**Discussion Questions: Col 1:1-8**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON COLOSSIANS

**Date**: Colossians was most likely written from Rome while Paul was in prison around 60-62 AD.

**Audience**: Colossae had been an important and wealthy city in the Roman Empire up to Paul's time. Around 60-61 AD an earthquake damaged the city significantly and it seems that the city was unable to rebuild and reach it former prominence. It was in the region of Asia Minor (modern day Turkey), about 11 miles from the city of Laodicea and 100 miles east of Ephesus. The church in Colossae had been founded by Ephaphras. Eventually Ephaphras went to visit Paul, and during that time Paul sent Tychicus to deliver his letter to the Colossian Christians.

**Purpose**: The purpose seems to be to address some sort of local syncretism that mixed Judaism and Christianity with Phrygian folk religion. In response, Paul affirms the authority and supremacy of Christ over all. He then demonstrates that our view of Jesus should be the controlling factor in our lifestyle and behavior.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Paul and the Christians at Colossae had never met, and yet Paul had some serious concerns about their church that he needed to address. How does he go about establishing both his authority over them and his genuine concern for them in a gentle way? (The below questions are meant to help you as a group answer this question)

a. What titles does he use for himself and Timothy? What do each of these communicate?

b. How does Paul express his affection and concern for them?

c. How does he both validate Epaphras (their founder) and at the same reveal his authority as an apostle?

2. What strikes or challenges you about the way Paul addresses the Colossian Christians? What does it reveal about the nature of church leaders and members within the household of God?

3. In vv. 4-5, Paul points out that both the Colossians’ faith in Christ and love for the saints are grounded in their hope, which is in heaven, that is, Christ (1:27).

a. How does the Bible define faith, hope, and love? How is this different than the world’s definition?

b. How does hope give rise to both faith and love? Can you think of examples of how your hope in Christ has lead to faith and love in your life?

c. What does this reveal about relationship between our attitudes, beliefs and actions? What determines what?

4. What is the basis of this hope that they have? (See v. 5)

5. What is it that is bearing fruit and increasing in Colossae as it does everywhere else (v. 6)?

6. How would you define the gospel?

7. How has the gospel shaped your expectations regarding the future (hope), where you place your trust (faith), and what you value (love)?

8. What areas do you find yourself struggling to live out the gospel?

9. God is the one who changes our hearts and he does it with the gospel by His Spirit. What part do we have to play in this process of transformation? In other words, how do we position ourselves to be increasingly shaped and transformed by the gospel?