

Colossians at Home

A 10-day journey through Paul's letter to the Colossians

Introduction to Colossians at Home

It's often easy to forget the "why" of what we do. We have certain practices or routines in our lives and in our churches, and we go through the motions of our day-to-day without stopping to consider why we do what we do. Sometimes, unhelpful or even harmful practices slip in without us ever noticing. Sometimes we do things we think are good and necessary when in reality it's doing more damage than we might realize. This is precisely why Paul wrote his letter to the church in Colossae. The Colossians were doing some things they thought they were supposed to be doing, but because they had forgotten their "why," the Colossians were harming their faith and their witness.

The letter to the Colossians is first a reminder of the "why" – Jesus. Jesus is bigger. Jesus is better. Jesus accomplished salvation through his death and resurrection. Jesus fulfills every hope, dream, law, and ritual. Jesus is the why. From this simple truth, Colossians goes on to show us that because Jesus is the why, here's what you should be focused on in your living. Stop keeping those old rituals and laws and stop focusing on the way things were done before Jesus came, because all that does is "gratify the flesh" (make you feel good about yourself). Instead, dive into the riches of the gospel – who Jesus is, what He accomplished, and how He continues to dwell in you through the Holy Spirit. Now in light of the truth of Jesus, live a life worthy of His calling and enduring presence.

Colossians invites us to reconsider the "why" in our life and faith. It invites us to focus on the very center of cosmos – the author, upholder, and redeemer Jesus and allow His life to flow through us in a new and profound way. It invites us to stop looking back, and start looking ahead to the day we see His face in glory.

Colossians at Home is not a devotional, nor is it a commentary. What you have is a guide to help you process the word of God as you read it. We will provide some helpful information in the introduction, and the rest is up to you (and God).

The 4 chapters of Colossians is broken up into 10 days' worth of reading. Following each daily reading you will find a few questions designed to help you think about what you just read - what it means, what it teaches, and how it impacts your life here and now. Some of the questions will be very concretely about the reading itself. Some of the questions will be about you. These questions are patterned after a method called Inductive Bible Study.

What Is Inductive Bible Study?

Inductive Bible Study is a method of reading the Bible that helps to investigate the text and apply it to your life. It sounds hard, but it isn't. Anyone can use the inductive method as they read by following three simple steps:

1. Observe.
 - a. Answer the question: *What does it say?*
 - i. This step is about looking at the facts.
 1. Ask yourself – Who, what, where, when, why, how?
 2. Make note of repeating words or phrases.
 3. Words that indicate a change in topic or time.
 4. Is there a cause and effect to what's being said/done?
2. Interpret.
 - a. Answer the question: *What does it mean?*
 - i. This step is about figuring out what is being communicated.
 1. What's the larger context of this passage?
 2. Are there other scriptures that might help me understand it?
 3. What else do I know about the author, characters, setting?
 4. What do particular words mean?
 5. How does this passage connect to Jesus?
3. Apply
 - a. Answer the question: *What do I do about it?*
 - i. This step is about taking action in your own life to live the truth of God's word.
 1. God isn't just about information...He's about transformation.
 2. Is there a change you need to make to be faithful to God's call?
 3. Is there sin you need to bring before God and ask forgiveness?
 4. Make a plan to implement whatever God is showing you.

The questions following each daily reading are patterned after the Inductive Bible Study method because it seeks not only to understand God's word but to aid in the process of life transformation, as long as we are seriously willing to think about how to apply it to our lives and take action.

What You Will Need

1. The Bible – hard copy, or the YouVersion Bible App on iPhone or Android, or Biblegateway.com. Use any translation you want!
2. Colossians at Home reading guide and questions (this document). Feel free to print or use it on your device.
3. Pen
4. Time (10-15 minutes)

Colossians Basic Information

Author: Paul, writing from prison in the later part of his life, sometime between 55-62 AD

Themes: Jesus is enough. Forgiveness of sins. Low value of the old rituals and practices. Value of suffering. Becoming a new creation. Jesus' lordship over our earthly relationships.

Outline of Colossians

- 1. Opening Greeting (1:1-2)**
- 2. Introduction of Paul and His Theme (1:3-2:5)**
 - a. Thanksgiving (1:3-8)
 - b. Prayer and meditation (1:9-23)
 - i. *Paul's prayer: the knowledge of God (1:9-12a)*
 - ii. *Reasons for thanksgiving (1:12b-23)*
 - c. Paul's ministry and his reasons for writing (1:24-2:5)
 - i. *Paul's ministry in Christ (1:24-29)*
 - ii. *Paul's ministry to the Colossians (2:1-5)*
- 3. The Appeal for Christian Maturity (2:6-4:6)**
 - a. Continue in Christ (2:6-7)
 - b. Let no one exclude you (2:8-23)
 - i. *Already complete in Christ (2:8-15)*
 - ii. *Therefore do not submit to unnecessary regulations (2:16-23)*
 - c. Live in accordance with the new in Jesus (3:1-4:6)
 - i. *Live in Christ, the risen Lord (3:1-4)*
 - ii. *Knowledge and life renewed according to God's image (3:5-11)*
 - iii. *Do all in the name of Jesus (3:12-17)*
 - iv. *New life at home and in the world (3:18-4:6)*
- 4. Final Greetings (4:7-18)**

Blessings as you read. May the Lord speak powerfully to you through His word.

Day 1

Read: Colossians 1:1-23

Dig In:

1. What stands out to you from this passage?
2. Summarize Paul's prayer for the Colossians in verses 9-14. What does this prayer mean for you?
3. What is the one condition placed upon salvation in verses 21-23? Is this good news or bad news? Why?
4. How are verses 15-20, and verses 21-23 connected?
5. Re-read verses 15-20. Take a few minutes to meditate on who Jesus is. Write down any thoughts or feelings you have.

Day 5

Read: Colossians 3:1-4

Dig In:

1. Yesterday you read Colossians 2:16-23. In verse 20 it says, “If you have died with Christ,” then gives a list of things to stop doing. Colossians 3:1 says, “If then you have been raise with Christ,” and then gives you something to start doing. What does Paul say to start doing?
2. What are some of the things that are above, where Christ is seated?
3. It often takes practice and discipline to “set your mind” on something new and different. How can you begin to practice and train yourself to see things from the heavenly perspective (the things that are above)?
4. What is the outcome when we set our mind on things above, that is, when we think about and see the world the way Jesus does?

Day 7

Read: Colossians 3:12-17

Dig In:

1. Connect yesterday's passage (vs 5-11) with today's passage. What does one have to do with the other?
2. List all the qualities we should "put on." How would you describe this list? Are these qualities more about how you feel or how you act?
3. How does love play into it? What does love "binds everything together" mean?
4. Reflect on verses 16-17. What does this look like for us today? What does it take to do everything in the name of Jesus?

Day 8

Read: Colossians 3:18-4:1

Dig In:

1. These verses are often interpreted with much controversy and abuse. Several groups of people are listed here – take a moment to write down each “person” this passage hits on, and what they are supposed to do.
2. Look at your list above. Is there a common theme between them? What is it? Why does it matter?
3. Who is ultimately in charge of everyone?
4. This passage makes it clear that even in our earthly relationships and economy, our true master is Jesus and we should do everything in submission to Him and not seek our own lordship over others. What does it mean to submit to Jesus in our earthly relationships? How can you submit yourself more fully?

Day 9

Read: Colossians 4:2-6

Dig In:

1. What stands out to you from this passage?
2. What does it mean to devote yourself/continue steadfastly in prayer? What practical ways can you continually be prayerful throughout your day?
3. Re-read verse 5. Who are the “outsiders.” How can you be wise in how you interact with them? Can you do a better job than you are now?
4. What you say and how you say it is important, no matter who you’re speaking to. Re-read verse 6. Write down your shortcomings in how you speak with others. What improvements can you make? What result do you hope will come from these changes?

Day 10

Read: Colossians 4:7-18

Dig In:

1. What stands out to you from this passage?
2. These are Paul's final greetings and instructions, and they are very specific about the people named in these verses. What sense do you get about what the relationship looks like between Paul and the people he names in these verses?
3. In verse 12 Paul says Epaphras is praying for the church. What do you think Paul means when he says, "that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God."
4. What does a mature person look like? Act like? Talk like? Think like? How can your life of faith grow in maturity?

Doing Comes from Knowing

So why do we do what we do? The answer flows seamlessly through book of Colossians. In the opening verses Paul makes known his hope for the church when he says, *“And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.”* What Paul is saying is that we do what we do because we know the Who - Jesus. Be filled with the knowledge of God, gain spiritual wisdom and understanding, and out of this knowledge and understanding of who God is, walk in a manner pleasing to Him. And in the verses that follow, Paul makes God known and then tells us what to do in light of Who He is.

So who is God? Colossians tell us He is the Father, who has delivered us. That He is the Son, who forgives us, who is the image of the Father, who created and upholds the universe, who died on the cross to make peace between us and God, and who is the head of the church. And from this knowledge of the who, we can start in on the doing. We can hold fast under pressure to abandon the faith. We can stop being sinful and doing harm to one another. We can start acting with patience, compassion, and love toward one another. We can stop seeking self-gratification and power and start treating others as greater than ourselves. What we do flows from knowing Who. We can't do the practical life stuff until we know Who it's all through and for. The more you know who He is, the more your doing will fall into line with who he is. And that, my friends, is gospel.

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?” “Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?” For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen. (Romans 11:33-36)