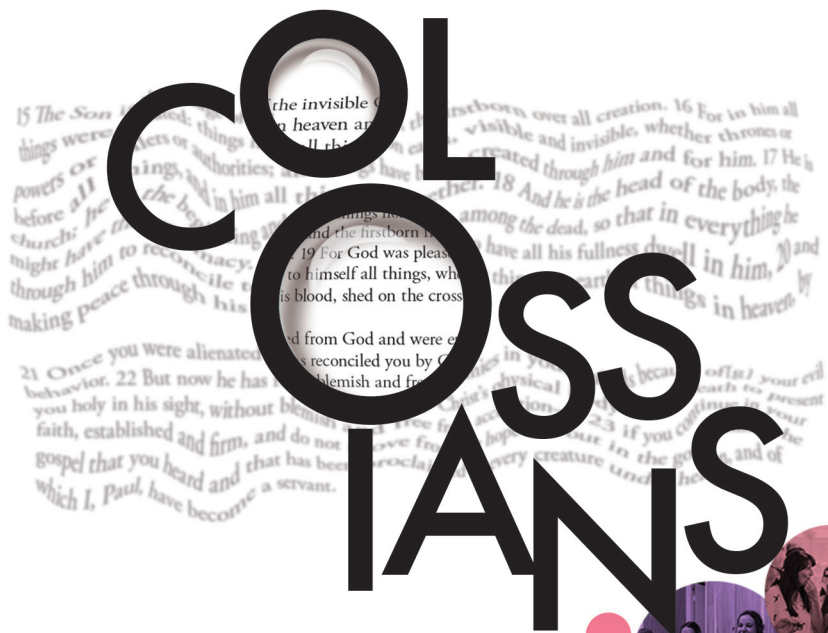


COLLOSSIANS



TRUTH IN
TRUTH OUT

SMALL GROUP STUDIES

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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)?

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

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?

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

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?

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?

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

TRUTH OUT

9. If Jesus stores up hope for 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?

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

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?

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?

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

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?

7. Why was Jesus a mystery?

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

TRUTH OUT

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

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

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

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)?

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)

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

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

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?

10. In what ways can we avoid false humility?

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?

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?

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?

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?

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?

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?

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"?*

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

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?

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

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?

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"?

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?

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?

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

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?

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 to?

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 it 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?

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”?

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

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?



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