

ABIDING

In Christ the King

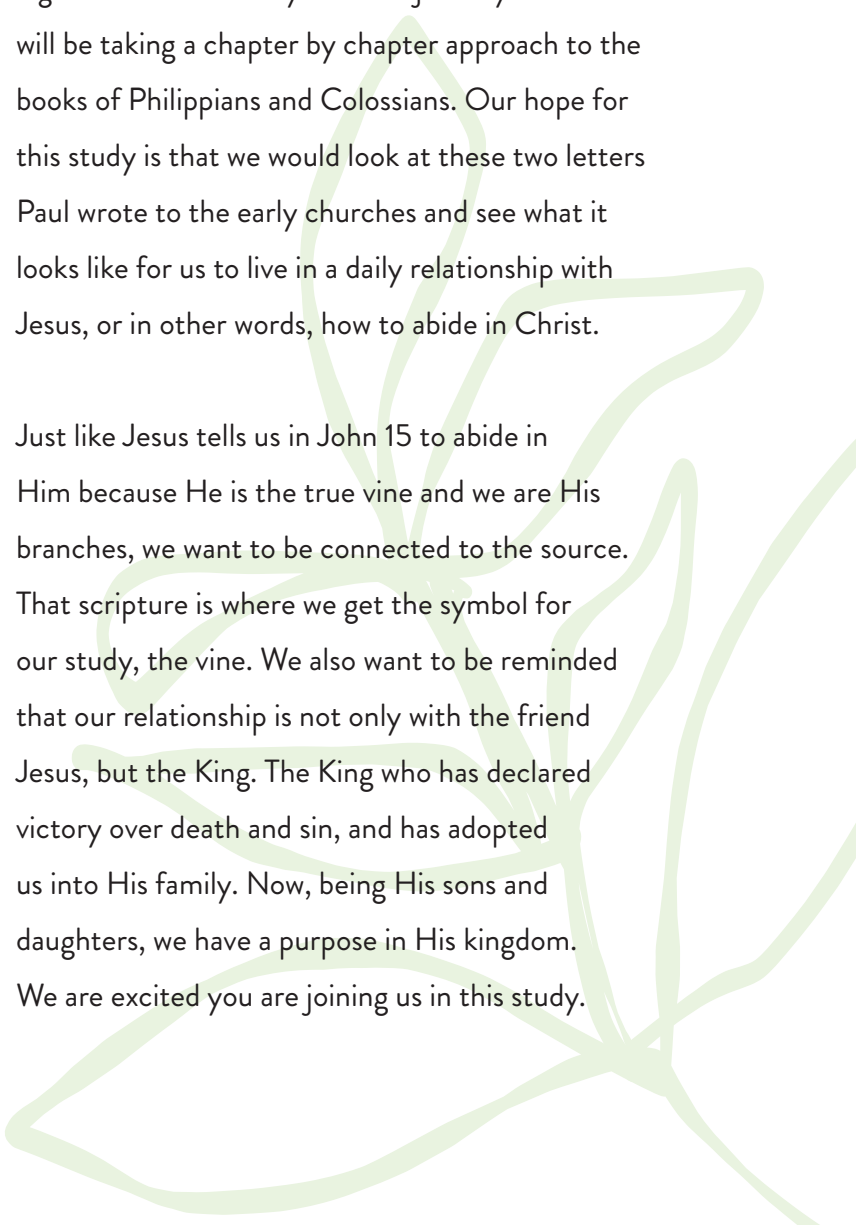


A Study of Philippians and Colossians

Written by:
Zach Wood
Beth Yanke
Thom Fulmer
Janet Fulmer

Designed & illustrated by:
Ashley Wier

Edited by:
Karen Nabers



Welcome to *Abiding in Christ the King*, an eight-week Bible study. On this journey we will be taking a chapter by chapter approach to the books of Philippians and Colossians. Our hope for this study is that we would look at these two letters Paul wrote to the early churches and see what it looks like for us to live in a daily relationship with Jesus, or in other words, how to abide in Christ.

Just like Jesus tells us in John 15 to abide in Him because He is the true vine and we are His branches, we want to be connected to the source. That scripture is where we get the symbol for our study, the vine. We also want to be reminded that our relationship is not only with the friend Jesus, but the King. The King who has declared victory over death and sin, and has adopted us into His family. Now, being His sons and daughters, we have a purpose in His kingdom. We are excited you are joining us in this study.



WEEK 1
Philippians 1

“I am certain that God,
who began the good work
within you, will continue
His work until it is finally
finished on the day when
Christ Jesus returns.”

Philippians 1:6 NLT

Philippians 1

Philippians is a letter from the Apostle Paul to the church in Philippi. Most likely, Paul wrote this letter while he was in a Roman prison, around 62 AD. He originally went to Philippi around 50 AD but had visited a total of three times before this letter.

Paul did not write to the Philippians in response to a crisis, as he did with Colossians. Instead, through his most personal letter, he wrote to express his appreciation and affection for them. The Philippian church had sent Epaphroditus to deliver financial gifts and support to Paul's ministry in Rome. At some point while serving with Paul, Epaphroditus became dangerously sick and nearly died. After his recovery, Paul sent Epaphroditus back to Philippi carrying with him the letter to the Philippian church.

Paul took the chance to thank the church in Philippi for their gifts, and he encouraged them on matters such as identity, humility and unity. He wrote on the value of living with an eternal perspective. The apostle then warned them about "Judaizers" (Jewish legalists) and how to hold tight to the truth of the gospel. Finally, Paul gave instructions on how to live a joyous Christian life, that despite the hardships in life, the source of his joyous contentment was rooted in knowing Christ.

Read Philippians 1:1-2

Why does Paul identify himself as a slave to Christ Jesus?
What is the significance of this claim, especially from Paul?

“FOR ALL WHO ARE LED BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD ARE CHILDREN OF GOD. SO YOU HAVE NOT RECEIVED A SPIRIT THAT MAKES YOU FEARFUL SLAVES. INSTEAD, YOU RECEIVED GOD’S SPIRIT WHEN HE ADOPTED YOU AS HIS OWN CHILDREN. NOW WE CALL HIM, “ABBA, FATHER.” FOR HIS SPIRIT JOINS WITH OUR SPIRIT TO AFFIRM THAT WE ARE GOD’S CHILDREN.” ROMANS 8:14-16 NLT

This letter to the Philippians deals greatly with the subject of identity. What aspects of your life do you mistakenly place your identity in? Where is the true place you should find your identity? Explain.

"Your real, new self (which is Christ's and also yours, and yours just because it is His) will not come as long as you are looking for it. It will come when you are looking for Him." - C.S. Lewis

PRAYER - God, I praise you for my new identity in Christ, that my old self has been washed clean and now I am a new creation. Thank you that I now belong to you, for if you are for me NOTHING can stand against me. Lord, nothing can separate me from you and your love. Capture my heart today Jesus, I am yours. Amen.

Read Philippians 1:3-11

List everything that Paul prays for his friends in Philippi.
Now list every reason he is thankful for them.

SMALL GROUP QUESTION

Read verse 6. Where do you see God actively continuing his work in you?

In all the love Paul has for these people, what does he want most for them? Why?

“BUT THE HOLY SPIRIT PRODUCES THIS KIND OF FRUIT IN OUR LIVES: LOVE, JOY, PEACE, PATIENCE, KINDNESS, GOODNESS, FAITHFULNESS, GENTLENESS, AND SELF-CONTROL.” GALATIANS 5:22-23 NLT

When Paul says “Every time I think of you, I give thanks to my God. Whenever I pray, I make my requests for all of you with joy,” he is not only praying for the Church of Philippi, but he also has specific people in mind, and he prays for them by name.

PRAYER - Thank you God that you designed me to live life not alone but in harmony with you and your people. Lord, I pray for _____ (pray for your friends by name). I pray that you continue your good work in them and that their love will overflow more and more. Jesus, mark our life with the fruit of your spirit, and use us in your kingdom, for your glory. Amen.

Read Philippians 1:12-19

PAUL WROTE THIS WHILE BEING IMPRISONED IN ROME, HENCE HIS REFERENCE TO HIS CHAINS IN THIS PASSAGE. IN FACT, PAUL'S JOURNEY HAS INCLUDED BEING IMPRISONED, WHIPPED, AT THE BRINK OF DEATH, STONED, SHIPWRECKED, ROBBED, BETRAYED AND SLEEPLESS AND WITHOUT FOOD FOR MANY DAYS. (2 CORINTHIANS 11:23-27)

Despite everything that Paul has endured, including currently being imprisoned, what is his perspective on why this all has happened to him?

Take a look back at your own life, every hardship and trial you have been through. Do you see how God has used these things in your life to share his Good News? List a few.

SMALL GROUP QUESTION

Read Romans 8:28 together. Why does God allow bad things to happen to his people?

PRAYER - God, I praise you that you are constantly redeeming my life. I thank you that you have a plan that is for good. Lord, I pray you continue to heal my wounds and deliver me from my trials. But more so, I pray you use all of it for glory and your kingdom. Amen.

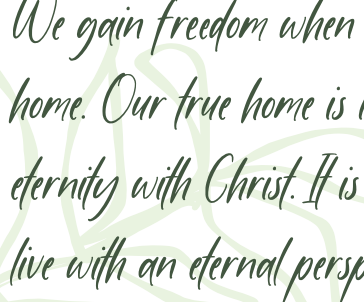
Read Philippians 1:20-26

Read verse 21. What does Paul mean that “to live is Christ, to die is gain”?

“SO WE DON’T LOOK AT THE TROUBLES WE CAN SEE NOW; RATHER, WE FIX OUR GAZE ON THINGS THAT CANNOT BE SEEN. FOR THE THINGS WE SEE NOW WILL SOON BE GONE, BUT THE THINGS WE CANNOT SEE WILL LAST FOREVER.” 2 CORINTHIANS 4:18 NLT

SMALL GROUP QUESTION

What does it mean to have an eternal perspective?



We gain freedom when we realize this place is not our home. Our true home is in heaven, where we will spend eternity with Christ. It is only then that we can truly live with an eternal perspective.

PRAYER - God, thank you for everything good that you have allowed me to see and be part of in this world, even though I realize that this isn't my home. But Lord, I ask that you remind me everyday this place is not my home. Today Jesus, help me set my eyes on things above: on you, your love and your will. Amen.

Read Philippians 1:27-30

Paul calls us “Citizens of Heaven.” What implication does that have on your life?

Paul says we are to live lives worthy of the gospel of Christ. What does he mean by that?

“FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT FOR THE TRUE FAITH. HOLD TIGHTLY TO THE ETERNAL LIFE TO WHICH GOD HAS CALLED YOU, WHICH YOU HAVE DECLARED SO WELL BEFORE MANY WITNESSES.” 1 TIMOTHY 6:12 NLT

SMALL GROUP QUESTION

Read Philippians 1:27-30 together. It is promised over and over again in scripture that life will be a struggle. With the example of Paul and the Philippians, how can we struggle well together?

PRAYER - God I praise you that you bring harmony to the world through your love. Your unity surpasses any culture, politics, race, language and age. Lord, I pray for your church, that we would be reminded everyday that your love binds us together. Jesus I pray for my local church and the body worldwide, that we would be united. Amen.



WEEK 2
Philippians 2

“You must have the
same attitude that
Christ Jesus had.”
Philippians 2:5 NLT

Philippians 2

The second chapter of Philippians is focused on humility, sacrificial love and the importance of obedience to God. Paul uses Jesus, Timothy and Epaphroditus as examples for these practices. Of course we know that Jesus, who was fully God and fully man, was the only One who could accomplish our salvation through His humiliation on the cross. He alone remains our ultimate example.

Read Philippians 2:1-5

In Chapter 1 Paul talked a lot about the unity of the church. He goes on now in Chapter 2 to tell us the characteristics of a unified church. What are those characteristics?

What is Paul's reasoning that we should have tender hearts and agree with, work with and love each other?

“AFTER WASHING THEIR FEET, HE PUT ON HIS ROBE AGAIN AND SAT DOWN AND ASKED, ‘DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT I WAS DOING? YOU CALL ME ‘TEACHER’ AND ‘LORD,’ AND YOU ARE RIGHT, BECAUSE THAT’S WHAT I AM. AND SINCE I, YOUR LORD AND TEACHER, HAVE WASHED YOUR FEET, YOU OUGHT TO WASH EACH OTHER’S FEET. I HAVE GIVEN YOU AN EXAMPLE TO FOLLOW. DO AS I HAVE DONE TO YOU.’ ” JOHN 13:12-15 NLT



Christ is our example.

SMALL GROUP QUESTION

Read Philippians 2:1-5 together. Paul desires for the Philippians to love each other with sacrificial love. He then points to Jesus as our perfect example of that love. What is your favorite story of Jesus that demonstrates this love?

PRAYER - God, I praise you today for your sacrificial love. Your love that manifested itself in your Son, who is not only our example of how to love, but is the only reason we are able to love. So I ask you to overflow me with this love for the people in every aspect of my life. May they know your love through me. Amen.

Read Philippians 2:6-11

This passage in Philippians is actually a hymn that the early church would sing when gathered together. Paul uses this hymn as his example of what Jesus' attitude really is (verse 5). This hymn declares that the character of the one we call Lord is most fully revealed in the crucified one who humbled himself and took the form of a slave to show us the true nature of our God.

Which statement, sentence or verse of this hymn sticks out to you the most when you read it? Why?

Knowing that this hymn is our example of Christ's attitude, how would you describe His attitude in these verses?

SMALL GROUP QUESTION

What aspect of the character of Jesus captures your heart the most or, in other words, with what part of God's personality do you most relate?

PRAYER - God, I praise your name today that you are a God who humbled yourself to the point of dying on the cross for the sake of having a relationship with me. Help me rest in this fact today. Lord, now imprint this nature of your love on my heart. Continue your good work in me Jesus. Amen.

Read Philippians 2:12-13

Yesterday's passage talked about Christ's obedience. Paul now calls the Philippians to be obedient. How would you describe and define obedience after looking at Jesus and the people of Philippi?



*"Obedience is the road to freedom."
- C.S. Lewis*

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

What does it mean for us to be obedient to God? How do we know what God is calling us to do?

“BUT GOD IS SO RICH IN MERCY, AND HE LOVED US SO MUCH, THAT EVEN THOUGH WE WERE DEAD BECAUSE OF OUR SINS, HE GAVE US LIFE WHEN HE RAISED CHRIST FROM THE DEAD. (IT IS ONLY BY GOD’S GRACE THAT YOU HAVE BEEN SAVED!) FOR HE RAISED US FROM THE DEAD ALONG WITH CHRIST AND SEATED US WITH HIM IN THE HEAVENLY REALMS BECAUSE WE ARE UNITED WITH CHRIST JESUS. SO GOD CAN POINT TO US IN ALL FUTURE AGES AS EXAMPLES OF THE INCREDIBLE WEALTH OF HIS GRACE AND KINDNESS TOWARD US, AS SHOWN IN ALL HE HAS DONE FOR US WHO ARE UNITED WITH CHRIST JESUS. GOD SAVED YOU BY HIS GRACE WHEN YOU BELIEVED. AND YOU CAN’T TAKE CREDIT FOR THIS; IT IS A GIFT FROM GOD. SALVATION IS NOT A REWARD FOR THE GOOD THINGS WE HAVE DONE, SO NONE OF US CAN BOAST ABOUT IT.” EPHESIANS 2:4-9 NLT

We know Ephesians 2 says we are only saved by grace through faith, so what does it mean to work out your own salvation? What part does fear and reverence play in our salvation?

PRAYER - God, I thank you that you are in control. You have the plan, and that plan is good. Lord, take away all of the control I want over my own life, I give it to you. Help me submit to what you have for my life. My life is yours. Amen.

Read Philippians 2:14-18

Paul commands the Philippians to not grumble or complain, or else people would criticize them. How would that affect them being a light in this world? What does it mean for us to be a light in this world?

“JESUS SPOKE TO THE PEOPLE ONCE MORE AND SAID, ‘I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD. IF YOU FOLLOW ME, YOU WON’T HAVE TO WALK IN DARKNESS, BECAUSE YOU WILL HAVE THE LIGHT THAT LEADS TO LIFE.’” JOHN 8:12 NLT

What is the word of life? How do we hold fast to the word of life? How would holding fast to the word of life enable the Philippians to remain joyful as they obeyed God?

SMALL GROUP QUESTION

Read verses 17 and 18. Paul talks about rejoicing even if he loses his life. Why should the Philippians rejoice, and what are they rejoicing over?

PRAYER - God, thank you for being the light of the world. Now, because I have you I will never walk in darkness again. You have me. Lord, I ask that you shine through every aspect of my life. I rejoice that I am a living sacrifice for the sake of your name, your kingdom and your will. Amen.

Read Philippians 2:19-30

Timothy & Epaphroditus are our examples.



From these verses what do we know about Timothy and Epaphroditus? What is Paul's relationship with them like?

Paul tells the Philippians that Timothy is uniquely qualified for certain important tasks. Paul tells the Philippians to honor Epaphroditus. What is it about each of these men that makes them an example for us?

SMALL GROUP QUESTION

Just like Paul uses Timothy and Epaphroditus as examples for the Philippian believers, share about someone in your small group that is a good example for fellow believers. Share why they are a good example?

"Making disciples of Jesus is the overflow of the delight in being disciples of Jesus."

- David Platt

What is the importance of discipleship in a life following Jesus?
Who in your life are you discipling? Who is discipling you?

PRAYER - God, I thank you that I am your disciple. You are my mentor, my friend and my King. Lord, continue to use me as your disciple to love, build up, encourage and challenge other people. Help me to spur on your church towards love and good works. Amen.



WEEK 3
Philippians 3

“Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ and become one with Him.”

Philippians 3:8 NLT

Philippians 3

Paul's love for the believers at Philippi is evident in his desire to help strengthen, build and protect their faith. He begins by speaking out against those that would try and summarize salvation as grace plus human effort. He reminds them it is faith in what Christ Jesus has done alone that makes us right with God. He continues to express his longing to know and be like Jesus, and explains it's a lifelong goal. He encourages the believers to look to him as an example for their lives, for there are many whose behavior shows they really do not know Jesus. It's a second warning, this time against the misuse of God's grace as license for all kinds of immorality.

Read Philippians 3:1-3

Judaizers were a sect of Jewish Christians that taught believing in Jesus AND adhering to the Mosaic law were requirements for salvation.

What is Paul's concern for the Philippians in verse 1? (see also Philippians 2:17) What is his concern for them in verse 2?

Can you think of a time when the Bible was a safeguard for your faith?

“AND TRUE CIRCUMCISION IS NOT MERELY OBEYING THE LETTER OF THE LAW; RATHER, IT IS A CHANGE OF HEART PRODUCED BY THE SPIRIT.” ROMANS 2:29 NLT

SMALL GROUP QUESTION

Is there something you are adding to God’s grace for your salvation?

SMALL GROUP QUESTION

“We put no confidence in human effort.” How do these words encourage and affirm you?

PRAYER - God, I praise and thank you that my salvation is completely dependent on what Jesus has done for me. I understand my ONLY responsibility has been to humbly acknowledge this amazing gift and accept it. Amen.

Read Philippians 3:4-6

Summarize Paul's list of accolades.

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

In what ways do we use our accomplishments as a valuation of our worth? Read 1 Corinthians 4:3-4. From these verses, who does Paul say has the right to examine us?

"AS FOR ME, IT MATTERS VERY LITTLE HOW I MIGHT BE EVALUATED BY YOU OR BY ANY HUMAN AUTHORITY. I DON'T EVEN TRUST MY OWN JUDGEMENT ON THIS POINT. MY CONSCIENCE IS CLEAR, BUT THAT DOESN'T PROVE I'M RIGHT. IT IS THE LORD HIMSELF WHO WILL EXAMINE ME AND DECIDE." 1 CORINTHIANS 4:3-4 NLT

Paul uses his resume as an argument against the Judaizers. In verse 4, the phrase "if anyone could" is very important. Read 1 Corinthians 15:9. Explain how Paul really feels regarding confidence in his own effort.

PRAYER - Lord, thank you that I don't have to earn my salvation. Thank you Jesus for dying for me when I was still a sinner. Lord, keep me from the self pride (or defeat) that comes when I place confidence in my own effort. Amen.

Read Philippians 3:7-11

These verses contain some of the richest language of how greatly Paul loves Jesus. It's a love that can't compare to anything else. What are some things believers might be tempted to hold more value in than knowing Jesus?

Paul uses the example of his own life in his witness to the life changing power of embracing the good news. Use his example to help you briefly tell your own story below.

“IF SOMEONE ASKS ABOUT YOUR HOPE AS A BELIEVER,
ALWAYS BE READY TO EXPLAIN IT.” 1 PETER 3:15 NLT

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

Many people struggle with why a good God would allow suffering. In verse 10, Paul claims to WANT to suffer with Jesus and share in His death. How would you use Paul's example here in addressing the issue of suffering? What does it mean to share in His death?

“I HAVE TOLD YOU ALL THIS SO THAT YOU MAY HAVE PEACE IN ME. HERE ON EARTH YOU WILL HAVE MANY TRIALS AND SORROWS. BUT TAKE HEART, BECAUSE I HAVE OVERCOME THE WORLD.” JOHN 16:33 NLT

PRAYER - God, I praise you for your way of making me right with you. Thank you for your gift of faith. Keep my focus on the “infinite value” of knowing you Jesus! Amen.

Read Philippians 3:12-16

Paul clarifies that he is not saying he has “already achieved these things.” What “things” is he referencing?

In verse 13, Paul states that forgetting the past is part of what is necessary for him in pressing on towards the goal of being more like Jesus. What part of Paul’s past could you imagine he might be speaking of here? (We can’t really know since he doesn’t say.) Is there anything in your past that hinders your becoming more like Jesus, and what steps can you take to let it go?

“SO NOW THERE IS NO CONDEMNATION FOR THOSE WHO BELONG TO CHRIST JESUS.” ROMANS 8:1 NLT

These verses have been describing what Christians call sanctification. He says it's really not negotiable so let's "agree on these things." How have you seen God change or mature your understanding of His truth?

"MAKE THEM HOLY BY YOUR TRUTH; TEACH THEM YOUR WORD, WHICH IS TRUTH." JOHN 17:17 NLT

In this verse Jesus prays for God to make His disciples holy by teaching them His word. Sanctification is the process and effect of being transformed as we obediently apply the truth of God's word to our lives.

PRAYER - God, I praise you for not leaving me as you found me, but for continuing to make me more and more like your son. Thank you Jesus for your example of how to live. God, continue to fill me with the desire and ability to follow you. Amen.

Read Philippians 3:17-21

Chapter 3 ends with Paul's second warning to the believers in Philippi. He begins in verse 17 by encouraging them to pattern their lives after him. We see serious consequences for those who have not done so in the next two verses. Having mentors, teachers and believers who hold us accountable are all valuable gifts in belonging to the body of Christ.

SMALL GROUP QUESTION

Who might be under your sphere of influence that looks to you as their example?

Many Christians have the attitude of "I know what I believe but I'm not going to presume to tell someone else how they ought to think." How do you see Paul's heart attitude as vastly different?

"MY HEART IS FILLED WITH BITTER SORROW AND UNENDING GRIEF FOR MY PEOPLE, MY JEWISH BROTHERS AND SISTERS. I WOULD BE WILLING TO BE FOREVER CURSED - CUT OFF FROM CHRIST! - IF THAT WOULD SAVE THEM." ROMANS 9:2-3 NLT

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

What is Paul saying about the people in verses 18 and 19? How are Christians to live differently?

“WELL THEN, SHOULD WE KEEP ON SINNING SO THAT GOD CAN SHOW US MORE AND MORE OF HIS WONDERFUL GRACE? OF COURSE NOT! SINCE WE HAVE DIED TO SIN, HOW CAN WE CONTINUE TO LIVE IN IT?” ROMANS 6:1-2 NLT

Paul gives us a glimpse in verse 21 of the hope we have in heaven. What are some of your hopes for heaven?

PRAYER - I praise you God that I have a citizenship in heaven! Thank you that my inheritance is secure. Make my heart tender toward those whose thoughts are only on here and now. Amen.



WEEK 4
Philippians 4

“And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me - everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you.”

Philippians 4:8-9 NLT

Philippians 4

In Chapter 4, Paul concludes his letter to the church at Philippi by encouraging them and thanking them. He asks that a dispute between two women be settled and again tells them to be joyful and considerate. He says to trade in worry for prayer and then they will experience God's unexplainable peace. Keeping praiseworthy thoughts at the forefront and living the way he has taught them will further that peace. He thanks them and praises God for their concern and their gifts even though he has learned contentment in all circumstances.

Read Philippians 4:1-3

SMALL GROUP QUESTION

Paul again expresses his love for the Philippian believers, encouraging them to “stay true to the Lord.” What action can you take to stay true?

In verses 2 and 3, Paul expresses concern for Euodia and Syntyche to be reconciled, stating “because you belong to the Lord, settle your disagreement.” Why are the stakes so high when Christians stand against each other (read John 13:35)? How could their dispute have possibly affected those who heard the gospel through them?

Is there anyone that comes to mind to whom you need to extend your forgiveness? What steps can you take?



PRAYER - God, thank you for your grace! Thank you for your forgiveness. Equip me to forgive others and live at peace with everyone to the very best of my ability. Amen.

Read Philippians 4:4-9

In verses 4 and 5, Paul continues to encourage believers to be full of joy and to be considerate in all they do. How are these two things connected? What can you do if you feel your joy in the Lord is waning?

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

What does Paul say we need to do in order to experience God's peace? What is our great benefit when we experience this?

Why is it so important for believers to fix our thoughts on “what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely and admirable”? What areas in your life need to come under Paul’s instruction?

“A GOOD PERSON PRODUCES GOOD THINGS FROM THE TREASURY OF A GOOD HEART, AND AN EVIL PERSON PRODUCES EVIL THINGS FROM THE TREASURY OF AN EVIL HEART. WHAT YOU SAY FLOWS FROM WHAT IS IN YOUR HEART.” LUKE 6:45 NLT

PRAYER - God, to the best of my ability, I surrender all my needs and requests into your capable hands. Thank you for the peace and joy that comes when I choose to abide in you. Help me fix my eyes on you always! Amen.

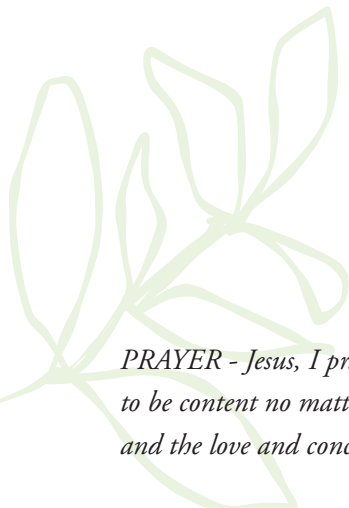
Read Philippians 4:10-14

Paul shares kind words with the church in verse 10 and again in 14, praising God for them. They are responding to his distress and need with concern and generosity just as the body of Christ should! Give some examples of how you see the body of Christ working like this in your life.

Some of the most well known scriptures are found in verses 11 through 13. Using the previous chapter along with these verses, describe Paul's "secret" to living with contentment during the most difficult of situations.

SMALL GROUP QUESTION

“For I have learned” are very important words here. Revisit Philippians 3:12. Becoming more and more like Jesus is a pursuit. Contentment during adversity is not our natural state. Can you share an instance when you relied on “Christ who gives me strength” to face a difficult situation with peace?



PRAYER - Jesus, I praise you as the source of my strength! Help me to learn to be content no matter the situation I face. Thank you for my community and the love and concern we share for one another. Amen.

Read Philippians 4:15-19

Paul is still remembering and thanking the Philippians for their generosity to him from years ago. He mentions their gifts even when he was away serving other churches. Their faithfulness gave him great joy.

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

What is Paul saying in verse 17? What type of reward does he want them to receive?

“YES, YOU WILL BE ENRICHED IN EVERY WAY SO THAT YOU CAN ALWAYS BE GENEROUS. AND WHEN WE TAKE YOUR GIFTS TO THOSE WHO NEED THEM, THEY WILL THANK GOD.” 2 CORINTHIANS 9:11 NLT

There are numerous Old Testament verses about sacrifices that are a pleasing aroma to the Lord. Paul uses this same language here to describe the Philippians sacrifice. Christ's sacrifice on the cross meant there would never again need to be an animal sacrificed on the altar to atone for our sins. This did not mean however, that believers were not continued to be called to live sacrificially. Giving generously to those in need is but one of the ways we can do this. What are other ways we can offer sacrifices to the Lord?

What assurance does Paul leave them with in verse 19? What ways have you seen this played out in your life?

PRAYER - God, I praise you for your wonderful provision. Thank you for always taking care of me. Help me to be generous with others, especially those that are in need. Amen.

Read Philippians 4:20-23

Paul begins his conclusion with “all glory to God our Father.” This is the seventh time Paul mentions glory in this letter. What are some ways you give glory to God your Father?

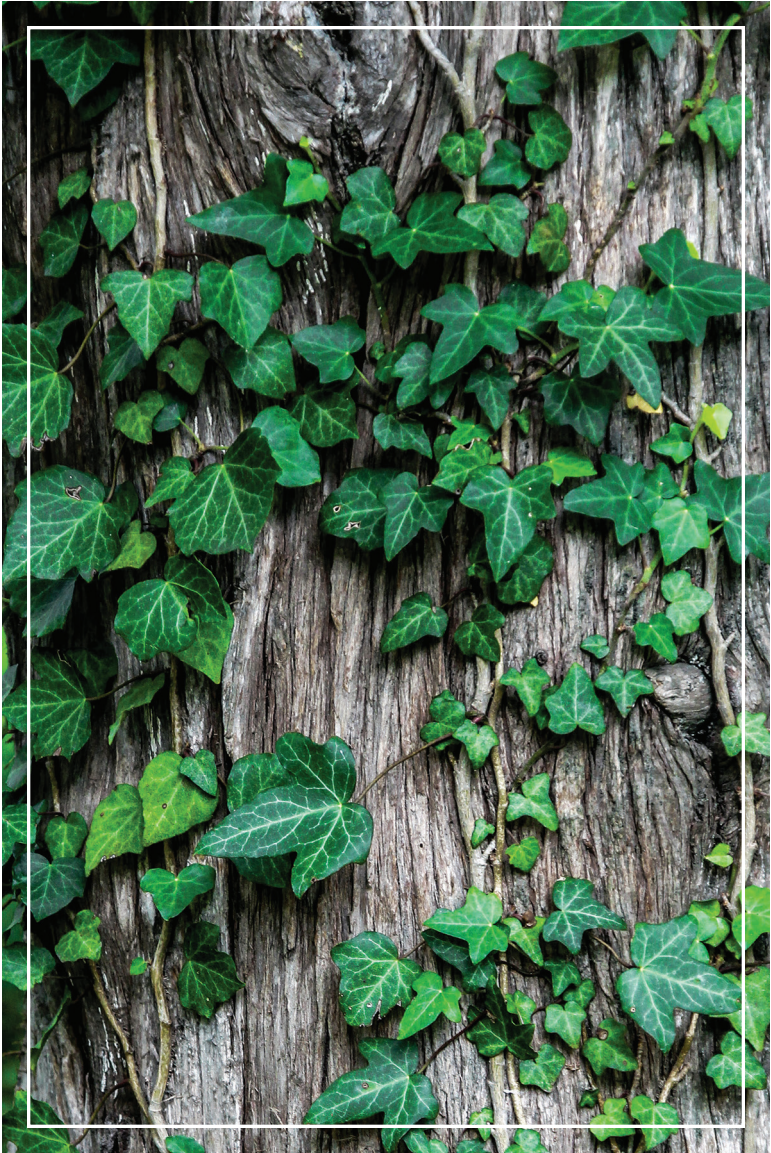
In verses 21 and 22, Paul sends his greetings along with all the brothers who are with him, the rest of God’s people and especially the members of Caesar’s household. What does this say about the work of Paul while imprisoned in Rome?



SMALL GROUP QUESTION

Finally, Paul concludes this letter similarly to many of his letters. In light of what we have been studying, why do you think he leaves the Philippians with “May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit”?

PRAYER - God, all glory and honor and praise be yours forever. Thank you for your grace. Grace that saves, grace that sanctifies, grace that fills my spirit. Amen.



WEEK 5
Colossians 1

“Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation, for through Him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can’t see— such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world. Everything was created through Him and for Him.”

Colossians 1:15-16 NLT

Colossians 1

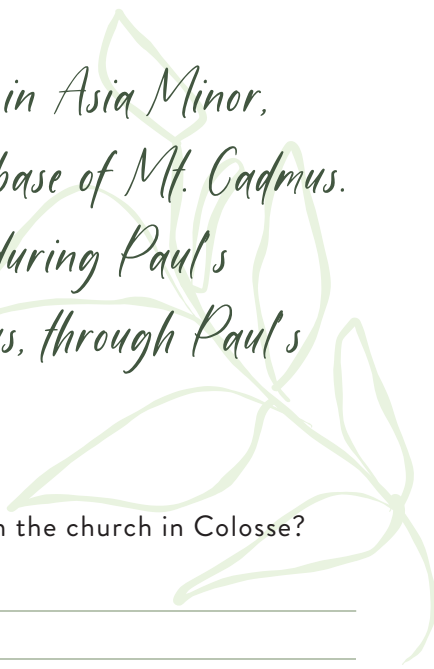
Colossians is a letter from the Apostle Paul to the church in Colosse. Most likely, Paul wrote this letter while he was in a Roman prison, around 60-62 AD. Interestingly, Paul did not start the church in Colosse and many believe he never visited this church. Instead, Epaphras became a Christian in Ephesus and was instructed by Paul, then he traveled home to Colosse to start the church.

We see Paul has great affection for all he knows about the new church in Colosse. Paul wrote this letter to address two concerns within the church. One concern was for a local group (Gnostics) who convinced new believers that though they considered Jesus a higher being, they did not think He was equal with God. The other concern was the Jewish believers who taught new believers that if they observed the Jewish Sabbath, festivals and rules, it would help them earn their salvation.

Paul dispels both concerns by explaining how Christ is over and above all other things. He reveals Christ is supreme over all creation. In fact, because Jesus is God and His nature is perfect, our sins are justified, and through Him, we are reconciled to the Lord. This is a beautiful affirmation of Jesus as the Author and King of Creation, and that He alone makes us right with the Lord.

Read Colossians 1:1-8

Colosse was a Roman city in Asia Minor, located in a valley, at the base of Mt. Cadmus. This city was evangelized during Paul's three-year stay in Ephesus, through Paul's co-worker, Epaphras.



How does Paul refer to the people in the church in Colosse?

What three things does Paul say he is grateful for within the Colossian church?

How is the Good News impacting Colosse and the world?

In what way does this inspire confidence in you today?

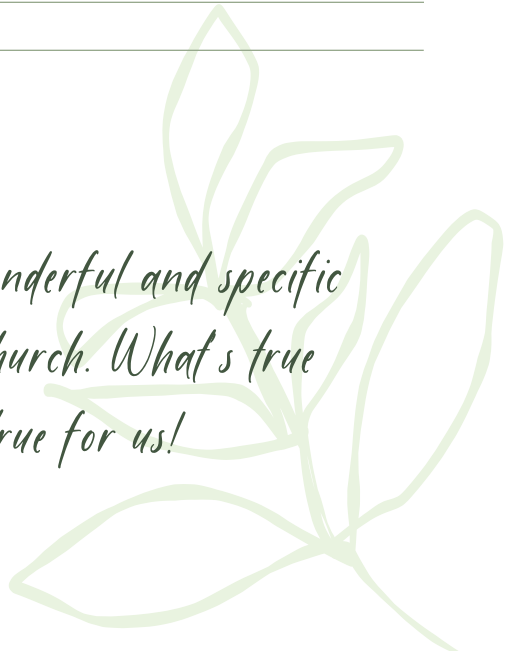
PRAYER - O Lord, when I stop to think about how I learned of your saving grace, I want to thank you for reaching out to me. Will you put someone on my mind who needs to know the Good News and show me a way to love them this week? Amen.

Read Colossians 1:9-14

According to verses 9-12, what does Paul ask the Lord to give the Colossians?

How is Paul's prayer for the church in Colosse a good model for us to pray for each other?

Paul prays a wonderful and specific prayer for the church. What's true for them is also true for us!



SMALL GROUP QUESTION

Read Colossians 1:13-14 together. According to these verses, list four things the Lord has done for us.

SMALL GROUP QUESTION

Does this help you understand how the Lord feels about you? Why or why not?

PRAYER - Heavenly Father, I praise you for taking me from darkness into your kingdom! When I read these verses and write down all that you have done for me, it is overwhelming. Thank you. Amen.

Read Colossians 1:15-20

SMALL GROUP QUESTION

Read Genesis 1:1, John 1:1-3 and Colossians 1:15-17 together.

These passages were written by Moses, John and Paul, respectively. In these passages, we learn specific things about our Heavenly Father, the Triune God; God the Father, God the Son and God the Spirit.

What do these passages tell us about who Jesus is and what He has done for us?

Read Colossians 1:18-20.

How did the Lord make peace with everything in heaven and on earth?


What does this indicate about how the Lord feels about us?

Which one of these verses is most significant for you? Why?

PRAYER - Lord Jesus, I see in your word that you are the Lord God Almighty; I praise you as the One who made all things and holds all things together! Please continue to reveal more truth about who you are and what a difference you make in my life. Amen.

Read Colossians 1:21-23

Our nature is to be obsessed with ourselves, and our culture encourages this. Scripture helps us understand there is a truth greater than us, and we need to be reconciled with that truth.



Read Colossians 1:21 and Ephesians 2:1-3.

According to these verses, when we refuse to follow the Lord and seek our own way, what is our standing before the Lord?

“YET NOW HE HAS RECONCILED YOU TO HIMSELF THROUGH THE DEATH OF CHRIST IN HIS PHYSICAL BODY. AS A RESULT, HE HAS BROUGHT YOU INTO HIS OWN PRESENCE, AND YOU ARE HOLY AND BLAMELESS AS YOU STAND BEFORE HIM WITHOUT A SINGLE FAULT.” COLOSSIANS 1:22 NLT

Read Romans 5:1-2.

In spite of our rebellion, the Lord made a way for us to be made right (reconciled) with Him. How has the Lord reconciled us, and what is the benefit of this for us?

Read Colossians 1:23.

Having been made right with the Lord, what are we to do now? How can we do this on a daily basis?

PRAYER - O LORD, thank you for all you have done for us. Though we turned away from you and became your enemies, through Jesus' death on the cross, you have reconciled us to yourself. Give us the strength to stand firm in the truth that we are now holy, blameless and we stand before you without a single fault. Only you could do this - we love you and praise you today! Amen.

Read Colossians 1:24-29

"In Greek pagan religions, a mystery was a secret teaching reserved for a few spiritual teachers, who had been initiated into an inner circle. Paul uses the word to refer to knowledge that had been 'hidden from the ages and generations,' but was now being revealed by God. The Lord had revealed this mystery to Paul and called him to be a steward of it (Ephesians 3:5). The mystery is that Christ now lives within Gentile believers: Christ in you, the hope of glory." – Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary, Note on Colossians 1:26-27

What does it mean for Christ to be in us?

What is the mystery Paul is revealing to the church in Colosse?

If the Lord has orchestrated things so we will share in His glory, what does that tell you about Him?

What is Paul's desire for the church?

SMALL GROUP QUESTION

After reading Colossians 1 this week, knowing that Paul was responding to false teachers, in what ways has Paul established that Christ is supreme over all things?

PRAYER - O Lord, thank you that you are with me and have included me in your glorious plans for all eternity! I humbly ask for you to include me in some way, as you reveal the Good News to others I come in contact with today. Amen.



WEEK 6
Colossians 2

“He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross. In this way, He disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by His victory over them on the cross.”

Colossians 2:14-15 NLT

Colossians 2

The second chapter of Colossians is a series of warnings issued by Paul to the church at Colosse. False teachers had tried to persuade the church to pursue other ways to be made right with God, from discussing philosophical truths to Jewish ceremonies. Paul addresses the false teachings in this chapter and points the church back to the cross of Jesus Christ, as our only means of being made right with the Lord.

Read Colossians 2:1-7

Colosse, Laodecia and Hierapolis made up a tri-city area. There was a strong mixture of Jewish and pagan people in the area, which contributed to the variety of ideas that were competing with the Colossians' faith.

What does Paul want for the believers in Colosse?

How does Paul describe Christ?

Once we have accepted Christ, how do we continue to follow Him?

PRAYER - LORD, thank you for your assurance of my salvation and relationship with you. Help me to continue to grow closer to you today. As I open up your word this week, will you meet with me through your word and your Spirit? Amen.

Read Colossians 2:8-10

Psalm 23:1 tells us that the Lord is our shepherd and in Him we have all that we need. And in the very next Psalm, David describes the Lord as a conquering warrior.

“WHO IS THE KING OF GLORY? THE LORD, STRONG AND MIGHTY; THE LORD, INVINCIBLE IN BATTLE.” PSALMS 24:8 NLT

Read Colossians 2:8-10 and Romans 1:21-23.

Today we will consider how Christ being over all things offers us victory over the empty but high-minded philosophies of our day, so that we might believe Him, trust Him and rest in Him.

What would you say is the difference between what the world offers and what the Lord offers to us?

SMALL GROUP QUESTION

Read Colossians 2:8-10 together. How does verse 10 affirm the supremacy of Christ?

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

Is it difficult to consider and truly believe that “you are complete through your union with Christ”? Why or why not?

PRAYER - Lord God, help me to trust your victory over sin and death. Help me to fully understand that your victory has secured eternal life for me. Help me to rest in you, to trust that though I am not perfect, you love me and you are with me. Thank you Lord for your unconditional love! Amen.

Read Colossians 2:11-15

As you read these verses, who has done all the work to secure our salvation?

In today's reading, Paul addresses Judaistic Ceremonialism, which is simply attaching special significance to the observance of rituals and holiday ceremonies. In short, Paul is combating the idea that we can earn our salvation.

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

Read Colossians 2:11-15 together.

Often when someone is baptized, a pastor will say, “buried with Christ in baptism, and raised to walk in the newness of life,” which comes directly from verse 12.

How does baptism symbolize our salvation and new relationship with the Lord?

According to verses 13-15, what has Christ done for us?

What is your response to what the Lord has done for you?

PRAYER - Take a minute to write down the things the Lord has done for you, for which you are most thankful. Then, thank him for each thing you wrote down.

Read Colossians 2:16-19

Paul is teaching the Colossians that there really is only one way to be in a right relationship with the Lord, and it is by having faith in what Jesus Christ has done for us. The following excerpt from The Silver Chair, by C. S. Lewis, highlights that freedom, life and hope are only found in Christ.

The delicious rippling noise of the stream was driving her nearly frantic.

"Will you promise not to do anything to me, if I do come?" said Jill.

"I make no promise," said the Lion.

Jill was so thirsty now that, without noticing it, she had come a step nearer.

"Do you eat girls?" she said.

"I have swallowed up girls and boys, women and men, kings and emperors, cities and realms," said the Lion. It didn't say this as if it were boasting, nor as if it were sorry, nor as if it were angry. It just said it.

"I daren't come and drink," said Jill.

"Then you will die of thirst," said the Lion.

"Oh dear!" said Jill, coming another step nearer. "I suppose I must go and look for another stream then."

"There is no other stream," said the Lion.

Read Colossians 2:16-19.

In John 14:6, Jesus tells his disciples that He is the only way to the Father. The church in Colosse was being offered other ideas about how they could have a right relationship with God.

What do you think Paul means in verses 18-19 when he says Jesus is the head of the church and he holds all of us together?

Read 2 Corinthians 3:17 and Galatians 5:1. What is one central characteristic of a life with Christ?

How do angel worship and trusting in our own pious self-denial lead us away from the Lord?

PRAYER - O Lord, you have gone to great lengths to free me from the law of sin, which leads to death. Help me to walk in your freedom, and live by trusting in you alone, for the sake of your kingdom. Amen.

Read Colossians 2:20-23

As you read Colossians 2:20-23, think about religious practices you follow.

Do you think your religious practices are helpful in your pursuit of the Lord? Why or why not?

According to verse 20, how have we been set free in Christ?

How does this freedom make a difference in your daily life?

SMALL GROUP QUESTION

What did you originally think was required to be “right with God?”

SMALL GROUP QUESTION

How has the supremacy and simplicity of his message set you free from what you used to think you needed to do?

PRAYER - I praise you for showing me the way to you, Lord. Help me to trust only in you and to know what it means to live, work and walk in your freedom. I pray for opportunities to share this joy and peace that can only be found in you with others. Amen.



WEEK 7
Colossians 3

“Put on your new nature,
and be renewed as you
learn to know your Creator
and become like Him.”

Colossians 3:10 NLT

Colossians 3

We have seen in Colossians 1-2, that Paul had high hopes for the believers of Colosse. He wanted them to see Christ as the supreme being over all creation. He wanted them to have a knowledge of God's will. He wanted them to be aware of and resist false teaching, including man-made rules that were not of God. He wanted their lives to please God through good work, always striving to know Him better, and drawing upon His strength to have endurance during trials. Most of all, Paul wanted the Colossians to be thankful and joyful in their salvation.

In the second half of his letter, Paul became specific about how to live in Christ. We read that there are behaviors of our old nature that must be put off; just as there are behaviors of our new nature that we must put on. As believers, we live with the tension of having both natures vying for our attention, but we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to choose the characteristics of Christ, and to reject the behaviors of sin. We live with the blessed hope that when Christ returns, the old will be done, and only the new will remain. Praise the Lord!

Read Colossians 3:1-4

From these verses, where is Christ now, and where will He appear in the future?

What do you think it means that your life is hidden with Christ in God?

In Greek, the word "set" indicates a continuous action.

SMALL GROUP QUESTION

How can we daily set our hearts and minds on the realities of heaven?

PRAYER - I praise you Lord, as the One who is seated in honor next to the Father. Thank you that, just as you rose from the dead, you will one day resurrect your Church to share in your glory. Holy Spirit, please show me how to daily maintain a heavenly perspective. Amen.

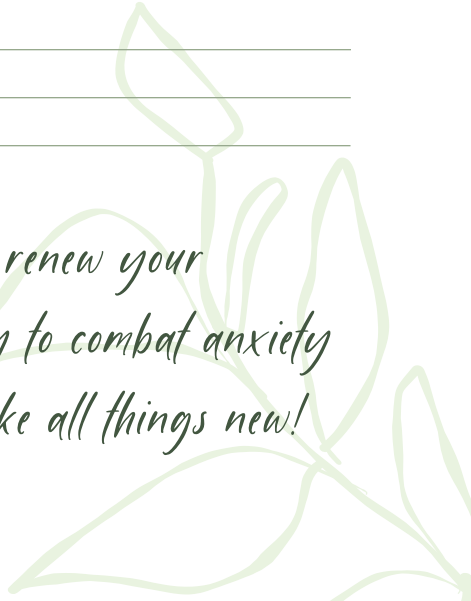
Read Colossians 3:5-11

“SINCE YOU HAVE BEEN RAISED TO NEW LIFE WITH CHRIST... PUT TO DEATH THE SINFUL, EARTHLY THINGS LURKING WITHIN YOU.” COLOSSIANS 3:1,5 NLT

As Christ followers, what activities and characteristics are we to have nothing to do with?

How does God feel about these behaviors?

Asking the Holy Spirit to renew your thoughts is a powerful way to combat anxiety and depression. He can make all things new!



“SEARCH ME, O GOD, AND KNOW MY HEART; TEST ME AND KNOW MY ANXIOUS THOUGHTS. POINT OUT ANYTHING IN ME THAT OFFENDS YOU, AND LEAD ME ALONG THE PATH OF EVERLASTING LIFE.” PSALMS 139:23-24 NLT

“WE TAKE CAPTIVE EVERY THOUGHT TO MAKE IT OBEDIENT TO CHRIST.” 2 CORINTHIANS 10:5 NIV

SMALL GROUP QUESTION

What does it mean to be renewed?

In the New International Version, we read that our “new self is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.” From verse 11, who all can be renewed in the image of God?

PRAYER - I praise you God for your holiness, righteousness, and justice. Thank you Lord that, as your follower, I am hidden from God's anger. Holy Spirit, please help me to get rid of anything in my life that is not honoring to You. Renew my thoughts when I feel anxious or depressed. Amen.

Read Colossians 3:12-15

Since God chose us to be holy people, how should we then live?

“SINCE YOU HAVE HEARD ABOUT JESUS AND HAVE LEARNED THE TRUTH THAT COMES FROM HIM, THROW OFF YOUR OLD SINFUL NATURE AND YOUR FORMER WAY OF LIFE, WHICH IS CORRUPTED BY LUST AND DECEPTION. INSTEAD, LET THE SPIRIT RENEW YOUR THOUGHTS AND ATTITUDES. PUT ON YOUR NEW NATURE, CREATED TO BE LIKE GOD-TRULY RIGHTEOUS AND HOLY.” EPHESIANS 4:21-24 NLT

What was God’s motivation for choosing you to be His child?

Here Paul uses a word picture of being clothed with the characteristics of God.

What clothing are Christ followers to put on?

Why are we to forgive others? What is the coat that holds all of the other characteristics in place?

What is the result of living in the clothing of God?

*"Choose those things that make for peace."
-F.B. Meyer*



PRAYER - I praise you God, as holy, peaceful and loving. Thank you for showing me mercy. This week, Holy Spirit, show me how to treat others well. Amen.

Read Colossians 3:16-17

“AND WHATEVER YOU DO OR SAY, DO IT AS A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE LORD JESUS, GIVING THANKS THROUGH HIM TO GOD THE FATHER.” COLOSSIANS 3:17 NLT

Where should the knowledge of how to share truth or advice with others come from?

What can you learn about God from these two verses?

SMALL GROUP QUESTION

Before you can influence others for Christ, what must happen in your own life?

“BY DAY THE LORD DIRECTS HIS LOVE, AT NIGHT HIS SONG IS WITH ME - A PRAYER TO THE GOD OF MY LIFE.” PSALMS 42:8 NIV

PRAYER - I praise you God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Thank you Lord for the richness of your message and for helping me to understand it. Holy Spirit, please fill my heart with Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs this week. Amen.

Re-read Colossians 3:1-17 & Genesis 1:26-27

The hinge point of this week's study is verse 10, which speaks of: "being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator." NIV



SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

From Genesis, who was created in God's image?

What do you think this means?

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

From Colossians, who is being renewed in God's image?

What do you think this means?

SMALL GROUP QUESTION

What do you think is the difference between the persons described before verse 10 and those that are described after?

PRAYER - I praise you God as Creator of heaven and earth. Thank you for making mankind in your image. Holy Spirit, please show me how to live as Christ's representative this week. Amen.



WEEK 8
Colossians 4

“Devote yourselves to prayer with an alert mind and a thankful heart.

Pray for us too, that God will give us many opportunities to speak about His mysterious plan concerning Christ. That is why I am here in chains.”

Colossians 4:2-3 NLT

Colossians 4

In Paul's day, women, children and slaves were all expected to submit to the head of the household unconditionally. Men on the other hand, would look for obedience from the members of their households without having to consider their opinions, feelings or needs. Paul had the responsibility to speak to the fact that in Christ all believers are equal, but we are still to follow Christ's example in submission. Christ, who is supreme over all creation, willingly submitted to His Father. Christians are to willingly submit to Christ and each other. Paul was not trying to overturn the social order of his day, nor did he condone or condemn slavery. His purpose was to explain that the motive for everyone to submit should ultimately be to please the Lord.

Read Colossians 3:18-21 & Ephesians 5:21-6:4

To submit is a military term which means to voluntarily accept the authority of another. To submit does not mean the person is under another's absolute control, nor does it equal blind obedience. It also does not diminish the worth of the one in submission. Mutual submission involves putting our own desires second to the needs of others.

What example of submission does Paul give to wives in the Ephesians passage?

How does this example help explain a wife's role?

The Ephesians passage emphasizes the duty of the one in authority, again with the example being Christ. Christ was a servant-leader who sacrificially cared for others.

From these verses, how are husbands to love and lead their wives? How are fathers to love and lead their children?

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

Do you think that submitting to Christ can help you submit to others? Do you think that submitting to others can help you submit to Christ?

PRAYER - I praise you Lord as the ultimate authority of all creation. Thank you for your example of servant-leadership. Holy Spirit, help me to submit to those in authority when called for, and to sacrificially love and serve those who are entrusted into my care. Amen.

Read Colossians 3:22-4:1

As Christians, slaves and masters were equal in the eyes of the Lord, but both still had roles to play, as do employees and employers today.

From these verses, how were slaves to treat their masters?
What was to be their motivation?

How were masters to treat their slaves? What was to be their motivation?

SMALL GROUP QUESTION

How could these verses encourage you today in your work environment?



PRAYER - I praise you God as the Master of all. Thank you that all people are equally loved in your sight. Holy Spirit, help me to do my work with integrity, and to be ever mindful that I am working for Christ. Amen.

Read Colossians 4:2-6

The Bible often talks about persisting in prayer. It is an act of faith to continue to pray when it seems that God is not answering. His timing and ways are different than ours (Isaiah 55:8-9). We also know that it pleases God if we have an attitude of thankfulness when we pray (Philippians 4:6). So we are to “devote ourselves to prayer, with thanksgiving,” and then be on the lookout for His answers.

What did Paul ask his readers to pray for?

“MY MESSAGE AND MY PREACHING WERE VERY PLAIN. RATHER THAN USING CLEVER AND PERSUASIVE SPEECHES, I RELIED ONLY ON THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. I DID THIS SO YOU WOULD TRUST NOT IN HUMAN WISDOM, BUT IN THE POWER OF GOD.”

1 CORINTHIANS 2:4-5 NLT

How did Paul encourage his readers to live among unbelievers?

SMALL GROUP QUESTION

What should our attitude be when sharing our faith with others?



PRAYER - I praise you, God, as the One who knows the end from the beginning, in every situation. I trust that You always answer my prayers, even when I have not seen your answers yet. Holy Spirit, help me make the most of every opportunity to share my faith. Help me to share it with graciousness and vitality, so that everyone I come in contact with will get a taste of what it's like to follow the Lord. Amen.

Read Colossians 4:7-15

Paul was not alone during his imprisonment in Rome. The Lord had blessed him with wonderful companions, who were an encouragement to him.

Here is a thumbnail sketch of each one:

Tychicus was Paul's longtime companion from Asia. He would be the one to take this letter to Colosse.

Onesimus was a runaway slave, a convert to Christianity, and the subject of the book of Philemon. He probably accompanied Tychicus to Colosse, bringing his personal letter from Paul to his ex-master.

Aristarchus was a Jew from Thessalonica, who had been with Paul since the riot in Ephesus.

Mark, the cousin of Barnabas, had deserted Paul on the first missionary journey, but had since reconciled, and was with Paul in Rome. Mark also wrote the Gospel of Mark.

Justus was a fellow Jew and co-worker with Paul.

Epaphras was a convert of Paul who founded the church in Colosse. He brought the report of the Colossians' faith which prompted Paul to write this letter.

Luke was the beloved physician and longtime companion of Paul. He wrote the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts.

Demas was another fellow Jew with Paul in Rome, who would later desert Paul "because he loved this world."

Archippus (vs. 17) is mentioned in Philemon 2, and is thought to either be a Roman soldier or Philemon's son.

How does Paul describe Tychicus and Onesimus? What were they to do in Colosse?

SMALL GROUP QUESTION

Epaphras was clearly a prayer warrior. For whom and what did he pray?

For whom could you pray Epaphras' prayer this week?

In Paul's day, Christians met in homes. Church buildings were not built until the 3rd century.

PRAYER - Let's conclude today with Paul's words from 2 Corinthians 2:14-16. "But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ's triumphal procession and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing...an aroma that brings life." Amen.

Read Colossians 4:16-18

What was Paul's message to Archippus?

As Christians we have a lifelong mission to serve the Lord. There is no retirement plan from ministry, and we can trust that the Lord will continue to give us the right work for the right time in our lives.

Consider what your mission is at this point in your life. Are you faithfully discharging your mission, or are you side-tracked, tired, discouraged or convinced someone else should take over?

Will you pray this week that the Holy Spirit will reveal to you what you are to be doing in your realm of influence, and how you are to go about it?

PRAYER - I praise you God as the author and perfecter of my faith. Thank you for the books of Philippians and Colossians, and their impact on my life. Holy Spirit, please continue to remind me of the lessons I have learned during this study. I pray that my life will be a pleasant aroma of the knowledge of Christ, everywhere I go. Amen.

