

Colossians: The Gospel Life

At the very beginning of the book of Acts, just before He is about to ascend back into heaven, Jesus tells His followers that they will change the world. Jesus' followers, a group of jacked up, uneducated, freaked out, Galilean peasants, had no clue what to do next. They gathered together in a stuff room on the roof of a house to pray.

After several weeks of praying, God showed up in power. And, these freaked out Galilean peasants stepped out in the market place with supernatural boldness. They proclaimed the Gospel and 3000 people became Christians in one day. Once again, Jesus' followers had no clue what to do. What are we supposed to do with all these people? How are we going to make sure that these new Christians grow? How can we continue to bring Gospel to more people in our city, country, and world?

The early church's answer to that question was Life Groups. The early church met in groups of 10 to 20 in various houses throughout Jerusalem. And, in these groups, men and women lived life together, they studied God's Word together, they challenged each other to grow together, and they lived on mission together.

What was true then, continues to be true today. Real growth, life changing growth, happens in the context of Life Group Communities. I became a Christian the summer after my freshman year of college. And, at the first Christian event that I attended, I met a group of guys who would take me under their wing. We didn't have formal times when we met together. But, we lived life together, we challenged each other, we encouraged each other, and we grew spiritually together. Later that same year, I got plugged into a college ministry. They invited me to be a part of a Life Group on campus. This Life Group was significantly more formal. We met for an hour and a half every week. We walked through a lesson, sometimes with a video. Both of these Life Groups, one more informal and one more formal, were integral in me growing in my faith as a young believer. From then until now, I have been in some sort of Life Group Community and the Lord has consistently used that community to draw me closer to Him.

Our dream at Fellowship is that every neighborhood and people group in Southwest Missouri would have some sort of Life Group Community. This is our dream because we long to see lives changed in Southwest Missouri and life change happens in Life Groups.

This curriculum is designed to make our Life Groups as effective and life changing as possible both for the participants and for you, the leaders.

CONTEXT OF A LIFE GROUP

Life Groups that flourish have three characteristics in common:

1. They are vulnerable. In our world of social media and staged instagram pictures, almost nobody has a place to be real. Our Life Groups must be a place where people can be real. They must be places where people can share the hard, messy, ugly parts of their lives, in addition to the fun, exciting, and easy parts. Leaders, this starts with you. Your Life Group will only be as vulnerable as you are.
2. They are compassionate. In our world of marketing, people feel used almost constantly. Almost nobody has a place where they are genuinely cared for. Our Life Groups must be one of those places. They must be places where people don't need to be fake, but where they can know that they are cared for. Leaders, this starts with you. You must genuinely care for people in your Life Group.
3. They are exciting. In our world of cynicism, almost nobody has a place where they can be genuinely excited about what God is doing in and through them. Our Life Groups must be one of those places. They must be places where our eyes are lifted out of the ho hum of our daily lives to the bigger picture of how God is changing us and changing our world through us. Leaders, this starts with you. No one will be more excited about your Life Group than you.

CONTENT OF A LIFE GROUP

We have all been to Life Groups that are nothing more than sterile Bible Studies. A fill-in-the-blank question here and a Sunday School answer there. And, we have all been to Life Groups that are essentially just hanging out. Frozen espresso drinks are great but coffee shops and various levels of caffeine don't change lives. Real Life Groups, Life-changing Life Groups have deep relationship and challenging engagement with God and His Word. You must have both.

The following curriculum is designed to foster both engagement with God's Word and deep community with those involved in the Life Group. Every Life Group will have four parts:

1. Connect (10 min). This usually happens at the very beginning. Much of this will be informal as people are eating cookies or just hanging out for the first several minutes. But, some should be formal. You should try to begin every Life Group with a fun or funny introductory question.
2. Discuss (35 min). Every Life Group will spend some time in God's Word. This should happen through reading a passage of Scripture and asking open-ended questions to discern what that passage means and how it applies to our life. For each passage, this curriculum will give you around 7 questions to choose from. You do not need to use all these questions. They are meant to give you tracks to run on as you plan your Life Group.
3. Relate (25 min). Every Life Group will have time when those who come can be real and vulnerable about their lives. This should be done in all male or all female groups. The two questions that should guide this time are: What has been the highlight of your walk with the Lord this week? and What has been the biggest struggle this week? Remember, leaders, you must lead out in this. This is intended to be an opportunity to confess sin/temptation and celebrate growth. And, leader,

you will need to model vulnerability and engaging in heart issues not simply surface issues.

4. Impact (5 min). Every week, your Life Group should pray about people that they are going to invite next week. Life Group is not an island. It is a launching pad for impacting people. That starts with this part of Life Group.

IMPACT OF A LIFE GROUP

There are some people in your Life Group who will become Christians because of your leadership. There are others who will be challenged to live on mission for a lifetime and they will. There are others who will become missionaries in their workplaces or overseas because of what they experience in your Life Group.

Leading a Life Group is a weighty responsibility. We prepare well for Life Group because the potential for impact is so great! But, the ripple effects of leading a Life Group this year could be felt to the ends of the earth and into eternity. Welcome to a great adventure!

THE GOSPEL LIFE FOR YOU (COLOSSIANS 1:1-2)

CONNECT

DISCUSS

During this week's Life Group, we are going to look at the lives of the two writers of Colossians and the church to whom they wrote.

Read Acts 8:1-3, 9:1-19

- What strikes you about Paul's story?
- What do you notice about the character of Jesus in this passage? How have you noticed Jesus acting in similar ways toward you?
- What role did Paul play in his salvation? What role did Jesus play in Paul's salvation? Why is that significant?
- Why do you think Jesus included Ananias in this story? What lessons did Ananias learn?
- Paul's conversion should comfort those with a messy past. If God can save and use Paul, then He can save and use you and me too. When is it easiest for you to not believe that?

Read Acts 16:1-3

- Timothy was faithful and dependable, but anxious and timid. When is it easiest for you to run to anxiety and/or timidity? How has Jesus helped you fight anxiety and/or timidity?

Read Colossians 1:1-2

- The Colossians were tempted to live buffet spirituality. They worshipped Jesus but then added other things to their Christianity for security, hope, and joy. What is it easiest for you to add to Jesus in your life?

RELATE

What has been your biggest spiritual highlight this week? What has been your biggest spiritual struggle this week?

IMPACT (Invite, Engage, Share)

Pray for one person that you can trust the Lord to impact this week.

GOSPEL TRUTHS (COLOSSIANS 1:3-14)

CONNECT

DISCUSS

What stands out to you most from these verses?

What was your biggest takeaway from the sermon?

How would you define faith? Describe a time when faith in Jesus played a significant role for you. How have you noticed yourself growing in love for the saints?

In verse 6, Paul says that the Gospel is “bearing fruit and growing” in the world and in the lives of the Colossian believers. What is evidence that the Gospel is bearing fruit and growing in the world right now? What is evidence that the Gospel is bearing fruit and growing in your heart?

What does it mean to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord? What are some practical ways that you can grow in walking in a manner worthy of the Lord? Why is “knowledge of His will and spiritual wisdom” necessary to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord?

Have you ever worried that you might not endure in the faith? What are doubts that you struggle with right now? How does it make you feel that God uses His glorious might keep you from falling away?

Read verses 13 and 14 again. Why are these verses good news?

Justin shared four questions that God is asking us in light of these verses:

1. Believer, do you know that I saved you?
2. Believer, do you know that I have made you new?
3. Believer, do you know that I will not lose you?
4. Believer, do you know that you are my son or my daughter in Jesus?

Which of these is hardest for you to believe is true of you? Why? How would your life be different if you truly believed the Gospel truths that these questions point to?

RELATE

What has been your biggest spiritual highlight this week? What has been your biggest spiritual struggle this week?

IMPACT (Invite, Engage, Share)

Pray for one person that you can trust the Lord to impact this week.

A BIG JESUS (COLOSSIANS 1:14-23)

CONNECT

DISCUSS

What stands out to you from these verses?

What was your biggest takeaway from the sermon?

Paul could have just said, "Jesus is God." But, instead, Paul gives us verses 15 to 20. Why do you think Paul did that? What parts of Jesus' character is Paul emphasizing?

In what ways is it easy for us to forget how big and powerful Jesus is? If you truly believed that Jesus is as big and powerful as Paul says, how would your life be different?

Why does it matter that Jesus is the head of the church? What are some ways that people forget this?

How have you noticed your sin creating a lack of peace with other people? With God? What is one specific way that Jesus brought peace into your life?

What most stands out to you from verses 21 to 23? In light of our Hebrews series, how would you explain verse 23 to some one?

There is a lot of theology in these verses. What is one practical action step that you can take this week in light of who Jesus is (verse 15 to 20) and what He has done for us (verses 21 to 23)?

RELATE

What has been your biggest spiritual highlight this week? What has been your biggest spiritual struggle?

IMPACT

Pray for one person that you can invite to our Sunday Celebration this week.