



STUDY GUIDE ON BOOK OF COLOSSIANS LADIES STUDY, CITYCHURCH, WILLIAMSPORT, PA

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WHY THIS STUDY?

If you have attended Citychurch for any time at all, you doubtlessly have heard the mission statement quoted: *“To extend the glory of God by making disciples through the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.”* This is the framework which everything revolves around in our church.

— *To extend the glory of God*

This means that our focus is on God and not ourselves. It is the prism which we view everything, not just our relationship to God but also to one another. This is why we end every service stating, *“We welcome one another as Christ as welcomed you, for the glory of God.”* (Romans 15:7*; see also 1 Timothy 1:17 and Revelation 4:11). The purpose of this study is help see life from above, with Christ in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6). This is one of the evidences that Christ is truly working in our lives (Philippians 3:18-20).

— *By making disciples through the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

This is clearly what following Christ is all about, emulating the life of Jesus through faith in the gospel (Matthew 10:24-25; 28:18-20). The gospel is our one and only way that we can approach God — through the finished work of Jesus Christ accomplished for us at the cross. Because it is through grace that we stand (Romans 5:2), we give all the glory to God for the fruit that comes from us in following Christ (Philippians 1:11).

We live out our mission statement through our three core values; gospel, community, and mission. Through this study in Colossians, we will see a glorious picture of the gospel in Jesus Christ, the community of faith that lives out this gospel, and how it extends beginning with our own homes, our workplaces, and in the world at large.

In short, this study is as much for others as it is for you! Rejoice!

[*All Scriptures used are from the ESV version unless noted otherwise.]

GETTING STARTED

When reading the Bible, it is easy to forget that these writings were originally written to real people experiencing real life situations and circumstances. Yet the Holy Spirit inspired these writers to enable these specific letters and writings to have universal application to the church for all time. These writings were assembled together in what is known as the “canon” which became our Bible.

What this means is that we should read the book of Colossians as both a ‘human’ book as well as a divine one. It is human in that this was a real church with real disciples of Jesus who had serious challenges to their faith. But it is divine, in that these same words apply to us at Citychurch in our present day.

We will look at the original context to that church in Colossae which provides an anchor so that we don’t use the Scripture like a Gumby toy that gets stretched into directions and dimensions that it never should have gone. These same Scriptures that speak of God’s revelation have been used to suggest fallacies such as Jesus being a created being rather than God himself, as well as false beliefs such as purgatory and salvation by works.

Paul’s letter to the church at Colossae is an encouraging and instructive message. They appeared to be a strong, believing church. Yet, just like us today, they faced challenges from different sources that were saying, in essence, “Jesus is not that special.” This is why Paul was speaking against those who were pushing for certain practices or beliefs that were necessary to *really* get right with God. Paul’s answer to this is to first focus on the supremacy and centrality of Christ, and then examining what living this out would look in practice.

Paul’s letter to the Colossians has many lessons for us today. We, too, are a church that is sincere in our faith and commitment to the gospel, community, and mission. But we also must guard from those who pull us in directions that take way from biblical truth. We will discover many treasures in these few chapters. At the same time, we must approach this study with humility and realize that we are not going to unlock every passage in the book of Colossians!

There are a number of key passages in this short letter of Paul. They should be kept in the back of our mind throughout the study. The first are two that focus on Christ himself, who should always be our focus:

Colossians 1:18, "He is also the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. (CSB)

Colossians 2:9-10, "For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.

As we keep our focus on Christ, we are also going to be guided by two other verses in this study.

Colossians 1:10, "so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God."

Colossians 2:6-7, "Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

Based on these two passages, we will have three principles that we will use in this study:

- (1) knowing God, which is the essence of our faith (John 17:3)
- (2) walking with God, doing everything in word and deed in his name (Col 3:17)
- (3) bearing fruit as a result of our faith in God, the evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit in us (Galatians 5:22-24)

Every lesson will reflect on these three key themes.

Like any study, you get out of it what you put into it. Study each lesson before your group gathers to discuss it. If you have difficulty with a question, do your best to answer. It may be helpful to inform your leader before the study of any particular questions you may have so they can come better prepared to answer. But do not limit what the Holy Spirit may be showing you, as well.

"May you be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord." (Colossians 1:9-10).

QUICK BIG PICTURE

COLOSSIANS

| | Christ Is Our Lord | ... Our Life | ... Our Love |
|----------------------|---|--------------|--------------------------|
| | Lord of creation | Our mind | Love for "outsiders" |
| | Lord of the church | Our body | Love for believers |
| | Lord of ministry | Our attitude | |
| | | Our actions | |
| | CHAPTER 1 | CHAPTER 3 | CHAPTER 4 |
| Subject | Instruction | Warnings | Exhortations |
| Christ | His person and work | | His peace and presence |
| Emphasis | Doctrinal and corrective | | Practical and reassuring |
| Theme | Christ is our supreme Lord and sufficient Savior. | | |
| Key Verses | 2:9-10 | | |
| Christ in Colossians | Jesus is the supreme Lord of the church and the world, the all-sufficient Savior in whom the fullness of Deity dwells (1:13-20; 2:9). | | |

Video Resource: Colossians Bible Project on Youtube ([youtube.com/watch?v=pXTXIDxQsvc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pXTXIDxQsvc))

PAUL'S LETTER TO THE COLOSSIANS

1:1-2:3 THE EXALTED MESSIAH

WE THANK GOD FOR YOUR **FAITH** and **HOPE** and **LOVE**. WE PRAY FOR GREATER **WISDOM** and **Spiritual Understanding**.

1:15-20 THE MESSIAH HYMN

HE IS THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD, FIRSTBORN OVER ALL CREATION, FOR IN HIM ALL THINGS WERE CREATED, IN THE HEAVENS & ON EARTH, THINGS VISIBLE & INVISIBLE, THRONES OR KINGDOMS, POWERS OR AUTHORITIES. ALL THINGS WERE CREATED THROUGH HIM & FOR HIM, AND HE IS BEFORE ALL THINGS, AND IN HIM ALL THINGS COHERE. AND HE IS THE HEAD OF THE BODY, THE CHURCH. HE IS THE BEGINNING, FIRSTBORN FROM AMONG THE DEAD, SO THAT IN ALL THINGS HE SHOULD HOLD THE HIGHEST ROLE. FOR GOD WAS PLEASED FOR HIS FULL PRESENCE TO DWELL IN HIM, AND THROUGH HIM TO RECONCILE ALL THINGS TO HIMSELF, AND THROUGH HIM TO RECONCILE ALL THINGS TO HIMSELF, TOGETHER IN THE HEAVENS OR ON EARTH, MAKING PEACE THROUGH THE BLOOD OF HIS CROSS.

FULL OF ECHOES - GENESIS 1 - PSALMS 2, 8, 68 - EXODUS 10 - PROVERBS 8

2:6-2:3 THE PRESSURE TO TURN AWAY

1:24-2:5 THE SUFFERING APOSTLE

3-4 THE RESURRECTION LIFE

2:6-10 CONCLUSION

JESUS IS LORD OF THE HOUSE

THE NEED HUMANITY

THE NEED ROMAN HOUSEHOLD

THE NEED ONESMUS AS A BELIEVED BROTHER IN THE LORD

ESCAPED SLAVE OF PHILEMON

created by the Bible Project



LESSON 1 - COLOSSIANS 1:1-14

OPEN IN PRAYER

Almighty God, open our hearts and minds in this study to see how good, and great, and gracious, and glorious you truly are. Help us to let go of our own ideas of who you are and how you work and let them be replaced with the truth of your Holy Scriptures that guide us into all truth. In Jesus Name we pray — Amen.

READ ALOUD COLOSSIANS 1:1-14

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, **2** To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

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

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

GETTING STARTED

This letter from the Apostle Paul follows a standard pattern; he introduces himself and generally the individual who is delivering his letter, which is then followed by acknowledging the positive traits found in this church.

— What kind of church does this look like based on Paul’s description?

— If Paul was writing a letter to Citychurch, do you think he would describe us the same way? Why or why not?

1/ KNOWING GOD

Verse 10 contains one of the key Scriptures of this letter, and speaks of “*increasing in the knowledge of God.*” It cannot be emphasize enough how important this is to us as believers in Christ. If we believe things about God that are wrong, that means our relationship with Him is not based on truth. (Example: If I believe that God’s love is proportional to my love for Him, then I am basing my relationship with God on works and not grace.) Note that in verse 9, Paul is praying for this church to be “*filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.*”

— Verse 6 states that we must understand the grace of God in truth. What is our understanding of the grace of God? How do we know this is the truth?

— Look at verse 11, “*being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy.*” What is the key to being strengthened with all power with endurance and patience with joy? How would you describe that in your own words?

Verse 13-14 is a gospel statement, “*He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*” Kingdom is a word that is archaic to us, but is often used in the Bible. It denotes two things; the ‘dominion’ of a king (hence the word, king-dom), but more than specifying a territory, it also implied that in this dominion, the king has absolute rule and authority.

— Put this into your own words. What does it mean to be formally living in the ‘domain of darkness’ and now to be in the ‘kingdom of his beloved Son’?

2/ WALKING WITH GOD

Verse 5-6 notes that the Colossian church heard the gospel and in verse 7 Paul states that they learned the gospel. The Bible describes a relationship with God in various ways, and one of these is as a journey. John Bunyan wrote *Pilgrim’s Progress* (highly recommended reading, by the way), describing the journey of a believer through the various trials, troubles and triumphs of life. But it is a walk that is “worthy.” (v.10)

— What exactly is a “worthy” walk with God look like? (Look up the word in the dictionary to get you started if you need help to get started.) Make a list of aspects from Romans 16:2; Philippians 1:27; 3 John 1:6. What is emphasized as an important element of a worthy walk in 1 Thessalonians 2:12 and Ephesians 4:1?

— Make it personal: If there was one single area that you believe you need to address to make your walk with Christ more “worthy,” what would it be?

3/ BEARING FRUIT AS A RESULT OF OUR FAITH IN GOD

Another analogy of Christian faith is a seed that becomes a fruit-bearing tree. In one sense, the fruit is the evidence of the ‘worthy walk.’ Many folks can ‘talk the talk’ but the evidence of heart is shown by the way a person lives this out in practice. But, it is important to remember that the answer is not to try to fix the walk, because that is the ‘fruit’ of the heart.

— Jesus related true faith to a healthy tree in Matthew chapter 7. But the context is very important, and it relates to what the Apostle Paul is going to address with errors in the Colossian church. Compare Colossians 1:10 with Matthew 7:15-23. What is the key element that produces a good fruit-bearing?

Verses 4-5 refer to the Colossians faith, hope, and love in the Lord. Mark Jones wrote a book, Faith, Hope, Love: The Christ-Centered Way to Grow in Grace (Crossway, 2017). In an interview about his book, he commented:

“Faith, hope, and love have been referred to as the three divine sisters. We can think of them as three beautiful sisters joined together hand in hand, swirling around as in a dance. Eventually, faith and hope vanish from the scene and love is left dancing alone forever. This picture may appear odd until we realize that faith and hope were there to help love on her way, until she was mature enough to be alone. For she exists as the greatest of the sisters and deserves the preeminence—just as Christ remains the greatest of the sons of men and deserves the same.

“Faith, hope, and love are also referred to as the theological virtues. The Christian life—in terms of our living in response to God and his new work in us—springs from faith, hope, and love. Everything we do as Christians relates to these three virtues and they all have a longing, an expectation, a desire that will one day be fully realized when Christ returns in glory. To possess only one of these graces would be misery. But to possess all of these graces is *delight*.” (<https://www.crossway.org/articles/whats-so-important-about-faith-hope-and-love/>)

— Paul exhorted the church at Corinth to practice faith, hope, and love (1 Cor 13:13, but he used it as a commendation to the Colossian church as well as the one at Thessalonica. Read 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10 and note the similarities between Paul’s opening comments to both of these churches. Would Paul write the same thing to Citychurch??

REFLECTION AND THANKSGIVING

— What personally spoke to you while doing this lesson by yourself? In what way did this idea or concept become clearer, or more important (or perhaps less important) from going through this lesson with your fellow sisters in Christ? Why?

— Our second key verse is Colossians 2:6-7, “*Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.*” Note that as good as it is to walk and be rooted and build up and established in faith — it all should be framed in a heart of thanksgiving!

The Apostle Paul began his letter with thanksgiving the church at Colossae, specifically for their faith in Christ Jesus (1:4), love for all the saints (1:4), and hope in the word of truth, the gospel (1:5). Paul gave this same commendation of faith, hope, and love to the church at Thessalonica (1 Thess 1:2-3), and expressed it as instruction to the Corinthian church (1 Cor 13:13).

Conclude your study today by giving thanks by recognizing the faith, hope, and love you see in one another and in our church in general.



LESSON 2 - COLOSSIANS 1:15-23

OPEN IN PRAYER

Almighty God, open our hearts and minds in this study to see how good, and great, and gracious, and glorious you truly are. Help us to let go of our own ideas of who you are and how you work and let them be replaced with the truth of your Holy Scriptures that guide us into all truth. In Jesus Name we pray — Amen.

READ ALOUD COLOSSIANS 1:15-23

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. **16** For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. **17** And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. **18** And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. **19** For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, **20** and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. **21** And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, **22** he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, **23** if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

GETTING STARTED

Remember that our tri-focus in this study is (1) knowing God, (2) walking with God, (3) bearing fruit as a result of our faith in God. This is also how Paul is going to present his letter to the Colossian church. Before the Apostle Paul begins to address errors in the church, he wants to make sure they first understand the truth clearly, beginning with Jesus Christ.

— Paul summarizes this section by saying that what he is describing is the “hope of the gospel.” In your own words, what is the gospel? Why is it described in one of the old confessions as our “only comfort in life and death?”

1/ KNOWING GOD

One of the great truths of the Christian faith is the triune God; manifested to us as Father, Son, Holy Spirit. This is absolutely essential to our faith, because if Jesus was not truly God, he could not have paid the sacrifice for our sins. But likewise, if he were not man, he could not represent us as a substitute!

— How is Jesus described as God in Colossians 1:15-23?

— Verse 15 which states, “*He is the ...firstborn of all creation,*” gives us an opportunity to learn an important element of Biblical understanding. It is called the “rule of faith,” which means in essence that the Bible cannot contradict itself, so the rule of understanding a particular Scripture is seeing what the rest of Scripture says about this same theme or idea. Jehovah Witnesses and other cults use verse 15 as a ‘proof-text’ that Jesus was created, and thus not a true member of the Deity. Yet, the very thrust of Colossians itself disavows such a belief. So, what is meant by “firstborn?” In ancient times, the first born son would be the leader or head of the family. Thus, the word can mean the first one born, but also the first in importance. Taking that view, read through verses 15-20 with this in mind, and summarize in your own words what Paul is telling us about Christ.

2/ WALKING WITH GOD

Verse 17 states that “*by him all things hold together.*” This has traditionally meant that God is not just the Creator but also is the Sustainer of the creation. But it also has a practical application for us in that Christ sustains us personally as well.

— Make it personal: Do you feel that you are having trouble “holding it all together?” Wouldn’t it be glorious to know that everything we need is found in Christ, that HE can sustain us through the most difficult times. Is there a burden you would like to let go of? Confess it to your group and pray for God’s comfort and assurance.

Verse 21 begins with “*And you...*” What follows is not a flattering portrait of man! The Bible is clear that mankind is not essentially good with a few bad apples in the bunch. Instead, it portrays that we are all sinners and in need of the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

— Follow the progression of thought in this section from v. 21, “*And you...*”, to v. 22, “*he has now...*” and finally v. 23, “*you continue...*” Try to write out this section in your own words. [If you need help, you can try reading a paraphrase edition such The Message (use biblegateway.com). But first try to do it on your own].

— The standard for our walk with God is to be “*holy and blameless and above reproach before him.*” (v.22). How is this possible? (Check out Philippians 1:6 & Jude 24 to help you with your answer).

3/ BEARING FRUIT AS A RESULT OF OUR FAITH IN GOD

As we are seeing in this study, our Christian walk is based on our understanding of God and His work for us through the cross of Jesus Christ, and is evidenced by the fruit we bear as a result. A great mistake is to try to produce the fruit by our own will power. The gospel recognizes that it is through the grace of God shown to us through Jesus Christ that we live as we were intended to live.

— V. 23 lists aspects that displays evidence of a true faith in Jesus Christ. What is the overall idea that Paul is emphasizing here?

— James 1:2-4 provides a key to how God works to produce this steadfastness. What is it? Can you give examples in your own life of how the Lord has taught you the “testing of your faith?”

REFLECTION AND THANKSGIVING

— Do you know how important it is to give thanks? 1 Thessalonians 5:18 tells us to, “give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” Reflect on this lesson and thank God on some specific areas that the Lord has spoken to you and acknowledge that before Him in prayer.



LESSON 3 - COLOSSIANS 1:24-2:1-4

OPEN IN PRAYER

Almighty God, open our hearts and minds in this study to see how good, and great, and gracious, and glorious you truly are. Help us to let go of our own ideas of who you are and how you work and let them be replaced with the truth of your Holy Scriptures that guide us into all truth. In Jesus Name we pray — Amen.

READ ALOUD COLOSSIANS 1:24 — 2:1-4

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

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

GETTING STARTED

Again we are reminded that the focus of our study (1) knowing God, (2) walking with God, (3) bearing fruit as a result of our faith in God. In this passage, Paul notes how much he must struggle for this to happen. Yet he notes that this struggle is with “all his energy that he powerfully works within me.”

— Paul’s struggle was related to his ministry. What aspect of serving do you find a ‘struggle?’ How can you follow Paul’s example to work through your struggle?

1/ KNOWING GOD

This passage presents an extremely important truth in relation to knowing God. Paul states in 1:25-26 that is through the Word of God that we know what is a mystery hidden through the ages and generations, but is now revealed.

— What does Paul describe as the “mystery?” (1:27; 2:3). What are the “riches” that come from a “complete understanding” of this mystery?

— In the last lesson we learned an important bible study tool known as the “rule of faith,” which means in essence that the Bible cannot contradict itself, so the rule of understanding a particular Scripture is seeing what the rest of Scripture says about this same theme or idea. Use this principle to come to a better understanding of what is meant in Colossians 2:3 of the “treasures of wisdom and knowledge” hidden in Christ? Look up John 1:14; Romans 11:33-36; 1 Corinthians 1:24, 30; 2:6-8; and Ephesians 1:8-9; 3:8-11, and summarize in your own words what Paul means in the Colossian passage.

2/ WALKING WITH GOD

Colossians 1:24 is one of the more difficult passages to understand in the New Testament, given that it Paul seems to be saying that Christ's afflictions were insufficient. If this was what he meant, then it would appear to justify some sort of self-righteousness earned by pain and suffering. (And in fact, there are Roman Catholic orders that practice flagellation for exactly that very purpose.) But this cannot be what Paul means, because it would nullify salvation through grace, which is taught throughout Scripture. Rather, what Paul is getting at is the necessary suffering for the "body of Christ," the church. Paul desires to submit to such suffering because he knows it is necessary in order to bring Christ to the church. In this he demonstrates Jesus himself, who "for the joy set before him endured the cross" (Hebrews 12:2).

— How was Paul able to rejoice in his suffering? Is it because he was able to show determination in the face of afflictions because it was God that was at work in his life? (see 1 Corinthians 15:10; Philippians 2:13; 4:13). How could we find that same strength in our faith?

A good gardener does not just love flowers but also must hate weeds. Paul is writing about the glorious riches of Christ, but sprinkled throughout this book are warnings about threats to the faith, and the need to yank them out like the weeds they are. We see one here in Colossians 2:4 where Paul warns the church to avoid deception. This is not a peripheral issue — there are references to deception in every single one of the 27 books of the New Testament!

— Look up 2 Corinthians 11:3 and compare it to Colossians 2:4. What is the lure of deception? Why must believers guard against it so carefully?

— Make it personal: Given what we have seen in this lesson, it is no wonder that Paul says in Colossians 1:29, "For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me." What have you seen in this lesson that makes you want to buckle down and "struggle with all his energy?"

3/ BEARING FRUIT AS A RESULT OF OUR FAITH IN GOD

Colossians 1:27 is one of the 216 times that Paul in his letters describes the indwelling of Christ in the believer, but here it is in a form that is absolutely beautiful. “The hope of glory, Christ in you.” The culmination of everything promised to us in Christ is found in that very simple statement. It means that every true believer has the hope of displaying the nature and character of God. Reflect on some ways that this truth can change your perspective on life.

— If indeed Christ is in you, the hope of glory, how should you respond when you are feeling lonely, discouraged, fearful, rejected, anxious, defeated, unloved, or other such discouraging emotions??

— If indeed Christ is in you, the hope of glory, how should you respond when you have been offended, hurt by others, taken advantage of, or other painful actions from other people?

— If indeed Christ is in you, the hope of glory, what message do you have to those who are lost and dying in their sinful life, trying to find fulfillment through pleasure, money, relationships, success, or other such activities?

In Colossians 2:2, Paul affirms that he desires the believers to be knit together in love. The Greek word for “knit” is συμβιβασθέντες (symbibasthentes), and it is only used here. It conveys an idea of a tightly knit fabric. This concept is the foundation for the value of “community” that we hold at Citychurch.

— Note that Paul wants to “present everyone mature in Christ” (Col 1:28). How does this relate to the “knitting in love” aspect Paul mentions later? (In other words, how do we encourage discipleship through love?).

REFLECTION AND THANKSGIVING

In Colossians 2:3 Paul notes that it is Christ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. It is not like they are hidden like in a treasure hunt, but rather, they are “hidden in plain sight.” Once we see the Scriptures through the lens of the Holy Spirit, what has always been there is clearly revealed. This is why we often say to ourselves, “Why did I never see that before? It’s right there in black and white!”

— Share with one another some areas of light that the Lord has shined in your hearts and understanding through this lesson. Together thank the Lord for his abundant grace that through the Spirit guides us unto all truth. (John 16:13).



LESSON 4 - COLOSSIANS 2:5-15

OPEN IN PRAYER

Almighty God, open our hearts and minds in this study to see how good, and great, and gracious, and glorious you truly are. Help us to let go of our own ideas of who you are and how you work and let them be replaced with the truth of your Holy Scriptures that guide us into all truth. In Jesus Name we pray — Amen.

READ ALOUD COLOSSIANS 2:5 - 15

5 For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ. **6** Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, **7** rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. **8** See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. **9** For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, **10** and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. **11** In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, **12** having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. **13** And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, **14** by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. **15** He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

GETTING STARTED

Again, we remember that our tri-focus in this study is (1) knowing God, (2) walking with God, (3) bearing fruit as a result of our faith in God. As we saw in our first three studies on Colossians 1, Paul wanted the Colossian church to clearly understand who Christ is before he began to deal with specific issues. Now in chapter 2, he is going to begin to weave together these two concepts (who Christ is and how they impacts our thinking and behavior).

— In what ways can you see this Christ-focus in our discipleship process at Citychurch? Can you point to examples of how the preliminary and primary focus is on Jesus Christ in our Discover Citychurch, our Growth tracks, and in our Home Groups, as well as in the Sunday morning messages? Do you understand now why this is so important?

1/ KNOWING GOD

The apostle Paul has a great ability to pack an incredible amount of truth in to very simple statements. Colossians 2:9 is one such example, “For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.” How any one professing to be a Christian could claim that Jesus Christ is not God has never read this verse! Nothing could be clearer.

The verse that follows this tremendous statement is, “*and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.*” (2:10) The gospel of John states much the same thing, “*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. / For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.*” (John 1:14,16)

— Notice how often the word “full” or “fullness” is used in both the Colossians and John passages? What image does this present in your minds? Why is it important to understand that when we think of Christ, we must see this “fullness?” (Or to put it another way, what would it mean if that were not true, that something is lacking?!)

Verse 12 has a simple expression, “*the powerful working of God.*” Notice that the context has to do with the act of redemption of our lives through Christ. Compare this to Paul’s statement to the Romans 1:16, “*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes...*”

— Can we change a person, really change them? We can talk to them, challenge them, plead with them, encourage them, but in the end, we are powerless to do more than assist in the direction of another person’s life. Why is the “power of God” so important to our walk with God? (Read 1 Peter 1:5; Rev 12:10; 19:1 to help you answer).

Verse 15 states that, “*He (God) disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him (Christ).*” This passage, like many others in the Bible, distinguish the members of the God-head, yet also affirm that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all equally God. We see this in John 1:1 where it states that “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*” So which is it — was the Word (Jesus Christ) with God or was He himself God? The fact that both are true is impossible for our brains to fully fathom, but despite that fact, it is still true. Jesus Christ was fully God and yet also fully and completely man.

But the “open shame” imagery is also quite important. In ancient times, when there was no media to communicate a great victory, it was done visually by forcing the vanquished to march through the capital city. The demonic forces that have ruled the earth doing the bidding of Satan since the fall of man are now humbled by Christ’s triumph at the cross. Though we do not yet see that ultimate victory (read ahead to the book of Revelation if you want to know how it all turns out), we can taste that triumph now through faith.

— Have you ever watched a sports event on the television that had already been completed and you knew the outcome? How is it different than watching it live? How can this analogy apply to our lives when we feel like the team we are on in life is losing and time is running out?

2/ WALKING WITH GOD

Colossians 2:8 states, “*See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.*” Do you remember in the last study how we looked at the subject of deception when examining Colossians 2:4 (“delude you with plausible arguments”.) Here Paul is elaborating more specifically on what could cause this delusion.

— Paul paints with a very broad brush here. Human tradition on one side and supernatural phenomenon on the other demonstrates how far from one end to another mankind can stray from the truth of Christ. What do you believe are the most serious threats to the Christian faith today that pull Christians in that direction?

Colossians 2:12 states, “*...having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.*” Baptism is mentioned numerous times in Scripture as an element of discipleship (e.g. Matthew 28:19, Acts 2:38, Galatians 3:27).

— Have you been baptized in water? If not, this study will hopefully help you to see how important it is to be baptized as a true follower of Jesus Christ. Speak to Pastor Raphael or one of the elders if you wish to take this step.

Colossians 2:13-14 is written in a sequence. First, it describes our condition; which is seen as dead in our trespasses (spiritual death, an inability to follow God), symbolized in the symbolism of circumcision (“uncircumcision of your flesh”). We were spiritually dead, and yet God made us alive! How? He forgave our trespasses, canceled the record of our debt, legally justified us, and set aside all of this on the basis of one thing and one thing only. He nailed all of our offenses on the cross!

— There are many ways to reflect on this passage, but one that has a powerful image is the cancelling of the record of our debt. Imagine that you owed millions of dollars that you had to pay back, and it caused you to work night and day for years and years and still were barely making a dent in the principle. Then picture that a man came and told you the debt was completely forgiven. What would be your reaction? Why do we not have this response when we read a passage like this concerning our debt of sin?

3/ BEARING FRUIT AS A RESULT OF OUR FAITH IN GOD

Paul commends the church in Colossians 2:5 for their “good order” and their “firmness of their faith in Christ.” Good order is the Greek word “taxin” and it is taken from military terminology with the thought of unbroken ranks. This relates also to the term of “firmness” in faith. In both of these expressions, there is an implication that they are meant in a corporate and not individual sense.

— How does being in a strong community of faith make our faith stronger? Can you think of practical examples of how your faith was strengthened as a result of others who stood and encouraged you during a time of testing in your faith?

REFLECTION AND THANKSGIVING

Our theme verse is Colossians 2:6-7, “*Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.*” We sometimes think that gratitude is a nice option but not necessarily essential, but Moses’ words to the children of Israel before entering the Promised Land are rather sobering:

“Because you did not serve the Lord your God with joyfulness and gladness of heart, because of the abundance of all things, therefore you shall serve your enemies whom the Lord will send against you, in hunger and thirst, in nakedness, and lacking everything. And he will put a yoke of iron on your neck until he has destroyed you.” (Deuteronomy 28:47-48)

If we take these words to heart, it means that we can go about our Christian lives trying to walk in truth, sink roots in truth, build upon truth, and be established in truth, but we do so with ungrateful hearts, we can expect divine discipline!

Spend some time in prayer giving thanks for the Lord’s blessing in your life and for what He has shown you in this lesson.
