**Caring for God’s People**

Colossians 2:1-5

**Introduction**

The ministry of Hillcrest Baptist Church should be centered on making the Person of Christ known to every person. We need to have an “every man” type of ministry, because every man needs Jesus and He is worthy of the praise of every man. The intent of our ministry of warning and teaching will be to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. This will require work and striving, based on God’s mighty work in us. But such a ministry will also generate a culture of care; an environment where people are more than just a number and that is conducive to spiritual growth. This will require that we get involved in the lives of people, and even caring for some we have never met. As you read Paul’s letter to the Colossians, you will see that this is the heart of Paul and thus, the heart of God. God cares about your individual spiritual growth, and He desires that you care about the individual spiritual growth of a fellow believer. If you do, you will enter into an intense spiritual battle. In this lesson, we will see why Paul engaged in an intense spiritual battle for the believers in and around Colossae, and why he put so much energy into serving the Lord by spreading the gospel.

1. **To care for the spiritual well-being of people brings you into an intense spiritual battle. (v. 1)** 
   1. Consider the terms used.
      1. Great – extensive; large; intense.
      2. Conflict – intense struggle, involving physical or nonphysical force against strong opposition; fight; agony (Colossians 1:29, 2 Timothy 4:7, Hebrews 12:1).
   2. He engaged in this battle for those he had never personally met. *“The apostle had never been at Colosse, and the church planted there was not of his planting; and yet he had as tender a care of it as if it had been the only people of his charge.” (Matthew Henry)*
   3. Spiritual leadership is essential for the well-being of churches.
   4. It is a desirable position. (1 Timothy 3:1)
   5. What was involved in the battle for spiritual leaders? For Paul, the struggle to spread the gospel involved preaching and teaching, personal study, prayer, travel, separation from family and friends, loneliness, imprisonment, persecution, personal discipleship, theological debates, late hours (tent business; preaching to midnight), financial burdens, confrontations, giving of encouragement, conducting services, and dealing with difficult church matters!
   6. What makes it such an intense battle?
      1. You are battling your own flesh.
      2. You are trying to lead in a way that is contrary to your own culture.
      3. You are fighting for God’s purposes, which draws opposition of those who oppose God.
      4. You are in a fight that is bigger than you are.
      5. You are facing the deceptive ways of false teachers.
      6. There are many casualties.
   7. While spiritual leaders may not face all that Paul did, the ministry does bring an added level of challenges.
      1. An unpredictable schedule.
      2. Unrealistic expectations.
      3. The requirement to always be available.
      4. The responsibility of being a public example.
      5. The stress of criticism and gossip.
      6. The struggle for family time. The struggle for pastoral support of family.
      7. The burden of spiritual problems, disappointments, and setbacks in the lives of others.
      8. The loneliness of ministry life.
      9. The constant presence of spiritual resistance.
      10. The demands of a pastor.
      11. The challenge to be ready for the next teaching or preaching opportunity.
      12. Yet, it is a wonderful privilege!
   8. The nature of this battle is not exclusively for those called to a position of spiritual leadership. It is also the role of spiritual leaders in the church. (Philippians 1:27-30, Romans 15:30)
   9. Have you taken your place in the ministry of Hillcrest Baptist Church?
      1. It is an honor to have a position, but you do not have to have a position to serve.
      2. Are you engaged in battle for the sake of your family? Are you willing to expend yourself for the sake of God’s people?
      3. Do you care? To care is to consider something important and of interest; to concern yourself with something that matters. It is not just seeing the need; it is doing something about it. It means you are willing to get involved.
      4. Everyone who walks through the doors of Hillcrest Baptist Church is in need of individual care. How are they going to get that type of care? Someone is going to have to go to battle for them.
      5. You should care because of who you are in Christ, not because of your personality, your upbringing, your background, or because it’s just “southern hospitality.” It should be your purpose to glorify God; to put on the attributes of the Father.
      6. Is there any reason we should not engage in the battle with the same degree of intensity as Paul?
2. **To engage in such an intense battle, it must be for good reason. Paul stated two goals. (v. 2)**
   1. He wanted them to be encouraged.
      1. Comforted – cheered up; encouraged; strengthened.
      2. Being knit together in love – to cause to stand together; to unite; to bring together; to be held together; to be joined.
   2. He wanted them to be enriched by knowing Christ.
      1. Riches - spiritual abundance or prosperity. (1:27)
      2. Full assurance – complete certainty, full confidence; to not doubt or call into question.
      3. Paul wanted them to embrace these great truths; to have understanding (insight) and acknowledgment (recognition) of the mystery of God, the Father, and of Christ. *“Christ Himself is ‘the mystery of God’; not just a clue or a key to it, as though it were something other than Himself.” (Wright)*
      4. He was engaged in an intense spiritual battle so that they might have all the riches that come from having a full assurance gained from the insight in knowing who Christ is.
      5. All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are found in Christ. (v. 3)
3. Treasures – a treasury, treasure box or chest, a storeroom or storehouse, a place for storing valuables; that which is of exceptional value and kept safe.
4. Notice that they are not hidden from us, but are for us in Christ. This means that they are accessible. You must only go to the right source; they are in Christ.
5. The treasures of wisdom and knowledge we need for living are not found outside of Christ. Many are going after fool’s gold.
6. The soul prospers when you understand who you are in Christ.
7. **Those who engage in the battle of spiritual leadership must understand the dangers that surround growing Christians. (v. 4)** 
   1. There are those who would lure them away with enticing words. There are people who wanted to beguile; to deceive with pervasive, plausible arguments; to delude with false reasoning.
   2. Whether present or absent, Paul was concerned about their spiritual stability. He rejoiced to see their order and steadfastness. Paul did not base their stability on that which is temporary (circumstances, health, wealth, results), but on knowing Jesus Christ.
   3. Though they have been forgiven of the sin of their past and are standing firm in the present, Paul is concerned about the future. He does not want them to be turned away from what they have in Christ. This is a vaccine, not an antibiotic.
8. **Central Idea: We should engage in intense spiritual battle so that others might be encouraged and enriched by knowing Christ.** 
   1. This goal is worthy of your efforts in your family to provide a place of encouragement and enrichment; an environment or culture of coming to know who Jesus is.
   2. Our church ought to be a place of care, encouragement, enrichment, and equipping.

**Conclusion**

What should you do? Cultivate a loving relationship with Jesus Christ. Emphasize Jesus Christ and His sufficiency. Care about people to the point of ministry.