

Equipping Hour: Apr. 12

Apr. 12: Spiritual Metabolism (pt1)

Our time together for the rest of this semester we will be looking at Scripture through a biblical worldview. That might seem like a strange thing at first, but consider for a moment that our ability to understand and apply Scripture can be hindered by what is in our hearts. We create barriers to the transformation God wants to reveal to us in His Word when we believe, desire, and choose outside of His plan for our lives. That means we can often miss things in Scripture because our lens are dirty.

I want to take just a moment and zoom out and remind us what we've been doing together over the last year and a half because what we've been doing is not normal. Most churches, most classes, most teaching environments focus on giving people information. And information matters. Doctrine matters. Precision matters. But what we've been doing is something deeper than that. We've been learning how to see. Not just how to read the Bible, but how to biblically interpret reality.

We've asked questions like:

- What is God actually like?
- What does it mean that He is sovereign?
- What is suffering, really?
- What is going on in the human heart?
- Why do we do what we do?
- How do things like anger, fear, and desire actually work?

And along the way, we've been exposing something uncomfortable—but necessary: That the secular worldview is not just out there—it's in here. It has shaped:

- how we think about identity
- how we think about happiness
- how we think about problems
- how we think about solutions

And often, without realizing it, we've brought those assumptions into the way we read Scripture. So now, as we come to these final weeks, we're making a shift. We're not learning new categories—we're learning how to apply those categories directly to the text of Scripture. We are practicing spiritual metabolism.

Just like your body takes in food and turns it into energy, strength, and growth—your soul is meant to take in truth and so the Spirit can transform. Not just knowledge. Not just notes. But life change. Anything less is spiritual constipation. You consume but it stays in your gut accomplishing nothing.

Equipping Hour: Apr. 12

So here is the controlling question for today: What does Colossians 1:1–23 teach us about what is ultimately real? How can we use this text to see reality clearly? Because everything in your life flows from what you believe is real. That’s worldview, remember?

- Your anxiety, your worry, your fear flows from what you think is real
- Your anger flows from what you think is real
- Your decisions flow from what you think is real

So if we misunderstand reality, we will misinterpret everything. So let’s begin with verses 1–8 in Colossians 1, which tells us that:

The Gospel Is Not Just the Entry Point—It Is the Lens (vv. 1–8)

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, ² To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father. ³ We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, ⁴ since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, ⁵ because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, ⁶ which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, ⁷ just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf ⁸ and has made known to us your love in the Spirit.

When Paul opens this letter, it feels familiar. He greets the saints, identifies himself as an apostle, and gives thanks. But very quickly, what appears routine becomes something much more significant. Paul is not merely offering encouragement—he is revealing how the gospel has reshaped the way these believers understand reality. He says that he has heard of their faith in Christ Jesus and their love for all the saints, and then he tells us what produces those things. He says it is because of the hope laid up for them in heaven. That word “because” matters. Their faith and love are not self-generated. They are the fruit of something deeper. They are produced by hope. And that hope is not vague or sentimental—it is anchored in something objective, something revealed through what Paul calls “the word of the truth, the gospel.”

That phrase is crucial. Paul does not describe the gospel as one helpful perspective among many. He calls it the truth. Not a truth. Not your truth. The truth. The gospel is not merely about how to be saved—it is a declaration about what is ultimately real. It tells us what is wrong with the world, what is wrong with us, what God has done, and where everything is going.

This stands in direct contrast to the assumptions of the secular worldview, which treats truth as something we construct or define for ourselves. But Paul leaves no room for that. The gospel is revealed, fixed, and authoritative because it comes from God. And then Paul adds something that deepens this even further. He says this gospel is bearing fruit and

increasing. It is not only true—it is active. Wherever it takes root, it produces change. It reshapes how people think, how they live, how they interpret their circumstances, and how they understand themselves. It is not a compartment of life—it is a comprehensive reorientation of reality.

This is where we need to make a crucial connection. Many Christians functionally treat the gospel like a doorway. It is how you get in. It is how your sins are forgiven. But once you are in, you move on to other ways of thinking. But Paul treats the gospel like a lens. You do not move past it—you look through it. It becomes the framework through which you interpret everything. So when suffering enters your life, the world says something has gone wrong. But the gospel says God has already demonstrated His goodness, and He is at work even here. When you are sinned against, the world says protect yourself, but the gospel reminds you that you have been forgiven much. When you fail, the world says hide it or redefine it, but the gospel says bring it into the light because Christ has already paid for it. When the future feels uncertain, the world says take control, but the gospel says your future is secure in Christ.

You are always interpreting your life through a lens. You are never neutral. The question is not whether you have a lens—it is which one you are using. And whatever you instinctively reach for under pressure reveals your functional worldview. So Paul is not simply reminding them of the gospel. He is calling them to live as if it is central, ongoing, and definitive for all of life. And the same question confronts us: are we interpreting our lives through the truth of the gospel, or through something else? Let's move to the next section.

Transformation Begins in the Heart, Not With Behavior (vv. 9–14)

As Paul continues, he moves from thanksgiving into prayer, and what he prays for is incredibly revealing. If you want to understand how true spiritual transformation actually happens—how a person moves from merely knowing about God to actually living in a way that reflects Him—this is one of the clearest passages in all of Scripture.

Paul says in verse 9, “And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.” That is a striking place to begin. Paul does not pray first for their circumstances to change. He does not pray that their suffering would be removed or that their lives would become easier. He prays that they would be filled with the knowledge of God's will. In other words, he goes straight to the heart.

And this immediately confronts one of the most deeply ingrained assumptions we carry. We tend to believe that what we need most is a change in our situation. If this relationship improved, if this pressure lifted, if this struggle resolved, then we would be okay. But Paul assumes something very different. He assumes that the most pressing need in the life of a believer is not a change in circumstances, but a deeper understanding of God—who He is,

Equipping Hour: Apr. 12

what He is doing, and what He desires. Because until that is in place, everything else will be misinterpreted and disordered.

We also need to be clear about what Paul means by “knowledge.” He is not talking about mere information. This is relational, spiritual knowledge—an understanding of God’s will that penetrates beyond the surface and begins to shape how a person thinks, feels, and lives. That is why he adds the phrase “in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.” This is knowledge that is applied and internalized. It is not simply something you can articulate—it is something that begins to reorient and reshape your inner life.

Paul then gives us the purpose of this knowledge in verse 10: “so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him.” That phrase “so as to” is crucial. It shows us the direction of transformation. Knowledge leads to a new way of living. Not the other way around. We do not start with behavior and hope that knowledge will follow. We begin with knowing God rightly, and that knowledge produces a life that reflects Him.

This directly challenges how we instinctively approach change. We often treat the Christian life as behavior management—trying harder, doing better, fixing what is visible. But Paul takes us deeper. Real, lasting change flows from a transformative understanding of God. He then describes what this “worthy walk” looks like. It involves bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. As you know God more deeply, your life begins to change. And as your life changes, your experience of God deepens further. This is not static—it is ongoing growth.

Then he says, “being strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy.” This is not superficial change that only holds under ideal conditions. This is transformation that produces endurance and patience—and not just that, but endurance with joy. That is something the secular worldview cannot account for, because it has no category for joy rooted in something deeper than circumstances.

Paul then grounds all of this in gratitude: “giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.” Your standing before God is not something you achieve—it is something you receive. He has “delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son.” You have been moved—from darkness to light, from bondage to freedom, from one kingdom to another. And this was not something you initiated. God acted. He delivered. He transferred.

And then Paul summarizes it: “in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” Redemption means you have been bought back. Forgiveness means your debt has been canceled. Your past does not define you. Your identity is now anchored in Christ.

When we step back, we see how this passage radically confronts a secular view of change. That model focuses on behavior, environment, and outcomes, but never reaches the heart. Because of that, the change it produces is often temporary. But the biblical model begins

with knowing God. That knowledge reshapes the heart—what you value, what you desire—and from that flows a transformed life. Your heart is always active, always interpreting and responding. And your life is shaped by what you believe about God.

So here is the question: where are you trying to produce change without addressing what you believe about God? Because as long as the heart remains unchanged, behavior will always be inconsistent. But when the heart is shaped by truth, change begins to take root in a way that is lasting and real.

What Paul shows us is that spiritual maturity is not primarily about doing more—it is about seeing more clearly.

Christ Is the Center of All Reality (vv. 15–20)

As we come to verses 15–20, we arrive at the center of gravity in this passage—and one of the most theologically dense and worldview-shaping sections in all of Scripture. Everything Paul has said leads here, and everything that follows depends on it. Verse 15-20 definitively show how Christ is the center of all reality. If we misunderstand what Scripture says about Christ, we will not just misinterpret this passage—we will misinterpret reality itself. Because Paul is not simply describing Jesus; he is redefining the structure of existence around the Son of God.

¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

He begins in verse 15 by saying, “He is the image of the invisible God.” God, by nature, is unseen, not grasped by human senses or reasoning. This is important because we, by nature, operate within the seen reality, but Paul is reminding us that there’s an unseen reality at play all around us at all times. Paul says Jesus is the image of that invisible God—not a reflection or approximation, but the exact, visible expression of who God is. Which means that if you want to know what God is like—His character, His authority, His posture toward sinners—you do not look inward or to cultural ideas of spirituality. You look to Christ. Jesus is the definitive revelation of God. There is no clearer picture and no higher authority.

Then Paul says, “the firstborn of all creation.” This is not about being created, but about supremacy. It is a term of rank—preeminence. In the ancient world, the firstborn son held the highest authority and privilege. Paul is saying that Christ occupies that position over all creation. He is not part of it—He is over it. And then Paul explains why: ¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities. Paul leaves no category untouched. Everything in existence—visible and invisible, physical and spiritual—was created by Christ. Nothing

exists outside of His authority. But he does not stop there. All things were created for Him. That means the ultimate purpose of everything that exists is not human fulfillment, comfort, or success—it is Christ. Everything exists for Him. This is where the collision with a secular worldview becomes unavoidable. At its core, the secular mindset assumes that life revolves around the individual—that meaning is self-defined and fulfillment is self-centered. But Paul dismantles that entirely. You are not the center of reality. Your desires do not define purpose. Christ does. He is the reference point. He is the reason everything exists.

Then Paul adds, “And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.” Christ is not only the origin of all things—He is the sustainer of all things. Right now, everything that exists continues to exist because He holds it together. Your life is not self-sustaining. Your circumstances are not random or outside His authority. The world is not running on its own—it is upheld, moment by moment, by Christ. This has profound implications for how we interpret our lives. We often live as if we are in control, as if we are holding things together. And when things begin to fall apart, we panic. But Paul reminds us that we were never holding things together to begin with. Christ is. And that truth is meant to produce rest, not fear—because the One who sustains all things is the same One who went to the cross for you.

Paul then moves in verse 18 from creation to the church: ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. The Christ who is supreme over all creation is also the head of the church. That means the church is not a human institution shaped by preference or trends. It belongs to Christ. He governs it. He defines its mission and message. And if He is the head, then we do not have the freedom to reshape the church according to what seems most effective—we are called to submit to His authority. He’s also the anchor for our hope of the resurrection because He went first and now has all authority, even over death.

Then Paul brings it all together: ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. The one who created all things is the one in whom the fullness of God dwells. There is no deficiency in Christ. There is no need to supplement Him. And this same Christ is the one who reconciles all things to Himself because all things are for Him. The Creator becomes the Redeemer. The Sustainer becomes the Sacrifice.

And that peace is not superficial. It is the restoration of relationship—the undoing of alienation. And Paul says this reconciliation is cosmic in scope. Christ is not just restoring individuals; He is restoring all things under His authority. So when we step back and take this in, the conclusion is unavoidable: Christ is not part of reality—He is the center of reality. He is not an addition to your life—He is the reason your life exists. He is not merely relevant—He is ultimate.

And the question that follows is this: if Christ is ultimate, how much of your life is actually oriented around Him? Not in theory, but in how you think, respond, decide, and interpret your circumstances. Because it is entirely possible to affirm His supremacy while still living as if you are at the center. This passage calls us to re-center everything—our identity, our priorities, and our understanding of reality—around Christ.

The Real Problem and the Real Solution (vv. 21–22)

As Paul moves into verses 21–22, the tone shifts in a very intentional and personal way as he identifies the real problem and the real solution. After lifting our eyes to the cosmic supremacy of Christ—showing us that He is the image of God, the creator, sustainer, and reconciler of all things—Paul brings that sweeping reality down to a single, unavoidable point: you. He says, “And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds...” This is no longer abstract theology. This is personal diagnosis, and it cuts directly against how we naturally think about ourselves.

Paul describes the human condition in three layers, each one going deeper than the last. First, he says we were “alienated.” That is a relational word. It means separated, cut off. At the most fundamental level, the human problem is not that life is difficult or circumstances are hard. The problem is that we are separated from God—the source of life and purpose. We were created to live in relationship with Him, but sin has fractured that relationship. And that alienation is not something we can fix through effort or improvement. But Paul goes deeper. He says we were “hostile in mind.” Our problem is not merely distance—it is opposition. We are not neutral toward God. Left to ourselves, we resist Him. We question His authority, doubt His goodness, and prefer our own way. This hostility is not always loud. It can be subtle—showing up as self-reliance, quiet distrust, or reshaping God into something more manageable for our tastes. But at its core, it is a posture of resistance.

And then Paul brings it to the surface: “doing evil deeds.” What is internal becomes external. Our actions are expressions of what is happening in the heart. So alienation leads to hostility, and hostility leads to behavior. This is a complete picture of the human condition—separated, opposed, and disobedient. This is where the worldview contrast becomes sharp. Our culture tells us that people are basically good and that problems are primarily external—our upbringing, our environment, our circumstances. And while those things influence us, Paul says they are not the root problem. The root problem is within us—our alienation from God and our hostility toward Him.

This is not an easy truth, but it is a necessary one. Because if we misdiagnose the problem, we will pursue the wrong solution. If we believe our primary issue is external, we will spend our lives trying to rearrange circumstances or manage outcomes. But if the problem is internal, the solution must address the heart. We have no excuse, remember? Can’t blame our society. Can’t blame our biology. Can’t blame the devil. We are responsible. And that is exactly what Paul shows us: “He has now reconciled in His body of flesh by His death...”

Equipping Hour: Apr. 12

Everything changes here. The alienation that defined us has been overcome—not by our effort, but by Christ.

Reconciliation is not something we achieve; it is something God accomplishes. And He does it through the real, physical, sacrificial death of His Son. Christ entered into our world, went to the cross, bore the penalty of sin, and removed the barrier between us and God. And Paul tells us why: “in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before Him.” This is not just forgiveness—it is a transformation of status. This is how God now sees you in Christ. Not as you once were—alienated and hostile—but as reconciled and accepted.

And this is where we must slow down. Because many believers still live as if their identity is tied to their past or their performance. We carry shame. We feel the need to prove ourselves. But Paul reminds us that our standing before God has already been settled. You are not working toward acceptance—you are living from it. This stands in stark contrast to the secular worldview, which says identity must be constructed and maintained. That makes it fragile and constantly under pressure. But the gospel gives an identity that is secure, grounded in what Christ has accomplished.

So the question becomes deeply practical: how would your life change if you actually believed this? If you believed that you are no longer alienated, but reconciled? Not defined by your sin, but by Christ’s righteousness? Because what Paul is doing here is not just reminding us of what has happened—he is calling us to live in light of it. And until that reality is rooted in our hearts, we will continue to drift back toward a worldview shaped more by experience than by the truth of the gospel.

The Call to Perseverance (v. 23)

²³ if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

As Paul concludes this section in verse 23, he brings everything we have seen—the truth of the gospel, the nature of transformation, the supremacy of Christ, and the reality of reconciliation—to a single, pressing call, the call to perseverance. He says, “if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard...” This is not a casual encouragement. It is a necessary exhortation. Because everything Paul has said only bears fruit in the life of someone who continues—who remains anchored and refuses to drift.

Notice how he describes that perseverance. He uses two words: “stable” and “steadfast.” These are structural terms. To be stable is to be grounded, to have a foundation that does not move. To be steadfast is to endure over time, to remain firm without giving way when the heat comes, when the storm comes. Paul is not describing a fragile faith that fluctuates

with circumstances or emotions. He is describing a settled confidence in the truth of the gospel. This is important.

Then he adds a warning: “not shifting from the hope of the gospel.” That word “shifting” implies drift—subtle movement, not necessarily a dramatic rejection of the faith. It is often quiet, gradual, and difficult to detect. And that is what makes it dangerous. Drifting rarely feels like drifting when it is happening. It feels reasonable. It feels like we are simply responding to life as it comes.

But over time, that shift becomes significant. Instead of interpreting our lives through the gospel, we begin to interpret the gospel through our experiences. Instead of letting the truth of Christ shape our understanding, we allow circumstances, emotions, or cultural assumptions to take the lead. And slowly, almost imperceptibly, the center begins to move. Christ is no longer functionally at the center of how we think and live.

This is why Paul’s call to remain “stable and steadfast” matters so much. Because we live in a world that constantly invites us to shift. The secular worldview is persuasive and ever-present. It tells us that truth is flexible, that beliefs should adapt, that certainty is naive. It encourages us to soften what is uncomfortable and prioritize what feels immediately helpful. And if we are not rooted deeply in the truth, we will begin to absorb those assumptions without even realizing it. And this danger is not just outside the church—it is inside as well. It shows up when we begin to treat Scripture as insufficient for addressing real struggles, when we look elsewhere for answers to problems of the heart, or when we subtly begin to believe that Christ is not enough. In those moments, we may not reject the gospel outright, but we shift away from its centrality.

Paul calls us to resist that drift. To remain anchored. To hold fast to the hope of the gospel. And that word “hope” is important. In our culture, hope often means wishful thinking—something uncertain. But in Scripture, hope is confident expectation. It is a settled assurance rooted in the finished work of Christ and the unchanging character of God. This gospel is not a private message or a localized belief. It is the universal declaration of what God has done in Christ. It is not something we reshape—it is something we receive and hold onto.

So what does this mean for us? It means perseverance is not passive. It requires intentionality. It requires vigilance. It requires continually bringing our thoughts, desires, and responses back into alignment with what is true. And this brings us back to everything we have been doing together. This is why a biblical worldview matters. Because without that foundation, we are easily moved. But when we are grounded in the truth—when we learn to see reality through the lens of Scripture—we are able to remain stable even when life is unstable.

Equipping Hour: Apr. 12

So the question we must ask is this: Where am I most vulnerable to shifting away from the hope of the gospel? It is in grief? Anger? Lust? Desire? Satisfaction? Because those moments of pressure reveal what we are actually trusting.

Let's bring this all together. What we have seen in this passage is not a collection of disconnected ideas, but a unified picture of reality as God defines it. Paul has shown us what is real—what actually governs and explains the world we live in. He has shown us who is central—not us, but Christ, the one for whom all things exist and in whom all things hold together. He has shown us what is wrong—not merely what is happening around us, but what is happening within us, our alienation from God and our hostility toward Him. And he has shown us what God has done—that through Christ, He has reconciled us, restored us, and given us a new identity no longer defined by sin but by His grace. And flowing from all of that, he shows us how we must respond—by continuing in the faith, remaining stable and steadfast, and refusing to shift from the hope of the gospel.

And all of that leads to a single question: what must change this week in how you see your life? Not just what must you do differently, but what must you see differently? Where are you still interpreting your circumstances through your feelings or assumptions rather than through the truth of the gospel? Because transformation does not happen simply by hearing truth. It happens when truth is believed, embraced as reality, and allowed to shape how you see, think, and live. So don't let this remain theoretical. Examine yourself.