

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions are designed to help you talk about God's word and Pastor Brian's message with friends and family. You of course can use your own questions, but we'd like to give you this tool to encourage Biblical fellowship and discipleship in your circle of relationships. **Enjoy discovering more about Him!**

## "THE PREEMINENT ONE" | COLOSSIANS 1:15-29 | PASTOR CAMERON SEELY

### WARM-UP QUESTION:

- When was a time when you felt separated from others?

### *"Jesus Is Supreme" Colossians 1: 15-20*

Jesus is the image of the Father, the Firstborn of Creation, the Creator, the Sustainer, the Head of the Church, and the Redeemer.

- Which characteristic of Jesus is hard to understand?
- Which characteristic moves you to praise Him?

### *"From Alienated to Reconciled" Colossians 1: 21-23*

People were alienated from God, but because of how great Jesus is and His death, they are now holy and blameless before God.

- How would you explain what it means to be "alienated" from God?
- Why is persevering in the faith an appropriate response to what Jesus did?

### *"Paul's Gospel Ministry" Colossians 1:24-29*

Paul's ministry was given to him by God and was full of suffering. He rejoices for that pain because God gives him power to endure and he imitates Christ through it.

- How do you respond to the idea that following God's call leads to suffering?
- How has God empowered you to endure difficulties?

### REFLECTION AND APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

Jesus is the Preeminent One. He is above all, before all, and creator and sustainer of all. Yet He sacrifices to redeem His people. His people look to serve Him by ministering to others as He leads.

- When was the last time you deeply reflected on who Jesus is?
- Where in your life is God calling you to persevere and minister to others even though it's hard?
- Take time to meditate on who Jesus is and talk to Him about it in prayer.

## **Christ - The Preeminent One (Colossians 1:15-29)**

### **Welcome & Background:**

**Hello everyone, Happy Father's day to my fellow dads out there. What a worthy and important work it is to be a Father is it not? Pray you all are well rested and loved today, and that each of us seek to love and serve our families! And if your missing dad this Fathers day, we love you. And pray you are comforted by your Father in heaven.**

**Well my Names Cameron Seely I'm the High School Youth Pastor here at Calvary and excited to share the word with you all, but first I wanted to bring a few extra announcements to your attention.**

### Announcements:

- **Reminder that next Sunday June 28th at 1:30pm we have our Missions Prayer meeting in the Agape Room**, please come out get updates on our field workers and lift them up with us.
  
- Also, I'm very happy and privileged to give a huge shout out and thank you to all our VBS staff and volunteers who served last week! This years VBS was such a blast, and it goes without saying that VBS is a servant's work. And gosh did our awesome volunteers do just that, students were loved on, cared for, and heard/ shown the good news. HUGE Thank you to Jasmine and Alyssa for all their hard work this year!!!
  
- Well why don't you all turn with me to Colossians Chapter 1, where we will be picking up in verses 15 to 20:

### **Pray & then give background:**

#### Quick Recap:

- Last week Pastor Brian took us through Paul's opening address to the church in Colossae. And gave some really helpful background and context:
  - Colossae was a small city in Asia Minor, with a small fellowship of believers, that Paul neither planted nor visited.

- Paul's writing both to encourage the Colossian believers mainly because of a battle against some false teaching in the city. (Namely Gnosticism and Jewish Legalism)
- Paul's main focuses of the book are on Christ's Supremacy (Jesus is Enough) and on some practical christian living aspect of the christian life.

**Today we are going to see probably one of the most rich portions of scripture on the Nature an Person of Jesus. AND IM HYPED! (Pray I don't take too long in this lol)**

**Read Colossians 1:15-20 with me:**

**<sup>15</sup> He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. <sup>16</sup> For by<sup>lf</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, <sup>20</sup> and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.**

- Paul pulls no punches against the false teachings that came about in the Colossian church. Teachings that included questioning Jesus' supremacy, His humanity, His sufficiency to be a person's salvation, needing special knowledge or angelic worship to gain spiritual visions.
- This little church was riddled with questions of is Jesus really who He says He is and people claim Him to be? Is it really enough to put my faith in Him alone and live in the freedom He offers?
- **These are questions many people ask today, and people still to this day challenge the deity of Jesus, the sufficiency of Jesus, and the finished work of Jesus. Who Christ is to us is still one of the most important questions in a person's life. (And its important for us to know ourselves)**

So this passage is just as relevant today than ever before...and it starts with one of the coolest statements of Christology in all of Scripture:

**"He (Jesus) is the Image of the invisible God" (vs. 1a)**

The greek word there for Image is Eikon (ICON) and carries with it two ideas, **Likeness and Manifestation.**

- When you hear likeness, please don't think close but not quite it. There is another greek word to describe things that are almost like it.
- This word is stronger. Think of the reflection in the mirror. Or the face stamped on a coin. This word speaks of resemblance more than representation.
- Christ reflects the perfect likeness of the Father and is the manifestation of the Father. Deity is shown in Jesus! (HE IS HIM, AS THE KIDS SAY)
- Manifestation meaning the bringing of something into PHYSICAL REALITY.

**The great English Bible Scholar Arthur Peake said it this way:**

**"God is invisible, which does not merely mean that He cannot be seen by our bodily eye, but that He is unknowable. In the exalted Christ the unknowable God becomes known."**

Jesus said it Himself in John 14:9:

**"If you've seen me, you've seen the Father"**

**This is just the opening statement to a beautiful poem Paul is stringing together, track with me, because Paul is going to lay out the Resume of the nature and person of the Risen King Jesus:**

#### **The Image & Manifestation of God (vs. 15a)**

- Jesus expressly shows and manifests God to mankind.
- He is God in the flesh!!!

#### **Firstborn or Supreme Over Creation (vs. 15b)**

- Right off the bat, this word in the Greek (Protokos) is translated Firstborn, because that's what it means.
- But many false teacher, have taken this word and run with it to assume a false doctrine that Jesus is "born" therefore He is a created being.
- This is problematic in so many ways, and is inconsistent with so many other parts of the scriptures. (Revelation 1:8, Hebrews 13:8, John 1:1-2)
- There are two ways of understanding the word firstborn, firstborn in time but also in rank or supremacy.
- Think about the privileges and place of the Firstborn in the Old Testament. Esau was meant to have all the rights and privileges of the firstborn in His family. He was meant to have lordship and leadership in His family, but God gave all that to Jacob.

- In the same way, Jesus is “firstborn” or “Lord of all Creation”. He assumes full rank over all creation because He is God.

**“And I will make him the firstborn  
the highest of the kings of the earth”  
Psalm 89:27 (A Messianic Psalm)**

### **Uncreated Creator of All Creation (Vs.16)**

- This one is fun to say! Lol
- Here we see Paul continue to answer and bring clarity to his last statement about Jesus, for by Jesus, ALL THINGS were created.
- There is perfect Unity within the Triune God, therefore Jesus was equally apart of creation, and it makes so much sense to me.
- With all the creative beauty in our world, the glory of a sunset, the magnificence of a mountain peak, the detail of a butterfly's wings. There is a language of a creative mind in all we see around us.
- And Jesus seemed to be an appreciator of it. In all seriousness. Think of all the scenes of Jesus appreciating what's around, He takes special notion of the sparrows & lilies in the sermon on the mount, He is often found up on a mount praying alone (getting away), He even takes stroll on the sea of Galilee seeing the sights. That last one was silly lol
- But not only did Paul believe with deep conviction Christ is CREATOR, but he clarifies that is all things: **Invisible & Visible**
- Note there at the end...all these things were made FOR HIM. All of creation, made to bring Him glory! (Let all that has breath praise the Lord, Psalm 150:6)**

### **Sustainer of All Creation (Vs. 17)**

- To really drive it home, Paul proclaims that Jesus is before all things! Truly He had no beginning, Jesus was before the beginning.
- But notice that next statement, “And in Him all things hold together”.
- Jesus is not only the beginning catalyst that starts creation, but He is the sustaining force that preserves it and helps it consist.
- Bring this down to our own personal lives for a minute, if you are following, trusting, and submitting your life to the one we call “Creator & Sustainer” of all Life. And scriptures tells us He cares for you...what do we have to fear or worry about?
- Gosh these things really convict me to think, this is true of Jesus, yet I doubt Him in my simple moments of life.
- Christ is the means at which the world and our lives hold together!

### **The Head & Life of the Church**

- A body without its head has no life, no direction, no power!
- Now I know they say a cockroach can live up to a week without its head, but that cockroach ain't good for nothing without its head! (Wasn't good for anything before lol)
- And whether you're using the example of the head of a body or the head of a river, either way Jesus is the source of all life for the church.

### **Fullness of God Bodily**

- The word for "Fullness" here speaks to the "totality" or "Sum total" of something, and as we can see in the text. Paul is saying Jesus has the totality of God in Him bodily.
- It actually says it "PLEASED" God to dwell in Him fully. Meaning literally to see it as a good thing, to be fully in Him.
- The Father was pleased to be one with Jesus and He vice versa.
- No doubt about it, Jesus has all the fullness of God bodily.
- He was as the Prophet Isaiah proclaimed about Him "Immanuel - God with us" (Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:23)

### **The Reconciler & Redeemer**

- Not only is He Uncreated, Creator of the Universe, Supreme Head of the Church but he is also the hope and reconciler of sinful mankind.
- Like if it wasn't enough that Jesus by nature is just powerful and eternal. He also loves the lost and broken, and is there only hope for eternal life and freedom.
- And Paul makes it clear that Jesus does make peace between sinners and God the Father by the blood he shed for them.
- To reconcile is to bring back completely, no separation. How many of us in the room have tasted being brought back to God completely through Jesus?
- The sacrificial atonement of Jesus on the cross of calvary is the only hope for any man to be saved, because there was no other man like Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

**<sup>8</sup> But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**

**<sup>9</sup> Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!**

**Romans 5:8-9**

**Jesus did not shy away from the sufferings and pain of that cross. Despite His great divine power and presence. Jesus felt every bit of the pain and agony he endured, all so that we could enjoy peace with God.**

**Because it wasn't always that way for us right? Many of us can remember the BC days!**

## **Alienated to Reconciled (Colossians 1:21-23)**

- That word in the Greek for alienated literally means to be transferred from one master to another. Meaning at one point we had been sold out to self and Satan because of sin. We had no chance of escaping from that place!
- Our minds and deeds were given over to our sin nature.
- But because of the power of God for salvation, the good news of Jesus Christ, and His literal death on the cross we are presented to God the Father as:
  - Holy
  - Blameless
  - Above Reproach
- We cannot make our own peace with God, our works and actions are filthy rags. But it now says that in Christ, HE presents us Holy, Blameless, and Above reproach.
- Almost like the complete opposite to a public shaming. Jesus brings us before His Father, for a public acceptance. **“Dad, these are my friends, lambs, children. We love them, and they are they are ours! They are forgiven!”**
- Paul encourages the Colossians believers to stay stable and steadfast in continuing the faith.
  - This encouragement is there amongst many like it, because the life of a believer is difficult. Trials and tribulations are promised. And temptations to fade back or sideline our walks with Jesus are constant.
  - But the promises to those who run the race, and keep the faith until the end are worth every moment of struggle.
  - Christ walked the long hard road for my salvation, it should be our desire to not neglect honoring Him with our lives!

**“The Road Ahead is Treacherous, but the End is Glorious”**

**- A Pilgrim's Progress**

**Perseverance is not an essential for salvation in the life of a believer, but it is essential for the christian life of a believer. Christ will hold tightly to us until the end, may we say we were doing the same when we get there!**

## Paul's Gospel Ministry: (Colossians 24-29)

There might not be a better New Testament follower of Christ to take this exhortation of perseverance from than Paul the Apostle, seeing that He was one who suffered incredible hardship for His faith, and yet ran His race and kept His faith until the end.

<sup>3</sup> Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. <sup>24</sup> Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. <sup>25</sup> Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; <sup>26</sup> on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; <sup>27</sup> in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food,<sup>[b]</sup> in cold and exposure.

This list details all the difficulties Paul faced as he ministered the gospel and planted churches on His missionary journeys. We don't need to compare our lives to this list. Just consider what Paul said in his other Epistle to the Romans: That suffering produces perseverance, perseverance, character, and character hope!

Stay steadfast, the hardships are helping!

**Now we will we get a glimpse about Paul's heart and perspective about His call to minister the gospel: (Read Colossians 1:24-29)**

<sup>24</sup> Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. <sup>25</sup> I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness— <sup>26</sup> the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord's people. <sup>27</sup> To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

<sup>28</sup> He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. <sup>29</sup> To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.

- Paul ends this chapter laying out what His labor has looked like for the church as a whole.
- **There are 4 main keys worth noting about the call God had on Paul's Ministry life:**

### **1. Paul's call to ministry looked like suffering for Christ Jesus and His church:**

- The idea Paul puts forward is that He rejoices in suffering for the churches sake, and filling up what's lacking in Christ's afflictions.
- The word afflictions there, is never used in the NT to describe Jesus's suffering on the cross.

- Scholars believe this is Paul alluding to His current sufferings and hardships as a result of representing Christ.
- Paul knew and rejoiced in the thought of suffering for the sake of Christ His Lord and the Church His bride.
- Again different context and different time for us. But same question, am I willing to serve and minister Jesus to others even if it costs me, comfort, ease, status, or safety? (A worthy question, one I'm asking myself often)

## 2. Paul had a ministry call given by God and for others:

- Paul makes mention multiple times even in these two verses that He is doing it for the church's sake, for the sake of the body, and eventually here in verse 25 says, he became a minister "for you" or "for them".
- And He became a minister of the gospel not by the sheer desire of His own heart, or plans of His own intellect & reasoning. But it was "given" to Him by God.
- Truly on that road of Damascus, God had plans for Him, and it could only have been by Christ Himself that they would be fulfilled. I think Paul was probably pretty blown away by all God walked Him into.
- And how often does what God give us, He wants us to give away at times?
- I think what's worth noting and praying about, is just how much Paul loves the church? Eager to serve her, eager to be with the people, and minister Jesus to them.
- I pray in this age where criticism of the church has risen, we ourselves would by the Spirit, have a deep love for the church and its people. Despite how she has failed.
- Paul actively loved churches that hurt him...just read Corinthians.

## 3. Paul had a ministry of revealing the mysteries of God's plan for the church:

- **The biblical idea of a mystery is not like a riddle that needs to be solved, more like something hidden that can be revealed.**
- Paul is now in the business of revealing these mysteries that God has had planned all along for His church:
  - **First:** That the Gentiles would receive redemptive grace and be grafted in the church the same as the Jews!
  - **Second:** That the indwelling of Christ in believers by His Spirit! (Securing a future hope for all believers)
- God always had a plan for the Gentiles, but its now being realized b the work of the gospel.
- OT saints woud have understood the reality of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit momentarily, its why David cried out in Psalm 51, "oh Lord, take not your Spirit from me"
- Now believers in the church get the sealed and secured presence of God by His Spirit everyday! (John 14:23, I and my Father will make our Home with you)

- May we never take for granted the fact that we get to be the temple of God's presence daily.

#### 4. Paul had a ministry of struggle empowered by God Himself:

- Paul finishes this thought by laying out that it's Christ He proclaims, warns, and teaches others about!
- A really helpful lay out of a healthy ministry and what they communicate:
  - Proclaiming His good news so many can be saved!
  - Warning those who neglect the gospel, and/or counseling others themselves living in sin and struggle.
  - Teaching and Admonishing those seeking Christ in their walk towards Him and mature.
- Paul's efforts were a struggle...the struggle was real! He said it himself.
- He toils and struggles, the idea here is almost like competing in the games! Paul works tirelessly to see others grow in Christ.
- But He acknowledges at the end of the day, His tireless effort is only because of God's powerful work within Him.

**<sup>12</sup>Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, <sup>13</sup>for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.**

**<sup>14</sup>Do all things without grumbling or disputing"**

**Philippians 2:12-14**

We are called to serve and honor the Lord. To work out our own salvation. Not to work for our own salvation. We minister because Christ Jesus is our King, the Supreme one, and worthy of all our efforts.

But we rest knowing, He will do the work in and through us. He will give us the words, gifts, and strength needed to help those around us.

So look to the Author and Finisher of your faith today, Jesus Christ the Preeminent one. He is above it all, before it all, and in all who trust Him by faith.

Look to serve Him and someone else today as He would lead.

Centuries after Paul, a dangerous (yet popular) teacher named Arius claimed that Jesus was not truly God and that there was a time when He did not exist. Paul rightly understood and insisted that Jesus **is before all things** and is Himself **the beginning**.

“They, whom God hath accepted in His Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by His Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end.”