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GROUPS Cornerstone Chapel

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KOINONIA

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Colossians 1 – 2

“Dig Down, Grow Up, Stand Firm”

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Paul wrote the letter to the church at Colosse while he was in prison in Rome, circa 60-61AD. He didn't plant this church, nor had he ever visited them; but he had a heart for the Body of Christ, not just the churches he planted. Colosse was located about 100 miles east of Ephesus, in what is modern Turkey. It was destroyed by an earthquake in the late 1st Century A.D. Paul wrote to address some unknown heresy, and in light of that, he encouraged the Believers with a key verse: *“So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.”* ([Colossians 2:6-7](#))

The focus of this study is to understand the warning Paul gave to Christians concerning the potential to be pulled in two directions: hyper-spirituality and worldliness. The worldly direction is influenced by secular thought, worldly wisdom and human philosophy. Hyper-spirituality is influenced by mystical experiences, deeper revelations, and the latest, greatest move of God. Both can be intimidating and persuasive. Both have the potential to rock you “off center,” which is the real danger. Paul was concerned that Christians would be pulled off course from the central message of the supremacy of Christ ([Colossians 1:8](#)) and the simplicity of a relationship with him ([Colossians 1:21-23](#)).

Worldly

1. Paul describes the pull of the world in these terms:
 - a. “[F]ine sounding arguments” – [Colossians 2:4](#)
 - b. “[H]ollow and deceptive philosophy” – [Colossians 2:8](#)
 - c. “[H]uman tradition” – [Colossians 2:8](#)
 - d. “[B]asic principles of this world” – [Colossians 2:8, 20](#)
 - e. “[H]uman commands and teachings” – [Colossians 2:22](#)

2. Paul is not cautioning against higher education, academic pursuit or even the study of philosophy in general.
3. Paul was well educated and apparently had a good working knowledge of philosophy in his day.
 - a. In fact, when he was engaged in a dialogue about God with some Greek scholars and philosophers while visiting Athens, he even quoted an unnamed poet-philosopher. ([Acts 17:28](#))
 - i. [Acts 17:18](#) – *“A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to dispute with him.”*
 - ii. [Acts 17:21](#) – *“All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.”*
 - iii. Paul was able to hold his own and debate with the best of them, as well as evangelize them.
 - iv. The latest ideas or trends or philosophers of his day did not persuade Paul because he had something/someone infinitely superior to the wisdom of the ages – Jesus!
 1. [Colossians 2:3](#) – *“[In Jesus] are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”*
4. The warning Paul gives is against **accepting** human ideas, philosophies, or principles that are devoid of God and **applying** those things to our lives instead of the wisdom of God and the counsel of God’s Word. (Emphasis added)
5. Paul’s concern is that people will be deceived ([Colossians 2:4](#)) and be made prisoners of modern thinking ([Colossians 2:8](#)).
6. [Romans 12:2](#) – *“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*
7. [Psalm 1:1–2](#) – *“Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law meditates day and night.”*

Hyper-spiritual

8. In [Colossians 2:13–15](#), Paul basically says, “Look, the Gospel is real simple: you were spiritually dead, so Christ died for you to make you alive. He forgave your sins, cancelled the legal system that no human could ever live up to, and he disarmed the powers of Hell on the cross.”
9. Paul writes in [Colossians 2:16](#): *“Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day.”*
 - a. Don’t let others try to impose more on you than God does just so they can appear to be more spiritual than you.

10. It's not about hyper-spirituality or rules; it's about a relationship with Jesus! ([Colossians 2:17–19](#))
11. Don't let others disqualify you!
 - a. There are pseudo-Christians who sound super-spiritual and go into great detail about visions they've had or the time they had tea with an angel!
 - i. People like this will talk all kinds of “spiritual talk” and sound really enlightened, so much so, that you'll start to wonder why you don't have the kind of faith they have or why you don't have certain gifts or why you don't feel the power, etc., etc.
 - ii. You'll hear all sorts of

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read [Colossians 2:1–8, 13–23](#) to provide an overview for this study.
3. What are thoughts concerning the idea that some people think Christians are supposed to be “dumb and humble”?
4. What are some of the current “philosophies” of this world, and who are some of the “philosophers and poets”?
 - a. What are some of the latest ideas?
 - b. Do you, like Paul in [Acts 17:28](#), have some knowledge or a basic understanding of the “latest” ideas, etc.
 - c. Why is it that some Christians believe they need to be isolated from the world?
 - d. Spend time talking about the need to understand culture as a part of the process of evangelism.
5. Review and discuss the descriptions Paul gives to the pull of the world (#1 above).
6. What is meant in [Colossians 2:3](#), when it says, “[In Jesus] are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”?
7. Spend time talking about examples of Christians being quick to adopt some principle from a secular self-help book or accepting the latest advice from a talk show on TV or jumping on the bandwagon of some popular global cause.
8. Why is that Christians don't first seek the wisdom of God's Word or spend time in prayer and fasting?
9. Allow time to discuss some of the prominent ideas found in modern thinking that deceive Christians to the point that they question and wonder what's really true and what's not, including:

- a. Maybe Evolution is true?
- b. Maybe it really is just a blob and it is a woman's right to choose?
- c. Maybe people really are born gay?
- d. Maybe the environment should be the most important thing?
- e. Maybe all paths do lead to God?

10. Read and discuss the Adolf Hitler quote Pastor Gary shared concerning the likelihood of people believing a lie if it's told often enough.

- a. "...In the big lie there is always a certain force of credibility; because the broad masses of a nation are always more easily corrupted in the deeper strata of their emotional nature than consciously or voluntarily; and thus in the primitive simplicity of their minds they more readily fall victims to the big lie than the small lie, since they themselves often tell small lies in little matters but would be ashamed to resort to large-scale falsehoods. It would never come into their heads to fabricate colossal untruths, and they would not believe that others could have the impudence to distort the truth so infamously. Even though the facts which prove this to be so may be brought clearly to their minds, they will still doubt and waver and will continue to think that there may be some other explanation. For the grossly impudent lie always leaves traces behind it, even after it has been nailed down, a fact which is known to all expert liars in this world and to all who conspire together in the art of lying."¹

11. What are some of the "big lies" people believe today?

12. Spend time talking about one of the "big lies" of our time – evolution and the 1925 Scopes Monkey Trial.

- a. Use this link to read more about the evidence that suggests Hollywood produced the film *Inherit the Wind* with full knowledge that the events they depict did not happen.
<http://www.scopestrial.org/scopes.htm>
- b. Use this link to read about Dr. Menton.
http://www.answersingenesis.org/home/area/bios/d_menton.asp
- c. Use this link to read more from Answers in Genesis.
<http://www.answersingenesis.org/docs2005/0711scopes.asp>

13. Allow the people in your group to share some of the experiences they've had with people who are hyper-spiritual.

- a. Did you have the sense that you were inferior in your relationship with Lord when you were around him/her?
- b. If you thought "I don't have that, so I guess I'm not really as spiritual as that person," what impact was there in your life?
- c. Did some of the "things" they did or didn't do appear as legalism?
 - i. Look at this list of possibilities, as well as others you can think of, to start a discussion on whether it's supposed to be following the "rules, rules, rules of religion" or a real life in relationship with the Lord?

¹ Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, vol. I, ch. X

1. Only fish on Fridays!
2. No playing face cards on Sundays!
3. The *real* day of Worship is Saturday!
4. Christians shouldn't go to movies – period!
5. Christians shouldn't dance!

14. Read and discuss [Ephesians 4:14–15](#).

15. Close your time in prayer by: rejoicing in the fact that a relationship with Christ is simple and uncomplicated; reading [Colossians 2:6–7](#) and asking the Holy Spirit to help them to dig down, grow up and stand firm in their faith.