



Sermon Study - Conversation Guide

April 14, 2024

“How to Fight for Good”

Colossians 2:1-5

This guide is a discipleship tool for personal reflection, family conversations, for home groups, and for Table Talk on Sundays @10:40 am and 12:15 pm on the Lowell Patio

Coastal Community Church
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Way back when we were in the book of Ephesians, in chapter 6, we talked about spiritual warfare. We learned how to fight against the enemy—the devil and his demons. But how do we fight for something that's good? Let's start with this verse from last week's message...

1:24 *Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church.*

Christ means Savior. Jesus saves us by gladly choosing to suffer for us, in our place, because he loves us. Love is when we choose to pay for other people, to suffer for them. We pay for their mistakes when they hurt us. We forgive because we love.

What is Paul saying? "As your pastor, I will spend my time, my energy, my resources, to see God's work of love completed in you. When I'm misunderstood, slandered, and persecuted, I will stay. When I feel hopeless and I'm attacked by the enemy so that I will stop loving you, I won't stop. I'll keep loving you, just as Jesus loved me." Paul continues:

2:1 *I want you to know how hard I am contending for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally.*

Paul is contending, wrestling, fighting for the good of the church reading this letter. How?

2:2 *My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding...*

Paul fights by using encouragement so the church stands united. It means building up a person's confidence in the truth of God's identity, work, and favor in their own life. We do this by celebrating people's victories, by telling them about how grateful we are for them, by affirming their worth and the way they're using their God-given gifts.

We live in a culture where an entire generation of children have been praised relentlessly, no matter how much or how little they work, giving them trophies for participation. It's created massive entitlement in them. Encouragement isn't propping someone up. It's building a person's confidence that they are living, or can live, in their true identity in Christ. Encouragement is celebrating God's work in them and then building their own desire to pursue everything God has for them.

On Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday we had seasoned pastors visit our church and they were amazed at the presence of God in this place. They said this to Gene, an elder here, "This is worth fighting for. God is in this place. You have to fight for this." This is why your faithful giving and service matters. We need your gifts, your talents, your energy. What Jesus is building here, if we join Him, is the spark that changes our region, our state, and our country. Jesus is working with us to break down the gates of people's hell and bring them into God's presence.

Paul, in part, talks here about having complete understanding. To fight for the good in your family and for this church means that you are so committed to being united in love, we won't tolerate the incomplete understanding brought on by gossip, which only tears people apart. We go to the person and get the full story. Do you know what burdens me? It's not hearing about a problem. It's hearing that people have problems and won't talk to me. If you have a problem, tell me.

2:2 ...in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

The mystery is that God isn't afraid of your failures, repulsed by your wounds, or shun you because of your grief or the abuse you've endured. Do you have any idea what this means? It means there is always hope beyond our brokenness. It means that when you fill in the unknown parts of your heart and your future with catastrophe, God invites you to let Him fill those places with His hope, love and life.

The work of healing and grief is the work of rescuing our own souls that's been buried underneath all that pain. We will feel it all and cry the tears. We feel totally alone and hopeless, yet underneath the pain isn't death. Instead, we will discover Jesus is there, present with us, resurrecting us into a new life. Still, this is hard, and sometimes we run from the process.

2:4 I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. 5 For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how disciplined you are and how firm your faith in Christ is.

We can choose to lash out when our emotions are high because the 'fine sounding argument' is this. You deserve to get revenge. Paul believed this for years. That's why he crushed Christians. But Jesus said to him, "Why are you persecuting Me?" God always identifies with us all, right where we are. He chooses to suffer alongside us and fight for our good. That's what love is. So, fight for the good of others, even if it hurts. Fight for them the way Jesus fought for you because what you do matters!

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDELINES: Tips for great conversation

- We aren't here to teach/fix each other, but to share our experiences.
- Show respect by listening to one another, asking clarifying questions.
- If you're quick to share, allow space and time for others to speak up.
- If you're slow to speak, your experience is valuable so please share.

INTRO

Invite everyone to introduce themselves and then read the Bible verses.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What part of the message and Scripture was most encouraging, and which part is most challenging?
2. What did You notice about God, and what did you notice about yourself as well as other people?

GOSPEL EXCHANGE (REDEMPTIVE WORK)

Jesus asks us to give Him our burdens (Matthew 11:28-29), whatever they may be (a lie we have believed about God or ourselves, our hurt or negative emotions, or even our concerns for loved ones), so He can carry them for us, giving us His peace (His completeness) in exchange.

What do you want to exchange with Jesus today?

What is the burden? "Lord Jesus, I give you my..."

What's His gift? "Lord Jesus, I receive your..."

ACTION QUESTIONS

1. What is one step of obedience you can take this week, based on what you've discovered today? *(NOTE – Consider prayerfully asking God to answer this question for you, taking 30-45 seconds to listen in silence, writing what you heard. If nothing comes clear, keep praying this week.)*
2. During the coming week, who can you share what you learned today? *(NOTE – Consider repeating the same step with this question as the previous question.)*