

SESSION 5

# Christ's truth

## SCRIPTURE FOCUS

Colossians 2:1–7

## BUILDUP THEME



INTERNALIZE GODLINESS

Christ is the source of all wisdom for spiritual growth.

## MEASURABLE RESPONSE

The learner will evaluate his or her life in light of the seven aims of spiritual maturity with the intent of addressing any areas of spiritual weakness.

## MEMORY VERSE

“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving” (Colossians 2:6, 7).

## Teacher Preparation

- ☐ When have you been impressed with a new version of a familiar product? What made the product better for you?
- ☐ Read Colossians 2:1–7. Note how Paul emphasizes the completeness of Christ. All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are already in Him. There is nothing to add or improve. There will never be a “New Christ” for believers to buy into. Christ can’t be upgraded.
- ☐ Have you ever thought that maybe Christ isn’t good enough for the present? What led to such thinking?
- ☐ Encourage your students to learn and embrace the truth that is in Christ. There is nothing to add to Him. He is and always will be sufficient for the believer. He will always be the truth and the way of salvation for the sinner.

## Session Summary

Paul wanted the Colossians to understand fully that Christ is the source of all wisdom and knowledge. False teachers with persuasive words were a risk to those believers. They needed to submit to Christ as Lord, keep the faith, and overflow with thanksgiving.



# Session Starters

## Options 1—iPhone Upgrade Slogans

### Steps

1. Present the following Apple iPhone advertising slogans. Have the students guess for which iPhone version the slogan was used. Have students keep track of how many they got right.
  - "Bigger than bigger." *iPhone 6 and 6 Plus.*
  - "The iPhone you've been waiting for." *iPhone 3G.*
  - "Your new superpower." *iPhone 13.*
  - "The biggest thing to happen to iPhone since iPhone." *iPhone 5.*
  - "You're more powerful than you think." *iPhone 5S.*
  - "Just the right amount of everything." *iPhone 11.*
  - "This changes everything. Again." *iPhone 4.*
  - "Apple reinvents the phone." *The original iPhone.*
  - "The only thing that's changed is everything." *iPhone 6S.*
  - "Say hello to the future." *iPhone X.*
  - "The ultimate iPhone." *iPhone 15Pro.*

2. Discuss the changes in iPhones over the years.

**ASK:** When, if ever, did you think your phone was sufficient to meet your needs?

**ASK:** How did you feel about your phone when the next model came out?

3. Transition to the Bible study.

Those pushing the Colossian heresy believed their version of Christ and salvation was an improvement on the original. They tried to sell their "upgrade" to the Colossian church members. Paul wrote to the Colossians to assure them that in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Christ can't be improved. He has revealed His truth to us in His Word, and there will forever be no upgrades needed.

## Option 2—Better Coke?

### Gather

- Vintage commercial for New Coke from the internet (optional).

### Steps

1. Before class, search the internet for a commercial for New Coke. Show it to your class.

## 2. Discuss the release of New Coke.

After 99 years of using the same formula for Coca-Cola, Coke changed it up and released New Coke on April 23, 1985. The change was meant to re-energize the slumping Coke brand. Slogans used to promote the new formula included: "Great new taste! Better than ever," and "Change for the best!" The New Coke formula did better than the original formula in blind taste tests, but when the old formula went away, the public didn't care if the New Coke tasted better. They wanted the original back. So just a few months after the release of New Coke, the original Coca-Cola returned to shelves to stay. The formula has stayed the same ever since.

**ASK:** If you were alive in 1985, what do you remember about the release of New Coke? (Q1)

**ASK:** What other changes to products have you found unwelcome? (Q2)

## 3. Transition to the Bible Study

Coke learned their brand was already as good as it could be. The changes weren't improvements at all. Those pushing the Colossian heresy believed their version of Christ and salvation was an improvement on the original. They tried to sell their "new taste" to the Colossian church members. Paul wrote to the Colossians to assure them that in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Christ can't be improved. He has revealed His truth to us in His Word, and there will forever be no changes to the "ingredients."

## Bible Study

In the second chapter of Colossians, Paul urged his readers to grasp the truth, guard the truth, and grow in the truth.

### I. Grasp the Truth (Col. 2:1-3)

#### A. The concern for truth (2:1)

Paul was concerned about his readers, saying he had felt a great deal of internal conflict concerning them. He wanted only the best for them. He agonized over them. But being under arrest in Rome, he was unable to have a face-to-face meeting with them..

**READ:** Colossians 2:1. **ASK:** To what do you attribute Paul's love for people who were for the most part strangers? (Q3) *Paul's love came from Christ, Who loves all people.*

The apostle John wrote Revelation more than thirty years after Paul wrote the Colossian letter. John recorded Christ's words to the church at Laodicea (Rev. 3:14–22).

Paul specifically mentioned his concern for the Colossians and the Laodiceans. Furthermore, he instructed the Colossians to pass along his letter to the Laodiceans. We have no reason to believe the Colossians ignored the truths Paul wrote.

## **B. The source of truth (2:2, 3)**

**READ:** Colossians 2:2.

Paul wanted God's best for all the believers in the Lycus Valley. First, he strongly desired that their hearts might be comforted or encouraged. Jesus used a form of the word "comfort" to identify the Holy Spirit (John 14:16, 17). The Greek word comes from a union of the word for "call" and the word for "alongside." The Holy Spirit is "called alongside" believers to comfort and encourage them. Certainly, the Holy Spirit would play an important role in helping the believers deal with the Colossian heresy that was threatening them.

As the believers in the two churches were grappling with the false teachings, there was the potential for disagreement among the believers. Paul wanted their hearts to be "knit together in love" (Col. 2:2). They would renew their love for one another and God if they kept their eyes on the Christ they knew at their salvation rather than the severely watered-down Christ presented as part of the heresy threatening the church.

**READ:** Colossians 2:3; Proverbs 8:1–11, 19–21. **ASK:** What similarities do you see between the Colossians verse and the Proverbs passages? (Q4) *Both the Colossians verse and the Proverbs passages portray wisdom as a valuable treasure. The Colossians verse tells us that wisdom is hidden in Christ, while the Proverbs passages seem to relate wisdom to Christ by personifying it.*

**READ:** Proverbs 1:7. **ASK:** Why is "fool" an appropriate name for those who despise wisdom and instruction? (Q5) *Because a fool doesn't fear God and believes his or her own way is best.*

Those teaching heresy in Colosse insisted that knowledge is secret and accessible only to a few individuals. Paul, by contrast, wanted his readers to understand that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are stored in Christ and are accessible to those who know Christ as Savior (Col. 2:3). The mystery he mentioned in verse 2 is God's revelation that Christ is the source of all wisdom and knowledge. Knowledge is the possession of facts, whereas wisdom is the right interpretation and application of facts. Paul wanted to make sure the Lycus Valley believers' eyes were open to the truth and not dimmed by the claims they heard from those who pushed the Colossian heresy.

## **II. Guard the Truth (Col. 2:4, 5)**

Christ's truth is a priceless treasure (Ps. 119:72). Believers will do well to guard against ruining it by changing it.

### **A. The truth protects (2:4)**

Paul's identification of Christ as the source of all wisdom and knowledge was designed to protect his readers from marauding wolves—the false teachers promoting the Colossian heresy.

**READ:** Colossians 2:4.

False teachers could not seduce the Lycus Valley believers if the believers understood that Christ was the treasury of all wisdom and knowledge. The believers would be fools to allow themselves to be seduced by the false teachers.

Apple always has a list of reasons to buy their latest version of the iPhone. In their ads they essentially admit their previous phones are no longer adequate to meet consumers' needs. Consumers must have their improved version, they claim, to navigate life successfully. The same is true for nearly every other brand.

The false teachers were trying to use advertising tactics on the believers in Colosse and Laodicea. But what they were trying to sell, the new and improved Christian religion, was false. They boasted that they had superior knowledge—secret knowledge—accessible only to those who joined their number. They promised to teach their converts secret passwords and lead them along avenues of higher learning. Their passwords, however, opened doors only to ignorance, and the avenues led to dead ends. True wisdom and knowledge are found only in Christ. Jesus cannot be improved upon. He is the ultimate and perfect treasure. Even an attempt to tweak Him a little bit here or there is a failure to recognize Him for the treasure that He already is. Paul wanted those in Colosse and Laodicea to be satisfied with Jesus as He was and to reject the heresy that diminished Christ.

**ASK:** How might believers today try to tweak the truth about Jesus? (Q6) *That Jesus is now woke; that Jesus' main goal is to make them healthy and wealthy; that Jesus has changed His teaching to match popular opinions.*

**ASK:** What might be the consequences of their actions? (Q7) *A person who tweaks the truth about Jesus begins to live according to his or her own wisdom, leading the person down a road to spiritual failure.*

The apostle John recorded Christ's words to the church at Laodicea approximately thirty years after the believers there had read Colossians (Rev. 3:14–22).

**READ:** Revelation 3:14–20. **ASK:** How do you know whether the Laodiceans embraced the treasure they had in Christ? (Q8) *They did not. If they had, Christ would have said they were hot, not lukewarm. And He wouldn't have called them wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.*

**ASK:** What positive outcome did Jesus offer the Laodiceans if they would open their eyes to the treasure that He offered them (Rev. 3:20)? (Q9) *He would come in and make His supper with them, meaning He would fellowship with them.*

Sometimes religious deception comes packaged in persuasive, smooth-talking, gentle teachers, but believers can never go wrong if they draw their wisdom and knowledge from Christ.

**ASK:** When have you heard false doctrine packaged in persuasive words? What helped you resist the false doctrine? (Q10)

## **B. The truth works (2:5)**

**READ:** Colossians 2:5.

Although Paul was in Rome when he wrote the Colossian letter, he was with the Colossian believers in the spirit. As we learned in session 1, he had heard a good report about their spiritual commitment. He made sure they knew he appreciated their standing firm for Christ. The Colossians had received the truth and become living testimonials that the truth works.

Paul rejoiced as he pictured the Colossian believers' order. Their faith in Christ was as strong and impenetrable as a Roman military unit (2:5). The word for "order" means a military arrangement. The word for steadfastness can mean "phalanx," a solid Roman military formation in close, deep ranks. The Colossians readily understood Paul's reference to military formations.

The Colossians' mutual love and devotion to the truth had made them strong and unflinching. The New Testament teaches that believers need one another and explains how they should relate to one another.

**READ:** Ephesians 4:14–16. **ASK:** What is the connection between standing together as a church and avoiding doctrinal error? (Q11) *Standing together makes us strong and keeps us from being blown around by every false doctrine that comes along.*

## **III. Grow in the Truth (Col. 2:6, 7)**

The Christian life ought to be dynamic rather than static. Every Christian ought to be growing in the faith.

### **A. Walking in Christ (2:6)**

**READ:** Colossians 2:6.

The Colossian believers had received a person, Jesus Christ. It is extremely important to understand that salvation depends upon a relationship with Jesus Christ rather than upon a mere intellectual assent to doctrinal statements about Christ. James exposed the lifelessness of invalid faith. He wrote that devils believe and tremble (James 2:19). A person may attend Sunday School in a Bible-believing church from the cradle to the grave, but the person's long record of perfect attendance can't save him or her. A person may have verbatim knowledge of the church constitution, including its statement of faith and covenant, but lack salvation. Correct doctrine leads us to Christ, but He does the saving. The only way to be saved is to believe on Jesus Christ as Savior (John 1:12; Acts 16:31; Rom. 10:13).

Having received Christ Jesus the Lord, we ought to walk in Him. We received Him by faith; we ought to walk in Him by faith. Faith, of course, comes through the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). As we study the Bible, we learn what God wants us to be and to do. Recognizing that Jesus Christ is our Lord, we submit to His authority and depend upon Him for the wisdom and strength to honor Him.

The word "walk" suggests that Christian living is a progressive experience. Nothing in this life catapults a Christian from spiritual infancy to spiritual maturity. We become like Christ one day at a time and one step at a time. Our spiritual development is described as a walk, not a leap.

**ASK:** What verse of the Scripture do you cherish most as foundational to your life? (Q12)

**B. Settled in the faith (2:7a)**

**READ:** Colossians 2:7a.

When the Colossians trusted in Christ as Savior, the Holy Spirit planted them in Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 12:13). They were rooted in Him. The tense of the word "rooted" (Col. 2:7) indicates a once-for-all action. From the time of their conversion, they obtained all their spiritual nourishment from Christ. From the first century until now, phony philosophies and false religions have given their adherents only empty promises and unfounded claims. From first-century Gnosticism to twenty-first-century New Age, every system of error has failed to give lasting peace and eternal hope.

Having been rooted in Christ, the Colossians were to be built up in Him and established in the faith (2:7). Just as a structurally sound building rests on a firm foundation, so the Christian life rests on Christ the Rock. Having Christ as their foundation, Christians build their lives on Him, layer by layer. They find that "the faith" provides all the building

Whereas "rooted" is perfect tense, indicating once-for-all action, the verbs for built up and established are present tense, indicating continual process.



materials they need. The Colossians didn't need the Gnostics' "building materials." Having been taught the faith, they had everything they needed.

**ASK:** What are some alternative foundations a believer might try to build his or her spiritual life upon? (Q13) *Outward appearances; good works; his or her own wisdom, goals, and power.*

**ASK:** How intentional should a believer be in his or her spiritual growth? Should a believer have a plan for spiritual growth? (Q14) *Believers should know the strengths and weaknesses of their individual spiritual lives and should intentionally seek to grow particularly in their weakest areas.*

## C. Abounding with gratitude (2:7b)

**READ:** Colossians 2:7b.

As we grow in the truth, we find more and more reasons to be grateful. We abound in the faith with "thanksgiving." We discover in Christ all we need to be content and productive. Just as a well-fed person would reject scraps of food from a garbage can, so believers who feed on God's Word find it easy to reject false doctrines. From a full heart we thank God for all that we have in Christ. We are complete in Him (2:10).

**TESTIMONY:** Allow volunteers to share their thankfulness for the opportunity to be built up in the faith. (Q15)

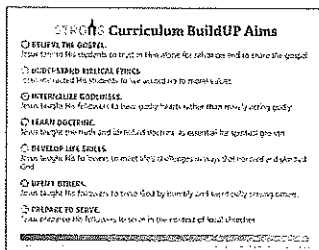
## Session Application

### Gather

- Resource 63-R8.

### Steps

1. Post resource 63-R8 or direct students to the introduction of their student books (page 5). Go over the aims and descriptions. (Q16) Point out that the first letters in the seven aims form an acronym that spells BuildUP. These aims delineate the areas in which God wants believers to grow. The Scriptures are clear that all believers should be built up in each area. Have the learners suggest examples of how a believer might live out each aim.
2. Have students suggest how they could address the areas of their spiritual lives that are the weakest. (Q17)
3. Encourage your students to be proactive in their spiritual growth rather than passive.



63-R8

