



COLOSSIANS

Lord
of
Creation

Recommended Reading:

Colossians & Philemon, <i>Tyndale NT Commentary</i>	N T Wright
Colossians & Philemon <i>Bible Speaks Today</i>	Dick Lucas
Life in God	Martyn Lloyd-Jones
Colossians and Philemon <i>Pillar NT Commentary</i> ,	D.J.Moo

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Study 1

Colossians 1:1 - 14

1. How do you tend to introduce yourself to someone you have never met?
2. What is the most audacious or extravagant prayer you have ever prayed? What was the answer?
3. Can you recall a time when someone went out of their way to encourage you? How did they go about it and how did you respond?

Read the four chapters of Colossians.

4. What would you say appears to be Paul's main reason(s) for writing the letter?
5. What do we learn about the church in Colossae?
6. Archaeologists working in the city of Cyzicus, in the neighbouring Roman province to Colossae, have uncovered an ancient Jewish amulet intended to be worn around a person's neck. It is inscribed: *"Michael, Gabriel, Ouriel, Raphael, protect the one who wears this amulet ... Evil angel Araaph, flee, O hated one; Solomon pursues you."* In Colossians, how do you see Paul address these issues of angels, the work of evil spirits and other pagan superstitions?

Re-read Colossians 1:1 - 14.

- 7.** What does Paul give thanks for in the lives of the Colossian Christians?

- 8.** What does it mean to have “understood God’s grace in all its truth” (v 6)?

- 9.** In verses 9 - 14 Paul explains to the Colossians what he has been praying for them. Make a list of the points Paul includes in his prayers.

- 10.** In verse 9, Paul recounts his prayer that God would fill the Colossians with “the knowledge of his will.” From your earlier reading of the rest of chapter 1, what do you think Paul means when he refers to God’s will, with respect to:
 - All of creation?

 - The Colossians?

- 11.** What does Paul anticipate knowing God’s will could lead to for the Colossians?

- 12.** If you asked people you know to describe a Christian filled with “spiritual wisdom” (v 9) what would their description include?

- 13.** If you were to define the same spiritually wise Christian based on Colossians 1:1 - 14, how might the picture differ?

- 14.** Based on this section, what do you think living a life “worthy of the Lord” (v 10) looks like today?

- 15.** Reflect on some of your prayers for other Christians. How do they compare to Paul’s prayers as described in verses 9 - 14?

- 16.** How do you account for whatever differences you identify?

- 17.** We know from Colossians 4:16 that this letter was intended to be an encouragement and exhortation for other Christians besides those in Colossae. What aspects of this opening section of chapter 1 do you find most encouraging to your Christian walk?

- 6.** Explain what you think it means for all God's fullness to dwell in Christ.
- 7.** Are you aware of any other passages in the Bible that speak in a similar way?
See for example Hebrews 1:1 - 4.
- 8.** How does this fact of the fullness of God dwelling in Christ shape our understanding of the doctrines of:
- Salvation
 - Creation
 - Suffering
 - Evangelism
- 9.** What do we learn about Christ's relationship to the created order?
- 10.** What do you think are some of the temptations faced by Christians today that would hinder us presenting "the Word of God in all its fullness" (v 25)?

11. What is the “mystery” to which Paul refers in verse 26?

12. What does Paul mean when he says his goal is to “present everyone perfect in Christ” (v 28)?

13. Summarise the three paragraphs of this section in one sentence each.

- verses 15 – 20

- verses 21 – 23

- verses 24 – 29

14. What do you find most significant about the change from the Colossians’ previous status (v 21) and their present status (v 1 - 8)?

15. How would you encourage someone who feels that the world is out of control, or that evil forces are in control of the world?

Study 3

Colossians 2:1 – 23

1. Do you have a friend or family member with whom you are particularly close, despite them living a great distance away?

2. How do you maintain your relationship and express your care and concern over the distance?

3. If you were to ask average Australians what they thought the life of a “religious person” looked like, what sort of response would you be likely to receive?

4. What superstitions or so-called spiritual practices do you see being practiced by non-Christian people around you?

5. What are they hoping these practices will achieve?

Read Colossians 2:1 – 23

6. Describe a Christian person based on Paul’s statements about a Christian’s status, identity, and the work done on their behalf.

- 7.** What does Paul mean when he says in Christ “are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (v 3)?

- 8.** If Paul’s main goal in this section is to guard the Colossians against deception (v 4):

- 9.** What is the nature of the error the Colossians are facing?

- 10.** What might be some 21st Century equivalents of this error?

- 11.** What is Paul’s solution for dealing with this kind of error?

- 12.** What do you think Paul means by “the basic principles of this world” (v 8 & v 20)?

- 13.** How can human traditions and practices take a Christian captive (v 8)?

- 14.** In what ways have we “died to ... to the basic principles of this world” (v 20)?

- 15.** What is the implication of this death that Paul draws out?

- 16.** In what ways might a ‘good, religious person’ be surprised if they were to read this passage describing the life of a Christian?

- 17.** Are there any issues in our church that could become points at which we judge others along the lines of verse 16?

- 18.** What are the problems with trying to be a Christian simply by obeying a set of rules?

- 19.** How does understanding Christ in all his fullness help guard against the errors and deceptions common in the 21st Century?

20. How could you use this passage to encourage a Christian person who:

- Is struggling with their faith?

- Is desperate for dreams and visions from God?

- Feels God is only pleased with them if they deny themselves all pleasure?

1. When you're day-dreaming what is the most common thought or pattern of thoughts that comes into your head?
Do you think there is any significance to this?

2. Can you recall a purchase or achievement to which you 'set your mind' when you were younger and needed to save up or work towards? What was the outcome?

Read Colossians 3:1 - 17

3. In this section Paul lists many things that God has done for the Colossians.

4. In many cases he links a statement about their current situation with an imperative concerning behaviour. Identify as many of these statement-imperative pairs as you can find.

5. Why do you think Paul ties his commands so closely to the work of God in the lives of the Colossians?

- 12.** How is greed idolatry?

- 13.** How does love bind together all the other virtues Paul identifies in verses 12 - 14?

- 14.** What would it have meant for Christians in the era before the writing down of the gospel accounts to “let the word of Christ dwell in your richly” (v 16)?

- 15.** How can Christians today ensure the word of Christ dwells in us?

- 16.** What is it for the word of Christ to dwell “richly” (v 16)?

- 17.** Why is the *NIV*’s “Rules for Holy Living” perhaps an unhelpful title for this section?

- 18.** Come up with a title that you feel more accurately reflects the message of this section.

- 19.** How would you rate your 'success' in fixing your mind on things above? What tends to get in the way and make this a difficult task?

- 20.** What do you find most difficult about living with both the 'now' of Christ's completed work for you and the 'not yet' of waiting for the final removal of sin?

Study 4

Colossians 4:2 - 18

1. Think of a time when someone has encouraged you significantly. What did they do or say that had such an effect on you?
2. Do you find that the frequency, earnestness and content of your prayers tends to vary according to your present situation?
3. If you ask other Christians to pray for you, for what sorts of things do you ask them to pray?

Read Colossians 4:2 - 18

4. If you were one of the Colossians who originally received this letter, how would you go about praying for Paul?
5. If this section were the only teaching about prayer you had ever received, what would you know about Christian prayer?
6. Having read verses 2 - 6, how do you think Paul would answer one of the Colossian Christians who protested, "I can't tell people about Jesus, I'm not an evangelist."?

- 7.** What does it mean for our conversations to be “full of grace” (v 5)?
Do you think actions and behaviour can be full of grace too?
- 8.** Paul describes Aristarchus and Mark as having provided comfort to him (v 11). What kind of comfort do you think Paul might have received from these two men?
Can you think of any Christian brothers or sisters to whom you provide this kind of comfort?
- 9.** Why does Paul mention his imprisonment twice in this short section, including in the very last verse which he wrote by hand, rather than through his scribe or secretary?
- 10.** What partnership do the Colossians have with Paul’s ministry of proclaiming the gospel?
- 11.** What lessons are there in this chapter for our relationship with missionaries and other minister of the gospel with whom we partner, even if we have no physical involvement in their ministry?

12. How do Paul's instructions about the reading of letters in verse 16 shape our understanding of the Scriptures?

13. Having studied this letter to the Colossians, how might you use it to shape your prayers in the coming weeks?

14. How can you pray this week, to "make the most of every opportunity" (v 5)?

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