



GROUP GUIDE: WEEK 2

CONVERSATION STARTER

What is one topic or hobby you wish you could become an overnight expert on?

FACING DOWN CULTURAL PRESSURES

As Paul pens his letter to this young church in Colossae, he's fully aware of the cultural pressures they're facing that seek to pull these Jesus-followers away from the faith, or at least into a distorted version of the faith. Paul warns them to watch out for those who would lure them away with false ideas about Jesus or about how the world works.

In particular, there are two "foes" Paul warns them about: The Synagogue who would invite them to follow Jesus through "human tradition"—Torah observance—and pagan mysticism, lumping Jesus in with the pantheon of Greco-Roman deities like Zeus, Apollo, or Aphrodite.

Today, while we don't face the same pressures these first followers faced. We're not facing pressure to convert to Judaism, and we don't worship Zeus. But make no mistake, there are still cultural pressures that seek to turn us away from Jesus. In many ways, we're still called to worship what these ancient gods represented—sex, money, power, etc. Today's pressures are more subtle than golden statues of Greco-Roman gods; they often take the form of devices, ideologies, and corporations that compete for our time and attention.

John Mark Comer explains the dangers of this phenomenon, saying, "What you give your attention to is the person you become. Put another way: the mind is the portal to the soul, and what you fill your mind with will shape the trajectory of your character. In the end, your life is no more than the sum of what you gave your attention to."

What do you give your attention to? What gets the bulk of your time and focus? And who are you becoming as a result?

In this week's reading, Paul reminds us that Jesus is not something we simply fit into the midst of our busy lives, as we have time and feel obligated to do so. Jesus is not a random nail

or board to be placed haphazardly here and there as you construct the scaffolding of your life. **Jesus is the foundation upon which your entire life is to be constructed**; he is to be infused into every ounce of wood, steel, brick, and drywall used to build up who you are and who you are becoming.

Spend a few moments discussing this idea with your group. What are the cultural pressures that seek to turn our attention away from Jesus or distract us? What kind of person are we pressured by culture to become? How does this align or not align with our faith in Christ?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What stuck out to you about the reading from this week? Was there a verse or idea that was particularly meaningful or challenging for you?
2. What kind of person are we often pressured by culture to become? How does this align or not align with our faith in Christ?
3. What gets the bulk of your attention and focus every day?
4. What are some practical ways you keep your eyes fixed on Jesus during the week?

WEEKLY PRACTICE

The short prayer below is known as the **Wesleyan Covenant Prayer**. Though John Wesley likely didn't write it, this prayer certainly played a deep role in his spiritual formation. The Wesleyan Covenant Prayer guides us in offering our full selves to God as we seek to live the way God calls us to live. This week, spend time praying this famous prayer slowly, line by line. Use it to spark conversation with God. Pay attention to what surprises you about the prayer, including things that may feel new or challenging for you. Don't just pray it once and be done. Savor it before God and allow God to bring up things in the quiet that He may want you to see with new eyes.

I am no longer my own, but yours.
Put me to what you will, place me with whom you will.
Put me to doing, put me to suffering.
Let me be put to work for you or set aside for you,
Praised for you or criticized for you.
Let me be full, let me be empty. Let me have all things, let me have nothing.
I freely and fully surrender all things to your glory and service.
And now, O wonderful and holy God,
Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer,
you are mine, and I am yours.
So be it.
And the covenant which I have made on earth,
let it also be made in heaven. Amen.