

Tapes For Growing Christians 

Study Guide for
COLOSSIANS

Growing Christians Ministries
Box 5757, River Forest, IL 60305
growingchristians.org

Lesson 1

The Salutation of Paul's Letter to the Church at Colosse Colossians 1:1-2

background notes

1.

2.

3.

doctrinal point

1. All Christians are “saints” and “brethren.”

practical application

Let's remember our two spheres of life.

questions

1. Who authored the book of Colossians, and why was he called an apostle?

2. Who was this person prior to his apostleship? How did he change?

3. Name the four prison epistles. Why are they called prison epistles?

4. Where did the Colossian church meet?

5. Who reported to Paul about the state of the church at Colosse?

6. What was the good news? What was the bad news?

7. What was the primary purpose of the letter to the Colossians?

answers

1. Paul; he was made an apostle by the sovereign will of God.

2. He was Saul, a persecutor of Christians, a prominent Pharisee. He became Paul, a willing bond-slave of Jesus Christ. See Acts 9.1-6.

3. Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. They were written during Paul's first Roman imprisonment.

4. In Philemon's house.

5. Epaphras

6. The good news: the church was growing in numbers, in faith and in love. The bad news: there was false teaching about Christ in Colosse.

7. To keep the Colossians believers from being taken in by false teaching. To help the church mature and be steadfast in the faith.

discuss / consider

1. What is a saint? Search the Scriptures for definitions and examples. What does it mean to be a faithful brother?

2. Name the two spheres of the brethren. What happens when one sphere is emphasized disproportionately? If the physical sphere is overemphasized, there is a tendency to become worldly; if the spiritual sphere is overemphasized, there is a tendency to be unaware or uncaring of earthly responsibilities.

challenge

Consider your claim to sainthood, both in position and in practice. Consider also the balance of spheres in your life, listing examples in each sphere.

memorize

"To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ." Colossians 1:2

Lesson 2

Paul's Letter to the Church at Colosse—Section of Thanksgiving Colossians 1:3-8

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal point

1. The gospel is good news.
 - a. Because it is hope
 - b. Because it is true
 - c. Because it is universal
 - d. Because it is productive
 - e. Because it is the grace of God

practical application

1. We should have busy prayer lives.
2. We should love all the saints.

questions

1. Name three things for which Paul was thankful, according to this letter.
2. List five reasons the gospel is good news.
3. The gospel is limited. True or False? Explain.
4. When is it appropriate to pray?
5. How are you to love certain unlovable, irritable Christians?

answers

1.
 - a. the Colossian believers
 - b. the gospel
 - c. Epaphras, a dear, beloved, faithful servant
2. Because it is
 - a. hope
 - b. true
 - c. universal
 - d. productive
 - e. the grace of God.
3. False. It is universal, available to all who will believe.
4. Anytime, anywhere.
5. Love with agape love, God's love.

discuss / consider

1. When we become busy in the Lord's work, we can be excused from praying (God understands our time and work pressures). T/F? Discuss.
2. Discuss examples of the gospel bearing fruit.

challenge

Pray earnestly this week for a Christian who you do not naturally like. Pray for yourself as to how you can relate to him/her.

memorize

"We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you." Colossians 1:3

Lesson 3

Paul Prays for Spiritual Growth of the Colossian Believers Colossians 1:9-10

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal points

1. God wants His children to be spiritually sensitive.
2. God wants His children to have a worthy walk.

practical application

1. Let's pray like Paul would pray for our family and friends.
2. Let's walk as if we're being watched.

questions

1. What news did Epaphras bring to Paul about the city and the church in Colosse?
2. According to this letter, what does God want from His children?
3. What does it mean to be spiritually sensitive?
4. What does it mean to have a worthy walk?
5. How can a person know God?
6. How did Paul pray for his friends?

answers

1. There was false teaching in Colosse, but it had not yet penetrated the church. The church was growing in numbers, in faith and in love.
2. To be spiritually sensitive and to have a worthy walk.
3. It is a knowledge of God's will (what God wants) and spiritual insight (why God wants it).
4. It is a way of life, both in direction and progress, based on spiritual sensitivity.
5. By learning about Him through His word, and by obedience to the word.
6. He prayed for their salvation, spiritual sensitivity and a worthy walk (Colossians 1.9-14)

discuss / consider

1. Review David's prayer for his son, Solomon, in 1 Chronicles 29:19.
2. A good test of a walk that pleases God is how a person spends his time when he is alone. How are you guarding your walk, both when you are alone and before others? Guard your thoughts, recalling 2 Corinthians 10:5.
3. Do you believe that God watches all that you do? Do you believe that God knows all your thoughts? How does your belief affect your life?

challenge

Following the two prayer examples, Paul's and David's, pray diligently for your family and friends. Think through some of the requests you could make on their behalf. You might want to jot them down on a piece of paper.

memorize

"...we do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God." Colossians 1:9-10

Lesson 4

Paul Prays for Continued Growth of the Colossian Believers Colossians 1:11-14

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal points

1. God wants His children to be strengthened with promised power.
2. God wants His children to have a thankful temperament.

practical application

1. Let's take advantage of what's available to us.
2. Let's take stock of what we've got.

questions

1. What two things did Paul do to keep the Colossian believers from being vulnerable to false teaching?
2. What were Paul's two primary requests for them?
3. To whom is God's power available?
4. What are the results of this power?
5. How is it possible for God's children to have a thankful temperament? List five reasons from this portion of Scripture.

answers

1. He prayed for them and he wrote to them.
2. He prayed for spiritual sensitivity and a worthy walk for the believers. He prayed also for strengthening by God's power, and that they would have a thankful temperament.
3. God's enabling power is promised and available to all of His children.
4. Patience and long-suffering
5. Because of our
 - a) inheritance
 - b) deliverance
 - c) transfer into the kingdom of His Son from the domain of Satan's darkness
 - d) redemption
 - e) forgiveness of sin

discuss / consider

1. Discuss how you can keep from being vulnerable to false teaching.
2. Discuss the joys of having a thankful heart. When you begin to grumble about something, even if only to yourself, stop and count your blessings. Thank God for all that He is doing for you right now. Remember, God's grace is seen in those who have thankful hearts.

challenge

When you begin to do things in your own strength, stop and avail yourself of the power of God. As a believer, God has promised this to you. Remember, it is His enabling power.

memorize

"...strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light." Colossians 1:11-12

Lesson 5

The Exaltation of Jesus Christ—His Person, His Work, and His Position Colossians 1:15-17

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal points

1. The Lord Jesus Christ is the firstborn over everything.
2. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Creator of everything
3. The Lord Jesus Christ is the sustainer of everything.

practical application

1. Are we fulfilling the purpose for which we were created?

questions

1. What was the theme of Paul's letter to the Colossians?
2. What were the Gnostics teaching about the person and work of Christ?
3. If God created all things, how could Jesus Christ have created all things?
4. Were some angels created evil?
5. How is the universe held together?
6. For what purpose were we created? To whom are we responsible (accountable)?

answers

1. The supremacy and all- sufficiency of Christ.
2. They taught that Christ was not fully God, not fully supreme, and not all-sufficient.
3. Because Jesus Christ is fully God; He is One with the Father
4. No. They became evil with the fall of Satan.
5. Jesus Christ is the sustainer of everything (Colossians 1:17).
6. To bring glory to God's name.

discuss / consider

1. Explain the term, "firstborn," in relation to Christ.
2. What does it mean to bring glory to the name of God?
3. Review Paul's primary message to the Colossian church concerning the person and work of Jesus Christ. Get a good view of the pre-eminence of Christ.

challenge

Consider the purpose for which you were created, and to whom you are responsible and accountable. Are you fulfilling this purpose? Are you bringing glory to the name of the Lord?

memorize

"He is the image of the invisible God." Colossians 1:15

"All things were created through Him and for Him." Colossians 1:16

"And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist." Colossians 1:17

Lesson 6

**Jesus Christ, the Head and Beginning of the Church
Colossians 1:18-19**

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal points

1. The Lord Jesus Christ is head of the Church.
2. The Lord Jesus Christ is the beginning of the Church.
3. The Lord Jesus Christ is the firstborn from the dead.
4. The Lord Jesus Christ is fully God.

practical application

1. Does Christ have pre-eminence in all my things?

questions

1. What is the great theme of Colossians?
2. To what false teaching were the first century Colossian believers exposed?
3. Who is the head of the Church? What does this mean practically?
4. Is our Lord in His resurrected body today? When will believers have new bodies?
5. Which two verses in Colossians declare that Jesus is fully God?

answers

1. The supremacy and all-sufficiency of Christ
2. The teaching that held Christ was less than God, and that Christ was not supreme or all-sufficient.
3. Christ, as head of the Church, has power, authority and control. The head of the Church is Christ, not some human leader. Local church leaders should look directly to Christ for their authority and direction. See Ephesians 1:22-23.
4. Yes. At the Rapture
5. Colossians 1:19 and 2:9

discuss \ consider

1. Discuss the raising of Lazarus and Jairus' daughter. Were they resurrected before Jesus? Discuss the terms, "raised from the dead," and "resurrected from the dead."
2. Discuss what happened to the saints in Matthew 27:52-53.

challenge

"Christ has pre-eminence in all things" Colossians 1:18. Each day as you awake, determine to make Christ pre-eminent in all things in your life. At the close of the day, recount what you did during the day that gave Him the pre-eminence. Were there areas in which you failed to make Christ number one? How could you have made Him supreme in those areas?

memorize

"He is the head of the body, the church." Colossians 1:18

"For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell." Colossians 1:19

Lesson 7

The Great Work of Reconciliation that Jesus Accomplished by His Death on the Cross Colossians 1:20-23

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal points

1. The Lord Jesus Christ has reconciled all things to Himself.
2. The Lord Jesus Christ has reconciled some people to Himself.
 - a) Not all people are reconciled.
 - b) People are alienated with bad attitudes and bad actions.
 - c) The reconciliation of people has already taken place.
 - d) Our reconciliation was one way.
 - e) The ultimate purpose of our reconciliation is perfection.

practical application

1. Let's make sure we are reconciled.

questions

1. What is set forth in Colossians 1:15-22?
2. Define the word, "reconcile."
3. What is the basis of Christ's reconciliatory work - His life or His death?
4. Were all the problems of sin settled on the cross?
5. Are all things reconciled by the cross? Are all people reconciled by the cross? What is the ultimate purpose of reconciliation?
6. Are people reconciled now, or only in the future?

answers

1. The wonder of Christ's Person, the magnitude of His work, and the pre-eminence of His position.
2. To restore to a right relationship; to make peace where there was a separation, alienation or enmity.
3. His death on the cross (Colossians 1:20,22)
4. Yes.
5. Yes. No. The work of Christ is sufficient for all, but is effective only for those who believe. The ultimate purpose of our reconciliation is perfection (Colossians 1:22).
6. Reconciliation has already taken place (Colossians 1:21). We are in a harmonious relationship with Christ from the moment of salvation.

discuss / consider

1. Can you lose your salvation? Support your answer with Scripture.
2. What is the ultimate purpose of reconciliation? How does this affect the way that you live?

challenge

Be sure that you are reconciled to God by Christ's work on the cross. Are you experiencing the harmony of reconciliation?

memorize

"And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled." Colossians 1:21

Lesson 8

Three Aspects of Paul's Service to Christ Colossians 1:24-29

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal points

1. There are two categories to the sufferings of Christ.
2. The Church as the body of Christ is a glorious mystery.
3. The aim of Christian service is Christian maturity.

practical application

1. Let's realize that Christ is at work in us.
2. Let's try to rejoice in our sufferings for Christ.

questions/discussion

1. What is the great theme of Colossians?
2. List the three aspects of Paul's service to Christ.
3. How does Paul's service relate to the theme of Colossians?
4. What is a mystery in the Bible?
5. How are the words "every" and "all" significant in Colossians 1:28?
6. Do we always see Christ at work in us?
7. What should be our response to suffering for Christ?

answers

1. The supremacy and all-sufficiency of Christ
2. His sufferings on behalf of Christ, his stewardship of the mystery of Christ, and his striving to present every person complete in Christ.
3. He is showing the great theme of Colossians being worked out in his own life.
4. A mystery is a truth concealed in the Old Testament and revealed in the New Testament.
5. The Gnostics taught that only a select elite could know certain secret truth. On the contrary, Paul is teaching that every Christian can become complete, perfect, and mature in Christ.
6. Not necessarily. Sometimes we see the outward signs of inward working. The important thing to remember is that Christ is at work in us, as He promised.
7. We can rejoice because we know that suffering for Christ is in the line of duty when we serve the Lord. Let's not cry about how hard it is to be a Christian, but let's count it for joy. It is a privilege to serve Christ.

discuss / consider

1. Review the mystery, "Christ in you, the hope of glory." The Church as the body of Christ was not known in the Old Testament. Jews and Gentiles brought together as one body with Christ as the head was a new concept hidden before. Aren't you thankful that Christ assigned Paul to make this mystery known?
2. Review the three aspects of Paul's service to Christ. Measure your service in these terms.

challenge

1. Do you recognize that Christ is at work in you mightily? Do not be discouraged in your Christian service. Christ will not only give you direction in your ministry, He will give you the strength to do it. Picture a sign declaring "Christ at Work"!

memorize

"... God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." Colossians 1:27

Lesson 9

The Importance that Paul Placed on Prayer for the Colossian Believers Colossians 2:1-3

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal points

1. The nature of prayer is more than serene repose.
2. The scope of prayer is more than self interest.
3. The content of prayer is more than secular concerns.

practical application

1. All that you ever need is found in Christ.
2. Tell people that you're praying for them.

questions

1. What did Paul mean when he wrote about the great conflict he was in for the believers?
2. Which cities were in the tri-city area for which Paul was praying? Had he met all of these believers personally?
3. List the three aspects of prayer that can be gleaned from this portion of Scripture.
4. Describe the conflict in prayer concerning
 - a. the flesh
 - b. the spiritual battle with the forces of evil
5. Paul prayed about the spiritual needs of the churches. What were these needs, specifically?

answers

1. It means that Paul was in the conflict of prayer. He was concerned that the Colossian believers would be taken in by false teachings in the area.

2. Laodicea, Hierapolis and Colosse. No, but he prayed for them being aware of their needs.

3.

a) the nature of prayer

b) the scope of prayer

c) the content of prayer

4.

a) the flesh - we tend to be lazy and prayer is work

b) spiritual battle - we wrestle against the forces of evil; it is spiritual warfare

5. That their hearts might be comforted and knit in love. He prayed that they would mature and be able to stand against false teachings.

discuss / consider

1. Is there value in telling others that you are praying for them?

2. *"In Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."* Colossians 2:3. Do you really believe this? How does your life reflect this belief?

3. If you have not sensed a conflict in your prayer life, consider the reasons. Determine to be more serious in this battle, realizing that true prayer is a conflict (check out the two aspects here -- your casualness or perseverance in prayer, and the struggle against spiritual forces of evil).

challenge

Look at your prayer life for others relative to its nature, scope and content. It might help to think of a specific person, and then to jot down your prayer requests for him/her. How can your prayers better fit the biblical pattern of prayer? Are you in the habit of praying primarily for secular needs?

memorize

"In Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Colossians 2:3

Lesson 10

Paul Warns and Instructs Against False Teaching Colossians 2:4-7

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal points

1. False teaching can be very persuasive.
2. There is protection against false teaching.

practical application

1. Let's write letters of encouragement to students away at college.
2. Let's practice the Lordship of Christ.

questions

1. What was the false teaching in the Colosse area in the first century?
2. Describe what is meant by the dualistic concept. According to dualistic teaching, how could a person be saved?
3. Describe another Gnostic teaching, one that resulted in self-indulgence.
4. State two means of protection against false teaching.
5. How does being thankful help us to be less vulnerable to false teaching?

answers

1. A mixture of Judaism and what later became known as Gnosticism. The deity of Christ was denied.
2. The spirit was good and matter was evil. Salvation (deliverance from the material world) was accomplished by moving up the “emanation” ladder. A person had to become a part of the elite esoteric knowledge of the Gnostic.
3. Some Gnostics said that since the body is evil, you can indulge it and do whatever you want, because it’s only the spirit that counts.
4. Encouragement and establishment in the faith
5. When we are discouraged, we are particularly vulnerable; therefore, being thankful helps us realize what we have in Christ.

discuss / consider

1. How could you help a young person away from home to be steadfast in the faith?
2. How would you refute these false teachings?
 - a. “There is no hell, a good God would not send people to hell.”
 - b. “There are many roads to God, especially if you are sincere.”
 - c. “Christians should be wealthy in this world’s goods. After all, we are children of the King.”

challenge

Pause often to thank God for salvation and the true teachings of the faith. Never take salvation or biblical teachings lightly.

memorize

“As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.” Colossians 2:6-7

Lesson 11

Paul Warns the Colossian Christians Not to be Taken in by a Philosophy, or Worldview, that is Not Christ-Centered Colossians 2:8-10

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal points

1. Christ is supreme and all-sufficient.
2. Worldviews that are not Christ-centered are false.
 - a. Because they are empty
 - b. Because they are man-made
 - c. Because they are deceptive
 - d. Because they are basic

practical application

Don't be kidnapped by philosophies which are not Christ-centered.

questions

1. What was the chief error in the false teaching in the first century in Colosse?
2. State verses from this passage that clearly show the supremacy of Christ and the all-sufficiency of Christ. What needs to be added?
3. Define "philosophy."
4. We all have a set of pre-suppositions, a basic philosophy, a grid. How do they affect the way that we think and the way that we live?
5. Paul wrote about world-views that are not Christ-centered. He stated that they were empty, deceptive, man-made, and basic. Give specific illustrations in each of these three areas.

answers

1. It lowered the Person and work of Christ.
2. Colossians 2:9-10. Nothing needs to be added. It couldn't be more plainly stated. Jesus is fully God, and in Him dwells all the fullness of God. He is the head of all principalities and power. All authority is given unto Him in heaven and in earth (Matthew 28:18).
3. Philosophy is a love of wisdom. It is how you put your presuppositions together, the grid through which you view all things.
4. All incoming data is filtered and interpreted through your basic philosophy, a set of presuppositions.
5.
 - a. empty—humanism
 - b. deceptive - New Age
 - c. man-made evolution
 - d. basic - Naturalism

discuss / consider

1. How did the example of the jigsaw puzzle illustrate a non-Christian worldview and a Christ-centered view?
2. How could you keep from being a captive to a non-Christian worldview? Have you ever been taken in by a non-Christian world philosophy? If so, how did you return to the truth of the Scriptures?

challenge

Meditate on the supremacy of Christ. How is He supreme in your life? Meditate on the all-sufficiency of Christ. What does this mean to you personally?

memorize

"Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit." Colossians 2:8

"For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." Colossians 2:9

Lesson 12

Paul Warns Against the Dangers of Religious Legalism Colossians 2:11-17

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal point

1. Legalism is a distortion of biblical Christianity.
 - a. Legalism forgets our position in Christ.
 - b. Legalism forgets that the Law ended in Christ.
 - c. Legalism forgets that the enemy was conquered in Christ.

practical application

Let's not get hung up with legalism.

questions

1. Judaism put an emphasis on Old Testament laws. What happens when this emphasis is mixed with Christianity?
2. Why does legalism look so good?
3. What is the worst form of legalism?
4. How does Paul argue against legalism?
5. What happens when we keep a list of "don'ts"?
6. What does Romans 14 tell us about legalistic judgment of others?

answers

1. The emphasis on laws was a form of legalism, and legalism distorts Christianity.
2. Because the legalists seem to be very religious.
3. Legalism that says salvation comes by keeping the rules.
4. He argues that legalism forgets our position in Christ, that the law ended with Christ, and that the enemy was conquered by Christ.
5. Any form of running your life by a list of don'ts rather than by a burning love for Christ is legalism.
6. Do not judge other Christians in non-moral areas.

discuss / consider

1. Review the argument against legalism, and take it to heart.
2. Beware of judging others by your spiritual lists. Do you find yourself doing this? Do you sometimes feel that you are being judged by others?
3. Are you sure of your position in Christ? What is it? Could you explain it to someone?

challenge

Are you under the law, or in love with Christ? Do you ever use your liberty in Christ for self-indulgence?

memorize

"...you, being dead in your trespasses...He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses." Colossians 2:

Lesson 13

**Paul Warns Against the Dangers of Mysticism and Asceticism
Colossians 2:18-23**

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal points

1. Mysticism is not Christ-centered, but self-centered.
2. Asceticism is not taught in the Bible.

practical application

1. Let's be careful about spiritual experiences.
2. Don't think that you can become more spiritual through asceticism.

questions

1. What was Paul's concern for the Colossian Christians? Is this a concern today?
2. Define "mysticism." How did the Gnostics set forth this belief?
3. Should Christians be devoid of spiritual experiences? What are the dangers of spiritual experiences?
4. Who is the Head of the body (the church)?
5. Explain Colossians 2:21.
6. Define "asceticism." What is the inherent danger in asceticism? What is the biblical response to asceticism?

answers

1. He was concerned that the elements of false teaching would make their way into the truth, and the Colossians would end up with a distorted faith. Yes, it is for concern today.
2. Mysticism is the belief that direct knowledge of God, spiritual truth, and/or reality can be obtained through subjective experiences. The Gnostics encouraged the worship of angels.
3. No, experience has its place in Christianity. The danger is to want these feelings all of the time, so you begin to focus on spiritual experiences like visions and the dramatic spiritual gifts. As such, you depend less on the word of God and more on feelings.
4. Jesus Christ. He is the head; believers are the body (the church).
5. We died with Christ to everything that has to do with the flesh.
6. Asceticism is the belief that salvation and/or sanctification comes through severe treatment of the body. It is a wrong idea of sanctification or becoming more spiritual. The biblical answer is to discipline oneself, but not according to asceticism. We do not keep our body under control by our own will power.

discuss / consider

1. Review the definitions and recount the dangers of mysticism and asceticism. Discuss where these philosophies are around today in different forms.
2. Discuss the biblical principles for keeping fleshly indulgences in check. Remember that the purpose of keeping your body under control is not to merit salvation. So why is it important?

challenge

Maintain a close relationship with Christ to ward off false beliefs. Do you have a regularly scheduled time for serious Bible study?

memorize

"...if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations?" Colossians 2:20

Lesson 14

**Victory Over Sin
Colossians 3:1-5**

background notes

1.

2.

3.

doctrinal point

1. The biblical method of victory over sin is the RAM method.

R - Realize your position in Christ

A - Aspire to the things of heaven

M - Mortify your members on earth

practical application

Memorize and practice Romans 6:11 every day.

questions

1. Briefly outline the structure of the Book of Colossians.
2. What is the RAM method of victory over sin?
3. What is our spiritual position in Christ? Support with Scripture.
4. Do Christians sin? Support your answer with Scripture.

5. Can we overcome sin by our own will power?

answers

1. Chapter 1 and 2 - Doctrinal; Chapters 3 and 4 D Practical

2.

R - realize your position in Christ

A - aspire to the things of heaven

M - mortify your members on earth

3. We are raised with Christ (Colossians 3.1-3), and this is the way God sees us. We are dead to sin and alive to Christ.

4. Yes. 1 John 1.8-10

5. No. That would be like trying to pull ourselves up by our own boot straps. We must rely on God's power.

discuss / consider

1. Review the RAM method for victory over sin. Discuss how you can apply this to your life.

2. Be sure that you know your position in Christ before God. Does this help in your daily living for Christ?

challenge

Memorize Romans 6:1-2. Think of a specific time you failed to have victory over sin in your life. If you have been trying to overcome it by your own will power, turn it over to Christ, and let Him deal with it.

memorize

"Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth." Colossians 3:2

"Your life is hidden with Christ in God." Colossians 3:3

"Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth." Colossians 3:5

Lesson 15

**Victory Over Sin: Priorities and Goals
Colossians 3:1-5**

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal point

1. The biblical method of victory over sin is the RAM method.

R - realize your position in Christ

A - aspire to the things of heaven

M - mortify your members on earth

practical application

Get more involved in Christian service.

questions

1. Basically, Gnostic thought said, "You can do whatever you want with your body; only two things matter." What were these two things?
2. List sins of the body to be overcome.
3. The biblical method of victory over sin is the RAM method. List the three steps.
4. Can mere humans have divine life?
5. What does it mean to aspire to something?
6. How do you die to self?

answers

1. The soul and the spirit
2. Colossians 3:5: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.
- 3.

R - realize your position in Christ

A - aspire to the things of heaven

M - mortify your members on earth

4. Yes, by recalling your position in Christ - believers are forgiven sinners. Realize that your debt has been paid. See 2 Peter 1:3-4.

5. To seek something high and great; it has to do with the priorities in life, aligning them with your position in Christ. We are to think, as well as to be what we are.

6. By ruthlessly rejecting all habits and practices which are known to be wrong.

See Matthew 5:29-30. This should affect all that we do.

discuss / consider

1. Refer to 2 Corinthians 10:5. How can you bring your thoughts into obedience to Christ?
2. Are you still trying to overcome sin in your life by your own will power? Does it work? Consciously seek things above. What are things above?

challenge

Review your priorities and goals in life. Align them with your position in Christ. How involved are you in Christian service? Is this sufficient to keep you from sin?

memorize

"If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above." Colossians 3:1

"When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory." Colossians 3:4

Lesson 16

**The Christ Life—Put Off the Old; Put on the New
Colossians 3:5-10**

background notes

1.

2.

3.

doctrinal point

1. We are to put off the old man and put on the new man.

practical application

Let's take off the old man hand-me-down clothes.

questions

1. Which verses in this passage describe the Colossian Christians before they came to Christ?

2. Why is covetousness called idolatry?

3. What is meant by the old man? What is meant by the new man?

4. What is the old nature? What is the new nature?

5. What do Romans 8:4 and Galatians 5:16 tell us about the way we should walk?

6. What is malice?

answers

1. Colossians 3:5-7
2. Because something other than God has first place in your life.
3. The old man is all that we were apart from Christ before we were saved, when we were under the wrath of God. The new man is all that we have become in Christ - the change, a new life, empowered by the indwelling Holy Spirit. We have been forgiven.
4. The old nature is the sinful nature (that, unfortunately, we have with us still); the flesh. It is characterized by the old man. The new nature is the divine nature that characterizes the Christian, having the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.
5. They tell us about the responsibility we have to walk after the spirit and not the flesh.
6. The attitude of wanting to harm another person (even through gossip).

discuss / consider

1. Are you still hanging on to some of your old man and old nature ways? How can you rid yourself of the old man hand-me-down clothes?
2. The concepts of old/new man and old/new nature frequently appear in God's Word. Read Romans 8:4 and Galatians 5:16. Put your name into these verses. Check out Ephesians 4:20-24. Also put your name in Colossians 3:10.

challenge

Be sure that Christ is supreme, number one in your life. Is there anything that verges on idolatry in your life, taking Christ's place? If so, do something about it.

memorize

"...put off the old man with his deeds...and put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him." Colossians 3:10

Lesson 17

**Relating to Fellow Believers in Unity
Colossians 3:9-11**

background notes

1.

2.

3.

doctrinal point

1. We must relate to fellow believers.

practical application

This coming year reach out across the barriers we've mentioned to establish some new relationships in the Lord.

questions

1. Relative to the Graeco-Roman culture, who were the barbarians and the Scythians?

2. What is the theme of Colossians?

3. How are we to relate to fellow believers? Describe, or diagram using concentric circles.

4. What kind of barrier does each of the following represent?

a. Greek or Jew

b. circumcised or uncircumcised

c. barbarian or Scythian

d. bond or free

answers

1. Both were foreign to the Graeco-Roman culture; they were uncultured, and different from the Graeco-Roman economic-social bracket. The worst of the barbarians were wild, nomadic, and savage. Now some were becoming Christians, and a part of the church at Colosse, so they were to be accepted as brothers and sisters.
2. The supremacy and all-sufficiency of Christ.
3. We must relate with unity to overcome the barriers.

Outside circle: relating to non-believers

Middle circle: relating to fellow believers

Inner circle: victory over sin in our personal lives

Making Christ Supreme or All-Sufficient in Our Lives

Victory over sin in our personal lives

Relating to fellow believers

Relating to non-believers

4.

a. a racial barrier

b. a religious background barrier

c. cultural differences,

d. socio-economic status barrier

discuss / consider

1. When we find it hard to get along with certain believers, should we isolate ourselves from them, and just keep on serving Christ in our own way?
2. Think of specific people in each of the barriers within your Christian sphere. How could you relate or reach out to each these people?

challenge

Are you ready to step outside your comfort zone to reach out to those who represent different barriers? Start in the circle nearest you.

memorize

"Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all." Colossians 3:11

Lesson 18

**Relating to Fellow Believers in Graces and Love
Colossians 3:12-17**

background notes

- 1.

- 2.

- 3.

doctrinal point

1. We must relate to fellow believers.

practical application

Grade yourself on a Relating-to-fellow-believers report card.

questions

1. What is the Greek origin of “bowels of mercy?”

2. What does it mean to translate Scripture literally and culturally?

3. Explain each of the following words in terms of relating to fellow-believers:
 - a. Christian graces, including forbearance (Colossians 3:12-13)
 - b. love (Colossians 3:14)
 - c. peace of God (Colossians 3:15)
 - d. teaching (and admonishing and singing) (Colossians 3:16)
 - e. thankfulness (Colossians 3:15, 17)
4. What is the key to good relationships?

answers

1. It means compassion, a heart of compassion, tender mercies. The Greek word means “intestines,” and in that time and culture your intestines were considered the seat of affection.
2. To read and interpret it just as it is written, and to understand the cultural term, which broadens the meaning and helps to build a bridge to a contemporary meaning of terms.
3.
 - a. forbearance is more than tolerance (when you could retaliate or humiliate, you withhold for the sake of Christ)
 - b. “agape” type of love (the love of the will, a voluntary denial of self in the interest of others)
 - c. letting peace be the umpire, calling it in relation to one another (an example would be church music, when elders say what type it will be, accept it and live with it, even if it’s not your style)
 - d. relating with teaching, with the word of God by knowing what you are teaching, and being what you can be; singing helps to cement people together, especially singing Scripture
 - e. in the context of relations with fellow-believers, regardless of their faults and our faults, being thankful for one another
4. Letting Christ be supreme and all-sufficient (in graces and love).

discuss / consider

1. Grade yourself on a relating-to-fellow-believers report card. Use a number grade from 1-10, with 10 being the highest mark. Grade yourself in the following areas:

- ___ unity
- ___ Christian graces, including forbearance
- ___ love
- ___ peace
- ___ teaching and admonishing
- ___ service
- ___ singing
- ___ thankfulness

2. What grade do you think God would give you?

challenge

How could you improve the grades on your report card? Which areas are the most troublesome to you? Do something about them.

memorize

“But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.” Colossians 3:1

Lesson 19

**Family Relationships (Submission)
Colossians 3:18-4:1**

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal point

1. We must relate to God's authority structures.

practical application

Remember the model of our Lord Jesus as a teenager.

questions

1. According to this passage, which categories of people were in the first century Colossian church?
2. What age were the "children" (Colossians 3:20)?
3. List the four authority structures through which God has chosen to channel His authority. Are we obliged to relate to God through one or more of these structures?
4. Define the word, "submit." Why do we have negative reactions to this word?
5. Does the phrase, "as is fitting in the Lord," excuse us from being subject to one another?

6. What is the best argument for children to obey their parents?

7. As authority figures, how should parents relate to their children?

answers

1. Wives, husbands, children, fathers, servants, and masters

2. Youth, pre-teens and teenagers

3. Family, church, state, and labor

4. To yield to governance or authority. We think of it as a “put-down,” or making us of lesser value. Such is not the case with God’s authority structure, for submission is not inferiority.

5. Not necessarily, but sometimes there is a higher authority. An example would be when a non-Christian husband gives a non-biblical command to his wife. She can refer to other lines of authority to which she is subject, such as the elders of the church.

6. Because it pleases the Lord.

7. They should not provoke their children, exasperate them, or nag them. Parents should be flexible, so as not to discourage their children, or make them lose their love for them, or become spiritless.

discuss / consider

1. Re-read the portions of this passage that relate specifically to your role, and determine how you can fulfill that role biblically.

2. Do you find it difficult to submit to God’s authority structures? If so, why?

challenge

Determine to fulfill your role biblically, and to submit graciously to God’s authority structures.

memorize

“...whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men.” Colossians 3:23

Lesson 20

Relationships Between Slaves and Masters Colossians 3:22-4:1

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal point

1. We must submit to God's authority structures.

practical application

Let's not play favorites.

questions

1. Review the five New Testament approaches to slavery as a part of the first century Roman Empire.
2. What is the underlying New Testament approach to the problem of slavery?
3. What is the source of all authority?
4. In the slave-master or employee-employer line of authority, review and discuss the meaning of
 - a. "according to the flesh" (Colossians 3:22)
 - b. "not with eye service, as men pleasers" (Colossians 3:22)
 - c. "inheritance" (Colossians 3:24)
 - d. "just and fair" (Colossians 4:1)
5. Discuss the meaning of Colossians 3:25.

answers

1. New Testament approaches to slavery in the first century:
 - a. slavery is neither prohibited nor promoted
 - b. Christian slaves were not to revolt, but Christian masters were not prevented from releasing their slaves
 - c. while the institution of slavery is not condemned in the New Testament, the abuses of it are strongly condemned
 - d. if Christian masters followed New Testament directions concerning slaves, the employer-employee relationship would be good
 - e. it was the outworking of New Testament Christian principles that finally led to the abolition of slavery, both in the Roman Empire and eventually in our own country.
2. Not revolution, but the gradual outworking of Christian principles, starting in the home.
3. All authority finds itself in God. There are times when authority is misused and abused, and even directed against God Himself, but only because God has allowed it. Even Satan's temporary authority derives from God.
4.
 - a. In this line of authority, the area of labor. A Christian slave in the Colossian church could have been an elder or church leader, where the master could have been subordinate to the slave in the church.
 - b. This means not just when the master is watching. The slave is serving Christ, even if the master is not a Christian. It means doing the right thing, even if a job is on the line. Submission is required as long as it does not counter God's principles
 - c. Slaves would not get any earthly inheritance, but by submitting to the authority structures that God has designed, they will receive an inheritance and a reward.
 - d. Masters (the boss in the labor force) are the authority figure. He is to be just and fair in payment, in work load, and in privileges.
5. Because there is not to be partiality, the authority figure will be repaid for doing wrong, as well as for doing right. This is true in all lines of authority.

discuss / consider

1. Review your job (school, home) relationships. Do you submit to the authority structure? How pleasantly or how grudgingly do you submit?
2. Is your service to the Lord or to men? Are you more concerned with how the Lord views your work, or how man views what you do?
3. If you were asked by your supervisor (teacher, husband) to do something against God's principles, how would you respond? Cite some specific examples.

challenge

Are you just and fair in all of your relationships? Are you in line with what God expects from you? If not, determine to set things right.

memorize

"...whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men." Colossians 3:23

Lesson 21

**Windows of Opportunity (Redeeming the Time)
Colossians 4:2-6**

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal point

1. We should be concerned about outsiders.

practical application

Let's put some moral bite into our talk with outsiders.

questions

1. Describe the conditions of Paul's first imprisonment in Rome.
2. Interpret Colossians 4:6, "*...let your speech...be seasoned with salt.*"
3. Recall the structure of this practical section of Colossians. Draw and label each of the concentric circles.
4. How are we to pray for outsiders (unbelievers)? See Colossians 4:2-4.
5. How are we to witness to unbelievers? See Colossians 4:5-6.
6. How are we to redeem the time? See Colossians 4:5.

answers

1. Paul was under house arrest, which meant being confined to a house (which he was able to rent). He was free to have visitors, preach, teach and write letters. However, he was under constant guard, even being chained to a Roman guard. This took place during his first Roman imprisonment during the early 60s A.D. (Refer to Acts 28).

2. Today we use salt to flavor our food, but then salt was used as a preservative. Our speech, as Christians, should help prevent cultural moral decay.

3. Concentric circles Ⓓ Making Christ Supreme and All-sufficient

Outer circle: We should be concerned with outsiders (Colossians 4:2-6)

Next circle: We must submit to God's authority structures (Colossians 3:18-4:1)

Next circle: We must relate properly to fellow-believers (Colossians 3:1-17)

Next circle: We must practice putting off the old man, putting on the new (Colossians 3:6-10)

Inner circle: We are to practice the biblical method of gaining victory over sin (Colossians 3:1-3)

4. For their salvation

5. We are to walk in wisdom, watching our lifestyle. Unbelievers watch and judge Christians more harshly than they judge unbelievers.

6. Make the most of opportunities. Capitalize on the windows of time that the Lord gives to you. "Strike while the iron is hot." Be aware of opportunities when you are traveling, or with neighbors, or on the job, or in the classroom, etc.

discuss / consider

1. Concerning redeeming the time, check yourself on ways in which you fail to do this.

2. How can you combat spiritual drowsiness in your life?

challenge

Pray for open doors to speak to an unbeliever in your life (a neighbor, a colleague, a fellow-worker, a classmate, a family member). Be ready to walk through the doors that God opens for you.

memorize

"Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time." Colossians 4:5

"Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one."
Colossians 4:6

Lesson 22

**Final Greetings of Paul's Letter to the Colossians
Colossians 4:7-9**

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal points

1. In Tychicus we are taught three of God's quality-control standards for Christians.
2. Salvation does not relieve us of our social obligations.

practical application

1. Let's be a typical Tychicus and an open Onesimus.

questions

1. In which book of the Bible do we learn more about Onesimus?
2. What is a quality-control standard?
3. List the three quality-control standards of God, as seen in Tychicus.
4. What is an important lesson learned from Onesimus?
5. What should a person do about sins he committed before he became a Christian?

answers

1. The book of Philemon
2. They are standards a product must meet before a company will release it to the public.
3.
 - a) a beloved brother,
 - b) a faithful minister,
 - c) a fellow bond-servant
4. We are taught that salvation does not relieve us of our social obligations.
5. Make them right in the eyes of the Lord and with the person offended.

discuss / consider

1. Review God's quality-control standards. Are they true in your life? Are you easy to be with? Are you helpful and dependable? Are you a true bond-slave of Jesus Christ? It is never too late to develop these qualities!

challenge

Are there sins in your life that you committed before you became a Christian that need to be dealt with? If so, deal with them according to biblical principles.

memorize

"Tychicus, a beloved brother, faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord..." Colossians 4:7

"Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother..." Colossians 4:9

Lesson 23

**The Conclusion of Paul's Letter to the Colossians
Colossians 4:10-11**

background notes

1.

2.

3.

doctrinal point

1. Failure is not final.

practical application

1. Your failure is not final.

questions

1. What do we know about Aristarchus?

2. What do we know about Mark?

3. Who was Justus?

4. How was each of these brothers helpful to Paul?

5. Does failure have to be final?

6. How did Mark overcome failure?

answer

1. He was a fellow-prisoner with Paul. He likely voluntarily made himself a prisoner to help Paul by assisting him in his ministry.
2. Mark as a cousin of Barnabas. He wrote the gospel of Mark. On his first missionary journey with Paul, he quit and returned to Jerusalem (Acts 13:13).
3. He is mentioned only in Colossians 4:11. He changed his name to Justus, perhaps not to lower the name of Jesus. He was “of the circumcision,” a Jewish fellow worker.
4. They were a comfort and help to Paul as he labored in the gospel.
5. No. God can pick up the pieces and make something beautiful out of a life, any life.
6. Paul had refused to take Mark after he quit, and he was useless for a time. Then Mark proved himself, and was approved by Paul and by God Himself (2 Timothy 4:11). He was chosen to write, by inspiration of God, the gospel of Mark. The theme of Mark’s gospel, incidentally, is a servant.

discuss / consider

1. Failure does not have to be final. Review how Mark overcame failure. Recall some area in your life where you have failed. By God’s strength you can overcome these failures.
2. Do you believe that God can make something beautiful of your life? Believe it! Discuss how God can take all things and work them together for God. The ultimate good is being conformed to the image of Christ. Praise God that He can do this with you.

challenge

Are you willing to submit yourself to help someone else in the ministry of the gospel of Christ? Think of specific ways in which you could do this (and with whom).

memorize

“...These are my only fellow workers for the kingdom of God...they have proved to be a comfort to me.” Colossians 4:11

Lesson 24

**Wrestling in Prayer
Colossians 4:12-14**

background notes

1.

2.

3.

doctrinal point

1. Wrestling in prayer brings results.

practical application

Let's be people pray-ers like Epaphras.

questions

1. What was the outstanding service of Epaphras?

2. Who was Luke?

3. Who was Demas? Would he be a model to follow? Explain.

4. For what did Epaphras pray specifically? What were the results?

5. What does it mean to labor earnestly in prayer?

6. Is it wrong to pray for programs, church buildings, finances, health, job situations, and the like?

answers

1. He labored fervently in prayer for the Colossian believers.
2. Paul's beloved physician, a Gentile. He joined Paul on his second missionary journey (see Acts 16:10). He was a faithful and productive Christian, writing much of the New Testament (Luke and Acts). He had a change of career, from doctor to missionary.
3. There was no commendation for him (perhaps a foreshadowing of his desertion). He would not be a model to follow because he was a deserter.
4. He labored in prayer for the church at Colosse. The Colossian believers did not capitulate to the false teaching around them, and they continued to grow spiritually.
5. It means hard work, wrestling in prayer to bring results. The Greek term "to labor fervently" is to agonize or struggle.
6. No. But following the example of Paul and Epaphras, being people pray-ers rather than program pray-ers, would seem to bring more lasting results.

discuss / consider

1. Have you ever labored earnestly in prayer? This is a wonderful habit to develop. How can you wrestle for a fellow believer's spiritual growth?
2. What does it mean to be a righteous person? See James 5:16. Should you expect your prayers to be effective?

challenge

Pray like Epaphras prayed. As you pray this week, keep track of your prayers. Then keep a record of when and how your prayers are answered.

memorize

"Epaphras, who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God." Colossians 4:12

Lesson 25

**Paul's Signature and Benediction
Colossians 4:15-18**

background notes

1.

2.

3.

doctrinal point

1. Every Christian is given a ministry to fulfill.

practical application

Fulfill your ministry.

questions

1. Who was Nymphas?

2. Where did the churches meet during the first three centuries?

3. Where else was this letter to be read besides in Colosse?

4. What happened to the church at Laodicea?

5. Who was Archippus? What was he told to do?

6. What is the theme of the letter to the Colossians?

answers

1. A godly person, probably living in Laodicea or Hierapolis.
2. In homes of the Christians
3. In the Laodicean church
4. They became lukewarm. Refer to Revelation 2:1-7
5. Probably he was a son of Philemon. He was told to fulfill his ministry.
6. The supremacy and all-sufficiency of Christ.

discuss / consider

1. Is every Christian given a ministry to fulfill? Is so, what is it?
2. Does everyone have a gift? Support your answer with Scripture. What is to be done with the gift? Consider your gifts. How are you using them for the Lord?
3. Recall the great theme of the epistle to the Colossians. What is the most influential thing you have learned from the book?

challenge

Would you be willing to open your home on a regular basis for the Lord's work? Are you doing this now?

memorize

"...Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it." Colossians 4:17