

Video #6 Transcript

We're going to jump right into Scripture today, so please turn with me in your Bibles to Colossians 1:6-10. Colossians 1:6-10, Paul says this:

“In the same way the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God's grace. You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf and who also told us of your love in the spirit.”

See, the gospel was doing what the gospel always does. It sends seeds out into the world. Those seeds started with Jesus Himself, the seed was passed on to Paul as he met Jesus on the road to Damascus. Paul in some way that we don't know quite how historically, but he had passed on the seed to Epaphras and Epaphras had taken it to the church at Colossae. These seeds were growing and bearing fruit, spreading because that's what seeds are designed to do.

Verse 9: “For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you.”

Kind of like Cheri and I have done for you.

“For we continually asked God to fill you with the knowledge of His will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives.”

A life well-lived, a life that's worthy and pleasing to the Lord is a fruitful life. Let me say that one more time: a life lived well, a life that's worthy and pleasing to the Lord is a fruitful life. Now I say that with great confidence, but can I tell you that for most of my life, that that idea, that a fruitful life is what God wants, it was a very intimidating idea to me. It was an idea that drove me to work harder, to do more, to strive to always feel like I was falling short. It was the kind of life that really led to exhaustion.

In that exhaustion one day, about 10 years ago, I was talking to the mailbox and I was in a season where I was doing ministry. I was writing, I was speaking, I was teaching Sunday school. I was mentoring. I was doing all the things for all the people. You hear what I'm saying to you, sisters? And in the midst of all of that, in the midst of a life that had built decades on the love of God from the time I was 10 and came to know Him, to the time I was in my 40s and experiencing this, but in the midst of that, on the way to the mailbox, a thought popped in my head. “What if I walked away from the God thing?”

Can I tell you that it kind of embarrasses me to confess that to you, that I was a woman that was leading - maybe some of you! - but I was struggling with my faith

myself. And I let myself go down that road for a few minutes. “What if I did walk away from the God thing?”

“Well,” I thought, “I would get my Sunday mornings back. I could sleep late. I wouldn’t have to deal with the messiness of church, the humanity of all that I could just - I could withdraw into my own household, in my own version of an abnormal life.” I thought “I wouldn’t have to give 10% of my money. I could get 10% back, and maybe buy that convertible that I mentioned in the book.” And I went down that road thinking and thinking about “Could I walk away from God?” That was a very very bad place to be.

These verses in Colossians, thank goodness, they reveal a different kind of life. It’s not a “try harder” life. Fruitfulness is an overflow of being rooted in God Himself.

Let’s look at verse 9 again for this reason. “Since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask to fill you with the knowledge of His will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit of God gives.”

You see, at its very core, the beginning of a life lived well is a state of being, not a state of doing. Yes, certainly, we’ll talk about good deeds in just a few minutes, but it’s rooted in a love for God and a knowledge of God. Knowing Him is the first and essential element of a life lived well. We cannot do it without that, and it’s simple to say that. “Just know God.”

But how do we go about doing that?

Well, Paul gives us a little insight. He says that we are growing in the knowledge of God in order to grow in the knowledge of God. We have to be in His word daily, or almost daily. We have to be seeking Him out, finding out who He is. That’s what saved me that day on the way to the mailbox because in the midst of all the pondering of what I would get if I gave up God. Psalm 103:2 popped in my head and that verse says “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.”

Because I had spent decades getting to know God by soaking in His word, God used a verse, a familiar most-loved verse in my life to bring me back to Himself and He said “Amy, don’t forget my benefits. You might get your Sunday morning back, but you would lose your peace. You might get 10% of your income back, but you would lose the joy of walking with Me. You might get a little bit more of a peaceful life and less messiness from being connected to your church, but you would lose the faithful community of the church and the people around you.”

See, if I had walked away from God, I would have lost more, much much more, than I would have gained. And He used His word to remind me of that. So we grow in His word, but we also grow in wisdom. It says in verse 10 our being, in other words, leads to doing. When I try to come up with a definition for wisdom on my own, I came up with this: it’s knowledge. It’s what we have up here from the world combined with

good works. Knowledge plus good works is wisdom. Wisdom is the knowledge of God lived out. In other words, we become rooted, but it leads to something. It's the "so that" that it leads to something good in our lives.

You read the story of the birth of *Exhale* in the book. I wanted women to stop spending their lives and start investing their lives in ways that filled their souls. Cheri came along and said "Yes ... but there's a process. We have to lead women through a process."

And now we're at the point here at the very end. We're at the intended end result of the book *Exhale*. We need to lose who we're not to make room for God's work through us. We need to love who we are so we take steps into God's calling for us, and then we need to fully launch into the life worthy of the Lord that pleases Him in every way.

This is the kind of life that meets that trifacta that our heart longs for:

That it fulfills us and it gives us joy.
That it helps us to love our people better than we ever have.
And most importantly of all, it glorifies God.

Verse 10 says that when we do these things, that we'll be abounding in seeds and fruit. Bearing fruit in every good work. Growing in the knowledge of God. A life lived well, a life that's worth and pleasing to the Lord, is a fruitful life.

It is a seed-sender life.

We bear fruit when we're abiding in the vine as John 15 says. And fruit by definition includes seeds. I did some looking up and botanically, that is the definition of fruit. A leaf of spinach, it's not a fruit because it doesn't have seeds. A carrot isn't a fruit because it doesn't have seeds, but an apple is a fruit because it contains seeds. A tomato is a fruit because it contains seeds.

When we are abiding the vine, we produce fruit because we are connected to Him. And within that fruit are the seeds that we then send in to the world. But I want to say to you right here that every good work leaves so much room for God's work. You are included in this. Your gifts, your talents, your wiring, your quirks, your hard story. All of those things are part of what God will use as the seeds He sends from you into the world.

I love this quote by Charles Spurgeon. I want you to listen carefully to it to just imagine where you are in this seed-sender celebration. "Have you the ability to preach the gospel? Preach it. Does a little child need comforting? Comfort it. Can you stand up and vindicate a glorious truth before thousands? Do it. Does a poor Saint need a bit of dinner from your table? Send it to her. Let works of obedience,

testimony, zeal, charity, piety, and philanthropy all be in your life. Do not select big things as your special line but glorify the Lord also in the littles.”

Love this. “Fruitful in every good work.” Just about a month ago, I was taking a walk and I looked down and saw something miraculous. It wasn’t very pretty. Can I just say that the dandelion on the cover of *Exhale* is way prettier than any dandelion I’ve ever seen out in nature? But I looked down and in my line of sight was every phase of a dandelion’s life. There was the first little yellow flower and I looked at that little yellow flower and I thought “This is like all the new Christians I know. They are a breath of fresh air. They draw us to them like the color yellow.”

And then I saw the stage where the dandelion had grown up and it had sprouted out full of seeds and I thought “That’s a more mature Christian, a Christian who just has seeds bursting out all over them.”

And then there was another one that the wind had blown, just like the Holy spirit blows through our lives, and had blown some of the seeds out into the world to reproduce.

And then there was one last one and it was the one that I want to be on my last day. It was just a stalk with no seeds left on it. Girls, that’s what I want us to be. Girls that go from that yellow sunshine of new belief to springing to maturity full of seeds until the Holy Spirit blows everything we’ve got out into the world and we go back to join him.

Jesus created you to be a seed-sender. You are meant to be a seed-sender. Think back: who were some of the seed-senders in your life who sparked a dream, who set you on a path, who set comfort into your pain, who nurtured your growth when you think about those people. Chances are that they weren’t flashy or famous at all, but despite that that person, those people, are important. Those people are seed-senders and you are the fruit of their lives. Just like Epaphras was the fruit of Paul’s life in the church, the people in the church Colossae were the fruit of Epaphras’ life.

You’re a seed-sender. As we close out our time together, I want us to do something significant. I want you to take your hands and cup it for a moment. I want you to close your eyes and pause. I want you to think about the seeds that God has put there. Your gifts, your talents, your quirks, your hard stories. Maybe it’s career-building with other women. Maybe it’s been adoption or leadership. Maybe for you it’s mothering or Bible teaching or goal-setting or encouragement. There is no end to the list of seeds that could be held in your hand because there is no end to God’s creative ability. What are the seeds that you hold in your hand?

Jesus created you to be a seed-sender.

Now, I want you to stand with your hands cupped and I’m going to read an excerpt from the book. Something you’ve already read before, but I want you to stand with

your hands cupped until I read the part where your hands are lifted. Will you get with the women near you? Would you stand up right now? Get with the women in your group. Stand shoulder to shoulder, close your eyes, and listen to me read this excerpt.

“All the work to lose who you’re not and love who you are is valuable because you are valuable. But it’s not the end. You don’t do that work so that you can simply stop trying to be everything for everyone, although Cheri and I dream that you have. It isn’t just so you can feel better about yourself, although we pray that you do. It isn’t only so that you can have more margin in your schedule, although we hope that you might. It isn’t even so that you give mental assent to your valuable calling.

Cheri and I want you to lose who you’re not so that the weeds that have been choking out your fruitfulness are uprooted and thrown into the compost pile. We want you to love who you are so that you see yourself worth in God’s eyes. Ultimately, though, we want to inspire you to become something – not something other than who you are but fully animated into who you’ve always been designed to be. We also want you to be a seed-sender.

This is the part where my throat clenches with emotions and my eyes fill with tears of longing. This is the moment when I want you and I to be consumed with the life created for us. I want us to be swallowed up with the desire to be a seed-sender. The good news: being a seed-sender both powerfully glorifies God and deeply fulfills us.

I picture us as a field of women standing shoulder to shoulder (do it girls, stand shoulder to shoulder) with flowers filling our hands. The flowers are in full bloom, bursting with seeds. Suddenly the wind starts to blow. It’s gentle at first, but just like God always does, the wind of the Spirit grows in power as the wind strengthens. We lift our hands as one (lift your hands as one!) offering our flowers to its force and the seeds begin to blow, and we lift our faces to watch. We don’t know where the seeds are going, exactly, we’re just the seed-senders. We’re not the seed-grower, but we know Him, so we trust and wait with expectation, dreaming of a field on the horizon, until the fruit appears and then raising our arms with joy, we rejoice together.”

Now, those of you in the room, go rejoice together. Do a seed-sender celebration. But before you leave the circle, would you share with one of your friends the seed or seeds that you held in your hands, that you are trusting God by the power and strength of His Holy Spirit, to send out in the world?

Now go out! I love you! I’m praying for you! And it’s been an amazing journey to be with you in your group.