

**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): **If you could choose one skill to master overnight, what would it be and why?**

**INTRODUCTION**

In 2019, a passenger on a flight claimed he was hurt by a metal serving cart, you know, the one with snacks, and decided to sue the airline company. When his lawyers filed the case in 2023, they mentioned six other legal cases to support their argument. The problem was these cases they mentioned we not real. Turns out, a lawyer had used ChatGPT to look for information, but instead of giving him real cases, ChatGPT gave the lawyer made-up cases, and the lawyer did not check if they were real. This mistake shows how important it is to verify information, especially because there’s a lot of false information in the world today. Early Christians also had to deal with lies and “fake news” so they needed to know the truth about their faith, which is why Paul wanted them to know the truth of Jesus so badly!

**Can you think of something you heard before that ended up being fake news? How do you think fake news about Jesus and the Bible is a real problem today too?**

***READ Exodus 34:1-30***

1. **What does it mean to be “taken captive by deceit and false arguments” (v. 8)?**
2. **What intentional steps can we take to become more rooted in our faith, like Paul mentioned in verse 7? What does this look like in daily life?**
3. **What does Paul’s writing here teach us about sharing the gospel and making disciples? How can we share the gospel with others in our lives?**
4. **What does it mean to die with Christ but still live as if we belong to the world (v. 20)?**
5. **How can we tell sound teaching from false teaching? What are some ways we prepare for this?**
6. **Revisit the way Paul described the gospel in verses 13-14. What language can we pull from this passage to share the gospel with another person today?**

**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**

In our passage today, Paul continued to help the Colossians understand the difference between the truth of the gospel and the lies they heard from false teachers. He warned them that some arguments that sound good and plausible aren’t and emphasized the truth of Christ and the gospel.

**What does it mean to be “taken captive by deceit and false arguments” (v. 8)?**

The header in the CSB Study Bible for this section of text is “Christ versus the Colossian Heresy.” This header wasn’t a part of Paul’s original letter— it was added later as a helpful study tool—but it is the perfect summary for our text today. Paul was dealing with this issue in the Colossian church: countering the heretical teachings the congregation heard with the truth of the gospel of Christ. “Heresy” can be defined in different ways but often refers not just to the spread of false biblical information but implies intent to deceive. We certainly get the impression of intent based on accounts we read in the New Testament. The false teachers in Colossae seemingly wanted to turn the believers there away from the true gospel. We don’t know for sure the nature of this teaching, but commentators have made educated guesses: Hellenistic Teachings: This Greek influence included the Gnostic school of thought. They believed the world was not created by God and that the physical body was evil, but the spirit was good. The latter was especially problematic because their belief conflicted with the truth that Jesus was both fully man and fully God.3 Jewish Teachings: There was a problematic movement in the early church that taught Gentiles would first need to convert to Judaism to become Christians. One sticking point we read about in the New Testament is the issue of circumcision. The Judaizers advocated that Gentiles had to first be circumcised according to Jewish law to become Christians, but this was not necessary. We don’t and can’t earn our salvation through our works. We are saved through grace by faith in Jesus alone (Ephesians 2:8-9). The Colossian church was mostly comprised of Gentiles, which could have put them at higher risk for believing this false teaching.4 Paul had explained the truth of the gospel to help prevent the Colossian congregation from believing persuasive false arguments they encountered. For Paul to be with them in spirit (v. 5) was no doubt a comfort. Paul praised them for still being “well ordered” (v. 5). We get the sense that, though they were in spiritual danger from the threat of the false teachers, they had not yet given in. They were still showing faith in the gospel. Paul’s proclamation that they “received Christ Jesus as Lord” (v. 6) was a profound debunking of false teaching. The Jews who did not accept Jesus as Messiah denied that He was God. The Gnostics, with their skewed physical body versus spirit beliefs, did not believe Jesus could have been fully human. Both were wrong. Christ Jesus was fully man and fully God. Paul encouraged the Colossians to continue to walk with Jesus in some specific ways (vv. 6-7): “Being rooted and built up in him”: Remember Jesus’s teaching about the vine in John 15? In this analogy, He is the vine, and we are the branches. The branches can only exist and produce fruit when connected to the vine. We must be rooted in Jesus to make that happen. Paul presented a similar idea to the Ephesian church in Ephesians 3:17. When we are rooted in Jesus, He’s the first place we go and our number one priority. When we are firmly rooted in our Savior, God builds up our faith and works powerfully in our lives. As branches on Jesus’s vine, lovingly tended by the Father to produce fruit in abundance (John 15:2), we are built up continuously. We grow and grow under His care. We don’t ever “arrive”; this is a life-long choice and pursuit. “Established in the faith”: When our faith is established, we are like the house built on the rock from Matthew 7. When our foundation in Christ is firm, we can weather storms that will come our way with the comfort, peace, and perspective that comes only through knowing Jesus. The Colossian believers were in their own storm, and Paul wanted their foundation firm enough to weather it. “Overflowing with gratitude”: Giving gratitude to God is seen in many places in the pages of Scripture. It is a solid practice, and one that Paul also recommended in 1 Thessalonians 5:15-16 and Ephesians 5:18-20. God has given us all good things, and we should thank Him for it regularly. Modern science has identified that gratitude alters your brain chemistry positively.5 Gratitude is good for us. We show the Lord gratitude because we understand the generous and undeserved gift of what He has done and continues to do for us and because He deserves it, but we also receive a benefit from showing that gratitude. Paul gave another warning against the false teaching. Paul’s reference to “philosophy” was probably a direct reference to the type of beliefs the false teachers were hoping to spread in this case. He told them to be careful and used the analogy of being taken captive. When we fall into the trap of false teaching, it is like being taken captive. It is hard to break free from.

**What intentional steps can we take to become more rooted in our faith, like Paul mentioned in verse 7? What does this look like in daily life?**

Paul continued to fight the battle of Christ versus the Colossian Heresy. Paul’s approach to evangelism and ministry is an example for us. Do you notice his strategy? Paul knew the best defense in the face of lies was the truth, and he explained this in a way that combatted the false teaching they had heard. There’s no name calling or mudslinging, just truth. Paul repeated the point that Jesus is God (v. 9). This combats the Gnostic idea that the body was “evil” and the Jewish belief that Jesus wasn’t divine. His note that we have been filled by Jesus (v. 10)—referencing his teaching around the centrality of Christ from chapter 1—means Jesus is all we need. Some translations say, “you have been made complete” (NASB) in Jesus. When we are “filled” by Jesus, we lack nothing. The false teachers could offer no understanding that the Colossians needed. Paul went on to present truth against the Jewish circumcision argument, a major conversation in the early church. Circumcision was on Old Testament law practiced by Jews. It was mandated by God to set His people apart from the pagans around them. Now that Jesus had come and died on the cross, it was no longer necessary to follow traditional Jewish laws like this one. Remember this congregation was primarily made up of Gentile believers, so many of them would not have been circumcised as children like the Jews. Instead, Paul spoke of the circumcision they did undergo, not of the physical body but of the heart (Romans 2:25-29). He also referenced baptism. When Jesus issued the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20), his command to baptize showed a break from the Old Testament Law. They didn’t need sacrifices, purification, or circumcision anymore. Jesus ushered in something new. It is important to note baptism isn’t necessary for salvation—it’s an outward sign and declaration we make when we accept the gift of salvation Jesus offers us— but it is commanded for believers as a step of obedience in following Jesus. Paul went on to paint a beautiful picture of what Jesus did for us on the cross. Before we knew Him, we were dead, living a life of slavery to our sin. Think about the picture that paints for us. We were dead and enslaved. But God had a better plan for us—freedom and forgiveness through Jesus. Once we accept the gift He freely offers, we go from being dead to being alive and free in Him. Jesus paid for all the debt we racked up and the debt we continue to rack up because of our sin. Because Jesus died on the cross for us, our sin is forever and freely forgiven.

**What does Paul’s writing here teach us about sharing the gospel and making disciples? How can we share the gospel with others in our lives?**

**What does it mean to die with Christ but still live as if we belong to the world (v. 20)?**

When we become believers, fully rooted in and walking with Jesus, it should transform us and affect the way we live. Paul advocated for this transformation in the Colossian congregation. They knew the truth, and this was to affect the way they reacted to the false teachings they heard. Paul first spoke against the Judaizers. He told the Colossians Christians not to let anyone judge them for not following Old Testament law that was no longer needed. These laws were a bridge, or “shadow” (v. 17), holding us over until Jesus came. Jesus was always the plan. The “substance” (v. 17) came through Jesus (Matthew 5:17-20). Paul went on to teach against mysticism (probably mostly Gnostic ideas).6 Paul warned against the worship of angels, which the false teachers advocated for. Gnostics particularly emphasized “special visions,”7 which Paul alluded to here. These ideas had no validity, and these people had no authority over the church. Jesus is the head of the church (1:18), which is why understanding Him and what He has done is so important. They were to remain rooted in this truth. Paul again tackled the idea of earning salvation by satisfying a checklist of items. This legalistic attitude is still a threat in the church today. We can’t earn our salvation this way, or at all; salvation is always a gift we don’t deserve. Our focus should be less on what we can’t do, and more on what we should do—seek and follow Jesus. When we walk with Him, are fully rooted and established in Him, and seek His will for our lives, good works are a natural result.

**How can we tell sound teaching from false teaching? What are some ways we prepare for this?**

**Revisit the way Paul described the gospel in verses 13-14. What language can we pull from this passage to share the gospel with another person today?**