



Colossians Remixed

Subverting the Empire: Session 1

St. John in the Wilderness

The background features a stylized, low-poly illustration of a building with a series of arches. The building is rendered in shades of light green and grey. To the left, there are stylized green bushes or trees. The overall style is modern and graphic.

Opening Prayer

Re-brand Us

by Walter Brueggemann, from *Awed to Heaven, Rooted in Earth*

Colossians Remixed

✦ **Based on book by Brian J. Walsh and Sylvia C. Keesmaat**

✦ **“Colossians is a subversive tract for subversive living, and it insists that such an alternative imagination and alternative way of life is formed and sustained in the context of community.” (p. 9)**

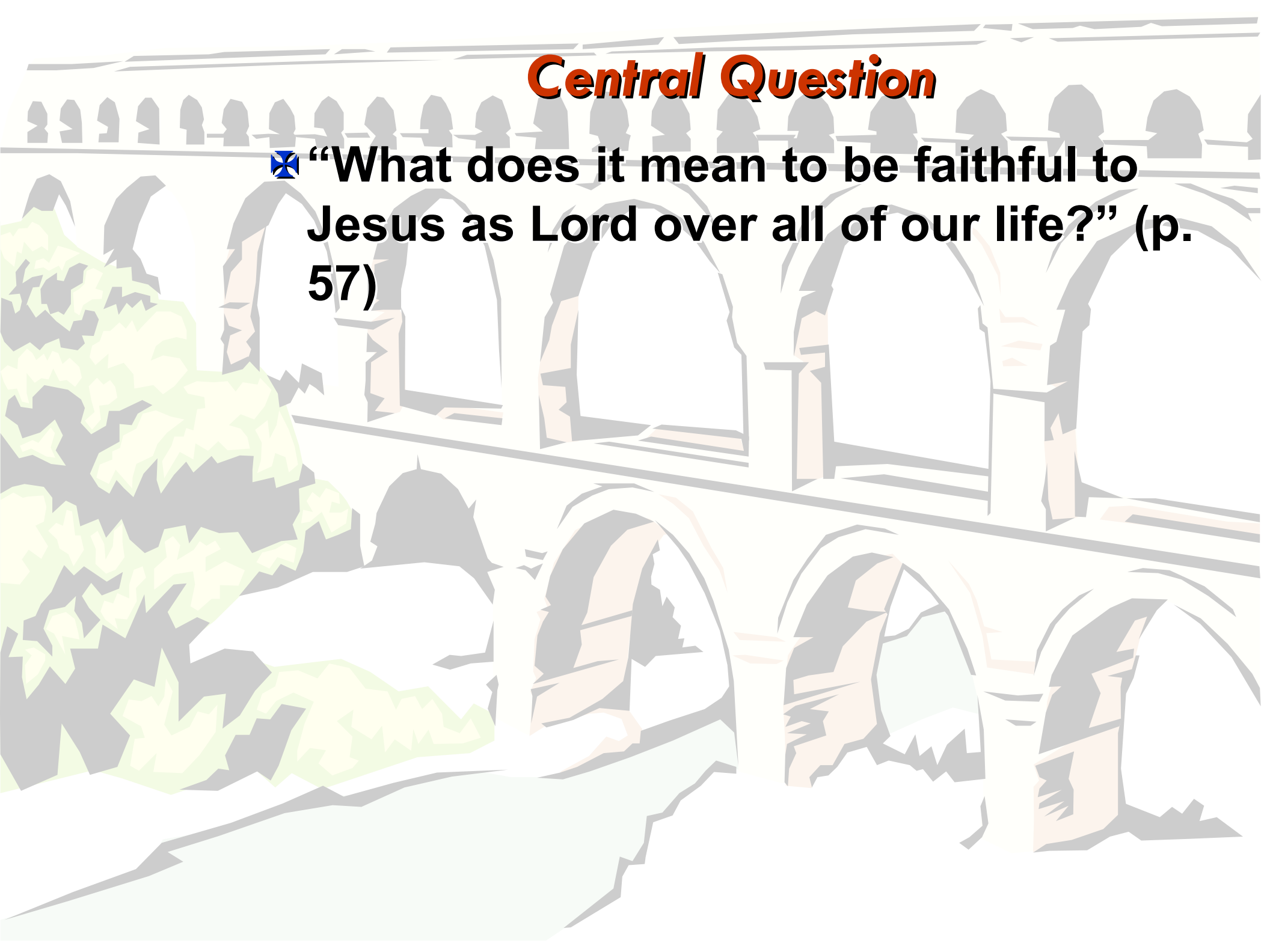
✦ **“What does it mean to be faithful to Jesus as Lord over all of our life?” (p. 57)**

Some Preliminary Comments

- ⌘ **Grew out of conversations between the authors and N. T. Wright**
- ⌘ **Framed as discussion with Gen Xers**
- ⌘ **Goal of the book is to develop a way of thinking about the letter to the Colossians that speaks to us today**
- ⌘ **Result is that Paul's message to those of us who are post-modern "Colossians" can be challenging**

Central Question

✠ **“What does it mean to be faithful to Jesus as Lord over all of our life?” (p. 57)**



Modern Is So Yesterday

- ✦ **“We live at a precarious moment in history. Relations of subjection, suffering, dispossession and contempt for human dignity and the sanctity of life are at the center of social existence. Emotional dislocation, moral sickness and individual helplessness remain ubiquitous features of our time.” (Peter McLaren, p. 19)**
- ✦ **This sense of disequilibrium is paired with optimistic, future oriented, ubiquitous messages, including a large share of advertising**

Postmodern Is Where We Live

- ✦ **Betrayal – having been fed too many lines**
- ✦ **Skepticism – toward all historical accounts**
- ✦ **Moral codes & normative systems are inventions of humans**
- ✦ **Unimpressed - by scientific proofs – post-rationalist**
- ✦ **“For Xers, both our *experience* and our *imagination* of our selves are characterized more by incoherence than coherence, more by fragmentation than unity...We seem to have many centers, each of them shifting and unstable.” (Tom Beaudoin, p. 25)**

Postmodernity and Globalism

⊕ **“The belief that there is, not a single truth and a single world, but a multiplicity of mutually untranslatable perspectives, is strangely analogous to the belief that the market is a boundless medium within which perfect competition is possible between an infinite number of discrete commercial identities.”**

(Boyle, p. 31)

⊕ **Humans are consumers who choose**

⊕ **Postmodernity’s emphasis on pluralism is equivalent to globalism’s concern to preserve consumer choice**

Globalism and Religion

- ⌘ **Watch Frontline: “The Persuaders”, especially the second segment on web**
- ⌘ **Follow the link:**
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/persuaders/view/>
- ⌘ **Identify all the religious language that you can**

Globalism and Religion

⚡ **Spiritual**

⚡ **Epiphany**

⚡ **Pain/suffering**

⚡ **Sweat lodges**

⚡ **Meaning (system)**

⚡ **Community**

⚡ **Cult(s)**

⚡ **Falon Gong**

⚡ **Hari Krishna**

⚡ **Belong**

⚡ **Homecoming/heaven**

⚡ **Values**

⚡ **“Fill the empty places”**

⚡ **Invitation**

⚡ **Churches**

Post-modern Reading of Biblical Texts

- ⊕ **Singular view is limiting**
- ⊕ **Search for a god is approached through a postmodern/globalist lens**
 - ⊗ **Chooses one god from many – consumer choice**
 - ⊗ **Demands god to be accountable to us instead of being accountable to God**
 - ⊗ **A search for an idol**

Colossians and Globalization

- ⌘ **Colossians not always someone else's mail written a long time ago**
- ⌘ **Try to imagine the letter of Colossians written post 9-11, in a consumer driven economy to people with high-speed internet access**
- ⌘ **What might it sound like?**

Colossians 1:1-14 Targum¹

- ⚡ Targum comes from the Hebrew *tirgem*
 - ⚡ Means both “to translate” and “to explain”
 - ⚡ Targums were among the scrolls found in the Dead Sea caves

¹ pp. 39-41, Walsh & Keesmaat, *Colossians Remixed: Subverting the Empire*, InterVarsity Press, 2004

Colossians 1:1-14 Targum

- ✦ **Questions to consider as you read and discuss**
 - ✦ **What are your general impressions of this part of Colossians?**
 - ✦ **What are the main points of the text?**
 - ✦ **What surprises you about this text?**
 - ✦ **Do you think the text has “exegetical credibility”? Why? Why not?**
 - ✦ **Does the “targum” raise any issues or ideas that you might want to explore further?**

Colossians 1:1-14 Targum

- ✦ **“Always read the New Testament with Old Testament eyes...always hear the New Testament with Old Testament ears.” (p. 42)**
- ✦ **Shalom has rich, multi-layered meaning in Hebrew Bible**
 - ✦ **Well-being**
 - ✦ **Blessing**
 - ✦ **Abundance**
 - ✦ **Richness**
 - ✦ **Harmony in relationship**

Shalom

✦ Ezekiel 34:25-31 - a picture of shalom

- ✦ Notice how this shalom is dependent on God's grace & relationship to God
- ✦ Contrast this picture with the competition of the marketplace
- ✦ Poses the question: Is our sense of well-being and security based on our skills and hard work or is it derived from God's gifts of grace?

Truth

⊕ **Presents truth personified**

⊗ **Proverbs 1:9-9:18**

† **Wisdom calls out in the public square**

† **Related to “fear of the Lord”, security, justice, & creation**

† **Wisdom, the search for truth, is about proper relationship to God, others and creation**

⊕ **Biblical truth is relational**

⊕ **Truth is founded on faithfulness, especially God’s faithfulness to his promises**

Faithfulness

✦ Psalm 85

✦ God's faithfulness is related to multiple concepts

✦ Salvation

✦ Steadfast love

✦ Righteousness

✦ Peace

✦ Blessings of creation

Results of Broken Relationship

† Hosea 4:1-3

- ✦ Pictures the break in relationship between God and God's people in terms of marriage**
- ✦ In opposition to post-modernist suspicions that truth claims lead to violence, Hosea says that a lack of truth/faithfulness leads to violence**
- † Humanity's relationship to creation keeps cropping up in these texts**
 - ✦ Suggests a spirituality rooted in everyday life**

Messiah

✦ Compare with Isaiah's picture of the Messiah

✦ Isaiah 11:2-5, 9

✦ Notice use of “spirit”, “knowledge”, “wisdom”, “understanding”

✦ Same words Paul uses when speaking to the Colossians

✦ Exemplifies wisdom through “fear of the Lord”

✦ Acts with justice/righteousness

✦ Security and fullness of creation result

✦ Same themes impact all of creation

Colossians 1:1-14

✦ **Paul's prayer for knowledge for Christians at Colossae**

✦ **Transformative of all aspects of their communal life**

✦ **A reading of Colossians that indicts modernist objectivity because of the emphasis on relationship**

Bibliography

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<http://office.microsoft.com/clipart/default.aspx?lc=en-us> (16 Jan. 2005)
- ✦ **Brueggemann, Walter.** *Awed to Heaven, Rooted in Earth.* Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2003.
- ✦ **Walsh, Brian J. & Keesmaat, Sylvia C.** *Colossians Remixed: Subverting the Empire.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004.