



ST LUKE'S
LIVERPOOL
a church for all people

Bible Studies



Growing Christians
in Colossians

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Introduction

Paul wrote the letter to the Colossian Christians to show how Jesus is the key to understanding all reality. His death and resurrection as king of the world demand that every aspect of our lives be transformed by his love and grace.

The summary of the book can be found in Colossians 2:6–7: '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.' Christian growth is what God desires for us too.

We pray that through these Bible studies in Colossians, God would fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way. (Col 1:9–10)



PAUL'S LETTER TO THE COLOSSIANS

1:1-23 THE EXALTED MESSIAH

WE THANK GOD FOR YOUR **FAITH, Love, and HOPE.** (1:3-5)



WE PRAY FOR GREATER **WISDOM and Spiritual Understanding.** (1:9-10)

1:15-20 THE MESSIAH POEM

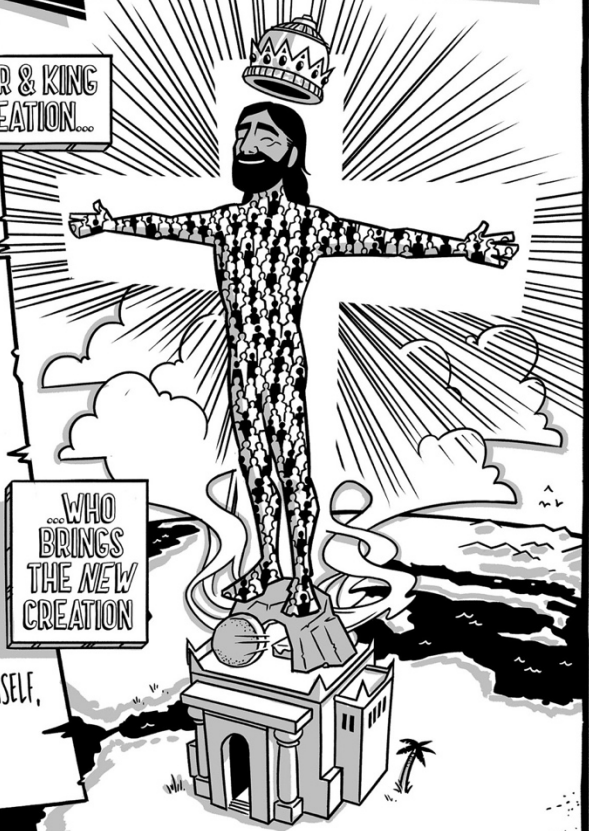
HE IS THE **IMAGE** OF THE INVISIBLE GOD, **FIRSTBORN** OVER ALL CREATION, FOR IN HIM ALL THINGS WERE **CREATED**, IN THE HEAVENS & ON EARTH, THINGS VISIBLE & INVISIBLE, THRONES OR KINGDOMS, POWERS OR AUTHORITIES. ALL THINGS WERE **CREATED** THROUGH HIM & FOR HIM, AND HE IS BEFORE ALL THINGS, AND IN HIM ALL THINGS COHERE. AND HE IS THE **HEAD** OF THE BODY, THE CHURCH. HE IS THE **BEGINNING**, **FIRSTBORN** FROM AMONG THE DEAD, SO THAT IN ALL THINGS HE WOULD HOLD THE HIGHEST ROLE. FOR GOD WAS PLEASED FOR HIS FULL **PRESENCE TO DWELL** IN HIM, AND THROUGH HIM TO **RECONCILE** ALL THINGS TO HIMSELF, WHETHER IN THE HEAVENS OR ON EARTH, MAKING PEACE THROUGH THE BLOOD OF HIS CROSS.

FULL of ECHOES of: - GENESIS 1 - PSALMS 2, 8, 68 - EXODUS 40 - PROVERBS 8

AUTHOR & KING OF CREATION...

SHARES THE IDENTITY OF THE ONE CREATOR GOD

...WHO BRINGS THE NEW CREATION



1:24-2:5



2:6-23



LETTER TO THE ASIANS

NO PART OF HUMAN EXISTENCE REMAINS UNTOUCHED BY THE LOVING & LIBERATING RULE OF JESUS.



WE'RE INVITED TO LIVE IN THE PRESENT AS IF THE NEW CREATION ARRIVED WHEN JESUS ROSE FROM THE DEAD.



THE SUFFERING APOSTLE

...FOR THE MESSIAH'S NEW, MULTI-ETHNIC FAMILY

THE MESSIAH IN YOU ALL, THE HOPE OF GLORY. (1:27)

PARTICIPATION IN THE REIGN OF THE MESSIAH

THE PRESSURE TO TURN AWAY

INFLUENCES TO RESIST

GIVING INTO THESE IS COMPROMISE!

OBSERVANCE OF THE LAWS OF THE TORAH

(SEE GALATIANS)

JESUS FULFILLED THE LAWS, WHICH LACKED POWER TO CHANGE THE HEART. JESUS IS THE REALITY TO WHICH THE LAWS POINTED.

3-4 THE RESURRECTION LIFE

3:1-17 THE NEW HUMANITY

"SET YOUR MIND ON THINGS ABOVE, WHERE THE MESSIAH RULES." (3:1)

"WHEN THE MESSIAH IS REVEALED, YOU TOO WILL BE REVEALED WITH HIM IN GLORY." (3:4)

CHALLENGE: LIVE IN THE PRESENT AS THE KIND OF HUMAN YOU WILL BECOME

OLD HUMANITY: DISTORTED SEXUALITY & DESTRUCTIVE SPEECH

NEW HUMANITY: MERCY! GENEROSITY! FORGIVENESS! LOVE!

"HERE NO ONE'S GREEK OR JEWISH, CIRCUMCISED OR UNCIRCUMCISED, SLAVE OR FREE: THE MESSIAH IS ALL & IS IN ALL PEOPLE." (3:11)

3:18-4:1 THE NEW ROMAN HOUSEHOLD

PATRIARCH HELD THE POWER OF LIFE & DEATH

JESUS IS LORD OF THE HOUSE

PAUL RESHAPES THE ROMAN HOUSEHOLD AROUND JESUS, WHO RULES WITH SELF-GIVING LOVE

4:2-18 CONCLUSION

"RECEIVE ONESIMUS NO LONGER AS A SLAVE, BUT AS A BELOVED BROTHER." (4:6)

ESCAPED SLAVE OF PHILEMON

TYCHICUS

PHILEMON

"GREET ONESIMUS AS A BELOVED BROTHER IN THE LORD." (4:9)

created by the Bible Project

Gospel Growth (1:1–14)

1. What are the most important things growing Christians need?

Read Colossians 1:1–2.

2. Who is writing to whom?
3. What do you expect this letter to contain?

Read Colossians 1:3–8.

4. Why does Paul and Timothy thank God for them?
5. What are the most common words that Paul uses here?
6. What is the connection between their faith, hope, love and the gospel? Draw a diagram.
7. Why is it important for the true gospel to be proclaimed and heard?

Read Colossians 1:9–14.

8. What is the reason Paul hasn't stopped praying for them?

9. Given what you know of the Colossian Christians already, what would you pray for them?

10. What does Paul pray to God for them? Is that surprising? (v. 9)

11. Make a list of the effects of receiving God's gift and put them into categories. (v. 10–14)

12. According to this passage, how can you tell when someone really knows the gospel?

13. Where can you see the effect of the gospel in your life so far?

14. What can you do to grow as a Christian?

Pray for each other to grow in faith, love and hope.

Who Will Be King? (1:15–23)

1. How would you summarise the Christian message?

Read Colossians 1:15–20

2. Write down every phrase that tells you something about the person of Jesus and what you think each phrase means.

Verse	Phrase	Meaning?

3. How would you sum up Paul's view of Jesus?

4. How does this view of Jesus compare with the view of people around you?

5. How does this view of Jesus compare with your own view?

Read Colossians 1:21-23.

6. What were the Colossian Christians once like?

7. Would this be a good description of you? Why or why not?

8. Would this be a good description of your family, friends or workmates? Why or why not?

9. What has happened since to the Colossians?

10. What is the condition to stay in their new state?

11. Have you been reconciled to God? What does this look like?

Pray for each other, for those who are reconciled to Christ to continue to trust Jesus as Lord, and for those who are not at peace with God to take the step to submit to the lordship of Christ Jesus.

Mission First (1:24–2:5)

1. When was the last time you committed yourself to something incredibly costly or difficult?

Read Colossians 1:24–27.

2. What is Paul's attitude to suffering?
3. What does it mean for Paul to 'fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions'?
4. What is Paul's role in God's mission?
5. How does he fulfil this role?
6. What is the mystery proclaimed? (see 1:21–23; 2:2)

Read Colossians 1:28–2:5.

7. What are Paul's goals?

8. Why is it important for people to know the mystery of God?

9. Share about one person who has 'contended for you'.

10. What is the progress of Paul's mission today?

11. What part can we play in God's mission?

12. Is God's mission your mission? What does your life show about whose mission you're pursuing?

13. Who do you need to contend for and how will you do it?

Thank God for the people who have committed themselves to his mission and to us, including the Apostle Paul. Pray that God would use us to present everyone fully mature in Christ.

Complete Christians (2:6–12)

1. What's the most convincing lie or hoax that you've ever been fooled by?

Read Colossians 2:6–7.

2. What is the person who has 'received' Jesus to do?
3. What is the common idea between 'continue', 'rooted', 'built up', and 'strengthened'?
4. Rewrite Colossians 2:6–7 in your own words.
5. What do you think is the opposite of doing these things?

Read Colossians 2:8

6. Why are some philosophies hollow and deceptive?
7. How might hollow and deceptive philosophy take you captive?

Read Colossians 2:9–12.

8. Why is it important to know that 'in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form'?

9. What happens to Christians as they are brought to fullness? (vv. 11–12)

10. Who does these things?

11. What is the real way to true spirituality according to this passage?

12. What 'spiritual' things can distract us from Jesus?

13. What 'spiritual' things tempt you to 'move on' from Jesus?

Thank God that we have been brought to full spirituality in Christ. Pray that God would deepen our maturity in Christ so that we will not be taken captive by hollow and deceptive philosophies.

Christians Under Threat (2:13–23)

1. What do different religions believe brings you to God/spirituality?

Read Colossians 2:13–14.

2. What did Jesus do for us?
3. When did he do this for us?
4. How did he do this for us?
5. What barriers are left between us and God?

Read Colossians 2:15–23.

6. According to Paul, where did the Colossians stand with regard to 'the powers and authorities'?
7. False teachers were urging the Colossians to observe certain religious practices as a way of progressing spiritually. Fill in the table.

Practice	Verses	Paul's Answer	Modern Equivalent
Circumcision	2:11-12		
Strict rules regarding food and drink			
Religious festivals			

8. What is Paul's attitude to these practices?

9. In what ways have you experienced or come in contact with such false teaching?

10. Are there subtle rules or regulations you believe that threaten to become an additional to the cross?

Thank God for the Jesus' death on the cross. Pray for discernment so that we can recognise false teaching. Ask God to protect us from the temptation of adding anything to the gospel.

True Spirituality (3:1–11)

1. 'I'm a very spiritual person'. What do most people mean by that?

Read Colossians 3:1–4.

2. Complete the table with the statements Paul makes of Christians and where they stand with God.

Time	Verse	Statement	Own Words
Past			
Present			
Future			

3. Which statements surprise you? Why?

4. Do these statements describe you?

5. In light of these facts, what are Christians to do?

Read Colossians 3:5–11

6. What is the result of this 'setting hearts and minds on things above'?

7. What are Christians told to put to death/rid yourselves of?

8. According to the passage, why should Christians change their behaviour?

9. Where is your mind fixed? Is it your longing, your desire, the focus of your life?

10. What do you need to put to death?

Thank God that we have died with Christ and been raised with him to the very presence of God. Pray for God's help to put to death what is earthly in us and seek the things that are above.

A Transformed People (3:12–17)

1. Why do people usually not get along? Give examples.

Read Colossians 3:12–14

2. What is verse 12's 'therefore' there for? (see vv. 1–4, 11)
3. The previous passage talked about what spiritual people 'put off'. List all the things that God's chosen people are to put on in these verses.
4. What do they all have in common?
5. How many of these virtues can be done without interaction with another human being?
6. Which of these do you find hardest to do? Why?
7. What do you need to work on? What do you need to become?

Read Colossians 3:15-17

8. What is the peace of Christ? (see 1:21-22)

9. How have you seen Christians not get along? Why does this happen?

10. How are Christians to let the peace of Christ rule? (v. 16-17)

11. How does teaching the message of Christ promote peace?

12. How does singing as Christians promote peace?

13. How does doing everything in the name of the Lord Jesus promote peace?

Thank God for the peace Christ has brought between us and God through the cross. Pray that we would be a loving people and a people of peace.

A Transformed Society (3:18–4:1)

1. What do you do when God says something different to everyone else?

The lordship of Christ changes every aspect of our lives, including our everyday relationships. Read Colossians 3:18–4:1.

2. What commands are given...

To wives?

To husbands?

To children?

To fathers?

To slaves?

To masters?

3. List all the phrases in the passage that contain the words 'lord' or master'.

Verse	Phrase containing 'Lord'
Verse	Phrase containing 'Master'

4. In light of this, what is the connection between 3:17 and 3:18–4:1?

5. 'Paul's commands were written for people in the first-century world, and have no bearing for Christians today.' Do you agree?

6. How do you think Paul's commands in verses 18–19 should work out in practice for married couples?

7. In what ways can parents, especially fathers, embitter their children?

8. Is there a point at which the obligation to obey our parents cease? Does the obligation to honour our parents ever cease?

9. How do the principles of slaves/masters apply to our work situations?

10. How does this contrast with the attitudes of most wage earners in our society?

11. If we are in charge of others at work, what practical steps can we take to treat them rightly and fairly?

Thank God for stopping at nothing to serve us. Pray that we would serve the Lord in every way, even if it is different to our culture.

Gospel Relationships (4:2–18)

1. 'I have God, I don't need anyone else for anything'. Discuss.

Read Colossians 4:2–18.

Prayerful Relationships

2. For what do the Colossians need to be watchful and thankful (see 3:1–4).
3. What does this passage teach us about:
 - a. What prayer is? (vv. 2, 12–13)
 - b. What to pray for? (vv. 3–4, 12)
4. What changes do you need to make to how you pray and what you pray for?
5. What is Paul's role?
6. What is the Colossian's role?

Evangelistic Relationships

7. What do you think being wise in how you act toward outsiders looks like?

8. What do you think it means for our conversations to be 'full of grace, seasoned with salt'?

9. What steps could you take to make your conversation more gracious and saltier?

Partnerships

10. How does Paul describe each person mentioned?

11. What does this tell us about the way Christian relationships should be like?

12. Does your relationship with other members of St Luke's look like this?

13. What can you do to grow together with other Christians?

Thank God for the freedom we have to approach him in prayer. Pray that we would be wise in the way we act towards outsiders. Pray that we would continue growing as Christians together, 'rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as we were taught'.

