



# ROOTED

GROW A FAITH THAT IS STRONG



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## GROW A FAITH THAT IS STRONG

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# HOW TO USE THIS STUDY:

This guide is designed to be used for individual or group study. Included you will find the **Text** (taken from the NIV) for Colossians, as well as **Group Discussion** questions to help apply the material to daily life. Discussion questions are broken into 4 sections:

1. **Break Ground** to introduce the topic
2. **Sow Seeds** to explore the text
3. **Add Water** to reflect on key ideas
4. **Grow Roots** to apply the lesson throughout the week.

## BEFORE EVERY MEETING

To get the most out of this study, you will need to *prepare* before you *participate* in a discussion.

Before meeting with the other members of your group take time to read through the text. As you read, pay attention to words that are used more than once. Repeated words are called *key words* and help unlock the meaning of the passage. Next, answer the group discussion questions on your own.

## DURING EVERY MEETING

This study is not designed to be a lecture, but a *discussion*. When you meet as a group be ready to join the conversation. Ask someone or several someone's to read the text and then dive into the questions. Remember, we are growing together.

# INTRODUCTION TO COLOSSIANS

This guide is designed to be used for individual or group study. Included you will find the **Text** (taken from the NIV) for Colossians, as well as **Group Discussion** questions to help apply the material to daily life. Discussion questions are broken into 4 sections:

## AUTHOR

This letter to the Colossians was written by Paul to a church located in the city of Colossae. After a radical encounter with Jesus and some coaching by other followers of Jesus, Paul was commissioned by the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:1-3) to take the gospel to the Gentiles. On three separate missionary journeys Paul established churches throughout Asia Minor and Greece. Eventually Paul was arrested and imprisoned for his beliefs. At the time this letter was written Paul was under arrest in Rome (Acts 28:16-31) where he was eventually killed for his faith.

## AUDIENCE

The Church in the city of Colossae is not a well-known church in the New Testament. If not for this letter from Paul, the church would never have been mentioned. Paul became aware of the Church in Colossae because a man named Epaphras went to visit him in Rome (Colossians 1:7-8). Epaphras was a Colossian who had been converted by Paul while in Ephesus (perhaps along with Philemon). Eventually Epaphras started the church in his home town. After false teachers began to infiltrate the body of believers, Epaphras went to Rome to seek Paul's help.

## PURPOSE

Paul's purpose for writing this letter was to address several false teachings that had begun to take root in the Church. The false ideas being introduced were an early form of Gnosticism (a belief system which blended elements of Jewish legalism, Eastern mysticism, and Greek asceticism). The Gnostics believed the way to salvation came through "secret" knowledge rather than through faith in Christ.

The *Gnostic* belief system included:

- Ceremonialism:** Adherence to old ritualistic Jewish laws.
- Mysticism:** A Greek belief that there was secret knowledge that man needed to strive to learn.
- Asceticism:** The belief that the path of enlightenment comes by living without any worldly pleasure or comforts.
- The Depreciation of Christ:** The belief that Christ was less than God.
- Worship of Angels:** The belief that God could be reached only through angelic beings.

Paul wanted to establish the truth that Christ is the only way to salvation and that religious experiences should never replace a personal relationship with Christ. More importantly, Paul wanted it to be known that the gift of grace was for all people, not just those who claimed to be “in the know” (Colossians 2:2).

# SESSION 1

## FAITH, HOPE, & LOVE

During Paul's imprisonment in Rome, the apostle learned the church in Colossae was being bombarded by false teachings which threatened to undermine the foundational truths of Christianity. Although Paul did not plant the church, he had heard many good things about the believers gathered in Colossae from his good friend Epaphras. As a result, Paul was compelled to write a letter designed to guide them back to the true teachings of the gospel so they could continue to be ROOTED in Christ.

### **READ: COLOSSIANS 1:1-12(NIV)**

*<sup>1</sup>Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, <sup>2</sup>To God's holy people in Colossae, the faithful brothers and sisters in Christ: Grace and peace to you from God our Father.*

*<sup>3</sup>We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, <sup>4</sup>because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all God's people— <sup>5</sup>the faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven and about which you have already heard in the true message of the gospel <sup>6</sup>that has come to you. In the same way, the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world—just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God's grace. <sup>7</sup>You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, <sup>8</sup>and who also told us of your love in the Spirit. <sup>9</sup>For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, <sup>10</sup>so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God,*

*<sup>11</sup>being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, <sup>12</sup>and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. <sup>13</sup>For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, <sup>14</sup>in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

## **BREAK GROUND**

Using the list below, what is one area where you have worked hard to build a good reputation?

- |                                             |                                                |
|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sharp Intellect    | <input type="checkbox"/> Artistic Creativity   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Personal Character | <input type="checkbox"/> Community Involvement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Decorating Skills  | <input type="checkbox"/> Friendly Demeanor     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Work Ethic         | <input type="checkbox"/> Cooking Abilities     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spiritual Growth   | <input type="checkbox"/> Physical Health       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Positive Attitude  | <input type="checkbox"/> Fashion Acumen        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family Life        | <input type="checkbox"/> Sense of Humor        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Athletic Prowess   |                                                |

Using the list below, what is one area where you have worked hard to build a good reputation?

## SOW SEEDS

**1.** Paul often started his letters (see 1:1-2) with greetings and thanksgiving. How do you think the Colossians felt before opening a personal letter from someone as well known as Paul?

- a) Oh No... Did we do something wrong?
- b) Wow! I can't believe Paul even knows we exist!
- c) Other.

**2.** Even though they were a relatively new church (4 or 5 years), Paul was impressed by their reputation. What three reasons did Paul give for being thankful for these believers (see 1:3-5)?

What is the connection between these 3 qualities?

**3.** Colossians 1:7-8 mentions a man named Epaphras; what do we learn about his relationship to Paul and the role he played with the Colossian church?

What does this tell us about the way the Gospel bears fruit in the world?

**4.** Paul mentions the Holy Spirit only once in Colossians (see 1:8). By contrast, he speaks of Christ over thirty times. In light of the false teaching going on at Colossae, why might Paul de-emphasize the role of the Spirit (see introduction to Colossians if needed) and emphasize the role of Christ?

What could be the danger of seeking spiritual knowledge over seeking a relationship with Jesus?



**5.** Although Paul did not start the church, he prayed for the Colossians daily. In the space below complete the four ways Paul interceded for this group of believers (see 1:10-12):

*And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way...*

- a) *Bearing fruit in...*
- b) *Growing in the...*
- c) *Being strengthened with...*
- d) *Joyfully giving...*

**What do you find interesting or extraordinary about Paul's prayers?**

## ADD WATER

**6.** Paul uses much of the opening section of his letter to encourage the Colossian Christians who were beginning to doubt and question their own faith. When are you most likely to get discouraged in your walk with the Lord?

- a) When life circumstances get difficult.
- b) When others start to criticize my beliefs or introduce new spiritual ideas.
- c) When I struggle with repetitive or on-going temptation.
- d) When there is a lack of spiritual community and accountability in my life.
- e) When God seems distant.
- f) Other

**7.** Epaphras traveled from Colossae to Rome to seek Paul's help with the Colossian church. This trip would have been at least a thousand miles round trip and extremely risky. How does this challenge or inspire your idea of what it means to belong to a church family?

**Practically speaking, what might this look like for this Small Group?**

**8.** Prayer is an effective tool in the life of the church. Paul was committed to praying daily for the believers in Colossae. Looking over Colossians 1:10-12 what would it mean for someone to pray these things for you?

**Think of specific areas where you need those prayers today.**



## SESSION 2

# JESUS IS EVERYTHING

Now that Paul has informed the Colossian believers of his prayers for them, he can move into the main subject of his letter: countering the false religious notions and beliefs that have surfaced in the congregation. The false teachers would not deny the importance of Jesus, they would simply try to dethrone Him. To address this issue, Paul begins by reciting a hymn early church goers would have known which emphasized the supremacy of Jesus over all creation. No section of Scripture contains more concentrated doctrine about Jesus than this one.

### **READ: COLOSSIANS 1:13-23**

*<sup>13</sup>For [Christ] has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, <sup>14</sup>in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. <sup>15</sup>He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. <sup>16</sup>For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. <sup>17</sup>He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup>And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. <sup>19</sup>For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, <sup>20</sup>and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.*

<sup>21</sup>Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. <sup>22</sup>But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation -

*<sup>23</sup>if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.*

## **BREAK GROUND**

History is filled with interesting and remarkable characters. Imagine throwing a pool party and getting to invite any three people (alive or dead). In the space below write down the names of the people who would be on your list.

1)

2)

3)

## SOW SEEDS

1. The false teachers in Colossae were combing parts of Jewish Legalism, with parts of Eastern Mysticism, and parts of Christianity. As a result there were several false ideas about Jesus being introduced to the church. Paul addressed each one in his letter. Many of these same ideas still exist! Read through the list below and put a check-mark next to any teachings which can be heard today.

### The false teachers in Paul's day believed...

- The earth is evil, therefore a holy God would not come to the earth in human form (vs. 15).
- A loving God would not allow evil to exist in the world (vs. 16-17).
- Jesus was not God, but rather one of many representatives or prophets between God and people (vs. 19-20).
- Christ is not the only way to God; people could also find God through secret knowledge (21-22).

What additional beliefs have you heard which seek to minimize Jesus?

2. One of the challenges the Colossian church was facing had to do with the Gnostic teaching claiming Jesus was "created" by God. What did Paul write about Jesus in order to refute this idea (see 1:15-18)?

**Note:** The term “firstborn” does not refer to time, but to place or status. Jesus was not the first being created, since He Himself is the Creator of all things. The term “firstborn” simply means of first importance of first rank.” Dr. Warren Wiersbe, *Be Complete*, pg. 60

How should it influence the way Christ followers live their lives?

**3.** One of central doctrines of the Christian faith can be found in Colossians 1:16: all things were created by [Jesus] and for [Jesus]. How should the preposition “for” influence the way Christ followers look at the world?

How should it influence the way Christ followers live their lives?

**4.** The fact that Jesus was fully human and is fully God can be a difficult for people to understand. According to verse 20 why was God pleased to have His fullness dwell in Jesus?

**5.** Paul reminds us before Jesus came and died, we were all enemies of God (see 1:21-23). What words does Paul use to describe the way God views a person who has been reconciled by Jesus?

## ADD WATER

**6.** Paul challenged his audience to “continue” in faith so they would not be moved from the hope they have in Christ. What doubts, worries, attitudes, or habits have the potential to move you away from Christ?

Which truth moves you toward Christ: Jesus is the Creator of all things, Jesus is the Head of the Church, Jesus is fully God, or Jesus is the Savior of my soul?

**7.** In His love God took the initiative to do what we could not do for ourselves by sending His Son to pay the penalty for our sins (vs. 21-23). The sacrifice Christ made allows anyone the opportunity to have peace with God. What would you say to someone who feels they have messed up too badly to receive the forgiveness and friendship of Christ?

**8.** Paul wrote, you were created by Christ and you were created for Christ. On a scale of 1 to 4 how true is this verse in true in your own life?



What is one step you can take this week to begin to live your life for Christ?



## GROW ROOTS

This week read through Colossians 1:13-23. Write out what you would say to someone if they asked you to explain who Jesus is and what Jesus means to you.

This week think about what Christ means to you. Write down everything Jesus has done for you. Write down three practical changes you can make with your time, talents, or treasures to better ensure Jesus has first place in your life.

## PRAYER JOURNAL

A grid of 20 rows and 20 columns of small dots, intended for writing in a prayer journal.

## SESSION 3

# THE STRUGGLE IS NO TROUBLE

In this section of Paul's letter, he reflects on his role as a servant of God and his mission to preach the message of Jesus to the Gentile churches in the world. In doing so, he reminds the believers in Colossae of the service that others have done to share the true Gospel to them. They need to hold on the truths like treasure and not cast them aside when confronted with seemingly more attractive religious ideas.

### **READ: COLOSSIANS 1:24-2:5**

*<sup>24</sup>Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. <sup>25</sup>I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness—<sup>26</sup>the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. <sup>27</sup>To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. <sup>28</sup>We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. <sup>29</sup>To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.*

*<sup>2:1</sup>I want you to know how much I am struggling for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally. <sup>2</sup>My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, <sup>3</sup>in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. <sup>4</sup>I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. <sup>5</sup>For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how orderly you are and how firm your faith in Christ is.*

## **BREAK GROUND**

Looking back over your faith journey who or what has had the greatest impact on your spiritual growth and development?

## **SOW SEEDS**

1. Although many would not consider a jail cell an effective base of operations for ministry, Paul continued to serve God faithfully from prison. Using the passages below, list four ways Paul fulfilled the mission of Christ while under arrest.

a) Colossians 1:3

b) Acts 16:29-31

c) Philippians 1:14

d) 2 Timothy 4:13

**2.** Being a political prisoner may have hurt Paul's credibility (in fact, the false teachers in Colossae were counting on it). How do Paul's statements (see 1:24-25; 28-29) about suffering, mission, and the power of the word of God demonstrate his credentials as a leader?

What character traits do you look for when it comes to submitting yourself to the leadership and guidance of a spiritual mentor?

**3.** The word "mystery" is used four times throughout Colossians. Who or what is the "mystery" that had been hidden for ages and generations (see 1:26-27)?

**4.** Helping others mature in Christ was Paul's passion (see 1:28)! Take a look at the following passages and write down key principles about how people grow perfect in Christ.

- a) When life circumstances get difficult.
- b) When others start to criticize my beliefs or introduce new spiritual ideas.
- c) When I struggle with repetitive or on-going temptation.
- d) When there is a lack of spiritual community and accountability in my life.
- e) When God seems distant.
- f) Other

Which one of these elements has helped you to grow the most over the years? Explain.

5. Paul's mission was not only to tell people about Christ, but also to help others have complete understanding in Christ (see 2:2-3).

Break into groups of 2 or 3, and in the space below write down spiritual concepts you believe individuals should be able to understand & practice at each stage of their spiritual development (for example: salvation, prayer, becoming an Elder, the Holy Spirit, God is love, Jesus is God's Son, how to resist temptation, explain the good news to others, tithing, serving, Bible study, attend church consistently, forgive others, other).

	<b>UNDERSTAND</b>	<b>PRACTICE</b>
<b>SPIRITUAL INFANT</b>		
<b>SPIRITUAL TEEN</b>		
<b>SPIRITUAL ADULT</b>		

## ADD WATER

**6.** Paul was able to rejoice in his suffering. Why do you think Paul was he still able to rejoice even though he was awaiting death in a prison cell?

How can Paul's story to persevere with his God-given call encourage you to rejoice through adversity and painful circumstances?

**7.** A principle formed by an Italian economist named Vilfredo Pareto states that in most enterprises eighty percent of the work will be done by twenty percent of the people. This same principle can apply to the church. How has this lesson challenged or inspired the way you think about serving and ministry in the church?

**8.** Paul wanted the Colossians to know although he couldn't be present with them "in body," he was still available for leadership and guidance "in spirit" (see 2:1; 5). How do you know when it's time to start investing in the spiritual development of others?

## GROW ROOTS

This week reflect on Colossians 1:28. Paul had a Kingdom mindset. Paul believed disciples make disciples. Write down the name of one person you will begin to invest in spiritually.

What will be your first step in helping them grow?

This week pray about where God can begin to use your gifts and talents in the church. If you don't know where to serve, stop by Volunteer Central and ask where they need the most help.

## PRAYER JOURNAL

A grid of 20 rows and 20 columns of small dots, intended for writing in a prayer journal.

## SESSION 4

# SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS

A central pillar of Paul's thoughts surfaces in this section of Colossians. With his frequent use of the phrases "in him" or "with him" (meaning Christ), Paul understands that believers enjoy an unbreakable and everlasting union with Christ which began the moment they first placed their trust in him. By virtue of Jesus' work for us on the cross, the world's powers no longer enslave us. We are free from the penalty and power of sin.

### **READ: COLOSSIANS 2:6-23**

*<sup>6</sup>So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, <sup>7</sup>rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. <sup>8</sup>See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.*

*<sup>9</sup>For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, <sup>10</sup>and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority. <sup>11</sup>In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, <sup>12</sup>having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. <sup>13</sup>When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, <sup>14</sup>having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. <sup>15</sup>And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.*



<sup>16</sup>Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. <sup>17</sup>These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. <sup>18</sup>Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. <sup>19</sup>He has lost connection with the Head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow. <sup>20</sup>Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: <sup>21</sup>“Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!”? <sup>22</sup>These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. <sup>23</sup>Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

## BREAK GROUND

Below are several statements which may or may not be found in God's word. Break into smaller groups of 2 or 3 to identify which phrases are truly Biblical.

- |            |           |                                              |
|------------|-----------|----------------------------------------------|
| <b>YES</b> | <b>NO</b> | Cleanliness is next to Godliness.            |
| <b>YES</b> | <b>NO</b> | Spare the rod, spoil the child.              |
| <b>YES</b> | <b>NO</b> | God helps those who help themselves.         |
| <b>YES</b> | <b>NO</b> | Money is the root of all evil.               |
| <b>YES</b> | <b>NO</b> | Pride comes before a fall.                   |
| <b>YES</b> | <b>NO</b> | God won't give you more than you can handle. |

## SOW SEEDS

**1.** Paul warned the believers in Colossae that it wasn't enough just to accept Christ, instead he said they must "continue to live in him" (see 2:6-7). Do you believe there will ever come a time when a Christ follower should be satisfied with his or her spiritual progress? Explain.

**2.** In this section Paul warns against three facets of Gnosticism being introduced to the church. These mixed-ideas (Jewish Legalism, Eastern Mysticism, and Greek Asceticism) threatened to draw believers away from Christ toward a lifestyle of self-righteousness (see 2:8-10). What do you think might be appealing to some people about a smorgasbord (a little of this, and a little of that) approach to faith?

Why or how might a person who attends church where the Bible is taught be susceptible to fall "captive" to false, ideas, doctrines, or teachings outside the church?

**3.** The first issue Paul addressed was *Jewish legalism* (vs. 11-17). To be a good Jew required strict adherence to the Mosaic Law including: a limited diet, no working on the Sabbath, and circumcision for all men. In fact, the Colossians (many of whom were not Jewish) were told circumcision was vital for conversion – Yikes!!! However, to be circumcised meant the believer would be going backward by placing himself under the authority of the Old Testament Laws. Why did Paul say believers were free from the rules and regulations of the Law (see 2:14)?

Even believers today can get caught up in legalism (looking for observable, measurable behaviors to gauge a person's spiritual maturity). Why should we be careful when evaluating a person's inner spiritual life according to outer behavior?

**4.** Although we are no longer required to keep all of the commands of the Old Testament, it doesn't mean we are free to live by any standard we want. Look up the following verses to learn more about the purpose of the Old Testament Law.

a) Matthew 22:37-40

b) Romans 3:9-10

c) Galatians 3:23-25

d) Hebrews 10:1-4

How do these verses help you to understand the connection between the Old and New Testaments?

**5.** A second issue Paul had to address was Mysticism: the worship of angelic beings and the pursuit of heavenly signs (vs. 18-19). The thought was that God could not be approached directly and therefore a person needed to communicate with angels. Discuss some of the dangers Paul mentions to those seeking a religious "experience" rather than seeking a "relationship" with Christ.

How can Christ followers guard against the same temptation today (not necessarily angel worship – but seeking spiritual signs)?

**6.** Finally, the Colossian Christians were influenced by Asceticism: the shunning of anything that might result in physical comfort or pleasure (vs. 20- 23). What might seem “spiritual” about such a lifestyle?

The church in America may struggle less with legalism, mysticism, or asceticism, and more with the issue of Consumerism: the pursuit of comfort and pleasure over sacrifice. In what ways can we guard against this threat to our spiritual development?

## **ADD WATER**

**7.** Paul reminds us that baptism is an outward sign of what Jesus has done for us on the cross (see 2:12-15). Meaning: Jesus + nothing = salvation and forgiveness. In light of today’s study, what thoughts or feelings do you have regarding this powerful truth?

If you’ve never been baptized, are you ready to do so?

**8.** This sections was written to Christians hundreds of years ago, however even in our modern times we can fall into the trap of self-righteousness. What is one way you can apply this section of Scripture to your daily life.

**8.** This sections was written to Christians hundreds of years ago, however even in our modern times we can fall into the trap of self-righteousness. What is one way you can apply this section of Scripture to your daily life.

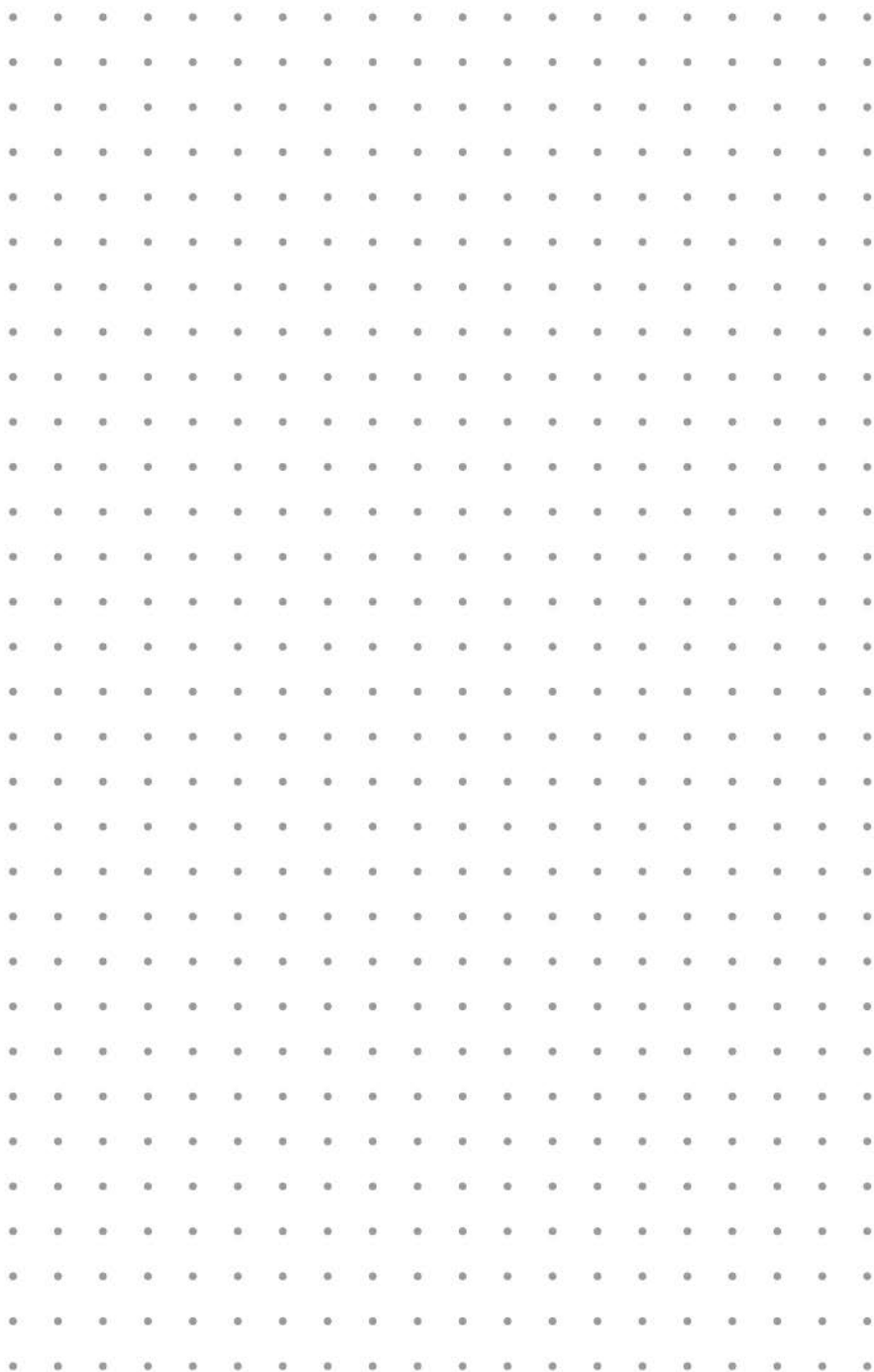
- I need to focus on the fact that I have been saved by grace not by my own works.
- I need to seek a relationship with Christ rather than seek a religious experience.
- I need to guard against the false humility that comes with religious activity.

## **GROW ROOTS**

This week memorize **Colossians 1:6**. Repeat it in the morning and in the evening. As you do, focus on the fact that spiritual growth is a process that starts when we recognize there is nothing we can do to make God love us any more than He already does, and there is nothing we can do to make God love us any less.

This week if you have never accepted the free gift of salvation or gone public with your faith through baptism, it may be time. You don't have to be "good enough" to receive the forgiveness God offers. God accepts you as you are and His Son does the rest. If you are ready to make a decision, talk with your Small Group Leader or Pastor.

# PRAYER JOURNAL



A grid of 20 columns and 30 rows of small dots, intended for writing in a prayer journal.

## SESSION 5

# GET DRESSED

In the early church it was common for someone being baptized to take off the old suit of clothes they were wearing and the, after coming up from immersion, put on a new set of clothes. The new clothes would be white to signify the purity of the new life they were now entering. Paul new the young church in Colossae needed to know very clearly what was involved in taking off the old clothes and putting on the new ones.

### **READ: COLOSSIANS 3:1-4:1**

*<sup>1</sup>Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.*

*<sup>2</sup>Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. <sup>3</sup>For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup>When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. <sup>5</sup>Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. <sup>6</sup>Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. <sup>7</sup>You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. <sup>8</sup>But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. <sup>9</sup>Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices <sup>10</sup>and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. <sup>11</sup>Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.*

*<sup>12</sup>Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. <sup>13</sup>Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. <sup>14</sup>And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. <sup>15</sup>Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.*

*<sup>16</sup>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.*

*<sup>17</sup>And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

*<sup>18</sup>Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.*

*<sup>19</sup>Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.*

*<sup>20</sup>Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. <sup>21</sup>Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.*

*<sup>22</sup>Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. <sup>23</sup>Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men,*

*<sup>24</sup>since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.*

*<sup>25</sup>Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there is no favoritism.*

*<sup>4:1</sup>Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven.*

## **BREAK GROUND**

Complete the following sentence: When it comes to picking out clothes, the most important concern I have is...

- The Brand
- The Price
- The Comfort
- The Style
- Other



## SOW SEEDS

1. Chapter 3 opens with the phrase with the phrases: "set your hearts on things above" and, "set your minds on things above" (see 3:1-2). In the space below write down the top three things that occupy your heart or mind.

a)

b)

c)

How difficult is it for you to keep your mind on heavenly things while at the same time fulfilling your daily responsibilities on this earth?

2. The opening verses in Colossians 3 provide the motivation (see 3:1-4) for focusing our lives on things above. In your own words summarize what is meant by each of the following phrases:

a) We are raised with Christ.

b) We are hidden with Christ.

c) We will be glorified in Christ.

**3.** The Good News is that Christ saves us from the penalty of sin (forgiveness), but then He begins to save us from the power of sin (transformation). Does this mean we will no longer be tempted to sin?

What does Paul say is the secret sauce for overcoming sin in your heart (see. 3:5-10)?

The best way to get rid of an old habit is to replace it with a new one. From the list below check off items that have helped you to "put to death" old habits and hang-ups?

**3.** The word "mystery" is used four times throughout Colossians. Who or what is the "mystery" that had been hidden for ages and generations (see 1:26-27)?

- Church Attendance
- Holy Spirit
- Time in the Word
- Prayer
- Accountability Partner
- Small Group
- Christian Radio/Music
- Scripture Memorization
- Desire to please God
- Other

**4.** Chosen by God, set apart for God, loved by God, and forgiven by God - they all add up to GRACE (see 3:12-14)! Looking at the list of virtues with which we are to “clothe” ourselves as followers of Christ, do you believe God is more concerned about how well we behave or how well we treat others? Explain.

What does Paul say is the secret sauce for overcoming sin in your heart (see. 3:5-10)?

**5.** Paul clearly believes that the Christian life must include every facet of life, including the home (see 3:18-21). What do you believe are the foremost challenges facing families today?

What do you believe are the most important things families can do to strengthen their relationships to one another? ...to Christ??

**6.** Although Paul is speaking to a culture that endorsed slavery (vs. 3:22-4:1), this section still has application for today. When it comes to your job, what advice do you believe Paul might give to you if he spent the day with you at work?

## ADD WATER

7. Read Colossians 3:11. Don't read over this verse too quickly. Racial reconciliation was a big part of God's plan for the church. What thoughts or feelings do you have about how well the big "C" Church is fulfilling this purpose in the world today?

How do you think your church could do better in this area?

8. Break into groups of 2 or 3. Spend a moment being honest with one another. Reflecting on Colossians 3, choose 1 behavior you need to put off and one characteristic trait you need to put on in order to continue to transform into the person God wants you to be.

Spend a few minutes praying for one another.

## GROW ROOTS

This week really practice setting your heart and mind on things above. Put "sticky notes" around the house, vehicle, and workplace with written reminders to focus on the heavenly while you are moving in the earthly.

This week really concentrate on "*putting off*" one earthly desire and "*putting on*" one heavenly quality. Remind yourself that you have been saved from the power of sin. Ask God to help you transform your character to look more and more like His.

# PRAYER JOURNAL

A grid of 24 rows and 20 columns of small dots, intended for writing in a prayer journal.

## SESSION 6

# CAN I GET A WITNESS

Paul wraps up the main body of his letter by encouraging the Colossian believers to devote themselves to prayer and to be “watchful” for the work God is doing in the world. He also requests for them to pray that he will continue to be able to share the message of Christ to a hurting and lost world – which was a definite concern of his at the time, since he wrote this letter from a prison cell. Paul’s challenge to the believers – and to us – is for them to open their mouths boldly and graciously in order to speak the only truth that sets people free.

### **READ: COLOSSIANS 4:2-18**

*<sup>2</sup>Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. <sup>3</sup>And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. <sup>4</sup>Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. <sup>5</sup>Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. <sup>6</sup>Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.*

*<sup>7</sup>Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. <sup>8</sup>I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts. <sup>9</sup>He is coming with Onesimus, our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you. They will tell you everything that is happening here.*

*<sup>10</sup>My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.) <sup>11</sup>Jesus, who is called Justus, also sends greetings. These are the only Jews among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have proved a comfort to me.*

<sup>12</sup>Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.

<sup>13</sup>I vouch for him that he is working hard for you and for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis. <sup>14</sup>Our dear friend Luke, the doctor, and Demas send greetings. <sup>15</sup>Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house.

<sup>16</sup>After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea. <sup>17</sup>Tell Archippus: "See to it that you complete the work you have received in the Lord." <sup>18</sup>I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

## **BREAK GROUND**

We call it by many names: evangelism, witnessing, soul winning, or giving a testimony. Regardless, what images (positive and negative) come to mind when you hear someone refer to sharing the gospel?

## SOW SEEDS

**1.** Paul believed in the power of prayer. So much so that he challenged his audience to devote their lives to it (see 4:2-4). When it comes to sharing our faith, why is it important to talk to God about people, before talking to people about God?

**2.** Paul's prayer that "God may open a door for our message" says a lot about his own spiritual maturity (Paul was locked behind prison doors). What does Paul's passion for sharing the good news, despite his circumstances, say to Christians today?

How do you think Paul would respond to someone who says they don't have the ability or time to serve in the church or share their faith?

**3.** After prayer, Paul mentions two methods for sharing the gospel (see 4:5-6). Which method seems the most natural for you?

- I am most comfortable demonstrating my faith through my actions.
- I am most comfortable sharing my faith through my words.

How do you think Paul would respond to someone who says they don't have the ability or time to serve in the church or share their faith?



**4.** Our actions can actually draw or push people to or from Christ. List some *wise* and *unwise* ways we can act around those who do not (yet) share our faith.

WISE	UNWISE

**5.** How many people were helping Paul at the time Colossians was written (see 3:7-18). How does this section speak to the importance of community when it comes to reaching the world for Christ?

## ADD WATER

**6.** Paul asked the Colossians to pray for him and his efforts to reach more people for Christ. How do you view your role in God's plan to save the world?

- My role is to pray for others.
- My role is to encourage others.
- My role is to serve others.
- My role is to teach.
- My role is to invite others to Christ.
- My role is to \_\_\_\_\_.

**7.** Colossians is an incredible book which reminds us that we are only complete through Christ. Of course being a complete Christian also means reaching out to those who are disconnected from God. As a group, discuss ways you will create open door opportunities to reach out and witness to others.

- We will host a party as a group and invite new people from around the area.
- We will go serve in the community as a group.
- Other

## GROW ROOTS

This week write out your testimony. A person doesn't need to understand everything about God, faith, and the Bible to share their faith; but they do need to know what Christ has done for them. The best testimonies include the following elements: my life before Christ, why I accepted Christ, and my life after Christ.

This week pray for an opportunity to share your faith or invite someone to church. Who are you praying for by name? Write it down and ask God to give you a open door to share.

## PRAYER JOURNAL

A grid of 20 rows and 20 columns of small dots, intended for writing a prayer journal.

# ROOTED

GROW A FAITH THAT IS STRONG

