

# **GROWING INTO JESUS**

Previously in Colossians: Paul is writing to the Christians at Colossae telling them how thankful to God he is that they accepted the gospel and trusted Jesus. He tells them he's been praying for them nonstop (1:9-12), and has been suffering (1:24) and working (1:28-2:1) for them so that they might grow in how deeply they know Jesus.

This week, Paul tells the Colossians that the next steps are to take no steps at all. Instead, he says, put down roots.

#### Read Colossians 2:6-10

1. How did the non-Jewish Colossians receive the Jewish Messiah, Jesus?

#### The Elemental Forces'

Ancient Greek had a word ('stoichea') that means "the fundamentals of how the world works" - how things work together in an orderly fashion. In the NIV it's translated "the elemental spiritual forces of this world". The word "spiritual" has been added by translators.

For Jews, the way their world worked was by rules and holy days set down by the law. Those were the 'fundamentals of life' for them in this world. For an average gentile in Colossae, ritual idol feasts at the local temple and following Greek philosophy were the obvious ways to find growth and fulfilment.

This common wisdom for how to get onside with your deity and live a full life is what Paul is referring to when he uses the Greek term stoicheia, which literally just means "basic principles".

2. How does Paul say that they should then go about life?

3. What might stop them doing that?

4. What is it that Christ has and Christ offers that nothing else can? (see v9&10)

## **HOW DOES GROWTH START?**

Prior to the coming of Jesus, Jews and gentiles were equally unable to grow up into the 'fullness of God', but for different reasons. The gentiles were alienated from God completely, while the Jews had a slightly different problem. Paul pointedly reminds each group where they came from and what Christ achieved.

#### Read Colossians 2:11-15

- 5. What things ruled people before Christ?
  - a) What ruled "you" (the gentiles in Colossae) in verses 11-13?
  - b) What ruled "us" (Jews) in verses 13-15?
- 6. How were they both set free from these things?

7. Who or what is left to judge them?

Because of what Christ has done for us on the cross, we are no longer held captive by the hollow and deceptive philosophy of religion - the idea that we need to placate God with religious activities so that he will be good to us. God has already been good to us in Christ!

### THIS IS HOW WE DO IT

There are behaviours, ideas and even political views that everyone accepts in our world - like "work hard, play hard," or "go hard or go home." They become common wisdom, even cliches after a while. And they can help you get ahead in life, in your industry or even in relationships. Maybe they've helped you or a friend get their life in order. Maybe they even spark joy, like decluttering your house Marie Kondo style! Paul, though, is convinced that they're lacking. They don't have Jesus' power to forgive your old life, leave it behind and start a whole new one.

### Circumcision By Jesus?

Circumcision was a vivid (and painful!) symbolic representation of "putting off the flesh" which marked out members of God's Old Testament people, Israel. But the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 30, Jeremiah 31) looked forward to the time that hearts would be circumcised rather than just bodies - people would be changed from the heart by the Spirit. The surprise is that when they believe in Jesus, Gentiles receive the Spirit too - so even though they're not Jewish, they have the "circumcision that really counts."

work hard play hard
mission focussed
cast vision
be authentic
go hard or go home
do what you do best
Just do it
Conceive believe achieve
only do what only you can do

### Read Colossians 2:16-23

8.	What do you imagine might be said about the gentile Colossians by the kind of people Paul mentions in verse 16? Has your Christian life ever raised comment from those who don't believe in Jesus for going against common wisdom?
9.	What 'basic principles' of life have you learned that have been genuinely helpful to you in living better?
10.	In what ways are these powerless to do what only Christ can? How is Jesus fundamentally different from these good but limited things?
11.	Is there a risk for you that you might build your life on these principles rather than on who Jesus is and everything he's done?
12.	How might you practically combat sin or temptation in your life with Christ, instead of relying on more slogans or personal productivity regimes?
oth	ay for a lightness of step, a loosening of guilt and shame, a freedom from judgement by ners, in light of your new life with Jesus. Pray also that you'll invest in Jesus, knowing and wing him, that he is where your roots will go down deepest, so that you really can grow in

him.

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