

Colossians 5 Week Study

Before studying a book of the Bible verse by verse, read the whole book and write down your first impressions. What is the book about? Who is the book written to? What are the main themes or purposes? Research the book as much as possible to gain an understanding of the context. Since Colossians is a letter to the church there, learn the importance of letters to Christians at this time.

Week 1 Colossians 1:1-12

Essential Questions: Who are your spiritual mentors? How do they help you and what qualities do they possess that you especially value?

Monday: Pray for your daily study time, then read Colossians 1:1-12 and jot down first thoughts. Take time to look up anything you want to learn about Colossae.

Tuesday: Think of someone you know and admire spiritually (a mentor). Why do you admire them? Now imagine that person is writing this letter opening to you. Rewrite this portion of the Colossae letter (or mentally reread it) filling in your name. How would you like to receive such a letter? What part can be said of you? What do you wish could be said? Pray about this and thank God for His faithfulness.

Wednesday: Reread this passage and write down (or highlight in yellow) all the words describing the Colossian believers. Then write down (or highlight in green) everything Paul prays, or hopes will happen for them. Lastly, circle one or two things from this list that you want God to develop in your life.

Thursday: Looking at the qualities you listed on Tuesday and the words you circled on Wednesday, prayerfully choose one of them to use for a word study. To do a word study, look up your word in dictionaries, online, in the Bible concordance, and the Bible side notes to give you a fuller picture of what the word means. Write down a Bible verse that pertains to your word study on a card and keep it some place to look at daily.

Friday: Look at verse 1:7. "It" refers to the gospel message that Epaphras shared with the Colossians leading to their belief in Jesus. Who told you about Jesus? Write about that person and how you came to faith in Christ. Have you had the opportunity to share your story with others or mentor someone? If yes, jot down some highlights. If no, and you would like to learn how, please let your study facilitators know so they can help. Pray for the person who shared with you and for others around you who are ready to hear about Jesus.

Saturday: Rest and reflect. Look over your notes. Pray about what you have learned so far and ask God how to apply it. Circle or write down something from this week's study that was an interesting fact, something to apply, a verse to memorize, or something inspirational.

Week 2 Colossians 1:13-2:5

Essential Questions: Who is God and how has He impacted your life? What evidence do you see of His work (the fruit of faith)?

Monday: Pray for your daily study time, then read Colossians 1:13-2:5 and jot down first thoughts. As we move our thoughts from valuable spiritual mentors in our lives (like Paul was to the Colossians) to the living God and who He is, pray for refreshing perspectives as you study.

Tuesday: Using verses 1:13-23 for reference, make a chart listing who God is, what God does, and what God will do. Some verses reference Jesus, His son. Look over your lists and circle one or two items that particularly stand out to you. Meditate on these. Look up other verses that reference the items you circled. Then pray, thanking God for who He is, what He has done, and what He will do.

Wednesday: Read verses 1:21-23. These are great verses to remember when explaining salvation to someone else! Do you remember a time before faith? Did you feel alienated from God or like an enemy in your own mind? Do you remember evil behaviors? Maybe you are even still dealing with consequences. Look at verse 22 and 23. What two things are true no matter what our past or current struggles? These verses make me think of one of my favorite hymns, Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing. If you have not heard it, look up the hymn online and listen to the words especially these:

O to grace how great a debtor
Daily I'm constrained to be!
Let Thy goodness, like a fetter,
Bind my wandering heart to Thee.
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
Prone to leave the God I love;
Here's my heart, O take and seal it,
Seal it for Thy courts above.

Thursday: Read verses 1:24-27. What is the mystery Paul writes about? This is a good time to do a word study. Look at the footnote letters next to this word to find other verses in the Bible about "mystery." Also, look up "mystery" in the dictionary to get a good definition. Write down interesting things you learned from your word study.

Friday: Read verses 1:28-2:5, then write down all that Paul (and other apostles) does and hopes for the believers. Now think about your friends, family, coworkers, anyone God has in your life right now. What do you do and hope for them? Circle one or two of the items listed that stand out to you. Ask God for ideas on living these verses out and for "all His energy, which so powerfully works" in you.

Saturday: Rest and reflect. Look over your notes. Pray about what you have learned so far and ask God how to apply it. Praise Him for your time together and any insights learned.

Week 3 Colossians 2:6-23

Essential Questions: Colossians 2:6-7. How can you continue to live in Him, be rooted and built up in Him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness?

Monday: In this part of the letter, Paul directly addresses the Colossian believers about the cultural and spiritual influences negatively affecting their faith. Instead of first thoughts, pray after reading 2:6-23 and ask God to clearly show you any thoughts, beliefs, or traditions you have that are contrary to His word or that hinder your growth. Consider taking a “media fast” this week where you only listen to worship music, read the Bible, and watch Christian programming. It is also beneficial to eliminate all noise completely for a time to clear your thoughts. Just pray and read the Bible.

Tuesday: Like today, many philosophies, religions, and traditions were prevalent during Roman times in Colossae and being mixed into the church. The most referenced were early Gnosticism, Greek philosophy, local mystery religions, asceticism, and Judaism. You may enjoy looking these up on your own for a more thorough understanding, but they can be briefly summed up as follows:

Early Gnosticism-god is not directly involved, gaining knowledge is most important and can be gained by combining truth from all religions.

Greek Philosophy-there are a lot of gods and they behave like humans with superpowers (remember the Greek and Roman mythology you read in school?).

Local Mystery Religions-god is in everything and everyone.

Asceticism-higher spiritual awareness comes through self-imposed humiliations, self-denial and rigorous discipline.

Judaism-Following rules and regulations are also necessary for salvation.

Do any of these teachings sound familiar in our modern world? The subtle danger of these philosophies is that they do not appear blatantly wrong. Many of the ideas and practices seem biblical until you see that they are human driven instead of God inspired. Instead of salvation through Christ alone, the focus is on salvation through our own thoughts or practices. Spend some time in prayer and confession as God reveals areas where you struggle or mix the truth.

Wednesday and Thursday: Write down the five philosophies listed Tuesday in five separate columns. Then take two days to read through verses 8-23 and note the verses that reference each one. They are mixed throughout so take your time. In addition to appreciating what the Colossians were up against, I hope we will see what we are up against as well through this exercise.

Friday: Read Colossians 2:6-7. Write down the five things believers are exhorted to do. Then write down an image or idea that comes to mind for each one. How can they combat the false teachings we studied this week and that we face today?

Saturday: Refresh yourself with something enjoyable. If you are ending your “media fast” now, jot down some insights or experiences gained during your fast.

Week 4 Colossians 3:1-4:6

Essential Questions: What characteristics or qualities do you associate with holy living?

Monday: Prayerfully read Colossians 3:1-4:6. Consider verses 3:1 and 2, “...set your hearts on things above...Set your minds on things above...” Write down what comes to mind after reflecting on these

two verses. This week we will look at the characteristics or qualities of holy living in our temperaments, homes, workplace, and churches. Please take time to pray for yourself as we study these verses. Guilt might overwhelm us as we read this week, so please remember that “Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret” (2 Corinthians 7:10). God gives us the encouragement and desire to repent and make things right. So, if at any time you are immobilized by guilt, remember, that is not from God! It is my prayer that we will instead feel encouraged and rejuvenated as we confess sin, repent, and live our faith.

Tuesday: Read verses 3:1-17. Write down the qualities listed in these verses regarding a holy temperament or behavior. The first list in verse 5 is sighted as idolatry. Remember the second commandment (Exodus 20:5)? Why do you think these qualities are listed as idolatry? The next two lists in verses 8-10 (what to remove) and 12-17 (what to put on) seem to indicate that we have an active role in behaving as a new person instead of our old self. What comes to mind as you study these verses?

Wednesday: Read verses 3:18-21. Write down the qualities listed in these verses regarding holy homes. How do the three elements of submitting, loving, and not embittering work together in a family? Why are these rules specific to different members of the household? Are they gender specific? Related to personalities or tendencies? Age related? Ask God what He wants you to learn from these verses.

Thursday: Read verses 3:22-4:1. Look up slave life in a Roman colony online so that you have a better understanding of the term used here. Yes, some people were captured or purchased. Some sold themselves into slavery to get money or pay a debt. For our study, apply it for the workplace. Write down the qualities listed in these verses for employees and for bosses. How have you learned to live your faith at work? Where do you still struggle? Read Ecclesiastes 5:19-20. How can these verses help us live our faith in the workplace and maintain a holy temperament? What can be done if we do not feel this way?

Friday: Read verses 4:2-6. Write down the qualities listed in holy churches. What part can you play in adding to your church’s quality? The Newsboys have a song on their Going Public album entitled, “When You Called My Name” that really speaks to the struggle pastors and church workers feel in ministry. Listen to the song online or look up the lyrics and ask God how you can help your church. Consider 1 Corinthians 12:12-26.

Saturday: Rest and reflect. Review your notes. Circle or write down something from this week’s study that especially impacted you.

Week 5 Colossians 4:7-18

Essential Questions: What is your story?

Monday: Prayerfully read through the final greeting in verses 4:7-18 and jot down first thoughts.

Tuesday: Go back through the verses and list all the people Paul mentions. Leave room in between names to write notes Wednesday and Thursday.

Wednesday and Thursday: Research each of the people you listed Tuesday and write down who they were, how they are described by Paul, what role they played in helping Paul or sharing the gospel, and anything interesting you learn. Place a star in front of anyone you especially relate to. Maybe you admire what they did, you do the same yourself, or you hope to have a similar impact. While researching, remember to look the people up in your Bible's concordance or footnotes, a Bible dictionary, and/or online.

Friday: Reflect on what each of these people did to help people grow spiritually. What is your story in helping other people grow spiritually? The Bible is already written but history is still unfolding. What would you like written about you?

Saturday: Think about our Colossians study as a whole. In week 1, we talked about how our spiritual mentors impacted our lives and who we can mentor now. In week 2, we focused on who God is and how knowing Him has affected our lives. In week 3, we researched the various philosophies that were negatively affecting the Colossian believers and how to stay strong in the truth as we are also affected by views opposed to biblical truth. In week 4, we learned how holy living plays out in ourselves, homes, workplace, and church. In week 5, we took time to consider the people listed in Paul's final greeting and the role they played in furthering Christianity.

Write down a couple of things you learned from the Colossian study. What are you impressed to start, stop, change, or rejoice over? Write down any other thoughts that come to mind as we conclude this study.