

## **YWJ Teen Devo: What Pleases God**

### **By Barry Shafer**

#### **The Backdrop**

During the first century after Jesus' ministry on earth, people accepted the good news that Jesus is the Christ at phenomenal rates. This surge of new believers called for strong discipleship action, which came in the form of letters (many from the apostle Paul) to new believers and new churches. The Book of Colossians is one of those letters. Let's tap into that new-believer surge and explore a bite-sized chunk of this letter.

#### **The Word**

"For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Col. 1:9-14).

#### **The What**

Print the passage above and with a pen or colored pencil:

1. Circle every reference to the recipients of this letter (look for words such as *you* and *your*). Pay particular attention to the things Paul (the letter's author) is praying for on their behalf.
2. When you see the word *please*, draw a smiley face over ways we can please God. You'll find four or five.

#### **The So What**

Look at what you've circled in the passage and think for a minute about how these folks were being prayed for. Imagine what your life would be like if you were living the fulfillment of that prayer: filled with the knowledge of God's will through wisdom and understanding. Of course, you don't have to imagine it. You can experience. Take a minute to pray that prayer for yourself. You may even want to write it out.

We hope you noticed the ways we can please God. Use the prompts below to begin applying these ways to your life right now:

#### **Bearing fruit in every good work:**

What good works do you have in your life or can you add to your life that bear fruit for God's kingdom? Here are a few ideas: Help your youth leader with a task; visit a widow or widower; offer your assistance to a single parent for a day.

#### **Growing in the knowledge of God:**

Are you being intentional in growing your knowledge of God? What can you do this week that would be an intentional step to grow in the knowledge of God? Here are a few ideas: Read through a gospel (Matthew, Mark, Luke or John) in one setting; go to a park and read five random psalms; get with a pastor or youth leader and ask what God has been teaching him or her lately.

**Being strengthened with all power according to God's glorious might (which gives great endurance and patience):**

What might you be trying to do according to your own strength, rather than relying on God's glorious might? Here's an idea: List of areas in your life in which you need endurance and patience, such as struggling with a class or teacher, navigating a challenging friendship, beating a nagging temptation, battling a disease, getting along with parents. Choose one area and focus this week on asking God to strengthen you with all power according to His glorious might in regard that area.

**Giving joyful thanks to the Father (out of gratitude for what He has done for you):**

Praising God doesn't need to be confined to a group worship setting. It can happen and should happen every day. Here's an idea: Take a hike in nature and worship God through your senses. Give joyful thanks for what God has done for you every time you: feel the breeze and sun; hear the birds; see the flowers; taste an apple you bought at a store ahead of time (we don't advocate random tasting along your hike); smell the fragrances (the sweet stuff) and odors (the not-so-sweet stuff).

Do you ever wonder what God wants you to do? This passage gives you a made-to-order to-do list in the form of these four ways to please God. By doing things that you know please God, you can't miss doing what He wants you to do.