gnostics valued knowledge and claimed they had secret knowledge the apostles did not. Because their religion was built on secrets it could rightly be called the wild west of religions where just about anything goes – an approach very much in vogue today as we see with the current deconstructing faith movement masking age old syncretism or the merging of many faiths under one umbrella often called "Christian". Generally, they denied the humanity of Christ, they denied the deity of Jesus, that He died on the cross, and that He had a bodily resurrection. Many of them believed the body was inherently sinful and therein practiced ascetism in an attempt to rise into an ever-higher spiritual state. Finally, they diminished Jesus work and His character.

5. One final note before we get into our opening passage. Why Colossians? Well, simply put, there is a tsunami of false teaching seeking to break down the church from both outside and inside the church. We, like the Colossians, need to be encouraged and equipped to stand on the word and bring forth the fruit of the Gospel.

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II. Colossians 1:1-2: The Foundation of Paul's Authority

1. The same authority upon which the church in Colossae was built, was the source of Paul's authority. Unlike the Gnostics, he did NOT claim to have secret knowledge in order to exercise authority over them. His claim was to the same Gospel that had given the Colossians hope. In this sense, they were the same...or as I love to say, each of them were one beggar leading another to the bread of life OR in this case, as we will see, to the fruit of God's word. Yet, Paul was also drawing a great distinction in that his letter carried the very authority of God.
2. Let's back up for a moment and remember that Paul was Saul of Tarsus, a pharisee. He hated Jesus and His followers. As a one-man wrecking crew, He would do anything to destroy them – indeed we see him complicit in the death of Stephen, the first Christian martyr in **Acts 7:54-60**. Yet, there was a moment in time, when Saul had a personal encounter with the risen Lord on the road to Damascus. It was then that Saul the destroyer became Paul the Apostle...one anointed and appointed by God to the office of Apostleship; meaning sent out with the authority to speak the canon of Scripture into existence.

Paul was establishing his authority with the Colossians that they would have firm ground to reject the false teachings coming against and into their body.

3. A few other notes from these verses:
 - A. A saint is someone who has received and been set aside (meaning been made holy) by God for His purposes. A saint is one that has been made worthy by the blood of Christ washing them of their sins. It is any who have repented of their sin and turned to God as Lord;
 - B. Frankly, I am not quite sure of the significance of this, but I love that the saints and faithful brethren are just like you and me...on this side of heaven it can be rightly said they were in two places at once. Did you see it? // They were "in Christ" and "in Colossae". Likewise, we are "in Christ" and "in Aiken";

C. Finally, we have a very Pauline greeting of grace and peace from the Father and Son. **This kind of greeting was not so unusual back in the day.** What was unusual is the grace and peace Paul greeted them with was a supernatural grace and peace birthed in the resurrection.

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III. Colossians 1:3-8: A Transforming & Giving Faith

1. Paul's initial focus is the well worn path of faith, hope, and love he wrote about in **1 Corinthians 13:13** some 5 years earlier and in a number of other places as well. **There he wrote:**

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And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love. – 1 Corinthians 13:13

2. As we read in verse 7, the Colossians pastor, Epaphras, had shared these wonderful ways in which the church body there looked like Christ and Paul was not only thankful, but faithful in praying for them to continue in growing and sharing in the Gospel that had so transformed them. **But I think it important we consider these three virtues in our lives.**

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- A. **First up, is faith.** **Hebrews 11:1** tells us “faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen”. **Faith is knowing that you know that you know that you know the absolute truth.** It is living absolute trust in the One, Jesus, that is truth and whom is unchanging.

The bible has much to share about faith that I pray will remind, refresh, and encourage us:

- i. **Hebrews 11:6** says it's impossible to please God without faith. **We are built to know and please God, it is only then that we are complete with rest, peace, contentment, and all the other things that follow being in God's presence;**
- ii. **Romans 1:17** says the righteousness of God in us comes through faith. **Godly righteousness is never a matter of**

works with both righteousness and works a fruit of our abiding in Him. What's more, the Holy Spirit leads us to prayer, worship, devotions, reading/studying/meditating on His word, and corporate fellowship, as chief ways of abiding in Him;

- iii. **Romans 10:7** says faith is given by God through the hearing of His word. Since it is God's word that gives life, we offer 2 weekly teachings, discipleship, prayer meetings, home fellowships, and numerous other opportunities to hear and walk in His word;
- iv. What's more, it is by grace and through faith, that we are restored in relationship with Jesus (**Eph 2:8-9**); and
- v. We are commanded to stand in the faith and be strong (**1 Cor 16:13**) that we may know our victory is birthed in faith (**1 John 5:4; 2 Ti 4:7**).

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B. **Next up is Biblical love.** This kind of love is not as the world loves with an affirming love, but as God loves with a transforming love. This kind of love was on grand display at the cross of Calvary as Jesus chose the higher good for us while willingly accepting the staggering cost to Himself. As such, Biblical love is using one's freedom to sacrificially and selflessly love another.

The Bible has much to say about love that I pray will strengthen, build courage, and empower you to forgive as Jesus forgives you. A sampling of these includes:

- i. **1 John 4:8 & 16** say, if we don't love, we don't know God, because God is love;
- ii. In one that is exceedingly uncomfortable, we are told to love even those that offend you for Godly love covers a multitude of sin (**1 Pet 4:8**) as a measure of His grace (**1 Pe 4:10**);

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- iii. **John 14:15** says if we love Jesus, we will obey Him AND in **John 13:34-35** that our love for one another is a testimony of God and His love for us;
- iv. **1 John 4:18** offers a very great promise that when our eyes and hearts (love) are on God, our lives will not be controlled by fear; and
- v. Paul's great words found in **1 Corinthians 13:4-7** offer a beautiful picture of the application of God's transforming love in our lives as we testify of Him: *⁴ Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; ⁵ does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; ⁶ does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; ⁷ bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

In the last few days, we have been offered a very public picture of what Biblical love looks like AND of evil's response. **Charlie was a man not so unlike many in this room, failed and yet faithful.** By all accounts, Charlie Kirk pointed to Jesus as our hope and victory as he imperfectly, but boldly modeled this Biblical love. **So EVIL rose up in hate, envy, pride, and rejecting the Gospel to kill, steal, and destroy Charlie and the God He testified of, Jesus.**

Whether Satan or of people's own depraved hearts, I have a word for EVIL, Charlie is with Jesus and you are still a loser. **You see Satan, you think we are hopeless, but there are tens of millions of Charlie's who have given their lives to Christ including many here at Calvary Chapel Aiken.** We too, like Charlie, are imperfect, but we are "bringing" Biblical love AND millions are coming to a saving knowledge of Jesus. **We do NOT fear you, because we have biblical hope of Jesus.** We have victory because the tomb was empty and Jesus offers us His hand of grace in restoring us to Himself and there is NOTHING you can do to change this reality! You see...**God's love trumps EVIL.** Church, will we all make the choice of engaging in standing

on God's word and discipling the next generations to do the same in Biblical love?!

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C. **The third virtue is hope.** Biblical hope is future certainty - it is something we know to be true and it is therefore, as **Hebrews 11:1** says, the substance of faith; because God is who He says He is and because He is faithful.

- i. **1 Tim 1:1** says Jesus is our hope. So hope speaks to the very character and attributes of God Himself; *thus, we can know He is worthy of love, worship, and obedience.*
- ii. The reality of Biblical hope brings life meaning and purpose in the here-and-now and for all eternity. *In this, Paul tells us, in **Romans 15:13**, that Biblical hope produces joy and peace through the power of the Holy Spirit.*

It is under the leadership of the Holy Spirit in our lives that we can know Jesus as our Savior having been born-again through His resurrection (**1 Pe 1:3**).

What's more, **Romans 5:2-5** teaches us that even the sufferings of this life are powerful instruments in God's hands in transforming us and bringing the hope of Christ alive through the love of God poured out through the Holy Spirit.

Before we move on, I want to note that Biblical hope is not your "want list" for this list is limited to our desires, thoughts, and ways. *Instead, Biblical hope is based on God's thoughts and ways, on His righteousness and holiness, and on His love and plan for you.* A good way to consider the hope that God offers us is by familiarizing yourself, praying about, and meditating on His promises. [Bookmarks]

3. Let's look at a few other things in this passage:

- A. First up is a thread that is found in verse 5 that goes like this...Jesus is at the right hand of the Father or laid up in heaven, hope is found in the word, the word is truth, and the truth is the Gospel, so we might present it this way:

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Jesus = Hope = The word of God = Truth = Gospel

- B. If that weren't enough, verse 6 takes this equation yet further still. Here we see that the same Gospel or Good News that came to them, went into ALL the world, and brings with it fruit because of God's Grace. So, if you are sitting there wondering what I just said, it goes like this:

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Jesus = Hope = The word of God = Truth = Gospel = Fruit, meaning Transformed Lives for those that repent and turn toward Jesus.

- i. **Galatians 5:22-23** tells us this fruit includes, but is not limited to love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Importantly, this is the fruit of the Spirit;
 - ii. **Romans 6:22** tells us this fruit leads to sanctification...our becoming more and more like God as we increasingly surrender to the Spirit's work in, on, and through our lives;
 - iii. Examples of other fruit that is so awesome include truth (**Eph 5:9**), righteousness (**Phil 1:11**), and even praising God (**Heb 13:15**).
- C. The third gem to note is found in found in verse 6. Paul has just reminded them of the Gospel they know because it was brought to them and then we see a simply amazing truth. Be reminded that in that day there was no printing press, snail-mail, email, text, social media, planes, train, or car. With a grand total of 12 disciples launching the church, being reminded that Paul's letter is not even 30 years after Jesus death, and yet the good news of Christ's birth, death, and resurrection is "in all the world".

Today there are 2.64 billion Christians in the world. Imagine, if you will, if the church were so faithful today.

If you have confessed Christ, you are a recipient of God's great grace also spoken of in verse 6. *May it be said that as ones set-aside by God for His glory, we embraced our duty and privilege to share the Good News and rejoice in the abounding fruit.* In **Luke 10:2**, we are told the harvest is truly great but the laborers are few...may it not be so on our account.

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IV. Closing: Being Prepared

1. Even in these opening verses Paul cuts right through to the issue at hand. *He does this by rebuilding and encouraging them with the Gospel as their faith foundation.* He does this by reminding them that the object of their faith is Jesus and He is the Gospel. *He does this by reinforcing their beautiful faith.* They were fruit bearing fruit. *They had received the truth and lived their lives in its freedom.* They had a faithful, truth-teaching minister that was discipling them and they were flowering more fruit. *They were purposing in discipleship and Paul was encouraging them to grow into full Christian discipleship.*

All this was in preparation for his words yet to come.

- A. He was calling them to be watchful in guarding their new, transformed hearts and defending the hope that was in them. *Do you guard our hearts and defend His hope in us?*
- B. He was setting the stage that they would NOT be seduced away from their faith in the One that had saved and was sanctifying them. *That instead they would rest in His promises in that age and in all the ages to come.* Will I, will you?
- C. He was setting the stage that while their faith may well cost them their lives in the fleshly sense, it was the path to a forever life with Jesus. *While not popular to say, every one of you is*

dying. Maybe or maybe not today, but you are dying. The question is, what does Jesus say your life testifies of?

For Notetakers

Colossians 1:1-8 Faith Brings Freedom

I. Introduction: False Teaching Abounds

Additional Scripture References: Acts 19:1-10

II. Colossians 1:1-2: The Foundation of Paul's Authority

Additional Scripture References: Acts 7:54-60

III. Colossians 1:3-8: A Transforming & Giving Faith

- 3 great Christian virtues, faith, hope, & love.

Additional Scripture References: 1 Co 13:13; Heb 11:1, 6; Ro 1:17, 10:7; Eph 2:8-9; 1 Co 16:13; 1 Jn 5:4; 2 Ti 4:7; 1 Jn 4:8, 16; 1 Pe 4:8, 10; 1 Co 13:4-7; Heb 11:1; 1 Ti 1:1; Ro 15:13; 1 Pe 1:3; Ro 5:2-5; Gal 5:22-23; Ro 6:22; Eph 5:9; Phil 1:11; Heb 13:15; Lk 102

IV. Closing: Being Prepared

5-Day Devotional Colossians 1:1-8 Foundations of Faith

Day 1: The Foundation of our Faith

Reading: Col 1:1-18

Devotional: Paul's greeting to the Colossians reminds us of the firm foundation upon which our faith is built. Just as Paul received his authority from God, we too find our identity and purpose in Christ. Reflect on what it means to be "in Christ" while also living in your current location. How does this dual citizenship shape your daily life and decisions?

Consider the "grace and peace" Paul extends - not just a casual greeting, but a profound blessing rooted in the resurrection power of Jesus. How might you extend this supernatural grace and peace to others today? Ask God to help you see opportunities to be a conduit of His grace in your interactions with others.

Day 2: Faith, Hope, and Love in Action

Reading: 1 Cor 13:1-13

Devotional: Paul's emphasis on faith, hope, and love echoes throughout his letters. These three virtues form the core of our Christian walk. As you read this famous passage on love, consider how your faith informs your ability to love others sacrificially. How does your hope in Christ's promises enable you to persevere in showing love, even when it's difficult?

Reflect on each characteristic of love described in verses 4-7. Which aspect of love do you find most challenging to embody? Ask the Holy Spirit to work in your heart, cultivating a love that truly reflects Christ's character. Consider one practical way you can demonstrate this kind of love to someone in your life today.

Day 3: The Power of Living Hope

Reading: 1 Pet 1:3-9

Devotional: Peter reminds us that our hope is not wishful thinking, but a living reality grounded in Christ's resurrection. This hope gives meaning to our present circumstances, even amidst trials. How does the promise of an imperishable inheritance impact your perspective on current challenges?

Reflect on times when your faith has been tested. How did those experiences ultimately strengthen your faith and refine your character? Thank God for His faithfulness during those times and ask Him to help you view present or future trials through the lens of hope. How might you encourage someone else who is struggling, sharing the living hope you have in Christ?

Day 4: Bearing Fruit in All Circumstances**Reading: Jn 15:1-17**

Devotional: Jesus uses the metaphor of a vine and branches to illustrate our need to abide in Him to bear fruit. This echoes Paul's words about the Gospel bearing fruit in the lives of the Colossians. What does it practically mean for you to "abide" in Christ daily?

Consider the fruit of the Spirit mentioned in Galatians 5:22-23. Which of these qualities do you see growing in your life? Which ones need more cultivation? Ask God to show you any areas where you might be trying to produce fruit in your own strength rather than relying on His. Commit to spending intentional time abiding in Christ through prayer, Scripture, and obedience.

Day 5: Standing Firm in the Faith**Reading: Eph 6:10-20**

Devotional: Paul's reminder to the Colossians about standing firm in their faith finds fuller expression in his letter to the Ephesians. As we put on the full armor of God, we're equipped to stand against false teachings and spiritual attacks. Which piece of spiritual armor do you most need to "put on" in your current season of life?

Reflect on the role of prayer in spiritual warfare. How consistent and fervent is your prayer life? Consider establishing a specific time and place for daily prayer, asking God to strengthen your faith and help you discern truth from error. Pray for fellow believers who may be struggling with doubts or facing spiritual opposition, that they too might stand firm in the faith.

Small Group Study Guide

Colossians 1:1-8

Foundations of Faith

Opening Prayer: Pray that the Lord would strengthen your resolve in the faith and speak to your heart through this study.

Key Takeaways: Query the group for takeaways first...you may stay with one or more of those.

1. Paul establishes his authority as an apostle to counter false teachings.
2. The letter emphasizes faith, hope, and love as core Christian virtues.
3. True faith in Christ produces visible fruit in believers' lives.
4. The Gospel spreads rapidly and bears fruit through God's grace.

Discussion Questions: Did the Holy Spirit prompt any questions with you? Start with those.

1. What does it mean to be "in Christ" and also in "the Aiken area" at the same time? How does this dual identity impact your daily life?
2. Paul emphasizes faith, hope, and love. How would you define each of these in your own words? Which of these do you find most challenging to live out?
3. The sermon mentions that biblical love is transforming, not just affirming. What's the difference, and why is this distinction important?
4. How has the Gospel been "bearing fruit" in your life recently? Share specific examples.
5. Paul was thankful for the Colossians' faith and prayed for them regularly. How can we cultivate a habit of gratitude and prayer for fellow believers?
6. The sermon mentions that the Gospel had spread "in all the world" within 30 years of Jesus' death. What can we learn from the early church's evangelism efforts?
7. How can we guard against false teachings while continuing to grow and learn?

Practical Applications: Query the group for applications first...you may explore one or more of those.

1. This week, identify one area where you can demonstrate "transforming love" rather than just "affirming love" in a relationship.
2. Make a list of 3-5 believers you can regularly pray for and express gratitude for their faith.
3. Reflect on the "fruit" the Gospel is producing in your life. Choose one area where you'd like to see more growth and make a plan to nurture it.
4. Practice sharing your faith story with the group. How has the Gospel transformed your life?

Closing Prayer: Thank God for His grace and the fruit of the Gospel in our lives. Ask for wisdom to guard against false teachings and for courage to share the Good News with others.

Discussion Questions

Colossians 1:1-8

Foundations of Faith

1. How does Paul's establishment of authority in his letter to the Colossians differ from the claims of authority made by the Gnostics, and what implications does this have for how we view spiritual authority today?
2. In what ways can we, like the Colossians, be 'in Christ' and 'in our city' simultaneously, and how might this dual identity shape our daily lives and interactions?
3. Paul emphasizes faith, hope, and love in his letter. How do these three virtues work together in a believer's life, and which one do you find most challenging to cultivate?
4. The sermon mentions that biblical love is transforming rather than affirming. How does this distinction challenge our modern understanding of love, especially in difficult relationships?
5. How does the concept of biblical hope as 'future certainty' differ from worldly optimism, and how might this impact the way we face trials and uncertainties?
6. Paul marvels at how quickly the Gospel spread 'in all the world' without modern technology. What barriers or advantages do we face today in spreading the Gospel, and how can we be more effective?
7. The sermon discusses the 'fruit' that comes from the Gospel. How have you seen this fruit manifested in your own life or in the lives of others in your community?
8. How does understanding Jesus as our hope, as mentioned in 1 Timothy 1:1, change our perspective on current circumstances and future expectations?
9. The sermon emphasizes the importance of guarding our hearts and defending our hope. In what practical ways can we do this in the face of modern challenges to our faith?
10. Paul combines thanksgiving and prayer for the Colossians. How might intentionally pairing gratitude with intercession change the way we pray for others and view our own spiritual growth?

Dinner Conversation Starters

Colossians 1:1-8

Foundations of Faith

1. Faith's Impact

How do you think faith in Jesus can bring freedom in our daily lives? Can you share a personal example where your faith has helped you overcome a challenge?

2. Importance of Love

The sermon talked about God's transforming love versus the world's affirming love. What do you think is the difference, and how can we show transforming love in our family or community?

3. Understanding Hope

Biblical hope is described as a future certainty. How does this version of hope differ from simply wishing for something? How can we apply this concept of hope during uncertain times?

4. Standing Firm in Faith

Paul emphasized the importance of standing firm in faith and not being swayed by false teachings. How can we guard our hearts and strengthen our faith together as a family?

5. Fruits of the Spirit

The sermon mentioned several fruits of the Spirit such as love, joy, and peace. Which of these fruits do you see most evident in your life, and which would you like to develop more?

Family Conversation Guide for Children & Early Teens

Colossians 1:1-8

Foundations of Faith

AGES 5-7: SIMPLIFYING THE MESSAGE APPLICATION POINTS

1. **Understanding and Sharing Love**: Encouraging children to share and show kindness with those they interact with.

Discussion Question: When someone in your playgroup is upset or left out, how do you think Jesus would want you to treat them? Can you think of a way to show kindness to a friend this week?

AGES 8-12: BUILDING UNDERSTANDING APPLICATION POINTS

1. **Choosing Truth and Faith**: Learning to discern right from wrong in what they see online or hear from friends.

Discussion Question: If you hear something from a friend or online that seems wrong or makes you uncomfortable, what is a good way to check if it's true? How can your faith help you make good choices?

AGES 11-15: DEEPENING THE CONNECTION APPLICATION POINTS

1. **Standing Firm in Faith**: Discuss the importance of staying rooted in their faith even when friends and people online challenge or ridicule them

Discussion Question: Have you ever felt pressured by friends or seen something online that challenged your values? What are some ways you can stand firm in your beliefs and stay true to your faith?

Tips for Parents

- Be patient and listen: Give your child time to think and respond.
- Relate to everyday life: Use real-life examples and stories familiar to your child to make abstract concepts more tangible.
- Encourage questions: Let your son or daughter know it's okay to ask questions, even if things don't make sense right away.
- Share personal insights: Tell a personal story about a time you experienced these themes, adapting as needed for age appropriateness.

Family Conversation Guide for Gen Z

Colossians 1:1-8

Foundations of Faith

1. Authentic Identity in Group Settings

Scenario: Navigating identity and self-expression in diverse social circles.

Bible Reference: Colossians 1:3-8 speaks to faith, hope, and love as core values.

Discussion Question: How can you hold onto your identity in Christ while engaging with different viewpoints and lifestyles in group settings? In what ways can faith, hope, and love shape your interactions?

2. Integrity in Relationships

Scenario: Building and maintaining relationships that reflect God's love.

Bible Reference: 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 defines love with patience, kindness, and truth.

Discussion Question: How can showing godly love and integrity enhance your friendships and relationships? What challenges might arise, and how can you address them with the love described in 1 Corinthians?

3. Discernment in Digital Spaces

Scenario: Distinguishing truth and managing influence in digital media.

Bible Reference: Romans 12:2 advises renewing your mind and testing things against God's will to determine what is true.

Discussion Question: With so many messages online, how can you practice discernment and align what you consume with your faith values? What steps can you take to ensure that your digital presence is consistent with your beliefs?

These points aim to empower Gen Z to live out their faith genuinely and courageously in various aspects of their daily lives, reflecting Biblical integrity, compassion, and steadfastness.