

RIGHT SIDE UP

LIFE AS GOD
MEANT IT TO BE

PAUL GRIMMOND

Sample Daily Reading Bible notes

These 20 sample readings are from volume 18 in Matthias Media's Daily Reading Bible series. Each booklet in the series contains around 60 readings, including the full text of the Bible passage, questions to ponder, and ideas for prayer. If you find these sample readings helpful, contact Matthias Media for information about other volumes in the series, or visit www.matthiasmedia.com.

COLOSSIANS

INTRODUCTION

What makes you sit down and write a letter? Is it to catch up with someone? Is it to send all the gossip to relatives and friends? Or do you have a more serious message to convey?

Paul's New Testament letters are never just chatty social jottings. He certainly has little personal snippets in them, but, by and large, they have a serious, more weighty purpose. Colossians is no different.

Imagine a fertile valley with a delightful river wandering through it somewhere in what we now call Turkey. If you walked through the streets into the marketplace, you'd meet all kinds of people—Jews, Greeks who believe in mystery religions, and adherents to all sorts of other cults and philosophies. Among this smorgasbord of religions is a small group who call themselves 'Christians'. These were the people Paul was writing to in the letter we call Colossians.

We're not certain exactly when the Colossian church started. It may have been during Paul's lengthy stay in Ephesus (which was not far away). But whatever their past history, Paul is delighted with their faith in the gospel, and the fruit of that faith. However, he is concerned for their welfare—concerned enough to write to them while he is in prison.

You might like to use this prayer (or your own variation of it) before each of the next 20 studies:

*Heavenly Father,
Please fill me with the knowledge of your will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding so that I can walk in a manner worthy of you, fully pleasing to you, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of you.
Amen.*

READING 1

COLOSSIANS 2:6-7

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.

Before tackling chapter 1, let's take a look at what are considered the summary verses of the whole letter. Consider memorizing them!

1. Paul says the Colossians had "received" Christ (v. 6). What does he mean (cf. Col 1:3-8, ¹ 23³)?
2. How were the Colossians to continue in their Christian 'walk' (v. 6)? How is this a response to the false teaching they faced?
3. In verse 7, the image is of the Colossians being like a tree whose roots are established or bedded down in Christ. How does this help you understand the way you are to continue in Christ?

PONDER Are you continuing in your walk with Christ? Are you growing?

PRAYER IDEAS Ask God to help you abound in thankfulness for your life in Christ.

POINTER Some think Paul wrote Colossians to combat a particular heresy in the Colossian church. However, there is little agreement about the details of this heresy (if there was one). In addition, the letter was meant for a wider readership than just the Colossian Christians (Col 4:16)³. So you probably don't need to worry too much about what the 'heresy' actually was.

1. 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 growing—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.

2. ...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.

3. 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.

READING 2**COLOSSIANS 2:6-7**

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.

1. Paul says the Christian life is to be characterized by thankfulness, and lots of it (v. 7). How does this compare with:

a) your natural tendencies?

b) the national character of your country?

2. From these verses, write down those words which indicate the past, completed actions and the present, continuing aspects of the Christian life.

Past	Present

3. From what you've learned in these two verses, what would you say to someone who is confused about what to do once they have begun the Christian life?

PONDER What things distract you from Jesus? What things tempt you to 'move on' from him?

PRAYER IDEAS Ask God to help you to continue to grow in your relationship with Jesus.

READING 3**COLOSSIANS 1:1-8**

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 growing—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.

Because Paul is so passionate about Christ and Christ alone being the answer to the false teaching the Colossians were struggling with, he tells us a great deal about Jesus and who he is. But he also speaks to the Colossian Christians in a very personal way.

1. What two things in the lives of the Colossians does Paul thank God for (v. 4)?

2. Where do these two things come from?

3. The Colossians "heard" the gospel, they "understood" it and they "learned" it from Epaphras (vv. 4, 6, 7). How does their experience influence the way Christians should engage in ministry?

PONDER In your own life, where do you see evidence of the "hope laid up for you in heaven" (v. 5)?

PRAYER IDEAS Thank God for all the things you learn about the gospel in verses 5-8.

READING 4**COLOSSIANS 1:1-8**

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 growing—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.

1. *What is "the hope laid up for you in heaven" (v. 5)?*
2. *Why is 'hope' a strange choice of words here? (Hint: think about how we use the word today.) What does this verse tell you about the nature of this hope?*
3. *Why is Paul so confident that the Colossians are Christians (vv. 6-8)?*

PONDER How is the gospel "bearing fruit" in your life (v. 6)?

PRAYER IDEAS Thank God for "the hope laid up for you in heaven" (v. 5).

READING 5**COLOSSIANS 1:1-14**

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 growing—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 May you be 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.

1. *Having affirmed their strengths, Paul tells the Colossians what he prays for them. What are Paul's main requests (vv. 9-11)?*
2. *What is the connection between the "knowledge of God" and the Colossians "bearing fruit" (vv. 9-10)?*
3. *How should you respond to what God has done for you in Christ?*

PONDER What does this passage teach you about what to pray for others?

PRAYER IDEAS Pray for people in your church using some of the ideas in verses 9-14.

READING 6**COLOSSIANS 1:15-20**

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.

1. *What does it mean that Jesus is "the firstborn of all creation" and "the firstborn from the dead" (vv. 15, 18)? (See also Psalm 89:27⁴ and the pointers below.)*
2. *How is Christ's supremacy demonstrated in verses 16-20?*
3. *What is the purpose of all created things according to verse 16?*

PONDER Consider your answer to question 3. How does this affect your attitude towards your life, possessions, relationships and goals?

PRAYER IDEAS Praise and thank God for all he has done in and through Jesus.

POINTERS v. 15: This verse should not be interpreted as saying that Jesus was 'created' in the sense that you and I are. Verse 16 prohibits this way of thinking. Psalm 89 shows that the "firstborn" was always the father's heir. So, as God's Son, Jesus is heir of all things (Heb 1:2)⁵. Therefore, all of creation exists for him. One day the heir will 'collect' his full inheritance, and all believers will share in it (Col 3:3-4).⁶

v. 16: "firstborn from the dead" is a clear reference to Jesus' resurrection.

4. And I will make him the firstborn,
the highest of the kings of the earth.

5. ...but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

6. 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.

READING 7**COLOSSIANS 1:19-23**

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.

1. *What is God's overall plan for the universe (v. 20)?*
2. *Read verses 21-23. What were you like before you came to Christ? What benefits do you share now that you're part of God's people?*
3. *What are some things you could do to ensure that you "continue in the faith" (v. 23)?*

PONDER Why do you think Christians face so much pressure from both inside and outside the church to water down their understanding about who Jesus is?

PRAYER IDEAS Thank God for moving you from being "alienated and hostile" to being "holy and blameless and above reproach before him" (vv. 21-22).

READING 8**COLOSSIANS 1:24-2:5**

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.

2:1 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.

1. *What is Paul's experience of ministry (1:24, 29; 2:1)?*
2. *What is the content of his message?*
3. *What is the "mystery" that Paul speaks of (1:26-27, 2:2-3)?*

PONDER What part does God have in the process of your maturation in Christ (v. 28)? What part do you have?

PRAYER IDEAS Thank God for revealing to you Christ, his mystery (2:2). Ask him to help you grow in maturity in Christ (1:28).

POINTER 1:26-27, 2:2-3: The reference to the 'mystery' is a play on words. Unlike the mysteries of various other religions (which may have been connected with the so-called 'Colossian heresy', and which were exclusive and secret), the gospel is inclusive, and is brought to people by public proclamation, not by secret rites.

READING 9**COLOSSIANS 1:24-2:5**

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.

2:1 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.

1. *What is Paul's goal (1:28-29)?*
2. *How does Paul achieve this goal?*
3. *The Gnostics (who propagated the type of heresy and false teaching that Paul was possibly addressing) believed that secret knowledge was the key to salvation. How does Paul's description of Christ defeat Gnostic arguments (2:3-4)?*

PONDER How is 'warning' different to 'teaching' (1:28)?

PRAYER IDEAS Thank God for pastors/teachers who have ministries like Paul's—ministries that are focused on seeing people from all nations of the world grow to maturity in Christ.

READING 10**COLOSSIANS 2:6-15**

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 cancelling 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 and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

The rest of chapter 2 focuses on Paul's deep concerns about the false teaching being promoted in the Colossian church.

1. What are the "elemental spirits" urging the Christians in Colossae to do (v. 8)?
2. What does Paul want them to remember instead (vv. 9-15)? How will this affect their attitude towards those "elemental spirits"?
3. The false teachers urged the Colossians to observe certain religious practices as a way of progressing spiritually (e.g. circumcision and legalism—both of which Paul counters in verses 12-15). What are some modern equivalents?
4. Do Paul's solutions still stand? Why?

PONDER Jesus cancelled the "record of debt" that stood against you (v. 14; cf. Eph 2:14-16)⁷. What impact has this had on you?

PRAYER IDEAS Ask God to help you to continue to walk in Christ, rooted and built up in him (vv. 6-7).

7. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility¹⁵ by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace,¹⁶ and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

READING 11**COLOSSIANS 2:15-23**

He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

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, 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.

1. What are the two things Paul commands the Colossians to do in verses 16-19?

2. What things does Paul reject in this passage? Why?

3. In this section and the previous one (vv. 6-15—see Reading 10), Paul keeps coming back to Jesus again and again. What aspects of Jesus' life and work does he focus on?

PONDER Why is it helpful to have this constant focus on Jesus and his work?

PRAYER IDEAS Thank God for all that the book of Colossians has taught you about Jesus so far. Thank God for the ways Jesus has changed you since you became a Christian.

READING 12**COLOSSIANS 3:1-4**

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.

Paul makes some important statements about the Colossians and where they stand with God: some things happened decisively in the past, some are present realities and some lie in the future.

1. *What does Paul say about your past, present and future (vv. 1-4)?*
2. *In the light of these facts, what does Paul instruct the Colossians to do (v. 2)?*
3. *What do you think Paul means by "things that are above" and "things that are on earth" (v. 2)?*

PONDER How does the promise of verse 4 affect your life now?

PRAYER IDEAS Ask God to help you to set your mind on "things that are above" (v. 2).

READING 13**COLOSSIANS 3:5-11**

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.

1. *What is the down-to-earth result of the heavenly mindedness spoken of in the last reading (vv. 5-10)?*
2. *What are the reasons Paul gives for why you should get rid of these behaviours? Are they incentives for you to change?*
3. *Which of these behaviours do you find particularly challenging to 'put to death'?*

PONDER Why do you think Paul used such strong expressions like 'put to death' (v. 5)?

PRAYER IDEAS Ask God to give you the strength and conviction to put these things to death in your life.

READING 14**COLOSSIANS 3:12-17**

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.

1. *How does Paul describe the Colossian Christians in verse 12? What is the significance of this (cf. Deut 7:6^a)?*

2. *Paul has already talked about what you should 'put off'; now he talks about what you should 'put on'. What are the things Paul says you should clothe yourself with?*

3. *Which ones are the most difficult for you to 'put on'?*

PONDER Which things in Paul's list do you need to work on? What can you do to cultivate these things?

PRAYER IDEAS Ask God to give you the conviction and commitment to 'put on' these things in your life.

8. "For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth."

READING 15**COLOSSIANS 3:12-17**

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.

1. *Looking back at the end of chapter 2, Paul argued against those who say "You must obey this rule and keep that law if you want to be a real Christian". What is the difference between what Paul is doing in this section and what the false teachers were saying?*

2. *How should love be expressed in their community (vv. 13-14)?*

3. *What are some practical examples of how to "do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus" (v. 17)?*

PONDER How can you let "the word of Christ dwell in you richly" (v. 16)?

PRAYER IDEAS Ask God to help you love the people in your church the way Paul encourages you to.

READING 16**COLOSSIANS 3:18-4:1**

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 Slaves, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, 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.

4:1 Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.

1. List the commands Paul gives to:

a) husbands and wives

b) children and parents

c) slaves and masters.

2. What is the responsibility of a Christian wife (v. 18)? Why is this "fitting in the Lord"?

3. How are Christian husbands to love their wives (cf. Eph 5:25-33)?

PONDER What do you like/dislike/struggle with about the roles and responsibilities of husbands and wives outlined by Paul?

PRAYER IDEAS Ask God to help you to honour him in all of your relationships.

9. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,²⁶ that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,²⁷ so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.²⁸ In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.²⁹ For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church,³⁰ because we are members of his body.³¹ "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."³² This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.³³ However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

READING 17**COLOSSIANS 3:18-4:1**

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 Slaves, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, 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.

4:1 Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.

1. Compare Colossians 3:18-19 with Galatians 3:28.¹⁰ Has Paul contradicted himself, or are his instructions to husbands and wives in Colossians consistent with his teaching in Galatians regarding sexual equality? Why/why not?

2. How do parents (fathers especially) provoke their children?

3. How do the principles Paul outlines in 3:22-4:1 apply to your work situation?

PONDER How can you better serve each member of your family?

PRAYER IDEAS Thank God for the opportunities he gives you to serve the members of your family.

10. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

READING 18**COLOSSIANS 4:2-6**

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.

1. *Looking at verses 3-4, what is Paul's responsibility in evangelism?*
2. *What are the Colossians' responsibilities in evangelism (vv. 2, 5-6)?*
3. *How might you "walk in wisdom toward outsiders"? How can you make "the best use of the time" (v. 5)?*

PONDER What would it mean for your conversation to be "gracious, seasoned with salt" (v. 6)?

PRAYER IDEAS Ask God to give you opportunities to share your faith. Ask him to help you to make your conversations more gracious and 'salty'.

READING 19**COLOSSIANS 4:2-18**

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.

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.

1. *Paul urges the Colossians to be watchful and thankful (v. 2). What are they to be watchful and thankful for? (Hint: remember the context by looking back at 3:1-4.)*
2. *What does this passage teach you about the nature of prayer (vv. 2, 12-13)?*
3. *What does this passage teach you about the content of prayer (vv. 3-4, 12)?*

PONDER How would you describe your prayer life? How does it compare to Epaphras'?

PRAYER IDEAS Ask God to help you to make prayer a priority.

11. 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.

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.

1. *What do you learn about each of the individuals Paul mentions in his final greeting?*
2. *How does their example reinforce the teaching of his letter?*
3. *Much of this last section is about encouraging the Christians in Colossae. How do you give and receive encouragement?*
4. *Why do you think Paul ends this letter with "Remember my chains" (v. 18)?*

PONDER What do you think it means to 'struggle' on behalf of someone else in prayer (v. 12)?

PRAYER IDEAS Thank God for the people who encourage you in your Christian life. Ask him to give you opportunities to do likewise to others.