

COLOSSIANS Bible Reading Schedule

1 Week

WEEK 1

Colossians is an inspiring letter. The Colossian Church was birthed by a convert from Ephesus named Epaphras. The Church at Ephesus was established first and that led to the Gospel being preached in Colosse. It was best for us to read Ephesians first and now Colossians.

The Letter to the Colossians is a beautiful blend of theology and practice. It combines some of the deepest and most sublime teachings about Christ with very basic instruction. As strongly as any other book in the New Testament, Colossians reminds us that Christ must always be preeminent in a Christian's affections and worship.

There are strong warnings in the letter to be aware of false teachings and man-made religion. The effects of legalism can be deadening with human pride taking over. On the reverse side, is the marvel of Christ's Deity. He is pre-existent, omnipotent, and equal with the Father, making him everything we need. With Him on the throne of our lives, we have the potential to lead very meaningful and fruitful lives.

DAY 1 – Colossians 1 to 4

Surprise, surprise! I want you to read through this letter in one setting. It will probably only take you 15 minutes. I think it is a very good idea to read through the whole letter before you concentrate on each chapter more specifically. I think one of the interesting aspects of Colossians is the fact that Paul never visited Colosse. I say that because he shows a deep concern for them but writes more like a counselor than a father. "For we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and your love for all God's people..." (1:4) He appreciates their genuine faith and is concerned for their protection from those who want to lead them astray. You might have noticed the theological emphasis in the first two chapters with chapters 3 & 4 filled with practical instruction. As we spend this first day just reading the text, it gives us a sense of anticipation for going deeper with reflection and inspiration. Which theme in the letter jumped out to you? The glorious gospel, the supremacy of Christ, the ministry of Paul, the concerns about legalism, the beauty of new life, the instructions for families, the importance of prayer? You can see why I think the next four days are going to be rich and even life-changing. Amen!

DAY 2 – Colossians 1

There are so many connect points in this chapter for me; how about you? The first thing I want to remind you of is the authority and authenticity of God's Word. This is God's message to the church in Colosse but it is also God's Word for us today. We need a respect and awe for His Word and a heart of gratitude that we have access to God's written revelation. With that in mind, I find life-giving truth in these 29

verses. Let me point to three noteworthy principles in this chapter. First, receiving the Gospel changed their lives as verse 8 says, "He (Epaphras) has told us about the love for others that the Holy Spirit has given." A changed life in Christ means an overflowing love for others. Paul affirms the tangible change in their lives because the Holy Spirit now lives in them. This is true for us also. Secondly, I cannot have too high a view of Christ. He is preeminent! The NLT says, "supreme." Verses 15 to 20 magnify the identity and truth about Jesus the Messiah. Most scholars believe that Paul is quoting a Christian hymn that circulated among the believers in Asia Minor. Jesus is the "Exalted One." What statement(s) about Jesus in these verses are you noticing? Third, Paul highlights his passion for the believers of his day in verses 28 & 29, "...so that we (Paul) may present everyone fully mature in Christ. To this end, I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me (NIV)." This is how the first chapter concludes and gives us the purpose and passion for Paul. That is transferrable to us. We have many people in our lives that we love. The love we offer is a strong love, "warning everyone and teaching everyone with all the wisdom God has given us." (V28) This last paragraph inspires me and challenges me to make the most of every opportunity for the spiritual benefit of others. Paul wanted the best for this new church in Colosse. He knew that more of Christ and the influence of Christ would help them the most. How concerned am I for the spiritual well-being of those around me? Paul cared deeply for these new believers even though he had never met them in person. His example is for us. How might you live that out?

DAY 3 – Colossians 2

I am reminded how much I appreciate this letter because it seems especially relevant for us today. Paul warns them about the empty philosophies of his day and the lofty human thinking that undermines Christ's authority. This is obviously very prevalent in our day as well. But the biggest theme of this chapter would warn against "legalism." Verses 16-23 confront the false teachers who were influenced by Jewish beliefs that insisted on following certain rules and practices that were deemed to make you better and more acceptable to God. The emphasis was on what you do or don't do to please God. The dietary laws and the religious rituals were the focus rather than Christ and the wonder of his love and grace. Paul challenged the Colossians believers to deepen their allegiance to Christ so that they might know the difference between Christ's freedom and Jewish legalism. "Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness." (V7) Plus, verses 14 & 15 are essential points of truth to memorize for they represent the foundation that is sure. "He canceled the record of the charges against us (all the ways we fell short and sinned against him) and took it away by nailing it to the cross. In this way, he disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross." Our own freedom has been paid for and the enemies of our soul have been defeated. This is Good News. Why then we would ever want to give a hearing to any rival teaching? Paul calls these rules a mere shadow of the real thing. Christ and his work on the cross are the real thing. How do you respond to the message of this chapter on "freedom from human rules and the richness of new life in Christ?"

DAY 4 – Colossians 3

How should I summarize my favorite chapter in this Book? There are four main themes found in this one chapter: set your heart on the things above; put off and put on; you are chosen; and your primary

relationships matter. Each one of these themes could turn into a sermon. In fact, I have preached on Colossians before and this chapter took four Sundays! I can't rate the value of each but verse 12 is my favorite and worth memorizing! "Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves..." (NLT) But this translation doesn't clearly emphasize the three aspects of your identity as a child of God: 1) chosen... hand-picked; 2) holy... set apart; 3) loved... a lavishing affection for you. Your new identity in Christ says "You have been raised to new life with Christ" (V1). The power of this message is that what Christ has given you and what he says about you proceeds a life that honors him. Because you are special, set apart, and forever loved, you have everything you need to be tenderhearted, compassionate, kind, humble, and patient. This is a profound truth to me. His initiative fills my soul with all that I need to live well for him. Chapter 3 teaches me how to succeed as a follower of Christ. I keep my mind and heart fixed on the things above; I put off the old and put on the new; I love and forgive others as Christ does and I share that with those closest to me. It is an extremely practiced chapter. What part of this chapter are you appreciating most? How might you display the character of Christ through compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, or patience? Why not memorize verse 12 as a summary of putting on the clothing that Christ gives?!