

Welcome to Colossians

It is such a joy to be sharing in this wonderful book together! This book is a jewel of Christian scripture. Only four chapters long and 95 verses in totality, it could be read in 13 minutes; yet it provides stunning panoramas of Jesus Christ that few other New Testament documents can match in such short space. The information from this little book has kept churches on track and false prophets and teachers running scared for centuries.

One of the challenges with taking a book so rich in content is that I cannot cover everything in a 40-min message. This is where community groups become vital in the process of "digging deeper." The questions that will accompany my sermons should act as a guide or reference to fostering deeper conversation and greater insights in relation to my message. However, be attentive and open to other topics and areas of discussion that may arise (which may not have been covered in the message). May God bless you and encourage you individually and/or your group as you dive into God's Word together!

Feel no pressure to answer every question, like on a test. Remember *transformation*, not *information* is always the goal.

Colossians 1:1-14 Study Questions:

Paul probably wrote his letters to the Colossians while imprisoned in Rome, about AD 60-62. The apostle had already completed the three missionary journeys recorded in the book of Acts. (Acts 13:1-21:16) Paul is now under his first Roman imprisonment, house arrest; and he is able to receive guests. During this time, he wrote Colossians, Ephesians, Philippians and Philemon. Timothy possibly served as his amanuensis (writing secretary) while Paul dictated the letters. (Col. 1:1, 4:18)

Now most of you are aware that all of Paul's letters have a dominant theme. In Romans it's justification by faith, in Ephesians it's the mystery of Christ and His Church, and in Philippians it's the joy that Jesus brings. In Colossians, it is the supremacy and sufficiency of Jesus Christ. Colossians presents Jesus as the **absolute head** of all creation and the **absolute head** of the Church.

Throughout history, one of the ways that false teachers worm their way into the Church is by attaching their false doctrine and weirdness onto Jesus. This was no different at Colossae. There were attacks on the deity of Jesus. There were pressures to add things (Eastern Mysticism, secret knowledge and codes) to Christ. And nationalism by the Roman state, as a savior, was always the social pressure of the day. Yet Colossians reminds us that if you have Jesus Christ, you have it all! He alone reigns above any other *add-on*. He alone is supreme. He alone is sufficient to save us. (Acts 4:12)

1. Read Colossians 1:1-8. The Apostle Paul begins his letter by greeting the Colossian church and giving thanks to God for them because of the fruit that the gospel is producing in them since the day it arrived through the ministry of Epaphras. They are "saints and faithful brothers in Christ." The gospel is "bearing fruit and increasing in the whole world." In spite of this, and most likely because of this, there are societal and cultural pressures to the message of Jesus Christ. What are some contemporary versions

of Gnosticism? How is the deity of Jesus under attack? How do we fall prey into nationalism above spiritualism?

2. Reread Colossians 1:4-5a, looking for the three virtues so central to Paul's thought. (Rom. 5:1-5, 1 Cor. 13:13, 1 Thess. 1:3 5:8) What are the three? How does the Colossians' "hope" of partaking in the everlasting kingdom of God *in the future* fuel their ability to labor in love for others *in the present*? Which of these three areas of Christian believing and living do you think you are weakest on? Why might that be?

3. "It's one thing to be grateful. It's another to give thanks. Gratitude is what you feel. Thanksgiving is what you do." (Tim Keller) How can you grow a sense of genuine gratitude in your heart? How can you improve the way you express your gratitude in thanksgiving? What are some tangible ways we can express our gratitude to Christ? To others?

4. Read Colossians 1:9-12. On what did Paul focus when he prayed for the Colossian believers? How does this contradict or compliment the things we pray about most?

5. Colossians 1:10 reads, "so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord." How would you describe this phrase practically living itself out in the life of a believer? Why is genuine faith never just believing things are true—that is, intellectual assent? What else is required to make it real?

6. Pastor Adrian highlighted 4 prayer principles that we should be praying for in the lives of others: Purpose, Productivity, Power and Perspective. Which one of these resonated with you the most? Which one of these do you need to grow in the most? Who are the specific people in your life you can be praying these 4 principles into?

7. Verses 13 and 14 are anchor points to the entire message of Jesus Christ's sufficiency. Meditating on these verses, what are some truths that you can pull that highlight Jesus' sufficiency? (Hint: meditate on the words, He (the personal pronoun), rescue, dominion of darkness, transfer and redemption.

Digging deeper:

In Colossians 1:6, Paul informs the Colossians that the gospel was advancing across the world. Its epicenter was Jerusalem. (Acts 1:8) When it reached Colossae, it swept up his audience in its triumphal wake as it rang out in expanding circles across the Roman empire. Approximately 30 years after the death and resurrection of Christ, the gospel had created numerous communities whose members swore allegiance to Jesus as Lord. Evidence exists of churches scattered across Palestine, Cyprus, Syria, Asia Minor, Macedonia, Achaia and Italy by this time. Nearly 2,000 years later, approximately 2.2 billion people across the globe self-identify as Christian or are at least affiliated with a Christian church. That is roughly 32 percent of the global population! Take a minute to ponder this remarkable growth of the gospel. Reflect, too, upon the time you yourself first "understood the grace of God in truth" (Col. 1:6) and thus were swept up in its triumphal advance across the earth. Think about your own conversion to Christ. How do you usually describe it? How might you describe it differently in the way that Paul does in verses 6-8?