

Colossians Study: Week One

Introduction

1. About God's Word

a. Isaiah 55:10,11

10 "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven
and do not return there but water the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
11 so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

2. The importance of prayer and the Holy Spirit

3. Pray

4. What we are covering *tonight*

- a. Go over format
- b. Basic principles of studying an epistle
- c. Background information on the book of Colossians
- d. Do week one study together
- e. If we have time, small groups

Course Format

1. Session Format

- a. My talk/teaching based on the homework you did
- b. Discussion as a large group. Opportunity to ask questions, etc.
- c. Small group discussions
 - i. Mostly to go over the application parts of your homework
 - ii. Pray together

2. Workbook

- a. Go over the breakdown - 5 steps
 - i. You may want to do them like I have them, one per day
 - ii. You may want to plan an extended time to do it all at once or in one or two sittings
 - iii. Don't stress over sections that don't have a clear answer
- b. Show them God's character appendix (desiring God kids)

- c. Notes for the parts I am teaching
- d. Hand out write the Colossians worksheet
- 3. Other Resources that you may find helpful
 - a. A study Bible for cross-references and notes
 - i. Hand out the introduction from ESV study bible
 - b. Blue letter Bible, if you like original language type study
 - c. The Bible Project for an overview
 - d. Dwell Bible app to listen and listen and listen
 - e. Highlighters, colored pencils, markers, pens
 - i. Frixion erasable pens, highlighters, markers

Basic Principles for Studying Epistles (*I'm going to give you a quick overview, then in the weeks to come, you'll see what this looks like more in-depth*).

1. What is an epistle?
 - a. Epistolary
 - b. Pauline Epistle
2. They make up 80% of the New Testament
3. What features of an epistle differ from a historical, prophetic, or wisdom book? How might our approach to an epistle differ from our approach to studying a historical or prophetic book of the Bible?
Because it's written to a specific audience with a specific message in mind, it's important to understand how the original audience would have interpreted the information.
4. **Principle 1: discover the author, date, recipients, and occasion.**
 - a. Author
 - b. Recipients
 - c. Date
 - d. Occasion
 - i. Was there a problem that needed to be addressed?
 - ii. Was there a doctrine he wanted to teach?
5. **Principle 2: Read the entire book in one sitting to establish the theme.** (and reread it lots of times)
 - a. What would be the benefit? This helps us identify the main themes, running arguments, and the overall purpose of the letter. Reading a letter in chunks makes this more difficult.

- b. Read in multiple translations.
- c. Most letters are short enough to read the whole thing in less than an hour. Colossians takes about 15-20 minutes.
- d. Helps us get the larger themes of the book

6. Principle 3: Keep every passage in its literary context

- a. Can you think of an example of scripture often taken out of context?
- b. Philippians 4:13 on fitness clothing.

7. Principle 4: make connections with the book of Acts

- a. Which book of the New Testament would be a great companion to the epistles... the Pauline ones in particular? Acts
- b. The book of Acts – Many of the events recorded in Acts can shed light on issues addressed in the epistles – particularly Paul's letters. For instance, Paul's unique love for the Philippians is better understood when we read of his time in Philippi. The emphasis on sexual morality in 1 Corinthians can be better understood by studying pagan worship in Corinth.

8. Principle 5: Always start with THEM THEN before you go to US NOW.

- a. Why is this important? More accurate understanding, richer application
- b. Research the culture and history – More than 2,000 years separate us from the time of the epistles. So much has changed about society, family life, how we do business, world religions, and a host of other things.
- c. We often want to ask, what is this verse or passage saying to me?

Background Information on the book of Colossians

(Principle 1 - Discover Author, Date, Recipient, and Occasion)

1. Author? Paul (note the use of the word "I" not we to include Timothy)
2. Date: c. A.D. 62 (same time as Philemon and Ephesians)
 - a. Sent with Tychicus and Onesimus
 - b. Paul's imprisonment in Rome (that followed his harrowing voyage in Acts 27-28)
3. Recipients? Church at Colossae

- a. Paul has never visited
- b. Planted by Epaphras. (**Principle 4 - Make connections with the book of Acts**)
- c. Epaphras isn't directly mentioned, but he probably got saved during the time Paul spent two years preaching in Ephesus. (Acts 19:10)

8 And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. 9 But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus.³ 10 This continued for two years so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews, and Greeks.

- 4. Occasion: Paul heard about the church from Epaphras, who was apparently concerned that this young church was being infiltrated or influenced by a dangerous form of syncretism, which I will discuss in more detail later.

This information is in the introductory section of the ESV Study Bible.

- 5. Literary Structure - typical of Paul's letters to various congregations in the early church
 - a. Greeting (1:1-2)
 - b. Thanksgiving and Prayer (1:3-14)
 - c. Body (1:15 - 4:6)
 - i. Doctrine
 - ii. Practice
 - d. Conclusion (4:7-18)
 - i. Closing instructions
 - ii. Closing greetings
 - e. What is unique about Colossians?
 - i. The Christ Hymn in Chapter 1
 - ii. It's the most Christocentric epistle
 - 1. Not the number of times Christ is mentioned

2. But the proportion of times compared to the other members of the Trinity.
 - iii. The fact that we don't know exactly what the heresy is (more about that later)
6. Setting (part of **Principle 5... this is the THEM/THEN part**)
 - a. Financial recession
 - i. Kind of like a route 66 situation
 - ii. Financial terminology (inheritance, put to death, covetousness, debt is canceled)
 - b. Insignificant - least important city
 - i. Hieropolous - touristy
 - ii. Laodemia - commercial
 - c. Cultural pressures
 - i. Mystical Polytheism - Many gods
 - ii. Societal pressure - if something went wrong in the area, it was because you made the gods angry.
 - d. Jewish customs
 - i. Dietary
 - ii. Supplemental practices adding to salvation
 - e. All agree that the worldview of their time was influencing the church. Syncretism - worldly philosophy merged with Christianity.
 - i. Douglas Moo says, "It is a situation in which the worldview of that time, with its religious and philosophical syncretism, was dominating the way the Colossians viewed Christ and their spirituality. Perhaps God in his providence has kept hidden from us some of the specifics of that false teaching so that the general contours of the problem could match so nicely the situation Christians and churches have faced through millennia."
 - ii. Establish a robust Christocentric worldview that will take care of any problem these people might have along these lines.
7. (Part of **Principle 2 - reading in one sitting to find out the major themes**)

- a. Theme: *Christ is Lord over all of creation, including the invisible realm. He has secured redemption for his people, enabling them to participate with Him in His death, resurrection, and fullness.* (ESV Study Bible)
- b. Have you ever taught Sunday School, and if little kids don't know the answer to the question, they say, "Jesus."
- c. The solution to the problem of worldly cultural influence on the church is Jesus. The solution to the problem of extrabiblical religious culture is Jesus.
- d. How might this book of the Bible, in particular, be beneficial to US/NOW **(Part of Principle 5)**
- e. The verse that keeps gripping my heart and influencing my prayer as I read and study this book is 3:4 "*When Christ who is your life* appears, then you will also appear with Him in glory."
 - i. He is my life. The source of all life, physical and spiritual.
 - ii. But is he MY life... like is He everything to me? That's what I want.