The Fruit of Grace

MAIN POINT:
When we focus on Christ and embrace God’s grace, our lives begin to look more and more like Jesus.

ICE BREAKER:
Have you ever run into something because you were focusing something else? Why is it so easy to get distracted?

INTRODUCTION:
Jesus said in Matthew 11:30, “my yoke is easy and my burden is light”. Jesus tells all who are weary and burdened to come to Him for rest. Christians usually embrace this truth for their salvation, but when it comes to sanctification we want to take back over. Jesus did not ask people to try harder at keeping the law and earning righteousness. He called those who were weary of the burdens imposed on them by religion to find rest in him. Jesus did more than speak words of encouragement to those burdened down with religions; Jesus offered to bear their load completely. Jesus calls us to focus on him and find rest in his grace, and when we do that our lives begin to produce the unnatural fruit of grace.

ENCOUNTERING GOD THROUGH BIBLE STUDY
Have someone read Colossians 3:1-10.

1. What does it mean to set our minds on the things that are above? How do we do that?

2. Why is it so dangerous to focus on the things of this world? Why do the things of this world so easily distract us from Christ?

3. What does Paul mean when he says we have died and our lives are hidden with Christ?
4. How would your life look different if your identity was solely based on the truth that your life is hidden with Christ and you will appear with him in glory? What other things do we seek to find our identity in?

5. How does it make you feel that nothing you do, good or bad, can change the reality that your life is hidden in Christ and you will appear with him in glory? Do you ever feel guilt or shame for not being a “perfect Christian”?

6. Paul explains in 3:5-10 that we need to take off, or put to death, worldly desires. Why is it so important to take off such behaviors?

7. Of the things that Paul describes, which do you find most difficult to put to death?

8. How does focusing on Christ and the things that are above affect these kinds of behaviors in your life?

9. Why do you think Paul emphasized over and over again the importance of who Christ is and the need to focus on him before explaining what that looks like? Have you ever been tempted to try and look like a “good” Christian instead of earnestly seeking after Jesus?

10. What good is “Christian” behavior that doesn't flow out of a changed heart? How does focusing on Christ and not our behavior lead to life change?
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Leader Notes:

Don’t feel the need to ask every question. Pick out the questions which will fit your group best and ask those – you know your group better than we do!

1. What does it mean to set our minds on the things that are above? How do we do that?

Paul is not talking about a form of escapism, but instead about where you place your affections. Pastor often says, “the things you think about ate the things you talk about, and the things you talk about are the things you love.” If we surround our lives and thoughts with the things of this world we will love the things of this world. If we surround our lives and thoughts with the things of Christ, our affection for Christ will grow deeper. This world would rather fill us with the wrong “fruit” but Christ would say “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, self-control” Galatians 5:22-23.

2. Why is it so dangerous to focus on the things of this world? Why do the things of this world so easily distract us from Christ?

The greatest danger to focusing on the things of this world is that they distract us from Christ. Paul has spent the first two chapters emphasizing how glorious Christ and what he did for us is. Jesus warns against loving the things of this world (Mark 10:17-27) and Paul lamented the loss of a believer because of his affections for this world (2 Timothy 4:10).

3. What does Paul mean when he says we have died and our lives are hidden with Christ?

Paul uses this image to express the incredible security we have in Christ. If we have been raised with Christ, nothing we do nor anyone else does can separate us from Christ (Romans 8:31-39). If we know this is true it should give us comfort not only when we face physical death, but also in the face of everyday difficulties. No matter what we face our lives are hidden with Christ and we have the power to live not in our own strength but in his.
6. Paul explains in 3:5-10 that we need to take off, or put to death, worldly desires. Why is it so important to take off such behaviors?

When we continue to live in our old self (v.9), it draws our affection away from Christ and toward this world. Sin is dangerous to the Christian not because it will lead to eternally punishment, but because it draws our desire away from Jesus and the things above.

9. Why do you think Paul emphasized over and over again the importance of who Christ is and the need to focus on him before explaining what that looks like? Have you ever been tempted to try and look like a “good” Christian instead of earnestly seeking after Jesus?

Paul emphasized who Jesus is and how important it is to focus on him because we tend to quickly forget it. The Colossians relied on Christ for their salvation, but tried to become holy through their own strength. They changed their behaviors, but their hearts remained far from God. If we aren’t careful we will spend all our time trying to behave like a Christian instead of spending our time trying to know Christ more. The incredible thing is that the more we know Christ, the more our behaviors change.

10. What good is “Christian” behavior that doesn’t flow out of a changed heart? How does focusing on Christ and not our behavior lead to life change?

The danger of trying to act like a Christian is that we can become like the Pharisees. They wanted other people to think they were godly, so they acted a certain way. Jesus condemned this behavior in Luke 16:15, explaining that God looks at the heart. God wants to change our hearts, not our behavior. However by focusing on Christ our behaviors do begin to change. A heart that is full of mercy leads to a life full of mercy. A heart full of love leads to love while a heart filled with hate leads to hate.