



Even though Christianity had sprung up there, Paul received a report that the pure truth of the gospel was being mingled with other religious ideas. Some people believed that angels were to be worshiped; others thought that physical matter, including the body, was evil and needed to be punished and escaped from; still others thought that a person became right with God by observing special holidays and customs. This letter is a response to these false ideas, calling people to return to the truth of the gospel.

- Why do you think it's so easy for us to intermingle false ideas of the truth with the gospel?
- In what ways do you feel that temptation?

| *Have a volunteer read Colossians 1:1-8.*

- Why do you think Paul reminded the church that he was an apostle of Jesus Christ, by God's will?
- How do you know who to listen to about spiritual truth?
- Why was Paul so thankful to God? When you express thanks to God, are you more apt to focus on temporary blessings or eternal blessings like faith, hope, and love? Why?

Jesus said that the world will recognize His disciples because of their love, and that love is rooted in faith in Him. The basis of their faith and love is the hope they had in heaven. Their hope was a result of hearing and believing the message of truth, the gospel.

- How, in our culture today, is the concept of "truth" being challenged? Why is it important for you to believe that some things are absolutely true?

Just as in Colossae, we live in a culture that has a relative approach to truth. Most people don't believe truth is absolute; instead, they believe that what is true for one person isn't true for another. That means "truth" isn't an objective reality, but instead is only determined in a specific situation. In other words, what is true for you at a specific time isn't true for someone else in a different situation.

- Why is that kind of thinking a challenge to the gospel?

## LOOKING FORWARD

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

- Where are some of the environments in which you find yourself where the truth of the gospel is being challenged? What is God calling you to do to stand for truth in that situation?
- Reread verse 6. Is that true of you? Why or why not?
- What are some practical ways you can demonstrate the faith, hope, and love that come as a result of believing the gospel?
- Name some reasons you have to thank God today?

## FAMILIES

*Use the following questions and truths to disciple your children throughout the week.*

- What questions do you have about Christianity (i.e. what it means to be saved, why God lets bad things happen in the world, what happens when a person dies)?
- When you have doubts about what is true, what can you do?
- What is the danger in not thanking God regularly for the ways He has shown you truth, helped you answer your doubts, and grown you in your relationship to Jesus?

**PRAY**

Thank God for the people He has placed in your life who have shown you His truth and encouraged you in the faith. Ask Him to continue to grow the fruit of faith in you. Invite Him to produce gospel fruit in and through you so that others might come to thank Him and yield the fruit of faith, too.

**COMMENTARY****| Colossians 1:1-8**

1:1-3 Paul greeted his letter's recipients and included Timothy, his coworker, in the greeting. Paul identified himself as Christ's apostle to indicate his authority (Col. 1: 1). He addressed the believers as saints (set apart ones) and faithful brothers in God's family of grace (1:2). He prayed that God would give them His grace (unmerited favor) and peace (wholeness). Paul informed the Colossian Christians that every time he prayed for them, he did so with thanksgiving to God. By identifying God as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul stressed Christ's sovereignty and Deity, thus establishing early the truth that Christ was in no way subordinate to anyone or anything.

1:4 Paul thanked God for the believers because he had heard about their faith in Christ and their love for all the saints. Epaphras evidently had given this report to Paul (see 1:7-8). The word "faith" conveyed the sense of trust in and commitment to Christ. "Love" translates the distinctive Christian term for persistent, self-giving good will (agape) that acts for others' best interests. The word "saints" is a synonym for "Christians." These believers' commitment to Christ was issuing in active love for all other Christians.

1:5 The Christians' love for one another sprang from the hope reserved for them in heaven. "Hope" has the idea of living with confident assurance, not wishful thinking. The noun has the sense of the fulfillment of believers' salvation when they enter God's immediate presence in heaven. The Colossian believers had learned of this hope when the message of truth was proclaimed to them. Because of the message's absolute and unchanging nature, they were to hold to it and not become victims of false teachings.

1:6 Paul defined "the message of truth" (1:5) as the gospel that had been preached in Colossae. It was the good news of Christ's servant ministry; His voluntary, atoning death on the cross; and His victorious resurrection. This good news of grace was bearing fruit wherever in the world that it was being proclaimed. God's purpose was that the revelation of His grace in Christ be offered to all people, even as it had been presented to the Colossians.

1:7 Epaphras had taken the good news of Christ to Colossae. Likely, he was the founder and pastor of the church. He may have proclaimed the gospel in Colossae during Paul's lengthy ministry in Ephesus (see Acts 19:1-20:1). Paul referred to Epaphras as much loved. Epaphras also was Paul's fellow slave; that is, both were totally subservient to their Master, dedicated to obeying His will. The phrase on your behalf can have two possible emphases. Paul could have meant that Epaphras faithfully ministered to him in the Colossian believers' stead. A second possibility is that Paul was referring to Epaphras's serving the Colossians by preaching the gospel to them. The Greek word translated "minister" is the term from which we get the word deacon, meaning "servant."

1:8 Epaphras had told Paul about the Colossian believers' love in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit working in and among them was producing God's kind of love (agape).