

# Colossians

## Core Group Study Guide

### By the Chi Alpha Staff at UVa

A study on the Book of Colossians.

We will focus on the main themes that arise throughout the book such as: The supremacy of Christ and what the Christian life is really like.

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## Week One: Introduction to Colossians

**Read** Colossians out loud – 1:1-14, 15-29, 2:1-12, 13-23, 3:1-14, 15-25, 4:1-9, 10-18

As we read Colossians be thinking the questions – who, what, where, when, why

**Who wrote it?** Vs. 1:1, 4:18 – Paul

**Who's it written to?** Vs. 1:2 – church of Colosse

**What are the themes you notice?** – supremacy of Christ, how to live Christian life, what we have in Christ

**Because of these themes, what do you think might have been some problems in the church?** – Supremacy of Christ questioned/threatened, questions about what Christian life is really like

**Do you think Paul knew them personally?** Vs. 1:4, 2:1 – Paul knew Epaphras, but he may be the only one Paul knew

- Probably from Paul's 3 yr. ministry in Ephesus (Acts 20:31, 19:10) – probably Epaphras or someone else who then worked with Epaphras heard Paul, then started the church in the area.

**When was it written?** – From vs. 4:18 – Paul in chains, most likely in Rome, so can begin to get estimated time period from that – A.D. 62

Read 1:1-14 for next week.

## Week Two: Colossians 1:1-14

### Opening Questions:

- 1.) How many times did you evangelize this week?

### Overview:

### Text Questions:

Read vs. 1-2

- Apostle – A sent one, holy, set apart
- **How did Paul see them?** – As brothers, as family and he'd never even met them – powerful!
- Grace and peace
  - Grace - when we greet each other and say hi – it means the same as when non-Christians say hi, but not in Paul's day. Regular greeting was the word *charein* – greetings, favor from me to you. Paul used the word *charis* – God's favor on sinful individuals with no strings attached, also a prayer, really
  - Peace – wholeness and well-being in every aspect of life – to taste God's fullness of presence and fulfillment that flows from that presence! Powerful!

Read vs. 3-8

- What do you think are important characteristics of a healthy church?
  - Faith in Christ – **when you say I believe in Jesus Christ, what does that mean to you?**
  - Love for each other – **What message do we send to non-Christians when we love each other? What message do we send to God?**
  - Hope in Heaven – **Why is it crucial to have hope in Heaven?**
    - Example of having a focus pt. while turning in ballet
  - Fruit bearing – **What kind of fruit?** Internal and external
    - In fruit and growth – tree both grows (it's alive) and bears fruit – like the Christian life – we're both growing and maturing in Christ and bearing fruit
- Epaphras – faithful minister – be open to being used and to teach, serve, etc.
- **What does it mean to love in the Spirit?**

Read vs. 9-14

- Knowledge of His will and Spiritual wisdom and understanding (Discernment)– inward revelation and transformation for outward expression **SO THAT... (in order...)**
- Live worthy life and please God – to live (walk – the outward expression that comes from revelation) – to please God – mature, anticipate His desires

- Indian tradition – expectations of children for father – 4yr. old – just be happy to see daddy, 8yr. old – obey if dad asks for slippers or tea, 14 yr. old – **anticipate** dad's desires before ask – get the paper, carry the luggage, get the tea, etc.
- Bearing fruit and growing – growing in, could also be by – rain/ sunshine to plant growth, what knowledge of God is to Spiritual maturity, **How can we be purposeful to grow in the knowledge of God?**
  - Good works are fruit not the root of right relationship with God
- Strengthened with all power according to His glorious might/ great endurance and patience – Spiritual warfare, being empowered to stand and do it, long suffering, to endure,
  - word for power – kratos – only God's power
- Joyfully giving thanks to God – total gratitude, freedom from expectations
- Qualified to share inheritance – like an athlete is qualified to compete in a race.
- He rescued us – His mercy – **we don't deserve it**
- 2 Kingdoms – one or the other
  - God's mercy and goodness – not just saved from harm, but left in evil kingdom, given a whole new God Kingdom!! Awesome!
- Forgiveness – as far as the east is from the west

#### **Application Questions:**

- 1.) **What aspects of this prayer do you want personal growth in?** – tell us where you're at and where you want to grow - knowledge of His will, Spiritual wisdom and understanding, living worthy life and pleasing God, bearing fruit/ growing, being strengthened with all power/ Spiritual warfare, revelation of God's redemption/ mercy, forgiveness.

#### **Memory Verse:**

Hope scriptures - Ps. 33:18 and Ps. 42:5,6 for next week

## Week Three: Colossians 1:15-20

### Opening Questions:

- 1.) If you dropped a penny, would you pick it up?
- 2.) Do you enjoy throwing parties for people?

### Overview:

The passage we're looking at today is a very unique one. It is the only one recorded in which Jesus tells, ultimately, the same parable three times in a row. Jesus deems the topic of evangelism to be important enough to be repeated three times in a row. Do we think this is because we're often so scared to do it? How many times do we have to remind ourselves that eternity is at stake and that there will be a party in Heaven every single time a sinner comes home? It is important to note that in the first two examples, the sheep and the coin, the answer is obvious to hearer that they would go and search for the lost item. In modern day America today, this idea is lost. We don't desire to go and look for things that are lost, after all time is money. Probably in the manner, we don't evangelize our neighbors, family members, classmates, because we just don't have the time. Here we see a great example of why Jesus does not approve of this behavior.

### Text Questions:

#### What aspects describing Christ do you see here?

- Image of the invisible – paradox – visible image (revelation of true identity) of someone invisible
- Firstborn over all creation – just like in a Hebrew family – the 1<sup>st</sup> born has special rights/ privileges not shared by offspring, manages “household” of all creation
- All things created by Him – including angelic beings – from false teaching emphasis on angels
- He's before all things
- He holds all things together
- He's the head of the church
- He's the firstborn of the dead – **What do you think this means?** – 1<sup>st</sup> to be resurrected – so we have hope of resurrection
- All God's fullness dwells in Christ
- To reconcile all things – He wants us! – He reconciles us to HIMSELF – for intimacy – not for other Kingdom, like 1st week – not just in the neighborhood, but in His home, so to speak – in intimacy

#### How does Christ reflect God's image?

#### How does Christ reflect God's purpose?

Read Col 1:21-23

According to these verses – what was our relationship to God like before salvation and then after salvation?

*Before*

Enemies in mind

Alienated from God

*After*

Holy in His sight

Perfect – no blemish

Free from accusation – ownership transferred

**According to vs. 23, what are these promises contingent on? – IF we continue in faith, not moved from the hope held out in the Gospel**

**How do we continue in the faith and not be moved from the hope of the Gospel? What are some practical everyday things we can do? - encourage each other – share what revelation we just got from Scripture, memorize scripture, remind self of scripture, read our Bible**

**What is a way you've changed since you became a Christian? If you've been a Christian a long time – how's God helped you grow and endure in your faith?**

**How does the truth of our state before and after salvation impact you to make Christ known to those seeking? - have each person share their person to pray for**

(possible ending) – look for opportunities to make Christ known this week – we'll talk about it next week

Read vs. 24-29

Vs. 24 – how I see it is, Paul's saying how can I explain how much I care for you even though we've never met? – so he explains his sufferings to express sympathies for their own suffering

Vs. 23/24 – servant – in Greek culture – a menial worker, in the OT – a trusted minister or messenger of a King – “I'm sending a man to the moon” illustration

Vs. 26 – mystery – pagan cults spoke of mysteries/ exclusive info. They alone possessed (possibly these false teachers, too) This mystery, however, if not a secret that no one can know – but it's a “wha-la” revelation moment – like pulling the drape away, telling a punchline to a joke, seeing the end twist in a plot

Vs. 27 – **How are you making Christ known among the non-Christians? What do you want to change to improve? – language, entertainment choices, dating morals, kindness, thoughtfulness ( challenge to make Christ known this week and talk about it next week)**

Vs. 28 – perfect – mature/ complete – both salvation/holiness and maturity? **How can we do this? How can we help other Christians get more mature?** - even if you're not in formal leadership

**Are you available to suffer to share the good news? What would you consider suffering?** – challenge to step out of selfishness and not be trapped with how others perceive us.

Vs. 29 – all His energy – not our talents, strengths.

**Application Questions:**

1. Do you have any people in mind which you can reach out to? Especially people who seem to have fallen away from the faith since coming to college? (these passages were ones in which the person or thing was once found, became lost, and then was found again.

**Memory Verse:**

Colossians 1:28-29

## Week Four: Colossians Chapter 1-2

### Opening Questions:

1.) Did you have the opportunity this week to share Christ in some way?

### Text Questions:

Read verses Colossians 1: 24-29

Vs. 24 – how I see it is, Paul’s saying how can I explain how much I care for you even though we’ve never met? – so he explains his sufferings to express sympathies for their own suffering

Vs. 23/24 – servant – in Greek culture – a menial worker, in the OT – a trusted minister or messenger of a King – “I’m sending a man to the moon” illustration

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Vs. 29 – all His energy – not our talents, strengths.

Memorize 1:28-29 for next week.

Read Col. 2:1-5

Vs. 1 says Paul was struggling for the believers there and those in the neighboring city, Laodicea, but he was in prison. **What do you think Paul meant by struggling?** – prayer

- **What was Paul’s passion/ heart toward those young in faith? What should ours be?**



- **What specifically did he hope for them?** – encouraged in heart, united in love, full riches of complete understanding, not deceived by fine sounding arguments
- **Why is it important for you to know from vs. 3, that ALL the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ?**
- **Vs 4 – Are you fighting against any “fine sounding arguments” against Christ right now?**
- Vs 5 – image of an army under attack – orderly, firm faith against attack of false teaching

Read vs. 6-7

- Christ is enough, then in 8-23 Paul goes into detail to show how He's enough
- In vs. 7 – **What are 4 images about continuing to live in Christ?**
  - Rooted in Him – agricultural – once for all – not moving
  - Built up in Him – construction – built-up, can see progress – maybe outward, orderly
  - Strengthened in the faith – athletic – (exercise) – determination, organicness of growth, mystery
  - Overflowing with thankfulness – continual habitual thing – like water overflowing the bank of a river – there's plenty, then there's a rush, then there's plenty again

Vs. 8

- Take captive – picture of war – taking enemy captive – into slavery of error
- **What are some of the deceptive philosophies, human traditions and principles of this world that have power to take people captive?** – tolerance, no absolute truth, shouldn't share our truth with someone else, materialism is success, greed is a good incentive, many ways to God, science final authority, intellectualism esteemed as enlightened way to see the world, etc.
- **What is one philosophy, tradition, or principle that had you captive, but Jesus set you free from it's power?**

**(possible ending – This week Spiritually encourage someone and tell what you did next week. Mem. Col. 1:28-29)**

Vs. 9-12 – turns the tide – here's your answer – Jesus is the only freedom

- **Do you notice a word theme in these verses?** – in Christ, in Him, by Christ
- Vs. 9 – **What does it mean that in Christ all the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form?**
- Vs 10 - **What does it mean that you have been given fullness in Christ?**
- Vs. 11 – circumcision – the false teachers said you needed physical circumcision, too. Christian circumcision is both a stripping off and a casting away of one's sinful nature
  - **What does it mean that in Him you were also circumcised in the putting off of the sinful nature?** (Understanding of depth of significance of physical circumcision for OT Israel)

- **What does it mean to be buried with Him in baptism? And raised with Him through faith?**

Vs. 13-15 – sounds like total victory – God made you alive with Christ, forgave your sins, canceled code against us, took it away, took power from evil forces – total triumph

- Vs. 14 – written code – a business term meaning a certificate of indebtedness in the debtor’s handwriting – the law left everyone a debtor to God
- The law had valid claim against us – we couldn’t meet the claims – so Jesus took it away – PERMANENTLY!!
- Vs. 14 – custom when decrees nullified – the text was hung in public place – imagery of nailing it to the cross – Jesus is the living text nullifying old decree of condemnation from the law
- Vs. 15 – triumphing over them – leading them in a triumphal entry – like when a Roman general was victorious – he’d bring back captives and have a parade – with his soldiers and captives

Vs. 16-23 – THEREFORE! – because of total victory and triumph – don’t do this

- Vs. 16,17 – found in Christ – commentary said Christianity is a daily feast, every day is holy, it’s moon never wanes, serene tranquility is an unbroken Sabbath rest
- Vs. 18 – probably errorists claimed false humility by worshipping angels as intermediaries and not worshipping God directly
- Vs. 19 – logical picture – body disconnected from the head/ Christ – not going to grow healthfully
- Vs. 21 – against empty asceticism – errorists dietary restrictions as a means for attaining salvation – to it’s end – holiness is avoiding contamination, so need to avoid everything
- Vs. 23 – clincher – apparent wisdom, but lack any power in restraining sensual indulgence
- **Why can’t rules really restrain sensual indulgence?** Comes from the heart, out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks, not outward discipline
- **How does building your life on the foundation of Jesus Christ bring a freedom and joy that no religious system could ever offer?**
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**Application Questions:**

- **What are some religious practices or traditions that can give people a false sense of security?**
- **What do you have in your life that you’d like God to transform your heart about?** – sin issue, bad attitude, etc.

**Creative Implementation for the week/Spiritual Exercise:**

**Memory Verse:** Col. 2:9, Matt: 15:17-20

## Week Five: Colossians 2:9-10

**Objective:** Discussing how a) love is the root of evangelism and b) how to evangelize out of love.

### Opening Questions:

1.) Why do people often turn down the things that others offer them, things that they need?

### Overview:

This week we are looking at a passage that is not an evangelistic story as we have done previously, but a passage that discusses how your heart should be engaged in evangelism.

Can we evangelize simply for the sake of evangelizing? If we are not acting in love, what are we acting in? Pride, selfish ambition, self-centeredness. If the desire to evangelize lies in oneself, we are missing the point of evangelism; we are missing what it means to have God's heart for the lost as was depicted in the evangelism stories of the previous studies.. Love is the basis for evangelism; all of our actions are to be rooted in love. Without love, we are nothing and we gain nothing.

### Text Questions:

Read Col 3:1-4

**1. Since we've become Christians, having "been raised with Christ", what are 4 changes that we're exhorted to make or have been made that you see in these verses?**

- Hearts on things above
- Minds on things above
- Life hidden with Christ
- Appear with Christ in glory

The second two are more Spiritual promises, the first two – we play a more active role in. The term "setting" means a continual process – keep and keep on setting your heart and mind

**2. How does someone set her heart/mind on things above?**

- Evaluate interests, attitudes, ambitions, etc. The idea is to seek Heaven and think Heaven

Read vs. 5-11

We see the word picture of clothing – the old self and new self

3. “Put to death” – **What does this phrase mean to you? What does it look like in your life? How are we as believers to act? With what type of attitude and action?**

- To slay utterly – sense of urgency – ex. A man’s finger is caught in a machine and he cuts off his own wrist to save his life.

4. **What is the first type of sin Paul refers to and what is the second?**

- Sexual sin and how we use our mouths

5. **Why do you think Paul hit the sexual sin first and with such intensity?**

- Because of their culture – temple prostitution, etc.

6. **Which of these sins are you most tempted to commit or are weakest in? How does it look or show up in your life?**

7. **What is one strategy you’ve found for stripping away the power for these sins/temptations?**

Read vs. 12-17

8. **What are the “garments” we’re told to put on?**

- Compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, bearing with each other, forgiving each other, peacefulness, knowing God’s word

9. **What is one that you feel you have a hard time “wearing”?**

10. **What ones do you see as strengths in each other?**

Vs. 15 – peace to rule – umpire, referee, arbitrate, moderate

**Application Questions:**

1. Is there an area in your life that you have become comfortable in sin?
2. How can we help each other this week to say “no” to our sinful nature - i.e. what are some accountability procedures we can do to lift one another up?

**Creative Implementation for the week/Spiritual Exercise:**

We encourage you all to spend time each day over this next week praying for one another. If there is a specific area someone shared pray for that, if not just pray that they would continue to turn away from sinful nature and be led by the Spirit.

**Memory Verse: Colossians 3:12-14**

## Week Six: Colossians 3:18-21

### Opening Question:

How did the past week of prayer go for everyone?

### Text Questions:

Read Col. 3:18-21

### Put in your own words/ summary Paul's challenge to each family member

- Wives – submit
- Husbands – be considerate and selfless
- Children – obey and honor parents
- Fathers – have integrity and compassion

Vs. 21 – How do you think the child's embitterment happens? How can this be avoided?

How does submission look to you? What are the blessings or what have you seen the blessings to be?

Read vs. 22-4:1

What does Paul challenge for slaves? For masters?

How does this impact us now?

- Work relationships, work ethic, attitude

What can you do to live out the principles for the workplace drawn from this passage?

Read vs. 2-4

What are some different kinds of prayer that Paul mentions in this passage?

- Warfare, expansion of Christian mission, personal help

Why should we be watchful and thankful?

What are other ways you can pray that aren't mentioned here?

What are some strategies that help you pray/ have a healthy prayer life?

- Prayer journal, consistent time

Read Vs. 5-6

To be wise towards outsiders/ unbelievers

What do you think Paul means to make the most of every opportunity?

What do you think it means to have conversations full of grace and seasoned with salt? Salt creates thirst

What does it mean to you to know how to answer everyone?

Closing – vs. 7-18

Such great love and tight relationships shown – from every walk of life – prisoner, Dr.

**Application Questions:**

- 1.) As you look over the study in Colossians, what do you think was most impacting, and insightful? What are one or two points that you are going to apply to your life/ have applied & will stick with you?

**Creative Implementation for the week/Spiritual Exercise:**

Re-read Colossians, but first ask God to show you areas in the letter that you need to be reminded of. Thank Him for his word to us.

**Memory Verse:**

Colossians 3:23-24

Colossians 4:5-6