



Colossians

Christ's supremacy
Believers' transformation
Faithful living
Grounded in love

Colossians Bible Study

Welcome & Introduction

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. Colossians 1:9-12

These verses capture our hope for you! We are so thankful you've chosen to study Colossians with us. We've been planning and praying for you and cannot wait to open the scriptures with you. We've purposefully written and prepared both this book and the messages to engage your heart, soul, and mind (Mark 12:30). Thank you for setting aside this time. We look forward with hope and anticipation to all God has in store!

How to Use This Study

Personal Study Time: God loves you and desires to have a personal relationship with you. One of the best ways to fuel that intimate relationship is to prayerfully engage with Him through His word (Psalm 1:2, Matthew 6:6). As you prepare to study His word, pray that God would reveal His Truth to you and that it would take root in your heart. Before jumping into Colossians 1, read the whole book. And remember, it's meant to be read as a letter! Reading the whole book before diving in will only help to deepen your understanding and appreciation for His Word.

Teaching time: The purpose of the teaching session is worship. Every message has been prayerfully prepared to proclaim the beautiful truths and riches of God's Word. We invite you to engage intentionally with the message and come ready to learn, reflect on, trust in, respond to, consider, pray over, and enjoy God's Word. (Colossians 3:16)

Group Discussions: The group discussion is a time to share what God is teaching you, to ask questions, to interpret God's Word together, and to benefit from what God is teaching each individual through His Word. This brings richness to the study of the Word because we encounter different perspectives on the text and it creates a space for us to hold one another accountable to an accurate understanding of the text and faithfully apply it in our lives. (Hebrews 3:12-14)

Colossians at a Glance

Welcome to Colossians! Paul's warm tone and brotherly love in the introduction make it easy to overlook the reality that Paul had never met these new believers. He knew of them through the passionate church planter, Epaphras, and had been encouraged by their new faith while enduring his first imprisonment in Rome. Though afar, Paul wanted to connect to these church members and welcome them to the family of God. He also wanted to address the attack they were under from false teachers and spur them on to progress further into their faith, their devotion to Christ, and their participation in the gospel mission.

10 Things To Know About Colossians (Crowe, 2016, 6)¹

1. The Apostle Paul identifies himself as the author of Colossians (1:1; 4:18).
2. Epaphras likely planted the church at Colossae after bringing the gospel he heard under Paul in Ephesus (Acts 19:10) back to his home city (1:7; 4:12).
3. Paul writes this letter from a Roman prison around 60-62 AD (4:16).
4. Colossae was a small but diverse city in Rome's Asia province, which corresponds to modern-day Turkey.
5. The Colossians were immersed in a cultural environment full of pluralism and syncretism. Most people borrowed bits and pieces from the religious and philosophical ideas of the day.
6. Throughout the book, Paul hints at a "Colossian heresy." However, he focuses on Christ-centered, correct teaching rather than the content of the false teaching.
7. Whatever this false teaching is, it is "not according to Christ" (2:8), and it undermines the supremacy and sufficiency of Jesus.
8. John Calvin summarizes Colossians as follows: "This Epistle...to express it in one word, distinguishes the true Christ from a fictitious one."
9. Like other Pauline letters, the first half of this book builds a rich theology that the second half exhorts us to live out the truths that have been established.
10. Ephesians and Colossians are companion books, written around the same time, that have a lot of overlap and often help explain one another.

¹Crowe, Dustin. 2016. *Colossians Study Guide: A 9-week study on Colossians*. Indianapolis, IN: College Park Church. <https://shorturl.at/pFK35>.

Week 1: Book Intro + Col 1: The Preeminence of Christ

Greeting + Thanksgiving and Prayer (vs. 1-14)

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, 2 To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father. 3 We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, 4 since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, 5 because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, 6 which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, 7 just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf 8 and has made known to us your love in the Spirit. 9 And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10 so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. 13 He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

- ☐ Read Colossians 1. After reading the whole chapter, circle each instance in the verses above where Paul uses familial language. Highlight any other word or phrase that resonates with you.
- ☐ In his greeting, Paul introduces himself as an Apostle. Look up the passages below to define what is significant about this term.

Acts 1:21-22 and 1 Corinthians 15:7-9	
Galatians 1:15-17	
Galatians 2:6-9, Acts 9:27-28	

- ☐ Paul briefly speaks of Epaphras in 1:7-8. He provides little information since the Colossians already knew him well. However brief, his description is poignant. How does he describe him here and in Colossians 4:12?

- ☐ In 1:12, Paul says that we have been qualified to “share in the inheritance of the saints.” Define “inheritance.” What qualifies the individual to benefit from this transaction?

- ☐ Paul’s fervent prayer in verses 9-12 applies to both these new Christians and to the church today, as we are part of the same family of faith. Read over this prayer and underline what he is asking God for. Now, take a moment to use these verses to pray for your walk with the Lord and for your fellow sisters in Christ.

The Preeminence of Christ (vs. 15-23)

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. 17 And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. 19 For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. 21 And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, 22 he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, 23 if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

"Jesus not only existed prior to creation and actively participated in creation, but he continues to sustain creation. Christ is actively involved in his creation as the sovereign King of the universe ... As Dutch theologian Abraham Kuyper famously proclaimed, 'There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is sovereign over all, does not cry, 'Mine!'"
(Pace 2021, 50)²

- ☐ Re-read Colossians 1 before diving into verses 15-23. Highlight the word “all” throughout this section. How many times is this word used?

²Pace, R. S. 2021. *Exalting Jesus in Colossians and Philemon*. Edited by Daniel L. Akin. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group.

- ☐ This passage has been called the Christ hymn. Read Colossians 1:15-20 again - silently, out loud, or even sing it. Ask God for fresh eyes to see the beauty of this hymn as it describes the divine nature of Christ and give thanks to a Savior who is Lord over all.

- ☐ Underline the phrases *by him*, *through him*, and *in him*. These phrases highlight the role, purpose, and authority of Jesus. Examine the verses below. How is the Son of God described?

Vs. 15-16	
Vs. 17	
Vs. 18-20	

- ☐ Which description of Christ resonates with you the most? Why?

- ☐ Paul describes Jesus as the image of the invisible God. How do the passages below help us interpret what he means by “image?”

Colossians 1:19, 2:9	
John 5:17-18, 8:58	
Hebrews 1:3	
2 Corinthians 4:4	

- ☐ Read verses 21-23 at least twice out loud but replace the word “you” with your name. How has the reconciling work of Jesus on the cross impacted your identity and your standing before God? Where can you apply this truth today?

Paul's ministry to the church (24-29)

24 Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, 25 of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, 26 the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. 27 To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. 28 Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. 29 For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.

- ☐ Re-read Colossians 1:24-29. After reading, draw an arrow from the word “for” to the benefiting party.
Example: In verse 24, draw an arrow from the word “for” to “your sake.”
- ☐ What is Paul communicating?
- ☐ In verse 24, Paul says that he is “filling up what is *lacking* in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body” (emphasis added). This statement can be confusing - reread this verse in different translations and let’s connect his words here with another one of his letters to the church at Philippi. Highlight any similarities you see.

Philippians 2:28-30	Colossians 1:24,29
I am the more eager to send him, therefore, that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious. So receive him in the Lord with all joy, and honor such men, for he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me.	Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church. ... For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.

Share your thoughts on what Paul is communicating to the church.

- ☐ Is there someone in your life that comes to mind who needs Christ? Someone that needs to be encouraged in their season? How might you “make the Word of God fully known” (vs. 25)?

- ☐ Is there something that would give you pause in doing so? If so, what is it? Paul reminds the Colossians that sharing the gospel often requires suffering and/or sacrifice (whether around the world or across the room). Pray that God would give you boldness, wisdom, and opportunity and that you would “walk in a manner worthy of the Lord” (Col. 1:10).

Week 1: Message Notes

Week 2: Colossians 2: Rooted and built up in Christ

Chapter intro (2:1-5) and Alive in Christ (2:6-15)

For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, 2 that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. 4 I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments. 5 For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ. 6 Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, 7 rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. 8 See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. 9 For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, 10 and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. 11 In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, 12 having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. 13 And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, 14 by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. 15 He disarmed the rulers and authorities[b] and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

- ☐ Read Colossians 2. Highlight the phrases “in whom” “in him” and “with him” in the section above. Draw an arrow from these phrases to the work of God they describe. From this list, what is most remarkable to you? Why?

- ☐ Read Colossians 1:26-27 and 2:2-3, Ephesians 1:8-10, I Corinthians 2:6-7 – note down similar words and phrases. How do these verses reveal what the “mystery of God” is and what the purpose of this mystery is?

- ☐ In this section, Paul transitions from prayers to directives. Reflect on these verses while you compare them to Colossians 1. Record any words or phrases that mirror each other.

<p><i>So as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. Colossians 1:10-12</i></p>	<p><i>Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. Colossians 2:6-7</i></p>
<p><i>Example: Walk in a manner worthy</i></p>	<p><i>Example: Walk in him</i></p>

- ☐ Rewrite vs. 8 in your own words. What are the origins of these distractions or “captivity” that he warns against? Are there lies you once viewed as captivating but now realize are not rooted in Christ?
- ☐ Reread this section, replacing the word “you” with your name. Thank God for what he has accomplished on your behalf. Thank Him for canceling your debt (vs. 14). Pray that He would open your eyes to anything that has taken you captive and that you would be fully built up and rooted in him (vs. 7).

Let No One Disqualify You (2:16-23)

16 Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. 17 These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. 18 Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions,[d] puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, 19 and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God. 20 If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the

world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations— 21 “Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch” 22 (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings? 23 These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.

- ☐ Read Colossians 2. In the section above (2:16-23), underline the false teachings Paul was warning the Colossians against. What were the teachers attempting to “add” to the sufficiency of Christ?

- ☐ Paul states that human precepts and teaching have the “appearance of wisdom” but don’t have value and don’t stop the “indulgence of the flesh” (verse 23). Let’s cross-reference with the verses below. Read them and highlight what does have wisdom, value, and results in **true** growth. What is the outcome of this growth?

Romans 8:3-6	Galatians 5:16-25
For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. 5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. 6 For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.	But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. 19 Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, 21 envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. 24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.

- ☐ If Paul were addressing his letter to the church today, what false teachings might he address? What are some personal examples of legalism, false humility, or self-made religion that might appear to be spiritual or holy but are dangerous lies that promote your own effort rather than Christ's finished work?

- ☐ Ask the Holy Spirit to help you identify where you are tempted to "add" to the work of Christ. Ask him to show you if you are falsely putting your hope in something besides him. Pray that He will help you leave those false idols and kingdoms at the Cross.

Week 2: Message Notes

Week 3 - Colossians 3

Put On the New Self (3:1-17)

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. 3 For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. 5 Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. 6 On account of these the wrath of God is coming. 7 In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. 8 But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. 11 Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all. 12 Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, 13 bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. 14 And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. 15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

☐ Read Col. 3:1-4 - what are the foundational truths of a believer?

☐ Read 2 Corinthians 3:18, Galatians 2:20, and Psalm 51:10-12.

How do these verses along with Col. 3:1-17 help us understand what it means to be “new in Christ”?

- ☐ Read Colossians 3. Use the chart below to record Paul's words to the Colossians in his exhortation to walk in freedom.

"Things above" / New Self	"Earthly things" / Old Self
Put on (vs. 10, 12, 14)	Put to death (vs 5)
How to treat each other (vs. 13)	Put away (vs. 8)
Rule your hearts with... (vs. 15)	Do not (vs. 9)
Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly (by)... (vs. 16)	
Do everything (vs. 17)	

- ☐ God our Father and gracious gardener desires to prune off the "old self" so that we might continue to grow in the "new self" (John 15:1-8). Looking at the list above, where do you need God to grow your new self? What needs to be pruned from your "old self?"
- ☐ Read Philippians 3:12-21 below, highlighting any similar words, phrases, or passages as they relate to Colossians 3.

12 Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. 13 Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. 16 Only let us hold true to what we have attained. 17 Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. 18 For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. 19 Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly

things. 20 But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

- ☐ Prayer prompt: Pray for both your own walk with Christ and for the women in our church and our city. If you're not in a community group, seek this out and pray that God would connect you to a community that would help you grow in this "new self." If you are, pray for those individuals now, that God would continue to knit your hearts together and that you would draw closer to the cross because of these relationships. Pray for opportunities to be vulnerable together and share your answer from #3 so that you might hold one another accountable and cheer each other on in your walk with Christ.

Rules for Christian Households (3:18-25)

18 Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. 19 Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them. 20 Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. 21 Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. 22 Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters,[f] not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. 23 Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ. 25 For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality.

- ☐ Reread Colossians 3 through 4:1. In the first part of chapter 3, Paul has been teaching about "kingdom living" in our hearts. He now points to the change this makes in our homes and in everyday living. Which relationships does he address? Underline who he speaks to and draw an arrow to his command for them.
- ☐ In the section above, circle each time the word "Lord" is used. What is Paul communicating about the Lordship of Christ?
- ☐ What about when the job feels thankless; the housework feels endless and you feel unseen and devalued; and the work conditions are bad? Maybe your family, spouse, roommates, or friends don't understand your efforts. How can verses 22-24 be an anchor? We are to work...

Not by way of...	
But with ...	

Read the following passages, highlighting any repetitive phrases or anything that resonates with you.

<p>The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God. For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. Romans 14:6-8</p>	<p>As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. 1 Peter 4:10-11</p>
<p>For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. Ephesians 2:8-10</p>	<p>Not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man. Ephesians 6:6-7</p>
<p>Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ. Colossians 3:23-24</p>	<p>So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. 1 Corinthians 10:31</p>

- ☐ C.S. Lewis tells a story about some explorers that journey into an undiscovered valley only to find breathtaking flowers. He questions the purpose of their beauty. If God put the flowers there, who are they for, why has no one seen them?

The answer is God. God beautifies some things just for himself and his enjoyment. Even the work we do that feels unending or unseen has value. It is an offering unto God. How does this truth and the verses above challenge you? Where are you tempted to feel worthless? How might these truths change your motivation?

- ☐ Pray that the Lord would help you see value in who he has called you to love and serve. Pray that his eyes would be our highest motivation for serving with all our heart and for being competent, compassionate, and steadfast in our homes, workspaces, and communities.

Week 3: Message Notes

Week 4 - Colossians 4: Walk in Wisdom

Further Instructions (4:1-6)

4 Masters, treat your bondservants justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven. 2 Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. 3 At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— 4 that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak. 5 Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. 6 Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

- ☐ Read Colossians 4. How does verse one connect to the previous passage?
- ☐ As Paul gives his final instructions in chapter 4, he highlights the power of speech. While the tongue is small, James 3 reminds us that it is powerful. Circle the imagery used below. What do these descriptions communicate about the potential power of our speech?

James 3	Power of Speech
<i>For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. vs. 2-4</i>	The power to _____
<i>So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! vs. 5</i>	The power to _____
<i>With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it, we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and saltwater? Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water. vs. 9-12</i>	The power to _____

- ☐ Words are powerful. As we saw above, our tongues have the power to direct, destroy, delight, and give life. Paul points to four important ministries of speech. The first three include **the call to** _____ (Col. 4: 2-3a), **the call to proclaim** _____ (Col. 4: 3b-4), and **the call to witness to the** _____ (Col. 4: 5-6).

- ☐ **Prayer:** Paul knew the power of prayer and urged the Colossians to be steadfast and thankful. Read a few of his prison prayers below. Highlight any repetitive phrases and anything that resonates with you.

Philippians 1:9-11

9 And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, 10 so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, 11 filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

Colossians 1:9-12

9 And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10 so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you[b] to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

Ephesians 1:15-23

15 For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, 16 I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, 18 having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might 20 that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. 22 And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Ephesians 3:14-21

14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, 16 that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. 20 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

- ☐ **Proclaim the gospel:** Paul didn't ask for the prison doors to be opened. He asked for the Colossians to pray for open doors to share what Christ has done. Take a minute and read that distinction again.

Is there a situation or season in your life that you're praying to end? Are you or someone you love currently walking through a trial? Do Paul's priorities and prayers challenge you to pray differently? If so, how?

- ☐ **Witness to the lost:** according to Col. 4:5-6, how are we to carry ourselves when engaging the lost? Write down the name of a person God has placed in your life that you need boldness and prayer to share the gospel with.

Final Greetings (4:7-18)

7 Tychicus will tell you all about my activities. He is a beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. 8 I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are and that he may encourage your hearts, 9 and with him Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will tell you of everything that has taken place here. 10 Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, and Mark the cousin of Barnabas (concerning whom you have received instructions—if he comes to you, welcome him), 11 and Jesus who is called Justus. These are the only men of the circumcision among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me. 12 Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God. 13 For I bear him witness that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and in Hierapolis. 14 Luke the beloved physician greets you, as does Demas. 15 Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house. 16 And when this letter has been read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you also read the letter from Laodicea. 17 And say to Archippus, "See that you fulfill the ministry that you have received in the Lord." 18 I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

- ☐ Read Colossians 4. Circle the individuals Paul mentions here and underline how he describes them.

☐ Paul's descriptions of his friends communicate his value for them. Take a moment and pray for the women in our study and at our church.

- Pray that our church would be known as a community that prays together and encourages one another.
- Pray that we would be willing to sit in hardship with one another even when we don't have the answer or the solution.
- Pray that we would rejoice and celebrate each other, share burdens, and serve well.
- Most of all, pray that we would be closer to the Lord because of our friendships with one another.

☐ In the previous section about the power of our words, we identified that Paul was calling the Colossians to **pray, join him in proclaiming the Gospel of Christ, and witnessing to the lost**. In Colossians 4:7-9, he identifies the importance of sharing _____.

☐ Paul's message about his fellow workers reminds us of John's praise for the believers:

"Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are, who testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God. For they have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth." 3rd John 1: 5-8

- Reflecting on Colossians 4 and the passage above, how might YOU be a fellow worker for the truth?
- Remember, Paul was not writing to individuals but to the church. How might we be a church of fellow workers to those in our communities and around the world?

☐ In verse 15, Paul mentions Nympha. This woman was hosting a church in her home. Our homes are powerful places. When we invite someone into our home, we invite them into our vulnerable and sacred spaces. How might your home be a place where Christ is known and proclaimed?

☐ **Prayer prompt:** Paul's closing line is heartfelt and vulnerable. In chapter 3, Paul exhorts the Colossians to seek and set their minds on things above (3:1-2). Now he brings them back to earth with his request. He reminds the readers of his chains and of a difficult truth - the gospel is often met with opposition. However, it's clear that he isn't saying that persecution stops the gospel, it's just part of it. **It's been estimated that half of the 7+ billion people living in the world reside in countries where being a Christian could cost you your life.**³ Many today face trials of imprisonment, intimidation, discrimination, violent threats against families, and threats against churches.

³ <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/remember-our-chains>

- Take a moment and pray for these brothers and sisters that we may never know this side of Heaven. Pray for any that you do know.
- Pray for their strength, their witness, their families, their churches, their persecutors, and most of all that Christ would be radically known in their communities.
- Pray for our church, that we would be obedient in how God is calling us to join Him in his mission to our city and to the world.

As we close, let's turn to **Hebrews 12:1-2**.

*Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, **looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith**, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.*

The 'cloud of witnesses' refers to people who have gone to Heaven before us and cheer us on. The author of Colossians, Paul, wrote this book to be read and shared (4:16). How does this letter spur you on in your faith? How is God calling you to walk in wisdom with those around you?

You made it! Thank you so much for joining us in our study of Colossians.

Week 4: Message Notes