

Community Groups |

Growing UP | Growing WITH | Growing OUT



"Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. ²⁵Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching." – Hebrews 10:23-25 (NIV)

Why Community Groups?

Because God created us to live life in the context of relationships! This is an opportunity for you to connect with others as your experience real life-change in your Christian walk.

What is a Community Group?

A group of 6-10 people who "do life" together as they grow in their love for God, His word, and others. Community Groups encourage folks to take their "next step" in three areas: (1) **Spiritual Growth – UP** towards God, (2) **Relational Growth – WITH** Group members, and (3) **Missional Growth – OUT** to those in the church and world.

Thus, a Community Group is an environment where we are conformed more and more into the image of Jesus Christ (*Romans 8:29-30*). Our conviction is that "real life-change only happens in the context of biblical community."

Not to be left out is the fact that a Community Group is also a place for folks to have fun as they celebrate and share life together! Come join us!

Our journey begins with a six-week study of the book of *Colossians*. The following Study Guide is intended to immerse you into God's word while you grow closer to Him in the context of relationships.

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Study One | **Colossians 1:1-14**

Background

Author: The Apostle Paul and Timothy

Date written: c. 60-62 AD

Written from: Rome during house arrest (*Colossians 4:3; Acts 28:16, 30-31*) in order to combat heresy within the Church at Colossae while exhorting them to pursue a true knowledge of Jesus Christ (*Colossians 1:9-10*).

Paul and Timothy open their letter to the Colossians by encouraging their readers to pursue life change rather than mere “head knowledge” of Christ. What a reminder for us too!

1. Do you find it interesting that Paul and Timothy (*Acts 16:1-3*) co-authored this epistle (i.e. letter; *Colossians 1:1*)? Why might they have done this? Do you believe that you are a “saint” (“holy,” NIV) in Christ (*1:2; 2 Corinthians 5:17*)? Why or why not?
2. Why did Paul and Timothy thank God (*Colossians 1:3*)? What sort of example did the Colossians set (*1:4; cf. Ephesians 1:15*)? What was the foundation for their example (*Colossians 1:15*) and how can we follow it today?
3. Why is the gospel a message of hope (*Colossians 1:15; Ephesians 1:13*)? Do you see the gospel “bearing fruit” (*Colossians 1:6*) around you? If so, what does it look like? If not, why might this be? What can you do to change this (*John 15:4-5*)?

4. Paul and Timothy truly felt burdened to pray for the Colossians (1:9), but what was the focus of their prayer (cf. *Ephesians 1:17-18*)? Does this differ from how you pray for others? What does it mean to have knowledge, spiritual wisdom, and understanding?
5. What was the ultimate purpose of this wisdom (*Colossians 1:10-12; Ephesians 4:1*)? With and increase in wisdom, what should our lives look like? What source are you depending on in order to live life (*Colossians 1:11; Ephesians 3:16*)?
6. Read *Colossians 1:13*. What implications does this great “citizenship transfer” have for us (*Colossians 1:14; Acts 26:18; Romans 6:11*)? How does this reality humble you while also encouraging you to bear fruit and increase in the knowledge of God?
7. How can you practically grow in knowledge, spiritual wisdom, and understanding this week? Take some quiet, focused time at least once a day this week and thank God for the glorious salvation that you have through faith in Christ (*Romans 8:1*)!

Memory verses:

Colossians 1:13-14 – “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.”

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Study Two | **Colossians 1:15-2:5**

This section features a rich hymn that declares the supremacy of Jesus Christ. As we will see, Paul's purpose in declaring Christ is the spiritual maturity of his readers.

1. How is Christ the image of the invisible God (*Colossians 1:15; John 1:1, 14; Philippians 2:5-7*)? What does it mean for him to be the "firstborn over all creation" (*Hebrews 1:6; Romans 8:29; Revelation 1:5*)?
2. How much did Jesus Christ create (*Colossians 1:16-17; John 1:3*) and what difference does this make in your life? Do you really see Jesus as being the "head" of the church (*Colossians 1:18*), or is it someone else (cf. *Ephesians 1:20-23*)?
3. How did God the Father reconcile *all* things to Himself (*Colossians 1:20*)? Why was reconciliation necessary (*Genesis 3:6-7*)? How did this reconciliation affect you and what is its result (*Colossians 1:22-23; Romans 5:10-11; 2 Corinthians 5:18-19*)?

4. Why would God keep the gospel as a “mystery” from past generations (*Colossians 1:26*; cf. *Romans 16:25-26*; *Ephesians 3:2-6*; *Hebrews 1:1-2*)? Are you humbled by God’s gracious revelation of this “mystery” to you? Why or why not?

5. What is Paul’s ultimate purpose in proclaiming Jesus Christ (*Colossians 1:28-29*)? What does it mean to be “complete in Christ” and when will this happen (*1 John 3:2*)? How should we live in the meantime (cf. *2 Corinthians 7:1*; *1 Peter 1:16*)?

6. Why was Paul so passionate about the wellbeing of people that he never met (*Colossians 2:1*)? What was Paul’s concern in *Colossians 2:4* (*Romans 16:16-17*; *2 Timothy 4:3-4*)? How can we combat this problem in the church today?

7. Imagine if Paul had sent this letter to you. Would you be encouraged to grow “firm/stable” in your Christian faith (*Colossians 2:5*)? Do you have anyone in your life who encourages you to grow firm in your faith (cf. *Proverbs 11:14*; *26:4*)?

Memory verses:

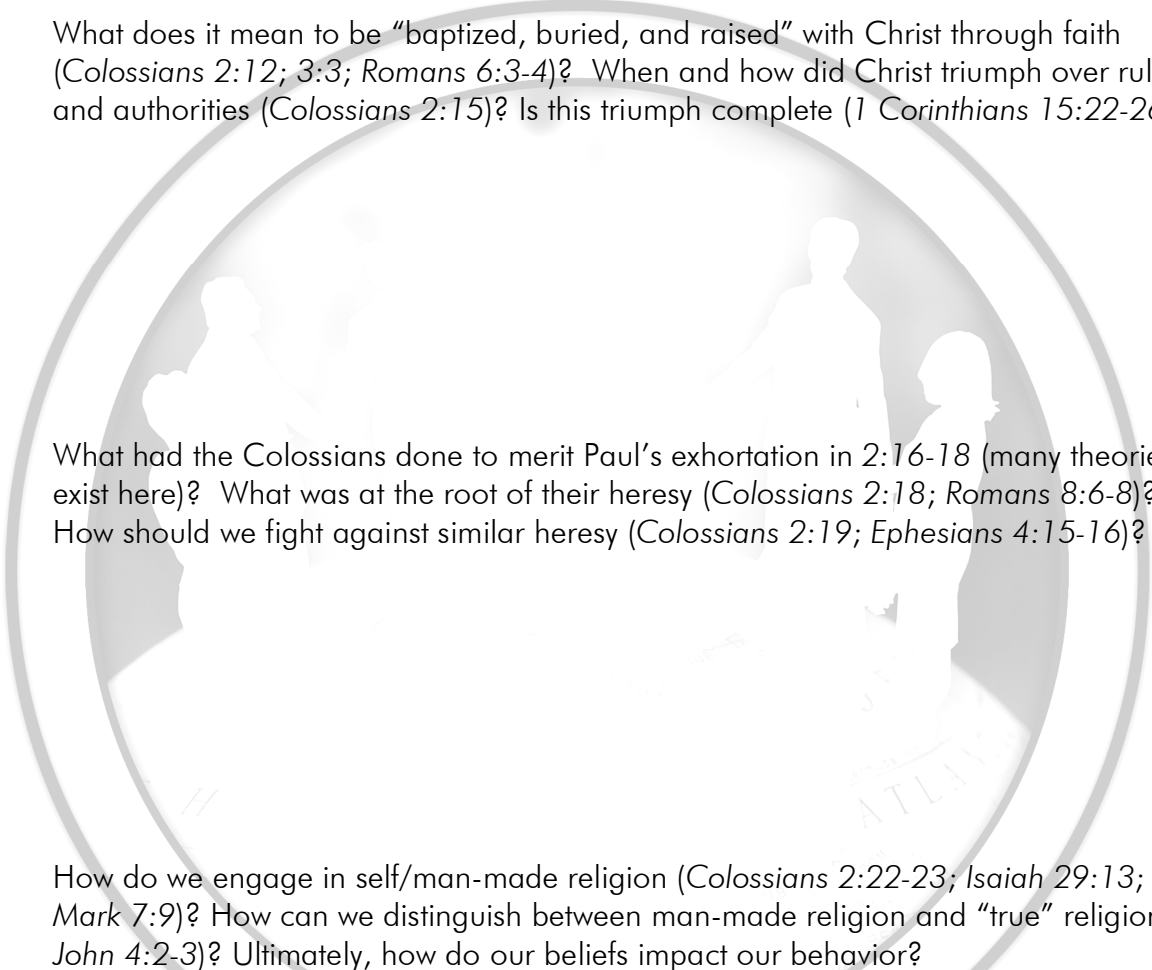
Colossians 1:28-29 – “We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. (29) For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.”

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Study Three | **Colossians 2:6-23**

This section of Colossians expounds upon the important biblical idea of discipleship. Pay attention to how these verses apply to you so that you may “walk” in Christ Jesus (2:6)

1. Notice the language that Paul uses to describe Christian growth (“rooted,” “built up,” etc.; *Colossians 2:7*). How is this language fitting for our spiritual lives (*1 Corinthians 1:8; Philippians 1:6*)? How have you seen this progression in your own life?
2. Similar to *Colossians 2:4*, what does 2:8 warn against (cf. *1 Timothy 6:20-21*)? What are “human tradition” and the “basic principles of the world” (*Galatians 4:3; Ephesians 5:6*)? Where do we see this empty “philosophy” in our world today?
3. Why would Paul repeat the truths from *Colossians 1:18-19* here in 2:9-10? What did he want his readers to know about Jesus’ nature and authority (*John 3:35; Philippians 2:9-11*)? What difference does Christ’s nature and authority make in your life?

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4. What was the meaning of “circumcision” in the Old Testament (*Genesis 17:10-12*)? What did Paul mean by a “circumcision without human hands” (*Colossians 2:11-12; Romans 2:29; Philippians 3:3*)?

 5. What does it mean to be “baptized, buried, and raised” with Christ through faith (*Colossians 2:12; 3:3; Romans 6:3-4*)? When and how did Christ triumph over rulers and authorities (*Colossians 2:15*)? Is this triumph complete (*1 Corinthians 15:22-26*)?

 6. What had the Colossians done to merit Paul’s exhortation in *2:16-18* (many theories exist here)? What was at the root of their heresy (*Colossians 2:18; Romans 8:6-8*)? How should we fight against similar heresy (*Colossians 2:19; Ephesians 4:15-16*)?

 7. How do we engage in self/man-made religion (*Colossians 2:22-23; Isaiah 29:13; Mark 7:9*)? How can we distinguish between man-made religion and “true” religion (*1 John 4:2-3*)? Ultimately, how do our beliefs impact our behavior?

Memory verse:

Colossians 2:3 – *“See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.”*

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Study Four | Colossians 3:1-17

Paul clearly instructs his readers to pursue godly living, noting the importance of putting aside old ways of life. Take special note of verse 17, which is the climax verse of this section.

1. How do you set your heart/mind on “things above” (Colossians 3:1-2; cf.)? How does this relate to our dying and being raised with Christ (Colossians 3:3; Philippians 3:20-21)? What “earthly things” do you set your mind on (cf. Matthew 16:23)?
2. Do you look forward to being revealed with Christ in glory (Colossians 3:4)? What does this mean? When will this happen (1 Corinthians 15:50-53; 1 John 3:2)? How should this reality give us immeasurable hope (Romans 8:20-21)?
3. According to Colossians 3:5, what are the practical implications of the first four verses of the chapter (Galatians 5:24)? Why are these actions considered to be idolatry (cf. Ephesians 5:5)?
4. A similar list is given in Colossians 3:8 (notice that these sins relate to how we treat other people). How might you need to grow in these areas? What does it mean to put off the “old self” (Colossians 3:9; cf. Romans 6:6)? How can we do this?

5. How does putting on the “new self” contrast with putting on the “old self” (*Colossians 3:10; Romans 13:14*)? What is the basis for putting on this “new self” (*Romans 12:2; Ephesians 4:22-24*)?

6. Contrast the list of virtues in *Colossians 3:12-14* to the previous list (*3:8-9*)? How does God’s choosing impact your willingness to live an obedient life (*Ephesians 2:10*)? Why is unity so important to God (*Colossians 3:14; Psalm 133:1; Ephesians 4:3*)?

7. What does the peace of Christ bring (*Colossians 3:15; John 14:27*)? What are the results of the word of Christ dwelling (*Colossians 3:16; cf. Ephesians 5:18-20*)? Finally, *Colossians 3:17* is a summary verse for our life in Christ. How can you specifically live this verse out this week?

Memory verse:

Colossians 3:17 – “And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

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Study Five | **Colossians 3:18–4:1**

Paul's instructions for Christian households stems from Colossians 3:17. Whatever your role is, think about how you can more successfully live out these words.

1. If you are a wife, how difficult is it for you to be subject (or “submit”) to your husband (*Colossians 3:18; Ephesians 5:22*)? How does our culture typically understand the word “submit?” What does submission that is “fitting” to the Lord look like?

2. If you are a husband, do you find it challenging to love your wife (*Colossians 3:19; Ephesians 5:25; 1 Peter 3:7*)? How can you guard from being “harsh with” (NIV) or “embittered against” (NASB) them (*Ephesians 4:31*)?

3. Why is obedience from children pleasing to the Lord (*Colossians 3:20; Ephesians 6:1*)? As a father, how do you protect from exasperating your children (*Colossians 3:21; Ephesians 6:4; Deuteronomy 6:4-7; Proverbs 22:6*)?

4. How does *Colossians 3:22* apply to us today (see also *Ephesians 6:5*)? Do you tend to conduct your work with “external service” (NASB)? Who should we see as our true “boss” each day (*Ephesians 6:6*)?

5. What fears do you have that prevent you from working primarily to please God (*Galatians 1:10*)? How might your daily tasks (at work or at home) look differently if you worked for the Lord with all of your heart (*Colossians 3:23; Ephesians 6:7-8*)?

6. What “inheritance” is Paul talking about (*Colossians 3:24*)? Is he referring to salvation (*1 Peter 1:3-4*) or something else (*Job 34:11; Jeremiah 17:9; 2 Corinthians 5:10*)? Why does God judge without partiality (*Colossians 3:25; Romans 2:11*)?

7. If you are a “master” (i.e. employer), how do you lead your employees justly and fairly (*Colossians 4:1; Ephesians 6:9*)? Who is the ultimate “Master” of your trade (*Psalms 24:1*)? Do you trust that He is in control of your business (*1 Samuel 2:7*)?

Memory verses:

Colossians 3:23-24 – “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, (24) since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.”

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Study Six | **Colossians 4:2-18**

Paul and Timothy conclude this letter with a corporate admonition to evangelism and spiritual growth in Christ Jesus.

1. Do you “devote” yourself to prayer (*Colossians 4:2*)? What does this look like practically? How is prayer related to thanksgiving (cf. *1 Thessalonians 5:16-18*)? What difference can devoted prayer make in your life (*Luke 18:1*)?
2. Are you “making the most of every opportunity” (*Colossians 4:5*; *1 Peter 3:15*)? Who are the “outsiders” and why is our speech/conversation so crucial to relating to them? Is your conversation “salty” (*Colossians 4:6*; *Ephesians 4:29*)? Why or why not?
3. Who is this Onesimus character (*Colossians 4:9*)? Briefly skim the letter of *Philemon*, verses 10 through 17 for some background. Thinking about the fact that Onesimus was once a slave, how significant is it that he would be used by God?
4. What is significant about Paul’s mention of Mark, Barnabas’ cousin, in *Colossians 4:10*? See *Acts 12:12*; *13:13*; and *15:36-40* for background on (John) Mark. Why is it noteworthy that Mark would serve with Paul in ministry (*2 Timothy 4:11*)?

5. Paul's ministry partners were both Jews (*Colossians 4:7-11*) and Gentiles (Luke, Demas, etc.; *Colossians 4:12-14*). Why would an ethnically diverse team have made a difference? At the same time, how is this distinction irrelevant (*Galatians 3:28*; *Colossians 3:11*)?

6. Why were Paul's letters were circulated to different church (*Colossians 4:16*; *1 Timothy 4:13*)? Think of how fortunate we are to have his letters in our possession now. Why would Paul point out that he was writing with his "own hand" (*Colossians 4:18*; *1 Corinthians 16:21*)?

7. Looking back on our study of Colossians, do any of Paul and Timothy's words particularly resonate with you? Did you find any key verses to memorize? Try to summarize the theme of the book and give three specific applications for your life.

Memory verses:

Colossians 4:5-6 – "Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. (6) Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone."

Resources for Philippians | TBC

For further study of the book of Colossians, see the following Bible Study Resources:

<http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/colossians.pdf>

<http://net.bible.org/bible.php?book=Col&chapter=1>

