

**OPEN THE CONVERSATION**

Take some time to build relationships with the students:

* Ask for each student’s high and low from the week.
* Today’s RBQ (Relationship Building Question): **What was your favorite part of the Super Bowl?**

**INTRODUCTION**

Have you ever seen someone skip a stone along the water? Can you picture it? When you choose a stone of the right shape and size and toss it at the right angle with the right force, it skips far along the surface of the water several times before it sinks. Each time it hits the surface, it creates ripples that expand, going wider and wider as they spread in the water. When we walk in God’s plan for our lives, the gospel spreads from us like the ripples from a well-skipped stone. Today, we will kick off our study of Colossians by learning about the ripple effect the gospel had in the first century. We’ll see how the disciples of the early church took the Great Commission seriously and sought the growth of the gospel message and spiritual fruit. We’ll explore the power of the gospel and some of the aspects of Paul’s strategic and intentional ministry that we can implement in our lives today.

**If you were asked to tell someone the “Gospel” how would you explain it? Do you know the Gospel? Was it hard to explain it?**

***READ Colossians 1:1-8***

1. **What does Paul’s example teach us about how we should approach our call to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19-20)?**
2. **What do you think Paul meant when he said the gospel is “bearing fruit” and “growing”? What does this look like today?**
3. **What are some small steps you can take this week to put more of a focus on prayer in your life?**
4. **Who is God calling you to share the gospel with this week? How will you respond?**

**WRAP UP**

**Put today's lesson into action: How can you apply it to your life?**
*Ask for any prayer requests and pray for one another.*

**EXTENDED CUT**

The gospel message, which Paul proclaimed so widely and thoroughly, is one of grace and peace. In a biblical context, grace can be understood as God giving us things we don’t deserve. In view of the gospel, we have been saved by God’s grace (Ephesians 2:8). In 2 Corinthians 12:9-10, Paul taught that God’s grace is sufficient for us even when we are in discouraging or difficult circumstances, which the early church often experienced. John 1:14 records that the Lord is “full of grace and truth,” and Hebrews 4:16 describes His throne as one of grace. Grace is an everpresent, ever-needed gift to us as believers. Peace, likewise, is a gift from the Lord, cultivated in all believers thanks to the presence of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). Jesus is the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6), and in John 16:33, He taught that we can have peace in Him despite whatever sufferings we face. Remember, the early church was rife with suffering. Jesus is our peace (Ephesians 2:14), and apart from Him we can’t know peace truly or fully. These are powerful blessings in the life of the believer, and Paul wanted first-century believers continue to receive them from the Lord.

**What does Paul’s example teach us about how we should approach our call to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19-20)?**

Prayer has become a neglected discipline in our culture, but Paul’s teachings tell us that it was clearly a high priority for him. Jesus also modeled prayer as a way of life, as He regularly made time to be alone with God in prayer during His earthly ministry and taught us to pray without giving up (Luke 5:16; 18:1). Scripture generally places a high emphasis on the importance of prayer, and we see that modeled throughout the Bible by people like Moses, Hannah, David, Daniel, and the apostles.

**What do you think Paul meant when he said the gospel is “bearing fruit” and “growing”? What does this look like today?**

In connection to the spread of the gospel in Colossae, Paul wrote a letter that has helped teach generations upon generations of believers what it means to follow Jesus. The Lord worked so mightily through the gospel spreading to this small town. Even when human minds label something as unworthy of our attention, God can work for His glory and good. Epaphras’s evangelism also produced a body of believers who Paul characterized by their faith and love (v. 4). We know these characteristics to be a true mark of knowing and following Jesus because these are fruits of the Holy Spirit working in our lives (Galatians 5:22-23). They also exemplify Jesus’s teaching from John 13:35: “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” The Colossians had received the true gospel, and the Lord was evident and working. We mentioned earlier that the gospel is one of grace and peace, and Paul wrote in verse 6 that as we learn and grow in the gospel, we come to appreciate God’s grace toward us more deeply. In verse 5, Paul taught that when we accept and follow the gospel message, we have a certain hope in heaven. As he taught elsewhere, Jesus is our hope (1 Timothy 1:1). This was an especially precious promise for the early church, who endured much persecution. As demonstrated by Epaphras’s faithful service to the Colossae population, Paul wrote that the gospel was “bearing fruit and growing all over the world” (v. 6). In John 15, Jesus taught that those in true relationship with Him would produce fruit (John 15:1-4).