

GROUP LEADER GUIDE (Week: 11/7-11/13) – Colossians: “The Living Gospel”

Sermon Text: Colossians 1:1-14

BIG Idea: *The gospel is a living message with the power to create extraordinary love in our hearts through the shared hope of glory it guarantees to those who believe.*

Focus this week: Continue to focus on growing in prayer, depth, and vulnerability as a group.

Semester updates: The Fall semester of groups will be concluding at the end of the month with Worship and Prayer on November 28. Please invite all group members to attend worship and prayer then.

FELLOWSHIP TIME (15 minutes)

Be sure to plan out some way to implement casual fellowship time as people come to your group. After the fellowship time at the beginning of your meeting, have everyone find their seats and start off with an icebreaker. You can use one of the icebreakers from the leader resource page found here:

<https://lifewayresearch.com/2020/02/19/75-icebreaker-questions-for-church-small-groups/>

Pow’s and Wow’s (a.k.a. “High’s” and “Low’s”): After you do the icebreaker, one thing you can do to start your group off each week is called “Pow’s and Wow’s”. Have each person go around and share a “pow” (a low moment from the past week) and a “wow” (a high point moment from the last week). This can also be a great way to learn how you can pray for one another.

DISCUSSION (30 minutes)

Start discussion by saying, “This past Sunday we began a new sermon series on the book of Colossians. The title of the sermon was ‘The Living Gospel.’ We saw how the gospel did a powerful work amongst the Colossians through the ministry of Epaphras. The gospel had produced extraordinary love toward fellow saints because of the future shared up that is guaranteed in the gospel.”

1. What were some things from the sermon that were particularly helpful or challenging for you?
2. Have someone read Colossians 1:1-14 again. The sermon was called “The Living Gospel.” When you read this passage what kind of language does Paul use that carries this idea of the *living* gospel?

This question is for the purpose of helping people see how the sermon title was actually derived from the Bible, as opposed to simply “made up”. Some scholars make a comparison between Paul’s use of the phrase, “bearing fruit and increasing” and the language in Genesis 1 at creation. God tells Adam and Eve to “be fruitful and multiply.” It is argued that this comparison is intentional and therefore illustrates how the gospel is fulfilling God’s command at creation to fill the earth.

3. One of the main aspects of the gospel that changed the Colossians was in verse 5, “*the hope laid up for you in heaven.*” What are all the reasons why hope is so important in the Christian life?

There are a lot of reasons, so be sure to encourage people to think for themselves and list them out as they think of them. Here are some possible reasons: 1) it helps us through suffering and hardship, 2) it keeps us optimistic and joyful when life circumstances work against us, 3) it prevents us from being wrapped up and concerned about the “things of this world” and more preoccupied with heaven... and many more! See what your group says!

4. The main question answered in the sermon was, “How did the future hope in the gospel create extraordinary love in the Colossians?” The answer is found in verse 12 about how the future inheritance is going to be “shared” amongst brother and sisters in Christ. Why do you think a shared hope would create love toward fellow Christians?

This was the main point of the sermon. The reason that a shared hope creates love is because you can't hate someone who is going to join you in the future joy of heaven. There is a shared experience that binds you together forever, which moves you in love toward another person. There was an illustration given in the sermon. Maybe consider asking if your group can come up with another example.

5. The other aspect that created such extraordinary love in the Colossians is how the Father “qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints.” What does it generally mean to “qualify” someone or something? Why is this so important for understanding the gospel?

The actual definition of ‘qualify’ is “be entitled to a particular benefit or privilege by fulfilling a necessary condition.” According to the gospel, you do not do this for yourself, but God the Father did it for through Christ. If we had to qualify ourselves, then our salvation would be up to us, which is not good news or grace at all.

6. Have someone read Colossians 1:13-14. The verse says that we were *transferred* to the kingdom of the beloved Son. How would it change things if the verse said *transferring*, instead of *transferred*? What is the difference? Why does it matter?

This is a technical question, but the point is if it said transferr-ING, then that would mean our salvation was not complete or finished, but was an ongoing process. But since it says transferr-ED, then that means our salvation is complete and finished. This importance for our assurance and understanding our future security in the kingdom of the beloved Son. Encourage your group to think through how it might affect their relationship with God if it was an ongoing process left unfinished.

7. How does the future hope of the gospel affect you today? What does it look like to let the future hope of the gospel compel you towards love for the church?

This question can be answered in many different ways based upon each person individually. Encourage people to think practically and share ways they can extend this “hope-inspired love” toward their neighbor. This is one of the keys to our mission statement: “Pursuing lives of wholehearted love for Jesus Christ and OUR NEIGHBOR.”

PRAYER (20 minutes)

Prayer is the most important thing you can do for one another. Take some time to specifically pray for one another and for Church at Bergen. Give sufficient time to ask how one another are doing and how you can pray.

Especially during this final month before we break for the winter, your prayer time is important. So, please be sure to leave plenty of time to really hear from each member of the group how they are doing and pray for them.