

The Letter to the Colossians Bible Study

How To Study the Bible

Let`s read the Bible and share the Gospel with one another.

*“...and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. **16** All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, **17** that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” II Timothy 3:15-17 ESV*

Beginning

The Bible is the book for all people to read and study freely. You may have some friends who are interested in Christianity or the Bible. Isn't it wonderful that you can share the Bible and the Gospel with them?

1. Preparation

Let's pray in preparation for studying the Bible.

*Decide the place and time to study and let others know. Make sure to let everyone know the passage you will be studying.

*Pray that God will fill the group with grace in the Bible study and bring meaning to the lives of all the participants.

*Take time to read the selected Bible passage and carefully study the important themes and questions according to the guide before each session.

*Think about what you can share about from your own experience in relation to the Bible reading.

2. Entering Into the Text

Ask about the latest news and share freely with each another while enjoying some coffee and tea. As you share life with one another, create a relaxed and good atmosphere for Bible study together.

It is not always necessary to begin with prayer especially if you are studying the Bible with non-Christians. Don't rush into it. But of course, it`s always best to begin with prayer if your group seems comfortable.

3. Study the Bible.

(1) Let's read the Bible.

*Read the selected passage for today.

1. verse by verse, 2. paragraph by paragraph or 3. Individually in silence.

*Next, mark the passage with these two signs as you read it.

[?] ... for a question or doubt.

[!] ... for a good impression. i.e. "I like what this verse says."

*Talk about the verses you marked. Why did you have a question or why do you like that verse?

*It doesn't matter if you cannot answer the question. If the question is related to today's study, tell the others about it, especially if you can answer it concisely. Don't take too much time for each answer.

(2) Let's Study the Bible

FOCUS

*Observe words or phrases in the passage. What is the main theme of this passage? Make a list of the things that you see in the passage.

*Focus on the main message of today's passage and think about what this means in a concrete way. If there is something you don't understand, research it or ask other church members or the pastor for next time.

STUDY

*It is not necessary to study each question on the guide completely. It is a good to have a longer discussion on one point or topic. If there are things you don't understand, you can skip these. Let the Holy Spirit guide the study.

*Don't go into too much detail for things that are difficult to understand. Even Bible scholars have different opinions regarding details. It may be impossible to fully understand some points.

*If you can, share freely how you have experienced Jesus in this study together. It is important to study the Bible to gain knowledge but there is no study more powerful than having your life transformed by Christ through the Bible.

(3) Application

*Make a summary of today's theme. It helps if you can say the theme in one word.

*Share what you learned and discovered from today's reading. Encourage the participants to share freely any comments or observations. The important thing is to be open to any response they may have in regard to this passage.

*Share how you can apply this learning to your own daily life.

Introduction to Colossians

Colossians is one of the thirteen letters written by the Apostle Paul. Although it is quite a short letter, it shows the abundant glory and blessing of Jesus Christ that is powerfully spreading around the world while answering the problems of the Colossian community.

Paul's letter is based on the letter writing style of the historical period. In the beginning of the letter, the sender and recipient's names are written, next greetings appear followed by words of exhortation and then comes the main message of the letter. At the end of the letter, another greeting is included and finally the letter closes with blessings. Of course, all throughout, the character of Christian faith is expressed.

Sender

The apostle Paul is the sender of the Letter to the Colossians. (1:1) Apparently, it is considered by many scholars that someone who was with Paul transcribed the letter (such as possibly Timothy, Tychicus, or Onesimus who are mentioned in the text) but it is not clear who actually transcribed the letter. (4:18)

Recipients

This letter is written for the Christian community in Colossae which is a comparatively young church at that time. Paul had three missionary journeys but according to the Bible there is no recording that he visited Colossae. (2:1) The church in Colossae was started by Epaphras a co-worker of Paul. Paul heard about the news of this church and this letter is written to address the various problems (1:1-8). Even though Paul mainly targeted big cities for his mission, Colossae was a small town and not a very important place. Colossae was a town next to the Lycos river in the southeast region of Asia Minor (now modern Turkey) with Laodicea on the western side and

Hierapolis, a comparatively bigger city, to the northwest.

Time and Place

There are many opinions among scholars about when and where it is written but it is clear that the letter was written after Paul went to prison.

(4:3,18) According to Paul's letter and the Book of Acts, he was imprisoned in three different places: Ephesus, Caesera and Rome. Ephesus was the first place he was imprisoned and is considered the place of writing of Colossians because the letter is written to a young church to encourage their faith, check on the foundation of their faith, and tell them how to separate from customs of other religions and become mature in the faith. (There is not evidence but this is assumed from the context.) If this is true, Colossians was written around AD 52-55, sometime during his third missionary journey in the period Paul stayed and worked in Ephesus for three years. (Acts 19: 8-10)

Context and Contents

Colossae, same as other cities, was a center for religious thought in that time. The biggest problem for the newly converted Christians and the church was their relationship with Judaism. To develop maturity in these Christians, Paul shows that Christianity instructs believers to be set apart from Judaism's traditions, rituals and customs and to apply the cross of Jesus Christ where he died and the good news of his resurrection to their daily living and faith.

The contents of this letter are basically in disagreement against Judaism and emphatically state that Jesus Christ is the ultimate centrality of the Christian faith. This letter cautions the recipients that the Gospel of Christ is not being treated carefully; and therefore, their faith and lifestyle have been corrupted. This letter is not constructed in a similar way to the book of Romans where the first half is teaching and the second half is application. Rather, it develops many applications of the faith throughout based on the centrality of Christ as the foundation.

Letter to the Colossians 1:1-14 "Thanksgiving and Prayer"

Paul communicates thanksgiving and prayer to the believers in Colossae. In his thanksgiving, he emphasizes the power of the Gospel. Today, first we will try to focus on the Gospel. The hope of the Gospel is the foundation of our faith. Also, in our prayers, as we increase in true understanding, we are able to joyfully give thanks to God. We will then look at knowledge and thirdly at thanksgiving. So that we don't lose the hope of the Gospel in the midst of work where don't feel appreciated as well as the monotony of our daily lives, we should joyfully give thanks to God and pray for one another.

1. Reading: Let's Read the Bible

While making some marks in the text, let's read Colossians 1:1-14. Put a ? where you have doubts or a question about some words or phrases in the passage. And put a ! where you had a positive impression to words or phrases in the passage. Then, share with one another why you had a doubt/question or rather a positive impression about the words or phrases where you placed a ? or ! in the text.

Colossians 1:1-14 (ESV)

Greeting

- 1) Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,
- 2) To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae:
Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

Thanksgiving and Prayer

- 3) We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you,
- 4) since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints,
- 5) because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel,
- 6) which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth,
- 7) just as you

learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf 8) and has made known to us your love in the Spirit.

9) And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10) so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. 11) May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, 12) giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. 13) He has delivered 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.

2. Focus: Let`s take a closer look.

- Examine the Passage:

What is written in this passage? Please summarize and express in your own words.

Focus: What is the focus of the passage above?

(Note: There are several possibilities) Please summarize concisely.

3. Study:

Using the following questions as a guide, let`s study the Bible together.

(1) (verses 3-5) Why does Paul give thanks?

(2) (verses 5-6)

In this passage, Paul is saying people grounded in the hope of the Gospel have faith and love, and that the Gospel is powerfully spreading throughout the world. He is emphasizing the power of the Gospel.

Let`s discuss briefly how Christians can receive faith through the Gospel?

(3) (verses 9-12) How does Paul pray for the people in Colossae?

(4) (verses 9-10)

To encourage the people living in Colossae at that time, in his letter Paul prayed that they would increase in knowledge.

What should we do to increase in true knowledge? Discuss this together.

(5) (verses 3-5)

Paul gives thanks to God because of the faith the Colossians had in Christ and their love "for all the saints."

(verse 12)

In this verse, he prays for the believers in Colossae to be able to joyfully give thanks to God.

Recently, what are you truly thankful for? Please share with one another.

(6) Growing in our understanding of the Bible is not the same as giving thanks.

What should we do to be able to give thanks? (Look at verses 13-14)

4. Application: Let`s apply the text to our own lives.

What are some new things you have learned or noticed by studying this passage? Please share your insights with one another.