

## OKOTOKS EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

THE BEST DECISION EVER  
MAY 17-23, 2015



### MAIN POINT

True wisdom is found in Jesus Christ. Seeing past the lies of earthly wisdom requires trust in Jesus' work on the cross and submitting our lives to Him.

### THINKING THINGS THROUGH

Connect the sermon to the study.

1. What is the best advice you have ever received? What made this advice so good? What is the worst advice you have ever received? What made it so bad?
2. How do you determine whether a particular piece of advice is good or not? Do you consider the source of the advice and the character of the person giving it? Why or why not?

**Leader:** When you know someone cares about you or possesses expertise you lack, you are more likely to listen to what that person has to say, particularly when it comes to advice on how to best live your life. The gospel is much more than good advice, it is the good news of eternal salvation in Jesus Christ, "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:4). If we hope to be truly wise, we must consider the source of our wisdom. Paul warned the church at Colossae to make sure they are looking to Christ and submitting to His wisdom, because apart from Christ they would be taken "captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition . . . rather than on Christ." True wisdom is found in Jesus Christ. If we hope to see past the lies of earthly wisdom we must trust in Jesus' work on the cross and continually submit our lives to Him.

### DIGGING DEEPER

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ COLOSSIANS 2:1-7.

**Leader:** Paul had just finished teaching on the Person and work of Christ (Col. 1:15-29). He reminded the church that Christ is the one who reconciled them to God and each other. It is the work of Christ on the cross that provided their salvation. There is no other hidden wisdom or knowledge to be discovered or added to the gospel. Jesus Christ is the wisdom and knowledge of God.

3. What was Paul's struggle with regard to the Colossians and Laodiceans? What do these verses say Paul wanted for the people of Colossae and Laodicea (vv. 2-3)?
4. What danger were the Colossians facing? Who was Paul worried would delude them with persuasive arguments? What worldly philosophies or deceptive arguments threaten our faith today?

5. How have you observed Christians repackage worldly wisdom in “Christian” terms (think about the way Christians talk about dating, politics, retirement, etc.)? What is dangerous about doing so? How can we guard against this tendency?

**Leader:** Paul had a unique struggle trying to guide the leaders of the Colossian church. He had never visited Colossae or Laodicea, a larger city near Colossae. Paul wanted the Colossians to be encouraged, to work together, and to have an understanding and true knowledge of Christ. Paul was chiefly worried about Gnostic false teachers. Gnosticism teaches that God is found in secret, personal, religious experiences. This concerned Paul because he did not want clever arguments and persuasive words to pull the church away from the truth about Jesus Christ. Paul wanted the church at Colossae to be united in seeking Christ so that “they may have the full riches of complete understanding in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely Christ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (v. 2). In other words, true wisdom is not found in secret personal religious experiences but in the Person and work of Christ.

6. What do you think being “rooted” and “built up” looks like in our day-to-day lives (v. 7)?

7. What are some practical measures we should take to “continue to live” in Christ? How might doing so help us to see the true nature of worldly thinking? If we are not careful, how might worldly thinking creep into the way we think about life, marriage, money, parenting, or work?

8. Read Galatians 1:6-7. What does Paul mean by “another gospel”? How does the search for hidden knowledge amount to searching for “another gospel”?

**Leader:** Paul’s exhortations for the Colossians focused on Jesus Christ. Paul wanted the leaders to persevere in their walks with Christ. He used language of a building—“rooted” or “established” and “built up” suggest a structure that is on solid footing. The solid footing is Jesus Christ. The way to become established was through following instructions and trusting the good teaching that had been imparted to them. The same is true today, as we study God’s Word ourselves and hear it preached, we must strive to submit to it and put it into action.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ COLOSSIANS 2:8-15.

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9. What is appealing about the hollow and deceptive philosophies Paul warned against? What is appealing about the worldly ways of thinking we face today? How can we be more aware of the ways worldly thinking has influenced us (i.e. the way we think about things like success, dating, marriage, money, etc.)?

**Leader:** The deceptive philosophies of Paul’s day were not all that different from those of our own, both are focused on human tradition and the principles of this world rather than on Christ. In other words, they are focused on our broken and imperfect wisdom, power, and strength rather than Christ, who possesses the fullness of wisdom and strength and alone has the power to save us.

10. When Paul brings up circumcision in verse 11, what is he referring to? What does this tell us about who we are in Christ?

## SERMON BASED GROWTH GROUP

**Leader:** In Deuteronomy 10, God commanded His people to circumcise their hearts. Circumcision was a symbol, starting with Abraham, of God's covenant. It was symbolic of the cutting off of the previous life and embracing the new one of faith. But in the New Testament, we see that because of Jesus, God has done for us what we could never do for ourselves. Circumcision and baptism both are designed to be outward symbols that God's chosen people are set apart and different.

- 11. The "powers and authorities" mentioned in verses 10 and 15 are references to the demons. What does this tell us about the true nature of worldly thinking? How might acknowledging that Christ has "disarmed" and "made a spectacle of" the demons help us to resist the subtle deception of worldly thinking?**

### DOING LIFE TOGETHER

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

- 12. In what areas of your life are you most tempted to give into worldly wisdom? How does Colossians 2 help us continually evaluate our spiritual health and whether we are focused on Christ or the things of the world?**

- 13. How might we, as a Growth Group, help one another remain firmly rooted in Christ?**

### PRAYER

Pray and thank Jesus for saving you. Thank Him for putting every false belief to open shame and ask God to deliver those who are being led astray by a false gospel. Ask that God would allow the truths of these verses to sink deeply into your heart and mind in a way that bears fruit in your life.

### FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following:

- ☐ Questions to consider as they continue to reflect on what they learned this week:
  - **Take some time to consider those areas of your life where you are most tempted to give into worldly wisdom. How will you approach these areas of your life differently this week?**
- ☐ A note of encouragement, following up on any specific prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.
- ☐ The challenge to memorize Colossians 2:6-7.

**SPOTLIGHT ON THE PASSAGE**

**COLOSSIANS 2:1-15**

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2:1. Paul likely had not preached in Colossae or Laodicea. Nevertheless, he continued to have a great struggle for believers there and for all Christians who had not seen him. The Greek term rendered struggle gives us the English word agony. It was used of strenuous exertion in athletics.

2:2. Paul's ongoing concern for believers who had not seen him was that their hearts (inner beings) might be encouraged or strengthened. They needed spiritual strength to reject the false teachings to which they were being subjected. In addition, believers needed to be joined together ("knit together" or "united") in love (agape, God's kind of love). That kind of unity would guard against divisions caused by false teachings.

2:3-4. False teachers claimed they had exclusive, superior knowledge people needed to experience salvation. Paul countered that in Christ all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden. Paul was concerned that the Colossian Christians might fall victim to false teachers' glib presentations. The Greek term rendered deceive originally meant "to cheat by false reckoning" and then "to delude."

2:5. Though Paul could not be physically present with the Colossian believers, he was with them in spirit. He used two related military images to express the basis of the joy they brought him. The phrase well ordered translates a Greek term that has the sense of an unbroken line of soldiers. Some believers may have bought into the false teachers' polished speech, but most were holding the line. Most believers were maintaining their faith in Christ—their personal commitment to Him.

2:6-7. The Colossian believers had heard the gospel and had accepted it. By faith, they had received Jesus (Savior) Christ (Messiah) the Lord (Deity). Paul urged the believers to maintain and strengthen their relationship with Christ. To walk in Christ means to continue to live in the sphere of His lordship—in relationship with Him. Paul used the figures of a tree or plant and a building to exhort believers to remain firm in their faith. The tense of the Greek word translated rooted points to believers' past conversions, whose effects continued. Thus Christ alone was the Source of their new life, and only He could provide the spiritual nutrients they needed. The word established also conveys continuous action and has the idea of becoming more stable or being strengthened.

2:8. Be careful is a strong warning to watch out so believers are not taken captive and enslaved to false doctrines through philosophy and empty deceit. "Human tradition" implies human origin (whether Jewish or Gentile) as opposed to the divine nature of the gospel. The elemental forces were most likely astral deities, spirits, and/or angels commonly associated with pagan worship, astrology, and magical practices.

2:10. "You have been filled" denotes a completed act with ongoing results.

2:11. The reference to circumcision indicates the Jewish nature of this false philosophy. Circumcision was established and mandated by God for entrance into the covenant community of His people. But the circumcision of the Messiah was spiritual and associated with "circumcision of the heart" (Dt 10:16; 30:6; Jer 4:4; Ezek 44:7; Rm 2:29). Here the reference is to the death of Christ, not the literal Old Testament practice of circumcision.

2:12. Baptism relates to Christ's death and burial (Rm 6:3-8); it is not the New Testament equivalent of Old Testament circumcision. Believer's baptism symbolizes union with Christ in death and complete separation from the former way of life. Likewise, believers are raised with Him through faith (1:23; Gal 2:20) according to God's power.

2:13. Prior to their faith in Christ, the Colossians were spiritually dead in trespasses (cp. Eph 2:1-3) and cut off from God's people because they were Gentiles (Eph 2:11-12). However, in Christ, God made them alive and forgave all their sins (Eph 2:4-8).

2:14. The certificate of debt may refer to a handwritten document or to the Mosaic law. Paul typically viewed the law's purpose as revealing the guilt of sinners (Dt 27:26; Rm 7:13; 1Co 15:56; Gal 3:10). Some Jewish writings, likewise, speak of God keeping records of people's sins as debts against them. God, however, has abolished those records through Christ's substitutionary atonement that was accomplished when He died on the cross.

2:15. The phrase "disgraced them publicly" relates to God humiliating these spiritual rulers in a public spectacle of shame and defeat. The word "triumphed" evokes the imagery of a triumphal procession where a victorious general would lead a parade to display the booty and prisoners of war from his conquest.