

Bible Study Discussion Guide

Colossians

The church at Colosse was founded by Epaphras, who had become a convert through the preaching of Paul. When Paul wrote his letter to the Colossians during a time of imprisonment, he had never visited the city himself.

The Knowing God Bible study discussion guides are provided to facilitate small group Bible study. We encourage everyone in the group to read or listen to the Bible text about ten times over the course of the study. We recommend providing a copy of these notes to each member of the group and selecting an individual to lead each week's study.

The book of Colossians takes approximately 15 minutes to read.

This discussion guide provides questions for four sessions.

Principles for use:

1. Encourage everyone in the group to read the book of Colossians many times.
2. Trust God to help you understand and apply his Word.
3. Focus on what the book reveals about God/Jesus.
4. Focus on what it clearly reveals about how God wants us to live.
5. Don't get bogged down on minor, uncertain or controversial issues.

For further copies, visit the Bibleworld website and follow the link to Bible Study Resources. The notes can either be printed off or if you prefer to remain paperless, you can view the questions online.

www.bibleworld.org.nz

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

Colossians 3:10

Introduction

The city of Colosse was located about 140 km east of Ephesus in the fertile Lycus valley (in modern day Turkey). The city had a mixed population of locals (Phrygians), Greeks and Jews. The city's mixed population embraced many religious ideas. The people held to beliefs in animism, astrology, mystery religions, Judaism and the worship of Greek and Roman gods. There were many tourists visiting the region to enjoy the hot springs at Pamukkale.

The letter to the Colossians was written while Paul was in prison. It is generally believed that this imprisonment refers to his time in prison in Rome and therefore dates to c. 60 – 61 AD. Paul wrote the letters known as Ephesians and Philemon at the same time, and Tychicus was given the responsibility to deliver all three letters.

Session One: The Gospel is Good News!

The word 'Gospel' simply means Good News. Paul believes the message about Christ is good news for those who hear and accept it. Can you summarise Paul's message of 'good news' in one sentence? What does Paul mention in Colossians as the positive benefits of the gospel?

Do you know of anyone whose life has been radically changed for the better, as a result of accepting Christ? In what ways have you benefitted most from being a follower of Jesus?

Many of us know people who claim to be Christians but who don't seem to enjoy the benefits outlined by Paul. What do you think can hinder people from experiencing the Christian life as good news?

Because Paul believes the message about Christ is Good News, he is strongly motivated to share this message with those who have not heard it. In Colossians 4:3-6, Paul provides guidelines of how to pray and how to be prepared to share the gospel. What can we learn from his example? Who do you know who could most benefit from the Good News about Christ?

Take a few moments as a group to thank God for the many ways in which we benefit from being believers in Christ.

Session Two: The Uniqueness of Christ

Using a whiteboard or a large sheet of paper, as a group write down everything that Paul teaches about Christ in this letter. Is there anything that particularly surprised or puzzled you?

Paul states that Jesus is the Creator of all things. How can this truth shape our view of ourselves? How can it shape our view of our world? How can this truth affect the way we pray?

Paul affirms that Jesus is the Head of the body, the Church. How can this affect the way we view ourselves? How can this shape the way we view other congregations and denominations?

Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. Colossians 1:15 (NLT)

In what ways does Jesus show us what God is like? What can we learn about God's character from the life of Jesus? What does Jesus reveal about God's priorities and values?

Session Three: Staying Faithful to the Message

Paul expressed concern about some of the teaching that had crept into the Colossian church. Some issues that had arisen include teaching from philosophy, an obligation towards circumcision, the need to observe dietary regulations, feast days and ritual occasions, the worship of angels and a focus on mystical experiences. What do you think are some of the dangerous teachings facing people today?

Don't let anyone capture you with empty philosophies and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the spiritual powers of this world, rather than from Christ. Colossians 2:8 (NLT)

We are surrounded by all sorts of human thinking, communicated in books, TV, movies, magazines, social media, and every possible sort of website or podcast. What principles do you use to assess what messages to accept? What are the danger signs to look out for?

You must continue to believe this truth and stand firmly in it. Don't drift away from the assurance you received when you heard the Good News. Colossians 1:23a (NLT)

What can we implement in our lives to help us stand firm in our faith? Have you ever had the sense of drifting away? What are the warning signs that you can look out for that indicate you might be drifting away?

In him [Christ] lie hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Colossians 2:3 (NLT)

What can we do to plunder these treasures?

Session Four: Pursuing a New Way of Life

And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness. Colossians 3:6-7 (NLT)

Paul anticipates that the gospel will affect every area of a person's life: their speech, thoughts, behaviours, hopes, and relationships. Are there any of his instructions which you find surprising? Which of his instructions do you find most challenging?

Put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you. Colossians 3:5 (NLT).

What practical steps can a person take to put to death sinful, earthly things?

Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him. Colossians 3:10 (NLT)

Why is it important that we become like Christ? What can we actively do to help us avoid evil? What can we do to help us actively pursue a Christ like life?

What has been the most important message of the book of Colossians for you? Is there a particular verse that you would like to memorise?