Colossians

Gaining a True Knowledge of Christ So No One Deludes You!
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HELPFUL STUDY TOOLS

ARThUR, KAY; ARThUR, DAVID; DE LACY, PETE
How to Study Your Bible

The New Inductive Study Bible—New American Standard Bible

Word Study Tools

Commentaries on Colossians
(See commentary list below.)

RECOMMENDED COMMENTARIES

KENT, JR., HOMER A.; VAUGHAN, CURTIS; AND RUPPRECHT, ARTHUR A.
The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Philippians, Colossians, Philemon

WALVOORD, JOHN F.; ZUCK, ROY B., eds.
The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures

MELICK, JR., RICHARD R.
The New American Commentary, Vol. 32, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon
Nashville, Tennessee: B & H Publishing Group, 1991

RECOMMENDED SOFTWARE

Logos Bible Software
Powerful search engines and up to 4,000 electronic Bible study resources
(commentaries, lexicons, Bible dictionaries etc.) make it fast and easy to do
simple and complex searches of multiple sources, then pull materials together
for orderly presentation—excellent for word and topical studies based on
English or original Hebrew and Greek. Available at www.logos.com.
Colossians is filled with rich and abundant treasures of truth—treasures that will keep us from error if we give ourselves to diligent and careful study.

As you begin this course on the book of Colossians, stop and count the cost. If you don’t do it now, you will not be prepared for Satan’s subtle allurements, devices, distractions, deceptions, and discouragements which will slip in to keep you from completing this study. The message of Colossians exposes what is going on in Christianity today and causes you to focus on the source of all life; therefore, the enemy of your soul wants to keep you ignorant of the wonderful mystery revealed in this book.

**DAY ONE**

1. Always begin with prayer, asking God to guide you into His truth (John 16:13). Ask God to open the eyes of your understanding that you might behold wondrous things out of His Word.

2. If you have never done a Precept Upon Precept course before, it’s helpful to read the chapters entitled “The Rule of Context—Context Rules!” and “Getting the Big Picture” in *How to Study Your Bible*.

The purpose of this first lesson is to discover the context of the book of Colossians. Since context always rules in interpretation and since Scripture must be interpreted in light of its context, the first step in your study of a letter is to begin with the **Overview**, the view of the entire book, to discover the context.
3. Like most letters, the place to begin your study is with the author because he is usually the first person mentioned.

Read Colossians and mark with a specific color or colored symbol each mention of the author’s name and the pronouns that refer specifically to him, such as I, me, my. At the beginning of this letter and also in chapter 4 you will notice that the author uses plural pronouns, such as we and us, so it will be important to mark these also. However, Colossians 1:23 shows you from the text exactly who wrote or dictated this epistle (letter).

Use the Observation Worksheets, located in the Appendix, for every assignment. These are what the title implies: worksheets for you to do your work on. They are the text of Colossians printed double-spaced from the New American Standard Bible. We encourage you to do your work on them, and at a later date you might want to transfer some of your study notes to your Bible.¹

4. Read all four chapters of Colossians again, using your marked Observation Worksheets. Look at each place you marked the author. List what you learn about him on the page at the end of this lesson titled “Author.” Do not include instructions he gives or facts that are true of all believers (such as, God is his Father); include facts that uniquely describe the author. Your list will give you the 5 Ws and an H about the author: who, what, when, where, why, how.

5. In the space provided for the historical setting on the “Colossians at a Glance” chart, located at the end of this lesson, note what you observed regarding the times in which this letter was written.

As you complete your study this week, you will fill in information on this chart. Then, whenever you need to see the book of Colossians at a glance, you will have this chart for a reference. If you have The New Inductive Study Bible, you will probably want to complete the “Colossians at a Glance” chart at the end of Colossians.

6. Now let’s look at the “where.”

a. Where was Paul when he wrote this letter?

¹ The New Inductive Study Bible is ideal for this. It is the best study Bible on the market because it doesn’t tell you what the text means. Rather, it gives you instructions for studying each book of the Bible in addition to many other valuable study aids.
b. What city was he in? Find Colossians on the chart, “Sequence of Events in Paul’s Life after His Conversion.”

c. Locate this city on the map at the end of this lesson.

Well, that is our first day of study. Don’t try to do all five days of your homework in one day unless that is the only way you can get it done. Give yourself time to meditate on what you have taken in. Think on and pray over what you are studying. It will make a big difference. And remember to stay in communication with the Father, asking God to open the eyes of your understanding that you might see the truths in Colossians.

Today our focus will be on the recipients of this letter that Paul wrote. As you look at their description, you might see a description of yourself and/or of people who are close to you. Therefore, as you begin, ask God to show you the relevance of Colossians to believers today.

1. Using your Observation Worksheets, read all of Colossians and mark each mention of the recipients with a different color or colored symbol from the one you used for the author. Also be sure to mark pronouns that refer specifically to them, such as you, your, who, and mark any synonyms for them, like brethren.

2. Read Colossians again.

This time, look at each place you marked references to the recipients. On the page titled “Recipient” at the end of this lesson, list what you learn about the recipients—facts that uniquely describe them. Remember to use words directly from the text, be brief, and record the verse from which you took your information. Do not include instructions they are given or facts that are true of all believers.

3. Evaluate what you learned about the author and recipients.

a. Did you see anything about the Colossians that gives you more insight into the historical setting, the times in which this letter was written? Record it under “Historical Setting” on your “Colossians at a Glance” chart.
Colossians
Lesson 1, Overview

b. What important words are repeated in Colossians?

c. Why was there a need for Paul to write to the believers in Colossae? In other words, what was his purpose in writing?

4. According to Colossians 1:6-8 and 4:12-13, how did the Colossians hear the gospel?

5. Read Colossians 1:2 and 4:13-16.
   a. Locate on the map the places named in these verses.
   b. Where else was this letter to be read?

As you read the book of Colossians and observed the facts about the author and recipients, you probably were awed at the truths about Christ that fill this book. Did it ignite a longing to understand more about Him? Well, today you are going to take a closer look at these wonderful truths about our Lord Jesus Christ. As you do your study today, turn it into an act of worship to the Father for the Son.

1. Christ is used throughout the book. He holds a place of prominence in understanding this book; therefore, Christ is a key word.

Key words unlock the meaning of the text. A key word might be a noun, a descriptive word, or an action word. As you observe key words and phrases, they help you identify the author’s repeated emphasis, the theme of the book, and how he will accomplish his purpose in conveying his message.
It will be helpful to make a Key Word Bookmark for Colossians. There’s a card on the back of your Precept book with suggestions how to mark frequently used words such as Christ. Write Christ on the blank side and mark it the way you want to mark it on your Observation Worksheets. You’ll add other key words as you continue your study.

Now read the entire book of Colossians.

a. Mark on your Observation Worksheets the key word Christ and other synonyms (names) and pronouns which refer to the Lord Jesus Christ.

b. In the Appendix you will find two pages titled, “The Lord Jesus Christ as Portrayed in Colossians.” Record everything you learn about Jesus Christ. It’s helpful to include the chapter and verse number for each truth you list.

2. Record the key word Christ on your “Colossians at a Glance” chart.

DAY FOUR

Today you are going to see even more exciting truths in Colossians. You’ve observed that the saints at Colossae were described as growing and grounded, but they were warned about certain things. As you study today, think about these warnings and how we might apply them in our own times. God’s Word is always relevant to today.

1. Using your Observation Worksheets, read Colossians and mark in a distinctive way the warnings. Then evaluate each warning in light of the truths you have already discovered about Christ.

2. List the warnings in the following space.
3. Record additional insights or information on your “Colossians at a Glance” chart.

4. Read the article “Gnosticism” in the Appendix. There’s no need to take notes at this point. We’ll look at this article in more depth later.

5. Finally, we need to know a little about the city of Colossae and those living there. It will help us appreciate Paul’s letter even more.

Read commentaries, Bible dictionaries, or other study helps which will give more background information on Colossae. Learn as much as you can about the city, the people, and the setting of this book. **DO NOT read anything that has to do with the interpretation of any part of Colossians.** Record your notes on a separate sheet of paper.

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**DAY FIVE**

1. Our first task today is to identify the **main theme** of the book of Colossians.

   a. To do this, answer these questions: What is the emphasis of the chapter? Does it emphasize who Christ is, what we have/are in Him, the warnings, or something else?

   b. Using words from the text, record the theme at the top of your “Colossians at a Glance” chart as the book theme.

2. The next step is to identify the theme of each chapter.

   Remember to ask: What is the emphasis of the chapter? Does it emphasize who Christ is, what we have/are in Him, the warnings, or something else?

   Keep the emphasis in mind as you identify the theme of each chapter. Then, using words from the text, record these themes on the “Colossians at a Glance” chart.
3. When studying inductively, it is often helpful to see the author’s plan/structure of his message by looking for any segments in the book—groupings of chapters that deal with the same topic or use the same kind of writing. If you observe any segment divisions in Colossians at this point, record them in the segment division columns on the “Colossians at a Glance” chart. Use a horizontal line to divide segments.

For more information about segments, read the section “Identify Clearly Defined Segments” of “Getting the Big Picture” in How to Study Your Bible.

4. Fill in any other information necessary to complete the “Colossians at a Glance” chart.

5. How has God spoken to you through your study this week? Record it in the following space.

Well, you are on your way. Remember your commitment to our Father regarding this study and keep it as unto the Lord.
AUTHOR
RECIPIENTS
## Colossians at a Glance

### Book Theme:

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<td>Date:</td>
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### Chapter Themes

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COLOSSIANS 1
Observation Worksheet

Chapter Theme _________________________________________________________________

PAUL, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

2 To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

3 We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,

4 since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints;

5 because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel

6 which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth;

7 just as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow bond-servant, who is a faithful servant of Christ on our behalf,

8 and he also informed us of your love in the Spirit.

9 For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,
10 so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;

11 strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously

12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.

13 For He rescued 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.

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

16 For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.

17 He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.

19 For it was the Father’s good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him,

20 and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.
21 And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds,

22 yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach—

23 if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.

24 Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions.

25 Of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, so that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God,

26 that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints,

27 to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

28 We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ.

29 For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.
Colossians
Chapter 2

FOR I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face,

2 that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God’s mystery, that is, Christ Himself,

3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

4 I say this so that no one will delude you with persuasive argument.

5 For even though I am absent in body, nevertheless I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good discipline and the stability of your faith in Christ.

6 Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,

7 having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.

8 See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.

9 For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form,
10 and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all
rule and authority;

11 and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made
without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the
circumcision of Christ;

12 having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised
up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from
the dead.

13 When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of
your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all
our transgressions,

14 having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against
us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having
nailed it to the cross.

15 When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public
display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.

16 Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in
respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day—

17 things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance
belongs to Christ.

18 Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-
abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he
has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind,
19 and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God.

20 If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as,

21 “Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!”

22 (which all refer to things destined to perish with use)—in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men?

23 These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence.
COLOSSIANS 3
Observation Worksheet

Chapter Theme _________________________________________________________________

THEREFORE if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

1. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.
2. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.
3. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.
4. Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.
5. For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience,
6. and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them.
7. But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth.
8. Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices,
9. and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him—
10. a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.
So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father. Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them. Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so that they will not lose heart. Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve. For he who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality.
Masters, grant to your slaves justice and fairness, knowing that you too have a Master in heaven.

2 Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving;

3 praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned;

4 that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak.

5 Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity.

6 Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.

7 As to all my affairs, Tychicus, our beloved brother and faithful servant and fellow bond-servant in the Lord, will bring you information.

8 For I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts;

9 and with him Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of your number. They will inform you about the whole situation here.
10 Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings; and also Barnabas’s cousin Mark (about whom you received instructions; if he comes to you, welcome him);

11 and also Jesus who is called Justus; these are the only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are from the circumcision, and they have proved to be an encouragement to me.

12 Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bondslave of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God.

13 For I testify for him that he has a deep concern for you and for those who are in Laodicea and Hierapolis.

14 Luke, the beloved physician, sends you his greetings, and also Demas.

15 Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea and also Nympha and the church that is in her house.

16 When this letter is read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and you, for your part read my letter *that is coming* from Laodicea.

17 Say to Archippus, “Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it.”

18 I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my imprisonment. Grace be with you.
THE LORD JESUS CHRIST AS PORTRAYED IN COLOSSIANS

His Nature/Character
THE LORD JESUS CHRIST AS PORTRAYED IN COLOSSIANS

His Work
Gnosticism

Much like the church today, many members of the early church were significantly influenced by the prevailing philosophy of the day. While some of the New Testament was being written, the church in Asia was being threatened by Gnosticism, a philosophy which became a major opponent of the gospel in the early apostolic church.

A familiarity with the teachings of Gnosticism will give you a greater understanding and appreciation for some of the warnings and teachings given in the Epistles.

Many members of the early church were seeking enlightenment, and were easily deceived by Gnostic teachers and led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ. Some had apparently left the church to form their own community purporting a different gospel than what the apostles had preached. This movement away from the church caused those who remained to question what was true, and thus confusion crept in.

The term “gnosticism” comes from the Greek word gnōsis, meaning to know. Gnosticism is a philosophy which centers on a search for higher knowledge. The Gnostics taught that this knowledge was not intellectual knowledge but a knowledge which the ordinary Christian was incapable of attaining. Once a believer came into possession of this extraordinary knowledge, according to Gnostic thought, he had “salvation.”

Although Gnostic philosophy took many strange and divergent turns, two axioms were basic to its teaching:

1. The first major Gnostic doctrine was the supremacy of knowledge.

   Certain pneumatiko or “enlightened ones” claimed to have special knowledge of the truth.

   Ordinary Christians did not or could not possess this secret of higher knowledge.

2. The second major doctrine of Gnosticism was the separation of spirit and matter.

   All matter was considered to be evil and the source of evil.
The spirit was considered to be good and impervious to defilement by anything the body (matter) did.

Purporting a so-called higher knowledge beyond that revealed by God in Christ Jesus and through the prophets, Gnosticism had its origins in the philosophies of the Greeks and the Romans, in the creeds of Plato and Philo, and in the religions of the East, especially those of Persia and India. While Christianity kept its Judaic roots, it was free from these heresies. However, when Christianity spread to Gentile territory, an attempt was made on the part of Eastern philosophical religion to form an alliance with it.

Many Gnostics allegorized the Old Testament and did not interpret its teachings literally. They strayed from the veracity of the Word which would have exposed their erroneous teaching regarding creation, sin, and the restoration of all things. They failed to see how a supreme God, pure in spirit and essentially good, could create a universe of matter which they considered evil.

When the Gnostics embraced Christianity, they split into factions on the subject of Christ’s deity. Two of those factions are as follows:

1. The Docetic Gnostics denied the humanity of Jesus. The word “docetic” comes from the Greek word dokeō, to seem. According to the Docetists, it was impossible for God, who was spirit and good, to become flesh, which was matter and evil, in the person of Jesus Christ. They believed that Jesus was a phantom; He didn’t possess a real flesh-and-blood body. He only seemed to have a body.

2. The Cerinthian Gnostics (followers of Cerinthus) separated the man Jesus from the aeon, the power of Christ. They believed that when the dove came on Jesus at His baptism, the power of Christ came and rested on the man Jesus. This power then departed before His death on the cross. So it was simply the “man” Jesus who died, not Jesus Christ, God in the flesh.

These Gnostic heresies denied that God became man and walked this earth in the person of Jesus Christ to bring redemption and salvation to mankind. Having eliminated Jesus Christ as the only way to God, the Gnostics believed they could make their own way to God through their inquiry and knowledge. Faith and one’s deeds were viewed as having no significance in salvation or the ensuing walk.

Understanding the basis of Gnosticism and the forms of thought that it took in the early days of the Christian church will enable you to better understand the doctrinal heresy some of the New Testament writers addressed.