

Colossians & Philemon

Fullness of Life in Christ

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Preview and Colossians 1:1-14

The Gospel

At the core, what do people long for? When basic needs of food, shelter, and safety are met, what is still lacking? Consider these possibilities: whole, meaningful, dependable relationships; vibrant, fulfilling lives; purpose; significance. When life is so often characterized by separation, alienation, hostility, and temporary, unfulfilling pleasures, in what ways do people try to fulfill these longings?

Paul writes to the Colossians about the reality of life in Christ—a present reality that brings completeness and meaning, everything we need to live a full life in a fragmented world.

Read the letter

1. Using a contemporary translation such as the NIV, NLT, NASB, or CEV, read each chapter aloud. Listen as if you were hearing it for the first time.

What is the tone of the letter, and what particularly impressed you as you listened?

2. From this reading, what can you tell about the church at Colossae?

3. What words and ideas are repeated throughout the letter?

Read Colossians 1:1-2

4. If you drew a diagram of the relationships suggested in these verses, what would your diagram show?

5. How does the identity of the sender affect the attention you give a letter? Why?

How do you think the Christians at Colossae received this letter?

Read Colossians 1:3-8

6. As Paul continues to pray for the Colossians, for what is he thankful?

What is the direction and source of their faith and their love?

7. List all the facts you can about the gospel from verses 5 and 6.

What hope does this gospel give you?

8. In what situations have you seen people express their faith in Christ Jesus?
9. How does Paul view the spread of Christianity in his day (verse 6)?
10. In what specific ways is the gospel, the good news of Jesus, bearing fruit and growing:
 - in your community
 - in your life

11. What impresses you about Epaphras from verses 7-8, 4:12-13, and Philemon 1:23?

Read Colossians 1:9-14

12. Since Paul first heard about the Colossian Christians, he has been praying for them. Put each of Paul's requests in your own words.

Which of these requests would you like for someone to pray for you?

13. What words indicate the scope of these requests?

What do you learn about the power available to Christians?

14. What three things has the Father already done for you if you are a Christian (verses 12-13)?

15. What does it mean for someone's life to be under the dominion of darkness?

How did God accomplish your transfer from *the dominion of darkness* to *the kingdom of the Son*?

What does it mean for someone to be a subject in Jesus' kingdom?

16. Use a dictionary to define **redemption**. Why does a person need both redemption and the forgiveness of sins?

SUMMARY

1. Paul commends the Colossians for their faith and love based on their hope, a hope stored up in heaven and anchored in the word of truth. Today many seekers of truth are strongly influenced by Eastern religions and new philosophies that are eclectic and subjective. Some Christians fall into the trap of testing truth by asking “How do I feel about it?” or “What is culturally acceptable?” or “Is it politically correct?”

In what form has this temptation come to you?

2. If you were explaining to a friend the change Jesus has made in your life, what ideas could you use from this section of Paul’s letter to the Colossian Christians?

PRAYER

This prayer is based on Paul’s prayer for the Colossians in chapter 1. In addition to praying it out loud together at the end of your discussion, consider praying it for each other during the week. Put specific names in place of “us,” “we,” and “our.”

God our Father, fill us with the knowledge of your will and give us spiritual wisdom and understanding. We pray this so that the way we live will always honor and please you, that our lives will produce every kind of good fruit, and that we will have all the endurance and patience we need. We’re filled with joy and thanksgiving because you rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of your Son. Jesus purchased our freedom and forgave our sins, and in his name we pray all these things, amen.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

To learn more about the content of the gospel, see:

1 Corinthians 15:1-8

Romans 3:21-23

Ephesians 2:1-10