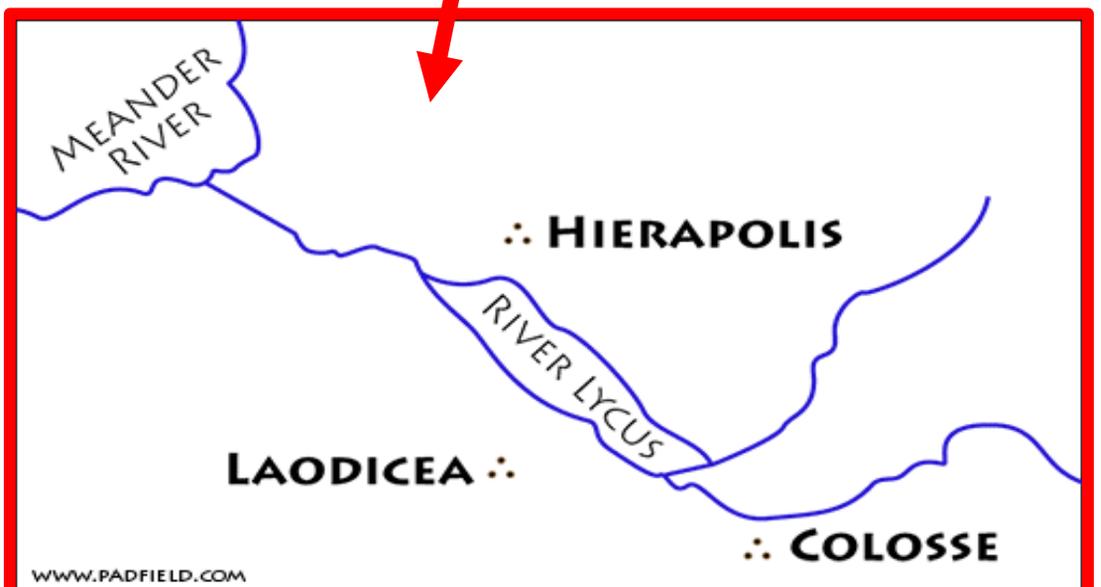


THIS COLOSSIAN LETTER



THE PRIMARY LYCUS VALLEY CONGREGATIONS

THIS COLOSSIAN LETTER ...

“Any teaching that in any way detracts from Christ’s exclusive role is by definition both wrong and ineffective...

...the teachers themselves are probably not intentionally denying that Christ was central to God’s saving purposes.

They seem rather to be arguing that certain practices must be added on in order to achieve true spiritual fulfillment ...

...but, for Paul, in this case, addition means subtraction: one cannot “add” to Christ without, in effect, subtracting from his exclusive place in creation and in salvation history.”

— [Douglas J. Moo](#),
[The Letters To The Colossians And To Philemon](#)

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SOME BACK-GROUND FACTS AND FUNDAMENTAL PREPARATIONS:



1. The fact that the evangelization of Asia Minor is well under way when this letter was written, is obvious. In fact, Paul has already effectually told the whole world that the work in Asia Minor is really reaching out and getting on with being the “*Army-Church*” of the Lord: reaching, 3preaching, and reaching out again.
2. There is an obvious sense of truth in this perspective, but we are still a very long way away from a case of “full realized evangelism.
3. In **ACTS 19:10, it actually says** . **[What do we do with this statement? Is it a report or synopsis of the work in general.]**

GOOD QUESTION: “Are you sure that Philo did not hear the word out there in the Anatolian mountains? Could he have missed it all when he was out with the sheep?”

- A. NOTE: The Church needs to be more aware as it reads, really sitting down and thinking about what is actually said in scripture, and what is emphatically not said.
- B. So, this statement about all Asia having heard the message, needs to be understood in more of a generic mode, than a full-on, specific-specific statement. This is not a simple or insignificant matter.
- C. This statement in Actsc19:10 is a simple generic statement, absolutely true statement, that one would use in a general type of synopial report, and thus not one that is absolute and all inclusive in nature.
- D. I may be taking my life in my hand by saying this in the general consensus that e are experiencing, but *only a devote “conservative-first” thinker, and thus not a full on Christian-First thinker, who is controlled by full educated logic assessment, would ever conclude that this passage of Acts 19:10 is a full and total report where the conclusion could only be that every village and every encampment has both heard the word and then converted to the glorious message of Jesus’ salvation.*
- E. Syntactically, this passage just does not follow the “holy grail” mode of ‘Primitive-conservativism’, something that has defined the church since Alexander Campbell and the Campbellite movement started; it seem to have held sway since they all walked the camps of Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Illinois, Virginia and the whole of the Ohio expansion.
- F. The first problem we all will have to personally deal with is this question from several of the New Testament book, but specifically in The Acts Of The Apostles. The term can mean more than one thing; it is just not a detailed report, but it is a very good consensus of what has generally been going on in the work in Asia Minor.
- G. POINT: We know that works have gone on in Cappadocia, in Phrygia, in the eastern Armen districts, and else where, all while Acts was being written, but these other works are never detailed in the Actine letter. Why? Because what has been said is sufficient to make the case by itself. This need to be understood as ‘generic reporting’ and not ‘specific reporting’.

4. We do not know who actually first established the congregation in Colossae. We have no existing record of Paul, or one of his disciples, ever having gone to the Lychus Valley, but it is “hearing” the message, never-the-less.
5. How do we know this to be true? There are congregations in Hierapolis, Laodicea, as well as Colossae. We do not know much about this Lychus league , but there it sits as testimony to the fact of the continual growth of the church during these crucial early days of Christendom.

I. WHO WROTE THIS PARTICULAR LETTER? ...

--Why is authorship important to 'me', today?—

- A. The text clearly states that this book is co-authored by Paul and by Timothy. **Colossians 1:1-2.** *go to aside #1*
- B. Thus, we may, **hypothetically**, find ourselves having to answer the question, "Do you truly believe that Paul and Timothy wrote this letter, to these people, at that time?"
- C. Next **hypothetical** Question: "..... Would you be willing to stake your own life on that belief ??????" *-now that is 'the real question, the one that we hope remains hypothetical ...*
- D. Staking your very life on who wrote this letter, is a bit much, isn't it??? Yes, it is, in a way, a bit much, but when was the last time you talked with anyone from Iraq's Christian community? **It only takes mere politics to turn the hypothetical into the hypocritical.** *"Never discuss the beauty of 'fire' with a sufferer from pyrotechnic-sociopathy."*
- E. Doctrine, coupled to what "I" actually believe, is important, to me, if to no one else. Even if it is absurd and a whirling dervish of contradictions, "I" still believe it to be true and inspired by God, The All Mighty One, Himself. *---Case and discussion closed ?? ---*
- F. Doctrine is made up of both big and significant things and by small and seemingly insignificant things. Those that down play any doctrinal matter, at any level, is endangering the whole by the arrogance carelessness of the few. *No one leaves the smallest of hatches open to the sea, on a submarine, do they!*
- G. So why do we chaff at the hypotheticality of some questions. It is because we do not want to have to accept the challenge as something real, and possible, in our lives. We like our Christianity nice and soft and cuddly, sprinkled with love and lots of chocolate kisses and no evil in anyone or in any situation. That special world of the ultimate-niceness is a utopian concept that we can only wish to be true,
- H. Colossae was no different in these aspects as we are today. *"Did this letter actually come from Paul, over there in Ephesus? Do you expect me to defend these ideas of his, hypothetically or for real?"*

GO BACK TO ASIDE # 1

I. **WHO WROTE THIS PARTICULAR LETTER? ...**
--Why is authorship important to 'me', today?—



II. **WHO IS THIS LETTER ADDRESSED TO?**

- A. The text says, *“Paul, apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God, and Timothy, brother, ² to them that be at Colosse, holy and faithful brethren in Christ Jesus, grace and peace to you of God our Father [grace to you and peace of God our Father] and of the Lord Jesus Christ. ³ We do thankings to God, and to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ [and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ], evermore praying for you,..... WYCLIFFE’S BIBLE Colossians 1:1-3*
- B. **JOHN WYCLIFFE’s translation**, and every other copy of the New Testament, in words that are very-very similar to these, declares that the letter is to go to the church in Colossae. [By the way, when they put Wycliffe on trial for having had the bible translated into English (late middle English, actually they asked him if he stood by his claim that all of the words in that translation were true to the Latin text. **They burnt him at the stake for saying yes.**)
- C. In **Colossians 4:16** it also says that this letter is to the church in Laodicea, as well as to Nympha and the church in her house.
- D. The idea that we all should read these letter is thus set down as a precedent. We all are to concern ourselves with a single message, written to several congregations, by one common pen and one common set of minds in its construction, for one common idea to emerge as “our” belief, in both big and little matters.
- E. **Question: Is Colossians 1:1-3 a command, an example, or a necessary inference ???**





What does it really take to fulfill our mission of taking the gospel to the whole world, beginning in here in Coffs Harbour?

6. **THE NOTABLE PEOPLE OF COLOSSAE:** There were some notable people who were in still living in Colossae, and or were very close to the congregation there.
7. We know that Epaphras, Philemon, Onesimus, and Archippus were members there at some point in time. There may be others, but these would make the Colossian congregation most unique in having some very strong personalities in its number.
8. The congregation was tied with the other members of the Lycus family of congregations: Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis.
9. All of these three congregations received letters from Paul, but only the letter that was written to Colossae remains extant today. All of the others are lost.
10. → → what makes the letter to Colossae so important for the church today is the fact that it speaks to so much of the world situation right now.
 - a. - First, the preeminent ‘paradigm’ of their day was that of the early, but developing, ideas of Gnosticism.
 - b. - Gnosticism is, in a practical perspective, where knowledge, and the associated university degrees, were seen to be rising superior over the modes of all other ‘knowable ideologies’.
 - c. - This was the start to the a rise in the supreme value of the individual and his own relativity. All forms of relativism have some point of relationship with the whole gnostic heresy.
 - d. - This insipient Gnosticism erodes the centrality of the New Testament and we can not allow that to ever happen again.
 - e. - This book is then about the role of false and misleading ideas that make Jesus ever more small and insignificant. Thus it speaks to the common mega-voice of conservatism, to the alternative perspectives of the progressive side, often called liberalism, to the modern phenomenon of Neo-Nihilism, to Calvinistic Determinism and even to Antinomian philosophies.
 - f. - To read, and thus gain, from the book of Colossians, one can not just look for the “do this” and the “do that’s” of this inspired work. This is the pointed discussion of Christian philosophy in its most powerful and engaging form. This is where we divide the foolish modernists from the faithful few.
 - g. - NOTE: This book is not conservative, nor fundamental at all, and it sure is not legalistic and “overtly simplified”.
 - h. - **WE WILL NOT SEE ANY OF THIS WITOUT DEALING WITH THE TEXT IN A FULL ON EXPOSITORY MANNER.** This we will do, and teach you to do it too !!

III. WHAT DID PAUL ACTUALLY TELL COLOSSAE TO 'DEFEND' IN CHAPTER 1?

1. Faith in Jesus Christ is paramount in all things
2. Love for the saints
3. The word of the truth, the full on gospel message
4. Belief in constant prayer
5. It is worth walking in accord with the word
6. Bearing fruit in every good work
7. Endurance – Patience – joy
8. Redemption in Jesus
9. The absolute preeminence of Christ in all things
10. Christ in you is a source of mystery and joy
11. The full acceptance of everyone.
12. Maturity is a process, not a single event.
13. Constant toil for the church / kingdom No waiting around for Jesus to do our job for us.

What is very unique about these first ten things that are to upheld as good modes for the congregation, is that Paul does not really define any of them, except for that solitary, single, central one. He does not use explain any of them in any systematic, or topical, way. That fact alone simplifies preaching greatly, and terrifies most preachers!

All Paul does is let the people know that he commends them for their service and faithfulness to the Lord, Jesus, the Son of God, in these areas.

The only item that comes up for a more detailed discussion is then the preeminence of this Christ, who is the foundation point for all of their faith activities, and essential to all of Paul's preaching-ministry..

Christ should be the **primary, up-front topic** of all of our preaching yet today. If we can ever get Him back into the pulpits, we will serve Him more properly and more encouragingly, let alone more biblically.



It has been suggested, in times long past, that one of the best bits of evidence we need to follow in the search for both elders and preachers is found in their libraries. If the vast majority of their libraries are not on the central subject of Jesus and Him crucified, and totally dog-eared, then pass that candidate by and go out and seek a Christian, instead. We would be a lot better off if we would have heeded that advice. Who gave that advice? The Apostle Paul did, in the first extant letter to the Corinthian congregation: "I preach Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." - Come on church, let's start doing it again !! -

READ CHAPTER ONE: ... THINK OUTSIDE OF THE BOX – DO WE REALLY AGREE ON THESE 13 POINTS ??? ...

III. WHAT DID PAUL ACTUALLY TELL COLOSSAE TO 'DEFEND' IN CHAPTER 1?

WRITE UP ON WHITE BOARD AND HAVE CLASS IDENTIFY THEM...DO NOT PUT THEM IN PROPER ORDER, NECESSARILY.

1. Faith in Jesus Christ is paramount in all things
2. Love for the saints
3. The word of the truth, the full on gospel message
4. Belief in constant prayer
5. It is worth walking in accord with the word
6. Bearing fruit in every good work
7. Endurance – Patience – joy
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10. Christ in you is a source of mystery and joy
11. The full acceptance of everyone.
12. Maturity is a process, not a single event.
13. Constant toil for the church / kingdom No waiting around for Jesus to do our job for us.

So, you tell me: "What can we implement these points today?"

WHAT IS MY PLAN TO HELP ME AND OTHERS IN THESE 7 AREAS, THIS WEEK?

1. How can we build faith in other people to imitate the faith in Colossae?
2. How can we improve our love for those outside of the church?
3. How can we improve our prayer life, realistically?
4. Where can "I" bear fruit this week in areas other than mere hospitality-peace?
5. How can anyone really improve on the skills of "endurance", "patience", and "joy"? *"Joy is particularly hard in this day for so many people."*
6. How can "I" help people to really mature, given my own limitations and imperfections?

GOOD INTENTIONS NEVER PRODUCE REAL FRUIT !!!

IV. WHY DID PAUL TELL THE COLOSSIANS TO FULLY 'DEFEND' THESE PARTICULAR COMMENDABLE THINGS?

NOTE: Why must we leave the safe confines of topical preaching if we truly wish to restore the church? That is an odd question, but one on which Paul spoke very openly on in the Colossian letter.

I once was told by a very strong and very conservative Christian lady to "just preach what the bible says and nothing more". I believe she meant well, but she missed the whole point of 'preaching' to fellow Christians, which is that we need to take care of both what the bible does say, what it does not say, and what holds it all together as one entity. If we are all super-great authorities on the topic of prayer modes, but do not know the one we are to pray to, it amounts to the fundamentals of Christian, legalistic based, nothingness! We loose the very heart of the religion.

Does it matter if we pray standing, or kneeling? Does it matter id we say 'Father-God...' in our prayers rather than just the more basic, "Father..."? Does it matter if we bring along a pillow to bow on when we pray? ---or what about one to sit on while we listen to the long winded preacher? And how about, "Can we bring our little dog with us to church, if he behaves himself?" *Does it matter if we pray to "Allah," or "Elah", or "Jehovah-Jireh" ????*



WHAT ARE WE TO ACTUALLY, SPECIFICALLY, "DEFEND", AND HOW ARE WE TO GO ABOUT MAKING THAT SPECIFIC DEFENCE, ACCORDING TO THE COLOSSIAL LETTER?

We are to do that for which Paul commended the Colossian brethren ...

1. Praying for all people, regardless
 2. A preeminent faith in Christ
 3. Love for the people of God
 4. Maintaining a universal, faith-filled, relationship with all people
 5. Listening to the Epaphras-people in our lives
 6. Hope in the coming future
 7. Practicing grace defined living
 8. Continued growth in the knowledge of God's will
 9. Living via faithfulness, understanding and wisdom,
 10. Walking in the way of the Lord on a daily basis, life style confirming
 11. Bearing daily fruit that pleases the Lord
 12. Being thankful for all things, daily
 13. Focusing the living of our whole lives on Jesus
- 14. These are a very good starting point. Writing out your meaning of each one will intensify them in your mind**

IV. WHY DID PAUL TELL THE COLOSSIANS TO FULLY 'DEFEND' THESE PARTICULAR, COMMENDABLE, THINGS?

- ✓ Paul's primary concern is to help the infant church in the primacy of their relationship with Jesus. That "primacy of Jesus" is Colossians, and all of Christianity, in a single nut-shell.
- ✓ Yes, He does use simple and practical points, so that he can tune-up the church's thinking processes.
- ✓ Paul's goal is not just to educate the church, revealing one more point to be injected into the system whereby education and focus become the total lifestyle and the only philosophy.
- ✓ However, you can not have one without the other: Education and training are eternally "tied together" as a single goal.
- ✓ To speak farther than Paul did on these elements is to truly diminish the innate intelligence of the people to whom he is talking, and or, to make the teacher look like some big-bad-bold super student. The total vision must remain on and with Jesus.
- ✓ ADVISE TO PREACHERS AND TEACHERS: Never let a "ME-CENTERED" person teach a kid because he will come out second best, or third best, and that very quickly. Just keep it all very simple and very subdued. Do like Paul did and let the qualities just speak for themselves, gently. Do not do brain dumps on the unsuspecting church !! Paul didn't.

V. PAUL GOES EVEN FARTHER IN CHAPTER 2.

1. Full on /struggle hard work' is the Christian work ethic
2. Focused von serving the whole church
3. Encouraging people
4. Knitting things together in love
5. Developing every stronger understandings
6. Growing ever closer and ever more involved with Jesus
7. Walking together with the whole church in a harmonious heart and with common efforts, towards one common goal
8. Promoting good discipline and faith, always

....and this is just the first paragraph !!!! What part of these items needs further commentary for us to start to develop a better understanding, working towards a truly deeper level.

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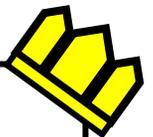
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...and this is just the first paragraph !!!! What part of these items needs further commentary for us to start to develop a better understanding, working towards a truly deeper level? When is the army of God going to stop fighting wars of two centuries past, with tactics that are five centuries past? When?

- * If Paul says such things in the clear airwave, what is the purpose of *our* constant preaching, to a room full of responsible, converted adults, who will very possibly forget the whole message in 2 hours time?
- * Many preachers today are really just occasional spokes-people, having most of the week free to pursue their golf and coffee goals for the week. What is the planned production platform for the growth of those church, this week? 4 cups – 8 cups?? Paul had a definite plan and it is seen in the sparsity words used to encourage the whole Colossian congregation.
- * Ask yourself honestly: **“WHY DIDN'T PAUL WRITE FULL FLEDGED 'BOOKS' ON EACH OF THESE ACTIVITIES AND ATTRIBUTES HE WAS USING AS ILLUSTRATIONS, WITH THE COLOSSIAN CONGREGATION ?”**

WHY?

WHAT ARE WE REALLY MISSING IN THE TEXT HERE?
WHAT IS THE ACTUAL MESSAGE?
COULD IT BE THE MESSAGE BETWEEN THE WORDS?



LET'S CONSIDER THESE PASSAGES ANEW?

They are important in the little pictures of scripture as well as in the bigger contextual pictures of scripture.

1. I Corinthians 4:6 “...not to exceed what is written ...”
2. I Corinthians 7: 17-19 “...keeping the commandments...”
3. Acts 4:23 “...give heed in every thing ,, heed that prophet...”
4. I Corinthians 2:12-13 “...that we may know...words by the spirit...”
5. Hebrews 2:1-2 “...pay closer attention to what we've heard...”
6. Ephesians 3:4 “...when you read, you can understand...”
7. I Thessalonians 2:13 “...when you received the word.....”
8. Acts 5:41-42 “...kept on preaching and teaching Jesus...”
9. Hebrews 4:12 “...for the word of God is living and active...”
10. Jude :17 “...remember the words...”
11. Psalms 119:105 “...Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light...”
12. James 1:22 “...do not just listen to the word, -do what it says...”
13. Matthew 24:35 “...my words will never pass away...”
14. Proverbs 30:5 “...every word of God is flawless...”
15. II Timothy 2:15 “...handling accurately the word of truth...”

These passages, and many more of very similar ilk, are called “The Theology Of The Word”. They all speak to the fact that God has put His message down into a written form so that those who wish to read His will may be able to do. The word of God is clear and it is concise. It hides nothing. It can be duplicated anywhere. It does not take a special degree or education to understand it. There is just no hidden agenda in the word at all. It can thus be understood by everyone who knows how to read, even at the most basic of levels. *All we have to do is to take the time to read it and think about it. This is the love of God in continuous action.*

NOTE: This is a discussion on the word in its printable form. There is not one single statement here about any form of ‘angel language’ or ‘a speaking in tongues’. This is just the given word, as it should be!!! We are not Pentecostals, Catholics, Protestants, nor are we Jews. We are just Christians, and Christians only.

VI. WHO IS TO 'DEFEND' THESE POINTS: THE PREACHER, THE ELDERS, OR ME ?

PROBLEM: The biggest problem that we in the active church have with the book of Colossians is who is responsible for undertaking the commands that are recorded here. That is first, but it is that which is in second position that really causes us personal concern.

FIRST RESPONSIBILITY: The 'Church' is responsible for handling these passages accurately. There is no problem with this perspective. The words in the Colossian Letter are scripture and thus we, as the church, are responsible for upholding them, ---all of them.

SECOND RESPONSIBILITY: The Church is made up of people who are to accept the responsibility, individually, of sharing the good news with some other person on a regular and frequent basis. This is where people begin to balk, a bit. "It is not my talent." is often heard as a response to this challenge. We tend to stand silently by and let the talent assessment go unchallenged. We do support it, in principle, but are a bit reluctant to do so on a more personal level.

THIRD RESPONSIBILITY: This is where we really fall down and dribble "I" am responsible for teaching my family the way of the Lord! That is clear and should be foremost in my mind, but we have bible classes at church and they take care of this for me, at a primary - first level sort of way. "I am just not good at teaching.", is an excuse used to stay uninvolved in those areas where I fear that my real knowledge base will be challenged, so I choose to hide and let others, more capable, do the job." "Somebody is skipping school, somewhere!, - 'ME THINKS'".

→ → I AM STILL RESPONSIBLE, NO MATTER WHAT EXCUSE OF DIVERSION I USE! PREACHERS, EDERS, AND ME, WE ALL WORK TOGETHER. The word is written to me, for me, so I can comply.

NOW, DO YOU WISH TO GO ONE STEP DEEPER INTO THE MESSAGE, OR ARE YOU WILLING TO REST ON YOUR INNATE ABILITIES TO READ THIS LETTER AND THUS STAND RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTING IT, FIRST IN YOUR OWN LIFE, AND NEXT IN YOUR CHURCH LIFE, AND THEN THIRD, IN THE TEACHING OF THE WORLD AT LARGE ??

NOTE: Should you want to go deeper, we should, and can, set up a way to do that which will require your time and your commitment. There will be some outside reading and lots of general discussions with the other class members, outside of regular class time. There will be a class moderator and or discussion leader, but we will all have to accept the role of cross-teaching each other.

ASIDE # 1

...ON THE DEFENSE OF AUTHORSHIP: ASIDE # 1

- A. When we read the first two verses of the letter to Colossae, we expect to find who wrote the letter. We expect to see the name of the Apostle Paul found there, and we do.
- B. But because of our Restoration Movement heritage, We only read these words in the most casual of forms. We read, and do not really see, sometimes, because it is not either a command, nor an example, and nor a necessary inference. It is essentially a 'nothing statement after we learn that Paul was connected with this letter.
- C. This is our conservative "blindness" kicking in and obscuring the text, ever so slightly. It really does not matter to us all that much, but we just left out one half of the authorship of this letter: Timothy. It may not matter to us, but it just may matter to Timothy.
- D. The real problem is not found in the slighting of Timothy, but in what it says about our reading techniques and educational philosophies, living in the post-Campbell world.
- E. To get the full benefit of the text, we simply must read all of it, clearly and openly. There are no options available, nor is there any defence for the selectivity of our reading techniques.
- F. If we can mess up on the authorship of the Letter to Colossae, plain and obvious as it is, what else can we 'mess-up on'?
- G. Some have advocated over the years that it is wrong to have a functioning kitchen in the church building, because there is no mention of one in the New Testament. It is true, there is no mention of a kitchen in a church building of the first century. But it is also true that there is no mention of breathing in the church buildings of the first century Come to think of it and there is no mention of church buildings either. --hmmmmmm ??
- H. The whole of 'the superiority of conservative' just got called into question. *No more "Oklahomaisms", maybe??*

ASIDE # 2

AREAS WHERE THE FOCUS OF PAST CONFLICTS HAS OBSCURED THE PERCEPTION OF CURRENTS CONCERNS

1. The role of baptism as central in the salvation process
2. The existence of denominational legalistic divisions
3. The role of the Lord's supper in daily Christian life
4. The necessity of judging one another
5. The necessity of having a professional trained clergy
6. The absolute centrality of the sermon in our worship services
7. The defense of the doctrines of autonomy
8. The defense of acapella music versus musical instruments
9. The defense of current, culturally inspired, interpretations
10. The length of Sunday morning worship services
11. The necessity of Sunday evening services
12. The required taking of communion to the sick
13. The existence and mode of Sunday School classes
14. The CEO perspective of the eldership role and structure
15. The reluctance to use demonstrative praise in worship services
16. The --- Well, do we get the picture ???

WHAT DO WE DO ABOUT THESE POINTS OF CONCERN?

III. Work Sheet 1

So, you tell me: "What can we implement these points today?
Just write down 1 or 2 things I plan to do this week in these areas.

1. How can we build faith in other people to imitate the faith in Colossae?
2. How can we improve our love for those outside of the church?
3. How can we improve our prayer life, realistically?
4. Where can "I" bear fruit this week in areas other than mere hospitality-peace?
5. How can anyone realistically improve on the skills of "endurance", "patience", and "joy"?

WHAT IS MY PLAN TO HELP ME AND OTHERS IN THESE 5 AREAS,, THIS WEEK?