

You may wonder, “If we don’t have to follow the rules of circumcision, why do we have to follow the rules of baptism?”

Matthew 28:18-19 NLT - 18 Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. 19 Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Baptism doesn’t make us a disciple of Jesus, baptism is what disciples of Jesus do in response to Jesus’s love and sacrifice. It is part of Jesus’ great commission in Matthew 28. Jesus himself commanded us to make disciples, and to baptize those who would follow Him; not because baptism saves them, but as a witness of their decision to become Jesus’s disciple.

WRAP-UP

The Colossian church was being pressured by those who trusted in human wisdom as well as those who trusted in Jewish legalism. But Paul brought the focus back to Christ. We cannot know God through human wisdom, nor can we earn our salvation by following the law. It is Jesus’ atonement and God’s grace that raises us from death to life. And our response to this gift is to follow Jesus’s example and his commandment to be baptized.

MEMORY VERSE.

For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead.

- *Colossians 2:12 NLT*

PRAYER (20 MIN) Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life.

Challenge - Just as Paul encouraged the church at Colossae, ask God to show you who needs you to extend hope and encouragement.

“New Life in Christ”

Prison Letters- #12

INTRODUCTION

Paul’s desire for the Colossians, and for all believers, was that they would experience the fullness of life that Jesus offers. When anything else overshadows Jesus, Paul is diligent to correct and encourage the believer to return to the truth of the Gospel. Through Jesus and His resurrection, we are set free from the bondage of sin. Paul challenges the false teachings that would cause us to rely on our own abilities to earn our salvation by following rules, or to trust in anyone or anything else except Jesus. He points to baptism as our symbol of dying to ourselves and our sins, then raising to a new life in Christ.

Ice Breaker

Have you been baptized? Share your baptism experience with your group.

Key Passage

Colossians 2:6-7 NLT - 6 And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. 7 Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Christ as Wisdom

Colossians 2:3 NLT - 3 In him [Christ] lie hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

The Colossians, like us, sought wisdom and knowledge. Who doesn't want to be wise and knowledgeable? But Paul recognized that there were false teachers that promised those things apart from Christ. All of us are vulnerable to being deceived. Even today, there is no shortage of those who offer solutions to our problems through worldly wisdom and knowledge apart from Christ.

Knowledge (gnosis) denotes general understanding and intelligence. But wisdom (Sophia) refers to the skillful application of diverse knowledge through appropriate actions.

What happens when our understanding (knowledge) and our definition of appropriate action (an essential element of wisdom) are generated apart from God? What other sources might we draw from for knowledge and wisdom apart from God?

Since all wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ, we need to stay closely connected to Him as our source.

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Paul likens our connection to Jesus to a plant. What do the roots do for a plant? How does Jesus provide those things for our lives?

Once you make Jesus Christ Lord of your life, cling tightly to Him as your source of life, and of wisdom and knowledge. Let your faith grow as you deepen your relationship to God through Christ.

2. Worldly Challenges

Colossians 2:8 NIV - 8 See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.

Paul warns us about empty philosophies, high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking, and spiritual powers of this world.

So, what is Paul referring to? The word Paul used for *Philosophy* denotes the highest effort of the intellect, the investigation of truth and nature, the love and pursuit of wisdom. He called this empty or vain because it has no spiritual value. Human wisdom is not how we come to know God. In fact, what Paul warns us about is depending on human understanding and traditions rather than relying on God.

1 Corinthians 1:20-21 NLT - 20 So where does this leave the philosophers, the scholars, and the world's brilliant debaters? God has made the wisdom of this world look foolish. 21 Since God in his wisdom saw to it that the world would never know him through human wisdom, he has used our foolish preaching to save those who believe.

Sometimes faith is misinterpreted as anti-intellectualism. 1Cor1:20 points out that the human wisdom is insufficient because we don't come to know God through human wisdom. Have you or someone you know, tried explaining God using human wisdom? What was that experience like? How do you explain God to those who don't know Him?

3. Baptism, the New Circumcision

Colossians 2:11-13, 17 NLT - 11 When you came to Christ, you were "circumcised," but not by a physical procedure. Christ performed a spiritual circumcision--the cutting away of your sinful nature. 12 For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead. 13 You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. ... 17 For these rules are only shadows of the reality yet to come. And Christ himself is that reality.

It appears that the believers in Colossae were being pressured to observe the Jewish laws including circumcision. But Paul assures them that those rules did not have the power to save them from their sins. They were merely foreshadowing what only Christ could do.

How does Paul describe spiritual circumcision? What is necessary for us to be alive with Christ? Are you raised to new life because you were baptized? (v 12)