

COLLOSSIANS

15 The Son of God, the invisible, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For in him all things were created, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created through him and for him. 17 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 firstborn among the dead, so that in everything he might have the preeminence. 19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. 21 Once you were alienated from God and were enemies, because of your evil behavior. 22 But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through the blood, shed on the cross, to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and with joy, 23 if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope of the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed in every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, have become a servant.



*TRUTH IN
TRUTH OUT*

INTRODUCTORY NOTES

The church at Colossae was not planted by the Apostle Paul but most likely by Epaphras (1:7, 8; 4:12, 13). It is likely that Epaphras was even a native of Colossae as it is read in Col 4:12 "one of you."

Colossians 2:6-8 seem to be the central verses of this letter. They were in danger of being influenced through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than Christ. What the false teaching was is not explicitly pointed out in the letter.

STUDY 1: (COLOSSIANS 1:1-14)

TRUTH IN

"We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all God's people." Colossians 1:3-4.

1. Read Colossians 1:1-14. Paul writes to the people in this city as God's holy people (or saints). On what basis are the people in the church at Colossae called God's Holy People (or saints)?

Maybe the answer to this is in the second half of verse 2. Grace and peace has come to them from God in the form of Jesus. They are saints on the basis of Jesus work for them not of any of their own doing. It is because of their faith in Jesus (v4). They heard the gospel and understood God's grace (v6).

2. In verses 4 and 5 what is the relationship between faith, love and hope? Where do people today find their hope?

In verse 4 love for other people comes from their faith in Jesus. Faith means nothing without an object and if Jesus is the object of their faith then they would understand love. In verse 5 faith and love spring from hope. All these things find their source in Jesus.

3. Who brought the gospel to the Colossians? What attributes does Paul say this person has? Can you think of someone in whom you have seen these attributes?

Epaphras. He is a fellow servant and a faithful minister of Christ.

4. What does it mean that the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the world (verse 6)?

Lives are being changed (captivated by the truth). Growing throughout the world could be Paul saying that it is reaching the ends of the empire. God uses the empires of people for his own use. People could travel freely through Roman empire which made the carrying of the gospel easier and even the fact that many spoke Greek aided this movement. Perhaps also the bearing of fruit is seen in what Paul describes in verse 3, 4 and 10ff, 3:12-17 (things that were not common in the first century).

5. In verse 13-14 say that the Colossian Christians have been “rescued from the dominion of darkness and brought into the kingdom of the son he loves.” What does Paul pray for those being brought into the kingdom of the Son? What is Paul’s expectation for whom he prays?

The answer is found in Paul’s prayer for the Colossians in Col 1:9b-12. He prays this so that those in the Colossian church might grow or be sanctified. Coming into the kingdom of the Son means we are new creatures as we have been redeemed through the forgiveness of sins.

GOING DEEPER

6. In verse 7 we are told that Epaphras brought them the gospel. Why do you think Paul includes this in the letter? Why is it important that we know where the gospel, that transforms us, comes from?

It is important for us to know that it came from Epaphras because it was taught to him by the Apostle. The gospel we speak must have an apostolic heritage and this is what they accepted as it had come from Paul. It is important because there are variations on the gospel, such as prosperity gospel, liberation gospel, nationalistic gospel and so on. Perhaps you could ask why it is important to believe the apostolic gospel. Answers could include that it was handed to them by Jesus, it brings assurance as it is all about the work of God and his grace, cross focussed and not “me” focussed. The object of this series is to see the basis of the way we live, that is, because of the change God through his gospel makes in our lives, it works itself out in the way we live.

7. The Kingdom of God is described in two ways in this passage. What is significant about the descriptions used?

Found in verse 12 and verse 13. Light and kingdom of the Son he loves. Want people to think about why it is important that the kingdom is light and why the language of the Son he loves is used.

8. From where does the knowledge of God’s will come? What is the result of being filled with the knowledge of his will (verses 10-12)? Why is this the result (verse 13)?

The knowledge of God’s will comes from His Spirit. We are not left to figure this out on our own but God Himself makes this known. This is very different from other religions or philosophies or positions. There is a long list of reasoning for but each is explained by the word that starts it, that is, bearing, growing, being, giving. We live this way because we are now new creatures brought out of darkness and into light. There are things that will remain the same about us but our identity is now found Jesus which brings about the changes, we do not make the changes to bring about our identity.

TRUTH OUT

9. If Jesus stores up hope or us how should we then live? Why does hope effect the way we live?

10. In what ways do we please God in every way?

11. What things do you compromise on when it comes to pleasing God?

STUDY 2: (COLOSSIANS 1:15-23)

TRUTH IN

He is...

The image of the invisible God.

The firstborn over all creation.

Creator.

Before all things and holds them together.

The head of the church.

The beginning and firstborn among the dead.

1. Read Colossians 1:15-23. In what ways is Jesus the image of the invisible God?

If God is invisible how can there be an image?

2. What has been reconciled to God? Why do all things need reconciling?

All things. At the fall all things that man was given to rule over was cursed by humanity's disobedience. It would take a perfect sacrifice and obedience to break this curse. Perhaps look at Romans 8:22-25.

3. From this passage is there anything that surprises you about Jesus? How should we treat Jesus knowing these things about him?

4. How does this view of Jesus compare with your own view? How does it compare with the way unbelievers think about Jesus?

GOING DEEPER

5. What do you think it means in verse 19 when it says that "God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him?"

6. Verse 23. What is the hope held out in the gospel?

7. What do you think is the image of God?

TRUTH OUT

8. In what ways do we fail to submit to Jesus?

9. What does it mean that Jesus is Lord of our lives? How is this displayed in your life?

STUDY 3: (COLOSSIANS 1:24-2:5)

TRUTH IN

*"There is a wisdom of the head and wisdom of the heart" Charles Dickens.
"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.." Proverbs 1:7.*

1. Read Colossians 1:24-2:5. How does Paul describe the church?

2. What do you think it means to present the word of God 'in its fullness?' What is another word used for God's word in this letter?

God's whole plan for creation. Creation, Fall, Redemption, Restoration. Another word used for God's word is gospel.

3. In verse 26 what do we learn about the content of Paul's message? ¹

4. What is Paul's goal in preaching the gospel?

Verse 28 and 29

5. How can we be deceived?

GOING DEEPER

6. What does it mean that Paul filled up in his flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions?

- He is not saying here that what Christ did was not enough. Look at verses 1:21-22. Jesus death means that we are presented in his sight as holy, without blemish and free from accusation. This language sounds pretty complete. To be without blemish and free from accusation is an absolute. Nothing is left to do for this to be possible. So how can Paul fill up what is still lacking?

- He talks in these verses about his commission. We read about this in Acts 9 where Paul is told by Jesus that he would take the news about Jesus to the gentiles and he would suffer for the name of Jesus. Paul is taking Jesus to the gentiles and it has cost him greatly. He has suffered during this time yet he is still joyful. Paul took up the commission Jesus had given even in the midst of affliction and suffering. He became Jesus representative to the gentiles. He could only do this because what Jesus did was enough to reconcile us to our Maker as it says in Col 1:21-22. It is not Jesus in the flesh who take this word to the gentiles but by his spirit through Paul. This was Paul's commission.

- How does joy and suffering fit together? Paul stopped looking for happiness and well-being in his religion, in his travel, as a Roman citizen, as a Pharisee he found it in Christ. This cannot be taken away from him. His happiness and well being. In the midst of and because of suffering. This means happiness and well being is not dependent on circumstance but on our status with Christ. In other words that Christ is in us (verse 27). Our happiness and well being is founded in the love and grace of God. This is what it was for Paul. He even says in Phil 1:21 for me to live is Christ.

7. Why was Jesus a mystery?

8. What do you think "Christ in you, the hope of glory" means?

¹ Taken from study "Complete Christian" by Tony Payne and Phillip Jensen (Matthias Media)

TRUTH OUT

9. What fine sounding arguments do we hear today? How are these arguments presented?

Want people to think about the way people argue in sound bites. Use of movies, humour, anecdotes, use of experts etc.

10. How can we protect ourselves from being taken in by fine sounding arguments?

What we read. Listening to the arguments and figuring out the gospel answers the issues that it raises.

11. Do you find it difficult to remain disciplined? Why or why not?

STUDY 4: (COLOSSIANS 2:6-15)

TRUTH IN

"So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness." Colossians 2:6-7.

1. Read Colossians 2:6-15. What does it mean to receive Christ Jesus as Lord?

2. What do hollow and deceptive philosophies do to us? How do we see evidence that this has happened?

They take us captive. People who try to read into the bible with their biases. Take a worldly view rather than a scriptural view. When there is something in the bible people will not obey because they do not like it. When philosophies contradict the bible. Maybe you can think of others.

3. Which powers and authorities is Jesus over? How is this possible?

He is over all authorities. The fact that he is over all things means that God's plans cannot be thwarted. Everyone is accountable to him.

4. What is our condition if we are not in Christ (verse 13)? Why do you think Paul uses this kind of language? What does Paul mean when he says "in the circumcision of your flesh?"

We are dead in our sins. Being dead in our sins means there is nothing we can do for ourselves. "In the circumcision of your flesh" means they were gentiles. It is almost like a double difficulty because they were dead in sin and gentiles.

5. To whom do we have a "legal indebtedness" (verse 14)? How is this debt paid?

GOING DEEPER

6. In these verses we see phrases such as "in Christ", "by Christ", "with Christ." What

do you think it means to be "in Christ"?

7. What does it mean that all the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form (verse 9)?
Perhaps it is talking about the image of God as verse 10 we have been brought to fullness.

8. In these verses what sentences or phrases point to God's grace?

TRUTH OUT

9. Can you think of any deceptive philosophies you face? How would answer these things? How might you avoid becoming captive to them?

10. What things can we do to continue to live our lives in him (verse 6-7)?

11. How should we respond to the message of verses 13-15?

STUDY 5: (COLOSSIANS 2:16-23)

TRUTH IN

1. The false teachers were urging the Colossians to observe certain religious practices as a way of progressing spiritually. Fill in the following table, showing Paul's answer to these practices and (if you can) listing some 21st-century equivalents.²

	Verses	Paul's answer	Modern Equivalents
Circumcision			
Austere regulations (about food, drink, etc.)			
Religious festivals			

2 Taken from study "Complete Christian" by Tony Payne and Phillip Jensen (Matthias Media)

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2. What are the signs of false humility (verse 18 and 23)?

3. From where does false humility and an unspiritual mind stem?

By losing connection with the head.

GOING DEEPER

6. Is there a place for visions and spiritual phenomenon today – if so how do we guard against a sense of superiority for those who might have them??

7. We're big on our doctrine/truth/facts and very tentative about 'experiences/feelings', but is there room for both without those experiences taking us away from Christ?

8. In what ways do we still submit to the rules of the world (verses 20-21)?

TRUTH OUT

9. Can you give examples of modern day concerns for people that can lead us astray?

The modern day person in the Hills is flat out trying to keep their family together, their marriage more than functional and their mortgage from overwhelming them. They are anxious, tired, stressed and caught in a lifestyle that allows for little self-reflection or analysis of the life they are living. They're drawn to quasi spiritual guru's like Oprah, clairvoyants or astrology. They seek their feel good experience in the gym, sex, food and holidays, but they're trapped in a never ending merry go round of routines that they fear will eventually crush them.

10. In what ways can we avoid false humility?

Understanding grace, being thankful etc.

11. In what ways do we stay connected with Jesus?

STUDY 6: (COLOSSIANS 3:1-17)

TRUTH IN

1. What is the call for Christians in this passage?

Interesting to note that the passage already makes the assumption of salvation, so the call isn't one of turning to Christ, but of living Holy lives.

2. Read Colossians 3:1-17. Carson states that in this passage "Believers are not called to escape the world but to obey God within it." What reasons does this passage give for Christians to be obedient?

See verse 3, verse 6, verse 10 and verse 12. Also see Romans 6:23 and Isaiah 53:6. We have been made alive in Christ (through His death and resurrection), and so we should live as adopted children of unconditional mercy and grace - in humble obedience, as Carson states.

3. Read Colossians 3:3-4. What do you think is the meaning of verse 3? What does it mean for Christ to be "your life" in verse 4? What does it mean when it says that we will appear with Him in future glory?

Verse 3 is a reference back to Colossians 2:20 regarding the death to the spiritual forces of this world. This means that our old self (the self spoken about in Colossians 3:9) has died, and we are made alive in Christ alone.

4. In verse 5 what defines those who are alienated from God? In verse 12 what clothes those who are in Christ?

5. What unifies those things in verse 5? What unifies the things of verses 12-14? Why does God value the things listed in verse 12?

Unity in verse 5 is found in idolatry and self. Unity in verse 12-14 is in being other person centred including love. God values these things because it reflects his own character. God values these things when the world does not even thought it is aware of them. These things were seen in the first century as a sign of weakness and stunted personal progress.

GOING DEEPER

6. What do you think it means to set your hearts on the things above (verse 1)?

7. What do you think verse 17 means when it says to do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus?

Get people to think about doing their work in the name of Jesus. Also their ministry, their parenting, their friendships, their worship. Describe what in the name of Jesus means to each person.

8. Paul concludes this section by emphasising the uniting characteristic of the virtue of love. Why does Paul find love so important, and how does it create unity among all virtues?

The importance of love is seen throughout the rest of the Bible. Everything God does,

he does out of love. See Psalm 136:26, 1 John 4:8, Matthew 5:43-48, Mark 12:28-33. Love creates unity among all the virtues and ties them all together as it is the overarching virtue. Every good virtue stems out of love. See Romans 14:8-10 and 1 Corinthians 13:1-13.

TRUTH OUT

9. What does being dead to sin (Romans 6) and the spiritual forces of this world and being alive in Christ mean for you? What response do you think this warrants from you?

10. In what areas of your life can you demonstrate these virtues better (verses 12-14)? Is there a specific situation you face right now which needs you to take a loving approach to it?

STUDY 7. (COLOSSIANS 3:18-4:1)

TRUTH IN

1. Verse 18 has become a controversial verse for many reasons. Some use this verse to rule over their wives as though she is some kind of possession or he has some kind of right. Some women have used this verse as a reason to be submissive which can lead to it's own set of problems. Neither of these ideas capture what Paul is trying to say especially in the light of the context of 3:1-17. What do you think Paul means by submit? Why does he qualify this with "as is fitting in the Lord"?

This can be a very difficult verse to understand mainly because of the way people have and do apply it. A wife is not a mans possession. He has no right to lord it over her. She is a precious gift from God who capable, and loved by her creator. A wife is not given to use as you please. The word for submit here actually means "to submit oneself", to give ourselves over. It is our choice. But this choice is made in the context of love to someone worthy of submission. Jesus himself submitted himself to the will of the Father even becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross. As it fitting in the Lord is seen particularly in 3:12-17.

2. What do you thin Paul means by love? What does he mean by not being harsh with them?

Original word "be harsh" is to embitter someone or to cause bitter feelings. A love that binds together compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience is the way husbands ought to love their wives. There is no hint of entitlement here just the good of the other person. In this case the wife. From these two commands we see mutual love and care.

3. What does it mean to obey your parents? How is this different for children who are very young (0-12) and those in their teens and those who are adults? Why do you think Paul's reason is so that it pleases the Lord?

When children are very young they need lots of direction. Relationship with teens is different where the relationship may change a bit but they must still honour their

parents. Adults it may mean honouring them by looking after them. There are obviously a lot of steps missing here but God wants children to honour their parents (as it says in Exodus 20) but life stage can influence what this look like. It please the Lord because we are clothed in his righteousness and peace (3:12-15).

4. In what ways can parents embitter or exasperate their children? Why does this discourage them?

Word for father here means "parents." The word for exasperate carries the following idea, to cause someone to react in a way that suggests acceptance of a challenge, arouse, provoke mostly in bad sense irritate (BDAG).

5. The word to slaves and masters in verses 3:22-4:1 are generally foreign to us. Who is that we are ultimately working for? Why do we do our best for him?

These verses are often used in to give guidance to peoples vocation and there are some principles we can draw for that area of our lives. It must remembered that these verses are particularly in the context of the household.

GOING DEEPER

6. Paul is particularly addressing households in these verses. However, in verses 15-17 he is addressing the whole church. How can some of the principles we see in these verses (3:18-4:1) be practiced in the "household of God"?

We need to be aware of those among us who are single or single parents or where only the husband or wife are a believer. There may be those among who are widows or orphans as well. As the family of God we are to care for all those God brings into his church family. This is really to raise an awareness of this and a spirit of care and discipleship for those in households different to our own. As God's people the peace of God ought to rule all our hearts (3:15).

7. Why is verse 18 particularly difficult for people to accept in the 21st century?

8. How does Jesus example help us to understand these commands?

TRUTH OUT

9. What things can we do in order that we do not exasperate children?

10. In what ways can we encourage our children to not become the kind of person who would abuse the commands in 3:18-21?

Love our spouses. Do not use language that may be an insult to the opposite sex. Correct them we hear things that contradict the teaching of Scripture rather than just let it go or think "who is going to hurt." Read the bible with them so that our children know why it is that we follow Jesus example.

11. How can we serve those in our church whose households are different from what is talked about here?

STUDY 8. (COLOSSIANS 4:2-6)

TRUTH IN

1. What ought to be our attitude to prayer? What do you think this entails?

Our attitude ought to be one of devotion. Devotion means it is a priority. It can consume us. To be devoted to something means that it has top priority (Acts 2:42).

2. What does it mean to be watchful and thankful?

Same word for watchful as Jesus used in Gethsemane when speaking to the apostles in Mark 13:24. Being watchful is being alert. Perhaps being ready to pray at every opportunity.

3. Verses 3-4 seems to direct the readers back to 1:6b-7, that is, just as the message goes out to world, just as it came to them and with the same message Epaphras brought to them Paul wants them to pray for him and others (us in verse 3). What is Paul asking them to pray for?

He is asking them to pray for opportunities to speak of Jesus.

4. Who are the outsiders? What does he mean to be wise in the way they act toward them?

5. Of what ought our speech be full?

GOING DEEPER

6. What kind of things do people today devote themselves?

7. What does it mean that their speech is full of grace and seasoned with salt? Can you give an example? How does this help us answer everyone?

8. What is the mystery of Christ (verses 3)?

TRUTH OUT

9. What makes it difficult for you to pray? Why is difficult to devote yourself to prayer? What can you do to change this?

10. Do you pray for opportunities? When ought you pray for opportunities.

11. Do you pray for opportunities with your children or your small group? If not, what is hindering you from doing this?

STUDY 9. (COLOSSIANS 4:7-18)

TRUTH IN

1. Why do you think it is important for Paul to tell the Colossians about him?

Look at verse 8.

2. What do you think it means to “wrestle in prayer for you” (verse 12)? In what ways does this encourage the Colossian Christians?

3. In this context what do you think Paul means when he says “the will of God”?

Also look at Colossians 1:9 and maybe Colossians 1:1. God’s will is a big topic but it seems here that Paul is talking about God’s will in them hearing the gospel, responding to it and having lives worthy of the calling they have received. Perhaps this is seen more specifically in 3:12-17.

4. What does Paul want them to do with this letter once they have read it? Why might he be asking this?

Paul’s letters contain teaching handed down to him as an apostle that needs to be passed on to other believers. This stops the message becoming diluted.

5. What does Paul ask them to remember? Why does he ask them to remember this?

GOING DEEPER

6. What things have you been challenged by from the book of Colossians?

7. What things are still difficult for you to accept or understand?

TRUTH OUT

8. What things are you encouraged by? How can you encourage others?

9. What things will change in your life as a result of going through this book?

10. How can we make sure that we keep the message consistent?