



Personal Bible Study Program 2006

Colossians

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

Colossians 3:16

To help you get the most out of bible talks on Sunday we have designed a daily bible reading program that will help you to read and apply each bible passage during the week before the bible talk. This can be a supplement to your existing bible reading program if you already have one.

We hope that you will make the most of this Bible reading program by setting aside the time to “let the word of Christ dwell in you richly”.

How to use the readings:

- Print the studies out double-sided and staple the pages as a booklet
- Set aside time
- Pray for understanding
- Read the passage
- Answer the questions
- Meditate on what you learn
- Apply what you learn
- Pray in response

This Bible reading guide is available for download from the ‘Resources’ page at www.bpc.org.au

Please note that we are open to feedback on how to improve this resource. Please email your comments to office@bpc.org.au

Introduction to the letter to the Colossians

A new church planted!

It’s always exciting to hear the news of people becoming Christians and a new church starting. Epaphras, a fellow servant along with the apostle Paul in gospel work, brings the exciting news to Paul that people in the city of Colossae are responding to the preaching of the gospel of Christ.

We can imagine Paul’s uncontainable excitement as he hangs on every word Epaphras’ report. But as Epaphras continues, Paul’s joy is tempered with concern. There are serious threats that could undermine this young church. Yes! The Colossian Christians have started their new life in Christ but they *must continue* living in Christ.

But what can Paul really do? After all he is in “chains” (4:18) – imprisoned for his work as a servant of Christ. Can he really be of any help to them?

He may be separated by distance. He may be separated from them by chains. But there is much that he can do. Paul’s joy and concern for these Colossian Christians drives him to his knees and drives him to pick up his pen. Prayer is not the last option but the first response for the apostle Paul. And as the apostle to the Gentiles, the apostle has much to teach them of what it means to have Christ as their Lord.

As you read this wonderful letter of Paul’s to the Colossians. You will learn from the apostle’s prayers. See the heart of a servant of Christ who cares so much for Christians he has never met and who labours for them before God.

And as you read this letter, prepare to have your view of Jesus Christ expanded. Is he supreme? Yes he is. Is he sufficient for my life? Yes he is. And what does this mean in daily life? Paul has some very practical suggestions.

To ponder as you read Colossians

- **How might you grow to be like the apostle Paul in your prayers and in your care for others?**
- **How might you continue with Christ as your Lord?**

Enjoy Colossians!

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

(Colossians 2:6,7)

**Day 1 Background study**

1. Try to read the whole book in a sitting.
2. Look up a bible map and find the city of Colossae, Laodicea and Hierapolis. Read a bit about them in an introduction if you like.

Day 2 Background continued

1. What is Paul's relationship to the Colossian Christians? (cf 2:1)
2. Who is Epaphras and what did he do? (1:7-8, 4:12,13 and also general background in Acts 19:10)
3. Where is Paul when the letter is written? (4:18)
4. The purpose of the letter is nowhere clearly stated. However there is a general consensus that Paul is refuting a false teaching. As you read and study the book stay alert to the positive statements particularly about Christ.

Day 3 Read 1:1-14

1. What is Paul's self description?
2. How does he address the Colossian Christians? (v.2)
3. Consider yourself as holy and faithful follower of Christ. Would that image match what you see in the mirror?
4. (vv.3-8) is a Thanksgiving to God for the Colossians but even more the blessings of the gospel.
5. What sign of faith had the Colossians demonstrated? (v.4)
6. What is the fruit of the gospel? (v.6)
7. Have I made progress in the fruit of the gospel?

Day 4

1. In vv.9-14 Paul prays for the Colossians. Make a list of the things Paul prays for the Colossians.
2. What part does knowledge and understanding play in the Christian life?
3. What are the particular benefits we receive from the Father? (1:13,14)
4. In what areas do I need to make progress and how should I be praying for others?

**Day 1 Read the passage.**

1. What is revealed in 15-20 about Christ's relationship to:
 - God
 - Creation
 - The Church
2. What is Paul saying to those searching for spiritual truth outside of Christ?
3. If your spiritual life is dry, to whom should you turn for refreshment?

Day 2

1. 1:15 is a crucial verse for groups like Jehovah's Witnesses. Try to get a clear grasp of what it means: "Christ is the image of the invisible God". Look at the use of the term (see also 2 Cor 4:4-6 John 1:18, 14:9, Heb 1:3 Rom 1:20)
2. Who else is in the image of God? (Gen 1:26,27) Think for a while on this statement:
"..There is a close association between the doctrine of man's creation in the divine image and the doctrine of our Lord's incarnation. It is because man in the creative order bears the image of his Creator that the Son of God could become incarnate as man and in his humanity display the glory of the invisible God." (*FF Bruce* p.58 - Colossians commentary)
3. "Christ is the firstborn of all creation" (1:15). Better translated: "firstborn *before* all creation" (17). What things were created by Christ? (vv. 16,17). What is the implication of *firstborn*? (Heb 1:2, Ps 89:27)

Day 3 As in creation so in redemption

1. Of what is Christ the firstborn? (v.18)
2. Against the false teachers, what does Paul assert about Christ? (v.19)
3. How can Christ reconcile all things not just on earth but in heaven? (v.20) How does Christ accomplish that work? (v.20) What implication does it have for us? (Phil 2:10-11)
4. Consider Christ's suffering as a way of reconciliation between God and all creation. What part does our suffering play? (v.24 – one of the most amazing verses in the NT).

Day 4 Read 1:21-23

1. What was our condition without Christ?
2. Who makes the big "BUT" in v.22?
3. What has he done? At what cost?
4. Why is there also a big "IF" in v.23?
5. What is required of us to enjoy the benefits of the gospel?
6. Consider the proclamation of the gospel:
 - (a) What kind of message is it?
 - (b) To whom should it be proclaimed?
 - (c) What is our status?

**Day 1 (Read 1:24-2:1)**

1. Think about Paul's gospel ministry:
 - How did he come to serve Christ?
 - What does he do?
 - How far will he go for others?
 - What is his goal?
2. Paul strives to present everyone mature in Christ (v.28). What things could you put into place this week in your own life to strive towards maturity in Christ?
3. How does this goal affect the way you relate to others around you?
4. If you're struggling to believe that God sees you as holy and blameless, what's a good reminder? (Hint: 1:22)

Day 2 (Read 1:24)

1. What do you think "is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions"? Is it that Christ's death was not quite effective to reconcile us to God? (see 1:19,20; 2:13-15)
2. So what does it mean for Paul to suffer for the Colossians? (1:24) You could say that in Christ the work is done, yet there remains work to be done. What is this work for Paul and for us today?
3. For Paul, a necessary part of serving Christ involved suffering (see Php 3:10-11). In fact, Paul rejoiced in his *suffering!* How does that affect the way you see suffering for the sake of Christ in your life?
4. In what ways do you suffer and struggle for others? (see 1:29, 2:1)

Day 3 (Read 2:1-5)

1. There seems to be a real threat of false teaching for the Colossians (see 2:4). Although Paul cannot be with them in person, what is his purpose for them?
2. Paul wants a number of things for believers he has never met:
 - Encouraged in heart (v.2)
 - United in love (v.2)
 - Full riches of complete understanding in order to know Christ (v.2)
 How might these things protect them from the false teaching they may face.
3. How can Paul say that he struggles (2:1) and labours (1:29) for them so much when he has never met them?
4. Paul is certainly a *labourer-in-prayer* (1:9) for the Colossians, as too is Epaphras who "wrestles in prayer" (4:12) for them. How might you grow in your prayer life so that you could be described as one who *wrestles* or *labours* in prayer for others.

Day 4 (Focus on 1:29)

1. Make a point of trying to memorise verses 1:28,29.
2. How is Christ the *message*, the *method* and the *motive* of ministry?
3. Spend some time thanking God for Paul the apostle to the Gentiles.
4. Pray that you might learn from his Christ-focused and other-centred ministry.

**Day 1 (Read 2:6-19) Christ as Lord**

Focus on verses 2:6,7

1. Describe how the Colossians received Christ Jesus as Lord (see 1:3-6)
2. Think back to how you *received* Christ Jesus as Lord. What happened? (If you're not sure if you've received Christ Jesus as Lord, read back over Colossians chapter 1 and think about what you need to do)
3. How have you continued with *Christ Jesus as Lord* since then? What areas have you seen growth in, what areas still need work?

Day 2 (Read 2:8, 16-19) The False teaching

It seems there is some sort of false teaching going on Colossae although we don't know the exact nature of the teaching. What we know is that the false teaching has the effect of moving people away from Christ.

1. How does Paul describe the false teaching (v.8)? Why is it of no value?
2. The "hollow and deceptive philosophy" of these teachers included:
 - Strict adherence to diet (2:16, 20)
 - Remembering religious days and festivals (2:16)
 - Super-spiritual experiences (2:18-19)

What do you think would be modern equivalents of these things today?

3. As impressive as these things seem, Paul has one response. What is that response? (See 2:17, 19)
4. Have there been times when you have compared yourself to "super-spiritual" people and felt worried about your own salvation? How can this passage encourage you?

Day 3 (Read 2:9-15) Christ is enough!

1. How does Paul describe our state before Christ? Who or what had power over us?
2. What did God do in order to bring us life and to disarm the powers over us?
3. A good summary of this passage is to say God acted for us in Christ Jesus. Why did it take Jesus to do this? (2:9). Look back at chapter 1 to remind yourself of just what Jesus is Lord over? (1:15-20)
4. Have you ever heard someone say, "yes Jesus is important, but I've moved on to more important things". According to Paul, why is this view totally wrong?
5. In your life, how does knowing *Jesus is enough*:
 1. Guard you against false teaching?
 2. Stop you chasing after worldly things

Day 4 (Focus on 2:6,7) Continuing with Christ as Lord

1. Make a point of trying to memorise 2:6,7
2. Think practically about how you can:
 - a. Continue to live in Christ
 - b. Be rooted and built up in Christ (like a strong, unshakeable tree roots)
 - c. Be strengthened in teaching about Christ
 - d. Overflow with thankfulness in Christ (like a river bursting its banks)



Read the whole passage each day.

Day 1

1. In what sense is it true to say we have died with Christ? Cf. 2:11-12, Romans 6:1-10
2. What are the 'basic principles of this world' that we have died to? Cf. 2:8
3. How is this changed relationship to this world to show itself?

Day 2

1. What is appealing about man made religion and its rules?
2. What is the problem with such rules? Do they promote true obedience to God? Can you think of any groups or religions that would fall under Paul's criticism here?
3. What part of your response to God is actually things 'based on human commands and teachings'?

Day 3

1. What does it say of Christ that he can be described now as at the Father's right hand?
2. How do we 'set our hearts on the things that are above'?
3. Why should we do this?
4. How does this affect the way we think about earthly plans and ambitions?

Day 4

1. What encouragement do you take from knowing your life is hidden with God?
2. Can the Christian life ever reach its fullness in this life?
3. Do you long for the appearing of Christ, and see that day as the fulfilment of all your own hopes and dreams?



Read the whole passage on day 1 and each day pray about the changes God is prompting you to make in your life.

Day 1 (Read 3:5-8)

1. Some of the things Paul talks about here [e.g. lust, greed, filthy language] are not only tolerated but encouraged by our society. What practical steps are you taking to put these things to death [i.e. to rid yourself completely of] in your life?
2. Why is it important, even urgent, to do so?
3. Do you fear God's wrath? (cf. Romans 1:18-2:11, Gal. 5:19-21, Eph. 5:3-7, Rev. 6:15-17)

Day 2 (Read 3:9-14)

1. What fundamental change is the foundation of the Christian's expectation of changed behaviour? Vv. 9-11 How does this 'taking off' and 'putting on' happen?
2. What does this change mean amongst believers for entrenched social, racial and economic divisions?
3. Are the virtues listed in v. 12 present in your life?

Day 3 (Read 3:9-14)

1. What does it mean to 'bear with each other'? In what contexts are you practicing forbearance?
2. Why do we forgive? Who are you struggling to forgive, and if there are outstanding grievances, will you act on it today?
3. Think about love. What role does it have in relation to all the other virtues Paul has discussed here? How can you become more loving?

Day 4 (Read 3:15-17)

1. What are our responsibilities to our fellow believers?
2. What must govern our relationships with each other (the peace of Christ is the peace Christ has established between ourselves and God 1:20-22), and to what outcome? (v.15)
3. What are you doing to 'let the word of Christ dwell in you richly'?
4. What does it mean to do things 'in the name of the Lord Jesus'? Do you know yourself to be, and show yourself to be, His person in all your speaking and doing? Would He be pleased to claim ownership of it?



Colossians 3:18-4:1 Rules for Christian Living

Day 1 (Read 3:18) Wot? In the 21st century?

1. Read 1 Peter 3:1-7.& Ephesians 5:21-28. Is it possible to run a family where there is no leader? What consequences might ensue?
2. What kind of leadership is envisaged here? How can a wife enhance her husband's attempts to be a Christ-like leader in his home? How can she sabotage him?
3. Do children learn anything valuable from seeing an example of submission to authority? If not, where will they learn this? Are there consequences?

Day 2 (Read 3:19) King of the hill?

1. Note that in Ephesians 5:24, Paul says that husbands are to love their wives "...as Christ loved the Church." What are the qualities of that kind of loving? (a verb)
2. Who is watching you exercise your headship in the family? Did you enjoy your father's leadership? What would you want to do differently?
3. Have you been inconsiderate, or critical of your wife (ie harsh)? Make amends!

Day 3 (Read 3:20) Children obey your parents

1. Are your children motivated by the thought of pleasing God? Should they be? How can you make this idea important to them?
2. At what age and stage are children no longer bound to obey their parents?

Day 4 (Read 3:21) The art of frustrating your children

1. Do you remember being angry or frustrated with your father? What was the reason? Have you been guilty of doing the same thing, to your employees, wife, or children?
2. How hard is it for your employees, wife or children to hear you say: "That's a really good job, well done" or "You've got a real talent for that!"?
3. What happens to children when they are discouraged?

Day 5 (Read 3:22-4:1) When work feels like slavery

1. How would you describe your attitude to your employer ? Do you have their best interests at heart?
2. What does it mean to serve your employer with a sincere heart, out of reverence to the Lord? What is the connection between the two?
3. What difference would it make to your job if you were to do it as though you are working for the Lord? If it is impossible to have this attitude, should you think about getting another job, or ask God to change your attitude?



Colossians 4:2-18 Friends

Day 1 (Read 4:1-4) Systematic Prayer

1. In the advance of the Gospel what role does prayer play? What would happen if we did not pray.
2. Make a note of the four specific prayer points that Paul asks for. Use these as a template in praying for missionaries and other Gospel workers.

Day 2 (Read 4:5,6) Graceful Conversation

1. What is Paul's motive in 'acting wisely towards strangers'?
2. See also Ephesians 4:29-32. What is the art of graceful conversation? Paul uses the phrase: "...helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen."(Eph.4:29b) Do your words have that effect?
3. Can you think of someone that you can encourage with your words today?

Day 3 (Read 4:7) Friends & Fellow Workers.

1. Check out what Paul says about Onesimus in Philemon 1:8-21. Notice the great loyalty that Paul has for his fellow workers, even those, who like Onesimus have failed. Do you show the same loyalty?
2. Do you treasure your friends as Paul did? Do they know how much you appreciate them?

Day 4 (Read 4:7-11) Who Are Your 'Fellow Workers'?

1. Do you belong to a small group? Could you regard them as 'fellow workers' in the Gospel? If you followed Paul's pattern set out in the 4th Chapter of Colossians, what would you have to do that you are not already doing?
2. How do you want your 'fellow workers' to regard you?

Day 5 (Read 4:12-18) Wrestling in Prayer

1. Have you, like Epaphras, ever 'wrestled' in prayer for others? What specifics was Epaphras praying for?
2. Note that Luke the Gospel writer gets a mention. What is the significance of this citation?
3. Name three ways in which your attitudes and practice have changed through reading Colossians.