

Life Groups: Think Like a Christian

So what does it mean to *'think like a Christian'* and how does that relate to this particular passage?

One of the main things addressed by Paul's letter to the Colossians is the challenge to live differently as Christians in a non-Christian culture and environment (v8). Becoming a Christian in any modern culture requires us to think differently.

***'Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.'* Romans 12:2a**

There are three areas to explore this week: circumcision, separateness and submission...

Circumcision

The Jewish practice of circumcision marked you out as being different - and due to its very physical nature, you couldn't deny it once you'd been circumcised - it identified you as a Jew. To Jews it was very important, but Paul once again teaches on circumcision in a Christian context.

See what Paul says about physical circumcision in 1 Corinthians 7:19: *'Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God's commands is what counts.'*

Paul makes the point that this Jewish practice is no longer important for those who now follow Jesus.

What does Paul mean in v11-12 - circumcision not by human hands, but circumcised by Christ through baptism?

How does circumcision lead on to the next subject of separateness?

Separateness

This week's passage opens with Paul calling the new Church family to live differently. To ensure they depend on Christ, rather than on the cultural traditions of their town/society, and not to trust the *'elemental spiritual forces'* of the world.

Believers in Colossae were being pressured to follow Jewish law/practice and were adding extra rules and false teaching from other religions/belief systems.

What 'human traditions' or 'cultural forces' pull us away from living distinctly as Christians?

"People aren't expecting us to be perfect, but they are expecting us to be different." - authentic, but distinctive.

In 2 Corinthians 6:17 Paul talks about the need for us to be separate, set apart. Ecclesia (which we translate as Church) means 'called out ones' or more specifically 'the gathering of those called out of the world'

How can we ensure that we stand firm in our Christian beliefs and practices?

Submission

Paul opens by saying '*see to it that no-one takes you captive...*' (v8) which suggests that it is our choice to stand firm or to go with the flow, and that it is about our intentional efforts.

In v8 what does Paul say we should do rather than give in to cultural pressures?
[depend on Christ]

It's not easy, and it requires effort and intention. But Paul says in v10 that we already have everything we need to stand against these pressures, '*in Christ you have been brought to fullness*' - you have everything you need.

And back to the circumcision verses, in v11 through the spiritual circumcision through Baptism, '*your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off*'.

What do the following verses teach us about submitting to Christ not the world?

***'The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.'* Romans 8:7**

***'Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.'* James 4:7**

Paul's final verses here speak about what Christ has already done and how He's already triumphed. It is this Jesus that we're called to depend on, and we can share in that victory when we do.

Conclusion

Paul challenges the Colossians not to give into the cultural/societal pressures around them, but instead to depend on Christ. He reminds them of their need to be separate from the world, and to live differently. He uses the symbolism of circumcision to challenge them about their new identity; and then he

He does all this in a short passage which has Jesus running through every verse, and which succinctly but powerfully declares the Gospel story.

Which takes us back to last week's passage, and the importance of the word '**continue**'... Jesus has already triumphed, and we've received fullness through Him, our flesh-ruled self has been put off already. We only need to continue to stand firm, and to resist the powers and forces of this world through Christ, by being in Christ, and standing with Christ.

***You will again have compassion on us;
you will tread our sins underfoot
and hurl them into the depths of the sea.***

Micah 7:19

