



THE BOOK OF
COLOSSIANS
COMMUNITY GROUPS 2024

Walk in wisdom toward outsiders,
making the best use of the time.

Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt,
so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

COLOSSIANS 4:5-6 (ESV)



AUTHOR AND RECIPIENTS

Paul the apostle wrote this, with Timothy, (1:1) to a small church in the small town of Colossae.

The church was planted by Epaphras, a native to Colossae. After believing in Paul's message taught in Ephesus (Acts 19:8-10) he traveled back to Colossae and proclaimed the gospel and a church was started.

DATE AND SETTING

Paul most likely wrote this letter, along with the letter to Philemon who was a member of the Colossian church, during his imprisonment in Rome from 60AD to 62AD. Epaphras was with Paul and probably told him about the Colossian church prompting Paul to write the letter.

PURPOSE AND THEMES

Paul's main purpose in writing is to ground the young believers in the truth about Christ and encourage them to continue to walk in Christ. This seems to be clear from 2:6 "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..."

The next verse seems to indicate that there were false teachers: "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" (2:8). Though Paul does not identify the false teachers or false teachings directly, by his positive counterarguments he seems to be fending off the following:

- A deeper knowledge or spiritual fullness not previously experienced
- A new spiritual freedom
- Special insights and protection against spiritual evil
- Severe abstinence and asceticism
- A sense of superiority and divisiveness toward believers who do not have the above

A major theme throughout the first half of the letter, which is the theological section, is the supremacy of Christ over all things. Christ is the fountain head of spiritual knowledge and fullness, and our source of spiritual power and freedom.

OUTLINE

1. Paul's Greeting & Thanksgiving (1:1-8)
2. Paul's Prayer (1:9-14)
3. The Preeminence of Christ (1:15-20)
4. Our Reconciliation & Continuation (1:21-23)
5. Paul's Ministry to the Churches (1:24-29)
6. Paul's Ministry to the Colossians (2:1-5)
7. What Saves Sustains (2:6-7)
8. Warning and Teaching (2:8-15)
9. Shadows vs. Substance (2:16-23)
10. Our Life is Hidden with Christ (3:1-4)
11. Putting Off the Old Self (3:5-11)
12. Put On the New Self (3:12-17)
13. Relationships at Home and Work (3:18-4:1)
14. Relating to the World (4:2-6)
15. Final Greetings (4:7-18)



REVIEW OF COLOSSIANS 3:1-17

In 3:1-17 Paul exhorts the Colossians to look to heaven instead of this world in order to know how to live. In verses 1-4 he reminds them that they died and been raised with Christ and one day we will be with him. In light of this in verses 5-11 Paul exhorts them to destroy earthly desires and discard earthly practices.

1. DESTROY EARTHLY DESIRES (V5-7)

The word “therefore” in verse 5 tells us that the reason for the command to “put to death what is earthly in you”, is in verses 1-4. Why should we kill these things?

How do the sins listed in verse 5 relate to each other?

What does the apparent progression of sin teach us about putting sexual sin to death?

2. DISCARD EARTHLY PRACTICES (V8-11)

How do these sins seem to be related to each other?

What does it look like to put away the things listed in verses 8 and 9?

According to verse 9 and 10, those who have died and risen to new life in Christ (v1-4), have already done what? Why should that give us hope?

What is the connection between putting off these practices and renewing our minds?

CONCLUSION

Those who have died and risen to new life in Christ (v1-4) are no longer primarily identified by race, wealth, education, politics, or earthly citizenship, but as Christians, first and foremost. Therefore, the most noticeable things about us should be our Christ-likeness.



REVIEW OF COLOSSIANS 3:12-17

Opening Question:

When you consider our church or even your community group, what qualities do you hope would mark the group? Are there obvious ones? Are there ones that take you longer to arrive at? Are some of the qualities that come to mind more important than others?

1. WHAT CHRISTIANS ARE TO WEAR (V12-14)

Before Paul addresses what Christians are to put on, what motivations does he give for why Christians are to 'dress differently'?

What motivations does Paul give for why Christians are to bear with and forgive one another?

Which of the qualities Paul lists is most surprising to you that it is on this list?

2. WHAT CHRISTIANS ARE TO BE RULED BY (V15-16)

What does it mean for the "peace of Christ to rule in your hearts"? Do you think that is more of an objective or subjective reality?

Why do you think Paul mentions thankfulness frequently throughout these verses?

How does Paul say the word of Christ dwells richly among the people of God?

In what ways is your life currently marked by regular or routine engagement with the truth of God's Word?

3. WHO CHRISTIANS ARE TO LIVE FOR (V17)

What does doing "everything in the name of the Lord Jesus" look like in day to day life?

In what ways are you tempted to make "whatever you do" a little less comprehensive than Paul intends?

What objective, spiritual realities has Paul already highlighted in Colossians that give us ample reason to give thanks?

CONCLUSION

God's beloved people are to be marked by humility and unity as the Word of Christ instructs and forms the entirety of their lives.



REVIEW OF COLOSSIANS 3:18-4:1

Opening Question:

Think about the most recent interpersonal conflict you have had in life. Who was it with? How do you know the person? What principles/ideas informed how you tried to handle the situation?

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COLOSSIANS 3:18-4:1 | LESSON THREE

1. HUSBANDS AND WIVES (V18-19)

If you are a wife, what is your gut reaction to Paul's words in V.18? Why do you think that is?

What does it mean for a wife to "submit" to her husband?

What motivation does Paul give for a wife's submission? Why does that matter?

It should go without saying, but are there ever times when a wife shouldn't submit to her husband?

Our world is confused about love. What would it practically look like for a husband to love a wife? Is it a feeling? An affection? An action?

If you're a husband, can you think of a recent time you were harsh with your wife? Why were you harsh? Have you asked for forgiveness?

If you're not married, what can you learn from and be instructed in by these verses?

2. CHILDREN AND PARENTS (V20-21)

What motivation is given for children to obey parents?

Why do you think fathers are particularly addressed in V.21?

Are there present attitudes or dispositions you have as a parent that might actually make it harder for your children to want to obey you?

What would an example be of a father provoking a child?

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COLOSSIANS 3:18-4:1 | LESSON THREE

3. BONDSERVANTS AND MASTERS (V22-4:1)

It is more challenging than we often acknowledge to apply these verses to our present context. Although there are clear principles that apply to a modern workplace it is not prudent to treat these as entirely analogous.

Approximately one-third of the population existed in the kind of slavery Paul provides instruction for here and was not reflective of ethnic prejudice. How does this knowledge change the way you perceive these verses?

In what ways do you see a propensity in your life to work more diligently when someone important is watching?

How does V.23-24 give us lasting motivation to carry out daily tasks with diligence?

In what ways is it significant that both slaves and masters are addressed by Paul? How should knowledge that God is our ultimate authority inform how we use exercise our authority?

CONCLUSION

The gospel transforms the totality of the life of the Christian specifically seen in marriage, parenting, and situations of authority.



REVIEW OF COLOSSIANS 4:2-6

As Paul continues to explain how to walk in Christ (2:6-7) he transitions from relationships in the church and home to those in the world. In Colossians 4:2-6 he explains how we need to pray, live, and speak to those outside of Christianity.

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COLOSSIANS 4:2-6 | LESSON FOUR

1. STEADFAST AND EXPECTANT PRAYER

What words does Paul use describe what our prayer life should look like?

What keeps us from praying?

What is the mysterious plan Paul refers to?

2. WISE AND MISSION-MINDED LIVING

Wisdom is that rare and noble ability to recognize right and wrong, good, better, and best, and be able to act on it. How does the phrase "toward outsiders" alter our definition of wisdom?

Paul is clearly telling us that we have limited time with those who are outsiders to Christianity and wisdom is required in order to determine how to best utilize that time. How does Paul use of the word wisdom in Colossians 1:9 and 2:2-3 help us interpret the way he uses it here?

3. GRACIOUS AND APPEALING CONVERSATIONS

"The revelation of God in Christ has already been given in history, and written in Scripture. But It must also be spoken by God's servants if people's minds are to be opened to the truth." Dick Lucas

What words does Paul use to exhort us about our speech?

What does Paul say will teach us to know how to respond to people?

What insights does the phrase "answer each person" give us about evangelism?

CONCLUSION

Paul prays for believers to be filled with God's will of spreading the gospel so that it bears fruit throughout the world. As believers all of us are called to participate in God's will for the world by steadfast, expectant prayer; wise, mission-minded living; and gracious, appealing conversations.



REVIEW OF COLOSSIANS 1-4

Chapter 1

From the opening verses of the letter we learn that Paul's words come from Christ and they reveal the grace and the will of God. Paul then proceeds to tell the Colossians that he is thankful to God for the fruit of the gospel in them and all over the world and that he prays that the knowledge of God's will would fill them and lead them to live worthy of the Lord, (bearing fruit, knowing God better, strengthened by him and being thankful to him). In 1:15-23 Paul lays the foundational truths of the gospel so that the Colossians will be firmly established in the faith. He reminds them that Christ is the only supreme sovereign and sufficient savior, reconciling us to God by his death. In 1:24-29 he explains that his ministry is one of suffering and struggling in order to proclaim the word of God and the grace of God in Christ.



REVIEW OF COLOSSIANS 1-4

Chapter 2

As we move into chapter 2 Paul explains that he is telling them about his ministry of suffering and proclamation so that they will be encouraged, unified and understand this mystery and continue in their orderly and firm faith in Christ. He knows it will have this effect because Paul's life shows them how he has walked as Jesus did, suffering and struggling, not to be served but to serve. And finally in 2:6-7 Paul explicitly gives his purpose for writing his letter and for reiterating these foundational truths of the gospel. It is so that this gospel he has laid out and that they have fully received, the gospel he has suffered and struggled for, will characterize how they live, direct how they grow, and be the source of their increasing understanding and thanksgiving. In 2:8-23 he warns them against being enslaved by the traditions of humanity and the world. Specifically, he writes to say that they should feel no judgment with regards to dietary and sabbath restrictions nor feel disqualified because they are not extreme enough in their spiritual disciplines or experiences.



REVIEW OF COLOSSIANS 1-4

Chapter 3

Therefore, in 3:1-17 he exhorts the Colossians to look to heaven instead of this earth to know how to live.

Paul tells them that since they have been raised with Christ, where their life is now hidden, and with whom they will appear when he appears in glory, they should put to death earthly, sinful desires, putting off sinful behavior and putting on godliness. In verses 18 through 4:1 Paul explains how this should look in relationships at home.

Chapter 4

In the final chapter he instructs us how to relate to the world. He tells us we should always be praying, living, and speaking with gospel intentionality. And in verses 7-18 he closes his letter with greetings from and to different people. But in these greetings gospel priorities are revealed in Paul's relationships.

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COLOSSIANS 4:7-18 | LESSON FIVE

1. RELATIONSHIPS

How can we tell that Paul places an extremely high value on relationships?

2. ENCOURAGEMENT

What do we learn about encouragement from the way Paul praises some of the people he mentions?

3. SACRIFICE (9V12-13)

Paul highlights the sacrifice, suffering, and hard work of Epaphras. He specifically mentions his prayer life. What does it mean to always struggle in prayer?

4. SCRIPTURE

Paul recognizes that it's God's will that he teach the gospel to these fledgling churches in order to instruct them how to walk, to build them up, and to further establish them (see 2:6-7). How important is it that we read, know, and apply what Paul has written?

5. GRACE

Paul closes his letter simply with, "Grace be with you." As we look at his final greeting and the rest of this letter, how do we know that Paul emphasizes grace? In what ways could you be more gracious?

CONCLUSION

The main reason Paul wrote this letter was to ground believers in the truth about Christ and encourage them to continue to walk in Christ. Paul's final greeting reveals what he valued and how he was walking in Christ with others.

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COMMUNITY GROUP CONTACT INFO

Leader:

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