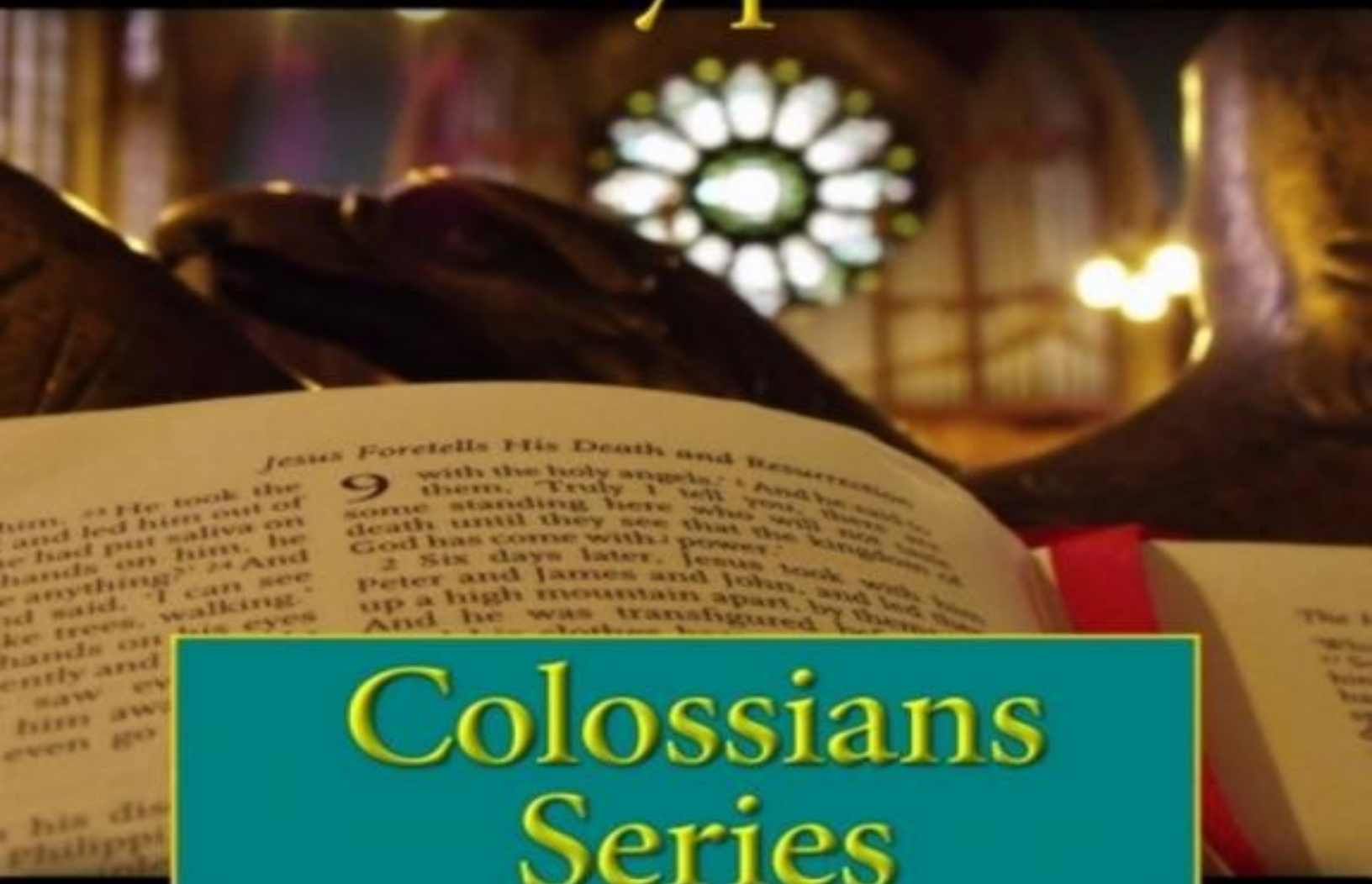
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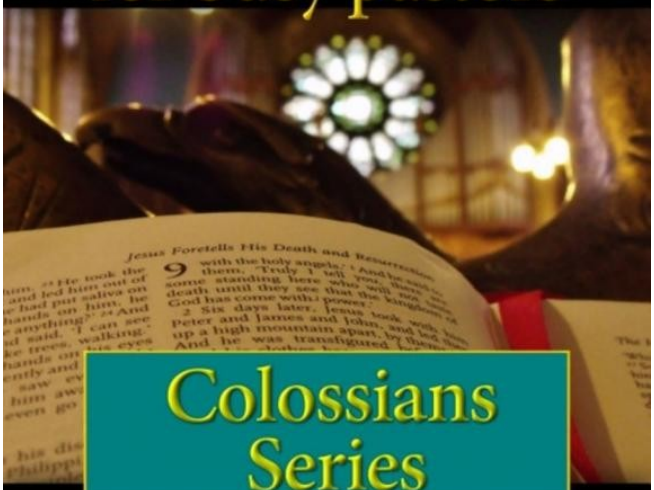


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Rob Westbrook

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SERMON OUTLINES FOR BUSY PASTORS

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SERMON OUTLINES FOR BUSY PASTORS

Colossians Series

by Rob Westbrook

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Books by Rob Westbrook

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About the Author

Introduction

Pastors are the busiest people in our country.

According to my research, that statement is a fact. Of course, my research is not scientific, but I believe it to be accurate. My most trusted research data comes from my wife. She says we're the busiest people in our country, and I always listen to my wife!

I know, firsthand, all the many different directions we are pulled, every single day. There's hospitals to visit, weddings to officiate, and funerals to preach. There's families to counsel, new believers to disciple, and leaders to train. There's worship services to plan, toilets to unclog, and light bulbs to be replaced. And some of us have these things to do WHILE working another job – doing the bi–vocational thing. There's enough stuff going on to keep us busy twenty–five hours a day, eight days a week.

Oh yeah, and there's sermons to prepare. We've got to work that in with all the other things vying for our attention. The one thing most of us feel to be our primary purpose, our calling – preaching the Word of God – has to compete with everything else for the one finite element in all of this. Time.

As a seminary student, I remember hearing someone say a pastor should dedicate an hour of preparation to every minute of his sermon. At the time, I thought that was an unreal amount of time to spend in sermon prep. Now, years and sermons later, I can't even grasp the thought. If our average sermon length is thirty minutes, that equates to thirty hours of prep! For those who have a Sunday night message to prepare, and maybe one for Wednesday night, well, that doesn't exactly leave time for much else.

There may be some of you who have that luxury of time, but for most of us, that amount of time is simply not there. So we do the best we can with the time we've got, and trust God to make something useful from our efforts. And our gracious and merciful Lord often does.

But we want to do better. We want to present our people with well–prepared messages. Messages that will not only fill a thirty minute time slot, but will also feed them spiritually, lift their hearts, convict them of their sin, and call them into a new or deeper walk with the Lord.

That's why I've put this series together. These ***Sermon Outlines for Busy Pastors*** books are for those of you who can identify with any of the above. I want to give you something to build on. Something that's been studied through, that gives you a head–start for your messages this Sunday. Something that will help you make the most of your limited time.

I don't make any claims these are the best sermon outlines you'll ever see. They may not be on par with anything you've prepared yourself. But they have all been studied over, prayed over, and preached. The outlines are complete, compiled from the sermon notes I take into the pulpit each week. Take them as a whole, or use them to spur your thoughts in other directions.

Another thing I remember hearing in seminary is: "The Bible, the Word of God, has been preached by many, many preachers for two thousand years. You're probably not going to preach anything that hasn't been preached before." I would say that is an accurate statement. We're influenced by the preachers and sermons we hear. God speaks to us through them. And He may speak those same words through us in our messages to others. I know that's true sometimes in my case and I'm fairly certain that's true for most pastors. And I'm sure many sermons you'll find here bear the marks of those preachers I've heard or read.

Nevertheless, I offer these sermon outlines to you. Use them for your benefit and for the glory of our Lord. I pray this book, and the entire series, provides you with a tool to help you make the most of your time. And to make much of Jesus Christ.

Preach the Word!

Introduction to Colossians
Colossians Series - Sermon 1
Colossians 2:1-4

I. Intro

A. As of this month, I've been a Christian for 19 years.

1. If you're under 25 or so, 19 years seems like forever.
2. If you're 40 or over, 19 years is not that long.
3. For me, it means I've been a Christian for around 1/3 of my life.
4. So I've been a Christian long enough to have observed a few things.

B. And the thing I've noticed the most is change.

1. Things are always changing.
2. Nothing ever stays the same.
3. But some of the changes I've noticed have been large changes.
4. And these changes have had, and will continue to have, long-reaching effect.

C. The changes have come on many different fronts.

1. I've seen huge technological change.
2. When I became a Christian, cell phones came in bags and the internet was text.
3. I've seen global change.
4. When I became a Christian, Africa was a continent light years away.
5. Now, I talk to friends in Africa by Facebook instantly.
6. I've seen social change.
7. Things nobody talked about or admitted to 19 years ago is now admired and celebrated.

D. I've also seen changes within Christianity.

1. Some have been for the better and some have been for the worse.
2. The one change that catches my attention the most is this.
3. The move from the basics of Christianity to that of a Christian religion.

E. Let me explain a little bit what I mean.

1. Christianity and religion are not the same.
2. Christianity holds to the tenet of "Jesus Christ and Christ alone."
3. Christianity is focused on a relationship with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.
4. Religion is different.
5. Religion is more about WHAT you know instead of WHO you know.
6. Jesus rules in Christianity.
7. People rule in religion.

F. We've seen this in many of the denominations over the past 19 years.

1. People are making decisions about the direction of their churches according to the dictates of society.
2. If society says it's OK for the 21st century, then many churches and denominations are saying it's OK, too.
3. What God has said and what God wants doesn't have the weight of what people say and want.
4. Many churches and Christians are bowing to the weight of popular opinion.
5. And it's stripping these churches and Christians of any power they might have to change the world for Christ.
6. They're selling out Christ for people's acceptance and approval.

G. I've seen a lot of this happen in my 19 years as a Christian.

1. It seems like the push in that direction is so strong there's no way to push back.
2. What can those of us who hold to Jesus do when it seems the whole world is pulling in the opposite direction?

H. Well, if it helps, we're not the first Christians to be in this predicament.

1. In fact, Christians have felt this push-back from the world for 2000 years.
2. Christians have battled with anti-Jesus teachings since there were Christians.
3. And there's much we can learn from these early Christians and churches.

I. Paul wrote many of his epistles to churches struggling with the exact same problems.

1. The churches Paul cared so much about existed in a world much like ours today.
2. They felt the pressures of society to water down Jesus to be accepted.
3. They felt the pressures of those inside the church trying to turn Christianity into religion.
4. They were pulled toward the need to change to meet other peoples' acceptance.
5. And Paul wrote them and told them to stand firm.

J. One of the letters Paul wrote was to the church in the city of Colosse.

1. Colosse was a town on the downside of its prominence when Paul wrote to the church there.
2. The city was losing all its prestige it had before.
3. It was becoming a 2nd class town.

K. At some point a person named Epaphras heard Paul preach the Gospel.

1. Epaphras trusted Christ and went to Colosse.
2. He couldn't keep his mouth shut about it and told everybody he met about Jesus.
3. Soon many there also believed and a church was born.

L. The church wasn't around long before people tried to move it from Christianity to religion.

1. People weren't happy with the church just being about Jesus.
2. There had to be more to it than just Jesus.
3. So they tried to pressure the people to change.
4. Change to something that was more pleasant to the people around them.

M. So the Colossian church is a great example for the Christian church today.

1. We both exist in a world that's changing.
2. We both exist in a world that's pressuring the church to change.
3. We both exist is a world that insists that Christians catch up with society.

N. So, in the coming weeks, we're going to concentrate on the book of Colossians.

1. We're going to let the Word of God in the book of Colossians guide us through a society insisting on change.
2. We're going to let the Word of God in Colossians guide us in avoiding letting religion take the place of Christianity.
3. Both in our church.
4. And in our families.

II. Today, we're going to start by taking a quick overview of what the Colossian church was facing.

A. Scholars call this the "Colossian Heresy."

1. "Heresy" is defined as "an opinion, doctrine, or practice contrary to the truth or to generally accepted beliefs or standards."
2. Paul wrote his letter to the Colossan church to help them deal with these false teachings that were trying to creep into the church.
3. Here's some of the heresies the Colossian church were up against.

B. Read Colossians 2:16-17.

1. Some at Colosse were teaching "do's and don'ts."
2. Don't eat this.
3. Don't do that.
4. Keep these holidays.
5. Do this.
6. Do that.
7. Rules and regulations are the foundation of religion.

8. And if you have rules, you've got to have someone to police the rules and regulations.
9. So there were people in the Colossian church who were saying "don't do that and do this."
10. And they were setting themselves up as the enforcers.

C. Read Colossians 2:21-23.

1. More rules.
2. More regulations.
3. Paul says, "These all look wise."
4. Paul says, "These all look humble."
5. But Paul also says these rules and regulations have no value in stopping people from sinning.
6. It all sounds good but there's nothing to it.

D. Read Colossians 2:18-19.

1. There were people who thought they knew more than others.
2. They had this secret knowledge nobody else had.
3. They thought they knew it all and they held it over the head of those who didn't know what they knew.
4. This is called "gnosticism."
5. When people say they have some secret knowledge that God has revealed to them and nobody else has it, that's gnosticism.
6. They hold the key to God or salvation and they decide who else gets it.

E. Read Colossians 2:8.

1. Do it like us.
2. Do it like we've always done it.
3. We know best.
4. We've always done it this way.
5. So this is the best way.

F. So that's what the Colossian church faced.

1. Any of it sound familiar?
2. If you're going to be part of us, you've got to do it like us.
3. No differences, no uniqueness.
4. And I'll let you know exactly when and how you've messed up.
5. Because I know better than you.
6. It's they way we've always done it, so it's right.

7. You're not doing it right.
8. Change to please us.

G. In the weeks ahead, we're going to see what the Word of God says to a church that finds itself in circumstances like this.

1. How do we respond in truth?

III. But for today, we're going to take a quick look at the answer.

A. How do we respond to a world pressuring us to change?

1. How do we respond to a world that says we're no longer doing it right?
2. How do we respond to religion?

B. Read Colossians 2:6-7.

1. The answer is Jesus.
2. The answer is to continue following and trusting Jesus.
3. The answer is not to get in arguments and try to win over people with your brilliance.
4. The answer is simply JESUS.
5. And Jesus alone.

C. Continue to live in Him.

1. The same Jesus you trusted for salvation is the same Jesus who will guide you in life.
2. Live for Him.
3. Trust in Him.
4. Christianity is not a religion, it's a relationship.
5. A relationship with Jesus Christ.

D. Become rooted and built up in Him.

1. Root yourself in His words.
2. Root yourself in the example of His life.
3. You maturity as a Christian is not based on WHAT you know.
4. Your maturity as a Christian is based on WHO you know.
5. Pursue Christ.
6. Chase after Jesus.
7. Make Him the "EVERYTHING" of your life.

E. Let your faith be strengthened by your relationship with Him.

1. The more you chase after Him the stronger your faith.

2. And the stronger your faith, the more you chase after Him.

F. Just thank Him for being your Lord and Savior.

1. Be thankful your faith and standing is not dependant on other people and their opinions.
2. Be thankful your faith and standing are sure and complete in Jesus Christ.

G. One thing has never changed in the 2000 years of Christianity.

1. It's still all about Jesus.
2. It's about His life.
3. It's about His death.
4. It's about His resurrection.
5. It's about His call to you.
6. It's all about Jesus.

Resist
Colossians Series - Sermon 2
Colossians 1:1-14

I. Do you remember a time when you gave into peer pressure?

A. I can remember one that still stands out, even after 35 years.

1. In the 8th grade, some of my friends were picking on one of the girls in our school that didn't have much.
2. I saw them doing it and I felt bad for the girl.
3. She couldn't help her circumstances - she had no control over who she was or how she lived.
4. But you know how peer pressure works.
5. To be one of the "cool" kids, I had to join in or lose my "cool" credentials.
6. So I jumped in there and made her life miserable, too.
7. A few minutes later I payed for giving in to peer pressure.
8. Coach Sullivan took out the payment on my rear end!

B. That's the way peer pressure works.

1. We know something isn't right.
2. But it's the going thing, the "in" thing.
3. Against our better judgement and internal watchdog, we give in.
4. And trouble and grief and problems always follow closely behind.

C. We're moving into week 2 our sermon series through the book of Colossians.

1. If you were here last week, maybe you remember some of the things the Colossian church faced.
2. There was pressure from outside forces wanting them to change who they were and what they believed.
3. And there was pressure from the inside, too.

4. They were just a few irrational decisions from leaving the path they started out on.
5. They were just a few "giving in situations" away from departing from the faith and beliefs that define a Christian church.

D. The apostle Paul knew this.

1. Paul knew the pressures the church faced.
2. The church was surrounded by a society that went against all they believed.
3. The church was constantly under pressure to change their message.
4. They felt the pressure to compromise.
5. Inspired and led by God, Paul wrote the Colossians church a letter to encourage them to stay the course.

E. God also knew other churches in the future would face what the Colossian church faced.

1. He had the American church of the 21st century in mind when He led Paul to write Colossians.
2. Because we are surrounded by a society that, for the most part, goes against all we believe.
3. We feel the pressure from outside to water down our message.
4. We feel the pressure to give up a little to stay relevant.
5. We know the pressure to compromise.
6. So the letter to the Colossians is as much to us today as it was to the Colossians almost 2000 years ago.

F. So let's get into the message God has for us in the book of Colossians.

1. And we're going to start at the very beginning.
2. Read Colossians 1:1-14.

G. Now, remember, Paul is writing to a church pressed by pressure all around.

1. In these first 14 verses, Paul focuses on qualities the Colossians church had from the beginning.
2. And it was the same qualities that would help the Colossian church resist the pressure they were feeling from society.

3. These qualities they had are the qualities a church of the 21st century needs to resist the immense pressure we feel today to water down.
4. To compromise.
5. There's three qualities we see here.
6. Three qualities to resist the pressure of the world.

II. The first quality the Colossian church had was its focus on the Gospel.

A. Paul had never been to Colosse.

1. What he knew about the church and the pressure they received came by word of mouth.
2. His young friend, Epaphras, was probably the main source for the news Paul heard from Colosse.
3. And in these first few verses, Paul tells them what he'd heard.

B. He had heard of their faith in Jesus.

1. He knew they trusted in Jesus.
2. He knew they were solidly saved and believers.

C. He had heard of their love for all Christians.

1. A sure sign of Jesus being real in your life is loving other Christians.
2. Paul heard they loved all the Christians.
3. These people were solid in their faith and love.

D. And it all came from their focus and trust in the Gospel.

1. The Gospel is the good news.
2. It's the good news of Jesus – His death, burial, and resurrection.
3. That's what empowered them.
4. And it's what would keep them focused and immune to drift and compromise.

E. The church today has to maintain its focus on the Gospel.

1. Society today will say it's foolish to believe in some supernatural God.
2. How can you think some man who lived 2000 years ago can still influence you today?

3. With all we know today, how can you really believe someone actually came back from the dead?
4. Just stick to the "love everybody" theme.
5. Just stick to the good ideals Christianity has developed over the centuries.
6. We like the justice and equality aspect.
7. Just don't bring that supernatural stuff into the conversation.
8. That stuff puts you on the fringes of society.

F. But we need to remember, the Gospel is Christianity.

1. There really was a Jesus.
2. He really did walk this planet He created.
3. He really did set the standard for a right life.
4. He really did allow Himself to be nailed to a cross by His creation.
5. There really is sin that needs to be atoned for.
6. He really did come back to life three days later.
7. He really does live today.
8. He not only saves us but He holds us accountable.
9. There really is an eternal separation from God by those who refuse to trust solely and completely in Him.

G. There's no room for compromise with the Gospel.

1. Either Jesus is who He says He is, or He's not.
2. Either Jesus did what He said He would do, or He did not.
3. We can't lose our focus on the Gospel.
4. We can't give any quarter to those who might want to change that focus.
5. Jesus is the only hope this world has.
6. When we give that up, there is no hope.
7. To resist compromise with society, we have to stay centered and focused on the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

III. The second quality of the Colossian church was their pursuit of God's will.

A. Paul prayed for them to know God's will.

1. He prayed that their knowledge of truth and love would continue to come from God.

2. He prayed they would have an intimate personal relationship with the Lord.
3. He prayed they would continue to follow God, the Holy Spirit.
4. They wanted to know God's will and direction.
5. They wanted to be right in the center of what God was doing in the city of Colosse.
6. They wanted to be the ones exerting the pressure to change.

B. The church of the 21st century needs to focus on God's will and purpose for us today.

1. And to do that, we need to know God better than we do.
2. We need to make Him and His will our primary pursuit and goal in life.
3. We need to pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

C. In our small group study, Experiencing God, we're learning how to know God's will.

1. We're learning that we learn God's will primarily in 4 different ways.
2. We learn God's will through the Bible.
3. We learn God's will through prayer.
4. We learn God's will through the church.
5. And we learn God's will through circumstances.

D. Our pursuit of God's will will take us into the Word.

1. Into deeper and more meaningful prayer.
2. Into deeper relationships within the church.
3. Into a examination of every circumstance in our lives against the Word of God.
4. To resist the pressure of society to compromise, we have to chase after God.

IV. The third quality of the Colossian church was the life they lived.

A. Paul prayed they would continue to live a worthy life.

1. He prayed they would focus on good work.
2. That they would continue to do good even in a society that had a perverted view of good.

3. That they would do the good Jesus called them to.

B. He prayed they would continue to bear fruit.

1. He prayed they would see results from their good work.
2. That people, even in a society like theirs, would see their lives and come to Jesus because of them.

C. He prayed they would continue to live according to what they knew about God.

1. And they would live according to what they had already experienced God doing in them.

D. There's no time in all of history that needs people living a godly life than now.

1. No one seems to really know what "good" is anymore.
2. Good changes according to who you talk to and what mood they're in.

E. As the church of Jesus Christ, we're called to live good, godly lives.

1. Not because it's causes God to love us more.
2. We live godly lives because we love God more.
3. The world needs examples.
4. Will you be God's example?

V. To encourage the Colossian church to hold on to these qualities, Paul told them to remember and thank God for what He'd already done.

A. Remember what Jesus has done for you.

1. Remember where you were and where you are now.
2. And thank God for it.

B. One way to stand firm under pressure is remember what God has already done.

1. He didn't do it by the standards of society.
2. He did it out of His love for you.
3. He rescued you from darkness.
4. He brought you into light.
5. He redeemed you.
6. He forgave you.

C. Are you feeling the peer pressure of society today?

1. Are you on the edge of backing down?
2. Focus on the Gospel that saved you.
3. Pursue God's will.
4. Keep living the life God has called you to.
5. Remember what God has already done.

Supreme
Colossians Series - Sermon 3
Colossians 1:15-23

I. Intro

A. When I was in high school, I thought I was pretty good at basketball.

1. I knew I wasn't the best, but I thought I could hold my own.
2. Between my junior and senior year, I went to a basketball camp at Ole Miss.
3. There were 400 kids there from all over the nation.
4. The Ole Miss players were there, too.
5. A guy named Carlos Clark and a guy named Elston Turner.
6. I had never seen that level of player in person in my life.
7. They were so much above and beyond anything I had ever played against ever.
8. It was overwhelming to see someone who was umpteen times better than I was.

B. Have you ever been confronted by someone who was overwhelmingly superior?

1. By something that was light years beyond what you thought could be?

C. As we continue our series through the book of Colossians, we're about to be introduced to someone overwhelmingly superior.

1. Paul is writing to a church in the middle of society that touts itself as the answer.
2. Outside influences were pressing the church to change.
3. To change its focus.
4. To conform more.
5. Inside influences were pressing the church to change.
6. Some said they had some secret knowledge.

7. Some were trying to enforce rules and regulations they thought were needed.
8. There were all kinds of people and ideas at work trying to change the people and direction of the Colossian church.

D. Paul was writing to them to encourage them not to give in.

1. Last week we saw how Paul told them to resist the pressure they were feeling.
2. Resist by keeping their focus on the Gospel.
3. Resist by pursuing God's will only.
4. Resist by living a Godly life.

E. Today we're going to see why they should resist.

1. The pressure they may have felt came from strong forces.
2. They may have used sound reasoning to argue their points.
3. They may have sounded convincing.

F. But Paul wants them to realize there's nothing better than Jesus.

1. Nothing the outside society offered held a candle to Jesus.
2. Nothing those pushing their agendas inside the church compared to the person of Jesus.
3. Paul wants them to know Jesus is supreme.

G. That's what we, as 21st century Christians, need to realize today.

1. There's nothing better than Jesus.
2. There's nothing bigger than Jesus.
3. There's nothing that overshadows Jesus.
4. Jesus is supreme.

H. That's what the church in Colosse was founded on.

1. The supremacy of Jesus.
2. And that's what we have to keep in mind today, in our churches.
3. The supremacy of Jesus.

I. In Colossians 1:15-23, Paul paints a picture of a supreme Jesus.

1. Let's see what Paul says.
2. Read Colossians 1:15-23.

J. Paul says that's why we don't back down.

1. We don't give in.
2. We don't compromise.

3. Because what we have in Jesus is far above and beyond what anybody else has to offer.
4. Let's look more into the supremacy of Christ.

II. Jesus is the image of the invisible God.

A. John 1:18 says no one has seen God.

1. But Jesus has made Him known.
2. Jesus is the visible image of the invisible God.
3. Jesus is the visible God.
4. We see God in Jesus.
5. He show us God.
6. Because He is God!

B. What can the world show us of God?

1. They create their own gods.
2. Their gods are figments of their imagination.
3. They present God in their own image.
4. And so their gods change according to their whims.

C. But we can know, really know, the real God, because we see Him in Jesus.

1. He is supreme over ideas.
2. He is supreme over imagination.
3. He is supreme over the best man can construct in their minds.
4. He is real.
5. He is God Himself.
6. Jesus is supreme.

III. Jesus is the Creator.

A. Now this may blow your minds.

1. And it probably blew the minds of those in the Colossian church, too.
2. But Jesus, the second person in the Trinity, created everything.
3. Everything was created by God the Father, through God the Son, by the power of God the Holy Spirit.

B. He created all things in heaven.

1. He created all things on earth.
2. He created the visible things we see.
3. He created the invisible things we can't see.
4. Every existing thing, invisible or visible, was created by Jesus Christ.
5. Every power, throne, ruler, and authority was created by Jesus.

C. And the Creator is always greater than its creation.

1. All those things society was pushing on the Colossian church.
2. Jesus was greater.
3. All those things those inside the church was pushing for.
4. Jesus was over all that.

D. All things were created by Jesus and they were created for Jesus.

1. Everything is for Him.
2. Everything serves Him.
3. Jesus is supreme over all creation.
4. Because He created everything.

IV. Jesus holds everything together.

A. I heard someone tell the story of the helicopter.

1. The nut that holds the rotor on is called the Jesus nut.
2. Because it holds everything together.

B. Jesus holds everything together.

1. He holds the world together.
2. He holds creation together.
3. He holds society together.
4. He holds the church together.

C. That also implies that He can choose to let go at anytime.

1. We are all in the hands of Jesus.
2. He holds us together.
3. He makes us and keeps us.
4. He is supreme.

V. Jesus is the firstborn from the dead.

A. That means He's the first to be resurrected and continue to live.

1. By saying He's first, we can know there's more resurrected people to come.
2. He is going to give more people life after death.
3. That new life comes from Him.
4. He gives eternal life.
5. He is supreme.

VI. So Jesus is supreme.

A. He is greater than anything society has to offer.

1. He is greater than anything anybody has to offer.
2. So why go anywhere else?

VII. Our supreme Jesus reconciles us to God.

A. The Colossians needed to be reconciled to God.

1. And we need to be reconciled to God.
2. Because we are alienated from God.
3. We are enemies of God.
4. Because we behave in evil ways.

B. But our supreme Jesus brought us together with God.

1. Through His supreme death on the cross.
2. He made a way for us to be right with God.

C. When we're reconciled with God through Jesus Paul tells us what we become.

1. We become holy.
2. We are seen by God as without blemish, unmarked by sin.
3. We are free from accusation.
4. We are free!

VIII. So why would we turn to anything else?

A. Why would we succumb to the pressures of this world?

1. Why would we let others turn us away from what we have in Jesus?

B. We love and serve a supreme Jesus.

1. There's no one better.
2. There's no one higher.

Mystery Revealed
Colossians Series - Sermon 4
Colossians 1:24-2:5

I. Intro

A. When I first felt God was leading me into preaching, I really didn't know what to do.

1. The church I attended was without a pastor.
2. I didn't really know any other preachers.
3. At least, I didn't know any well enough that I thought I could talk to them about what was going on.

B. The only preacher I could think of, that I could talk to, was Danny Lanier.

1. Bro. Danny, at that time, was a fulltime evangelist.
2. He had preached the night I was saved.
3. And he lived in Meridian, Mississippi, 100 miles away..
4. That was far enough away I felt comfortable talking to him without anyone in Monroe County knowing what we talked about!

C. So I called him.

1. I told him what was going on and what I was feeling.
2. I told him I had been praying and praying.
3. He stopped me.
4. "You've prayed?"
5. "Yes."
6. "And you feel like this is what God wants you to do?"
7. "Yes, I really think that's what He's telling me."
8. "Then here's what you do. You quit praying about it and get up and do what He's calling you to do!"

D. That's what I needed.

1. I needed someone to tell me to follow God.

2. I needed someone to encourage me that God had a plan for my life.
3. I'll never forget that.
4. That one phone call of encouragement led me on this adventure of a lifetime.

E. Don't we all like people who encourage us?

1. Sometimes that little bit of encouragement is all it takes to get us moving.
2. And once we get moving, things get accomplished.

F. As we continue our series through Colossians, we're hitting a section where Paul plays the encourager.

1. If you've been with us so far, you know some of the background of the church at Colosse.
2. They were a young church.
3. And they're feeling pressure.
4. There's pressure from the outside.
5. Society is wanting to press the Colossian church into conforming.
6. Into compromising.
7. There's pressure from within the church.
8. Some of those within the church are coming up with all these different forms of Christianity.
9. Some say it's all rules – all religion.
10. Some say it's all about secret knowledge.

G. Those in the middle, trying to stay the course, are being pulled in every direction.

1. You know how it feels when you're in the middle of a tug-o-war.
2. You wear out quickly.
3. Sometimes you just want to quit so all the pressure stops.

H. So Paul steps up for a few paragraphs of encouragement.

1. He wants to encourage the church to stay the course.
2. He wants to let them know there's good still to come.
3. Read Colossians 1:24–2:5.

I. We live in a world a lot like the world the Colossians were in.

1. And we feel the same pressures they did.
2. Society wants us to conform.

3. Society wants us to compromise.
4. And the church today, as a whole, is fractured.
5. Denominations all hold that they're right.

J. It's easy to get discouraged.

1. It's easy to just say, "I don't think it's worth it."

K. So we need this word of encouragement as much as the Colossian church did.

1. Let's see how Paul encouraged the Colossian church.
2. And let's see if we can get some encouragement, as well.

II. Facing a world of change, remember: The legacy of the church is struggle.

A. Paul struggled to support the church.

1. It cost him.
2. He suffered.
3. Most of Paul's ministry was opposed by almost everyone.
4. He was always fighting an uphill battle.
5. He was writing to the Colossian church from prison.
6. But his struggles and suffering paled in comparison to the importance of what he had to say.

B. He wanted the Colossian church to remember that.

1. Going against the grain is a struggle.
2. Most people will fight against you.
3. They crucified their Leader.
4. Why think it might be different?
5. But what they were doing was important.
6. If it wasn't important, there wouldn't be the resistance.
7. They must have been making a difference.
8. Because it was stirring up trouble.

C. The legacy of the church of Jesus Christ has always been struggle.

1. We see the struggle in our society today.
2. The truth is not welcome.
3. There are many voices that are trying to shout over us.
4. Sometimes it seems we're making no progress.
5. And we're making no difference.

D. But remember what we're about.

1. We're about seeing people changed by the power of God.
2. We're about seeing our families united and strong.
3. We're about seeing our world turn to the love and grace and mercy of Jesus Christ.
4. Everything else pales in comparison.

E. It is a struggle.

1. But it's worth it.
2. It was worth it when Jesus saved us.
3. And it's worth it when we see those we love come to know our Lord and Savior.

III. What propels the church is encouragement and unity.

A. Paul knew all the Colossian church faced.

1. He says his purpose is to encourage their hearts.
2. He wanted his encouragement to lead to unity and love.

B. The Colossian church needed to be reminded that their mission was important.

1. They needed to be encouraged to stand strong for Jesus.
2. It would have been easy to roll over and give up.
3. Everything looked to be stacked against them.
4. And now here's this man in prison writing them.
5. A man most all of them had never met.
6. And he was encouraging them.
7. This man of God thought what they were doing was important.
8. Paul wanted to encourage them that their purpose was life-changing.

C. Paul encouraged them to be united.

1. It was hard enough being a church in a society that opposed them.
2. How much harder is it when your opposed by those who are supposed to be on your side.
3. You can't fight the enemy if you're fighting each other.
4. Paul was about to call out those who were disrupting the unity in the church.

5. To be effective for Jesus they had to be united in mind and purpose.
6. They had to be united in love.
7. Most of what the world sees of the church is disunity.

D. Our mission is important.

1. We may feel like we're not even making a dent in anything for Jesus.
2. We may feel like what's the use.
3. We may feel like we can't do anything.

E. But what we're doing as Christians and as a church are of the utmost importance.

1. All the decisions made in Jackson and Washington will one day cease to make a difference.
2. The people who have the loudest voices today will be gone and forgotten tomorrow.
3. But what we do will have eternal consequences.
4. Hundreds of years from today, what we do now will have a direct influence.

F. If we do it in unity.

1. We can't make a difference in the world for Jesus if we're bogged down in things that don't really matter.
2. We need to united and encouraging to make a lasting difference in this world today.

IV. The message of the church is still Jesus, just Jesus.

A. Paul reminds them of the message he preached.

1. They heard that message from Epaphras, who heard it from Paul.

B. Paul takes an early swipe at those who thought they had the secret knowledge of how to come to God.

1. These were the gnostics.
2. Paul says he presents the mystery.
3. He says he knows where all the wisdom and knowledge is hidden.
4. And he doesn't hold it back.
5. He wants everyone to know.

C. He reveals the mystery.

1. It's Christ in you.
2. It's no longer a mystery.
3. It's Jesus.

D. That's why he struggled.

1. That's why he suffered.
2. To present Jesus to the world.
3. To see people hear and trust in Jesus Christ.
4. That's what it was all about for Paul.
5. And Paul says that's what it's all about for the Colossian church.
6. Jesus!

E. Every denomination has their pet peeves.

1. And almost every Christian I've met, including myself, have our little pet peeves.
2. We can get really loud when someone crosses that line.
3. And we should stick to those things that are Godly and Biblical.
4. Those things define us.
5. But those things can never be our message.

F. Our message is Jesus.

1. Jesus lived.
2. Jesus died.
3. Jesus rose again.
4. Jesus lives today.
5. Jesus saves those who come to Him.
6. He forgives them.
7. He cleans them up.
8. He gives them meaning.
9. He gives them purpose.
10. He changes lives.

Jesus is the Answer
Colossians Series - Sermon 5
Colossians 2:6-23

I. Intro

A. Back a long time ago, a friend and I went to Puerto Vallarta, Mexico.

1. Neither one of us spoke Spanish.
2. We wanted to be able to communicate a little bit down there.
3. And somebody told us a Spanish word to use.
4. Bueno.

B. Now that's a perfectly legitimate Spanish word.

1. We could use it in Mexico.
2. And we could communicate with those Mexican people with the Spanish word "Bueno."
3. If we used it correctly.

C. See, the Spanish word "Bueno" means "good."

1. But we were told it meant "Hello."
2. So we met everyone with a "Bueno."
3. And they looked at us like we were crazy Americans.
4. We thought we were saying "Hello."
5. But we were telling everyone we met either we were good or they were good!

D. There's a lot of people in the world doing a religious version of our "Bueno" today.

1. Somebody tells them something is true.
2. Somebody teaches them something is true.
3. Somebody insists that they are right and you must do it their "right" way.
4. So many just accept these things as true.

E. It's happening all around us today.

1. Somebody says something is no longer a sin.

2. That God doesn't really mean that.

3. Someone says you can only worship God if you do it like this or do it like that.

4. Someone says they have the truth that's been hidden for millennium.

F. And we've got people everywhere accepting and repeating everything they hear as true.

1. They don't bother to investigate themselves.

2. They don't think about how it goes counter to everything God has said.

3. They forget what Jesus did.

4. They just tell everybody "Bueno" because that's what they've been told.

G. We're picking back up in our series through the book of Colossians.

1. We're going to get into the heart of the problem today.

H. The Colossian church faced a lot of opposition and mis-information.

1. They lived in a society that opposed all they taught.

2. All they stood for.

3. There were people within the church who had messed up views of God.

4. They had messed up views of Jesus.

I. And all this opposition and mis-information was threatening to splinter the Colossian church.

1. Paul was writing to them to encourage them.

2. He was also writing to remind them of the truth.

3. He wrote them to help them avoid the mis-information.

4. He wrote them to keep them from being crushed by the pressure.

J. What we're going to look at today is the heart of what Paul wanted the Colossian church to know.

1. He goes on the offensive against the pressures the Colossians were facing.

K. As we've been going through Colossians, we've kept emphasizing some things.

1. We find ourselves today, in the 21st century church, facing the exact same things the Colossians faced.
2. We live in a society that lives and teaches things that are counter to the teachings of the Bible.
3. And we see some of the same mis-information and heresy within the church of the 21st century today.

L. So the book of Colossians is to us today as much as it was to the Colossians 2000 years ago.

1. So let's get into our passage of Scripture today.
2. We're reading from Colossians 2:6-23.
3. Read Colossians 2:6-23.
4. So, first of all, let's look at some of the mis-information Paul points out to the Colossian church.

II. Philosophy.

A. Verse 8 talks about philosophy.

1. The word "philosophy" is a compound of two Greek words.
2. The Greek word "philos" which is one of the Greek forms for "love."
3. And the Greek word "sophia" which means wisdom.
4. So philosophy means "a love of wisdom."
5. Philosophy is the love of thinking.

B. Now philosophy is not bad in itself.

1. Philosophy has made its greatest gains and advancements through Christian philosophers.
2. Some of the greatest thinkers the world has ever known have been Christians.
3. Through proper philosophy we learn to see the world and everything around us better.
4. Paul wasn't warning against philosophy itself.

C. Paul says stay away from "hollow" and "deceptive" philosophy.

1. Hollow means there's no substance to it.
2. And deceptive means it's used to deceive people.

D. The secular world prides itself on wisdom and thinking.

1. They've thought God right out of existence.

2. They build their philosophy on what Paul calls "worldly principles."
3. They've removed God from the equation.
4. Their thinking and wisdom depends on the NON-EXISTENCE OF GOD.

E. Paul tells the church not to fall for this type of philosophy.

1. If any teaching, wisdom, or philosophy has no inclusion of the God of the Bible, it wrong.
2. It's hollow because, without God included, there's no substance to it.
3. We can't think and perceive our world without including its Creator.
4. This is also deceptive.
5. It's deceiving people of the existence of God.
6. It's leading people away from seeking God.
7. Or seeing the need for a relationship with Him.

F. We live right smack dab in the middle of a world with hollow and deceptive thinking.

1. God has been removed from "smart" thinking.
2. If we mention faith in Jesus, we are automatically seen as "non-thinkers."
3. Some churches have fallen for these hollow and deceptive philosophies.
4. Jesus is downplayed, if not completely eliminated from their beliefs.

G. Paul says don't fall for this.

1. Don't fall into this trap.
2. It may sound reasonable.
3. They may be able to argue you into a corner.
4. But don't be deceived.
5. Anyone or any philosophy that excludes God is incorrect.
6. Stay away.

III. Paul also calls out tradition.

A. He mentions it in verse 8 and covers much more in verses 16-18 and verses 21-23.

1. He tells the Colossian church not to get caught up in religious traditions.
2. He talks about eating and drinking.
3. He talks about religious festivals, celebrations, and Sabbaths.
4. He says don't get caught up in traditions.

B. Tradition is like philosophy.

1. Just like philosophy, in itself, is not bad, neither is tradition.
2. We have traditions – about food!
3. We're going to eat in just a few minutes, a tradition we've had for at least 5 years.
4. Traditions are not always bad.

C. Paul is talking about a different kind of tradition here.

1. He mentions the eating and drinking that was ceremonial.
2. He mentions festivals and days that were taught to be necessary.
3. Necessary to be accepted by God.

D. Some in the Colossian church was teaching that certain things had to be done to be accepted by God.

1. Without doing these things, you could never be right with God.
2. God would absolutely reject you if you did not do these things.

E. Paul says those traditions didn't count for anything anymore.

1. God instituted those things in the Old Testament as a "shadow of the things that were to come."
2. All these things pointed to Jesus.
3. Now that Jesus has come, He fulfilled everything.
4. They're no longer necessary.
5. Nothing is necessary but Jesus now.

F. We see that so much in the church today.

1. You can't worship God with music less than 100 years old.
2. God only speaks through a certain translation of the Bible.
3. You have to dress just like we did in the 1950s for God to accept you.
4. It's got to be done this way.
5. It's got to be done that way.

G. Paul says don't get caught up in these traditions, either.

1. Don't try to add to Jesus.
2. Don't try to take away from Jesus.
3. Salvation and righteousness is found in Jesus – only Jesus.

IV. So where do these things come from?

A. How has the world gotten so far away from right thinking?

1. How have some in the church gotten so caught up in tradition?
2. Paul gets to the heart of the matter in verses 18 and 19.
3. Read Colossians 2:18-19.
4. Right there, Paul gets to the crux of the problem.

B. Why does hollow and deceptive philosophy develop?

1. Why do wrong and dangerous traditions develop?

C. They come from a lost connection with the Head.

1. These things develop when a connection with Jesus is lost.
2. When Jesus is no longer honored in a society, the connection to Jesus is lost.
3. Bad traditions rise up when what Jesus has done is forgotten.

V. So Paul reminds the Colossians of Jesus again.

A. Paul never strays from the message of Jesus.

1. He is always pointing people to Jesus.
2. Verses 9 through 15 serve as another reminder.

B. In Jesus we have everything.

1. We have forgiveness.
2. We have eternal life.
3. We have freedom.

C. How do we avoid hollow and deceptive philosophy?

1. We keep our focus on Jesus!
2. How do we avoid misleading traditions?
3. We remember what Jesus has already done.
4. The way we keep our focus is we keep Jesus front and center.

VI. Has some grandiose philosophy got your attention?

A. Is the wisdom of the world becoming enticing to you?

1. Does it exclude Jesus?
2. Then it's hollow and deceptive.
3. Stay away.

B. Are there traditions that claim they are the only way to God?

1. Do these traditions forget what Christ has done?
2. Are they additions to what Christ has done?
3. Then they are wrong.
4. Stay away.

VII. Jesus is our all in all.

A. Is He your all in all?

1. Do you have room for Him?
2. He's just a step away.

Your Identity
Colossians Series - Sermon 6
Colossians 3:1-11

I. Intro

A. Most of you have heard me talk about some of the mission trips I've been on.

1. Every trip I've taken has been routed through Amsterdam, Netherlands.
2. I've been through Amsterdam 6 different times.
3. There's usually been a long layover there.
4. So I've been into downtown Amsterdam quite a few times.

B. Every time I've been there I've noticed something interesting.

1. I still haven't completely figured it out.
2. But it happens every time.
3. The Dutch people know within seconds we're Americans.

C. I thought maybe it's our American accent.

1. But, being from the South, we don't have typical American accents.
2. The Dutch people say it's easy to identify us.
3. They see us.
4. They hear us.
5. They interact with us.
6. And they easily identify us.
7. You're American.

D. Identity is going to be our focus today.

1. As we continue in our study of Colossians we're going to talk about identity.

E. Let's recap a little bit about the setting of the Colossian church.

1. Colosse was a Roman city located in Asia Minor.
2. It's what we now know as Turkey.
3. It was a typical Roman city.

4. Almost everyone was pagan.
5. They had their gods and their religions.
6. They worshiped the sun and the moon.
7. They worshiped all type of gods.
8. All these religions incorporated all types of immoral things in their worship.

F. It was in this city that a man lived named Epaphras.

1. Epaphras had been in another area city, Ephesus.
2. While he was there he ran into a man named Paul.
3. Paul was teaching about another God, One different than all those Epaphras knew about.
4. Paul was saying there was only one God.
5. Paul said all those other gods were nothing but figments of man's imagination.
6. Paul said this God came, lived, and died to save mankind.
7. Paul said by trusting in this God, your sins were forgiven.
8. By trusting in this God, you would live forever with Him.
9. That this God wanted a real and personal relationship with every single person.
10. Epaphras believed and became a Christian.

G. Epaphras was so caught up in his relationship with God, he couldn't keep his mouth shut.

1. So when he got back home in Colosse, he started telling others about the real God.
2. A few of these others believed, too.
3. Out of these few people a church was born.

H. It was tough being a church in the Colossian environment.

1. The pagan society was still the majority.
2. And they didn't take kindly to people who suggested there was another God.
3. A real God.
4. They didn't like to be told they could be wrong.
5. So they were putting pressure on the little Colossian church to get back in line.
6. To conform to the way society said they should be.

I. And some within the church started adding to the message Epaphras heard from Paul.

1. They were saying there was more to it.
2. There had to be more hard and fast rules about following God.
3. Some others were saying there was a different way to God and they held the secret.
4. The little church of Colossians was feeling intense pressure from within and without.

J. Paul heard about the intense pressure the Colossian church was feeling.

1. So he wrote a letter to them to help them better understand what was going on.
2. And he wanted them to know how to maintain their faith in the middle of the firestorm.

K. We've been talking about all of that for the past five weeks.

1. Last week we saw where Paul warned the Colossians to steer clear of two groups in particular.
2. These groups were bombarding the Colossians with mis-information.

L. One group was denying the existence of God.

1. They saw the world through a lens devoid of God.
2. So anything went.
3. If there was no real God, then you did whatever you wanted to please yourself.
4. And if there were many gods, then you were at the mercy of those who claimed to speak for those gods.

M. The other group was hung up on tradition and religion.

1. They were setting up strict rules and regulations.
2. They were building a religion of secret knowledge and vision.
3. They were all shouting they were right and everyone else was wrong.

N. Paul says "Stay away from both."

1. Neither one of those groups have gotten anything right.
2. Stay way.
3. Don't let either group define you.
4. That's not who you are.

O. You are Christians.

1. You are followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. You look different.
3. You act different.
4. You live different.

P. So up to this point Paul has told them who they aren't.

1. Now he's about to tell them who they are.
2. He is about to define them as Christians.
3. He is about to say, "This is who you are."
4. "This is your identity."

Q. Here's what Paul tells them.

1. We're going to be in Colossians 3:1-11.
2. Read Colossians 3:1-11.
3. So let's see what Paul says about the identity the Colossians now have.

R. But before we do that let's answer a question.

1. This applies to me in the 21st century sitting in this church - how?
2. What has all of this stuff that happened 2000 years ago got to do with me?

S. It applies because we, as Christians, find ourselves in the exact same spot the Colossians were in 2000 years ago.

1. We live in a society that's trying to squeeze God out.
2. Many deny the very existence of God.
3. And we see the results of a society that denies the existence of God.
4. Anything goes.
5. Do whatever you want.
6. Except be a Christian.

T. We live in a era where denominations are becoming religions.

1. Those of us who belong to Jesus are pulled in all different directions.
2. Society pressures us from without.
3. Religion pressures us from within.

U. So what Paul has to say to the Colossians 2000 years ago directly applies to Christians today.

1. He tells the Colossians that's not who you are.
2. You have a new idenitity.

3. And God tells us we're not like society today.
4. And we're not like religions today.
5. We have a different identity.

II. As Christians, this is who we are.

A. This is our standing as believers.

1. This is our identity now.

III. You are not who you used to be.

A. At one time, you were a part of the society around you.

1. You identified with those things.
2. Others in society saw you as part of them.
3. You followed their maps.
4. You lived that life.

B. But you are not who you used to be.

1. Jesus came storming into your life.
2. He changed you.
3. Verse 3 says you died.
4. The "you" that died is the "you" you used to be.
5. That person is gone.
6. That identity is dead and buried.

C. You can't be that person anymore.

1. You can't go back and "un-die."

D. So don't try and go back to who you were.

1. It will never be the same.
2. You're aware of things now you didn't know then.
3. So let that go.

E. Don't let anybody talk you back into that former life.

1. Don't give in to that pull.
2. You were there once.
3. But's that not who you are now.
4. You have a new identity.

IV. You've been raised with Christ.

A. The "you" that died with Christ has also been raised with Christ.

1. You have a resurrected life.
2. You're different.
3. Your life is different.

B. God brought you to life for a reason.

1. He wants you to experience a different life – a new life only He can give.
2. He raised you to make a difference in the society you came from.
3. He raised you to life to bring Him glory and honor.
4. He raised you to know Him in intense love and relationship.
5. Your new life is your new identity.

V. Your life is hidden in Christ.

A. In other words, your life is Christ's life.

1. You live for Him.
2. You live in Him.
3. Your life is His life.
4. You live a brand new life in the power and guidance of Jesus Christ.
5. Your identity is Jesus.

VI. You are being renewed by Christ.

A. You're not static.

1. God is making you "newer and newer" every day.
2. He is making you into a "little Jesus."
3. Everyday He is presenting Jesus to the world through you!

VII. You will live forever with Christ.

A. You are a being that will never cease to exist as a child of God.

1. There is no end to your relationship with God.
2. There is no end to God's love for you.
3. There is no end to God's presence in your life.

4. One day you will be in the very physical presence of God.
5. You are His and you are His forever.
6. That's who you are!
7. That's your standing as a Christian.
8. That's your identity.

VIII. Paul doesn't stop at just defining our identity.

A. He tells us our identity shows in our lives.

1. The Dutch identified us as Americans because they saw something in us.
2. Something that stood out so much they had no problem knowing who we were.

B. Paul says our identity should stand out.

1. As Christians, there should be no problem for those who see us get who we are.
2. He points out areas of our lives that should stand out because we belong to Christ.
3. Our lives should reflect the reality of the identity change we have by following Jesus.

IX. Our pursuit of the earthly nature is dead.

A. Verse 5 says to put to death our earthly nature.

1. What in the world is an earthly nature?
2. What are we supposed to kill off in our lives now that we identify with Christ?
3. What shouldn't exist in our Christian lives that exists in the rest of society?

B. Paul gives us a few things that should die in our lives now that we're Christians.

1. Verse 5 gives us a few things to kill.
2. Sexual immorality.
3. Impurity.
4. Lust.
5. Evil desires.
6. Greed.

7. He sums up this list with one word: idolatry.

C. What is idolatry?

1. It's making anything or anyone in our lives more important than God.

D. That's what society was doing around the Colossians.

1. And that's what society is doing around us today.
2. They have more important things and people in their lives than God.

E. Most of what Paul tells us to kill is sexual in nature.

1. Because that's the epitome of idolatry.
2. That's the epitome of idolatry today.
3. Ourselves.
4. It's the worship of self.

F. When God is out of the picture, we pursue whatever most pleases us.

1. We are our own god.
2. It's all about what gives us the most pleasure.

G. That's the identity of society.

1. But that's not our identity in Christ.
2. He is our everything.
3. He is our pleasure.

H. That's the identity the world should see in us.

1. That our pursuit of our own pleasure is not the driving force in our lives.
2. Our identity should be seeking God and His pleasure.

X. Our identity should not be defined by our actions, either.

A. Paul mentions some actions that identify with the world.

1. Anger.
2. Malice.
3. Slander.
4. Filthy language.
5. Lying.

B. All of these are actions taken by people who have no hope or faith or view of God.

1. Paul says you took all that stuff off when you died in Christ.

2. That stuff should be history.
3. You're a new person now.
4. Don't act like you're still dead.
5. Don't let those things be your identity.

XI. Paul finishes off this section in verse 11.

A. Colossians 3:11.

1. Read Colossians 3:11.

B. Christ is your everything.

1. Your race isn't your identity anymore.
2. Your nationality isn't your identity anymore.
3. Your position in life isn't your identity anymore.
4. Your position in society isn't your identity anymore.
5. Your identity is wrapped up in Christ.

C. So what do we need to do to make our identity plain to see?

1. What do we still need to kill off in our lives?
2. What adjustments do we need to make so there's no doubt of our identity?
3. What sin is still battling against who we really are?

D. If you're a Christian, you are identified in Christ.

1. Let's make sure the world recognizes our identity.

The Church the World Should See
Colossians Series - Sermon 7
Colossians 3:12-17

I. Intro

A. I want to show you a picture.

1. (I used a picture here of a burning southern mansion. The mansion was a movie prop. The first picture showed the mansion apparently heavily engulfed in flames.)
2. That's not a good sight, is it?
3. A beautiful southern mansion on fire.
4. Seeing such a great building burn down is a terrible thing.

B. Now I want to show you a picture of the same building.

1. (The picture I used here was a more wide angle view of the picture I used above. It was then obvious that this building burning was only a movie prop.)
2. What do you think now?
3. It's not really a beautiful southern mansion, is it?
4. It's just some Hollywood set made to look like a southern mansion.
5. And it's not really on fire.
6. It's all smoke and mirrors.

C. That's called a movie set facade.

1. It's supposed to look like something else.
2. Form the front, it looks like a real mansion.
3. With some clever camera angles it looks real.
4. The whole intent of the facade is to make something that's not real look real.
5. This ties in directly with our message from Colossians today.

D. A quick recap of Colossians so far.

1. You've heard this at least seven times.
2. It sounds like I'm repeating myself, because...I am.

3. I want us to see just how much Colossians applies to us, the church in 2014.

E. The city of Colosse was in the Roman Empire.

1. The church was in a city under Roman influence.
2. Romans had gods for everything.
3. Colosse was a society of many gods and many types of worship.
4. The people of the Colossian church grew up and lived in this society.
5. And then they became believers in Jesus Christ.

F. They were a small group of believers in a large city who didn't believe like they did.

1. So they felt the pressure of a society that didn't like their difference.
2. It was a tough environment to be a Christian.

G. In the past messages, we've seen how Paul warned them to steer clear of these pagan ideas.

1. He also warned them to steer clear of people trying to add to the Gospel they believed.

H. Last week we talked about the Christian identity.

1. The Bible tells us who we are, now that we're Christians.
2. We can sum it all up in one word.
3. Jesus.
4. Our identity is Jesus.
5. We're not who we used to be.
6. So our actions are not what they once were.
7. Since we identify with Jesus, we should look like Jesus.

I. So, today, we're moving on in Colossians.

1. And what we're going to look at today adds to that identity we have in Jesus.
2. But Paul moves from our individual identities.
3. He now moves to our corporate identity.
4. Out identity as a church of Jesus Christ.

J. Today, we're going to look at Colossians 3:12-17.

1. Read Colossians 3:12-17.

II. Let's see how the Bible describes the church.

A. We are God's chosen people.

1. You may have been told you're special when someone had nothing better to say.
2. But, as a follower of Jesus Christ, you really are special.
3. You belong to God.
4. He chose you.
5. No one here is worthless.
6. Everyone here has meaning and purpose in the eyes of the only One that really matters.
7. God.

B. We are holy.

1. Now that might not be a word you've been described as before.
2. But you are holy.
3. Set apart.
4. Sanctified by God.
5. For Him.

C. We are dearly loved.

1. God is not out to get you.
2. His purpose is not to sabotage your entire life.
3. He dearly and deeply loves you.
4. He sacrificed everything for you.
5. He loves you!

D. So we are special.

1. We are holy.
2. We are deeply loved.
3. There's one more descriptive term for us used in this passage.

E. You are members of one body.

1. Now what can that mean?
2. We've definitely sitting here as individuals.
3. There are many bodies in this building.
4. How can we be one?

F. Because we, as a church, are the body of Christ.

1. We are special, and holy, and deeply loved, as one organism, too.

2. God not only sees us individually, but as one – one body.
3. We are, collectively, the hands and feet of Jesus today.
4. We are the Jesus that this society sees today.

G. Now, let's go back to that facade talk for a minute.

1. We saw a picture of a beautiful southern mansion.
2. But then we saw behind the scenes.
3. Behind the scenes there was no substance at all.
4. From the front it looked good.
5. But when we saw the entire picture, there was really nothing there.
6. The front said something great exists.
7. The back said there's nothing there.

H. Paul says you are the body of Christ.

1. You represent Christ.
2. In a society who desperately needs Christ, you represent Him.
3. All this society will see of Jesus is you.

I. What does society see of Jesus today?

1. What does the church look like to society today?
2. Do they see Jesus really changing and making a difference in our lives?
3. Or do they just see a facade?
4. Do they see an empty, fake facade of Jesus?

J. Paul was concerned about the way the Colossian church lived in the middle of that pagan society.

1. He wanted them to make sure what they presented as the body of Christ was real.
2. God is concerned about the way our church lives in the middle of our society today.
3. He wants to make sure what the world sees in us as the body of Christ is real.

K. So this passage tells us what a real church looks in a pagan society.

1. These are the attributes we should have, together, as a church.
2. This is what society should see when they look at the church of Jesus Christ.

III. They should see Jesus in how we treat each other.

A. Paul lists some ways we are to treat one another.

1. And these also describes how we should treat those outside the church, as well.
2. With compassion.
3. With kindness.
4. With humility.
5. With gentleness.
6. With patience.

B. Compassion is a virtue of the church.

1. Compassion has to do with mercy.
2. In Paul's time, there wasn't much mercy in society.
3. The elderly were thrown away.
4. The handicapped were thrown away.
5. The mentally ill were thrown away.
6. Anyone who didn't meet society's requirements for value were thrown away.
7. Paul says the church is different.
8. We have compassion.
9. We have mercy.

C. Kindness is a virtue of the church.

1. Kindness has to do with how we think about others.
2. If we regard someone as less than us, then their value is less.
3. Kindness regards others as equal.
4. We value them.
5. And we treat them as someone of value.

D. Humility is a virtue of the church.

1. The Greek language had no word for humility that didn't relate to submission.
2. Think of humiliate.
3. But Christianity redefined humility.
4. We see each other as equals.
5. We were all called and saved by God.
6. None of us would be anything without God's actions.
7. That puts us on equal ground.

E. Gentleness is a virtue of the church.

1. Jesus has been gentle with us.
2. We have not received what we should.
3. So we emulate Jesus by not always giving someone what they deserve.

F. Patience is a virtue of the church.

1. There are some foolish people in this world.
2. There are some people who never seem to learn.
3. There are some people who never say anything good about anyone.
4. There are some people who always think and say the worst about someone.
5. Sometimes we just want to wring their necks!
6. But we have been foolish, never learning, never saying anything good, and thinking the worst.
7. And Jesus forgave us.
8. He still took us as His own.
9. That's what patience looks like.
10. Like Jesus and you.

G. Those virtues should be seen in the church.

1. We should treat everyone who is part of our church like this.
2. And we should treat everyone out in society the same way.
3. With compassion.
4. With kindness.
5. With humility.
6. With gentleness.
7. With patience.
8. Like Jesus treats us!

H. Now, it's hard enough for one of us to treat others like that.

1. How in the world can we do that as a body?
2. How can we really be this church Paul describes?
3. How can we have and display these virtues?
4. How can we be more than just a facade?
5. How can we really be the church of Jesus Christ today?
6. Paul tells us.

IV. Put on love.

A. Love is what holds us together.

1. Love is what binds us together.
2. When we really love each other, then we don't have to fake it.
3. It will be who we are.

B. When we really love each other, we will have compassion.

1. We'll be kind and humble and gentle and patient.
2. We love one another.

C. How do we do that?

1. I mean, how can I love these people here?
2. I can barely tolerate them!

D. First of all, you have to know what love is.

1. It's hard to love someone when you don't know what love is.
2. And we know what love is - in Jesus.
3. He is love.
4. You can't know love without Jesus.
5. So you have to know Jesus.
6. Not know about Him.
7. Know Him.

E. You have to submerge yourself in Jesus.

1. Get to know Him better.
2. Make the investment of time with Jesus.
3. As we know Him and His love more, we will love more.
4. We can't been around Jesus without Him rubbing off on us.

V. Let the peace of Christ rule.

A. The Greek words used here are interesting.

1. Paul literally says "Let the peace of Christ be your umpire." (Barclay, The New Daily Study Bible, p. 185).
2. A man named William Barclay said this about letting the peace of Christ rule.
3. "It is a word that is used of an umpire who settled things in any matter of dispute. If the peace of Jesus Christ is the umpire in anyone's heart, then, when feelings clash and we are pulled in two directions at the same time, the decision of Christ will

keep us in the way of love, and the church will remain the one body it is meant to be. The way to right action is to appoint Jesus Christ as the one who decides between the conflicting emotions in our hearts; and, if we accept His decisions, we cannot go wrong." (Barclay, p. 185).

B. The peace of Christ ruling means we let Christ keep us together.

1. Our love for Him keeps us loving each other.
2. We put up with others because Christ puts up with us.
3. We are unified because Christ wants us to be unified.

VI. Society thinks of most of the church today as hypocritical.

A. And in many ways they're correct.

1. They see us saying one thing and doing another.
2. They've seen past the facade and see there's no substance.
3. So what we have to say is disregarded because it's doesn't seem to matter.

B. The Bible tells us how to tear down that facade.

1. To become real.
2. We do it all in the love of Jesus.
3. And we do it all for Jesus.
4. Our identity.

C. This afternoon, we're back in society.

1. Tomorrow we'll be right in the middle of it.
2. How will they see the church?
3. How will they see Jesus?
4. What will you show them of Christ?
5. Do you know Him?

Relationships Reflecting Jesus
Colossians Series - Sermon 8
Colossians 3:18-4:1

I. Intro

A. Today we're in our next to last message from Colossians.

1. For the past two months we've been looking at how this book applies to us today.
2. We've been talking about the similarities between the Colossian church, which existed 2000 years ago, and the 21st century church today.

B. The Colossian church existed in a world with many gods.

1. There were many deities and many forms of worship.
2. Most were comfortable with people worshiping gods different from theirs.
3. But the Colossian church was teaching there is only one true God.
4. This put them at odds with the rest of society.
5. And it was causing them problems.

C. The Colossian church also had some problems within the church.

1. There were those who were teaching things contrary to the Gospel truth they first believed.
2. They were adding to the Gospel.
3. They were teaching that you had to do something more.
4. Or know something more.

D. Paul wrote to the Colossian church to help them not to give in to either side.

1. He warned them to stay away from those things society was pushing on them.
2. He encouraged them to stand firm and not compromise.

3. He told them to avoid those who were teaching something different than the Gospel.

E. The first half or so of Colossians is telling them, and us, what to avoid.

1. We need to stand strong and not bend to the pressures society pushes on the church today.
2. We cannot give in to a society that wants to eliminate God.
3. And we have to stand firm on the Gospel.
4. The Good News of Jesus is enough.
5. It is all.
6. It is everything.
7. There's nothing man can add or subtract from the Gospel.

F. Beginning in chapter 3, Paul moves from the things to avoid to the things to be done.

1. In a society that doesn't know the true God, our actions will show them God.
2. We're to put to death the things we once thought made life.
3. We're not that person anymore.
4. We've been saved.
5. We're been made new.
6. Jesus is now our lives.
7. We should reflect Him to a world that desperately needs Him.

G. Paul then addresses the body of Christ.

1. The church.
2. As followers of Jesus Christ, we are part of His body.
3. And His body is the church.
4. We are to treat each other with respect.
5. We are to respect each other.
6. We are to forgive each other.
7. And, to top it all off, we're to love one another.

H. Society needs people like this.

1. Society need churches like this.
2. People who live for Jesus.
3. Churches who are the hands and feet of Jesus.

I. Do you think society, today, needs Jesus?

1. Show them Jesus.

2. Show them in how you carry yourselves.
3. Show them with a church that looks just like Jesus.

J. So, we've seen two types of relationships we're to look like Jesus.

1. We're to look like Jesus in our individual lives.
2. We're to look like Jesus in our church lives.
3. People should see Jesus in these two relationships.

K. Now, we're about to see two more relationships where we're to look like Jesus.

1. We're to look like Jesus in our family relationships.
2. And we're to look like Jesus in our work relationships.

L. Let's see what God's Word says about these two relationships.

1. Read Colossians 3:18-4:1.

M. Alright, let's jump right in.

1. The Word of God addresses relationships within the family first.

II. Wives are addressed first.

A. Wives, submit to your husbands.

1. Alright, are we clear?
2. Let's move on then!

B. That word "submit" doesn't set well with some people.

1. But lets talk about it a minute.

C. What does it mean to "submit?"

1. Submit is a word that has a voluntary connotation to it.
2. Wives are not told to obey.
3. Children are told to obey.
4. Slaves are told to obey.
5. Wives are told to submit.

D. Submitting to someone is voluntarily yielding your rights to someone else.

1. It's doing something because you want to.
2. It's voluntarily doing something for the greater good.

E. What is that greater good?

1. Pleasing the Lord.

2. "Submit yourselves to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord."
3. Wives submit to their husbands, not just to please and serve their husbands.
4. Wives submit to their husbands as an act of submission to Jesus.

F. This pleases the Lord.

1. God designed the family with order, just like He designed everything else in creation with order.
2. That order doesn't raise or lower anyone's importance.
3. That order doesn't mean God loves some more and others less.
4. His order is for function.
5. For the family to function, God has established this order.
6. Wives, when you please God with your actions, the family functions as He designed it.
7. He doesn't see you as less than a man.
8. He doesn't love you less than a man.
9. He doesn't see you as less important than a man.
10. He knows best how the family should function.
11. He asks you to willingly live in the order He has laid out.

III. Husbands, you don't get off here either.

A. You are to love your wives.

1. In Ephesians 5, husbands are told to love their wives as Christ loved the church.
2. And how much did Jesus love the church?
3. Jesus loves the church so much He died for the church.
4. He placed our needs above His own.
5. He sold out everything He had for the church.
6. He gave up life.
7. He gave up following His own course.
8. He happily and voluntarily gave up everything He had because He loved the church.

B. That's our model for loving our wives.

1. Love them so much nothing else even competes.

2. When you said "I do," you gave up all rights to yourself.
3. You are now part of someone else – your wife.
4. You have become one.
5. She's yours.
6. And guess what?
7. You're hers.
8. Love her.

C. Love them and don't be harsh with them.

1. This was kind of revolutionary to the Colossians.
2. The husband was the undisputed champion of the marriage.
3. He practically owned his wife.
4. He could treat her any way he wanted, and there was no one to stand in his way.
5. Paul says love them and treat them right.
6. That's your wife.

IV. Children, you get equal time, too.

A. Obey your parents.

1. In everything.
2. God, in His infinite wisdom, decided you would have the parents you have.
3. We may not always be able to see the wisdom in that, but it is His choice.
4. So we're to obey them.
5. There are some exceptions, but the large majority of parents want what's best for their children.
6. They've lived.
7. They've messed up.
8. They know consequences of actions.
9. They tell you "yes" or "no" based upon their experience and their knowledge of God.
10. Obey them.

B. Your obedience pleases the Lord.

1. It might not please you.
2. It might not be the way you want to go.
3. It may not be the thing you want to do.

4. But, if nothing else, do it for Jesus.
5. Don't you want to please Jesus?
6. Don't you want to bring a smile to Jesus?
7. Obey your parents.

V. So we have God's instructions for family relationships.

A. There's one more relationship God addresses.

1. The work relationship.

B. You may wonder where I'm getting that from?

1. The next section talks about masters and slaves.
2. I'm not a slave.
3. And I don't have a master.
4. How in the world does this apply to me?

C. There's some principles here we can use in our workplace.

1. Let's see what they are.

VI. Workers are to do their jobs like doing it for Jesus.

A. In fact, the Bible says it is Jesus you're doing your work for.

1. When you belong to Jesus, everything you do is for Jesus.
2. Building tires.
3. Loading train cars.
4. Nursing.
5. Whatever you do.
6. It's for Jesus.

B. So do your work.

1. It doesn't matter if your boss sees it.
2. It doesn't matter if you are the favorite or not.
3. Do your work.
4. It's all for Jesus.

VII. Bosses, treat your workers right.

A. Do what is right.

1. Do what is fair.
2. That's what you expect from your Master, right?

3. You want Jesus to be right and fair.
4. And He always is.
5. So emulate your master.
6. Be Jesus to your workers.

VIII. So we've seen how we should reflect Jesus as individuals.

A. We've seen how we should reflect Jesus as part of the church.

1. We've seen how we should reflect Jesus in our family.
2. We've seen how we should reflect Jesus at work.

B. Why do we have that weight on us?

1. Why are we supposed to reflect Jesus?
2. Why can't the preachers do that?
3. Why can't the super-spiritual do that?
4. Why is it on me?

C. Because of Jesus!

1. We owe Him everything.
2. We are direct recipients of His live, grace, and mercy.

D. How will the world know about Jesus except for us?

1. How will society know how Jesus really changes lives if we're not living a changed life?
2. It's not about us.
3. It's about those yet to come.
4. And it's about pleasing our Lord.

E. Do you need to change some things?

1. Do you need to get real with Jesus right now and get things right?
2. Do you need this Jesus?

A Plan for Bringing Change
Colossian Series - Sermon 9
Colossians 4:2-18

I. Intro

A. Well, we're finally going to finish up our series through Colossians today.

1. We've been going through this Bible book since June.
2. This will be the last message from Colossians – for now.

B. We've seen that this letter from Paul is still relevant to us today.

1. We live in a society much like the Colossians did.
2. We face many of the same obstacles the Colossians did.
3. This book reads like today's headlines.

C. The book tells us to avoid the pressures of society.

1. We are to resist compromising to be accepted.
2. We are to be on guard for wrong teachings.
3. We are to cling to Jesus.
4. And we're to cling to the Gospel.

D. Overarching everything in Colossians is Jesus.

1. Jesus is our everything.
2. We are in Christ.
3. He is supreme.
4. There is no one like Jesus.
5. And there's no hope without Jesus.
6. It's all Jesus, all the time.

E. Much of the book of Colossians is defensive in nature.

1. We're told of things to defend ourselves against: pressure and compromise.
2. We're told to defend our church and it's unity.
3. We're told to defend our families.
4. We're told to defend our workplace.
5. We're to stand strong and not give in to a God-less society.

6. We're told to stand strong against anything that adds or compromises the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
7. We're to defend.

F. As Paul finishes up his letter, he changes the focus a bit.

1. After so much advice to be defensive, Paul moves to the other side of that coin.
2. Going on the offensive.
3. Being proactive.

G. Paul spent a lot of time nurturing and advising churches.

1. He loves those people and wanted to help them live in a society dead-set against them.
2. But that was not Paul's sole focus.
3. It wasn't even his top priority.

H. Paul wanted to see people saved.

1. Paul wanted to see people trust in Jesus Christ.
2. Paul wanted to bring change to society.
3. Paul wanted to bring Jesus to the world.

I. That's the focus for us this morning, too.

1. We must be on the defensive today.
2. We have to defend ourselves from false truths and compromise.
3. But we've got another job to do.
4. Bring change to our society.
5. Take Jesus to the world.

J. We're going to read these last verses and see what we find in them.

1. This is Colossians 4:2-18.
2. Read Colossians 4:2-18.

K. We see a type of plan formed in these verses.

1. A plan to bring change to society.
2. A plan to take Jesus to the world.
3. A plan for going on the offensive.
4. What is this plan?
5. What will it take to change this society?
6. What will it take to take Jesus to the world?

II. It takes a team to bring change to our world.

A. Many times we think of Paul as acting alone.

1. He is so prominent in the New Testament.
2. His name is mentioned so many times.
3. We give Him credit for all the stuff that happened.
4. But there were others involved.

B. Paul had a large team around him.

1. And much of the team served in other places.
2. Tychicus.
3. Onesimus.
4. Aristarchus.
5. Mark.
6. Justus.
7. Luke.
8. Demas.

C. These were all a part of the team Paul had around him.

1. Paul had a huge load on his shoulders.
2. By the time he wrote Colossians he had started many churches.
3. But he still wanted to see more come to know Jesus.
4. And he wanted to see many new churches planted.
5. He couldn't do it alone.
6. He wasn't supposed to do it alone.
7. God had others included in His plans.

D. I think everyone one of us would like to see our world change.

1. I think everyone of us want to see people saved.
2. I think all of us want to see our church grow by reaching people for Jesus.

E. We're to be on the offensive.

1. We're to go into this world and proclaim Jesus.
2. We can do a little bit on our own.
3. But it's hard to make a dent solo.
4. We need to work together.

F. We need a team.

1. We need people with like minds.
2. We need people who want to see people changed by Jesus.
3. We need team players.

4. We need to work together.
5. To change this world, it's going to take a team.

III. It takes cooperation to change the world.

A. Look at Colossians 4:16.

1. Read Colossians 4:16.

B. Paul wrote this letter to the Colossian church.

1. And now we find out he wrote a letter to the church at Laodicea, too.
2. And they were to share the letters with each other.
3. They were to cooperate with each other.
4. They shared similar circumstances.
5. They could do more cooperating with one another.

C. This is just an extension of the team.

1. The team to change the world is not just our individual church.
2. The team is all churches of Jesus Christ.
3. We are all in Christ.
4. We are all on the same team.

D. I think this one concept has the most potential to change this world.

1. Churches working together.
2. Churches that forget borders.
3. Churches that quit competing for people who already know Jesus.
4. Churches that quit running down each other.
5. The world needs to see churches in unity with one another.
6. Churches should work together to change this world.

IV. It takes prayer to change the world.

A. Here's Colossians 4:2-4.

1. Read Colossians 4:2-4.

B. We are to devote ourselves to praying.

1. Praying is simply talking to God.
2. We are to be talking to God.

3. And we've got a topic to talk to Him about.
4. The world that needs His Son, Jesus.
5. Seeing the world change for good is important enough to talk to God about.
6. Seeing people saved and forgiven is important enough to talk to God about.
7. So we pray.

C. We pray for open doors.

1. We pray for opportunities.
2. We pray for God to provide us opportunities to tell people about Jesus.
3. We pray for God to open up doors to people and places we can't get into right now.

D. We pray for an audience.

1. We pray for God to put people in our lives to tell them about Jesus.
2. We pray for people to ask us about our Lord and our faith.
3. We pray for those people long before we talk to them or even know them.

E. We pray for clarity and the right words to say.

1. So many fail to talk to people about Jesus because they don't know what to say.
2. Well, I know Someone who knows what needs to be said.
3. And I know Someone who can do anything through us.
4. Pray for those right words.
5. Pray for God to give you exactly what you need to say.

V. It takes every one of us to bring change to this world.

A. The Bible sees this as one of our greatest reasons for living.

1. Wouldn't it be terrible to miss out on the greatest reason God has you here?
2. God has left us here.
3. Our salvation is secure.
4. Many others are not.

B. Here's what Paul says in Colossians 4:5-6.

1. Read Colossians 4:5-6.

C. Be wise in your actions.

1. Use wisdom.
2. Remember they're watching.
3. They're looking for Jesus.

D. Make the most of every opportunity.

1. Every minute with someone is an opportunity to live Jesus.
2. Don't miss it.

E. Bring something worthwhile to the conversation.

1. Give people something to think about.

F. Be prepared to answer.

1. All of us had a first day at work.
2. We didn't know anything.
3. But we eventually learn.
4. Why?
5. Because it's important to us.
6. Because we want to do better.
7. We'll work our fingers to the bone to get better.

G. We work at what's important to us.

1. Are those people outside the doors important enough?
2. Are they important enough to get into the Bible?
3. Are they important enough to invest time in learning more about Jesus?
4. Are they important enough to prepare?
5. Prepare yourselves to lead people to Jesus.

VI. God doesn't expect us to hide in a hole until He takes us home.

A. He wants to bring change to this world.

1. He wants people to come to Jesus.
2. We're to be on the offensive.
3. Are you ready to get active on God's team?
4. Are you ready to trust Jesus?

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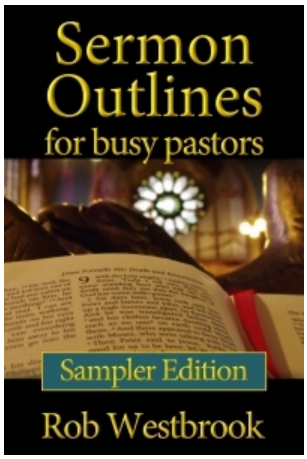


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Titles and Scripture References

1. World History - Genesis 1:1

2. The Most Important Exam - 2 Corinthians 13:5

3. Jesus - Our Reconciliation - Romans 5:6-11

4. What Is A Christian? - Acts 11:19-26

5. Five Steps to Spiritual Maturity - Hebrews 5:11-6:3

6. The Sacrifice of Atonement - Romans 3:21-26

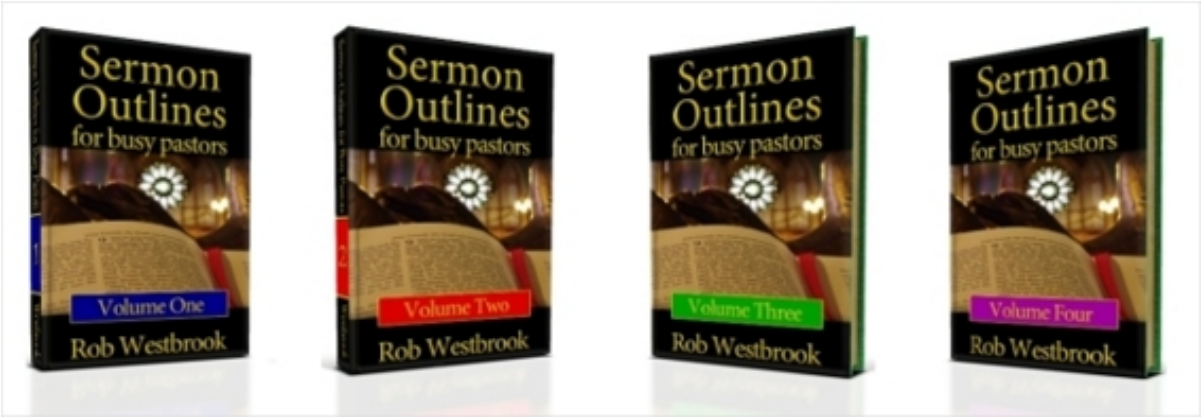
7. Be Encouraged - Romans 8:31-39

8. Crime and Punishment - Levitcus 24:10-16

9. The Message of Jesus - Mark 1:14-15

10. A Matter of Faith - Hebrews 11:1-6

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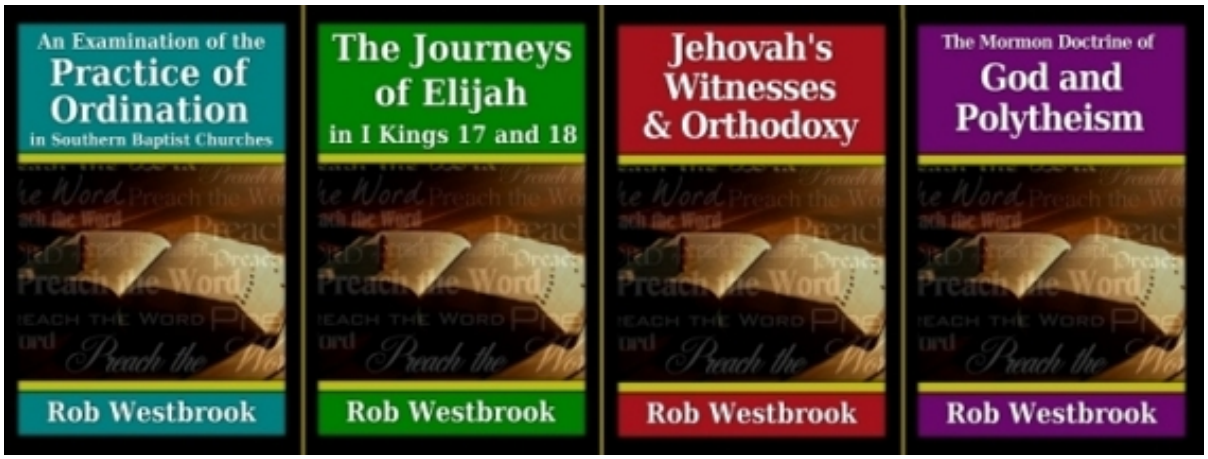
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About the Author

Rob Westbrook became a follower of Jesus Christ at the later age of thirty. Called into the preaching ministry at thirty–two, Rob attended New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, earning a Bachelors of Arts degree in Pastoral Ministry. He later earned forty–six hours toward a Masters of Divinity degree.

Rob became pastor of his first church, Hebron Baptist Church, in Amite County, Mississippi, in 1998, while attending seminary. By 2002 the time commitments to both seminary and the church became strained, and Rob chose to leave seminary behind for the church. Around 2005, God began preparing him for planting a new church. He left his first church pastorate in 2006 to become a church planter in his hometown of Amory, Mississippi. LifePointe Church had its first service in January 2008. Rob currently serves there, at LifePointe Church.

Rob has been married to Teresa since 1989. He and Teresa have one daughter, Lauren, who is married to Brandon Britt. They also have two dogs: Malachi and Gabby.

You can find Rob at his website: http://www.robwestbrook.com.

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