



Colossians & Philemon

*Life Group
Study Guide*



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How to Use this Study Guide

This guide was written as a companion to our Life Group study in Colossians and Philemon this fall, beginning in September and continuing through November. We've prepared this guide in hopes that it will encourage you in your daily walk and prepare you to engage well as you study with others in your Life Group.

Each week's lesson contains a brief overview of the week's passage, and then five days worth of study. Each day, you will find a short introduction, three questions to get you thinking about the text, and then challenges to apply the text and pray for God to use it in your life. A careful reading of the day's passage and answering the questions should take most people about 15-20 minutes a day.

However you use this guide, our prayer is that it would continually drive you to make the study of God's Word a regular habit. May the Lord richly bless and sustain you as you meditate on His Word.

The Study Guide Team



Introduction

By Pastor Jason Hall

How would you begin to address a letter to a group of people you have never met? Maybe, “To whom it may concern”? Surely you wouldn’t start by calling them sacred, or faithful? Yet that’s precisely what Paul does as he writes a letter to a church that he did not plant and had not ever visited. How does he gain such affection for people he doesn’t even know? It must be the Spirit of Christ!

Colossians and Philemon are two of four books we call collectively the “Prison Epistles,” aptly named because Paul wrote them while he was in jail in Rome (for the background story of how he got to prison in the first place, read the second half of the book of Acts). As I noted, Paul had never been to Colossae, but he knew of it through his relationship with his friend Epaphras. Paul had also never been to Colossae’s sister city, Laodicea, but he’ll make it clear in our text that he wants his letter read to them, too (Col. 4:16). It is remarkable how personal and fatherly the tone of this letter is, considering that Paul has never met them. Our relationship with Jesus Christ indeed draws us together and makes us a family.

While Colossians was written to churches, Paul wrote Philemon to a man named Philemon (thus the name). The letters were likely written at the same time, since they were both delivered by Paul’s friend Tychicus.

We’re going to take ten weeks to study together through these letters (nine weeks in Colossians and a week in Philemon). This means we’ll walk pretty carefully, generally moving passage by passage as we notice how Paul communicates under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Pay attention to the meanings of the words and how the words fit together to form sentences, the sentences form paragraphs, and paragraphs form the letter. Remember that the individual pieces only make sense in light of the whole.

Our Life Group leaders are reading and studying from a resource called *Colossians and Philemon for You* by Mark Meynell. It’s a sort of study guide/commentary hybrid and a helpful book. If you’re into such things, try to find a copy at thegoodbook.com.

Our Life Group leaders and study guide team are praying for you as we walk together through these letters. By God’s grace, they will inspire and equip us to love each other more and follow Christ with passion and patience.



Colossians 1:1-14

In these opening verses of Colossians, we will meet the apostle Paul, the author, and Timothy, his faithful traveling companion. We will also learn key bits of information about the church at Colossae and their faith, as well as about Epaphras, Paul’s “fellow servant” and “faithful minister.” He shared the gospel with the Colossians, which led to their salvation and the start of the church there.

The structure of these verses will follow Paul’s typical pattern, beginning first with a brief greeting and then flowing immediately into a prayer of thanksgiving for the Colossians as well as petitions for their spiritual well-being. Paul’s prayer of thanksgiving centers on the past salvation of the Colossians: he is thankful for their faith in God which manifests itself in their love for God’s people. This faith and love are possible only because of the sure hope offered in the gospel of Christ. Paul’s prayer focuses on the Colossians’ present and future sanctification (spiritual growth toward holiness): he desires for them to know and do God’s will with the strength that God supplies and with thankful hearts for all that God has done for them in Christ.

Prepared by Robin Hall and Candi Powers

Day 1: Colossians 1:1-2

In today's passage, we will look at the introduction to Colossians, including its author, recipients, and greeting. While it may be easy to overlook these verses, they provide critical details for the context of the book.

According to verse 1, who is the author of Colossians, and how is he described? Who else is mentioned?

To whom was this letter written? Where are they, and how are they described?

What does grace mean? What is peace? Who do these things come from, according to verse 2?

Apply: Paul describes himself, Timothy, and the Colossians in family terms, also emphasizing their relationships to Christ. How do you view the believers around you? Do you think of them as brothers and sisters or as opponents?

Pray: Lord, thank You for the Bible and that every word is inspired truth. Thank You that You give us grace and peace that is impossible to get from the world. Praise You that You also give us other believers to walk with us as we seek to glorify You. Help me to see fellow believers as brothers and sisters that I love, instead of focusing on our differences.

Day 2: **Colossians 1:3-5**

As Paul begins his prayer for the Colossian church, his attitude is one of thanksgiving. In these verses, he describes what characteristics of theirs make him thankful.

From verses 3 and 4, what things does Paul thank God for in his prayers for the Colossians?

What is the basis for the Colossian believers' faith and love?

Where is this hope kept? Is that a secure or insecure place?

Apply: The basis of our faith and love is the work of Christ in salvation, which secures for us an eternal hope. How can you meditate more on “the hope laid up for you in heaven” today so that you will increase in faith and love?

Pray: Jesus, thank You for securing an eternal heavenly hope for us that does not fade or disappoint. Forgive me for times I don't think of that hope enough and allow myself to be distracted. Increase my faith in You and love for other believers. Thank You for the faith and love of Your church.

Day 3: Colossians 1:5-8

One reason that Paul was thankful for the Colossians was their response to the gospel. These verses talk about the gospel, their response to it, and a servant of the gospel, Epaphras.

How is the gospel described in these verses?

What is the gospel message? See 1 Cor. 15:3-4, Rom. 6:23, and Rom. 10:9-10 for help with your answer.

How do these verses describe Epaphras?

Apply: Once you believe the gospel and become a Christian, you are called to share it with others. For whom can you pray for and share the gospel in the next few weeks?

Pray: Lord, thank You for letting the gospel come to me so that I could respond to it in repentance and faith and accept Your gift of salvation. Please allow Your salvation to bear increasing fruit in me and around the world. Show me who I can share this good news with in the next couple of weeks and give me wisdom and the opportunity to do it.

Day 4: Colossians 1:9-14

In today's verses, Paul's prayer for the Colossians moves from thanksgiving for God's work of salvation that has occurred in them to petitions for God's work of sanctification to continue in them. As you read his prayer, note the key components necessary for spiritual growth in the life of a believer.

As Paul begins this part of his prayer for the Colossian believers, what is his first request (verse 9)? Why does he want this for the Colossians (verse 10)?

What does it mean to "walk in a manner worthy of the Lord?" Read verse 10 as well as Eph. 4:1-3.

In addition to requests for the Colossians to know and do God's will, Paul also prays for them to be strengthened with all power. According to verse 11, what will they need this power for?

Apply: Read through today's verses again as you evaluate your own prayers for your loved ones. Imagine how their lives would be different if these things were always true of them. How are these requests better than anything else you could pray for them?

Pray: Father, I pray for _____ to be filled with the knowledge of Your will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of You, fully pleasing to You: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of You.

Day 5: Colossians 1:9-14

Paul continues his prayer for the Colossians in verses 12-14. He prays for them to be thankful for all that God has done for them and in them, through the work of His beloved Son.

In verses 12-14, what reasons do believers have to give thanks to God?

What more do you learn about the inheritance referenced in verse 12 from the following passages: Psa. 105:8-11, Heb. 11:8-10, Eph. 1:11-14 and 1 Pet. 1:3-5?

What do you learn about Jesus, the Son, in verses 13 and 14 (also look at Eph. 1:6-8, which uses similar wording)?

Apply: Look back through verses 9-14. What actions do you see in these verses that only God can do for us, that we are powerless to do on our own? Spend time thanking Him for His goodness in your life.

Pray: Father, I pray for _____ to be strengthened with all power, according to Your glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; that they may give thanks eternally to You - for Your deliverance, forgiveness, redemption, and inheritance in Christ.



Prayer Week

As we look ahead to Life Group meetings on Sept. 12, we're excited about dedicating this time to a season of prayer for ourselves, our groups, and our church. We will have three of these dedicated Life Group prayer meetings this fall.

As we prepare our hearts this week for our time of prayer in Life Groups, instead of moving ahead in our Colossians study, we'll briefly review what we've learned and take time to reflect. Feel free to use the suggestions below as you move through this week; next week, we'll pick back up in Colossians 1.

***Day 1:* Re-read Colossians 1:3-8. Thank God for those who have mentored and encouraged you in your faith, past and present.**

***Day 2:* Re-read Colossians 1:9-12. Pray for the spiritual wisdom and understanding of others in your Life Group.**

***Day 3:* Look ahead to Colossians 2:1-3. Pray for Christians around the world to know Christ more deeply.**

***Day 4:* Read Ephesians 3:14-19. Pray for our church to understand the love that surpasses knowledge.**

***Day 5:* Read 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12. Pray for yourself and your family, that God would fulfill His purpose in you.**



Colossians 1:15-20

Many scholars believe that this passage was part of a hymn or a confession of faith composed and recited in the early church. Paul quotes and incorporates it to argue that Christ is not one of the many spiritual powers, but He is supreme over all of them; He is fully God. The hymn can be divided into two stanzas. The first stanza proclaims that Jesus is God and the Lord of all creation (verses 15-17). He holds authority over all powers, rulers, and dominions in all spheres of the universe. The second stanza declares that Christ is the Lord of the new creation (verses 18-20). Christ's finished work on the cross affects every part of creation, the seen and the unseen, bringing peace where there was conflict. In Christ, the Colossian believers have received all the blessings of the cross; their salvation is complete. Like the Colossians, we also share in the kingdom's blessings (verse 14) since we belong to the King, Jesus Christ.

Prepared by John Nyota

Day 1: Colossians 1:15-20

We will start our study by noting the attributes of Christ in the whole passage, and then we will focus on the first part of verse 15. The word “image” (verse 15) can be translated in two ways. First, as a representation (or likeness) like an image on a coin or a reflection in a mirror. Second, as a manifestation — the symbol brings with it the actual presence of the object. Paul is expressing the second meaning in this verse: Jesus Christ fully reveals God.

After reading the passage, list everything mentioned regarding the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Read Exod. 20:4-6, Lev. 26:1, Ps. 97:7, and Acts 17:29. How do these verses rule out the first meaning (above) of the word “image?”

Read John 1:1-2, 14, 18; 14:8-9 and Heb. 1:3. How has Christ made God (who is invisible) known to humanity?

Apply: Man can't know God without God making Himself known. Jesus, God the Son, revealed to us the Father by becoming one of us — fully human. He did all this because He loves us and provided a way to be adopted into His family.

Pray: Thank You, Lord, for making Yourself known to me. Thank You for coming and dying on the cross to provide a way for salvation. I pray that I will be faithful in making You known to others by sharing the gospel.

Day 2: Colossians 1:15-17

Our focus today will be on the works of Christ in relation to all of creation. Because He created everything, He has preeminence (or supremacy) over everything. The phrase “first-born of all creation” does not mean that Jesus was the first to be created. Instead, it refers to the unique status of Jesus in relation to creation.

Read Exod. 4:22 and Ps. 89:27. Describe the meaning of “firstborn” from these verses.

Read Col. 1:16-17, John 1:3 and Heb. 1:2. List all the things mentioned in these passages that Christ created.

What does it mean that in Christ, “all things hold together” (See Col. 1:17 and Heb. 1:3)?

Apply: Jesus is the Lord of all creation. He created everything, and He sustains the whole of creation. No matter what might be happening, He is in total control right now! Also, everything was created for Him — to glorify Him. How are you trusting and glorifying Jesus with your life?

Pray: Lord, You are in total control of everything. Forgive me for the times I have panicked when it seemed like things were out of control and about to fall into chaos. May I remember and trust these words, that You sustain the whole of creation “by the word of Your power.”

Day 3: Read Colossians 1:18-20

And now we turn to the second stanza of the hymn, which emphasizes that Jesus is the Lord of the new creation. Today we will be focusing on the first part of verse 18, Christ's relationship with the church.

What is the relationship between Christ and the church (verse 18)? What does this mean for the local church?

Read 1 Cor. 12:27 and Eph. 1:22-23; 4:15-16; and 5:23. What more details do you find in these passages about the relationship between Christ and the church?

Since Christ is the head of the church, what should be your attitude toward church and your involvement (See Eph. 4:11-16, 29-32 and 5:17-21)?

Apply: Every believer is part of Christ's body, His church. As part of the body, we all have a role to play, through God-given spiritual gifts, in keeping the body healthy. How are you involved in building up the body and keeping it healthy? If you are not involved, talk to your Life Group leader, a pastor, or any ministry leader about how you can get involved.

Pray: Thank You, Jesus, for the church, Your visible representation here on earth. I pray that I will make use of my spiritual gifts at Richland Creek. May I seek to serve my brothers and sisters rather than to be served.

Day 4: Colossians 1:18-20

Two days ago, we saw that Christ is supreme over creation (verses 15-17). Today we will see that He is not only Lord over creation, but He is also Lord over the new creation! This lordship is a consequence of His death, burial, and resurrection. Jesus is the Lord of reconciliation.

Read Rom. 5:17 and 6:4; 1 Cor. 15:21-23; and Eph. 2:5-6. List all the things mentioned in these verses that Christ's resurrection has accomplished.

According to verse 18, what is the purpose of Christ's resurrection (what came from Him being "firstborn from the dead")? How should this truth affect the way you live your life?

Read verses 19-20. How did Christ make peace? What was the extent of this peace (reconciliation)?

Apply: Jesus, through His resurrection, is recreating everything affected by sin. We are a new creation in Christ, and the Holy Spirit is renewing us to become more like Christ. One day we will have new bodies like Christ's. Meanwhile, may we seek to become more like Him by obeying His word, praying, and worshipping privately and corporately with the church body.

Pray: Holy Spirit, thank You for living in me. Thank You for empowering me to live a Christian life. Thank You for Your work of sanctification in my life, transforming me to be more like Christ as I surrender to Your leading and confess my sins. I pray that I will glorify You.

Day 5: Colossians 1:15-20

This week we have been studying one of the key passages in the Bible about the doctrine of Christ. Today we will look at other passages that teach on the person and works of Jesus Christ. Philippians 2:5-11, one of our other passages for today, is also widely believed to have been a hymn used to teach Christian doctrine in the early church.

Read John 1:1-5, Phil. 2:5-11 and Heb. 1:1-4. List everything mentioned on (a) the person of Christ and (b) the works of Christ.

How do these passages complement Col. 1:15-20 regarding the person and works of Christ? What repeated themes do you see?

How can you use these passages to explain to someone that Jesus Christ is God?

Apply: There are many lessons we can take from these passages on the person and works of Jesus Christ. One of them is that although Jesus was fully God. He chose to become fully man and lived among us, facing challenges, suffering, and death. In so doing, He reconciled us to God. How can we have the same mindset (Phil. 2:3-5)?

Pray: Lord Jesus, thank You for loving me so much that You left heaven, came down to earth, and died for me, rising again after three days. Thank You that through repentance and faith in You, You have adopted me into your family. May I seek to obey with the same humility and mercy toward others that you exemplified for us.



Colossians 1:21-27

The changes believers see in their lives post-salvation are impossible to achieve by sheer willpower. The sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit enables believers not only to make more moral choices but also to have joy even in suffering. Paul is well acquainted with suffering for the sake of the gospel. The Jewish leaders were especially incensed by Paul's ministering to the Gentiles, even going so far as to stop listening to him as soon as he mentioned the word "Gentiles" and then ordering his execution (Acts 22). In this week's passage, Paul explains how he can rejoice even in such suffering. He also shares the calling the Lord has placed on his life to proclaim the mysteries of the gospel and God's plan to include the Gentiles in the body of Christ. These verses also serve to remind us of the hope we have in our stewardship of the good news.

Prepared by Christy Crowder

Day 1: Colossians 1:21–22

In today's passage, Paul reminds believers of the stark contrast between who they once were and who they have become in Christ.

How does Paul describe the status of the lost? Read Eph. 4:18–19 for further elaboration.

According to verse 22, what changed the status of the lost, both for the believers in Colossae and for the believers of Richland Creek Community Church? Who initiated the change and did the work to make it happen?

What reason does Paul give in verse 22 for Christ's atoning death on our behalf? Check out the cross-reference in Jude 24.

Apply: If the change described in today's passage is not something you have experienced, please reach out to a pastor or Life Group leader today. They would love to talk with you about the Lord's plan to take you from alienated and hostile in mind to holy and blameless. If you have been saved, pray for the Lord to show you who He would have you share this good news with this week.

Pray: Dear Lord, thank You for Your plan to save me. I praise You for Your Son's finished work on the cross and Your grace that changed my life and made me a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17) that I may be presented as blameless before You.

Day 2: Colossians 1:23

Though today's verse begins with "if," there is no indication Paul believes the Colossian believers will not continue in the faith or that a believer can lose his or her salvation. Warren Wiersbe, in his commentary on Colossians, explains it this way: "If you are truly saved, and built on the solid foundation, Jesus Christ, then you will continue in the faith and nothing will move you."

What does Matthew 10:22 say about continuing in the faith?

The words in verse 23 translated in the ESV as "stable, steadfast" and "not shifting" are architectural terms. The imagery Paul uses in this verse hearkens back to Jesus' words in Matt. 7:24–27. What does He say about the importance of building on a solid foundation?

The stability of the gospel gives us hope. Read Titus 2:11-13. How is this hope ultimately realized?

Apply: The consistency and steadfastness of the Lord bring comfort to believers in this ever-changing world. By remaining consistent in the spiritual disciplines, believers draw closer to this comfort and God's peace. This week, examine your habits to see where you perhaps haven't been consistent. Make a plan to draw closer to Him in prayer, Bible study, worship, giving, evangelism, community, service, and missions.

Pray: Heavenly Father, I thank You for the hope I have in the gospel. Because You never change, I know I can always trust You. Father, help me diligently and consistently seek You out in prayer and the Word to strengthen my trust in You.

Day 3: Colossians 1:24

Paul has suffered greatly for the sake of the gospel, enduring physical punishment that has brought him near to death more than once. Even as he writes this letter to the Colossians, he is in prison. Rather than complaining to garner sympathy or validation, Paul's posture toward suffering should inspire believers to glorify God no matter the circumstances of their lives.

Why is Paul able to rejoice in suffering? Read Phil. 3:10, 4:12-13 and 1 Pet. 4:15–16 to help you answer.

The phrase “lacking in Christ’s afflictions” does not indicate a deficiency in Jesus’ finished work on the cross, as this would contradict the rest of Scripture. Instead, Paul notes the suffering believers will endure because of their stand for the faith until Christ’s return. What does James 1:2–4 say about suffering? What hope do we find in 2 Cor. 1:5?

Paul indicates his sufferings are for the sake of the church. Though Paul was once a persecutor of the church, he now works tirelessly for her sake by God’s grace. Read 1 Cor. 15:9–10 and note this transformation. What does he say makes his work possible?

Apply: As you encounter trials, meditate on the life of Paul. Flip through Paul’s narrative in Acts and see what the Lord did through his obedience. Where may God use you to further His Kingdom through your obedience?

Pray: Dear Lord, forgive me when I focus solely on my circumstances and sufferings. Help me see how You would use them to sanctify me and help me be a blessing to others. I praise You for Your perfect love and plan for my life.

Day 4: **Colossians 1:25–26**

Paul took the responsibilities given to him by the Lord seriously. He knew the only approval and calling that mattered came from the Lord; and that the Lord's Word, even if it contradicted tradition, would go forth in His sovereign power.

Paul refers to his ministry as a “stewardship from God” in verse 25. Read 1 Cor. 4:1–2. What qualifications does Paul give for stewards?

In Eph. 3:1–10, Paul spells out the “mystery” he refers to in today’s passage. What is the “mystery” that has now been revealed?

What are the implications of this mystery for believers? Use Rom. 10:12–13 to help you answer.

Apply: The inclusiveness of the gospel is spelled out very clearly in Scripture. Yet, even today, we often discount the validity of Christians who look, speak, dress, or worship differently than we do. Spend some time today in prayer, asking the Lord to show you any biases you may be harboring. Repent, and make a point of seeking those outside your typical “church bubble.”

Pray: Dear Father, please help me remember I am a steward of Your grace and not an owner. Salvation is not in my power but Yours. Help me be obedient to share the good news of the gospel freely with everyone You put in my path. Forgive me for my prejudices and help me to see and love like You.

Day 5: Colossians 1:27

God chooses to reveal Himself through His Word. We have seen Him unravel the mystery of the new covenant through Paul's letter to the Colossians in this week's verses. In today's passage, we read more of the good news the Lord has for the Gentiles.

Read Ephesians 2:11–22. What has changed for the Gentiles? Who is responsible for this change?

How does John 14:16–20 help us understand the glory of Christ “in” us, which Paul mentions in verse 27?

How does 1 Thess. 4:13–18 help us to better understand the “hope of glory” promised to those who have received Christ?

Apply: As believers, our hope is in Christ and His promise to be with us always, regardless of where and to whom we were born. So often, this world distracts us from our faith, and we place our hope in the temporal rather than the eternal. Today, spend some time meditating on what promises you can claim from God's Word that can help shift your focus back on Jesus.

Pray: Dear Lord, You are my hope. My salvation through the shed blood of Your Son is my greatest treasure. Forgive me for giving the things of this world my attention instead of Your Word and will for my life. Help me to seek You and focus on You first.



Colossians 1:28-2:5

Paul's affections for God's people have been displayed from the beginning of his letter to the church in Colossae. He has encouraged them by letting them know he has prayed joyfully over their love for one another and the fruit they have demonstrated. The Colossians have been reminded of their reconciliation to God through Jesus. Paul has exalted Christ as supreme over creation and in restoration. He will also remind them that he has labored for their sake. While all these things are wonderful, Paul wants them to continue to look forward to further growth in Christ. In our verses this week, Paul will share his heart for seeing the gospel of Christ proclaimed such that it has its full effect in the believers – maturity. We will see that according to the Scriptures, maturity in Christ is both vital and possible for the Christian life.

Prepared by Daniel Brooker

Day 1: Colossians 1:28-29

In today's text, Paul reminds us of our goal and the method for reaching maturity: The work of the Spirit of God, through the Word of God, delivered by the servant of God.

What is Paul's stated goal as stated in verse 28? How will that goal be accomplished?

Read Eph. 4:12-14. Why does Paul indicate maturity is so vital to the Christian?

Look carefully at verse 29. Who is it that gives us the strength to work toward the goal? Why would that be so important to remember?

Apply: The danger is to view this passage as being written for someone else. Paul wasn't writing this letter to Timothy about his preaching; he was writing to the entire body of believers in Colossae about their lives in Christ. Maturity was an expectation for the whole church. Do you view maturity as a goal for your life in Christ?

Pray: Father, thank You for making Your Word known to me through the Scriptures and through those You have called to be Your servants. Help me this day to pursue personal holiness and obedience to Your will for every area of my life.

Day 2: Colossians 2:1-2

Today we continue to see Paul's heart revealed for God's people. He will expose his hopes for their future as well as his concerns for them.

The word used in verse 1 for “struggle” in the original Greek is *agōnizomai*. It is an athletic term used for entering a contest and struggling to obtain something. We get our word *agony* from it. Who does Paul say he is contending for? How would knowing that someone has endeavored under such struggle for their sake encourage a believer?

Read Acts 22:17-21. Note how radically different Paul's thinking and actions were toward believers before he met Christ. Now look back at our Colossians passage today. How does the gospel work itself out in how we think about and treat others?

Read Col. 3:14. What binds Christians together in unity? What other verses in the Bible speak to the unity of believers in the gospel?

Apply: One of the discipleship goals at Richland Creek is to love others through our ministry (1 Cor. 12:7). How have you sought to encourage others through prayer, encouragement, love, and unity this week?

Pray: God, give me the strength to endure struggle for the sake of Your will and Your church. Help our church to be knit together in love, building one another up, firm in the assurance of our Savior's love as we serve one another.

Day 3: Colossians 2:3

Today we will see how it is in Christ that we find all the treasures of knowledge and wisdom. This was not just Paul's message, but the truth revealed at the beginning of time and creation.

Read Prov. 8:27-36. Here Solomon personifies wisdom and ties it back to the creation account in Genesis. According to John 1:1-3, who was involved in creating all things, and how does this tie into Proverbs 8 and Colossians 2:3?

How do these truths about Jesus relate to Paul's goal of maturity for the Colossians and us?

Read Philippians 3:7-8. How did Paul's life exemplify his teaching to the Colossians about Jesus being a treasure?

Apply: In Christ, we have all we ever need. Have you lived your life this week with Jesus as your treasure, or have you behaved as if you had to earn something in this world to attain true worth?

Pray: Lord, I join Paul in exalting You in Your greatness. Thank You that in Christ I have all I need. There is no other pursuit more worthy than Him. If there are things in my life which I have put too much worth in, show them to me, Lord, and help me to remove these idols from between us.

Day 4: Colossians 2:4-5

Today we will see that the Christian that is not progressing in maturity is at risk of attack.

According to verse 4, why does Paul want the Colossians to know of his struggle, his desire for their unity, and their assurance of the treasures of Christ? Why does he tell them these things?

How would spiritual maturity help the Colossians to defend themselves from “plausible arguments” (literally “confident speech” in the original language)?

What is at risk, then, for the church member who is not growing in maturity, who is not firm in their faith? See also Heb. 13:9 and Jude 1:18-19.

Apply: Paul was absent, but his heart was with them. This tapestry of life, woven by God, brings about real and deep relationships with others called by grace to faith in Christ. How will you plan to regularly engage with the body of Christ to grow in your relationships with other believers?

Pray: God, I praise You for the work You are doing to sow the most beautiful quilt of love in the hearts of Your people. Give me a heart like Yours that cares for others, that seeks to encourage, serve, and be concerned for others.

Day 5: Ephesians 6:10-18

We close our study this week with a passage of Scripture that also highlights the importance of spiritual maturity in defending against the enemy.

While we realize that we ultimately get our strength from the Lord and His power, what role are we asked to play in defending against the adversary's attacks?

We tend to concern ourselves with what we see. How do the words of Paul here open our minds to the fight we engage in with invisible forces?

Truth, righteousness, the gospel, faith, salvation, and the Word of God are the weapons of our warfare against evil. How do we use these weapons, according to verse 18?

Apply: Like any soldier that enters the battlefield, preparation is necessary. How will you prepare to fight the spiritual fight today?

Pray: Father in heaven, we can only become godly by Your grace. It is Your grace that sanctifies us and gives us the desire to seek Your kingdom. Help me to never get over Your grace. Transform me, Lord, into Your image, not for my sake, but for the sake of Your Son's name.



Colossians 2:6-15

Paul loves his fellow believers deeply, as evidenced by the opening verses of chapter two that we studied last week. As we continue further into Colossians 2, Paul reveals the purpose behind his letter to the church at Colossae. Epaphras likely shared with Paul that dangerous teaching threatened the church. Paul, feeling burdened in love, wants to correct and encourage through writing this letter. His message begins simply enough: The believers in Colossae have everything they need in Christ alone.

This sentiment is not a dated message for a church long ago; it is a word for us, in our generation and time! The message we find in chapter two is needed as much now as it was then. Warren Wiersbe explains, “I hear too many voices telling me that I need something more than Jesus Christ—some exciting experience, some new doctrine, some addition to my Christian experience. But Paul affirms that what I need is appropriation of what I already have in Christ. ‘And ye are complete in Him.’”

Prepared by Nicole Caldwell

Day 1: Colossians 2:6-7

At the close of last week, Paul implied that the Colossians, by virtue of being possessed by Christ, had everything they needed (2:3) and, therefore, should not be tempted by the teachings of the heretics in their midst (2:4). Paul continues this train of thought in 2:6-7 as he calls them back to the foundational teaching passed on to them by Epaphras when they first became Christians.

What does it mean to “receive”?

In light of what we have received, we are called to action. What are the action words that follow at the end of verse 6 and into verse 7?

What does it mean to live a life “rooted” in Christ?

Apply: God saved you in Christ Jesus. God alone rooted and founded you. As you actively trust in Him, you will inevitably become a person overflowing with thanksgiving.

Pray: Ephesians 3:17-19, which says, “so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”

Day 2: Colossians 2:8

Paul gives warning to the church regarding what influences their thinking and beliefs. He writes in the imperative mood, which means this is a command, with strong language to convey Paul's seriousness in the heresy being taught at Colossae.

The verb which begins this verse, translated “see to it,” is used but translated differently in Mark 13:9 and Phil. 3:2. View those texts to gain a good understanding of the range of this word.

What does it mean to be taken captive?

Where does the “philosophy” and “empty deceit” that Paul warns against come from?

Apply: Worldly philosophy, even when cloaked in Christian language, often makes much of us and little of Christ. Be careful of teachings that honor men more than Jesus.

Pray: Thank You, God, for Your Word. Thank You that it is how we can know You. Guide us in our study of it and in our pursuit of knowing You so that we may recognize the deceit of false teachers and false doctrine.

Day 3: **Colossians 2:9-13 & Romans 6:1-11**

Paul continues to remind the church at Colossae that they have everything they need in Jesus. They have been forgiven of their sins by the saving power of Christ and the crucifixion. They live a new life in Christ and do not need additional rituals or practices to complete their salvation. Salvation is complete in Christ. Death and sin have been conquered.

The phrase “you have been filled in him” means that Christ gives us everything we need. How, according to verse 10, is Christ able to do this?

What is true of us regarding our sin, according to verses 12-13? What happened to make this possible?

Read Romans 6:1-11. Christ saves us from the mastery of sin. We are no longer slaves. How has that saving power changed your life?

Apply: The power of sin has been broken for those who believe. The old self was crucified with Christ; therefore, we are no longer slaves to sin. We now have the power of the Holy Spirit to grow progressively in sanctification that results in conformity to God’s moral law in thought and action.

Pray: Thank You, God, for the gift of Your Son. Thank You for his atoning death on the cross that has cleansed me of my sin so that I may stand as righteous before You. I praise You for the power of the Holy Spirit that dwells in me, giving me power over sin. God, please convict my heart of unrepentant sin so that I can continue to be sanctified in Christ.

Day 4: **Colossians 2:14**

Paul continues the sentence that began in verse 13, explaining how the forgiveness of sin required debt to be paid. God's forgiveness of the sinner involves the cancellation of debt.

Define the word "debt."

In our culture, what is expected when a debt is owed? Who is responsible?

In the Greco-Roman world, a "record of debt" as used here by Paul was a written note of indebtedness. In using this word picture, Paul says that we owed our debt to God because of our sin. What thoughts come to mind as you picture your debt note being nailed to the cross of Jesus?

Apply: Jesus paid the debt of our sin on the cross. Because of Christ, our sins have been blotted out (Acts 3:19).

Prayer: Thank You, Jesus, for Your death on the cross. May I never take for granted the debt You paid on my behalf. Lord, encourage me to share the gift of Your salvation with others so that they too may know the deep love You have for them.

Day 5: Colossians 2:15

As we wrap up this week's section, Paul works to remind the church of their power over the false teachings and human philosophies they were encountering. The church was tempted to submit to spirits and false worship. Paul, though, reminds them of Christ's victory over Satan. We are likewise reminded that Christ has already won the battle against these spirits. The cross of Christ marks the decisive defeat of demonic powers; therefore, they should not enslave us.

Read John 12:31-32 and Jude 6. Who are the “rulers and authorities” over whom Jesus has triumphed?

If the “rulers and authorities” are disarmed, then what power can they claim over believers?

Read Eph. 6:12-17. The enemy and his allies are working, but we are not defenseless in the face of spiritual enemies. What does Paul remind believers that they have access to in these verses?

Apply: Christ defeated and defanged Satan and his allies. Christ's victory means these powers have no authority in our lives.

Prayer: Father God, we are thankful for Your armor and the power we have in it to withstand evil. We praise You for the truth, righteousness, the gospel, faith, salvation, and Your Word. We thank You for the power we have in You against the enemy.



Colossians 2:16-23

Paul has reminded the believers at Colossae of the preeminence of Christ and that our salvation is rooted firmly in Christ alone – who He is and what He has done. Having made us alive together with Him (Col. 2:13) and having disarmed the forces of darkness that oppose us (Col. 2:15), there is no need for followers of Christ to participate in religious rituals trying to make ourselves look better before God and man.

False teachings, worldly philosophies, and man-made religion have always been a problem. They have always been at odds with the gospel. Paul acknowledged the gospel's impact in the lives of the Colossians, but he was also greatly concerned that some might shift from the hope of the gospel (Col. 1:23, 2:1), that they might fall into the trap of false teachings and meaningless rituals. Paul was not concerned with the crazy stuff that would be obvious, but the subtle things that might appear good (Col. 2:4, 2:23).

In our text this week, Paul warns the church to avoid practices that have no value in our walk with Christ. We are not to judge each other regarding useless practices. Followers of Christ are called to follow the “substance” of Christ, not the “shadows.”

Prepared by Mike Greene

Day 1: Colossians 2:16-23

Paul does not identify specific false teachers, but he describes a mixture of Jewish legalism and common pagan practices. It is also plausible that opinionated and influential people in the church may have been promoting rituals and practices that have no value in the Christian's walk with Christ. In your study today, look for things we should avoid and the reasons why.

“Therefore” connects this passage with what has come before. Review Col. 2:1-15. Underline or write down the action words that describe what Jesus has done for the believer

Paul addresses three dangerous things: legalism, asceticism, and mysticism. These are essential concepts to understand. If you are not intimately familiar with these words, look them up in a dictionary and write down a brief definition for each. As you read the text today, what examples does Paul give for these?

Why do you think people can be so fascinated with religious rituals? What are some ways people practice legalism, asceticism, and mysticism today?

Apply: Salvation is firmly rooted in who Christ is and what He has done. Prayerfully evaluate your walk with Christ. Do you rely on religious rituals to make yourself holy or to wrestle with a sinful habit? If so, what does that say about what Jesus has done for you?

Pray: Father, thank You that our salvation is Your work and that we are not left to our own efforts. Forgive us for the times we have trusted in man-made religion and useless practices. It is Christ alone who saves and makes us holy.

Day 2: Colossians 2:16-17

People can be very opinionated about what we eat and drink. In Colossae, the debate resembled questions about Jewish dietary laws. Paul's use of "festivals" likely refers to annual religious events and "new moons" to monthly observances. Keeping the Sabbath was an Old Testament requirement that is not repeated in the New Testament. While observing a Sabbath is a good thing when done for the right reason, it does not make you holy, nor does it save you. These were a "shadow" of Christ, and His "substance" has now been revealed. Our faith is in who Jesus is and what He has done.

Debates over food and drink usually center on things like clean versus unclean, meat sacrificed to idols (1 Corinthians 8-10), and alcohol use. What rituals or observances does Paul mention? What does he say about them?

Read 1 Tim. 4:1-5 and Rom. 14:1-4. Based on these passages, how would you respond to someone who judges others regarding what they eat and drink? What is the source of such judgment?

Why did Paul say that we should not let others judge us regarding the issues mentioned in verse 16?

Apply: Since Jesus has done the work to forgive and save us, it is not necessary to keep our own rules and regulations to make ourselves more acceptable; in fact, it is not even possible. Have you allowed others to impose religious requirements on you that go beyond God's commands? Do religious rituals make you feel more spiritual? Do you impose them on others?

Pray: Lord Jesus, help us be satisfied in You, in who You are and what You have done for us. Forgive us for times we have embraced man-made rules for the wrong reasons. Help us not to judge others regarding things that don't matter. May gospel truth prevail in our lives.

Day 3: Colossians 2:18-19

The word “disqualify” carries the idea of an umpire or a judge who removes a contestant from a sport because they do not follow the rules. Paul’s concern is that the purveyors of false teachings might turn believers away from following Christ and rob believers of their prize. There is no spiritual value in asceticism or self-abasement, and God forbids our dabbling in mystical things like the worship of angels, yet people are still fascinated with these things. According to Paul, the one who practices or promotes these things may seem super-spiritual, but they have false humility.

What reasons does Paul give to reject the one who insists on asceticism and worship of angels?

How would you respond if someone were to approach you with a new teaching that sounded good, yet they claimed the source to be a vision or their own “spiritual” feelings? How can you protect yourself from this trap? Is this any different than someone claiming to have some direct revelation from God outside of Scripture?

Paul refers to the false teacher as being puffed up and having a “sensuous” or a fleshly mind. Read Rom. 8:1-8 and 2 Tim. 3:1-5. What is the plight of the one who is fixed on things other than Christ?

Apply: Avoid any teacher or religious influencer who is disconnected from the Head. Christ is the Head, and we can only grow when we are connected to Him.

Pray: John 15:1-11 and offer this passage to God as a personal prayer.

Day 4: **Colossians 2:20-22**

The rest of the passage focuses on the nature of these attacks on our faith. People try to achieve holiness or spirituality through rigorous neglect, denying themselves of good things and even inflicting harm on themselves. This is actually a form of pride or false humility. Such rituals do not result in true holiness; in fact, they presume that the work of Christ is insufficient.

Paul challenges the Colossians to remember their experience in Christ. What things does Paul compare to advise his readers?

In what ways do people today profess Christ yet still live in the world?

How can denying your body nourish your soul? How can worldly wisdom and man-made religion help you grow in faith? Will following such rules set you free or keep you in bondage?

Apply: The believer in Christ becomes a new creation, raised to new life, made alive in Christ. The believer does not need rules and regulations to control his or her desires. The Holy Spirit gives us new desires.

Pray: Lord Jesus, please forgive me for the times I have tried to act holy when it is Your work that redeems and sustains me. Your grace is all-sufficient.

Day 5: Colossians 2:20-23

Paul has warned against trying to achieve spirituality through our efforts. Now, he gives some reasons why we should not give in to the temptation to rely on man-made regulations and rituals, including some that were previously a shadow of Christ. We are prone to rely on actions that we can see, measure, or even show off to feel better about ourselves.

What reasons does Paul give for avoiding “human precepts and teachings?”

Read Col. 2:13-14 again. For those who are united to Christ, has their guilt has been taken away? Why do people still turn to rituals and self-abasement to atone for sin or change sinful habits? Why is punishing yourself a useless exercise?

Read Rom. 6:1-14. Based on this text, is your identity based on your efforts or the work of Christ? Which verse convinces you of your answer? What reasons does Paul give for trusting Christ rather than religious rituals?

Apply: True teachings will always be rooted in who Jesus is and what He has done. Examine yourself to see if you are being influenced by teachings not based on Christ and His gospel. Rather than fight your desires, ask God to change your desires and renew your mind. The power of Christ does more than help us fight our old desires; He gives us a new heart with new desires.

Prayer: Thank You, Father, for the freedom we have in Christ. Thank you for the Holy Spirit who never leaves us and who guides Your children into all truth. Help me to avoid false teachings. Help me to make choices based on truth and not based on my feelings.



Colossians 3:1-14

The beginning of chapter 3 marks a transition in Paul's letter to the church at Colossae. He has finished his disputation against the false teaching and wrong doctrine which had crept into the church. He now turns his attention to how the believer can lead a life that exemplifies correct doctrine and the proper understanding of who Christ is. It is one thing to say you believe in Christ, His preeminence, and what He has done on behalf of sinners. It is another to lead a life demonstrating those beliefs daily through all the challenging interactions of life. Paul provides practical application in these verses, using the metaphor of taking off and putting on clothing to describe the behavior of godly living for the believer. We have been appropriately clothed in Christ and now must strive to "walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him, bearing fruit in every good work..." (Col. 1:10).

Prepared by Faith Cross

Day 1: Colossians 3:1-4

These verses mark a transition, reminding the Colossians (and us) of the fundamental truths of life in Christ before leading into the behaviors of godly living. The believer has been raised to a new life in Christ and now has the ability and responsibility to seek the eternal things of life.

Read verses 1-2. What does it mean to “set” your minds? Is this a deliberate action? What should the believer be setting his or her mind on?

What “things above” do you think Paul is referring to? Look at verses 1-2, ahead to verse 10, and also at Matt. 6:33 for help answering.

Read verses 3-4. Why should the believer be focusing their minds on things that are above? Where is the life of the believer found?

Apply: While we live as believers here on earth, circumstances distract us constantly. We must consistently turn our eyes from the earthly to the heavenly, remembering that Jesus is our life, strength, and hope. Our Savior is living, available to us now, and will return soon.

Pray: Help me, God, to set my mind on things above. I confess this is hard for me in this world of distractions. I ask You to give me a heavenly perspective because there is so much more to this life than what I see with my human eyes. Strengthen me to use my mind to honor You.

Day 2: Colossians 3:5-6

Paul reminded the Colossian believers that they have a new life hidden in Christ. They have the responsibility to use their minds to honor the Lord. Now Paul will address their behaviors, the everyday struggles of living on this earth.

Consider the phrase “put to death.” How seriously should Christians take the presence of sin in their lives? Read Rom. 8:13. What is the warning in these verses?

What specific sins are listed in verse 5, and what do they have in common? What does Paul label these sins at the end of the verse?

Read Matt. 26:41. What instructions (or commands) is the believer given about handling the temptations of the flesh?

Apply: Sexual purity is important to God. We must be on guard for the temptation to fall into this type of idolatry. The focus of our lives should be worshiping Him, not satisfying ourselves. We must be praying and acting now to remove from our lives the sins keeping us from living for Him.

Pray: Lord, I know that one of the fruits of the Spirit is self-control. Help me to not give in to the desires of the flesh but to be led by the Spirit in honoring You with my mind and body.

Day 3: Colossians 3:7-10

Paul has addressed the sins of sexual immorality committed in the body. Now he gives the believer a second list of sinful behaviors to avoid. Look closely at these attitudes and behaviors of the heart.

What behaviors must the believer “put away” in verse 8? Does the believer experience these behaviors in isolation or a relationship with others? Using a dictionary, take some time to define each of the words in this list.

Read James 3:8-10. How do these verses help your understanding of our passage?

What contrasting metaphors is Paul using in verses 9 and 10? In verse 10, look carefully at the verbs in the phrase “which is being renewed in knowledge?” What does this choice of verbs indicate to us about the process of transformation in the believer’s life?

Apply: Once again, we must be active in removing sin from our lives. It will not just disappear on its own without effort on our part. We must align our walk with our new identity. Our interactions in relationship with others, specifically how we use our words, is of critical importance.

Pray: Lord, I confess, I do not always use my words wisely. Let me heed the warning found in James 3:6 — “The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body.” As I grow to know You more, You will continue to shape me to look more like Your Son.

Day 4: **Colossians 3:11**

Paul makes a statement now that he has made in many of his other writings. Being “in Christ” with others is unifying. Human divisions disappear in Him. The Spirit of God in the new man is the same, regardless of external differences.

Read Rom. 10:12. What words are repeated from our verses in Colossians? Are these words referring to nationality, religion, or culture?

Read Gal. 5:6. What words are repeated from our verse? Are these words referring to nationality, religion, or culture?

Greeks considered Scythians to be violent, uncivilized, inferior people. Why do you think Paul mentions them here? Is he addressing nationality, religion, or culture?

Apply: In one complex sentence, Paul was addressing barriers that create divisions in the church. He understood the human mind that wanted to classify and rank. But the believer, a new creation, is not classified as anything but “in Christ” with other believers. We must promote the unity of Christ, not the divisions of man.

Pray: Lord, You are the creator of diversity and the giver of unity. In Your Son, I have harmony and equality. Let me rejoice in the uniqueness and diversity of the body and contribute to its unity with my words and actions.

Day 5: Colossians 3:12-14

Paul has addressed any barriers the church at Colossae may have been promoting. Now he gives more practical advice on the attitudes and behaviors that encourage unity amongst the church.

Look at verse 12. What metaphor does he recall from earlier in these verses (see verse 10)? Is there action on the part of the believer here?

Take some time to compare the list of attitudes and behaviors in verses 12-13 with the list in verse 8. How do changing these attitudes and behaviors affect our relationships?

In verse 14, what binds everything else together? Think on John 3:16. How can the love of God in sending Jesus motivate us?

Apply: God's love for us motivated Him to send His only Son to die in our place. Our love for Him should inspire us to love others. We show love for others through our interactions of kindness, compassion, forgiveness, etc. (see verse 12!). This is an incredibly practical passage on how to live with others in a way that promotes unity.

Prayer: Lord, my example for living is Your Son, Jesus — for “though He was in the form of God, He did not count equality with God something to be grasped, but emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant...” (Phil. 2:6). Help me to put off behaviors that dishonor You and divide (anger, malice, slander, obscene talk), and put on behaviors that honor You and promote unity (compassion, kindness, humility, patience, forgiveness).



Prayer Week

As we look ahead to Life Group meetings on Oct. 31, we're going to have the second of our three meetings this quarter devoted to praying for ourselves, our groups, and our church.

As we prepare our hearts this week for our time of prayer in Life Groups, instead of moving ahead in our Colossians study, we'll briefly review what we've learned and take time to reflect. Feel free to use the suggestions below as you move through this week; next week, we'll pick back up in Colossians 3.

Day 1: Re-read Colossians 2:8-15. Thank God that you have been given everything you need in Christ.

Day 2: Re-read Colossians 3:1-4. Pray for those in your Life Group to set their minds on Christ.

Day 3: Re-read Colossians 3:12-14. Pray for yourself and your family to put on the attributes of Jesus.

Day 4: Look ahead to Colossians 3:15-17. Pray for our church to embody the peace and love of Christ to one another.

Day 5: Read Philippians 1:8-11. Pray for believers around the world to abound in love and fruitfulness for the kingdom.



Colossians 3:15-4:1

“I’m saved! I’m part of the family of God! What do I do now?” Thank God, He didn’t give us a new life in Christ and then leave us without instructions on how to live. This week’s study is focused on the practical aspects of our new life so that we may honor God in our relationships and witness.

Paul has already reminded us that we need a heavenly perspective to replace our earthly mindset. Then he listed worldly characteristics that we need to leave behind, followed by those we should intentionally put on: compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, forgiveness, and love, which he says “binds everything together.”

This week, as we study the second half of chapter 3, Paul is teaching us how to walk as individuals, families, and as part of the body of Christ. Our walk must match our new way of thinking.

Prepared by Chuck Bounds

Day 1: Colossians 3:15

Review Col. 3:12-15. Paul speaks to the church as a body, which includes the individuals that make it up. He tells us to «let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts.» Paul used the phrase «put on,» referring to actively putting on, or wearing, certain character traits. Now he is saying «let» certain things happen. The Holy Spirit does His work in our lives when we seek to imitate Christ.

Read Galatians 5:22. Where does the «peace of Christ» come from?

What needs to occur in the church body and in our hearts for peace to take root? Look closely at verses 14-15, Eph. 4:1-3, and Phil. 4:6-7 for examples.

Paul adds a command at the end of verse 15. What is the command, and how will it contribute to unity and peace in the body?

Apply: Paul said that we, as followers of Christ, are «called in one body,» a picture of unity. The body of Christ must display all of the character traits of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is vitally important that each follower show a spirit of peace, unity, and thankfulness. How are you doing?

Pray: Lord Jesus, thank You for including me in Your salvation and for making me a part of Your body, the church. Help me to live in peace and to share Your peace with others.

Day 2: Colossians 3:16

According to Hebrews 4:12, God's Word is living and active. This Word is an essential part of God's plan to redeem and sanctify us. Through His Word, we know what God expects from us in our relationship with Him, and we know how to be fruitful members of the body of Christ.

Read John 8:31. How does this verse relate to today's passage?

Paul speaks of letting God's Word «dwell in you richly.» What does this mean, and what steps can you take to have God's Word dwell within you?

When you have God's Word dwelling in you, how are you to use it within the body of Christ, according to verse 16?

Apply: According to John 8:31, faithful followers of Christ «abide» in God's Word. To abide is to live or dwell. The idea is to spend a significant amount of time listening to God through reading and meditating on His Word. When God's Word permeates your life, you can use it to edify others in the church and glorify God.

Pray: Lord, guide me by Your Word. Open my mind to understand it and soften my heart to love it. Help me use Your Word to lead others to know You and grow as a disciple of Christ.

Day 3: Colossians 3:17, 23-24

There is much debate these days over wages for entry-level jobs, but little is said about developing strong work ethics. How important is it for a Christian to work hard and strive for excellence? In today's verses, Paul gives us advice about how a follower of Christ should work and why his or her work is important.

Read verse 17. Who does Paul say we are representing by everything we say and do? Who should we thank in everything we say and do?

In verse 23, Paul commands us to put our heart into our work because we are working for _____ and not for _____.

Read verse 24. Paul tells us that when we put our heart into our work, a reward awaits us. What is that reward? Who will give this reward?

Apply: There are many reasons people work: provision, self-gratification, pride, wealth. As followers of Christ, we should work hard, do a good job, and put our hearts into whatever we do. Our work certainly benefits our families and us, but the primary reason for our diligence should be to glorify our Lord Jesus and our Heavenly Father.

Pray: Dear Lord, thank You for allowing us to serve You, and thank You for the abilities You have given us to work. Remind me each day to do my best, and help me always to be mindful that it is ultimately You who gets the glory for all my actions.

Day 4: **Colossians 3:18-21**

In today's Scripture passage, Paul instructs believers on how we should conduct ourselves in our relationships within the family. Specifically, Paul addresses four groups of people in the family. We are called to follow these principles «in the Lord» for the sake of honoring God our Father and maintaining godly relationships.

What is the attitude that a Christian wife should have toward her husband? (See also Eph. 5:22-24 and 1 Pet. 3:1-6)

What instructions are given to a Christian husband? (See also Eph. 5:25-33 and 1 Pet. 3:7)

What command is given to children in the home? What command is given to fathers? What is the reason for each command?

Apply: Living in harmony with our families is very important because it pleases our Heavenly Father. These instructions from Paul begin with proper attitudes conducive to building godly relationships within the family. The way we relate to our family members is reflective of how we relate to our Heavenly Father, who gives and expects love, kindness, humility, and faithfulness.

Pray: Dear Heavenly Father, please forgive me when I treat my family in selfish, hurtful, and unloving ways. Help me to follow Your commands and love my family as You have loved me. Thank You for Your lovingkindness in adopting me into Your family.

Day 5: Colossians 3:22-4:1

In today's verses, Paul guides the relationships between masters and bondservants, which were prevalent in the Roman Empire. However, we may learn from these verses godly principles to relate to our employer or supervisor. Or, if we are the boss, we can learn how to treat those who work under our authority with consideration.

Read verse 22. What instructions are given to bondservants? How is Jesus an example for them (See 1 Pet. 2:18-21)?

In the second part of verse 22, Paul tells us not to have a fake attitude before our master/employer. What are the two alternative perspectives which Paul teaches us to display?

In chapter 4, verse 1, Paul speaks to Christian masters, employers, and supervisors, saying that they should treat those who work for them justly and fairly. What is the reason or motive Paul gives for this command?

Apply: Whichever side of the employee/employer scenario you happen to be on, it is essential to honor these instructions that Paul gives for the sake of glorifying God and for the sake of our witness. What attitudes or actions do you need to change?

Pray: Dear Father, I want to honor You in my attitudes and actions as I work. Your Word tells me that everything I do is ultimately for Your glory. Please work through me so that my work ethic and attitudes match my Lord Jesus Christ's, that others may be drawn to Him.



Colossians 4:2-28

The ending of Colossians is very personal and pastoral. Paul has spent most of the last three chapters spelling out what we believe and why that makes a difference in our lives. In his final words, he gives pointed instructions to the Colossian church, which focuses on living out what they have learned. Paul is helping his people, and by extension, us, understand what it means to be faithful disciples who love God with everything they have and love others as themselves.

Prepared by Jase Brown

Day 1: Colossians 4:2-4

Being “watchful in prayer” is a common theme in the Bible, especially in the New Testament. Paul is asking us to be steadfast in prayer and to keep watch as we do so. Specifically, he asks the Colossians to pray for his ability to witness. Prayer and evangelism are tied closely together here because prayer is the foundation of evangelism.

What does it mean to be watchful in prayer? Check out Matt. 26:41. How does this relate?

What role does giving thanks through prayer play in our spiritual growth?

We don't often think of Paul “needing” prayer for evangelism, so, based on verse 4, why does he ask for it? What other reasons might we have for praying for evangelism?

Apply: Our goal as believers is to be the best worshipper that we can be. In this passage, our worship takes the form of continual connection with God through prayer and obedience in being faithful witnesses. Prayer leads us to the heart of God, which then leads us to proclaim his goodness.

Pray: Father, I know You love me and hear me. I am grateful for every blessing You give. I pray that I would keep watch over myself that I may reflect Your glory well. I pray that You would give me opportunities to communicate Your saving grace to the world around me.

Day 2: Colossians 4:5-6

We will continue with the theme of evangelism. Paul gives us instruction on how we should handle ourselves towards “outsiders.” By this, Paul means anyone not in the family of faith. How we treat those who are not believers will be a megaphone to how the world views you, your church, and even Jesus himself. We must remember that we are God’s ambassadors. Paul is trying to help us be the best ambassador possible.

What does a life characterized by “walking in wisdom” look like? Consider what you know of the book of Proverbs and other wisdom books of the Old Testament when you answer this.

In our day, “speech” encompasses more than just verbal communication. What other areas does this include?

Can you think of examples of ungracious speech? How effective is that type of speech usually?

Apply: Paul wants us to understand two things here. First, the way we live our lives. Second, the way we communicate. Both must reflect God’s character. God is patient, merciful, and kind. We must live and deliver the truth, but we must do it with grace!

Pray: Lord, I am imperfect, but I desire to honor You. Please help me understand how to communicate with both truth and grace so that when I share the good news, it is understood as good news.

Day 3: Colossians 4:7-14

Paul mentions many traveling companions in this section, and two, in particular, Onesimus and Aristarchus, are excellent examples of the Christian life. Onesimus was the lowest in society as a runaway slave. Yet, he gained the whole world after meeting Paul and coming to faith. As for what we know of Aristarchus, he was living a comfortable life before hearing the gospel, and God called him to put it all on the line going as far as being a fellow prisoner with Paul.

Like Onesimus, how did the Lord redeem you from your way of life before you knew him? How does his redemption encourage you toward obedience?

Like Aristarchus, what things did you once consider valuable that you put away for the gospel? How would you communicate the value of knowing Jesus over having these things to a lost family member or friend?

How can your story of coming to know the Lord be used to encourage other believers and glorify Jesus among those who don't yet know him?

Apply: Each of us who knows the Lord has a past that can reflect the glory of God. Paul sends these two to encourage the church toward further obedience. When we share our stories, this very thing happens. Regardless of what happened in your past, use your testimony to build the kingdom.

Pray: Dear Jesus, I know You have a perfect plan for me and that You met me at just the right time in my life. I know You are working all things together for my good. Please help me be open and share with others how I have seen You at work in me for our good and Your glory.

Day 4: Colossians 4:15-18

The last two names Paul mentions are Nympha and Archippus. It seems that both of them had a crucial role to play, which Paul was eager to encourage them in. Nympha provided a space for the people of God to meet. Archippus's ministry is less defined here, though we know from the book of Philemon that he is likely an elder in the church. Paul's encouragement was to continue strong in what the Lord had given them.

In verse 15, the church is in the house, but it is not the house itself. What do we mean when we say, as we often do, that the people are the church?

What do we miss out on when we don't join God in his work and fulfill what he has called us to?

Like Archippus, is the Lord calling you to begin or follow through on something He has given you?

Apply: God has made each one of us with certain personalities, desires, talents, and, most importantly, spiritual gifts so that we can be capable servants for him. Our job is to be attentive to the opportunities that he has laid before us and be faithful in them. Likewise, it is just as important (or perhaps even more important) for us to finish those tasks well.

Pray: Gracious King, the Word tells me that You have prepared for me ahead of time good deeds that I should walk in them. Please help me recognize why I am gifted the way I am and for what ministry You have made me. Guide me so that I can begin, sustain, and finish this work for Your glory.

Day 5: Colossians 4:15-18

In his final instructions, Paul encourages this church to pass on what he has shared in his letter and tells them to likewise pay attention to a letter coming from Laodicea. This is likely a lost letter or possibly a reference to the book of Ephesians. Either way, Paul understood that the book of Colossians carried authority and importance for the people of God, which is why he authenticated it by writing verse 18 by hand rather than through a scribe.

Why would Paul need to “sign” his letter? What would be the danger in just “trusting” that people could tell if it were from him?

It seems these letters circulated from town to town. How does this help you understand how the New Testament came to be?

Would learning more about the Bible itself help you value it more in your life and your study?

Apply: The Word of God is a precious treasure given to the church by God through faithful men who were inspired by the Spirit. As the people of God, we must honor it as God’s truth and pay close attention to obey all that God commands through it. While we don’t worship the Bible, we do worship the one who wrote it.

Pray: Lord God, help me value Your Word more in my life. May I seek not only Your wisdom there, but may I encounter You in its pages. Shape me through careful study and application to be more like You every day.



Philemon

Does Christian brotherly love work even in extremely tense situations? For example, could it work between a prominent slave owner and one of his runaway slaves? Paul believes it will! He writes a rather personal letter to Philemon, his beloved brother and fellow worker, on behalf of Onesimus, a thief, a runaway and formerly useless slave, but now Philemon's brother in Christ. With tact and tenderness, Paul pleads with Philemon to take Onesimus back in the same warm way he would receive Paul himself. Any debt Onesimus owes, Paul promised to make good. Knowing Philemon to be a man of God, Paul was confident that brotherly love and forgiveness would win the day.

Paul had led Onesimus to Christ, and by God's grace, Onesimus had become a real asset to Paul. Since he was now bound to follow Christ wholeheartedly, Onesimus had a responsibility to return to Philemon. This letter shows a beautiful picture of what the Father has done for us in His Son Jesus Christ.

Prepared by Jamie O'Brien

Day 1: Philemon 1:1-7

Paul's ministry was a team effort, and he would often include the names of his "fellow workers" when he wrote his letters. At the time of this writing, local bodies of believers met in homes. Philemon likely lived in Colossae, and his house was large enough to serve as a meeting place for the church there. Paul had won Philemon to faith in Christ, and Philemon became a blessing to other Christians.

In his greeting, Paul expressed his love for his Christian friends. How did he describe himself? Based on the occasion for this letter, is there significance to his description?

It was customary for Paul to open his letters with praise and thanksgiving to God. In his thanksgiving, how did Paul describe Philemon?

What is the content of Paul's prayers for Philemon?

Apply: Philemon was likely wealthy but also hospitable and willing to face the persecution that would come as being openly identified as a believer. In his thanksgiving, Paul described his friend as a man of love and faith toward Christ Jesus and His saints. Philemon was a man of God who "refreshed" God's people through his words and work.

Pray: Lord, equip me through the power of Your Holy Spirit to be an effective witness for Jesus. Help me grow in the knowledge, wisdom, and love of our Lord and Savior.

Day 2: Philemon 1:8-10

Estimates indicate that there were more than sixty million slaves in the Roman Empire. Men and women were treated like cattle, auctioned off to the highest bidder. A slave had no rights at all. If a slave ran away, the master would register the name and description of the runaway slave with the officials and put them on a “wanted” list. Based on Roman law, a master could put a runaway slave to death if he desired. A Roman slave had no standing in society.

Read through Philemon 1:1-25, focusing on verses 8-10. Paul could have used his apostolic authority and ordered his friend to obey. What did Paul do instead of ordering Philemon? What did he base his appeal on?

In verse 10, how does Paul describe his relationship with Onesimus?

How had Onesimus’ standing changed before God and before God’s people?

Apply: In Jesus Christ, there is “neither bond nor free” (Gal. 3:28). Philemon was a “refreshing” believer, and Paul wanted to give him an opportunity to refresh his heart. Philemon had been a blessing to many saints, and now he could be a blessing to one of his slaves who had just been saved. How might you refresh the hearts of your brothers and sisters in Christ?

Pray: Dear Father, Your Word tells me that I am no longer a slave to sin and death. I have been set free by the sacrifice of Christ, and I now have a new standing before God and God’s people. Help me, Lord, to stand firm in Your grace.

Day 3: Philemon 1:10-16

As you review today's passage, notice how Paul lovingly and tenderly persuades his friend Philemon that he should receive his disobedient slave and forgive him. Onesimus was no longer just a slave; he was now Paul's son in the faith. This did not alter Onesimus' legal position as a slave or cancel his debt to the law and his master. But it did mean that Onesimus had a new standing before God and before God's people, and Philemon had to consider this.

Paul said that Onesimus, whose name means “useful,” was formerly useless but now useful to Philemon and Paul. Why was Onesimus now so much more useful than before?

Paul loved Onesimus and would have kept him in Rome as a fellow worker, but he did not want to tell Philemon what to do. What was it that motivated Paul to make this voluntary sacrifice? Why do you think Paul sent Onesimus back?

If you could summarize Paul's request into one word, what was he asking Philemon to do?

Apply: Even though there is no mention in this letter that the cause of Onesimus' transformation was the gospel, it does illustrate how the gospel transforms the lives of everyone who places their faith in Christ. Elsewhere Paul wrote, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come” (2 Cor. 5:17). How has the gospel of Jesus Christ transformed your life?

Pray: Dear Father, I thank you for the transforming power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I pray for my brothers and sisters in Christ at the Creek that we would stand firm in the freedom that we have in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Day 4: Philemon 1:17-25

In today's passage, Paul makes his final appeal to Philemon. The word translated "partner" in verse 17 is koinonia, which means "to have in common," and can also mean "fellowship." Even though Paul was Philemon's "partner," he could not leave Rome and go to Colossae. But he could send Onesimus as his representative, telling Philemon to "receive him as you would receive me." The word "receive" means "to receive into one's family circle." Onesimus's new standing in Christ made him Philemon's spiritual brother in the Lord, and they both had the same "spiritual father" – the apostle Paul.

In verses 17-19, what is Paul offering to do? How is this a picture of what Christ has done for us?

In verses 19-21, how does Paul use his special relationship with Philemon to encourage him to receive Onesimus?

Paul closes his letter with the usual personal requests and greetings. How does Paul encourage Philemon to follow His instructions?

Apply: God's people are so identified with Jesus Christ that God receives them as He receives His Son. We are "accepted in the beloved" (Eph. 1:6) and clothed in His righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21). We cannot approach God with any merit of our own, but God will receive us when we come to Him in Christ Jesus.

Pray: Dear Father, I am so grateful that I can do nothing to earn my salvation. I come to You in Christ Jesus, who paid a debt that He did not owe because I owed a debt I could not pay. You have clothed me with His righteousness and set me free.

Day 5: Philemon 1:1-25

The Epistle of Paul to Philemon is a beautiful analogy of the forgiveness we receive when we come to faith in Christ Jesus. Onesimus was guilty of a great transgression against Philemon and was motivated by Paul's love on his behalf. Paul laid aside His rights and became Onesimus' substitute by taking on his debt. By grace, Onesimus can be restored and placed in a new relationship with his master.

Onesimus was condemned by the law but saved by grace. As you review Philemon, explain how Paul's advocacy before Philemon illustrates Christ's work as our mediator before the Father.

How is this letter to Philemon different from Paul's other letters?

This letter is Paul's appeal to Philemon to receive Onesimus even as he would receive Paul. Why do you think Paul also addressed this letter to others in Philemon's circle?

Apply: As you review this wonderful letter, observe how Paul develops the transition from bondage to brotherhood that was accomplished by Christian love and forgiveness. Just as Philemon was shown mercy through the grace of Christ, so he must graciously show mercy and forgiveness to Onesimus, who left a slave but returned as a brother in Christ. How might you apply this to your life and in your relationship with others?

Pray: Dear Father, thank You that by Your grace I have been saved and forgiven of my sins. Help me to be quick to forgive those who have offended me or hurt me in some way.



Prayer Week

As we look ahead to Life Group meetings on Nov. 28, having finished our study of Colossians and Philemon, we're going to have the third of our three meetings this quarter devoted to praying for ourselves, our groups, and our church.

As we prepare our hearts this week for our time of prayer in Life Groups, we'll look back on what we've studied and take time to reflect. Feel free to use the suggestions below as you move through this week..

***Day 1:* Re-read Colossians 1:1-14. Praise the Lord for His mercy in your salvation and sanctification.**

***Day 2:* Re-read Colossians 1:15-20. Thank the Father for His gracious provision of the Son, the image of God.**

***Day 3:* Re-read Colossians 3:1-17. Pray for the Spirit's power to daily lift our minds to heaven, put away sin, and practice joyful righteousness.**

***Day 4:* Re-read Colossians 3:18-21. Pray for the families in our church to embrace God's purpose for them.**

***Day 5:* Read Philemon 4-7. Pray that we would encourage one another, as we head into the Christmas season, with the joy and comfort of Christ.**

