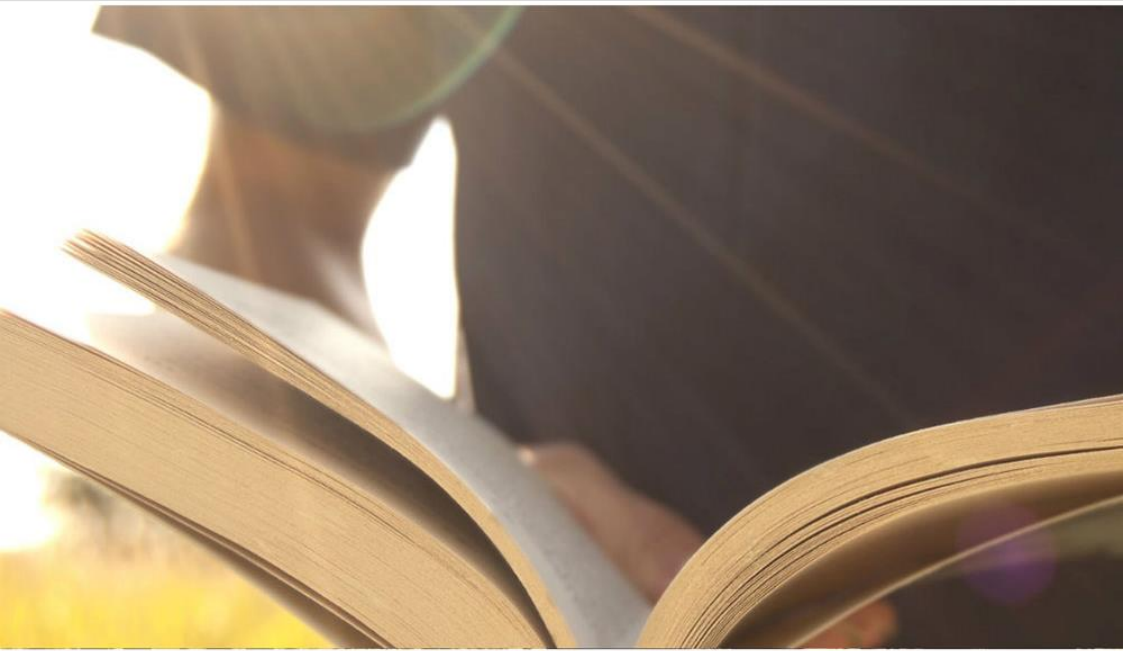


the sufficiency of CHRIST in his CHURCH

THE BOOK OF COLOSSIANS



small group or individual bible study series

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And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.
Colossians 1:9-12

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Developed by

KINGSTON COMMUNITY CHURCH

To love and honour God in being disciples and helping make disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Address: Corner of Kingston St and London Terrace
PO Box 1155

Palmerston North

Phone: 06 358 0716

Email: kstreet@xtra.co.nz

Website: <http://kingstoncommunitychurch.com/>

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HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

At the very heart of this study is intentional discipleship. The intentional transformation of a person into the character of Christ *...until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood (womanhood), to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. Ephesians 4:13 (ESV)*

We desire for you to be maturing spiritually, having both the spiritual life and spiritual skills of a disciple. To be a mature and equipped follower of Christ. A person who is living consistently under the control of the Holy Spirit [Matthew 6:33], the direction of the Word of God [Jeremiah 15:16], and the motivation of the love of Christ [Galatians 2:20].

Our prayer is that you will not just acquire a lot of Bible knowledge. Although understanding the Bible is a significant factor that drives spiritual growth, simple head knowledge is not sufficient in itself. There is a difference between knowing and living God's word. Therefore, our focus in this Bible Study is on applying God's truth, not merely understanding it (head knowledge).

This is not a Bible Study you simply do as a group. It requires your engagement in three components before you meet with your small group:



READ SCRIPTURE

In preparation and continued engagement in studying the passage, take the time to repeatedly read and meditate on the passage each day across the week.

We would encourage you to use at least two different versions of the Bible (ESV – English Standard Version / NIV New International Version / CEV – Contemporary English Version).



LISTEN TO THE MESSAGE

Bring your study book along to church family and listen and take notes from the Sunday morning message. If you miss a message you can listen online to the recorded sermon. This allows us to each be under the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit as he speaks through gifted preachers.



COMPLETE THE STUDY GUIDE

Across the week, work through the study guide questions assigned to each passage. Be prayerful as you seek truth in and through the Word. Jot down any questions or additional observations you make so you can share them with your small group. The questions aim to engage you more and more deeply in the truths of the Word. Don't rush this process, give yourself plenty of time.

The study is broken up into sections...

DISCOVER TRUTH: What are some of the key aspects of the passage. This section will seek to get you into the passage.

WORD STUDY: Going deeper in what God is revealing for us to know, understand and obey.

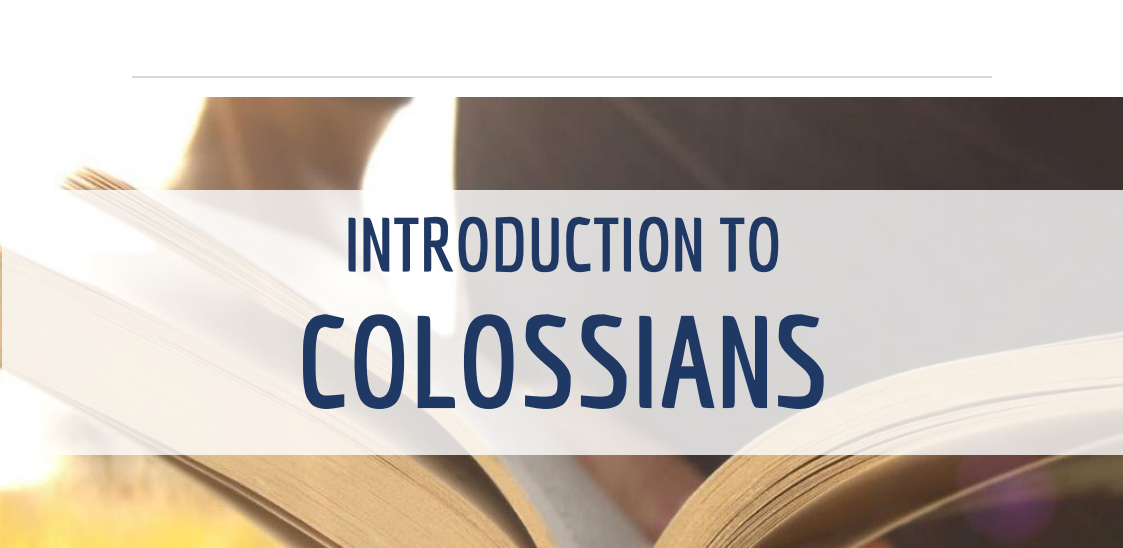
REFLECT ON THE TRUTH: From hearing and learning truth, this section will seek to grow our understanding and usability in our lives.

APPLY TRUTH: What is the passage asking me/us to do? Truth leading to obedience and transformation.

EXTRA: An optional chance to stretch yourself both biblically and practically through the passage.

ENGAGE WITH GOD: Engaging in conversation with God. This will include praying with and for the other members of your small group as we seek God's work in and through us.

Additional tools (Overview and Commentary) have been provided to support you in your study of God's Word.



INTRODUCTION TO COLOSSIANS

In Jerusalem after his third missionary journey, Paul was greeted with hostility by the temple leadership and arrested. Following two years imprisonment in Caesarea (Acts 23–26), Paul was transferred to Rome, awaiting trial (Acts 27–28). Most scholars think he wrote four so-called “prison epistles” while at Rome: Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon.

Colossians reveals how deeply this church was rooted in Hellenistic thought. Paul does not debate Jewish law with these churches as he did in Romans and Galatians. Instead, he strengthens the church against the influences of Jewish and pagan religious and philosophical systems. He emphasizes that faith in Christ requires no supplemental religious experience drawn from the local temple rituals. In Colossians, he paints an awe-inspiring picture of the cosmic Christ, who stands above all creation. Paul outlines how to be a Christian within the Greco-Roman milieu and how the Christian faith shapes social categories such as marriage, family, slavery, and politics.

THE CONTEXT OF COLOSSIANS

Colossae was a small town in the Roman province of Asia, located about a hundred miles east of Ephesus and close to two more prominent neighbours, Laodicea and Hierapolis. Because of its fertile soil, Colossae produced figs and olives, as well as “Colossian” wool, known for its distinctive black colour.

PHRYGIAN WORSHIP OF CYBELE

Rome’s conquest of Colossae introduced Roman religious deities and practices, but these had not percolated down into the local population. Generally, people followed traditional Phrygian gods and goddesses. Agdistis

(Gk. *Cybele*) was the most popular goddess in Anatolia and was worshiped in numerous cultic festivals along with her consort, Attis. Cybele had compelled Attis to castrate himself so that he would not be drawn to another lover. Worshipers of Cybele sang loudly, played flutes, drums, and cymbals, and danced wildly. Her more devoted male worshipers might castrate themselves in their frenzied adulation, mimicking Attis (Ovid, *Fasti* 4.181). Paul may be referencing such practices in his comments about “their self-imposed worship ... and their harsh treatment of the body” (2:23).

JEWISH WORSHIP IN ASIA MINOR

Cities like Colossae also hosted large Jewish populations. Estimates suggest as many as 11,000 Jews, who practiced Jewish piety, such as reverence for the temple and observance of Sabbath, festivals, circumcision, and food laws. “Jews from ... Asia” stirred up the crowd against Paul in Jerusalem, claiming “this is the man who teaches everyone everywhere against our people and our law and this place [temple]” (Acts 21:28).

THE MESSAGE OF COLOSSIANS

The Colossian believers are being attacked on two fronts, one ideological (who controlled the universe?) and one sociological (should the Colossians separate from larger society through asceticism?). These two tensions threatened to pull apart the church, because they worked against each other. Asceticism tends to draw tight boundaries around its group, but the borders of the Colossian beliefs were eclectic and porous. Their “philosophy” promoted that Christians could believe in many different powers in the world, but they could only manipulate that spiritual world through narrow ascetic practices.

Paul speaks to the ideological issues by proclaiming Christ as the all-powerful deity, in control of all things (1:15–19). He attacks the problem of asceticism by declaring that in baptism, a believer has put off the old self (2:12). All efforts to control the body with self-abasing practices are misguided and futile.

The Colossians saw around them frenzied and violent religious celebrations. But it was not their previous worship of a pagan deity that troubled Paul. Rather, the insidious quality of eclecticism within paganism threatened to undermine the exclusivity of Christ. Their mindset undermined the singular claims of Christ’s sovereignty over all spiritual forces. Paul had to teach them that Christ could not be manipulated by external acts of ritual piety (2:20–23).

Paul focuses on four tasks in Colossians. After his introduction and thanksgiving, he describes the divine glory and majesty of Christ (1:15–2:7) and contrasts this exalted vision with the debased viewpoint of the “philosophy” (2:8–23). He then turns to the behaviours characteristic of a believer convinced of the power and authority of Jesus Christ (3:1–4:6). He ends with a list of greetings (4:7–18).

Paul writes with Timothy, his solid supporter and young pastor (1:1). The Colossian church is made up largely of Gentiles, who have turned from paganism to follow Jesus (3:7). Paul does not know the Colossians personally (2:1), for his co-worker Epaphras founded the church (1:7, 4:12). In his thanksgiving, Paul mentions several important ideas that play a key role in his subsequent argument: faith, love, hope, wisdom, darkness, and kingdom. The first three are well known to readers of Paul, for these are used extensively elsewhere (e.g., 1 Cor. 13; 1 Thess. 1:3). His specific battle with the “philosophy” at Colossae centres on the definition of wisdom, which Paul understands as God’s discrete acts of history, especially through Israel and Jesus, the Messiah. The “philosophy” has defined wisdom as esoteric and hidden knowledge of heavenly spirits, planets and stars, and powers such as Fate. None of these has any connection to actual history. Paul repudiates the “philosophy’s” teachings about the nature of the world and contends that they leave the person in darkness. God’s kingdom has brought in a new age with Christ’s death and resurrection. The old things—the elemental spirits and unseen powers—fade before the surpassing power of God in Christ. In 1:15–20, he provides a breath-taking description of the divine Christ, in which each characteristic counters the “philosophy’s” view of Christ and the world.

Christ is the image of God (1:15); he carries all the power and authority of the Most High God. Through him creation came into being (1:16), including the unseen world of spirits, demonic forces, planetary powers, and Fate. All things are also ruled by Christ. He represents ultimate power, the power of God. Paul describes Christ three times as the “head” (1:18, 2:10, 19) of the body, the church; that is, he is the source of life for the church (2:19). Christ has been raised, and Paul describes him as “the firstborn from among the dead” (1:18). Both these descriptions intimately connect Christ to the church and its hope of resurrection.

Because God’s fullness resides in Christ (1:19), Christ can reconcile humans to himself. This incredible power breaks any holds that capricious gods/goddesses or planetary powers might have on humans. Christ reveals the mystery of God, which is the reconciliation of people to God through him

(1:27). This mystery is firmly rooted in the story of Jesus' life in Palestine, not in esoteric musings about mythic cycles of dead and rising gods/goddesses. If all this is true, the Colossian believers must live in line with this reality. Their behaviour will change based on three truths: their position in Christ, their new life in Christ, and their new nature.

(1) They have been raised with Christ (3:1), so they can now seek heavenly things. If the Colossians want to know about heaven, they must do so through Christ, not the elemental spirits. In addition, believers can live in hope of the new age, for although Christ inaugurated the new age with his resurrection, more is still to come. Someday Christ will appear in glory (3:4).

(2) New life in Christ is possible only through death (cf. this same theme in Rom. 6:4; Gal 2:20). Through our union with Christ's death, all evil behaviors, including idolatry, are also put to death (3:5).

(3) A new life results in a new nature (3:10), which reflects the image of Christ (3:10). All ethnic and social boundaries are broken down (3:11), and social relationships within the church are built up (3:12–4:1).

The centre of the letter is Paul's attack against the "philosophy." Yet as serious as this disease is, scholars have struggled to understand its nature in the Colossian context. Some have labelled it a Jewish heresy; others see a pagan cult, while still others fall back on general "syncretism." While each of these is true, what provides the central key is the vast influence of magic and folk religion throughout Asia Minor.

The "philosophy" is best understood as an amalgam of Jewish, pagan, and folk religious ideas blended by arrogant teachers within the Colossian church who mocked believers who did not accept their ways (2:16, 18). Paul sees it as linked to human thinking and earthly perspectives. It is part of the present evil age, is founded on human traditions, and leads to a glorification of the flesh. It devalues Christ's unique work of redemption and instead promotes magic to heal illness

He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. COLOSSIANS 1:13-14

COLOSSIANS 1:1-14



READ SCRIPTURE

Take the time to repeatedly read and meditate on the passage daily, across the week, using at least two different versions of the Bible.

COLOSSIANS 1:1-14 ESV – English Standard Version

The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2001). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

¹ Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

² To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

³ We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, ⁴ since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, ⁵ because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, ⁶ which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, ⁷ just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf ⁸ and has made known to us your love in the Spirit.

⁹ And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰ so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; ¹¹ being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. ¹³ He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.



LISTEN TO THE MESSAGE

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MESSAGE NOTES



COMPLETE THE STUDY GUIDE

Take your time across the week to work through the following study guide questions. Be prayerful as you seek truth in and through the Word. Jot down any questions or additional observations you make so you can share them with others in your church family or small group.

OVERVIEW

CHAPTER SUMMARY: Paul's greeting (1:1–2) is followed by heartfelt thanksgiving for the impact of the Gospel (vv. 3–8) and a prayer which outlines the way to spiritual fruitfulness (vv. 9–11) in Christ's kingdom (vv. 12–14).

KEY VERSE: 1:13-14: Through Christ they were brought from a rebel kingdom and placed under the sovereignty of our rightful King. The sovereign Christ.

PERSONAL APPLICATION: Christianity must be Christ-centred.

DISCOVER TRUTH

What do you think are some of the key words or phrases in this passage?

NOTE: Key words are those which, because of emphasis or repetition, stand out as being central to the message of the passage.

What is the basic meaning of the title 'apostle'? (1:1)

Who is Timothy? Why is he mentioned in this letter? (1:1)

Why did Paul give thanks for the brothers and sisters at Colossae? (1:3)

WORD STUDY

The word *gospel* simply means 'good news'. What good news are Paul and Timothy speaking of (1:5)?

(See Romans 1:16-17, 1 Corinthians 15:1-6, 2 Timothy 2:8)

What is redemption? (1:14) Why is this word so fitting to describe our salvation from past sins?

REFLECT ON THE TRUTH

What is the difference between *hearing* and *knowing* the grace of God? (1:6)

What does it mean to “walk in a manner worthy of the Lord”? (1:10)

What is the relationship between faith, love and hope? (1:4-5) How do they fit together?

Regarding faith, love and hope, why is each so essential to the spiritual life? If one is weak, how are the other two affected?
(See 1 Corinthians 13:13, Ephesians 1:15-18)

APPLY TRUTH

How do your prayers for others compare with Paul’s intensity, thankfulness, and clarity?

Where do you get ‘stuck’ in prayer for others?

EXTRA

The Colossians believers were characterised by faith, love and hope as the gospel; had left such a clear mark upon them.

Do you see your own identity and purpose in life so tied to the gospel of Jesus that you would refer to yourself as a 'bond servant' for the gospel of Jesus? Why /why not?

ENGAGE WITH GOD

What prayer or praise points have come out of your study of this passage?

My praise/prayer points regarding a situation in my life at the moment?

Praise/prayer points from others in my group?

COMMENTARY

1:1–2 From prison, Paul writes to the Christians at Colossae (Col 4:3, 10)—whom he may have never met (compare v. 4)—to encourage their progress in the faith (vv. 9–10). His location at this time is uncertain. If he was in Ephesus, roughly 120 miles west of Colossae, then he wrote the letter around AD 54–55; he also could have written it during imprisonments in Caesarea (AD 58–60) or Rome (early 60s AD).

1:1 Paul Formerly known as Saul, he persecuted the early Christians until a dramatic encounter with the risen Christ led to him becoming Christianity’s most prolific missionary (Acts 8:1–3; 9:1–22;). He preached the gospel and planted churches throughout Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Greece, but there is no record that he ever visited Colossae. Paul was born a Roman citizen (Acts 22:28) and grew up in the city of Tarsus (located in the southeastern region of modern-day Turkey). In Tarsus, one of the largest cities of the Roman Empire, Paul was exposed to Graeco-Roman customs, religions, and philosophies. His expertise in Jewish law and thorough understanding of Greek culture made him ideally suited to proclaim the gospel among the Gentiles.

1:1 apostle A person designated by God to speak and act with special authority. Paul did not always refer to himself as an apostle (Phil 1:1), but does so here to establish his credentials among the Colossians, most of whom he had never met (Col 2:1).

1:1 Timothy Served with Paul in the region west of Colossae and might have been known by the believers there. A disciple and companion of Paul. Timothy met Paul in Lystra (Acts 16:1) and assisted in his missionary efforts (Acts 16:3; 20:4–5; 2 Cor 1:19; 1 Tim 1:3), becoming like a son to Paul (1 Tim 1:2). Paul also names Timothy as a co-sender in the opening of several other letters (Phil 1:1; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1).

1:2 saints The Greek word used here, *hagioi*, often translated “saints” or “holy ones,” refers to those who are set apart or who belong to God.

1:2 Colossae A city located in southwest Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). In the first century AD, Colossae was a small agricultural community in Phrygia, a region known for an obsession with magic and the occult. The church at Colossae apparently was planted by a man named Epaphras (see Col 1:7 and note), who also ministered in the nearby cities of Laodicea and Hierapolis (4:12–13).

1:3–23 Paul expresses gratitude for the Colossian believers and a desire that their witness to Christ’s lordship will mature and grow. Embedded within this passage is a hymn to Christ that affirms His authority over all things (Col 1:15–20). The importance of this theme becomes evident later in the letter, as Paul confronts false teachings that apparently were gaining a foothold in the Colossian church (2:4, 8, 16–23; see note on 2:8). In ch. 1, Paul’s references to false teaching are subtle; he is preparing his audience for the more direct discussion in ch. 2.

1:4 faith The Greek word used here, *pistis*, refers to trust and reliance. Paul is thankful that the Colossians—under the threat of false teaching—have anchored their faith in Christ.

1:4 love The greatest of the three Christian virtues (1 Cor 13:13), the others being faith and hope. The natural result of faith in Christ is love (*agapē* in Greek) for God and others. The Greek word *agapē*, often translated “love,” is a general word for affection and warm regard. The NT uses the word to describe compassion for other people, love for God or Christ, and the love God and Christ have for humanity and for each other. The gospel message makes the love denoted by *agapē* more of a mindset than a feeling. It involves putting the needs and interests of others before your own—even enduring suffering and hardship for the sake of others.

1:5 hope reserved for you The Greek word used in this phrase, *elpis*, often rendered as “hope,” refers to confident expectation, not wishful thinking. The Colossians have hope because of their union with Christ (Col 1:27). This means they are free from corruption and death and are qualified to participate in Christ’s life, resurrection and glory. Paul reminds them that their hope of a glorious future does not come from a religious philosophy (2:8), but from God. Therefore, they do not need to accept the demands of false teachers.

1:5 word of truth Paul wants the Colossians to know that the gospel message they received is God’s true revelation. See note on v. 9.

1:7 Epaphras A believer who shared the gospel message with the Colossians. Paul later describes him as a servant-hearted leader who works hard on behalf of Christians in Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis (4:12–13).

1:7 slave This description of Epaphras does not mean that he was literally a servant or slave. Rather, Paul is using figurative language to characterize Epaphras as a humble servant of God.

1:9 knowledge of his will Refers to the believers’ awareness of Christ’s desires for how they ought to conduct themselves (see vv. 10–12). False teachers might have described God’s will as unknowable—or knowable only through secret rituals. Paul rejects this idea: Followers of Christ, filled with the knowledge of His will, can live in a manner pleasing to God because they know what matters to Him.

1:9 wisdom The biblical conception of wisdom is oriented around God as the source of all wisdom; a wise person is a godly person (Hos 14:9; Col 4:5; Rom 16:19).

1:9 spiritual insight Refers to insight that comes from the Spirit. This stands in contrast to the mystery religions, which promoted insight through secret rituals.

1:10 live in a manner worthy The purpose of having knowledge, wisdom, and insight is not to boast or brag, but to love God and others, thereby reflecting His image in the world.

1:10 knowledge of God Refers to experiential knowledge, not just intellectual understanding. As believers trust and obey God’s will, they become more acquainted with God’s ways—and with God Himself.

1:12 qualified you for a share of the inheritance As non-Jews (Gentiles), the Colossians would have been considered outsiders to God's blessings, which were reserved for the people of Israel. However, the central truth of the gospel for Paul was that Christ's death and resurrection brought salvation for all who believed, Jews and Gentiles alike.

1:13 domain of darkness Refers to the realm dominated by sin and death (compare Eph 6:12).

1:13 kingdom The realm in which Christ reigns as King, where His sovereign rule is carried out. The transfer from one realm to the other is accomplished by God: In His love and grace, He brings believers out of the domain of sin and death and moves them into the kingdom of His Son.

1:14 redemption Refers to the act of freeing someone who is enslaved. Just as Israel was enslaved in Egypt before being rescued by Yahweh, so the Colossian believers had been enslaved to the domain of sin and death before they responded in faith to God's act of salvation in Christ (Exod 6:6; 14:30; compare Rom 6:16–17).

1:14 forgiveness God's forgiveness removes sin (Col 2:14) and provides reconciliation (v. 22). Forgiveness is an expression of God's grace and love.

For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell...
COLOSSIANS 1:19

COLOSSIANS 1:15-23



READ SCRIPTURE

Take the time to repeatedly read and meditate on the passage daily, across the week, using at least two different versions of the Bible.

COLOSSIANS 1:15-23 ESV – English Standard Version

The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2001). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

¹⁵ Paul, He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

²¹ And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, ²² he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, ²³ if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.



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MESSAGE NOTES



COMPLETE THE STUDY GUIDE

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OVERVIEW

CHAPTER SUMMARY: The Jesus Paul describes is the real Christ: the One in whom we find redemption and forgiveness. This Christ is the visible manifestation of the invisible God, the heir of all creation (v. 15). This Christ is the creative source of the visible and invisible universe, who not only made all things but whose power holds all things together (vv. 16–17). He is supreme over everything and though God in His fullness, His blood shed on the cross is the source of reconciliation for all humankind (vv. 18–20). Paul says it again: God in Christ took on a physical body and in that body He died to make us holy (vv. 21–23).

KEY VERSE: 1:19: The real Jesus

PERSONAL APPLICATION: Christianity must be Christ-centred.

DISCOVER TRUTH

What do you think are some of the key words or phrases in this passage?

NOTE: Key words are those which, because of emphasis or repetition, stand out as being central to the message of the passage.

How is Christ 'the image of the invisible God'? (1:15)

How is Christ 'firstborn of all creation'? (1:15)

Who created the universe? (1:16)
How does this sit with the book of Genesis?

WORD STUDY

Use verses 20-23 to answer the following questions about reconciliation...
What is it?

Why is it needed?

How is it made possible?

Who will enjoy it?
(See Romans 8:20-21)

When will it be finally accomplished?

REFLECT ON THE TRUTH

Who is the leader of the church? (1:18)

What does it look when Christ 'is the head of the body, the church'? (1:18)

Explain the 'if' statement in verse 23 in your own words.

APPLY TRUTH

What does it mean for you knowing that it was Jesus, the Creator and Lord of all, who dies on the cross for you?

What do you have more difficulty with, understanding how Christ is supreme, or yielding your life to his supremacy? Explain.

EXTRA

How can we 'continue in the faith, stable and steadfast'? (1:23)

ENGAGE WITH GOD

What prayer or praise points have come out of your study of this passage?

My praise/prayer points regarding a situation in my life at the moment?

Praise/prayer points from others in my group?

COMMENTARY

1:15–20 Paul proclaims the supremacy and sovereignty of Christ, who was present and active in the creation of the universe and who remains active in sustaining and reconciling all things. Whether Paul himself wrote this hymn is debated; he could have borrowed material used in early Christian worship. Regardless of authorship, the hymn is a central component of the letter, providing the basis for Paul's key points in chs. 2–3 about the sufficiency of Christ and the futility of false teachings. Because God's fullness dwells in Christ (v. 19), He is all that believers need.

1:15 image of the invisible God Jesus Christ makes the Father and the Spirit visible to people. Paul later draws on the notion of resembling God when writing about how people should treat one another (3:10).

1:15 firstborn In this context, the Greek word used here, *prōtotokos*, affirms Christ's supremacy and sovereignty over all things (see vv. 17–18).

1:16 things visible and things invisible These terms refer to earthly creatures and spiritual beings.

1:16 all things were created through him There is nothing outside the scope of Christ's sovereignty. Since all things—natural and supernatural—were created through Him, they are subject to His authority.

1:18 head Indicates Christ's leadership of the Church. His authority and empowerment enable the body of Christ to grow and mature.

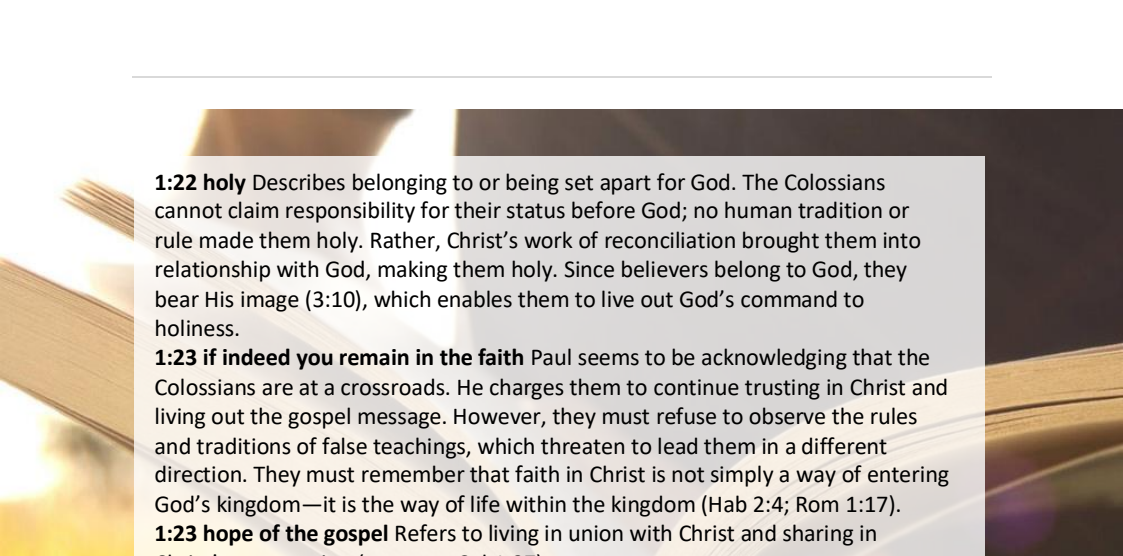
1:18 church The Greek word used here, *ekklēsia*, refers to an assembly of people. In Christian contexts, it describes the people who assemble in the name of Christ.

1:18 the firstborn from the dead Refers to Jesus' resurrection, which Paul regards as a template for the resurrection of all believers (e.g., 1 Cor 15:20–23; 1 Thess 4:14). Compare Col 1:15 and note.

1:19 all the fullness to dwell in him Refers to God being fully present in Christ, parallel with Paul's statement in 2:9. Consequently, Christ is sufficient for the Colossians' salvation.

1:20 reconcile The Greek word used here, *apokatalassō*, refers to the act of restoring a relationship to harmony. The purpose of Christ's death on the cross was to bring all things created by Christ and for Christ (Col 1:16) into harmonious relationship.

1:22 his physical body Christ was not an angel or a nonphysical being; He had a body, and He endured suffering and death in His body. By emphasizing Christ's physical body, Paul may be combatting early gnostic-like influences that could have been at work in Colossae. Gnostics emphasized spiritual, nonmaterial reality over the material world, prompting some people to deny that Christ had a physical body. Gnostics wrongly considered material reality to be evil and sought to escape it through abstaining from worldly comforts and pleasures. While fully developed Gnosticism postdates the NT, the beliefs Paul seems to be addressing here resemble later gnostic thought.



1:22 holy Describes belonging to or being set apart for God. The Colossians cannot claim responsibility for their status before God; no human tradition or rule made them holy. Rather, Christ's work of reconciliation brought them into relationship with God, making them holy. Since believers belong to God, they bear His image (3:10), which enables them to live out God's command to holiness.

1:23 if indeed you remain in the faith Paul seems to be acknowledging that the Colossians are at a crossroads. He charges them to continue trusting in Christ and living out the gospel message. However, they must refuse to observe the rules and traditions of false teachings, which threaten to lead them in a different direction. They must remember that faith in Christ is not simply a way of entering God's kingdom—it is the way of life within the kingdom (Hab 2:4; Rom 1:17).

1:23 hope of the gospel Refers to living in union with Christ and sharing in Christ's resurrection (compare Col 1:27).

For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.
COLOSSIANS 1:29

COLOSSIANS 1:24-29



READ SCRIPTURE

Take the time to repeatedly read and meditate on the passage daily, across the week, using at least two different versions of the Bible.

COLOSSIANS 1:24-29 ESV – English Standard Version

The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2001). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

²⁴ Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, ²⁵ of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, ²⁶ the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. ²⁷ To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. ²⁸ Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. ²⁹ For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.



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MESSAGE NOTES



COMPLETE THE STUDY GUIDE

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OVERVIEW

CHAPTER SUMMARY: As for Paul, he gladly accepts any personal sufferings in order to share the great mystery of the Gospel: that this glorious Christ now takes up residence in the believer and is Himself the hope of all the glorious things that await you and me here, and in eternity (vv. 24–29).

KEY VERSE: 1:29: We grow in cooperation with Christ's indwelling presence.

PERSONAL APPLICATION: Christianity must be Christ-centred.

DISCOVER TRUTH

What do you think are some of the key words or phrases in this passage?

NOTE: Key words are those which, because of emphasis or repetition, stand out as being central to the message of the passage.

Why did Paul rejoice? (1:24)

How did Paul receive a stewardship from God? (1:25)

WORD STUDY

What was 'lacking in Christ's afflictions'? (1:24)

(See 2 Corinthians 1:3-7, 2 Corinthians 4:7-18, Philippians 1:12-14, 2 Timothy 2:8-10)

What is 'the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints'? (1:26)

REFLECT ON THE TRUTH

Paul describes himself as a 'minister'. (1:25) According to the passage...

What were the responsibilities of his role as a minister?

What was the goal or purpose of these responsibilities?

What resources had God provided to carry out these responsibilities?

How is Christ in us? (1:27)

APPLY TRUTH

What does it mean to 'toil' according to Christ's power? (1:29)

How do we practically depend on the strength of the Lord?

EXTRA

Are you involved in 'teaching' the word of God? How could you become more involved in this?

ENGAGE WITH GOD

What prayer or praise points have come out of your study of this passage?

My praise/prayer points regarding a situation in my life at the moment?

Praise/prayer points from others in my group?



COMMENTARY

1:24–29 The centre of this passage is God’s plan of salvation, revealed in Christ and expanded to include Gentiles (non-Jews) as well as Jews.

1:24 I rejoice in my sufferings Paul refers to his imprisonment (4:3), which he considers part of his calling—not a cause for shame. His attitude serves as a model for the Colossians of how to endure hardship for the sake of others.

1:24 what is lacking of the afflictions of Christ This difficult phrase might refer to the hardships traditionally expected to befall the Messiah’s people in advance of His return (sometimes called the “messianic woes”). The idea behind this tradition was that a certain amount of suffering was necessary before God’s people would be vindicated. Paul seems to be referring here to this remainder of afflictions that the Church must endure. He considers his own sufferings to represent some portion of this remainder; in this way, he is suffering on behalf of the Church (compare 2 Cor 1:5; 4:10; Phil 3:10).

1:26 mystery Refers to God’s plan of salvation revealed through the death and resurrection of Christ. This specifically involves Christ’s ministry of reconciliation, which unites Gentiles (non-Jews, such as the Colossians) with Jews and creates one people of God (e.g., Eph 3:6–9).

1:26 saints See note on Col 1:2.

1:27 mystery among the Gentiles The Colossians’ non-Jewish ethnicity did not exclude them or disqualify them from God’s promises and plan. On the contrary, the work of Christ makes them eligible to share in the inheritance of God’s people (v. 12). The inclusion of Gentiles into the people of God was always part of God’s plan of salvation (Gen 12:3; Isa 49:6; Gal 3:8).

1:27 Christ in you Refers to union with Christ.

1:28 wisdom See note on Col 1:9.

1:28 every person False teachers may have promoted special knowledge that was available only to a select few. Paul wants the Colossians to understand that the truth and wisdom of the gospel is available to everyone in their congregation; all believers are called to full maturity in Christ.

1:29 labor Paul explains that he, too, is on the path to Christian maturity. Like all believers, he is pursuing the hard work of discipleship in cooperation with Christ’s indwelling presence.

...that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. COLOSSIANS 2:2-3

COLOSSIANS 2:1-5



READ SCRIPTURE

Take the time to repeatedly read and meditate on the passage daily, across the week, using at least two different versions of the Bible.

COLOSSIANS 2:1-5 ESV – English Standard Version

The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2001). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

¹ For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, ² that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, ³ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. ⁴ I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments. ⁵ For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ.



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MESSAGE NOTES



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OVERVIEW

CHAPTER SUMMARY: Paul prays constantly that the believers in Colossae and Laodicea may really understand what they have in Christ, who is the storehouse where God has placed all the “treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (2:1–5).

KEY VERSE: 2:2-3: Where to look.

PERSONAL APPLICATION: Deepening our relationship with Jesus is the one way to a vital spiritual life.

DISCOVER TRUTH

What do you think are some of the key words or phrases in this passage?

NOTE: Key words are those which, because of emphasis or repetition, stand out as being central to the message of the passage.

What concern did Paul have for those in Laodicea? (2:1)

How are some people deceived with 'plausible arguments'? (2:4)

How have you been deceived in the past with plausible arguments?

WORD STUDY

What is 'hidden' in Christ? (2:2-3) Explain.

REFLECT ON THE TRUTH

How can our hearts as a church be 'knitted together in love'? (2:2)

How does your time in the Word reveal the extent to which you treasure it?

APPLY TRUTH

What wisdom and knowledge do you treasure?

How does the Word of God relate to your various pursuits of knowledge and wisdom?

EXTRA

Is Paul's purpose in life your purpose in being? Explain.

Is Paul's purpose in life your church's purpose in being? Explain.

ENGAGE WITH GOD

What prayer or praise points have come out of your study of this passage?

My praise/prayer points regarding a situation in my life at the moment?

Praise/prayer points from others in my group?



COMMENTARY

2:1–5 Paul begins this chapter by assuring the Colossians that Christ reveals the full truth of God.

2:1 struggle This seems to refer to Paul’s deep concern for the believers. He also might be referring to his intense effort in prayer.

2:1 Laodicea A city about 11 miles from Colossae.

2:2 mystery of God In mystery cults, a mystery was a secret ritual that supposedly established a relationship with a god and resulted in perceived benefits such as immortality. The Colossians likely knew of such teachings from their culture. Paul uses the term “mystery” to refer to Christ, who reveals and fulfills God’s plan of salvation. See note on 1:26.

2:3 wisdom and knowledge Jewish traditions prized wisdom, and mystery cults valued knowledge. Paul affirms Christ as the true source of both. Since the believers of Colossae have Christ (1:27), they have no need for the wisdom and knowledge offered by false teachers.

2:4 persuasive speech Ancient philosophers used lofty arguments to persuade their audiences. Paul warns the Colossians that such teachings may appear logical, but their conclusions are false.

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 2:6-7

COLOSSIANS 2:6-15



READ SCRIPTURE

Take the time to repeatedly read and meditate on the passage daily, across the week, using at least two different versions of the Bible.

COLOSSIANS 2:6-15 ESV – English Standard Version

The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2001). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

⁶ Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, ⁷ rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

⁸ 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. ⁹ For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, ¹⁰ and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. ¹¹ In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, ¹² having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. ¹³ 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, ¹⁴ by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.



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OVERVIEW

CHAPTER SUMMARY: Gnostics claim access to a superior knowledge, but the secret of the Christian's life is to remain rooted in the Lord (vv. 6–7). Paul then lists a series of warnings. Spiritual reality is not to be found in “deceptive philosophy,” but in union with a Christ in whom all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form (vv. 8–15).

KEY VERSE: 2:6-7: A continual experience, abounding through the meaningfulness of our experience with Jesus.

PERSONAL APPLICATION: We relate to Christ to draw on His riches, rooted in our salvation, built up, strengthened and overflowing with thankfulness.

DISCOVER TRUTH

What do you think are some of the key words or phrases in this passage?

NOTE: Key words are those which, because of emphasis or repetition, stand out as being central to the message of the passage.

How does 2:6-7 describe the spiritual formation process?
(Hint: Notice the verb tenses.)

According to this passage, what changes has Jesus accomplished for those who are 'in Him'?

WORD STUDY

What is the significance of the title 'Christ Jesus the Lord' used by Paul here?
(2:6)

What does Paul mean by the 'record of debt' in 2:14?

REFLECT ON THE TRUTH

What was the 'circumcision' that Paul referred to in 2:11?

How are we 'circumcised in Christ' (2:11)

How is this similar/different from physical circumcision?
(See Genesis 17:1-14, Romans 4:9-12 Philippians 3:2-3.)

APPLY TRUTH

What philosophies today diminish Christ's supremacy in your life?

What philosophies today diminish Christ's supremacy in the life of your church?

EXTRA

Do you ever feel guilt for your sin and failures even though Christ has already cancelled your debt and forgiven all your sins once and for all? If so, why?

ENGAGE WITH GOD

What prayer or praise points have come out of your study of this passage?

My praise/prayer points regarding a situation in my life at the moment?

Praise/prayer points from others in my group?



COMMENTARY

2:6–15 This passage builds on Paul’s remarks in vv. 2–3. Because Christ represents the full revelation of God (vv. 3, 9), and because believers are united with Christ (vv. 6, 10), the Colossians can be confident of their salvation and the defeat of worldly powers (vv. 7, 13–15).

2:6 you have received The Greek word used here, *paralambanō*, can refer to the reception of a tradition—in this case, the message of the gospel handed down from the apostles (Acts 2:42; 2 Thess 3:6). Paul urges the Colossians to continue in this tradition, which contrasts with the human traditions of false teachers (Col 2:8).

2:7 firmly rooted and built up Indicates the stability that the Colossians have in Christ. Old Testament writers used similar imagery to describe those who are faithful to God (Psa 1:3; Isa 61:3).

2:8 philosophy and empty deceit The false teaching that Paul opposes in this letter is sometimes called “the Colossian heresy.” This philosophy cannot be identified precisely; it could reflect the influences of several ancient traditions, including Judaism, mysticism, asceticism, mystery cults, and Gnosticism (see note on Col 1:22). Regardless of the specific teachings, the fundamental problem Paul identifies is that human rules and traditions are being recommended as necessary supplements to Christ. However, it is also possible that Paul is not correcting a particular false teaching. Instead, Paul could be concerned with the immaturity and ignorance of the Colossian believers.

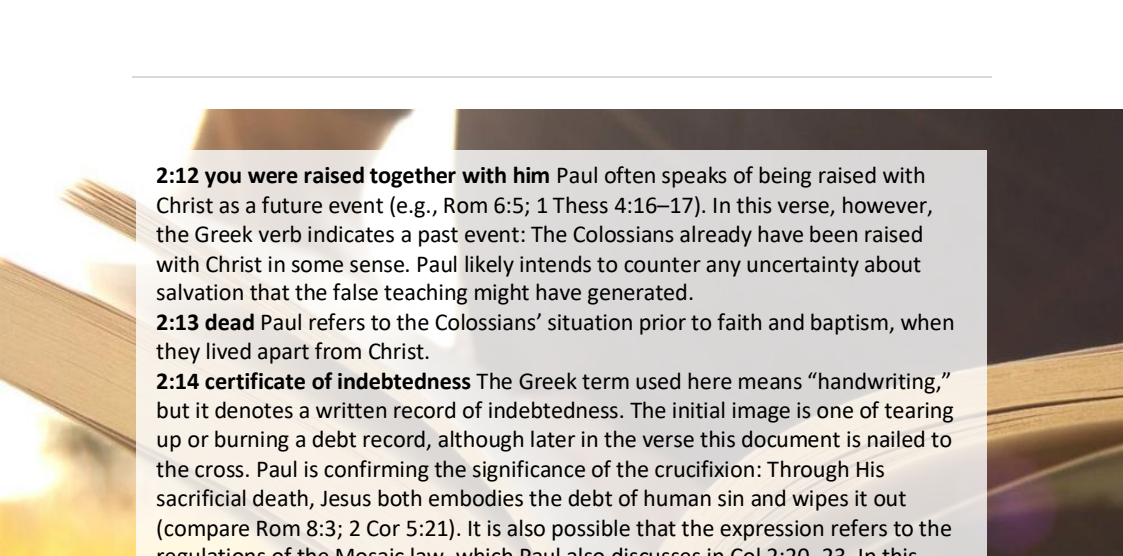
2:8 human tradition Refers to teaching that has its origin in human beings. In contrast, the gospel message has its origin in God (Gal 1:11).

2:8 elemental spirits The Greek phrase used here could refer to several concepts: the basic religious teachings of Jews and Gentiles; the material parts of the universe (such as water, earth, and fire); or spiritual powers (such as evil spirits or demonic entities). In this context, the first and third options are most likely. Paul makes clear that these teachings or forces are negative influences.

2:9 fullness of deity The very nature of God is fully present in Christ. False teachers may have asserted that Christ was one of many divine beings or that God’s fullness was distributed throughout supernatural beings, not just Christ—claims that Paul rejects.

2:11 circumcision Although the physical act of circumcision was a sign of Jewish identity within the covenant, God continually expresses concern for circumcision of the heart (Deut 10:16; Jer 4:4; Rom 2:29). Here, Paul affirms that the Colossians already have received Christ’s spiritual circumcision through their union with Him in baptism; therefore, they do not need the sign of physical circumcision to legitimize their identity as God’s people.

2:12 baptism The sacrament of washing with water as a sign of Christian commitment. Through baptism, believers identify with Christ’s crucifixion and burial, symbolizing death to sin.



2:12 you were raised together with him Paul often speaks of being raised with Christ as a future event (e.g., Rom 6:5; 1 Thess 4:16–17). In this verse, however, the Greek verb indicates a past event: The Colossians already have been raised with Christ in some sense. Paul likely intends to counter any uncertainty about salvation that the false teaching might have generated.

2:13 dead Paul refers to the Colossians' situation prior to faith and baptism, when they lived apart from Christ.

2:14 certificate of indebtedness The Greek term used here means “handwriting,” but it denotes a written record of indebtedness. The initial image is one of tearing up or burning a debt record, although later in the verse this document is nailed to the cross. Paul is confirming the significance of the crucifixion: Through His sacrificial death, Jesus both embodies the debt of human sin and wipes it out (compare Rom 8:3; 2 Cor 5:21). It is also possible that the expression refers to the regulations of the Mosaic law, which Paul also discusses in Col 2:20–23. In this case, the law functions like a record book of humanity's sins (compare Rom 4:15; Gal 3:19–22).

2:15 disarmed the rulers and the authorities This verse describes Christ exposing, defeating, and subjugating the hostile spiritual powers (compare Luke 10:18; John 12:31; 1 Pet 3:22).

If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations...?

COLOSSIANS 2:20

COLOSSIANS 2:16-23



READ SCRIPTURE

Take the time to repeatedly read and meditate on the passage daily, across the week, using at least two different versions of the Bible.

COLOSSIANS 2:16-23 ESV – English Standard Version

The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2001). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

¹⁶ Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. ¹⁷ These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. ¹⁸ Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, ¹⁹ and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.

²⁰ If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations— ²¹ “Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch” ²² (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings? ²³ These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.



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MESSAGE NOTES



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OVERVIEW

CHAPTER SUMMARY: Spiritual reality is not found in legalism (vv. 16–17), in the worship of angels (vv. 18–19), or in an asceticism which makes a person look good, but has no value in restraining expressions of one’s sin nature (vv. 20–23).

KEY VERSE: 2:20: Do’s and don’ts are of no “value in restraining sensual indulgence.

PERSONAL APPLICATION: The person groping for a touch of God loses connection with Christ when he or she focuses on the shadows of human effort.

DISCOVER TRUTH

What do you think are some of the key words or phrases in this passage?

NOTE: Key words are those which, because of emphasis or repetition, stand out as being central to the message of the passage.

How does this passage identify the false teachings these Colossian believers were facing?

What things can have an “appearance of wisdom”? (2:23)

WORD STUDY

How does Colossians 2:16-23 relate to Colossians 2:6-15?
(Hint: Notice the ‘therefore’ in 2:16.)

Where does growth in the church come from? (2:19)

REFLECT ON THE TRUTH

How has Christ's death on the cross changed the New Testament believer's relationship to the Old Testament law?

(See Romans 7:6, Romans 10:4)

Why was there a need for a change?

(See Deuteronomy 5:29, Galatians 3:21, Hebrews 10:1-4.)

How should the believer today relate to foods and festivals?

(See Mark 7:18-19, Acts 10:9-16, 1 Corinthians 8:8-9, Galatians 4:9-11.)

APPLY TRUTH

Do the dangers that threatened the Colossians exist today for us? Explain.

If they do, how do we protect ourselves from such dangers?

EXTRA

How can we diligently be involved with spiritual disciplines like fasting, prayer and Bible meditation without falling into the same dangers that threaten the Colossians?

ENGAGE WITH GOD

What prayer or praise points have come out of your study of this passage?

My praise/prayer points regarding a situation in my life at the moment?

Praise/prayer points from others in my group?

COMMENTARY

2:16–23 Because God’s presence, salvation, and victory are revealed fully in Christ (Col 2:9–15), He is sufficient for the Colossians’ salvation. There is no need to pursue additional teachings or practices.

2:16 judge The Greek word used here, *krinō*, can mean “to condemn”; it also can refer to assessing value.

2:16 eating or drinking The criteria listed in this verse correspond with Jewish practices like food laws and calendar observances.

2:17 shadow of what is to come Although Israelites were required to observe food laws and certain days, Paul asserts that the law ultimately points to Christ (compare Rom 10:4; Gal 3:24).

2:18 taking pleasure in humility Likely refers to ascetic practices (see note on Col 2:21).

2:18 worship of angels The Greek phrase used here could indicate people worshiping angels or being led in worship by angels. The latter might refer to the heavenly worship liturgy mentioned in several ancient Jewish traditions.

2:18 things which he has seen Probably refers to visionary experiences.

2:19 head Paul emphasizes the need for believers (the body) to be connected to Christ (the head). See note on 1:18.

2:20 elemental spirits Since Christ has defeated the powers and authorities (v. 15), those in union with Christ must not subject themselves to other forces (see note on v. 8; compare Gal 4:8–9).

2:21 do not handle, do not taste, do not touch These appear to represent regulations set by the false teachers, who were promoting ascetic practices (abstaining from worldly comforts and pleasures) as the means to holiness and salvation.

2:23 an appearance of wisdom The false teaching might have sounded convincing, but it ultimately was futile because it did not address the root of the problem: sin. In Christ, however, the worldly powers of sin have been defeated. Believers have been raised to new life and therefore have no need for man-made rules (Col 2:12–15, 20).

And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

COLOSSIANS 3:17

COLOSSIANS 3:1-17



READ SCRIPTURE

Take the time to repeatedly read and meditate on the passage daily, across the week, using at least two different versions of the Bible.

COLOSSIANS 3:1-17 ESV – English Standard Version

The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2001). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

¹ If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³ For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

⁵ Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. ⁶ On account of these the wrath of God is coming. ⁷ In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. ⁸ But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. ⁹ Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices ¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. ¹¹ Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.

¹² Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³ bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴ And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and

spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.



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MESSAGE NOTES



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OVERVIEW

CHAPTER SUMMARY: Since we have been raised with Christ (3:1–4), we “put to death” the sins that belong to our earthly, sin nature (vv. 5–8). We have put on a new “self,” renewed in God’s image (vv. 9–11). Thus, as God’s people we live with others the kind of life Jesus lived here on earth, so that all we do can be said to be done “in the name of the Lord Jesus” (vv. 12–17).

KEY VERSE: 3:17: What we do in the body does concern God.

PERSONAL APPLICATION: Everything we say and do reflects on the God we claim to know and love.

DISCOVER TRUTH

What do you think are some of the key words or phrases in this passage?

NOTE: Key words are those which, because of emphasis or repetition, stand out as being central to the message of the passage.

How are we 'raised with Christ'? (3:1)

Why is Christ 'seated at the right hand of God'? (3:1)

WORD STUDY

How does Paul describe the mindset we are to have in verse 1-4?

How are we to practically maintain this mindset daily? (3:12-17)
(See Romans 8:5-8, Romans 8:27, Romans 12:2-3, Romans 12:16, Philippians 2:5, Philippians 3:15-16, 18-19.)

REFLECT ON THE TRUTH

For each of the following sins, provide a brief description of the sin and then describe how it can at times become idolatrous.

Sexual immorality and impurity (3:5)

(See 1 Corinthians 5:1, 1 Corinthians 6:15-18, 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5)

Description...

How idolatrous...

Passion and evil desire (3:5)

(See 1 Thessalonians 4:5)

Description...

How idolatrous...

Greed/Covetousness (3:5)

(See Luke 12:15)

Description...

How idolatrous...

APPLY TRUTH

How would you describe your last week?

Too heavenly minded to be any earthly good?

Too earthly minded to be any heavenly good?

Explain...

EXTRA

Are you pursuing spiritual change all by yourself or have you found some fellow brothers and sisters who you can be transparent and accountable to?

Explain...

ENGAGE WITH GOD

What prayer or praise points have come out of your study of this passage?

My praise/prayer points regarding a situation in my life at the moment?

Praise/prayer points from others in my group?



COMMENTARY

3:1–3:17 Earlier, Paul affirmed that the Colossians have been raised to new life in Christ (2:12–13). Now he presents the implications of that life. This teaching section of the letter has its own short introduction (vv. 1–4), a contrast between the old and new ways of living (vv. 5–11), and guidelines for the Christian community (vv. 12–17).

3:1 raised together with Christ See note on 2:12.

3:1 things above Paul's remarks here echo Jesus' instruction to seek first the kingdom of heaven (Matt 6:33).

3:1 seated at the right hand of God A position of favour, honour, and authority (Psa 110:1; Eph 1:20). In the OT, God's right hand symbolizes strength and salvation (Exod 15:6; Psa 20:6).

3:2 things on earth Paul probably has in mind the empty human traditions and worldly elemental forces he spoke against throughout ch. 2.

3:3 you have died Refers to believers sharing in Christ's death through baptism.

3:4 Christ, who is your life Paul underscores the significance of Christ for the believer: Jesus is not peripheral to life; He is life. He imparts God's life, and He is the centre around which life should be oriented.

3:4 revealed with him The believer's life is hidden in God, and the world does not recognize it. Here, Paul reminds the Colossians that they will share in Christ's glory when He returns.

3:5 put to death what is earthly The list of sinful actions in this verse echoes the deeds of the flesh in Gal 5:19–21.

3:5 Idolatry Paul associates idolatry with the consuming desire to possess more than others, regardless of actual need.

3:6 wrath of God Refers to divine judgment against evil. See Rom 1:18.

3:8 lay aside These vices all relate to dysfunction among the community of believers. Believers must no longer participate in—these actions.

3:9 lie If believers mislead one another by communicating falsely, the trust within the community will be broken.

3:9 taken off See note on Col 3:10.

3:10 put on Here the Greek text of Colossians uses the imagery of changing one's clothes to illustrate Christ's transformative work in believers' lives (compare Rom 13:14; Gal 3:27).

3:10 being renewed The Greek word used here, *anakainōō*, refers to the process of becoming new, which is ongoing for the believer.

3:10 knowledge True knowledge reflects the image of the Creator. Compare the opening of the Christ-hymn in ch. 1, which identifies Christ as both the image of God and the agent of creation (1:15–16). Paul also states that divine wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ (2:3).

3:11 Greek The Greek word used here, *hellēn*, is an ethnic term denoting the people of Greece. Paul sometimes uses this term as a synonym for “Gentiles” (non-Jews).

3:11 circumcision nor uncircumcision Another way of referring to Jews (those who are circumcised according to the law) and Gentiles (those who are not).

3:11 barbarian A person considered uncultured according to Graeco-Roman standards—i.e., those who did not speak Greek or Latin and who practiced foreign customs or traditions.

3:11 Scythian Like barbarians, Scythians were typically regarded as uncivilized people.

3:11 Christ is all The standard categories of race and social status that normally divide people do not apply to those who are in Christ (compare Gal 3:28)—there is equality.

3:12 chosen of God Originally, God chose the nation of Israel to be His people (Deut 14:2; Rom 9:4–5). However, because such distinctions are rendered irrelevant in Christ (Col 3:11), Paul affirms the Colossian believers as being among God’s chosen people (compare 1:12, 21–22).

3:13 putting up with one another Believers must have patience with one another, even while enduring difficult situations.

3:13 forgiving one another Even in the community of believers, the actions of some offend or hurt others; how believers respond is critical. Experiencing God’s forgiveness shows that believers must forgive one another (Luke 7:47).

3:15 peace The Greek word used here, *eirēnē*, refers to wholeness or the absence of conflict in a relationship.

3:15 be thankful Paul commands the Colossians to express gratitude for the things they have and the people in their lives. Gratitude is a safeguard against grumbling and complaining, both of which can ruin a community.

3:16 word of Christ Refers either to the gospel message about Christ or to Christ’s teaching (as opposed to human philosophies or traditions; Col 2:8).

3:16 psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs Refers to a variety of songs used in Christian worship, probably including the OT psalms.

Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

COLOSSIANS 3:23-24

COLOSSIANS 3:18-4:1



READ SCRIPTURE

Take the time to repeatedly read and meditate on the passage daily, across the week, using at least two different versions of the Bible.

COLOSSIANS 3:18-4:1 ESV – English Standard Version

The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2001). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

¹⁸ Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. ¹⁹ Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them. ²⁰ Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. ²¹ Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. ²² Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. ²³ Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, ²⁴ knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ. ²⁵ For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality.

4 ¹ Masters, treat your bondservants justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.



LISTEN TO THE MESSAGE

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MESSAGE NOTES



COMPLETE THE STUDY GUIDE

Take your time across the week to work through the following study guide questions. Be prayerful as you seek truth in and through the Word. Jot down any questions or additional observations you make so you can share them with others in your church family or small group.

OVERVIEW

CHAPTER SUMMARY: Here too Paul reminds us that we are each to live this way in the framework of the role we have been assigned—as spouse, parent or child, slave or free. In whatever setting we find ourselves we can live in a way that expresses, and pleases, God (3:18–4:1).

KEY VERSE: 3:23-24: We work for Christ, not humanity.

PERSONAL APPLICATION: We are to serve God not from a heavy-hearted servitude but a deep desire to serve the Lord.

DISCOVER TRUTH

What do you think are some of the key words or phrases in this passage?

NOTE: Key words are those which, because of emphasis or repetition, stand out as being central to the message of the passage.

Paul outlines various relationships in 3:18-4:1. List the responsibilities and motivations for each in the table below.

| Relationship | Responsibilities | Motivation |
|---------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

WORD STUDY

Paul uses the words 'submit', 'love', and 'obey' in describing these relationships...

Define each of these words.

Submit -

Love -

Obey –

What is the relationship between these words?

REFLECT ON THE TRUTH

How do you reconcile Paul's distinction between different groups of people in 3:18-4:1 with his earlier statement in 3:11 that there is 'no distinction' between different peoples in Christ?

APPLY TRUTH

Look at the roles/positions mentioned in 3:18-4:1. Which of these most apply to you personally at this time in your life?

How are you doing in these roles lately?

How can you do better this coming week?

EXTRA

What difference would it make if you actually worked as if it was Jesus who you were working for? What would it look like?

ENGAGE WITH GOD

What prayer or praise points have come out of your study of this passage?

My praise/prayer points regarding a situation in my life at the moment?

Praise/prayer points from others in my group?



COMMENTARY

3:18–4:1 Paul transitions his address from the Christian assembly to the household. Together, these represent the two most important social settings where believers can show the transformative power of the gospel.

3:18 be subject Paul is not saying that a wife ought to respond to her husband with mindless obedience; being subject to one's spouse should be voluntary and conscious. Submission in marriage is not demeaning; it is informed by God's relationship to the Church (see Eph 5:22–23).

3:19 love In this context, to love (*agapaō*) means to put the needs and interests of others before your own. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul presents Christ's sacrificial death on behalf of the Church as the model of love that husbands should have for their wives (see Eph 5:25).

3:20 obey your parents This reflects the fifth commandment (Exod 20:12).

3:21 provoke In Paul's time, fathers had considerable authority within the household. He urges fathers to use that authority in a way that avoids causing resentment.

3:22 Slaves Paul includes slaves in his discussion of the family because they were considered members of the Graeco-Roman household. Compare note on Col 4:1.

3:22 fearing the Lord Refers to having a profound reverence for God, especially for His authority and commands. In the book of Proverbs, fear of Yahweh is equated with the beginning of wisdom (Prov 9:10).

3:24 Inheritance The property received by a child or descendent from a deceased parent.

3:25 partiality God does not make unfair distinctions between people, treating some better than others. Therefore, He does not condone the use of social status or our identity in Christ as license for wrongdoing.

4:1 Masters In Graeco-Roman society, masters assumed complete authority over their slaves and could freely mistreat them. Paul urges masters who are believers to use their authority with integrity; in God's kingdom, they too are slaves, and God is their master (compare Eph 6:5–9).

Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.
COLOSSIANS 4:2

COLOSSIANS 4:2-18



READ SCRIPTURE

Take the time to repeatedly read and meditate on the passage daily, across the week, using at least two different versions of the Bible.

COLOSSIANS 4:2-18 ESV – English Standard Version

The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2001). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

² Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. ³ At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— ⁴ that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.

⁵ Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. ⁶ Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

⁷ Tychicus will tell you all about my activities. He is a beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. ⁸ I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are and that he may encourage your hearts, ⁹ and with him Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will tell you of everything that has taken place here.

¹⁰ Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, and Mark the cousin of Barnabas (concerning whom you have received instructions—if he comes to you, welcome him), ¹¹ and Jesus who is called Justus. These are the only men of the circumcision among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me.

¹² Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God. ¹³ For I bear him witness that he has worked hard for you and for those in

Laodicea and in Hierapolis. ¹⁴ Luke the beloved physician greets you, as does Demas. ¹⁵ Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house. ¹⁶ And when this letter has been read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you also read the letter from Laodicea. ¹⁷ And say to Archippus, "See that you fulfill the ministry that you have received in the Lord." ¹⁸ I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.



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MESSAGE NOTES



COMPLETE THE STUDY GUIDE

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OVERVIEW

CHAPTER SUMMARY: Paul concludes his lifestyle instructions with a word about prayer and witnessing (4:2–6). He then introduces Tychicus, who will carry this letter (vv. 7–9), and sends greetings from several mutual friends who are currently with him in Rome (vv. 10–15). Finally Paul instructs the Colossians to send the letter on to others when it has been read and studied in Colossae (vv. 16–18).

KEY VERSE: 4:2: Everyone needs prayer!

PERSONAL APPLICATION: How easy it is for people to accept our instruction when they know we care about them.

DISCOVER TRUTH

What do you think are some of the key words or phrases in this passage?

NOTE: Key words are those which, because of emphasis or repetition, stand out as being central to the message of the passage.

Why does Paul begin his discussion in verses 2-6 with the subject of prayer?

How does he characterise the nature and purpose of prayer?

WORD STUDY

What exactly is 'wise conduct' towards outsider? (4:5)

(See Matthew 5:16, Romans 13:7-8, Ephesians 5:15, 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12, 1 Peter 2:12.)

REFLECT ON THE TRUTH

Why does Paul use the imagery of 'seasoned with salt' to describe the kind of speech necessary to respond to each person? (4:6)

(See Matthew 5:13.)

See how Paul operated with a team of fellow Christians, what does this mean for church life?

APPLY TRUTH

Why is it such a struggle to remain devoted and alert in prayer?

What practical steps can we take to grow in prayer individually?

What practical steps can we take to grow in prayer as a church family?

EXTRA

In 4:17, Archippus was instructed to 'see you fulfil the ministry that you have received in the Lord'. What ministry do you sense the Lord asking you to fulfil?

ENGAGE WITH GOD

What prayer or praise points have come out of your study of this passage?

My praise/prayer points regarding a situation in my life at the moment?

Praise/prayer points from others in my group?

COMMENTARY

4:2–18 Paul concludes the letter with final instructions and greetings.

4:2 alert The Colossians must stay alert for false teachings that contradict the gospel message (Col 2:8). Jesus gave His disciples a similar warning prior to His arrest (Mark 14:38).

4:2 thanksgiving See note on Col 3:15.

4:3 praying at the same time Paul encourages the Colossians to partner with him in his preaching ministry through prayer.

4:3 mystery of Christ Refers to God's plan of redemption for creation and humanity (compare 1:26–27; 2:2; see note on 1:26). This mystery has been revealed through Jesus Christ and the teaching of His apostles.

4:3 a prisoner Paul wants the Colossians to understand that his imprisonment is a result of his gospel work, and that it demonstrates his love for them (1:24).

4:5 wisdom Paul refers to practical and transformational wisdom, not intellectual insight (compare 1 Cor 1:21, 27). Those who apply such wisdom can reflect God's values and character.

4:6 seasoned with salt In the ancient world, salt was used to preserve food and enhance flavour. Conversation that is figuratively seasoned with salt is uplifting.

4:7 Tychicus A believer from the Roman province of Asia, which included Colossae (Acts 20:4). While Paul was imprisoned, Tychicus delivered his letters to several churches in southwest Asia Minor (Col 4:16; Eph 6:21–22).

4:9 Onesimus A slave who accompanied Tychicus to Colossae. Onesimus apparently had run away from his owner, Philemon, who might have hosted the Colossian church in his home (Phlm 2). Paul seems to have met Onesimus while in prison and now was sending him back to Colossae to be reconciled to Philemon (Phlm 10, 12).

4:10 Aristarchus A missionary companion from Thessalonica (Acts 20:4). He was with Paul in Ephesus and Jerusalem and during his voyage to Rome (Acts 19:29; 20:4; 27:2).

4:10 Mark, the cousin of Barnabas John Mark from Jerusalem (Acts 12:12). John Mark accompanied Paul and Barnabas during the first missionary journey, but returned home in the middle of it (Acts 13:13). The Gospel of Mark is commonly attributed to John Mark. When Barnabas wanted John Mark to accompany him on the second missionary journey, Paul refused. Because of this disagreement, Paul and Barnabas parted company (Acts 15:39). Mark later joined Paul in his missionary work, and Paul commended him to others (2 Tim 4:11; Phlm 24).

4:11 Jesus who is called Justus Nothing is known of this man.

4:12 Epaphras A believer who likely planted the church at Colossae and perhaps also the churches at Laodicea and Hierapolis. Compare Col 1:7.

4:13 I testify to him The believers at Colossae probably were concerned about Epaphras. Paul reassures them that he continues to work for their benefit.

4:13 Laodicea See note on 2:1.

4:13 Hierapolis A commercial and military colony near Colossae and Laodicea in southwest Asia Minor. Hierapolis was known for its mystery cults.

4:14 Luke A missionary companion of Paul (see Acts 16:10 and note; 2 Ti 4:11); traditionally identified as the author of the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts.

4:14 Demas Although he was with Paul at the time of this letter, Demas later deserts Paul and goes to Thessalonica (2 Tim 4:10).

4:15 Laodicea See note on Col 2:1.

4:15 Nympha Probably a wealthy single woman or a widow, since she hosted a church in her home. Members of the early church typically met in homes (e.g., Rom 16:5).

4:16 letter from Laodicea Paul's letter to the Laodiceans is unknown. One proposal is that it might be the letter to the Ephesians (which Paul may have sent to several churches), but there is no conclusive evidence for this claim.

4:17 Archippus Mentioned only in this verse and in Phlm 2, where he is included as part of Philemon's household. Archippus likely served with Paul at some point.

4:18 The greeting is by my hand Paul would have dictated his letter to a professional scribe. By writing the last line himself (and perhaps including a distinguishing mark), Paul confirms that the letter is from him.

4:18 Grace be with you Paul's typical closing in his letters (e.g., Gal 6:18; 1 Thess 5:28).



JOHN IN REVIEW



COMPLETE THE STUDY GUIDE

Now you have completed your studies in John, take the time to reflect on what has been revealed to you and the transformation of your mind that has occurred.

REFLECT ON THE TRUTH

What have you learned about who Jesus is?

What have you learned about your life in Christ?

What have you learned about the church under the headship of Christ?

Having studied Colossians, what new reasons do you have to be thankful?