

# The Centre 1: Holding it all Together

Colossians 1:1-23

## Group Chat

### Key Scriptures

*9For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, 11being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, 12and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. 13For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, 14in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

Colossians 1:9-14

Discuss these questions with someone—maybe a family member, friend, or member of your LifeGroup. Use a communication method that works best for your situation.

**Start talking.** Find a conversation starter for your group.

- What ways do you prefer to stay connected to people? Social Media? FaceTime? Text messages? Phone calls? Letters?

**Start thinking.** Ask a question to get your group thinking.

- How important are other people in your life?
- How often do you pray for other people? What sorts of prayers do you pray for them?

**Start sharing.** Choose a question to create openness.

- Who are three people you are thankful for this week?
- If you had one email to send, who would you send it to and what would you say?
- Is there a time in your life when you were struggling and someone came alongside you and strengthened you? What did they say?

**Start praying.** Be bold.

*Father, thank you for our people, our tribe, our squad.*

*Thank you that, even when life is difficult, we have people in our lives who stick by us and support us. We thank you for the incredible way you care for us through others and we pray that we would be used by you to care for people in just the same way as people care for us. In Jesus' name, amen.*

**Start doing.** Commit to a step and live it out this week.

- Send a letter/note/text/pm to someone thanking God for them this week.

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## Bible Study

*This is for those who have a little more time and would like to do some more bible study.*

Jesus Christ is not an unfamiliar historical figure. Even in secular society Jesus ranks with Moses, Buddha, Socrates and other great philosophical and religious leaders.

The claim of Christianity however, is that there is a uniqueness about Jesus that qualifies him to be the universal saviour of the world. In the first century this was a particularly bold claim, when there were hundreds of other gods around, each with their own claims to power and authority. In this letter, Paul not only claims that there is only one true God, but also that Jesus was this one true God.

*15-18 We look at this Son and see the God who cannot be seen. We look at this Son and see God's original purpose in everything created. For everything, absolutely everything, above and below, visible and invisible, rank after rank after rank of angels—everything got started in him and finds its purpose in him. Colossians 1:15-18 (MSG)*

The reason Paul is so keen to spell out the basics of the message is that he has never met these Colossians. They didn't hear the message from him directly. Rather they were converted by Epaphras, who had been converted by Paul and then gone back to his home town (Colossae) to share the message there. So Paul is keen to clarify what exactly is the message, and what is really important.

Before getting into more of the message, however, he gives thanks to God for them and their new faith and hope they have. He also prays that their faith would continue to grow – asking for 'wise minds and spirits attuned to [God's] will' and that they would understand the ways God works.

*We pray that you'll have the strength to stick it out over the long haul—not the grim strength of gritting your teeth but the glory-strength God gives. It is strength that endures the unendurable and spills over into joy, thanking the Father who makes us strong enough to take part in everything bright and beautiful that he has for us. Colossians 1:12*

Paul then prays that they would give thanks to the Father for rescuing them from "dead end alleys and dark dungeons," from the pit they couldn't get themselves out of – the sins they were doomed to keep repeating.

He ends his prayer and then describes exactly how and why Jesus was able to rescue them from the dead ends and dark dungeons.

**First - Jesus is God - The one true creator and ruler of all things.**

- *We look at this Son and see the God who cannot be seen. (v15)*
- *Everything got started in him and finds its purpose in him. (v16)*
- *He was supreme in the beginning and he is supreme in the end (v18)*
- *all the broken and dislocated pieces of the universe—people and things, animals and atoms—get properly fixed and fit together in vibrant harmonies, all because of his death, his blood that poured down from the cross. (v20)*

## **Second - Jesus died for them - Personally**

Paul makes it personal and explains that this incredibly exalted heavenly figure died on the cross, just for them, even though they had turned their backs on God.

*Christ brought you over to God's side and put your lives together, whole and holy in his presence. You don't walk away from a gift like that! You stay grounded and steady in that bond of trust, constantly tuned in to the Message, careful not to be distracted or diverted. There is no other Message—just this one. Colossians 1:22-23*

This has a profound effect on the lives of those who believe it to be true. It brings a whole hearted harmony to life, a changed perspective of self, a changed perspective of the present and a changed perspective of the future. Because of who Jesus is, and what Jesus did, you can look forward to a glorious future. Nothing should be added to this truth, and nothing subtracted from it. It is the message.

One of the greatest theologians of our time Alister E. McGrath writes:

“At the centre of the Christian faith lies a picture. Christian art and architecture, literature and hymns are dominated by the symbol of the cross. A symbol, however, both invites and demands thought and reflection. What are we to make of this symbol? What does it tell us about God and the world, or about our nature and ultimate destiny? Why is it that at the centre of a faith in a loving God lies a symbol of death and despair – the dreadful picture of a man dying through crucifixion?

The cross is ... a powerful challenge to the complacency of the Christian church. The cross continually raises questions for the church which dares to call itself “Christian” after the one who was crucified and rose again, and yet seems to prefer to look for the grounds of its identity and relevance elsewhere than in the crucified Christ.”

- Alister E. McGrath, *The Mystery of the Cross* (Zondervan, 1988)

## Questions

1. If you were born and raised in the church, what keeps you connected and part of your church community? If you were not raised in the church (like the people at Colossae) what brought you into the life of the church and what keeps you connected?
2. What would an ideal church look like? What would it need to have to be a biblically functioning community of believers?
3. When you say "I believe in Jesus Christ" what does this mean to you?
4. Paul speaks highly of Epaphras whose life and faith positively impacted the believers in Colossae, who has been an Epaphras in your life? How has their faith and love for Jesus impacted your life as a Christ Follower.
5. What are some of the ways we can grow in our knowledge of God's will for our lives and the life of our friends(Col. 1:9)? Describe a time when you had a clear sense of God's direction in your life.
6. What is one area in your life where you need God's strength and power right now?
7. Challenge: write a letter of thanks to previous pastors, officers and leaders who are retired or who have served your church in the past. Express your love to them and thank them for investing their lives in the church.