



GREATER THAN • COMMUNITY GROUP STUDY • COLOSSIANS 2

Greater Than Every False Hope

A guided conversation from the August 2, 2026 sermon by Kent Keller

SUMMARY

Kent opened with a naval commander who had served for decades. Every morning on the bridge his men watched the same ritual — a key from his pocket, a bottom drawer unlocked, a sealed box, a combination spun, an envelope, another key. He would unfold a single piece of paper and stare at it for thirty seconds. On it was written: "Port is left. Starboard is right."

That is not a story about a foolish man. It is a story about an honest one. "Sometimes, no matter how long we've been doing this, we need to be reminded of a few basic truths." Which is exactly what Paul is doing in Colossians 2. The church at Colossae was not abandoning Jesus — they were being told he was a fine place to start, and that real spirituality lay somewhere past him.

Paul's answer is not a more advanced teaching. It is a return to the first thing: "as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him." You received him with empty hands. That is also how you walk. And the two questions the sermon turns on are: where are you rooted, and how deeply?

The warning that follows contains one of the stranger phrases in the New Testament — "the elemental spirits of the world." The Greek is *stoicheia*, which literally means things lined up in a row: the ABCs, the building blocks. Kent's image was wooden alphabet blocks on the floor. Paul's objection to the false teaching is not mainly that it is wicked. It is that it is small.

PRAYER

OPENING PRAYER

Father, we come to this passage carrying things that promise more than they can deliver. Remind us of the basic truths we think we have outgrown. Show us where we are rooted, and how deeply — and grow us up into Christ, in whom the whole fullness of God already dwells. Amen.

START

ICE BREAKER

Think of something you have done for years — a job, a skill, a hobby. What is one "basic" you still have to consciously remind yourself of, even now? Share it around the room, then talk about why the basics are the first thing we assume we have outgrown.

COLOSSIANS 2:6-7 (ESV)

Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

COLOSSIANS 2:8 (ESV)

See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.

COLOSSIANS 2:9-10 (ESV)

For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.

COLOSSIANS 2:13-14 (ESV)

And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.

01 THE BASICS YOU STILL NEED

Kent's naval commander read "port is left, starboard is right" every morning after decades of service. What is the equivalent for you spiritually — a basic you still need in front of you?

02 AS YOU RECEIVED HIM

Paul says "as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him." How did you receive him? Is that still how you are walking, or has something else crept in?

03 HOW DEEPLY?

"Where are you rooted? And how deeply are you rooted?" Which of those two questions is harder for you to answer honestly, and why?

04 FINISHED AND ONGOING

Notice the tenses in v7: rooted is finished, built up and established are ongoing. What difference does it make to build on ground that already holds rather than working toward acceptance?

05 PLAYING WITH BLOCKS

The Greek stoicheia means the ABCs — alphabet blocks. Paul's complaint about false teaching is that it is elementary, not merely wrong. Where have you been offered something that promised what you already have in Christ?

06 ALREADY FILLED

v10 says you have already been filled. Where in your life are you still living as though something essential is missing?

07 THE CANCELLED RECORD

Read v13-14 aloud. Paul describes a legal record of debt, cancelled and nailed to the cross. What is on the record you still carry that Christ has already settled?

08 THE LEDGER YOU KEEP

v7 ends "abounding in thanksgiving." Kent named the opposite creed: whatever you do for me is not enough, whatever you ask of me is too much. Where do you catch yourself keeping that kind of ledger?

APPLY LIFE APPLICATION

The passage moves from what is already true of you to how you walk in it. These are three ways to put that into practice this week.

- 1 Name your blocks** Identify one thing you have been treating as an upgrade on Christ — a system, a discipline, a philosophy, a version of yourself just out of reach. Write it down. Then write next to it what Colossians 2:10 says you already have.
- 2 Go back to the paper in the drawer** Pick one basic truth of the gospel you have quietly assumed you are past, and return to it deliberately this week — in Scripture, in prayer, or in conversation with someone in this group.
- 3 Re-file one thing** Take something you would normally file under "what I am owed" and deliberately move it to "what I have been given." Do not fake a feeling about it. Just move it honestly and notice what happens over a few days.

Paul is not asking the Colossians to try harder to be filled. He is telling them the filling already happened, and that what they lack is not more of God but a clearer sight of what they were handed the moment they believed.

REMEMBER KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ▶ There is no graduation from the gospel — you walk the way you received.
- ▶ Rooted is God's finished work; built up and established are the ongoing ones.
- ▶ False hope rarely arrives as a lie. It arrives as an upgrade.
- ▶ Paul's objection to false teaching is that it is small, not merely that it is wrong.
- ▶ You have already been filled in him — past tense.
- ▶ The record of debt was not disputed. It was cancelled, publicly, and nailed to the cross.

Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

PRAYER CLOSING PRAYER

Lord Jesus, in you the whole fullness of God dwells, and in you we have been filled. Teach us to stop shopping for what you have already given. Send our roots down deeper than our feelings go, and make us people who abound in thanksgiving — not because life is easy, but because the record is cancelled. Amen.

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