

**First Baptist Church Merritt Island**  
**Discipleship Pastor Mark Lewis**  
**January 1, 2023**  
**God Desires We Mature in Christ**  
**Colossians 1:28-29**

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***“Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.” Colossians 1:28-29***

God used this passage to lead me into ministry and to confirm his calling at various times in my life. I wrote Colossians 1:28-29 in the cover of my Bible May 16<sup>th</sup>, 1992.

The context:

- “Christ in you, the hope of glory”. God, in Christ, has FORGIVEN you to FILL you so that he may one day FINISH what he began in you.
- Paul refers to this truth as a mystery not previously known but now revealed in Christ.
- And this mystery raised eyebrows because Paul revealed it to Gentiles, those considered far from God and without hope.

*'And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.'*

*Ephesians 2:17-18*

**The big idea: God desires we encourage everyone toward maturity in Christ.**

God is the author of encouragement, and he has called us into the ministry of encouragement for the sake of the Gospel. Especially for those who believe they are too far gone and hopelessly broken. Paul in 1:28-29 reveals three ways we can encourage one another in Christ:

**1. WE EXTOL CHRIST OPENLY**

This means we enthusiastically applaud the person and work of Christ. We do this by...

- Sharing what God has done in our own lives – how he saved us, redeemed us, and rescued us from bondage to sin.
- Reminding one another of the promises of God’s word (1 Thessalonians 4:18, “Encourage one another with these words.”)
- Telling others how we see God at work in them. Sometimes, we are the last to know God is at work in our lives until someone points it out.

*'Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.'* You are not who you used to be! I see God at work in your life. *2 Corinthians 3:18*

**2. WE EXHORT ONE ANOTHER GRACIOUSLY**

This means we admonish one another, “*Don’t do that; do this instead.*” This can be the toughest form of encouragement. Consider Paul’s exhortation to put off the old self and to put on the new self – lot of these exhortations in the NT:

*'But that is not the way you learned Christ!— assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. '*  
*Ephesians 4:20-24*

- Illustrations - Couple of times where I personally experienced exhortation! The Alligator and the Bob Cat.
- A couple of warnings about exhortation: Criticism is not a gift of the Spirit, and no one likes a back seat driver who is constantly looking over your shoulder.
- Exhortation is the gift of encouragement that reminds us God allows U-turns!

### 3. WE EXPLAIN THE MYSTERY OF THE GOSPEL PLAINLY

This means coming alongside people to help them take their next steps of obedience. We come alongside people to...

- Encourage them to depend on HIS wisdom and energy, not our own.
- Encourage them to obey Jesus first and fast. Best measure of spiritual growth is the gap between God's command and our obedience. Mind the gap!
- Encourage them to There's a big difference between teaching to impart knowledge and teaching people to obey what they already know.
  - Guys in our Fall discipleship class met in small groups for several weeks recently where they made themselves accountable to memorize Scripture, keep a quiet time journal and share how God was work in their lives. We had four different classes that met on different days and times. Guys came to class prepared. It was so powerful to see brothers in Christ listen to one another in their small groups and encourage one another weekly.

#### **The Charge:**

- God desires we encourage everyone toward maturity in Christ.
- God is the author of encouragement, and he has called us into the ministry of encouragement for the sake of the Gospel.
- We cannot grow spiritually in isolation. We need one another.
- Do the work of an encourager! Notice Paul said he 'toils' in his efforts to help others grow spiritually (Col. 1:29).
- Who has God placed in your life whom he wants you to encourage?