

The Compass

a tool for disciplers



Equipping Believers for Ministry

Centrality of Christ

Conversation On the Journey

A man who is merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic - on the level with a man who says he is a poached egg - or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.

– C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

So what separates Christianity from all other religions of the world? The person of Jesus Christ. It is exciting to see Jesus in Scripture. One of the greatest things you could do for your disciple is to help her fall more in love with the Person of Christ.

So why is Jesus so central to the Christian faith? Was He simply sent to be an example? A prophet? A great teacher? If you ask someone who Jesus is, you can get answers ranging from “He was a good moral teacher” to “He is the Savior of the world”. It might surprise you to discover that both those answers fall far short of who Jesus is. Jesus is the very center of all reality. Many people think that God sent Jesus because He created everything good and we messed it up, so we needed a Savior. However, Jesus is NOT plan B! The plan from the beginning was that Jesus, in unity with the Father and the Holy Spirit, decided to create the world knowing that it would be the best way to show the gloriousness of their goodness and grace. They knew full well that man would sin and that evil would be on display. But, it is this very darkness that provides the contrast to God’s many perfections: His love, justice, wisdom, goodness, grace. So let’s dive in and see just why Jesus is the center of all reality.

There are several places one can go in Scripture to answer the above questions, but we’ll take a look at Colossians 1 and what it says about who Christ is - what His relationship is to God, to Creation, and to the Church. So with your disciple, grab a Greek Word Study dictionary (if you don’t have one, go get one - it’s totally worth the cash. I highly recommend *The Complete Word Study New Testament by Spiros Zodhiates* - AMG Publishers), turn to Colossians 1 and go ahead and read the whole chapter. We’re going to campout however in verses 15-20.

This Week’s Excursion

Your objective in this lesson is to help your disciple begin to see (or realize more fully) why Jesus Christ is central to the Christian faith, and ideally to fall more in love with Him and desire to get to know Him more deeply. We’ll answer briefly these three questions: What is Christ’s relationship to God? What is Christ’s relationship to Creation? And what is Christ’s relationship to the Church? A side bonus of this lesson is that you’ll begin to help your disciple learn how to more deeply study the Word.



Christ's Relationship to God

Verse 15 says two things about Christ's relationship to God: first, Christ is the "image of the invisible God;" and second, that Christ is "the firstborn of all creation."

Look up that word "image" in your Greek dictionary. What you'll find is that it is the word "eikon." Just like our word "icon." When you see an icon on a computer screen, you know that it represents a program that is in the computer. It is the visible image of the invisible program. It is the perfect representation and manifestation of what is not seen. In other words, Jesus is the representation and manifestation of all that God is in His character and His nature. In other words, He is God...the invisible become visible. Some other verses to check out are John 1:1,14,18 and Hebrews 1:3.

Now take a look at "the firstborn of all creation," and look up "firstborn" in your Greek tool. It is the word "prototokos" which means to be first, or to be brought forth first (like a firstborn son) or to be the best one, not necessarily chronologically first. For example, David in Psalm 89:27 was called the firstborn among the kings of Israel - he wasn't the first king of Israel but was being called the best of the kings. In other words, Jesus is called the highest ranked person, the first person, the best. It refers to priority and privilege. It shows that He was linked with creation, prominent over all of creation, but not created. And that leads us to Christ's relationship to creation.

Christ's Relationship to Creation

Moving on to verse 16 (good stuff, isn't it?)...in this verse we see Jesus as the architect, the general contractor, and the construction worker of Creation. Again with the Greek, look up the word "by." It is the Greek word "en" which refers to design and plan. So by Him creation was designed and planned.

Next, "all things were created through Him." That word "through" in the Greek is the word "dia" which refers to personal agency. In other words, Jesus is the general contractor of Creation - He did it. By Him all the construction took place. John 1 also talks about how all things were made through Him. This shows us that Jesus was not just a mortal man, not just a prophet, but the Creator of all things.

Also, we see that all things were created "for Him." The word "for" in the Greek is the word "eis" referring to glory and praise. In other words, Jesus should get the praise for Creation. He is the uncreated cause of all things - the designer and contractor.

Not only is Jesus Christ the architect and contractor of Creation, He is the Sovereign Sustainer of it. In verse 17 we see that "in Him all things hold together."

We see that Christ is God, Creator, and Sustainer of Creation. Wow. But He didn't stop there. Even in all of His glory and power, He chose to also have relationship with us.

Next Steps

Ask your disciple to write a letter to Christ in response to what she learned about Him from this time together. Encourage her to read a few of the books listed in the Side Trails section. Challenge her to ask herself daily if Christ has first place in her life. If He doesn't have first place, what will it take for Him to have first place?



Christ's Relationship to the Church

In Scripture, when you see the word “body” or “church” it is usually referring to people - us, Believers in Christ. So in verse 18 when we read that Jesus is the “head of the Body, the church” it means that He is head over us. In looking at His relationship to the Church we'll look at five “P's” found in verses 18-20 - position, power, preeminence, person, and peace.

Christ's *position* in relationship to us is as the Head of the body. He's in charge. He is the only one in charge. We are body parts that do what the Head tells us to do. There is only one head on a body (some possible strange exceptions found in a zoo somewhere perhaps). We are fully dependent on His direction. His position is indisputable. This would be a good time to ask your disciple some questions about what this looks like practically in the life of a Believer.

Christ's *power* in relationship to us is that He was the “firstborn from the dead.” In other words, He is the best one to come back from the dead. (Take a look at Acts 2 and 3 and Romans 1:4). His power to raise Himself from the dead allows Him to be first - first in time, first in rank because of His resurrection. His power is undeniable.

Christ's *preeminence* is the third “P” in His relationship to the Church. He gets to be first place - He deserves it because of all He is and has done. Because of His position, because of His power, because His person is incomparable, His preeminence is unquestionable.

Taking a look at verse 19 now we see that in the *person* of Christ “all of the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.” It was God's good pleasure to have all of His deity dwell in a human body (see also Colossians 2:9). The saying goes, “Jesus Christ was God in a ‘bod’.” This is possible due to the virgin birth. (A good time to note perhaps that we are simply scratching the surface of these topics. There are LOTS of great resources out there - see Side Trails for some - that you and your disciple can research together if desired). Jesus is like no other. Period. His person is incomparable.

The final “P” we'll look at in reference to Christ's relationship to the Church is *peace*. We see in verse 20 that we can be reconciled to God because of Who Christ is and that His blood was shed on the cross. Jesus Christ is our peacemaker, our reconciler. The Cross is the ground for redemption, the ground of Satan's destruction, the ground for renovation of the world...all because of Christ. Without His peace, it is impossible for us to have a relationship with God. His peace is indispensable.

Just as Creation depends on Christ for its existence, so does redemption depend on Christ. Jesus ties both, creation and redemption, in His person. Jesus Christ is not just related to God and related to His Creation, but by the plan and purpose of the heartbeat of God, He wants to be related to us!

Jesus is the center of Christianity because: everything was created by Him; everything was created for Him. Jesus is not just saving us so that we don't spend eternity in hell, he's bringing us to Himself so that we can know Him and be

Side Trails

Mere Christianity. C.S. Lewis. Zondervan Corp.

More Than a Carpenter. Josh McDowell. Tyndale House

Case for Christ. Lee Strobel. Zondervan Corp.

Evidence That Demands a Verdict. Josh McDowell. Nelson Publishers

Seeing and Savoring Jesus Christ. John Piper. Crossway.

Order at Christianbook.com

A Man Without Equal. Bill Bright. NewLife2000 Publications

Order at Campuscrusade.com



with Him forever. Jesus is the greatest gift we could ever get. He's better than all the riches of the world, all the honor in the world, and all the accomplishments we could ever experience. The greatest gift God can give us is Himself, and this is exactly what Jesus accomplishes. Jesus is not only the means to "everlasting life"... knowing Him IS everlasting life.

Summary

Wow. That's a lot of deep stuff and we barely even scratched the surface. Perhaps we've even raised more questions now for your disciple than we've answered. But hopefully through this discipleship time, your disciple has gained a greater knowledge and appreciation for Who Christ is - that He's far more than an example to be followed. As you work through this with your disciple, be sure to not just let it be an intellectual discussion. You can do that by asking good questions about what she's thinking and learning as you talk.

Notes to Self

End

The Compass is the discipleship curriculum for Campus Crusade for Christ's Campus Ministry. It was created by Centerfield Productions, the field based division of CruPress. We'd love to hear your feedback on this lesson. Please write us at centerfield@uscm.org