

Colossians 1:1-14

1. What are the most common subjects of prayer in your group?

2. Read Colossians 1:1-14
 - a. What is it about the Colossians for which Paul thanks God? (v 1-4)

 - b. How have they come to be like this? (v 5-8 & 13-14)

 - c. What do we learn here about the content and impact of “the gospel”?

 - d. What does Paul pray for the Colossians in verses 9-12? Try and explain what each clause means. What is the main request and/or aim in Paul’s prayers?

 - e. Verse 9 begins with “for this reason”. What is the logic of the connection between Paul’s thanks and his prayers?

3. To what extent is our agenda for ourselves and others (as reflected in our prayers) different to God’s agenda (reflected in Paul’s prayers here)? If the difference is significant why do you think this might be? What could we do to align our prayers more closely with God’s agenda?

4. Through whom did the “word of truth” first come to you? What was the most immediate change that it brought into your life?

5. As you read Paul’s prayer in verses 9-11 which particular requests do you think are most relevant to you at the moment?

6. Spend time praying together
 - a. Thank God for rescuing you from the dominion of darkness and bringing you into the kingdom of his Son. Also thank him for the human agents he used to bring the gospel to you.

 - b. Thank God for the signs of his work in each other’s lives.

 - c. Pray for each other according to God’s agenda revealed in Paul’s prayer.

Colossians 1:15-2:5

1. What are some common views in our society about what Christians and churches should be doing?
2. Verses 15-20 present a magnificent description of Jesus. This is the “theological foundation” of the letter, upon which Paul builds his argument. Read verses 15-20.
 - a) What words or ideas are repeated or emphasized in these verses? What is the overall impression given?
 - b) What do we learn here about who Jesus is and what he has done? What questions do you have? What phrases stand out to you as the most surprising or significant?
 - c) If you had to give a title to this section, what would it be?
3. Verses 21-23 describe how the Colossians have already benefited from receiving the gospel message about this Christ.
 - a. In what way does the description of Jesus in v 15-20 establish and strengthen the assurance of verses 21-23?
 - b. How might an inadequate understanding of Jesus undermine Christian assurance, and/or leave us vulnerable to the temptation to look elsewhere for confidence?
4. Paul then expands on how his understanding of Jesus shapes his ministry. Read 1:24-2:5.
 - a. What motivates Paul to suffer for the sake of the church? (v 24-27)
 - b. What are the aims and methods of Paul’s ministry? (v 28-2:5) How are these shaped by or consistent with the truths in verses 1:15-20?
 - c. How might an inadequate view of Jesus lead us to engage in other aims and methods of ministry?
 - d. To what extent are Paul’s aims and methods for people consistent with our own?
5. What particular challenge or encouragement does this passage present to you?
6. Praise God for who Jesus is and what he has done. Thank God for the assurance we have in Christ. Ask God to help you live with motives, aims and methods consistent with a right understanding of Jesus.

Colossians 2:6-23

1. Do you know someone who you'd describe as a "mature" Christian? What is it about them that makes you think of them as 'mature'?

2. In many ways, the exhortation of Colossians 2:6-7 summarizes the main message of the letter...
 - a) What words/ideas are repeated in these verses?
 - b) What is the main idea of these verses?
 - c) How does this build on what has already been said in the letter ("So then")?

3. The "flipside" of the positive instruction of verses 6 & 7 are the warnings and negative instructions that begin in verse 8. Read verses 8-23...
 - a) What examples of "hollow and deceptive philosophies, depending on human traditions and the basic principles of this world, rather than on Christ" do we find listed in this section? What makes each of these seem attractive?

 - b) In verses 9-15 Paul begins to address the threat posed by these teachings (v 9-15). From these verses, what has God given the Colossians in Christ? How might appreciating this guard them from being taken captive?

 - c) What else does Paul indicate is wrong with each of the dangerous teachings? (v 16-23)?

4. What contemporary teachings/philosophies (v 8) might similarly threaten to take us captive, and distract us from continuing in Christ alone?

5. What practical steps could you take to continue to live in Christ, and to avoid being taken captive by hollow and deceptive philosophies not based on Christ?

6. Spend time praying together. Give thanks for the fullness and freedom we have in Christ. Pray for each other, families, and our whole church – that we might continue to live in Christ and not be taken captive.

Colossians 3:1- 4:1

1. Look back through chapters 1 and 2. What are the main themes and/or points made so far? (See especially 1:15-20, 1:28 and 2:6-8).

2. Having urged the Colossians to “walk in Christ” (2:6), and warned of teachings not based on Christ (2:8-23), the apostle now sets out what this means for everyday living. Read verses 1-4.
 - a. In what sense have Christians been “raised with Christ”? What does this mean?

 - b. What implications does this have in the present and for the future?

 - c. What does it mean that “Christ is your life” (v 4)? Is this how you normally think?

3. Read v 5-11.
 - a. According to the passage itself, what is/are the motivation(s) put to death/put away these vices?

 - b. Which of the vices listed needs most attention in your life at present?

4. Read v 12-17.
 - a. In what ways are these instructions connected to the theme of living in Christ?

 - b. What do you notice about the list of characteristics we are to “put on”? Are there any that you particularly need to work on?

5. Read 3:18-4:1. Life in Christ is also to have a profound impact on the household
 - a. What do you notice about the motivation for, and content of these instructions?

 - b. Which one is most relevant for you at this time?

6. Spend time praying together. Confess your sins to God. Thank God for you are in Christ. Pray for God’s help to address the areas this passage has identified as needing attention in your lives.

Colossians 4:2- 6

1. To what extent do Christians you know (including yourself) perceive that they have an active and vital role to play in God's work in the world? What might distract or discourage us from this?

In this study we will focus on just 5 verses. These form the final part of the 'application' section of Colossians (3:1-4:6) which spell out what life in Christ should be like. Here Christians are called to engage in God's work in the world in two ways – by prayer and proclamation.

2. Read 4:2-6. Regarding prayer...
 - a. What might it mean in practice to “devote yourselves to prayer”?
 - b. What does it mean to be alert/watchful and thankful in prayer?
 - c. What in particular are the Colossians urged to pray for?
 - d. What could you do to apply these instructions to your own prayers – both individually and as a group?
 - e. Spend time praying now. Pray for opportunities for Christ to be proclaimed locally, around our city and in the world. Pray for those known to you who have particular responsibility to proclaim Christ in the world.
3. Regarding proclamation...
 - a. What does it mean to be “wise” in the way you act towards “outsiders”?
 - b. In verse 5 we are commanded to “make the most of every opportunity”(HCSB – “make the most of the time”). What might this look like in our everyday lives?
 - c. Why does knowing “how” to answer each person require gracious and salty conversation (ie. what do you make of the “so that” in verse 6)?
 - d. Some people say that only a few Christians (like the apostle) have the responsibility to actively proclaim Christ, and that most Christians are to be more “passive” in proclamation – by living a good life and waiting for opportunities to speak. To what extent is this taught here?
 - e. To what extent is “sharing Christ” on your heart? What could increase your motivation for and/or application to this aspect of the Christian maturity?
 - f. Pray that you will be able to apply verses 5 & 6 this week. Ask God for opportunities to speak.

Colossians 4:7-18

1. A great cause can motivate and mobilize people to sacrifice time and effort (even their lives), to work together and to accomplish great things. Can you think of examples from history where we have seen this? What present day causes excite and engage people in our area?
2. In the closing verses of Paul's letter to the Colossians we get a glimpse into a network of people working together in the cause of Christ and his kingdom. Read Colossians 4:7-18. From the way the various individuals are described, what can we learn about...
 - a. The cause they are engaged in?
 - b. Their motives and goals?
 - c. Their relationship to each other?
 - d. The ways different ones were contributing? (Consider not only what they did, but how they did it).
3. Think back over the whole letter and its major themes. In what ways do these themes emerge/relate to these closing verses?
4. In what ways would these verses have encouraged the Colossians?
5. To what extent do you consider yourself to be part of a worldwide movement seeking to proclaim Christ and present people mature in him (cf. 1:28)? What might help you to be more conscious of this?
6. In what ways are you currently, or could you see yourself, contributing to "the cause" in your own family, church circles, street, workplace e, etc? How might you also contribute on a wider scale to "impact the nations"?
7. Who are your "co-workers for the kingdom of God"? What shape does your partnership take?
8. Spend time praying together. Pray for...
 - Your church and others to be "mature and fully assured in everything God wills" (v 12).
 - Your co-workers to persevere and complete the ministries they have been given (v 17).
 - Yourselves to be faithful servants and 'slaves' of Christ in your home, church, work/study and local community (v 7 & 13)
 - God to use gospel proclamation to transfer people into the kingdom of his Son and transform them towards maturity in Him. Pray for this to happen in our suburbs, city, country and around the world.