

Colossians Study

LESSON 1

MEET THE AUTHOR

FOCUS

1. How do you get to know someone?
 2. How do you know if someone has really changed?
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STUDY

READ COLOSSIANS 1:1-2

“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father.”

1. Colossians is a letter. Discuss the following:
 - a. Who is it written by?
 - b. How does he describe himself?
 - c. Who gave him this title?
 - d. Who is the letter written to?
2. Let's get to know the author and his background! To put the storyline in context, what are the gospel books about? What is the Book of Acts about?

READ ACTS 7:54-8:3 AND 9:1-2

3. Describe the situation of the early church. How did Stephen respond to his persecutors? Is this something you would expect?
4. If this was a movie, how would you describe the story's villain?
5. If this is all you knew about Saul and his life, would you be surprised to find out that he was the one who wrote the letter to the church in Colossians? Why?

READ ACTS 9:1-9

6. How did God get Saul's attention?
7. Saul had been persecuting the church, but when Jesus spoke to him, he said Saul was persecuting Jesus. What does this teach you about Jesus and the church?
8. What do you imagine Saul did for those three days without sight in Damascus? How do you think he felt?

READ ACTS 9:10-16

9. What does God say Paul was doing for those three days?
10. Describe the conversation between God and Ananias:
 - a. What does God command him to do?
 - b. How does Ananias feel about this?
 - c. Why does God tell him to do this?
11. How was Saul's life different after he regained his sight?
12. Was it challenging to believe Saul had genuinely changed? Explain. What was the proof of his conversion?

READ ACTS 9:17-31

13. There are thirteen letters in the New Testament written by the apostle Paul, once named Saul. Colossians is one of those letters that Paul wrote while in prison. Paul suffered most of his life, just as God said he would, in pursuit of sharing the gospel. Why would Paul continue to share about Jesus if he suffered so much?

14. Paul most likely never visited the church of Colossae. However, a man named Epaphras did after he heard and responded to the gospel message that Paul preached. Paul is writing to the church because Epaphras has shared with Paul about their faith in Jesus and their struggle with false teachings. Why would a letter from Paul be meaningful and helpful for this group?

APPLY

1. What lessons do you learn from this passage? Explain.
 2. What should you pray for based on this passage?
 3. What change would you like to implement in your life based on these verses?
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ACTIVITY

Storyboard: Have participants draw stick figure summaries after each section of Acts they read. Drawing out what happens in the story in an easy, humorous, and fun way helps participants engage in the lesson and ensures they understand what is happening as the story unfolds.

Colossians Study

LESSON 2

THANKSGIVING

FOCUS

1. Who in your life encourages you the most? How do they do this? How does it make you feel?
 2. How does it make you feel when people notice something good you are doing? Explain.
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STUDY

READ COLOSSIANS 1:1-8

1. Who is this letter from, and who is it for (v. 1-2)?
2. Why do Paul and his comrades thank God for the church (v. 3-4)?
3. What is the connection between faith in Jesus and the love for other Christians (v. 4)?
 - a. Give examples of what it looks like to love other believers.
 - b. When is it difficult to exercise this sort of love? Explain.
 - c. Why is it important to love others?
 - d. How is loving your brothers and sisters possible (v. 8)?

4. Verse 5 says the church has a hope laid up in heaven for them, a reference to their salvation and eternal life. Read John 3:16-18 below and then answer the following questions about salvation:

- a. Why does someone need to be saved?
- b. How do they receive salvation?

“16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. 18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.”

5. Where is the gospel (the good news of Jesus) being spread to (v. 6)? Who did the church hear the gospel message from (v. 7)? What does it mean that Epaphras was described as a “faithful minister?”

6. Why is it important to note that the church “heard” and “understood” the grace of God and truth (v. 6) when they heard the gospel message? How does understanding, not just hearing, impact their lives?

7. What does this section teach you about sharing the gospel?

- a. Have you ever shared the gospel with people who were not already Christians? Explain.
- b. Have you ever seen someone else share the gospel with someone who is not a Christian? Describe what happened.

8. What is the overall tone of the introduction to the letter?

- a. Why would Paul feel so connected to people he has never met?
- b. What does this section teach you about your relationship to other groups of believers?

APPLY

1. What lessons do you learn from this passage? Explain.
2. What should you pray for based on this passage?
3. What change would you like to implement in your life based on these verses?

ACTIVITY

Letter Writing: The apostle Paul began his greeting to the church with praise and thankfulness for the church people's faithfulness and love. Think of someone in your life who displays qualities of godliness. Take time to write that person a letter of gratitude, thank them for their encouragement in your life, and give specific examples of how they have impacted you.

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LESSON 3

A REQUEST TO GOD

FOCUS

1. What tips would you give someone wanting to learn how to pray?
 2. When you pray for people, who do you generally pray for, and what do you pray about for them? Explain.
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STUDY

READ COLOSSIANS 1:9-14

1. What does Paul and his comrades constantly pray over the church (v. 9)? What does this teach you about Paul and his priorities? How do you think the church felt hearing this sort of prayer?
2. According to verses 9-10, what will happen as the believers are filled with the knowledge of God's will? What does this practically look like?
3. How has growing in your knowledge of God affected your life? Explain.
4. Are there any areas in your relationship with the Lord that you desire to grow? Explain.
5. According to verse 12, why would the church give thanks to God?
 - a. What are we qualified for?
 - b. How is this qualification different from what we are used to in the world?

6. According to verses 13-14, what has Jesus done?

- a. What impact should that have on the way you live?

7. Paul is writing to a church, people who already believe this gospel message. Why do you think it is important to him to repeat this gospel message?

8. What part of Paul's prayer stands out to you the most? Why?

APPLY

1. What lessons do you learn from this passage? Explain.

2. What should you pray for based on this passage?

3. What change would you like to implement in your life based on these verses?

ACTIVITY

Prayer Journal: Write out a list of specific needs in your church congregation. Then, write a prayer to God, asking Him to meet those needs. As you pray, use Paul's writing to give you inspiration for what to pray for.

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LESSON 4

WHO IS CHRIST

FOCUS

1. What are the first three words that come to your mind when describing Jesus?
 2. How do those descriptions about Jesus affect how you think and live? Explain.
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STUDY

READ COLOSSIANS 1:15-23

1. Who is Jesus the image of (v. 15)? What does that teach you about getting to know God?
2. In verse 15, Paul says that Jesus is the firstborn of all creation. This description does not say “first created” but implies Jesus’ ownership and inheritance rights over all creation. What more do you learn about Jesus’ relationship with creation in verses 16-17?
3. In addition to being over all creation, what does verse 18 say Jesus is in charge of?
 - a. The "head" is the source of decision-making, authority, and control. What does it look like for the church to submit to Jesus’ authority?
4. What other qualities about Jesus does Paul list in verse 18?
 - a. John 1:1-3 says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.” How does this verse help you understand what it means for Jesus to be “the beginning.”

- b. How is Jesus the firstborn from the dead?

5. “Preeminent” means that Jesus is supreme and the Lord of all things. How does being the beginning and firstborn over the dead prove his preeminence?

- a. What priorities battle for supreme importance over your life?
- b. What does it or should it look like to live your life knowing Jesus is Lord?

6. Re-read verses 19-23. Reconciliation is when a relationship is repaired between two groups. What relationship is described as being reconciled in this passage? How is this done?

7. Below, create a list of how Paul describes someone before and after reconciliation, then discuss what these words mean and how this identity change is possible.

Before Reconciliation (v. 21) / After Reconciliation (v. 22)

8. In verse 23, what descriptions does Paul give for those who genuinely believe?

- a. Paul is not implying you can lose your salvation, but that genuine faith is built on a solid foundation and understanding of *who Jesus is* and the gospel message. Re-read Colossians 1:15-23 and create a list below describing everything Paul shares about Jesus’ identity.
- b. Which of these descriptions of Jesus’ identity are easiest for you to trust and live out, and which are hardest?

APPLY

1. What lessons do you learn from this passage? Explain.
2. What should you pray for based on this passage?
3. What change would you like to implement in your life based on these verses?

ACTIVITY

Last Man Standing: After participants list what they have learned about Jesus' identity in question 8, have them stand in a circle. Using a ball, have participants pass the ball to one another three times. On the third toss, the person who receives the ball will share one thing they learned about Jesus. The group will continue the pattern until someone has nothing new to add; then, the participant with no new information will sit down. The ball will go back into play, starting with the person who spoke last. The winner will be the person who shared the last piece of non-repeated information about Jesus.

Colossians Study

LESSON 5

THE MYSTERY REVEALED

FOCUS

1. What do people like about mysteries? Is there anything to dislike about them?
 2. When it comes to faith, does God work more mysteriously or in more certain and knowable ways?
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STUDY

READ COLOSSIANS 1:24-29

1. Reread verses 24-25. Jesus suffered in his ministry on earth. What was "lacking" was the future suffering of Jesus' followers for the gospel message's sake. Paul says he is suffering for the church to propel that message further. Read the verse. How is suffering a part of God's will for Paul?

"But the Lord said to him [Ananias], "Go, for he [Paul] is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." Acts 9:15-16

2. How does Paul view God's plan for his life (v. 24)? Why do you think he responds this way to suffering?
3. When you think of your life, do you usually embrace the trials of this world and see them as opportunities to become more like Jesus or do you try to flee from them? Explain. How is your reaction similar to or different from Paul's? Why do you think that is?

4. Re-read verses 25-27. What is the mystery that has now been revealed?

- a. What do you know about how God revealed his presence and dwelt with His people in the Old Testament?
- b. Why would this mystery be revolutionary to those hearing this message?
- c. What does it practically mean for Christ to be “in you”?

5. Re-read verses 28-29. What is Paul’s goal for the church people? How do warning (counseling) and teaching with godly wisdom help this goal?

6. How can the church help its members become fully mature in Christ? How can you or are you a part of that mission both as a recipient and giver?

READ COLOSSIANS 2:1-5

7. Why did Paul write the letter to the church (v. 1-2)?

- a. What is found in Christ (v. 2-3)?
- b. Who is the treasure for?

8. Why does Paul want the church to be firmly rooted in the knowledge of the gospel (v. 4)?

- a. What are some things that lead Christians to false beliefs? What can be done to prevent this?
- b. Do you think you know the teachings of Jesus well enough to quickly identify when someone is teaching them falsely?

APPLY

1. What lessons do you learn from this passage? Explain.
2. What should you pray for based on this passage?
3. What change would you like to implement in your life based on these verses?

ACTIVITY

Guess the Mystery Item: Bring a mystery item like an unusual fruit (i.e., a dragon fruit would work great!) and keep it concealed in some container. Ask participants to guess what you may have brought. Next, have a volunteer place their hand in the container and describe what they feel without looking. Next, take the mystery item out to see if they guessed correctly. This activity can work on any object but make it challenging. If you brought a less-known food item, ask the group what they suppose the inside looks or tastes like. Try to have only members who have never experienced the food item answer. Reveal what the inside of the food looks like to the group and serve it to everyone. Transition the group by discussing the first Share question.

Colossians Study

LESSON 6

NOW WHAT?

FOCUS

1. What does it mean to be a Christian?
2. What does the saying, "Don't just talk the talk, but walk the walk" mean? Do you agree with it? Explain.

STUDY

READ COLOSSIANS 2:6-15

1. Read Colossians 1:27 and discuss what Paul spoke about before today's passage. In Colossians 2:6, Paul says, "Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord," what does this mean? How does that relate to "Christ being in you" as a believer?
2. Since receiving Jesus as Lord, what does Paul instruct the church members to do (v. 6-8)? What does this practically look like?
3. What is Paul warning the church about in verse 8? Does Paul want Christians to avoid deep thinking? Use Acts 17:11, 1 John 4:1, and Proverbs 15:28 to aid your discussion.
 - a, What cultural ideas, thoughts, or philosophies are at odds with the teachings of Christ today? Explain.
4. Describe the relationship between God, Jesus, and believers in verses 9-10.
 - a. How does this relationship with Jesus help believers to combat untrue teachings and stand firm in their faith?

5. Circumcision was a physical sign for the Jews that stated to God, each other, and the other nations that they belonged to Yahweh. Paul is saying that with Jesus, there's a spiritual marking that believers now possess who are in Christ. What spiritual change takes place according to verse 12?

6. What does it mean to be buried with Jesus and raised with Him?

- a. How does water baptism symbolically demonstrate this spiritual change in a person?

7. How does the apostle Paul describe the believers' spiritual state before being forgiven (v. 13)? What change takes place in a believer's life according to Paul (v. 13)? How is this change possible (v. 13-14)?

8. In your own words, using what you learned from today's text, explain what it means to be a Christian, someone who is "in Christ."

- a. Would it make sense for someone who professes Jesus as their Lord and Savior to live the way they lived before placing their faith in him? Why or why not?

APPLY

1. What lessons do you learn from this passage? Explain.

2. What should you pray for based on this passage?

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ACTIVITY

20 Questions: Play 20 questions at the beginning of the lesson by telling the group that you are thinking of a noun (person, place, or thing), and they must discover what you are thinking by asking up to 20 yes or no questions. When the game finishes, say, "For each word, you had to figure out what I was thinking about; you had to ask good questions to figure out what the word was and was not. Everything has characteristics and qualities that help describe that "thing best." Today, we will discuss more about what it means to be "in Christ" and the characteristics and relationships believers have with the Lord.

Colossians Study

LESSON 7

DO YOU KNOW TRUTH?

FOCUS

1. Who has helped to shape your belief systems the most? Explain.
2. Do you believe you can know without a doubt who God is and what He wants for your life? Explain.

STUDY

READ COLOSSIANS 2:16-23

1. Look back in the letter and read Colossians 2:4 and 2:8. What has Paul warned the church about?
 - a. Read verse 16. What four specific areas does Paul tell the church not to let false teachers pass judgment on them for?
2. What does verse 17 say about the purpose of the practices set up in the Old Testament?
3. Look back and read Colossians 2:12-14. What do these verses teach you about how someone is saved? Why are the Old Testament practices no longer necessary for salvation?
4. Re-read verse 18. Disqualified is an athletic reference of a judge holding a player accountable to the rules. Paul does not disregard Christian accountability but instead points out that false teachers are not good judges because their teachings are against Christ. What are the false teachers insisting that believers must do to be qualified?
 - a. What is the danger of following wrong spiritual teachings?
 - b. How do you know who to trust with your spiritual upbringing?

5. In verse 18, Paul warns that the false teachers are “puffed up.” They do everything from a place of pride and cannot truly grow spiritually by their own efforts. Read verse 19. According to the verse, how does someone grow spiritually? How is this different from how the false teachers attempt to develop spiritually?

- a. How has, or how can, connecting to a local church help you to grow?

6. Read verses 20-23. Verse 20 uses the phrase “elemental spirits of the world,” which likely refers to worldly thinking and practices. What is Paul asking the church members, in your own words?

- b. Why would it be ridiculous for the church to continue to obsess over human rules and regulations as a means for their salvation?

7. What is dangerous about what the false teachers present (v. 23)? Look back at Colossians 2:2-3. Where do true wisdom and knowledge come from?

8. How do you know when someone is teaching something untrue in or out of the church?

- a. How well do you know Christ’s teachings?
- b. Can you discern when someone is saying something that contradicts God’s Word? Explain.

APPLY

1. What lessons do you learn from this passage? Explain.

2. What should you pray for based on this passage?

3. What change would you like to implement in your life based on these verses?

ACTIVITY

Two Truths and a Lie: To play, instruct the group to come up with two truths about themselves and one lie. The participants can share their statements in any order with the group. The group then must vote on which “fact” they think is the lie. The participant sharing can then reveal the truths and the one lie. The game makes a fun introduction to the lesson, focusing on discerning truth.

Colossians Study

LESSON 8

OUT WITH THE OLD, IN WITH THE NEW

FOCUS

1. When you were little, what did you use to dress up as during pretend play? Why did you dress up and put on clothes to pretend to be those characters?
 2. What attributes do you hope to see in yourself each day? How do you think these qualities are developed?
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STUDY

READ COLOSSIANS 3:1-17

1. In verse 1, Paul says, "If you have been raised with Christ." Who is he talking to?
 - a. As a result of being raised with Christ, what does he say Christians should seek and set their minds on (v. 1-2)? What does this mean?
 - b. When is this easiest and most challenging to do? Explain.
2. According to verses 3-4, why is there a mindset and life change in a Christian? How have you experienced this sort of change in your own life?
3. What sinful practices are believers to put to death because of the new life they have in Christ (v. 5)? According to verse 6, what results from choosing to live as opposed to God and His holy laws?
 - a. Who does Paul point to as having gone against God (v. 7)?
 - b. Why is it humbling for Christians to remember who they were before Christ?

- c. How should this reality influence the way Christians should view and treat others?

4. What other things are Christians to “put away” and “put off” according to verses 8-9? Do you think these are a one-time “putting off” or more frequent? Explain.

5. When you place your faith in Jesus, your old self is replaced with a new self. According to verse 10, who is the new self a reflection of?

- a. Genesis 1:26 says, “Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” How does this verse connect to what is happening to believers in Colossians 3:10?
- b. What does it mean that your new self is “renewed in knowledge?”
- c. According to verse 11, who can become this “new self”?

6. Before Paul explains what to “put on,” how does he describe the identity of a Christian at the beginning of verse 12? How does knowing who you are affect the way you live?

7. What are Christians to “put on” according to verses 12-14? Why do you think “love” is singled out as extra important?

8. Reread verses 15-17. What is Christ doing on the inside of Christians to help them put on the new self and live differently? What responsibility does the church and you have in growing your relationship with God (v. 16)?

APPLY

1. What lessons do you learn from this passage? Explain.
2. What should you pray for based on this passage?
3. What change would you like to implement in your life based on these verses?

ACTIVITY

Occupational Pictionary: Play Pictionary using occupational words [doctor, firefighter, construction worker, etc.]. Segue into the lesson by saying, “For the most part, we could identify who these people were based on what they wore. When someone is made alive in Christ, they spiritually disrobe their old self and put on a new self. Today, we will discuss what being transformed into the image of our Creator looks like for those who have placed their faith in Jesus.”

Colossians Study

LESSON 9

LORD OVER THE HOUSEHOLD

FOCUS

1. What makes a healthy relationship?
 2. What makes relationships difficult (i.e. employee/employer, wife/husband, parent/child)?
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STUDY

READ COLOSSIANS 3:18-4:1

1. After watching the "Book of Colossians Bible Project" video, starting at 6:35, discuss how God restructured the Roman household. What was different about how the family unit treated each other?
2. Why do you think Jesus cares about how our families are structured?
3. What instructions are given to wives and husbands in verses 18-19? How does this relationship honor God and each other?
4. What instructions are given to children and fathers (v. 20-21)? What are the reasons why both people should treat each other this way?
 - a. What are some consequences when children do not obey their parents?
 - b. What are some consequences when fathers are too harsh with their children?

5. How would you describe what a Christian household looks like today to someone?

- a. When you think about your family, how does it honor Jesus as Lord, and how could it be more Christ-centered? Explain.

6. What instructions are given to Christian bondservants (v. 22-24)? Why?

- a. Think about your life. What sort of work is easiest, and which is most challenging for you to work wholeheartedly?
- b. Should the way you view your daily tasks and jobs depend on the kind of environment, employer, or mood you are in? Why or why not?

7. How are the Masters to treat their bondservants? Why? Why would this be revolutionary at the time?

- a. How can this command to Christian masters in ancient Roman times be applied to leaders nowadays?
- b. What other qualities do you think make a good leader?

8. What do you learn matters to God from these verses?

APPLY

1. What lessons do you learn from this passage? Explain.

2. What should you pray for based on this passage?

3. What change would you like to implement in your life based on these verses?

ACTIVITY

Bible Project Video: After reading the text and before answering question one, watch the Bible Projects Book of Colossians video starting at 6:35 [<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/colossians/>]. The video will help participants understand the ancient Roman household culture and how God was transforming it under Jesus's Lordship and is still transforming Christian homes today. If you cannot show the video, watch it beforehand to verbally share with the group about the cultural and social impact Jesus had on the believers.

Colossians Study

LESSON 10

THE FINAL WORDS

FOCUS

1. Look back at the letter to the church and discuss the different points Paul made to the church in the letter. Which section has been most meaningful to you?
 2. What have you learned about relationships with God and people from this letter?
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STUDY

READ COLOSSIANS 4:2-18

1. What does Paul instruct the church in verses 2-3?
2. What does it mean to be steadfast in prayer (v. 2)? Why would he tell them to be watchful and thankful in their prayers (v. 2)?
3. Paul is in prison, yet what does he ask for (v. 3-4)? Does this surprise you? Explain.
 - a. What do you most often pray about?
 - b. Do you ever pray for opportunities for you or others to share the gospel? Why or why not?
4. In your own words, what does Paul instruct the church in verses 5-6? How do these instructions relate to his prayer request?
5. Why does the way we live and speak matter? How do verses 5-6 encourage or challenge you?

6. Re-read verses 7-15. Paul mentions several other people who greet the church. How are they described? Do you know people like this?

7. What is the purpose of Tychicus and Onesimus coming to the church?

- a. Why is it important to share what God is doing in your life with those around you?
- b. Look at the list of people who greeted the church. Why would it be meaningful for the church to hear from these other people?

8. What does Paul say he wants done with this letter in verse 16?

- a. Think about all the people who Paul said send their greeting to them and how they are to greet other members of the faith. What does this teach you about the role of the church community?
- b. How would you respond to someone who says they can know God apart from the church?

APPLY

1. What lessons do you learn from this passage? Explain.

2. What should you pray for based on this passage?

3. What change would you like to implement in your life based on these verses?

ACTIVITY

Group Storytelling: As a group, decide on a setting for a story. Then, instruct the participants to create a story by going around the room and having each person add a sentence to the story until the story has a conclusion. The story will be silly and poorly crafted, but it is a fun way to show how communication matters. Paul's letter was not a story made on the fly but a carefully crafted document designed to share important truths about Jesus and the gospel. Today, participants will finish the letter by reading Paul's last instructions and noting the community of believers working for the kingdom of God. From beginning to end, the letter is written with intentionality.