



Colossians Core Group Study

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, the freedom we experience through the Gospel, and how to live a life pleasing to the Lord.

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Week One: Colossians 1:1-14

What's Happening in Colossae?

Objective:

To introduce this Bible study in the book of Colossians. This first week will focus on community: traits of a healthy church/fellowship, praying for one another, and loving each other in the Spirit for the glory of God.

Worship idea:

Consider starting by explaining why we worship (especially if you are a First Year core group or have new members). Then, pick an easily sung song that people know and can follow along to. Remember to always provide lyrics and even better if there's a musician in your core group who can lead!

Opening Questions:

1. What is your favorite thing so far about being in a Church and/or Fellowship community? (if you have people who have never been to core group and this is their first time with you, consider asking what their favorite part of being in any community is.)
2. Share about someone you are thankful for due to their faith, love, hope, etc.

Important to Know:

What we know as the book of Colossians is actually a letter written by the Apostle Paul to the church at Colossae, probably around AD 62 because we know he is in chains, likely in Rome. Surprisingly, Paul had never been to their city, but had heard of them through Epaphras - a member of the church. While Paul commends them early in the letter, he also addresses the fact that they have been infiltrated by false teachers and christological heresy (specifically, teachings that Jesus was not actually God). As you travel through this study, you will see Paul's assertions on the deity of Jesus, His sufficiency in all things, and the freedom we experience through the Gospel. Ultimately, all of these things should change us personally in our faith and hope and actions, and impact how we interact corporately. This week, you will be getting an introduction to the church at Colossae, and Paul's hopes for them.

Questions from the Text:

1. Who wrote the letter? To whom is it written?
2. What characteristics of the church does Paul thank God for in verse 4?
 - a. Where do these characteristics spring from?
3. What does Paul say the Gospel is doing (vs.6)? How do you think this could look?
4. What do you think love 'in the Spirit' means?
5. In verse 9, Paul says that these same people he is thankful for, he "prays daily for". We don't only pray in the face of issues, but also in health. How might these prayers look different from each other? Why do you think both are important?
6. Read verse 10a. What is Paul praying their lives will be like?
7. What four ways do we please God, according to verse 10b-12?



8. What kingdom are we leaving, and which do we enter? What do we experience here, through the Son?
9. Consider having a leader define redemption. (essentially: *the action of regaining or gaining possession of something in exchange for payment, or clearing a debt. ex. someone paying the cost of a slave for him to be freed*). What does this mean God did? How did God do this?

Application Questions:

1. There is a phrase: "Good works are the fruit, not the root of a right relationship with God." How can the understanding of this change how you relate to God this week?
2. What aspect of Paul's prayer do you want personal growth in? (knowledge of His will, spiritual wisdom and understanding, living a worthy life and pleasing God, bearing fruit/ growing, being strengthened with all power, revelation of God's redemption/mercy/ forgiveness.)

Spiritual Exercise for the Week:

Create a group text if you don't already have one. Have a different person volunteer each day to text something about your Core Group they are thankful for, and a verse to encourage the members.





Week Two: Colossians 1:15-23

The Supremacy of Christ

Objective:

To communicate that Christ is the true God; originator, provider, and sustainer. Rather than being enemies of God, we know that we can place our hope in Him, and live as servants to the Gospel, holy and blameless before the Lord.

Worship idea:

Sing a salvation-focused song or sanctification-focused song, and remember to provide lyric sheets!

Opening Questions:

1. Tell us about the weirdest/most difficult job you've had. What was hard? What made it worth it?
2. Have you ever had to reconcile with someone? What was the circumstance, and how did you both make it through the rough time?

Important to Know:

This text is one of the clearest of Paul's doctrine of Jesus in the Bible. Paul was responding to reports that the church was mixed up with teachings that Jesus was not God. Through this text, Paul asserts that Jesus is fully Divine, and that He was not only involved in Creation, but also sustaining all things. And as if that were not powerful enough, Paul states that these things are not only BY Christ, but FOR Him. He is not only a tool of Creation, but the reason for it. Paul then gives a meditation on the hope of the Gospel for reconciling us to God, through our faith. It is for this hope that Paul declares himself a "servant" (or minister in some translations).

Questions from the Text:

1. What does it mean that all things were created by Christ? For Christ? That all things hold together in Christ?
2. How much of God dwells in Jesus? (vs. 19) This can be a very difficult concept for people to understand. How would you try to explain to someone that Jesus is fully God?
3. How are all things reconciled to God? (vs. 20)
4. What does it mean to be alienated from God? To be an enemy of God? (vs. 21)
5. According to verse 22, how are we viewed by God, through Jesus?
6. Verse 23a says to continue in our faith of the hope of the Gospel. What is the hope of the Gospel? What work did that require from you? (Read: none). Who already did this work for you? (Jesus). So you being presented to God as holy and blameless rests only on the actions of? (Jesus)
7. In verse 23b Paul says he has become a servant/minister of the Gospel. What does it mean to be a servant/minister? What does this mean about Paul's commitment/duties for the Gospel?



Application Questions:

1. The Colossians had a problem with remembering the deity of Jesus. Is there anywhere in your own life where you have been treating your relationship with Jesus as purely a human one, rather than as a relationship with the God of the Universe? How could it change your life if you remembered that He is fully God?
2. What does it mean to be a servant/minister of the Gospel for us now? How have you seen others doing this well? How would you like to grow in this? (*this could be a good time to pray as a group, or in pairs for one another*). Name one way you will do that this week.

Spiritual Exercise for the Week:

Memory Verse: Colossians 1:19-20

"In [Jesus] all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross."





Week Three: Colossians 1:24-2:5

Paul's Labor for the Church

Objective:

To communicate that God's mystery has been revealed - the person of Jesus Christ and His saving work on the Cross. That we should not be distracted by things of this world whether philosophies, or intellectual gain, or other fine-sounding replacements. Rather, the Church should labor in the world with His energy, for His glory.

Worship idea:

Write a Psalm together. Have one person write an introductory line at the top of a notebook page, and then fold over the paper so the next person can't see. Then that person adds a line, and so on and so on till you have gone through everyone (or twice if you have a smaller group). Then have someone read the Psalm aloud.

Alternatively, you can also do it so each person can only see the line that came immediately before them if going completely blind makes you hesitate!

Opening Questions:

1. Share your favorite joke.
2. Talk about something you learned about the world through your relationship with Jesus that you wouldn't have known otherwise.

Important to Know:

In this section, Paul continues on from the previous week's assertion, that he is a servant of the gospel, to present the word of God for the sake of Christ's body, the church. He says that the mystery of the Gospel has now been disclosed to the saints, and that God has even chosen to reveal this mystery to the Gentiles. The word "mystery" is interesting here. Mysteries were something common to mystical sects/pagan cults in the ancient world, and those groups professed to be the only ones with the answer/secret to the mystery. Paul is not professing to have this kind of secret. Rather, it is more of a "Voilà!" sort of mystery. The kind where the plot twist is revealed to all viewers, or the punch line of a joke is told, or pulling the drape away from door #2. It is the sort of mystery that is hidden, and is then revealed to all who would receive it - not just a select few. Paul closes by encouraging the church to not be led away from Christ by fine-sounding arguments but to be firm in faith.

Questions from the Text:

1. In verse 25, What does Paul say his role is?
2. In verse 24, Paul says his flesh takes on the suffering that was still lacking from Christ's afflictions. If Christ did all that was needed to redeem us, what "lack" might Paul be talking about? *(See verse 25). All that is left for people to receive the sacrifice of Christ, is to HEAR about it! For the sake of Christ's body, the church, we may suffer that people may hear the gospel and join the body.*



3. Verse 26. What is the mystery the world has been waiting to be revealed? What is the answer?
Ex. The mystery: How (or if) God will reconcile people to Himself. The answer: Christ in us, the hope of Glory.
4. According to verse 28, what are some of the labors of a Christian? What is the goal of these things?
5. Following, in verse 29, how are we supposed to labor/contend?
6. In 2:1 Paul says he is struggling for the church. What could he mean? (*in prayer (vs. 3), in teaching (vs. 28), in proclaiming, in suffering (in verse 18 he is in chains)*).
7. Verses 2-3 says all wisdom and knowledge is found in Christ. Where else do people often look for these things?
 - a. How could finding your wisdom and knowledge in Christ alone help present you “fully mature in Christ” (vs. 1:28)?

Application Questions:

1. Verse 28 talks about teaching everyone with all wisdom, so we may present everyone perfect in Christ. How can you follow Paul’s lead in “teaching” your fellow Christians? In making known the mystery of Christ to those who don’t know him?
2. Where do you need to depend on Christ’s energy and not your own, while laboring to be a more effective representative of the Gospel this week? (ex. language, entertainment choices, boundaries in dating, kindness, willingness to speak).

Spiritual Exercise for the Week:

Together create a calendar of something to contend for in prayer each day of the week. Have someone responsible agree to text your group text, or email each day to remind people.





Week Four: Colossians 2:6-15

Alive with Christ

Objective:

Paul gives us four images of what a life with Christ can look like, and then warns us not to be taken captive by any other philosophy. We freely express our identification with Christ in baptism.

Worship idea:

Sing a song about freedom in Christ. Don't forget lyrics!

Opening Questions:

1. What is a freedom you are grateful for?
2. What do you think is a mark of maturity?

Important to Know:

In this section, Paul further elaborates on why Christ is enough, and on what sort of "fine-sounding arguments" he doesn't want the church to be deceived by. In verses 6-8 he reminds us that Christ is enough and to not drift away from Him. In verses 9-15 he elaborates on how Christ alone gives us fullness and freedom from the written code that stood opposed to us, and a spiritual circumcision unachievable by the hands of men. In the Old Testament, circumcision was practiced as a way to signify that you were part of the chosen people of God. It meant that you would live obediently to Jewish law and that your parents would raise you to understand the covenant between the Jewish people and God (Genesis 17:10-14). A spiritual circumcision, therefore, is still a mark of covenant, but one you receive because of faith and not because of nationality/culture. In verses 16-23, Paul illuminates some of the worldly beliefs that can distance us from the freedom we experience in Christ; e.g. rules on eating, drinking, festivals, worshipping angels, harsh treatment of the body for the sake of restraining sensuality.

Questions from the Text:

1. In verse 7, what four images does Paul give of living with Christ?
2. What do each of these four images illuminate about living with Christ:
 - a. Rooted in Christ - an agricultural term - being in Christ once and for all and not moving
 - b. Built up in him - construction term - outwardly and orderly progress through time
 - c. Strengthened in the faith - athletic imagery - exercise and practice of determination, perseverance, and obedience
 - d. Overflowing with thankfulness - water imagery - continuous renewal of thanks, like water from a spring feeding everything around it
3. What does Paul warn against in verse 8?
4. What are some things you think might fall under "hollow and deceptive philosophies"? (*Ex. tolerance, no absolute truth, materialism = success, many ways to God, science as final authority rather than revealer of final authority, intellectualism = enlightenment*)
5. What could be the differences between a circumcision by the hands of men, or a spiritual circumcision by Jesus?
6. What does verse 12 relate baptism to? (*being buried and then raised to life*)



7. What does it mean that we have been buried with Christ in baptism, and raised with him in faith?
(vs 12) *(This may be a good time to ask if anyone has not been baptized, and begin conversations later in private about if they would like to pursue it)*
8. What did Christ nail to the cross?
 - a. How does this make us alive with Christ?

Application Questions:

1. Of the four images in question 2, which do you feel strongest in? Which do you need to grow in?
How can you help each other do this?
2. What is an expectation/law you place on yourself that Jesus wants to nail to the cross?

Spiritual Exercise for the Week:

Provide note cards and markers. Have everyone write a truth they need to have before them this week, as opposed to what the world tells them. Ex. "My grades do not define my value to God" or "Knowledge or Intellectualism is not the same as Righteousness" etc. Then have them write a Scripture on the back. People can post it where they want that week! (mirror, dashboard, notebook, back of their phone, etc.)





Week Five: Colossians 3:1-17

Rules for Holy Living

Objective:

How to live our lives responsibly and righteously; setting our hearts and minds on things above, and living in right relationship with one another.

Worship idea:

Let folks know you'll be getting a little creative today. Give everyone a note card. Have them write one to three haikus praising God. (a poem of 3 lines, with 5, then 7, then 5 syllables respectively. Read them aloud. It's ok if some are goofy as long as people are engaging. The goal is to shake up their typical expression of worship to know other creative forms are available as well.

If you don't want to do the above, sing a song of praise.

Opening Questions:

1. Are you more like your mother or father? How?
2. Tell a story from your childhood (funny, injury, vacation, sibling, etc).

Important to Know:

This is the part of Paul's letter that transitions from the "observation" to the "application" section. Paul has explained who Christ is, and what He has freed us from. Chapter 3 says that since these things are true, we should behave in certain ways. This involves inner change (recalibrating our hearts and minds) as well as outer change (how we interact with one another). In the center of Paul's list of traits for holy living, and his rules for holy households, Paul takes the chance to remind us not just *why* but *how* we do this: by letting the peace of God rule our hearts, letting the Word of Christ dwell in us, doing everything in the name of the Lord, and giving thanks to the Father. How incredible! Every inner and outer change overflows out of our meditation on Jesus, and what He offers us, not out of our own power (2:23).

Questions from the Text:

1. What do you think it means to set your heart on things above? Your mind?
2. How is our life hidden with Christ in God (vs. 3)? Why should this give us a sense of security?
3. What does the phrase "put to death"(vs. 5) mean to you?
4. In verses 5-9, what things are we supposed to "put to death" and not do anymore. What sort of categories do these things fall into?
5. In verse 10, what is our new self starting to look like?
6. What is the only label/status that can be attached to someone being transformed into the image of God?
7. With what are we to clothe ourselves (vs. 12-14)?
8. What characteristic binds all the others in perfect unity?
 - a. Why do you think love has the power to do this?



Application Questions:

1. Which of the “clothes” in verses 12-14 do you think you have a hard time “wearing”? What “spiritual clothes” do you see each other wearing? (*a good time of affirmation*)
2. How can you practically bind yourself in love this week?

Spiritual Exercise for the Week:

Memory Verse: Colossians 3:2-3

“Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.”





Week Six: Colossians 4:2-6

Further and Final Instructions

Objective:

To close out our study in Colossians. This final lesson is on the power of prayer, and to give insight into the relational heart of the church.

Worship idea:

Either sing, listen to, or pray during a song about reaching the world with the gospel. Ex. "For the Sake of the World" or "Build your Kingdom Here".

Opening Questions:

1. Tell about a time you tried to, or wanted to, share Jesus with someone who didn't know him.
2. If you could fix any one problem in the world through prayer, what would it be (other than salvation)?

Important to Know:

As Paul wraps up his letter, he includes some final instructions for the church, and then specific messages and greetings. In his instructions, he reminds them to be devoted in prayer, and specifically to pray for him to have open doors and clear words as he proclaims the gospel. Clearly, Paul believes that prayers have consequence - things happen because we pray. Next, he tells them to make the most of every opportunity with those who don't yet know Christ. Essentially, Paul is closing with two thoughts: pray for others in their proclamation of the gospel, and then proclaim the gospel yourself as well. This is where the rubber hits the road. How will your relationships with Christ and with each other change how you interact with the world?

Questions from the Text:

1. According to verse 2, what are two essential parts of being devoted to prayer?
 - a. Why is it important to be both watchful and thankful?
2. We know from other areas of the Bible that prayer can be a way to connect relationally with the Father. How do verses 2-4 show that prayer is also causal (*that it has an expected consequence*)?
 - a. What is the category of the things Paul requests prayer for? (*proclamation- the advancement of the gospel*)
3. How does verse 5 instruct us to act towards outsiders?
4. What do you think verse 5 means by "be wise" in the way you act towards those who aren't Christians, and to "make the most of every opportunity"? What might some examples be?
5. In verse 6, what do you think "seasoned with salt" means? Why do you think Paul instructs us in this way?

Application Questions:

1. What are some strategies to help you have a better prayer life: both relationally with the Lord, and consequentially in the world?



2. Who is someone you will proclaim Jesus to this week?

Spiritual Exercise for the Week:

Actually follow through on Application #2. No really. Do it. End strong. Then make sure to follow up next week on how it went: rejoice in the successes, and troubleshoot the challenges.

