

Colossians

*Christ in You –
the Hope of Glory*

Notes and Comments by John Sullivan



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This journal belongs to:

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Moline, IL
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Resources

Alexander, David and Pat (editors) *Erdmans' Handbook of the Bible*, Lion Publishing, 1973

Halley, Henry *Halley's Bible Handbook*, Zondervan, 2000.

Hamilton, Mark (editor) *The Transforming Word*, Abilene Christian University Press, 2009.

Barclay, William *The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*. The Westminster Press, 1959.

Online Resources

Biblegateway.com

A free searchable tool with the Bible in multiple translations and languages, along with many other Bible-study aids.

BibleProject.com

A huge resource of Bible videos on the books of the Bible.

Gotquestions.org

Devoted to providing thought-provoking answers to Bible questions. Just type in the question and see what you think about their answer.

YouVersion Bible App

A free download of the Bible in many versions to make the Word of God available on your phone or other devices. The audio reading of the Bible is especially helpful.

Conclusion

*Christ in you –
the hope of glory.*

Colossians 1:27

Have you found greater inspiration from your greater appreciation of the fact that Christ is in you?

As stated several times in this journal, this presence of Christ in your life is not the invention of your own imagination or initiative. But it is up to us to believe it, focus on it, and allow our lives to reflect the fact of His Presence.

Hopefully, this study has helped you to do that.

God bless you as you continue to grow in your knowledge of God and His Word.

Colossians

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the Hope of Glory**

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Table of Contents

Week	Theme	Scripture	Page
	<i>Introduction</i>		i
1	<i>The Kingdom of the Supreme Christ</i>	Colossians 1:1 – 23	1
2	<i>The Mystery of Christ in You</i>	Colossians 1:24 – 2:23	9
3	<i>Raised with Christ</i>	Colossians 3:1 – 17	17
4	<i>Christ-Centered Relationships</i>	Colossians 3:18 – 4:18	25
	<i>Conclusion</i>		32
	<i>Resources</i>		33

Knowing Your Bible/Knowing Your God

As you close this week's study, write a summary of what you know about this part of the Bible and what you know about God.

This is what I know about Colossians 3:18 – 4:18:

This is what I know about God:

Put it in your heart.

Quote the memory verse for the week and think about how it affects your life.

Share it.

Call or visit someone and share your thoughts from this week's studies.

Prepare for worship and fellowship.

All week, you have been worshipping God, praising him for the Christ-centered relationships you have in his kingdom. At the same time, you have been praying for your brothers and sisters and for those who are not yet in Christ's kingdom. It is our desire that they not only experience the blessing of being reconciled with God, but that they also experience the joy of reconciled relationships. Our hearts ache when we see people we love in broken, harmful, and dysfunctional relationships. Think about ways you can encourage someone today with these thoughts.

*Christ in you –
the hope of glory.*

Colossians 1:27

Introduction

1. The church in Laodicea (verses 15 – 16)

Laodicea and Hierapolis were just across the river from each other and were about 10 miles from Colossae. At that time, they were more prosperous and prominent than was Colossae. Paul wanted this letter to be read to them also. We don't know for sure what the other letter mentioned here was, but this kind of sharing and circulating of the apostles' writings was a common practice of the day. Of course we know more about the church in Laodicea from the warnings it received from Christ in **Revelation 3:14 – 22**, which was written at least 10 and probably 30 years after Paul's letter. So that shows you what can happen to a church in a short time if the principles of Christ are not kept in the focus.

What do you think we need to do as a church to make sure we learn from the unfortunate example of the Laodiceans?

2. Archippus

We don't know much about Archippus. The letter of *Philemon* was addressed to him as well and he is described there as a *fellow soldier*. But in spite of how little we know about him, you have to love what Paul said to him: "*Complete the work you have received in the Lord.*" What was that work? We don't know. But it was received in the Lord and should be completed with all due respect and diligence.

How does that apply to you?

What work have you received in the Lord, and how does it inspire you to want to complete it?

3. "Remember my chains."

Oh yeah, we almost forgot. This inspiring, convicting, and practical letter was written by a man in chains. How has that inspired you during your study of this letter from a prisoner of the Lord?

4. "Grace be with you."

And to you as well!

Meditate on the grace that is with you and pray that you will complete the work you have received in the Lord as you pass his grace on to others.

What would cause a man in jail to sing joyful songs of praise and thanksgiving (see **Acts 16:25**)? What would cause a man in prison to write to people he didn't even know encouraging them to also sing joyful songs of praise and thanksgiving (see **Colossians 3:16**)? One of the keys was the full assurance of faith that that man (Paul) had about the fact that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was living powerfully inside him and also inside everyone in the kingdom of God.

One of the most inspiring thoughts found in the inspired Scriptures is the indwelling presence of God. We know that God wants us to focus on that because of the abundance of times that He had the inspired writers speak of the fact that God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit are living powerfully inside each and every disciple of Jesus Christ. You can find that fact, along with the equally inspiring thought that we are in Him, repeated frequently in Scripture. He is in us, and we are in Him! The letter we are about to read expresses it in climatic fashion in verse 27 of the first chapter by saying that Christ in you is the hope of glory!

That hope is not only centered on the amazing heavenly kingdom prepared for us after this life. It is also centered on the amazing kingdom God has brought us into while we are still living on this earth. As **Colossians 1:13** says "*he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves.*" The almost "other-worldly" principles found in his kingdom on earth can only be explained and accomplished by his indwelling Presence. Christ is actively living inside every citizen of his kingdom!

Living inside us – that's God's part. You and I cannot make that happen on our own initiative. We didn't dream it up to make us feel better. It was His idea all along. Our part is to make sure we believe it, focus on it, and allow our lives to reflect the fact of that Presence. As God told us in one passage, "*let us fix our eyes on Jesus*" (**Hebrews 12:2**). In this letter to the Colossian brothers and sisters, God inspired Paul to remind us of how amazing his Son is. This letter has some of the highest praise of Jesus Christ ever written. If they are true, as we believe they are, then it is no wonder that Christ living in us is such an important and powerful concept. In troubling times, it is more and more important that we continually fix our eyes on Jesus and let his abiding presence guide our lives.

(continued on the next page)

Introduction (Continued)

How can we have any semblance of joy, peace, love, and unity during these trying times? One major answer is to believe and focus on the fact that Christ is in each of us. We cannot allow that to just be a doctrine to which we give intellectual consent. It has to be a genuine statement of our faith and the consistent atmosphere of our daily lives.

Get ready to dig deeply into this part of God's word. May you know this part of the Bible better and know God better as a result of your study!

John Sullivan
August 2020

NOTE: Here are two suggestions before you start the chapter-by chapter analysis of this epistle:

- 1) Read the whole epistle in one setting. You might enjoy having a Bible App read it to you out loud while you follow along in your Bible (NOT just while driving in your car).
- 2) Study the background to Paul's letter using a resource such as those listed on page 33.

Week 4 **Day 4**

Wrestling in Prayer

Read *Colossians 4:7 – 14*.

Today's Date: _____

Some of my favorite parts of Paul's letters are the sections where he mentions the specific names of the people of his day. It shows the realness of his situation. These were real people, just like us in so many ways. Let's notice what was said about these people.

1. Tychicus and Onesimus (verses 7 – 9)

We mentioned Onesimus earlier. They were traveling from Rome to Colossae delivering this letter from Paul. Paul describes them with words like *dear brother, faithful minister, fellow servant*, and *faithful and dear brother*. Their task was to not only deliver the letter, but to tell them how Paul was doing and to encourage their hearts.

2. Aristarchus, Mark, and Justus (verses 10 – 11)

Paul called these Jewish brethren his "*fellow workers for the kingdom of God*," and he said that they were a great comfort to him. Mark is particularly interesting because he was the cause of a dispute and split between Paul and Barnabas (**Acts 15:39**). That split serves to remind us of how fragile our fellowship is and how unresolved conflict can lead to division. However, their reconciliation is also a good reminder of what is possible if we stay focused on Christ, as Paul and Barnabas and Mark did.

3. Epaphras (verses 12 – 13)

He is the one mentioned in the first chapter as being one of the original teachers in the Colossian church. Now, he was with Paul in Rome and was sending them his greetings. Paul's statement about him is classic: "*He is always wrestling in prayer for you that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured*."

4. Luke and Demas (verse 14)

Luke, the physician and New Testament writer, was a faithful companion of Paul. Demas, unfortunately, had a sadder chapter in his life. In **2 Timothy 4:10**, Paul said that Demas deserted him because "*he loved this world*."

Hopefully, Demas recovered, but this shows us that Christ's kingdom principles are just ideals if they stay isolated in our studies and devotionals. They only become real when they are acted out in real lives like yours and mine.

What stands out to you from this passage that can apply to the way you view other disciples?

Meditate on the examples of these real life Christians and spend some time "*wrestling in prayer*". Continue to focus on the memory verse and apply it to your daily actions and conversations.

1. What do you think it means to “devote” yourself to prayer?

What do you think *being watchful and thankful* have to do with it?

2. We earlier got a lot of insight and inspiration about prayer from Paul's prayer in chapter 1. Here he tells them how they can pray for him. As you look at both of these requests, write down some thoughts about how they inspire you.
- He asked them to pray for an open door to proclaim the message of Christ.
 - He asked them to pray for him to proclaim it clearly.

As we mentioned in week one, the things we pray about for others are often things that deal with their circumstances. It is also true that we usually ask people to pray for us about our circumstances. Again, there is nothing wrong with that. But what do you think would happen if we consistently ask people to pray for us the way Paul did?

3. Verses 5 and 6 (this week's memory verse) refer to our actions and conversations with those outside the church.
- What does he say about our actions?
 - What does he say about our conversations?
 - How do those two go together?

Meditate on these insights about prayer, actions, and conversations and pray about how you can apply them in your life.

The Kingdom of the Supreme Christ

Colossians 1:1 – 23

Memory Verse for the Week:

For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Colossians 1:13 – 14

Try to recall the memory verse two or three times every day this week and think about how it applies to your life at that moment.

Daily Worship

In your personal worship to God this week, focus on the supremacy of Christ and the blessing of being in his kingdom.

Suggested Song: *All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name*

Fellowship

Your brothers and sisters also have that same blessing. Pray about how you can encourage them with that thought.

Week 1
Day 1

Grace and Peace

Read *Colossians 1:1 – 2*.

*Grace and peace to you
from God our Father.*
Colossians 1:2b

Today's Date: _____

1. The authors: *the apostle Paul and the brother Timothy*.

- Paul was in prison, possibly in Rome, at this time (~60 AD), where he also wrote *Ephesians*, *Philippians*, and *Philemon*. While he mentions his chains occasionally, you will have to keep reminding yourself of his imprisonment, because his faith and joy are so prevalent.
- Timothy was an amazing brother. Scriptures speak of his faith, loyalty, and devotion, stating that there was “no one else like him” because of his genuine interest in others’ welfare (**Philippians 2:20**).

What inspirations do you get from Paul and Timothy’s role model?

2. The recipients: *God’s holy people in Colossae; faithful brothers and sisters*.

- Colossae (also spelled Colosse) was a small town about 100 – 120 miles east of Ephesus, in what we now call Turkey. It was about 10 miles up the Lycus River valley from the more prominent towns of Hierapolis and Laodicea. Today, the city does not exist but the site is known.
- This was one of the churches that Paul himself had not established or ever visited. It was probably planted during his stay in Ephesus (**Acts 19:10**), possibly started by Epaphras (**Colossians 1:7**). Do you think calling others *holy* and *faithful* would encourage them?
- Note the two spheres in which they lived: they were *in Colossae* and they were *in Christ*. We don’t want to read too much into this simple sentence, but it is possible to see a significant application to our lives. We also live in two arenas: in our neighborhood and in Christ. One is our mission field, the other is our source of strength. How can you apply that to your life today?

3. The greeting: *Grace and Peace*.

“Grace” was the usual Greek greeting of that day, and “Peace” was the normal Jewish greeting. So, even in this greeting which God inspired Paul to use in all his letters, we see God’s heart of drawing all nations to himself and wanting them to feel encouraged by His grace and His peace. It’s obvious how badly our world today needs that encouragement. How can you use the thoughts of *grace* and *peace* to encourage others?

Meditate and pray about how these simple opening verses apply to you.

Week 4
Day 2

Our Master in Heaven

Read *Colossians 3:22 – 4:1*.

Today's Date: _____

Verse 23 is one of my favorite Scriptures. It is an inspiring and practical thought, but it is easy to overlook that this was written in the context of slavery. He is not just saying “*mow the yard like you are doing it for Christ*,” although that is one application that helps me a lot personally. He was telling the Christian who was a slave to have this mindset in the cruelest and most inhumane circumstances. Let’s make sure we see the picture. There were slaves who were members of the Colossian church. And they probably did not have Christian masters. There were slave owners who were members of the Colossian church. They worshipped side-by-side as equals in Christ, because Christ was in all of them (3:11). Many people are upset with Paul for not telling the masters to free the slaves. It’s a difficult topic, isn’t it? Let’s approach it faithfully and prayerfully. (You might also want to read **1 Corinthians 7:20 – 24**.)

1. Note the instruction to the slave owners (4:1) to provide for them *what is right and fair*. It falls short of telling them to abolish the slavery system, but there is no way they could apply this command and still treat them as a lower-class, less-important person. Combined with everything else taught in this letter and all of the rest of the New Testament, the owners, if they followed Christ’s teachings, would know that their slaves were their equals. They would know that what we read last week in 3:11 and 3:12 applied to everyone in the kingdom. It was brought to a climax by reminding them that they all have the same Master in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him. It is hard to imagine how they could do what is said here without giving them their freedom.
2. Notice also what is said to the slaves. They were assured that Christ sees them as serving him and that they have an inheritance from Him as a reward. All the wrong that was done to them would be punished in the end. Everything written in this letter about how God views his people (*holy, dearly loved*, etc.) applied to them, just as it did to anyone else.
3. Example: Onesimus and Philemon. At the same time Paul was writing this letter, he was writing the private letter to Philemon, a Christian in Colossae. Onesimus had been his slave. He met Paul and became a Christian. Paul was sending him back as a “*faithful and dear brother*” (4:9). He told Philemon to receive him “*no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother*” (**Philemon 16**). That could be the way God intended to abolish slavery – through the brotherhood of Christ.

You might want to spend more time researching this difficult topic. We may not understand everything, but we know that we can count on the fact that God does not show favoritism based on societal standards. We are all one in Christ. Meditate more about it and ask God for wisdom to understand it.

Week 4
Day 1

Christ-Centered Families

Read *Colossians 4:18 – 21*.

Today's Date: _____

These verses on the Christian ethics of relationships give a slightly condensed version of what was written in **Ephesians 5:21 – 6:9**. One key principle in both letters is to let Christ be the center of our relationships.

1. Breaking down the double-standard barrier.

Throughout history, there has been a worldly tendency of a double standard in male/female relationships. That was certainly true in 60 AD. Wives were held to a different standard of purity than men were. Men could treat women harshly, and women had fewer rights. Also, children could be treated as property and were often abused without any laws to protect them. A strong “woman’s-rights” movement was developing in the Roman empire, but it was the Christian standard of family ethics that really provided much needed light on this subject. It always focused on the mutual respect of both parties – whether it was husband and wife or parent and child. Among other great principles, here are two keys that the Scriptures teach about how to have harmonious relationships. These apply in the home, but also in all of our Christian relationships. So marrieds, singles, parents, empty-nesters – all of us benefit from these principles.

- **Focus on Christ in us.** Treat the other person the way Christ would treat them and treat them the way we would treat Christ. After all, Christ is in us, so his heart for people is the umpire ruling in our heart. Also, Christ is in our brothers and sisters, so the way we treat them is literally the way we treat Christ.
- **Focus on helping one another grow in Christ.** I am not in this relationship just for my benefit. I am also here to help the others in this relationship go to heaven. Remember the goal from 1:28 of wanting to present everyone perfect in Christ. What better place to start with that goal than in our closest relationships?

2. Bringing it home.

Christianity is not real if it’s not real in the home. Earlier in chapter 3, we read about all of the evil ways of treating people that we are to put to death and the godly ways of treating people that we are to cling to. It seems that God knew that we need to take these teachings about how to treat people and make sure we bring it on home.

What do you need to do to make sure that all of this happens in your relationships? **Romans 12: 18** always helps when thinking about the fact that we can’t change others; we can only change ourselves.

Meditate on these family relationship principles and pray about applying them.

Week 1
Day 2

Now That's What I Call a Prayer!

Read *Colossians 1:3 – 14*.

Today's Date: _____

This prayer of Paul, like all of his prayers, gives us great insight into the heart and strategy of prayer. We will focus on two aspects of his prayer that can be of great benefit to us: (1) his gratitude for disciples; (2) his vision for them.

1. Gratitude for their faith and their love – two of the most important ingredients of any Christian’s life.

We may have prayed for our brothers and sisters to grow in faith and love. We may not have noticed, though, the importance of starting, as this prayer does, with gratitude for the faith and love that they already have.

- What do you think happens to you personally if you are thankful and express your gratitude for other disciples’ faith and love?
- What do you think it would do for others to hear your gratitude?

In addition to gratitude for the brothers, Paul showed his gratitude for the gospel. Dig deeply into the words Paul used in verses 5 – 8 (the word of truth, the fruitfulness, the message of grace, the blessing of being a servant of the Gospel, etc.). Is that your attitude about the gospel, and does it show up in your prayer life?

2. Vision for their growth – in knowledge of the will of God and in putting that knowledge into practice.

- As Jesus taught, the will of God should always be one focus of our prayer (**Matthew 6:10**). Paul’s prayer (verse 9) was that God would give them spiritual wisdom (*sophia*), which is the knowledge of the fundamentals of his will, and that he would give them understanding (*sunesis*), which is the ability to apply his will to any given situation.
- The goal of his prayer was that they would be able to live out the will of God in their daily lives. He wanted them to live a life worthy of the Lord (verse 10) and be strengthened by God’s power (11). There are three gifts that he desired for them: *endurance, patience, and joyful thanksgiving* (verses 12 – 13). These three great gifts from God give us the ability to never allow any situation or any people to rob us of our joy about being in Christ.

We usually pray for people’s circumstances, and there is nothing wrong with that. But what do you think will happen if we all consistently prayed for people in the ways we see modeled in this prayer?

Now that’s what I call a prayer! Meditate about it and use this prayer as a model for your own praying.

This prayer closes with the granddaddy of all reasons for gratitude – the fundamental point in history that changed our lives forever: God rescued us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of the Son.

1. What has God rescued us from?

Think about the pattern of hatred that we frequently received and frequently gave out to others (see **Titus 3:3**, which speaks of “*being hated and hating*”).

- We judged, accused, and blamed others; and we frequently felt judged, accused, and blamed by others.
- We used others for our own gain; and we felt used by others.
- We ignored people; and we often felt ignored by others.

You could go on with that list. It is not surprising that verse 13 describes that state of being as a “*dominion*.” It dominated us, deceived us, and frustrated us. As **Titus 3:3**, quoted above, points out, sometimes we were foolishly unaware of it, but when we came to realize it, we felt trapped and hopeless. That’s when God stepped in and rescued us. How does God’s amazing rescue operation make you feel and what does it inspire you to do?

2. What has he transferred us into?

The New Testament frequently reminds citizens of Christ’s kingdom of the exact opposites of the previous list. (See **Romans 8:1; 14:7**, for instance.)

- We do not judge, accuse, and blame other disciples; and they do not judge, accuse, and blame us.
- We do not use other Christians for our own gain; and we are not used by them.
- We do not ignore our brothers and sisters; and we are not ignored by them.

Again, this list could go on and on. Unfortunately, we are not yet perfect at any of those kingdom qualities, but we all know that it is a vast improvement over what we dished out and what we received in the kingdom of darkness. You have been transferred into the “*No Condemnation*” Zone (**Romans 8:1**). No condemnation from God, from your brothers and sisters, or coming out of your mouth either. When you see what God has transferred you into, how does that make you feel and what does it inspire you to do?

Meditate about this rescue and transfer and pray about living a life reflective of the kingdom in which you now live.

Colossians: Christ in You – the Hope of Glory

Christ-Centered Relationships

Colossians 3:18 – 4:18

Memory Verse for the Week:

*Let your conversation be always full of grace,
seasoned with salt,
so that you may know how to answer everyone.*

Colossians 4:6

Try to recall the memory verse two or three times every day this week and think about how it applies to your life at that moment.

Daily Worship

In your personal worship to God this week, thank him for the Christ-centered relationships you have in his kingdom.

Suggested Song: *Love Lifted Me*

Fellowship

Your brothers and sisters also have those relationships. Pray about ways you can encourage them in their relationships this week.

This passage, which was possibly an early Christian hymn, is one of the greatest accolades of Jesus Christ found anywhere. It is why having Christ living in us is so amazing. If what is said here is true, as we believe it is, it is no wonder why being in his Kingdom is such a great blessing.

The Supreme Qualities of Christ	Write a statement of praise and honor to Him.
1. <i>The image of the invisible God</i>	
2. <i>The source and focus of creation</i>	
3. <i>Holding all things together</i>	
4. <i>The head of the body, the church</i>	
5. <i>The firstborn from among the dead</i>	
6. <i>All of God's fullness</i>	
7. <i>Everyone reconciled through his death</i>	

Our world today is very much at a kind of **Matthew 16:15** moment. *Who do you say that Jesus is?* All of the criticisms that our modern world has about Christianity comes down to this one consideration: if Jesus really is the Supreme being that Scripture says he is, then everything he says matters more than anything his critics say. We need to make sure that we are more in awe of the Supreme Christ than we are in fear of his critics.

Meditate about the Supremacy of Christ. In your prayer, give him the glory and honor that is due him and also pray that you will be able to share his praises fearlessly to the world around us.

Continue to recall the memory verse and think about how blessed we are to be in the kingdom of the Supreme Christ.

Giving glory and honor to Christ is the focus, not only of these two day's devotionals but of our whole life as well. However, it is amazing that even in this elevated praise of Jesus, God tells us that we have been elevated through him in a way that is not humanly possible or even imaginable without him. Read again verse 22. We're praising Jesus, right? He is perfectly sinless, and we all know that we are not. But, to our surprise, he tells us that this Supreme Being has reconciled us to God and actually considers us to be *holy, without blemish, and free from accusation!* Let's dig deeply into each of these descriptions. Remember that this verse says that this is how Christ presents you, not the result of your accomplishments.

1. Holy in his sight.

God is the one who makes us holy (set apart). He places his Holy Spirit in us. Our goal is to pursue holiness and to desire to grow in holiness by his help. How does it make you feel that he sees you as holy?

2. Without blemish.

In the Old Testament, God did not want people to offer blemished sacrifices to him. In other words, he did not want people to sacrifice to him what they really did not want in the first place. In a sense, this passage pictures Jesus as offering us to God. We are his gift to God. And he sees to it that our blemishes have been removed. Again, that is his accomplishment, not ours. Our goal is to try to keep our lives as pure as possible. How does it feel to be seen as blemish-free?

3. Free from accusation.

One of the consistent roles of Satan is that of the accuser. We are all aware of how prevalent that is in our lives. We constantly feel the heavy burden of accusation and find ourselves dishing it out a lot too. An amazing gift of reconciliation is that in Christ we are freed from that, which also implies that we work hard at freeing ourselves from constantly being the accuser of others. Do you feel free from Satan's accusations and freed from the tendency of being the resident accuser of your circle?

Verse 23 gives us the encouragement to make sure we "*continue in our faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel.*" What does that inspire you to do?

Continue to meditate about the supremacy of Christ and pray about your desire to continue in your faith.

Knowing Your Bible/Knowing Your God

As you close this week's study, write a summary of what you know about this part of the Bible and what you know about God.

This is what I know about Colossians 3:1 – 17:

This is what I know about God:

Put it in your heart.

Quote the memory verse for the week and think about how it affects your life.

Share it.

Call or visit someone and share your thoughts from this week's studies.

Prepare for worship and fellowship.

All week, you have been worshipping God, praising him for allowing you to be raised with Christ. Before you meet together with your brothers and sisters for worship and fellowship, spend some time praying for them using the kind of prayers you have been reading about. Think specifically about how you can encourage someone today with these thoughts.

Week 3
Day 5

Letting the Peace of Christ Rule

Read *Colossians 3:15 – 17*.

Today's Date: _____

Wow! This letter just keeps getting better! Here we see two “let” statements, implying, like 3:1 – 4, a decision on our part. These statements can be viewed as commands and expectations, but it is obvious that we have to be willing to let them happen; God does not force them on us.

1. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.

“Rule” was the word used in the world of sports back then to refer to the umpire of the games. In all matters of dispute, let the peace of Christ be the umpire. There is no doubt about it: there will still be disputes, even in the kingdom of Christ, and we will even sometimes grumble to the Umpire about what he prompts us to do, but “Christ in us” turns every conflict within the church into an opportunity for peace. This verse reminds us that as members of the one body we were called to peace. So, while each of us has to put this into practice individually, God really wants us to lift our sights beyond ourselves and think about how to implement it as a whole group. This passage also reminds us to be a group of people who are genuinely thankful.

- What does it take for us to do that; i.e. to let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts as a church?
- What do you think being thankful has to do with it?

2. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.

Not just knowledge of the word, but “dwelling” in you; living and active inside you. Not weakly, but richly. This verse speaks of letting the word of Christ live in us as we teach one another and sing with one another.

- What does it take for us to do that; i.e. to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly as a church?
- What do you think this has to do with singing?

The final, all-inclusive principle: *do everything in the name of Jesus and give thanks to the Father through him*. You can see two powerful components of this principle. What do you think happens when we put this into practice?

Meditate on these verses and pray that you will put them into practice today.

Week 1
Days 6 & 7

Summary

Today's Date _____

Knowing Your Bible/Knowing Your God

As you close this week's study, write a summary of what you know about this part of the Bible and what you know about God.

This is what I know about Colossians 1:1 – 23:

This is what I know about God:

Put it in your heart.

Quote the memory verse for the week and think about how it affects your life.

Share it.

Call or visit someone and share your thoughts from this week's studies.

Prepare for worship and fellowship.

All week, you have been focusing on the supremacy of Christ and the glorious results of being in his kingdom. Before you meet together with your brothers and sisters for worship and fellowship, spend some time praying for them using the kind of prayers found in this letter. Think specifically about how you can encourage someone today with these thoughts.

1. *Chosen, holy, and dearly loved people.* (This is the amazing way God views everyone in his kingdom, regardless of how the world sees them.)
 - How do you think those words impacted the Colossian disciples?
 - Is this the way you see yourself? More to the point: do you think this is the way God sees you?
 - Is this the way you see other brothers and sisters? Do they know that this is the way you see them?
 - How different is this from the way that we tended to view others and be viewed by them in the dominion of darkness? Are you grateful for being transferred into the kingdom where you can view others and can be viewed by them in these godly viewpoints of people?
2. Look at the positive attributes listed in these verses that God wants us to clothe ourselves with. It's interesting to see from other Scriptures the concept that we have seen before, namely that these are attributes that God gives us (the fruit of the Spirit) and at the same time they are principles that he expects us to obey. We are gifted with patience, for instance, and we are commanded to be patient. In other words, we see God's part in giving us these abilities through his Spirit, and we see our part in making the effort to diligently study these qualities and put them into practice.
 - What would you say is God's part in clothing you with these attributes of the new self?
 - What would you say is your part?
3. One more question: why do you think God had his inspired writer to emphasize in verse 13 the importance of bearing with each other and forgiving each other? Remember, this was not written to the town of Colossae; it was written to the Christians there. Surely they didn't need this, did they? (Hopefully, you see through my poor attempt at sarcastic humor.) What do you think is the point of this verse and how do you think it applies to us today? (See also **Matthew 5:43 – 48**, which may be one of the hardest things Jesus ever taught us.)

Meditate on this passage. Pick at least one attribute and pray about your willingness to do your part in clothing yourself with the things of the new self. Continue to recall the memory verse throughout your day and remind yourself of the truth of being raised with Christ.

We read this verse yesterday in the context of the principles of evil that God wants us to put to death. The inclusiveness of Christ's Kingdom is a breath of fresh air when compared to the hatred and division that exists in the world. That's one of the reasons we are so thankful for being rescued from that dominion (1:13) and blessed with the "new self" (3:10). Some of the barriers mentioned here involve divisions that made perfect sense to the people of 60 AD, but are strange to us. So let's look at those barriers in their more general terms and see how it applies to all generations.

1. "Christ in you" breaks down the barrier of superiority.

The Jews felt superior to the Greeks, and the Greeks looked down upon the Jews. They all looked down upon the barbarian (which was basically anyone who didn't speak Greek), and the Scythians who were considered the lowest of the barbarians. Slaves at that time were treated less than fully human, and they, in turn, resented and hated the free class. What an amazing sight it was in those days to see brothers and sisters from all of these areas sitting together in the fellowship of Christian worship. It was unheard of then and is no less amazing today. It was not the result of a human project to build a great society; it was the result of Christ being in each one. *Christ is all and is in all.*

How does that help you when you are tempted to feel superior or inferior?

2. "Christ in you" also helps to keep those barriers from coming back.

That's why God's word told them (and us) in the passage we read yesterday to put to death and rid ourselves of the things that keep us hating and hurting other people. That's why he tells us in the passage we will read tomorrow to keep growing in the positive attributes that help all people feel loved and respected. Yes, the kingdom of Christ is for all people, but we have to work hard to keep that inclusive nature alive and well. While the barriers were broken down between brothers and sisters in the kingdom of Christ in 60 AD, the situations that they found themselves in did not change. They were still either Greek or Jew, slave or free, etc. The temptation would always be strong to let the old worldly ideas creep in to the "new-self" kingdom. That's why there is so much written in the New Testament about continuing to grow and apply the attributes of Christ that keep these barriers from returning. (**Romans 14:19, Ephesians 4:3, and James 2**, for instance.)

What do you need to do to continue to grow in ways that will keep these barriers from coming back?

Meditate on the privilege of being in the all-inclusive kingdom of Christ and pray for strength to keep that unity.

Colossians: Christ in You – the Hope of Glory

Week 2

The Mystery of Christ in You

Colossians 1:24 – 2:23

Memory Verse for the Week:

*To them God has chosen to make known among the
Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery,
which is Christ in you,
the hope of glory.
Colossians 1:27*

Try to recall the memory verse two or three times every day this week and think about how it applies to your life at that moment.

Daily Worship

In your personal worship to God this week, praise him for the fact that Christ is in you and thank him for the glorious riches of His Presence.

Suggested Song: *To God be the Glory*

Fellowship

Your brothers and sisters also have that same Presence. Pray that we will all understand the glory of that thought.

Week 2
Day 1

Christ in You — the Hope of Glory

Read *Colossians 1:24 – 27*.

Today's Date: _____

We have seen so far in the beginning of this letter a tribute to the amazing attributes that can only be summarized as the “supremacy” of Christ (verse 18). Those amazing attributes make us realize what a privilege it is that God rescued us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his Son (as stated in last week’s memory verse). In fact, if we really believe those attributes, we would be thrilled to just be in his kingdom, just basking in his glory. But being awe-struck fans of this Supreme being, as great as that would be, is not where God stops in his plan for us. Not only are you in the kingdom of the Son, the Son is actually dwelling inside you. The Lord, the Savior, the King of Glory, the Son of God is in you. That, God says, is your hope of glory. This passage reveals three aspects of the phrase *Christ in you*.

1. This fact is the revealed mystery; the unhidden secret; the unrestricted privilege. At one time, being in God’s kingdom was a mystery, a secret, a restricted privilege, known only to the Jews and those to whom they chose to reveal it. But all of that changed with Jesus. It is now unlocked and available for everyone. The mystery has been revealed; the secret is no longer hidden. “*Christ in you*” is a blessing that knows no borders; it is truly available to everyone who comes to Christ. Let’s not take that for granted.

How much do you value the privilege of knowing God’s will? Would you genuinely call it “*glorious riches*” as Paul did?

2. It is the hope of glory. We may have tried to gain glory through our accomplishments, skills, or possessions. If so, we eventually found out how meaningless that turns out to be. Either we found out that we fail to reach the standard that gains glory, or we found out how shallow that glory really is. In coming to Christ, we humbled ourselves at his feet and wholeheartedly decided that he is the only one worthy of glory. When that happened, he then turned it around, lifted us up, and told us of a glory that we never imagined – the glory of being accepted, valued, and endorsed by the Creator of the universe. That glory is much better than any glory in the world!

What glory do you see from having Christ in you?

3. It is a message that is worth working hard for. We will see more about that in tomorrow’s devotional. But notice for now how Paul was willing to not only work hard, but actually suffer afflictions for the sake of Christ’s kingdom and the mission before him. Let’s face it, suffering is not our favorite idea. Is it possible that we all need to toughen up a little?

How do you feel about suffering for the mission?

Meditate on the words of this passage and pray about how you can make them the words that describe your heart.

Week 3
Day 2

Putting the Old Things to Death

Read *Colossians 3:5 – 11*.

Today's Date: _____

1. Does it surprise you to see the Scripture telling us to “*put to death*” these evil desires? Didn’t we just read in the previous chapter that we died with Christ? Why do we still need to put these things to death?
2. This passage uses vivid language to describe the way God wants us to treat sin: put it to death (verse 5) and get rid of it (verse 8). That mirrors the way God deals with our sins – he put them to death and he removed them from us.
 - Why do you think God wants us to have such an extreme view of sin? (See also **Matthew 5:29 – 30**.)
 - Is that your attitude?
 - Are there any sins listed in this passage that you may have been taking too lightly? If so, what can you do about it?
3. Most, if not all, of the negative traits stated in this section have to do with the ungodly way of treating others. They are the traits that we have been rescued from (using the language of **Colossians 1:13**). We used to do those things, and we used to be the recipient of those things. Now this passage says that we “*have put on the new self which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator*” (verse 10). Yesterday, we talked a little bit about God’s part and our part in living the resurrected life. Let’s talk more about it today. When it comes to putting to death the things of your old life:
 - What would you say is God’s part?
 - What would you say is your part?
4. This passage ends on the positive note of the equality that is found in the kingdom of God (verse 11). We will talk more about that tomorrow, but for now, do you see that all of the negative traits that God wants us to put to death are related to the ugly divisions that existed then and still exist today based on race, culture, and society standing?

Meditate on this passage and pray about your willingness to do your part in putting to death the things of the old life.

This passage starts off with the fact that you have been raised with Christ, as we read last week (2:12), and proceeds to detail the valuable and practical results of that resurrected life. We will dive into those details later, but today we look at what God tells us to do in general: *set your hearts and minds on things above.*

1. Set your hearts and minds.

We can think of the heart as the center of our passions and desires and the mind as the center of our plans and learning. You could probably get more detailed than that, but the exact difference between heart and mind may not be the main point of this Scripture, which seems to be drawing our attention to the need to “set” them on the right things. This implies, first of all, that it is our decision. Being raised with Christ is totally beyond our ability. Only God can do that. But deciding where we will focus our heart and our mind – that’s our decision. We can and should ask God to help us, of course, but we have to decide: what is going to be my heart’s desire – heavenly qualities or earthly qualities? What am I going to think about the most – heavenly ideas or earthly ideas? Spend some time thinking about your decision.

2. Be focused on things above.

As stated above, one of the first things this passage draws our attention to is the need for us to make a decision. But a second thing we might be led to is asking the question: what are things above? While the thoughts of heaven after our life here on earth are captivating and motivating ideas, the “things that are above” could mean much more than just focusing on eternal life after death. It could also be talking about the attributes of God that he blesses us with and wants us to grow in and exhibit in this life. We will see those attributes in sharp contrast with their earthly opposites in the devotionals later this week. What do you think is meant by “things above”?

3. Christ is your life!

That’s not a small little statement, is it? It is a great way of saying that your heart’s desires and your mind’s plans are all focused on Christ. Your whole life is wrapped up in him. What does that mean to you?

4. You will also appear with him in glory.

There’s that “hope of glory” idea again. As mentioned above, the Scriptures do not teach us to only be focused on what it will be like after this earth is passed, but it is certainly one of the great things to think about. How does it feel to think about appearing with him in glory?

Meditate on Christ being your life and pray about setting your heart and your mind on things above.

We not only desire “Christ in you” as a blessing for ourselves; we also desire it for others. Paul’s goal about this is impressive: to “present everyone perfect in Christ.” Let’s see how really practical that “impossible dream” is for us today.

1. The Seemingly Impossible Goal

- The seemingly impossible target: everyone. That shows Paul’s awareness of and commitment to God’s will, which is that his kingdom is for all people, regardless of nationality, race, income, gender, or background. (We will see more about that in chapter 3, verse 11.) For another thing, that shows the passion for sharing the gospel with everyone and anyone. To Paul, just like it was to Jesus, no one is too good or too bad to hear, believe, and be impacted by the gospel.
- The seemingly impossible result: perfection. We incorrectly use that word to mean complete sinlessness, which of course is impossible. But the Scriptures use it to describe the state of blamelessness, sincerity, maturity, and completion that are found in Christ. Like holiness, it is the gift of God and the pursuit of mankind. (See **Matthew 5:48**, **2 Corinthians 13:11**, **Hebrews 10:14**, and **James 1:4** for instance).

Both the target and the result are *seemingly* impossible. In fact, on our own effort, they are impossible. But, as we all believe, in the words of Jesus: *Things that are impossible with people are possible with God (Luke 18:27).* While we may not all be able to genuinely say that we have as much vision for as many people as Paul did, we can at least realize that we have that vision for people closest to us. And as we grow, we will have that vision for more and more people. Do you have that dream of presenting everyone perfect in Christ? How can you grow in that?

2. The Inexhaustible Energy Source

When we look at Paul’s seemingly impossible goal, it is easy to be overwhelmed. Just thinking about it exhausts me! While it is a goal that we are willing to work hard for, we also need to believe that God is giving us the energy we need to continue to work hard, without getting burned out. That was Paul’s conviction. Yes, he had a lofty goal. But he knew that Christ was an inexhaustible source of energy. Christ in him was not only his hope of glory; Christ’s indwelling presence was his energy. (See also **Philippians 4:13**.) The original Energizer Bunny! Do you have that conviction about the energizing presence of Christ in you? How can you grow in that?

Meditate and pray that you will have this same goal. relying on this same energy.

1. "I am struggling for you." (verse 1)

When's the last time you heard someone say that about you?

When's the last time you said that about someone?

The way we usually use the word, someone who is struggling, is not doing well. That's not the way Paul used that word here (and in the last verse of the previous chapter), is it? He had a purpose (verse 2), a very positive goal in mind. Look at what he was laboring (struggling) to make happen:

- That they would be encouraged in heart.
- That they would be united in love.
- That they would have the full riches of complete understanding.

Those are pretty lofty goals, aren't they? What do you suppose Paul might have done on a practical level that was an actual struggle on his part to make those things happen?

How would you feel if someone told you that they were really struggling for you with a vision for your life like this?

Are you struggling for anyone like this?

2. Verses 4 & 5 refer to a deep concern that Paul had about some false teachers who were working their way into the fellowship. We will see more about that at the end of this chapter. For now, note the commendation he gave the Colossian disciples in verse 5: "orderly" and "firm in the faith." What do those two phrases mean to you?

3. "Continue to live in him." (verses 6 – 7)

Look at the 4-phase aspect of that life mentioned in verse 7 and think about how each one applies to you, not only as a goal for your own life, but also as a desire you have to help others in their continuing life in Christ:

- Rooted
- Built up
- Strengthened
- Overflowing with thankfulness

Meditate on the impact of these verses in your life today, and pray for God to help you put them into practice in your vision for others.

Colossians: Christ in You – the Hope of Glory

Week 3

Raised with Christ

Colossians 3:1 – 17

Memory Verse for the Week:

*Since, then, you have been raised with Christ,
set your hearts on things above,
where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.*

Colossians 3:1

Try to recall the memory verse two or three times every day this week and think about how it applies to your life at that moment.

Daily Worship

In your personal worship to God this week, thank him for all the blessings you have as someone who has been raised with Christ.

Suggested Song: *Blessed Assurance*

Fellowship

Your brothers and sisters also have been raised with him. Pray about how you can encourage them this week with that thought.

Here's our opportunity to testify! It shouldn't be hard at all for each of us to read this passage and put our name in it as an example of its truthfulness, its value to our lives, and how much we can recommend it to everyone else.

1. We testify about Christ and the power of his cross.

- “In Christ, all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.” (verse 9) That was just the opposite of what the false teaching known as Gnosticism proposed. We will see more about that false teaching tomorrow. They said that Christ's body was only an illusion. To them, he was not fully human and fully God. One of the great and amazing truths about Jesus, though, is that he was fully human and fully divine (**John 1:14**).
- His cross triumphed over all powers and authorities. There is hardly anything more powerful or having more authority than evil itself. *Hardly* anything. The exception is Christ. On the cross, he disarmed all the powerful forces of evil.

Do you actively testify about Christ and his power? Can you recommend him to everyone else?

2. We testify about how we have been made alive in Christ.

- We were once dead in our sins, but he has made us fully alive in Christ. There is no example of a complete turnaround more impressive than that. Look again at verse 10: *you have been given fullness in Christ!*
- We were buried with him in baptism and raised with him through our faith in the power of God. Christian baptism is a death of an old life and the resurrection of a new life. It is a general fact that no one is baptized into Christ who is not a changed person. It is a personal fact that we can testify to its value in our own lives.
- We were “*circumcised*.” That spoke especially to the Jewish audience of that day who understood that the Old Testament often emphasized the spiritual nature of circumcision, not just the physical. It also told them that Gentiles did not have to go through the Jewish custom of physical circumcision to be in Christ's kingdom. They were circumcised, spiritually not physically, by Christ.

Do you actively testify about your conversion? Can you recommend it to others?

Meditate on your testimony about Christ and about your conversion, and pray that you will actively testify about both. Continue to focus on the memory verse and recall it throughout your day, drawing from the strength promised there.

Week 2
Day 5

Don't Lose Connection with the Head

Today's Date: _____

Read *Colossians 2:16 – 23*.

Many phrases in this letter deal indirectly with some false teachings that were prevalent all over the world in 60 AD. This section deals even more directly with them. In particular, two false teachings that were prevalent then were classified as the *Judaizers* and the *Gnostics*. The Judaizers taught that Gentiles had to also obey the Jewish customs to be saved. (See resources like <https://www.gotquestions.org/Judaizers.html> for more information about them.) The Gnostics taught, among other things, that they had the secret knowledge necessary to come to God and that the Gospel of Christ alone was not sufficient. (See <https://www.gotquestions.org/Christian-gnosticism.html> for more information about them.) The false teachings prevalent today differ in many ways from those of 60 AD, but the principles for how to deal with them that are taught here still apply.

1. Don't let them judge you by their false rules (verse 16). We have one judge and that is God. We have one standard, and that is his Word. Anytime we are disobeying his Word, we actually want people to point that out to us and help us get back on the right path. But we should not allow anyone who is promoting rules not found in Scripture to make us feel guilty about their rules.
2. Don't let them disqualify you for the prize (verse 18). That's interesting. How could someone else do that? Only if we let them move us away from Christ and his Word. Don't let that happen. Be on your guard.
3. Don't be like them and lose your connection with the Christ the head (verse 19). It is still true today that most controversies and conflicts tempt us to take our eyes off of Jesus in our discussions about them. We either forget to bring him into the discussion, or we say things that he would never say or in a way that he would never say them. Again, don't let that happen! "*Fix our eyes on Jesus*" (**Hebrews 12:2**), and don't lose our connection with him.
4. Don't submit to rules that actually have no value in helping you avoid sin (verses 20 – 23). Pray for discernment and search the Scriptures to see what is right. If it is from God, it has value. If it is not, don't be fooled by it. Human-made rules sometimes can help us in our structure and discipline, but rules do not really change us inside. Only Christ can do that.

False teaching of today may take on different forms than it did in 60 AD. But these principles can help us in every age.

Meditate on these principles and pray about how you can avoid the traps of false teaching and help others avoid it also.

Week 2
Days 6 & 7

Summary

Today's Date _____

Knowing Your Bible/Knowing Your God

As you close this week's study, write a summary of what you know about this part of the Bible and what you know about God.

This is what I know about Colossians 1:24 – 2:23:

This is what I know about God:

Put it in your heart.

Quote the memory verse for the week and think about how it affects your life.

Share it.

Call or visit someone and share your thoughts from this week's studies.

Prepare for worship and fellowship.

All week, you have been focusing on the glorious results of having Christ living in you. Before you meet together with your brothers and sisters for worship and fellowship, spend some time praying for them using the kind of prayers we read about last week. Think specifically about how you can encourage someone today with these thoughts.