

FOLLOWING JESUS: SUBVERTING THE

**EMPIRE**

STUDY GUIDE

# The Sufficiency of Christ

Colossians 2.15-23

## WELCOME & SHARING

Share any announcements...

- Mazatlan Mission Trip is Feb 20-25. If you missed the info meeting last week and want to learn about the trip, contact Pastor Josh ([joshua.reitano@gmail.com](mailto:joshua.reitano@gmail.com)).
- The Great Cincinnati Bus Tour is coming up Saturday October 15, 8am-1pm. Dr Terry Grundy will be leading us on a bus tour of Cincinnati. We have limited seating, so purchase your tickets ASAP. Visit the City for more details and the link to purchase tickets.
- Guys...while the women are away on their retreat those of us left behind are going to gather at French Park on Saturday, October 22nd @ 9a to dine on donuts and coffee / hot chocolate, then play or hike. Bring your own donuts and coffee. And bring kids if you've got 'em. Visit the City to RSVP and for more info.

## OPENER QUESTION

If you had friends visiting from out of town, and you could take them to do one thing in Cincinnati, what would it be?

## STUDY/DISCUSSION

We are journeying through the Apostle Paul's letter to the Colossian church in September and October. This week we're studying Colossians 2:15-23.

*Note: this is a difficult passage to understand without some context. Paul began Colossians by greeting and praying for this community of Christians who are trying to follow Jesus as a small, little group in the shadow of the vast and powerful Roman empire. Then Paul talks about the supremacy of Jesus Christ - whatever Caesar or Rome claim, Jesus is the one and only Lord. Then Paul begins to talk about his own mission: which is to proclaim Jesus and make the word of God fully known.*

*And then in the passage we looked at last week, Paul encourages the Colossians to keep pursuing Jesus. He tells them that real fullness is found in him.*

*That brings us to our passage this week. Paul addresses the temptation the Colossians face to think Jesus is not enough for them. That they might need something else.*

### **Read: Colossians 2:15-23**

1. In verses 16 and 18, Paul gives two warnings. What are they? What do you think they mean?  
*HINT: It might be helpful to explain these things under two headings like we did on Sunday — legalism (v. 16, 20-23) and mysticism (v. 18)*
2. Why might these practices and disciplines have “the appearance of wisdom”? According to verses 17 and 20-23, why does Paul discourage them from this?
3. Today, as then, it is tempting to think that while the gospel of Jesus Christ was a good start, to really get that spiritual *extra* we must need something more. This might be called a “Christ PLUS \_\_\_\_\_” approach. What are the things we are tempted to think we need as an add on to Jesus, in order to grow or be happy or content?
4. What role does the church play in helping us hold fast to the Head? (v.19)
5. Growing up, if you were raised in the church, was your experience more like the legalism/asceticism OR more like the mysticism and how has that affected you and your walk with God? And for parents/guardians, how do you navigate this tension as you seek to help your child(ren) come to follow Christ?
6. How might this passage shape the way you give advice and counsel to others who might be struggling? How might it shape your approach to reaching out to our neighbors?
7. Does this passage bring you any comfort? If so, how?
8. What is one thing you want to take away from this passage or our discussion?

**NEIGHBORING EXPERIMENT OF THE MONTH:** Try to meet one neighbor you don't know yet and learn something about them. (If you've met and talked about this, give a report...have you met a neighbor you didn't know before?)

### **PRAYER**

*As you get to know each other as a group, it's good to keep the prayer time a little lighter and help set the tone of how you'd like the prayer time to be as everyone is just getting to know each other. You can close in prayer, ask a few folks to pray, or break into smaller groups. Try using “conversational prayer” where folks pray briefly in a sentence or two (not “prayer speeches”), with normal words (no thees and thous), and can pray more than once (no “one and done” rule). Basically, pray to God like you're talking with one another.*

*What should we pray about? The most natural thing is to ask for personal requests if folks are willing to share, though in these first few weeks, people may be somewhat hesitant. Instead, you can pray in response to the passage, or simply focus your prayers on the growth and development of your community group.*

## **LEADER'S NOTES**

Paul tells Christians about the benefits available by virtue of being united to Christ in order to “walk in him” faithfully and wisely—especially in the face of false teaching. He calls on them to understand all the resources they have in Christ so as to utilize those resources to fight the good fight of faith (1 Tim. 6:12).

Through the use of the simple yet profound phrase “in him,” Paul reveals all the resources available to combat falsehood. In union with Christ, Christians have been rooted, built up, and established in faith (Col. 2:7). In Christ they have been filled with the same authority that Christ possesses (v. 10). In Christ they have been spiritually “circumcised,” or set apart from the realm of the flesh to that of the Spirit (v. 11). In him they have “died” to sin and have been “raised” to new life through Christ’s baptism of death and resurrection (v. 12). In him they have been forgiven of all their spiritual debts because of the cross (v. 13). In him they have the certainty of victory over Satan and death (v. 15).

And in Christ, as Paul has said already numerous times in this letter, believers walk (vv. 6–7). In the same ways that we received Christ—through faith, by grace—we move forward. The gospel is for sanctification, not only justification; for growth, not only conversion. We do what Jesus instructs in the confidence that he knows and will accomplish what is best for our lives, and we are motivated and enabled to do this as he instructs us by his grace.

Paul thus calls on believers who are united to Christ to utilize these promises and benefits and to not be led astray by any teaching that is contrary to the gospel that he taught them (v. 8). For fear that they may fall prey to humanly devised rules regarding true spirituality (vv. 16–18), Paul reminds them of all that they know about Christ and all that they possess in Christ (v. 19). Through faith, believers have the assurance of accessing the resources of the Word and Spirit to remain steadfast amid the storms of false teaching (cf. 1 John 2:26–27).