



Jesus
at the
Center

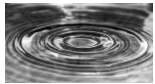
Part One ~ May 12, 2019

OPEN

What does it mean to have “Jesus at the center” of one’s life or church? Here are two ways of approaching this matter of having Jesus at the center.



TARGET – this is thinking that all the responsibility is upon us to aim well and ensure that we put Jesus into the central place. This is the pressure of religious performance and not the work of God’s grace.



RIPPLES – this is understanding that by God’s grace we are forgiven. By faith Jesus now rules and reigns in our lives. He is at the center and now the truth of who He is should ripple out to impact every part of us.

DIG

Read carefully through **Colossians 1:3-14**. In his study guide, **Colossians & Philemon** N. T. Wright suggests that the apostle Paul might have felt about the Colossian Christians as a mother duck does when trying to lead her ducklings safely into the world. Paul was not the founder of this church but took great interest in helping the Colossian Christians mature in Christ. They faced dangerous teaches from Jewish legalists and Greek philosophers.

As N. T. Wright puts it, “New Christians need to understand what’s happening to them, and how they must cooperate with the divine life that gently began to work in them.” In other words, Christians must be responsive to the ripples!

[1] Keeping Jesus at the center involves appreciation - vv. 3-8

Paul began with sincere thanksgiving as He acknowledged and appreciated what God had produced in the lives of the Colossian Christians.

1. Faith - vv. 3-5 **“word of truth” – v. 5**

The first reality for which Paul was thankful was the evidence of faith in the lives of the Colossian believers. They heard the Gospel from Epaphras (1:7) who was deeply committed to their growth – see Colossians 4:12-13.

2. Fruit - vv. 6-8 **“grace of truth” – v. 6**

The Gospel had taken root and was “bearing fruit and increasing.” What was the evidence? There were loving relationships (see verse 4 and 8). There was hope for heaven (see verse 5).

[2] Keeping Jesus at the center involves anticipation - vv. 9-13

Consider three experiences for which Paul petitioned God on behalf of his brothers and sisters in Colossae.

1. Engagement - vv. 9-10

The Christian journey simply does not allow for dis-engagement. When Jesus invites us to follow Him we must forsake all that hinders us and actively engage with Him. God provides spiritual wisdom and understanding for this (v. 9) so that we can have God-pleasing lifestyles, motivation, and outcomes (v.10).

2. Empowerment - vv. 11-12

We cannot physically see God’s power, any more than we can see the wind. But we see the evidence when He empowers believers. What becomes visible is God-empowered lives of patience, joy, and gratitude!

3. Encouragement - vv. 12-14

What should flood the heart of every follower of Jesus? A constant, all-encompassing appreciation for the amazing grace of God in Christ. We have been rescued from Satan’s kingdom and made members of God’s Kingdom!

REFLECT

How do we apply this? **Cornerstone is called to impact our world by living and sharing the life of Jesus!** If we are going to accomplish the mission Jesus has given to us, we must keep Him at the center. Our five realms of **purpose** are seen in the patter of the early Church – see Acts 2:37-47.

- 1. **Worship** Celebrating God in personal and corporate settings, making God the centre of our lives by expressing our love to Him through obedience in both word and deed.
- 2. **Homes** Building friendships with God’s people that nurtures and encourages positive life-change, especially through *Home Groups*. Creating community in all contexts of Church life.
- 3. **Outreach** Offering the message of God’s hope to those in our community so they can experience life-transformation through a relationship with Jesus Christ.
- 4. **Learn** Learning and developing Christ-like character and ministry skills through the teaching of God’s Word so that we will reach our full potential in Christ.
- 5. **Equip** Involving trained believers to multiply themselves by positively impacting others for Jesus Christ, discovering and developing the ability to make disciples.

Is Jesus at the center of your life? Is Jesus at the center of Cornerstone?

Do you / are we displaying the evidence that Jesus is at the center?

- 1. *Do we have loving relationships with fellow believers?*
- 2. *Does the hope of heaven fill our hearts?*
- 3. *Do we live with meaningful engagement in the purposes of God?*
- 4. *Do our lives display patience, joy, and gratitude?*