



Small Group Discussion Guide



PREPARATION

STUDY

Spend the week studying Colossians 2:6–23. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools to enhance your preparation.

DETERMINE

Determine which discussion points and study questions will work best for your group.

PRAY

Pray for our pastors and this week's message, the upcoming group time, your group members, and their openness to God's Word.

LANDING POINT

I am to walk in Christ just as I received Him—by faith, not works.



GROUP DISCUSSION

❑ **CONFIDENTIALITY** | What's said in the group stays in the group.

❑ **NO CROSS-TALK** | Be considerate of others as they share. Refrain from side conversations and texting during group time.

❑ **NO FIXING** | We are not in the group to fix each other. Jesus does that part.

❑ **SHARING** | Be sensitive to the amount of time you share. Don't talk too much or too little. Every person brings something valuable to the group.



INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

ONE SIMPLE PROMISE

We live in a world bombarded by advertisements. Research shows the average person is exposed to 4,000 to 10,000 ads each day. Whether it's at the supermarket or on your smartphone, there are companies out there that want your business. How do they hook you? By making one simple promise: *Your life will be better*. Your life will be better if you buy this product, sign up for this plan, take this course, etc.

Deep down we know what these advertisers are up to. They want to sell something and they want us to buy it. And yet, there's still something alluring about their promise, isn't there? There's a part of us that wants to believe life *might* be a little better if we bought that new car, downloaded that app or got on that trendy diet plan. Maybe life would be more organized, productive and satisfying.

Q: Describe some of the techniques you've seen advertisers use to sell their product or service.

THE REAL DEAL

Two thousand years ago, believers in Colossae were being sold something—and it wasn't the gospel. There were people saying, "Jesus isn't enough. You need to do more." Their plan was Jesus + Something Else. But God's plan has been and always will be Jesus + Nothing.

This week your group will discuss how the false teaching they were exposed to still exists. You will also discuss how to combat the false promises of these plans by building your foundation on Jesus.

The gospel is the real deal. It's the Jesus + Nothing Plan. With the gospel you get the one Person who can truly deliver on the promises He makes. In Jesus you can have the real deal which leads to real life, real hope and real joy.

Q: Why is it difficult for people to receive the free grace given by the gospel?



Select 2–3 questions to discuss as a group.

DON'T SETTLE FOR LESS

Previously, Paul expressed his desire for the Colossians to be firm in their faith. Paul instructs his readers to be rooted, built up and established in Jesus. The gospel originally preached to them was Jesus—and nothing else—as the foundation of their faith. On Him and Him alone they should build their lives.

Paul's next instruction comes as a warning not to be taken in by false teachers. These false teachers were trying to make human traditions, philosophies and worldly principles the foundation of faith, not Jesus. Paul sees through their deceitful schemes and turns his readers back to Jesus and the truth.

Paul is telling these Colossians, “Don't settle for anything less than Jesus. You have all you need in Him.” In Jesus God has made Himself known. Believers can now encounter the Living God in a real relationship through Jesus. In Jesus believers have His power and authority. They have no reason to fear any enemy, physical or spiritual. In Jesus believers are identified in His death and resurrection. God brought them from death to life. The victory of Jesus shows believers that they have been empowered to live a new life with God. Our enemies have lost their power over us. In Jesus God has declared the debt for sin paid-in-full. Believers receive full forgiveness from God and no longer stand condemned before Him.

READ: *Colossians 2:6–23. How would you describe someone with firm faith?*

Q: *What are some ways we settle for something less than Jesus in life?*

LEGALISM AND PRIDE

These false teachers were judging the Colossian believers because they didn't follow certain rules about what foods to eat or observe special days and festivals. To Paul, this was legalism and its foundation was pride. These false teachers aren't looking to Jesus. They're looking at themselves and thinking, “I'm superior, and anyone who doesn't follow my rules doesn't measure up.” On the surface, this false teaching may seem wise, but it is powerless to change anyone. Only the gospel has the power to turn someone from sin and seek after God. Following more rules can't do

that. Self-denial can't do that. Only faith in Jesus can change the heart.

Q: *Where do you see this kind of legalism and superiority today?*

Q: *How have you experienced the gospel's power to change your heart and behavior?*



LIVE

Select 2–3 questions from this section to answer.

THE MORE THINGS CHANGE...

We are far removed from the time and culture of the Colossians. But we know the old saying, “The more things change, the more they stay the same.” Legalism and spiritual pride still exist. People still want to add something to the gospel. It might look different now than it did in Colossae, but people still promote a Jesus + Something Plan today.

The gospel isn't about what you do for God. It's about what God did for you in Jesus. The gospel is the story of Jesus doing what you couldn't do. He was God made flesh. In Him we see what God is like. He showed us His love and compassion. He showed us mercy and God's longing to save. Jesus lived a sinless life in obedience to God. His death paid the penalty for sin and His resurrection was proof of His victory over sin, Satan and death.

Q: *What are some of the dangers of spiritual pride?*

Q: *How does the gospel cure pride and judgmentalism?*

FREEDOM TO LIVE

Jesus gives you freedom from being a slave to rule-keeping, of always trying to measure up. The gospel really is good news because it shows us that we don't have to earn God's love. It's freely given and fully expressed in Jesus. You don't have to follow this tradition or abstain from that particular thing because someone says you should. Yes,

God gives you boundaries in His Word and you should live within them. Those boundaries are for your good and protection. But they are never meant to put you back into a system of rule-keeping. Jesus gives you freedom to live and live well. And to live well is to live with Him, to worship and enjoy Him for who He is and what He did for you.

🗣️: *Where in life is it tempting for you to feel that you have to measure up?*

🗣️: *What's the difference between healthy boundaries and legalism?*



LEAD

Select 1 question from this section to ask your group.

ON GUARD AND FOCUSED

Paul does two things that help us lead others in life. First, he warns us to be on guard. There are false teachers out there, regardless of the time and place you live. We are engaged in a spiritual war, and there are forces at work to lead others astray. False teaching is something the church continues to struggle and fight against. Thankfully, we have God's Word to help us combat false teaching with truth. Second, Paul points his readers to Jesus and what He has done for us. The gospel is the real deal. It delivers on what it promises. You can have a relationship with God through Jesus by putting your faith in a Person, not your performance. You can have real life, real hope and real joy when you put your trust in Jesus. That's grace. That's the Jesus + Nothing Plan.

🗣️: *What does it look like to combat false teaching with love and compassion for others?*

🗣️: *What's one way you can point someone to Jesus this week?*



PRAY

Thank God for His gift of grace to you in His Son. Thank Him that you don't have to earn His love. You already have it by what Jesus did for you. Pray for discernment to see any ways that you might be living by the Jesus + Something Else Plan.



FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following:

- Read Romans 6:1–14 and reflect on what it means to be dead to sin and alive in Christ.
- Ask the group to share any stories or lessons learned where they see God at work in their lives.



COMMENTARY

THE IMPORTANCE OF THANKFULNESS Paul states that a heart that is grounded in Jesus is a thankful one. “A thankful believer is not easily led away from Christ. A discontented, grumbling, whiny believer, however, will be easy prey for false teachers who are more than willing to offer ‘just what you’ve been missing.’”¹

THE POWER BEHIND LEGALISM “By fulfilling the demands of the Law, Christ disarmed the demonic powers and authorities (cf. 1:16; 2:10), triumphing over them (cf. 2 Cor. 2:14). As a result, believers are delivered from these evil powers, which inspire legalistic rules about foods and festivals.”²

ENDNOTES:

1. Max Anders, *Holman New Testament Commentary: Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1999), Kindle edition.
2. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty* (Colorado Springs, CO: