



EVERLASTING JOY
Book of Colossians
Lesson One

Before you begin, please read the whole book of Colossians at least once through. Answer the questions below at whatever speed or depth you are comfortable with. Don't forget to pray and ask the Holy Spirit to open your understanding and guide you "into all truth"! (John 16:13) Let's get going right away on our **Memory Verse of the Week** which is Colossians 1:17, "And He is before all things and in Him all things consist." Amen to that!

1. Read all four chapters of Colossians. Write your first thoughts and impressions of the book.

Paul begins this letter on a light note without immediately sharing the burden on his heart for them.

2. Read Colossians 1:1-29. Observe and list the facts you find, noting the key words and phrases on your **Key Word** sheet.

3. How many times is the word “all” used in this chapter? Why is this significant?

Paul begins this letter with his name, which was typical of the style of writing at the time. He calls himself an apostle by the will of God, establishing his authority with the Colossians. Paul begins his letter on a personal note before he begins the doctrinal points. Paul was thankful they had heard the Gospel, and that it was bearing fruit. The word “Gospel” comes from the Greek word “evangelion,” which literally means “good news.” Real faith in the Gospel results in a changed life, which Paul saw in his friends in Colossae.

4. Read verses 1-8. Paul mentions seven things that are accomplished by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Read each one and **list the verse** from this section that corresponds. Explain how the Gospel causes these changes. (Other verses are given for support.)
 - a. Received by faith (Hebrews 11:1)
 - b. Results in love (John 13:34-35)
 - c. Rests in hope (1 Peter 1:4, Hebrews 6:18-19)
 - d. Reaches the world (Matthew 24:14)
 - e. Reproduces fruit (Matthew 13:3-8)
 - f. Rooted in grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)
 - g. Reported by people (Acts 1:8, Romans 10:14)
5. Explain how the Gospel should result in love.
6. In what were the Colossians putting their faith?
7. In what other “things” do we often place our faith?

8. Paul was thankful for what was happening as a result of their faith. Are you thankful for what God is doing in the lives of other believers? Do you ever let them know that you see God working in their lives and how thankful you are for them?
9. What is Paul's prayer for them in verses 9-12?
10. Explain what it means to "walk worthy" of the Lord? (Are you?)
11. Are you increasing in the knowledge of God? Are you teaching your children how to do that too?

We need to remember that the false teachers at the time were denying the deity of Christ. They claimed that Jesus was "prominent" but not "preeminent." They believed that Jesus was but one of many "emanations" that proceeded from God, through which men could reach God. He was "one" way, not "the" way. In this section, Paul was setting out to prove that Jesus was preeminent. Paul points out that Jesus is the Savior, the Creator, and the Head of the Church. Paul wants to make sure the Colossians understand the true identity of Christ, in relation to God, the universe, the unseen world, and the church.

12. What's the main point of verses 12-20?

Verse 12 tells us that we have been "qualified" to be partakers of the inheritance, which means "to make fit," "to empower," or to "authorize." God has qualified us through the finished work of Christ.

13. How long does our inheritance last? Read Hebrews 9:15.

14. The word “delivered” means “to draw to oneself or to rescue.”
“Translated” means removed or changed. How have we been delivered and translated?

Redemption means to deliver by payment of a ransom and was used to describe the freeing of a slave from bondage.

15. From verses 15-20, how does Paul refute the teaching that Jesus was less than God? What arguments does he use?

16. How was Christ the “image” of God? Read Philippians 2:6, John 14:9, and John 1:14.

The word “image” means “an exact representation and revelation.” In His essence, God is invisible, but Jesus Christ has revealed Him to us, according to John 1:18.

The phrase “first born” does not infer that Jesus was a created being, but refers to position and rank, or status. Jesus was not the first being created, since He Himself is the Creator of all things (John 1:3). He was the highest in rank, or of first importance. Jesus is also “prior” to all Creation.

17. How is Jesus “before” all things? (Read John 1:1-2, 1 John 1:1, John 8:58, Micah 5:2, and Revelation 22:13.)

18. What do we learn about the Creator as we study creation? How does that minister to you?

- 19.** The false teachers were saying that Jesus was no higher than the angels. How does Paul refute that? (Read Hebrews 1:7-8, Ephesians 1:21, Philippians 2:10, and 1 Peter 3:22)

Irving Jensen makes a great point in his book Jensen's Survey of the New Testament. He says, "A key phrase in this passage is 'in Him all things hold together.' The statement is sometimes referred to as the Colossian law. The phrase 'all things' no doubt refers to every realm, including the spiritual and physical. Concerning the latter, it is interesting that the physical scientist is baffled by his observation that the atoms of the universe remain intact, when all the physical laws say some of their parts (electrons, protons) are mutually repellant. In one scientist's words, 'Some inflexible inhibition is holding them relentlessly together.' The Scripture of Colossians 1:17, by the hand of Paul, reveals that Christ is the binding force of all things."

According to verse 18, Jesus is the head of the church. The Greeks used this word to mean "source" and "origin" as well as "leader, or ruler." He is the source and the leader.

- 20.** In this verse, what four great truths about Christ's relation to the church does Paul point out?

- A.
- B.
- C.
- D.

Jesus was not the first one that was raised from the dead, but He was the most important of all, because without His resurrection, there would be no resurrection for us (1 Corinthians 15:20).

- 21.** What phrase in verse 18 sums up this entire section?

The term “fullness” was a word used by the Gnostics to refer to divine power and attributes, which, they believed, was divided among various gods. Paul most likely used this term to sum up his argument, stating that all the “fullness” dwells in Christ alone.

- 22.** What are some practical ways that we can show Christ that He is preeminent in our life?

Search your heart on this one. Is Christ preeminent in your life? Have you given Him the highest place of honor? I’ve heard it said that “If Christ isn’t Lord over all, He isn’t Lord at all.” Ladies, is He the Lord of your life, or is someone, or something else, reigning on the throne?

God’s ultimate plan was to reconcile all things to Himself, through Jesus Christ. The word “reconcile” means “to change” or “exchange.” In the New Testament, it refers to a change in a relationship. When people change from being at war with each other to being at peace, they are “reconciled.” For a believer, reconciliation means that a right relationship has been restored between God and man. They have exchanged hostility for friendship with God. In this section, Paul now argues the preeminence of Christ by showing that in Jesus Christ, there is total and complete reconciliation between God and man.

- 23.** Discuss the plan of reconciliation from verses 19-23. (Also read Ephesians 2:16 and Romans 5:9-11) Who made it possible? According to Romans 8:21, what else will be reconciled to God?

We must remember that although reconciliation has been made possible for all men (John 3:16, 1 John 2:2), only those who come to a saving faith in Christ will be redeemed. Paul reminds them that this reconciliation is only possible through the blood of Christ. Blood speaks of His atonement. John MacArthur writes, “Blood connects Christ’s death with the Old Testament sacrificial system (1 Peter 1:18-19). It is also a term

that graphically notes violent death, such as suffered by the sacrificial animals. The countless thousands of animals sacrificed under the Old Covenant pointed ahead to the violent, blood-shedding death the final sacrificial lamb would suffer. The writer of Hebrews informs us that ‘the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy place by the high priest as an offering for sin, are burned outside the camp. Therefore, Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate (Hebrews 13:11-12). Unlike those animals, Jesus did not bleed to death (John 19:34). No man took His life. He was not a helpless victim, but willingly offered up His life to God (John 10:17-18). Jesus chose the moment of His death (John 19:30).”

- 24.** How does Paul describe the Colossians before they were reconciled?
- 25.** Before you were saved, you were alienated, or “estranged” from God. Although you are no longer estranged, is there anything in your life that is breaking your fellowship with Him? Examine your heart today. Are you grieving or pleasing Him?

- 26.** According to verse 22, what is the aim of reconciliation?

The word “holy” means to be separated from sin and set apart to God. Blameless means “without blemish.” Irreproachable means “free from accusation,” meaning that no one can bring a charge against you. Once we are reconciled to God, God will not accept the accusations that Satan tries to throw at us (Romans 8:31-34). Isn’t it amazing that God sees us as we will be in heaven. We have a holy standing before God that no one can change. God sees us as clean, washed by the blood of the Lamb. In God’s sight, we are beautiful!

- 27.** In verse 23, Paul gives us some evidences of those who are truly reconciled. If someone is really saved, what will be the result?

This verse has been translated by some to prove that you can lose your salvation if this condition is not met. This would mean that our salvation is never really assured. Others believe that Paul is giving the Colossians some signs of one who is truly saved. If they have been reconciled to God, they will continue in the faith and not move away from the hope of the Gospel. There are many that claim to know Christ, but Jesus Himself said that many of those He never knew (Matthew 7:22-23). By falling away, they are simply proving that they never really knew Him. In 1 John 2:19, John writes, "They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, in order that it might be shown that they all are not of us." I believe that we continue in the faith if we are saved. We must examine our own heart, making sure that we really have a relationship with Him.

28. Paul sees himself as a minister of this Gospel of reconciliation (23). Read 2 Corinthians 5:17-21. As ambassadors for Christ, what is our responsibility? (Look up the word "ambassador" to get a better understanding of what Paul is saying.)

29. 2 Corinthians 5:20 shows us the burden of Paul's heart. Do you have the same burden? If not, what should you do?

Paul now spends some time describing the source and the aim of his own personal ministry. His enemies were trying to capitalize on the fact that the great apostle Paul was in prison. Paul just turned the table and used his circumstance to bring glory to God. Jesus was sufficient, even in Paul's sufferings.

30. According to verses 24-29, did Paul see suffering as a penalty or a privilege? Why?

Not only was Paul suffering for Christ, he was also suffering for the Gentiles, and for Christ's body, the church.

31. How was he suffering for the Gentiles? Read Ephesians 3:1-13.

32. How was he suffering for the body? (Before Paul was saved, what was his attitude toward the body of Christ?)

Paul knew that it was possible to rejoice, no matter what was happening in his life. Joy did not depend on his circumstances. At that time, believers rejoiced "that they had been counted worthy to suffer shame for His name" (Acts 5:41). Paul mentions this a few times in the book of Philippians (1:29, 3:10). Jesus Himself said, "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 10:10). Paul was suffering for the sake of Christ, to glorify Him and spread the Good News. He was suffering for the Gentiles, being the vessel chosen by God to bring them the Gospel. In fact, he was in prison because of it. And, thirdly, he was suffering for the body, devoting his life to minister to them.

33. The New Testament gives us at least four reasons why suffering is a cause for joy. Read the following Scriptures and list the reasons given.

- A.** Philippians 3:10
- B.** 1 Peter 4:14 and 2 Timothy 3:12
- C.** Romans 8:17-18 and 2 Corinthians 4:17
- D.** Philippians 1:14

Verse 24 is a little puzzling and has created much controversy. The simplest explanation seems to be that Paul was saying he was taking his turn in sharing in the afflictions of Christ, as his way to build up the church.

The persecution he was receiving was meant for Christ but had now been turned toward Paul and those who were preaching the Gospel (2Corinthians 1:5).

The “mystery” that Paul is referring to in verse 26 was the fact that God was uniting Jews and Gentiles in the church (Ephesians 2:11-22). The word mystery is not referring to secret teachings that only the privileged receive. Paul used this word to describe truth that was once hidden but is now revealed in the New Testament. Warren Wiersbe said, “When the church is completed, then Jesus Christ will return and take His people to Heaven (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). Then He will again deal with Israel as a nation and establish the promised Kingdom (Acts 15:12-18).” The Gentiles are no longer excluded from God’s blessings and graces. Jews and Gentiles alike are now both saved by faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 10:12-13).

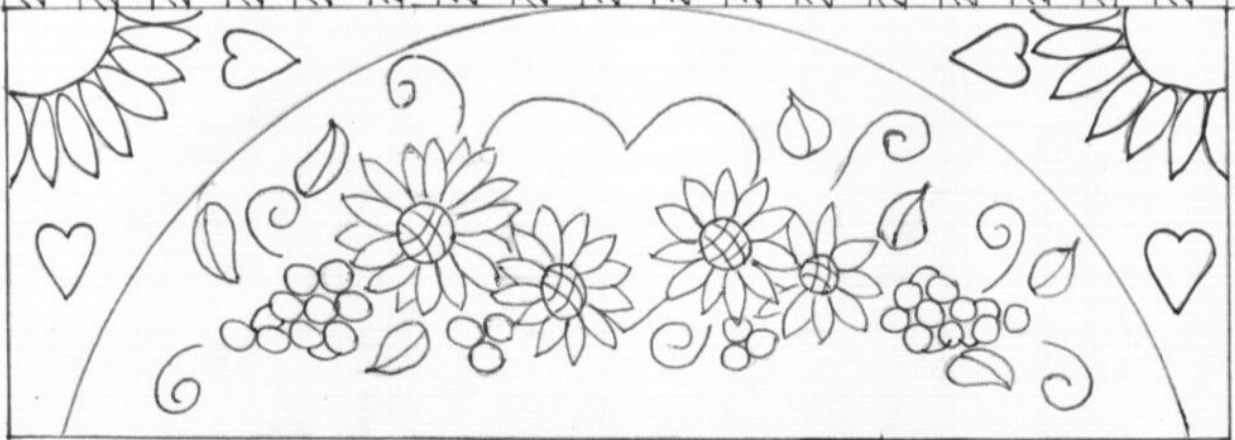
34. What are some signs of “growth” in Christ?

35. Are you growing in Christ? Look back over this year. Have you matured “in Christ”? How do you know?

Paul was expending all his strength, agonizing and working hard in order to see their growth. Although Paul did his part, he knew his power to minister came from God. The word “labor” is a strong word, denoting toil to the point of weariness or exhaustion.

36. What are you striving for? Are you laboring in ministry toward others? To “what end” are you laboring? At the end of the day, are you exhausted because you lived for Christ or for self?

Let’s spend some time in prayer expressing our gratitude to Him that we are a new creation in Christ, being reconciled by the blood of Jesus! See you next week!



That you may walk worthy of the Lord,
Fully pleasing Him,
Being fruitful in every good work
And increasing in the knowledge of God.

Colossians 1:10

