



COLOSSIANS  
COMPLETE IN CHRIST



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# WELCOME

The book of Colossians stands out among the New Testament letters for its emphasis on the supremacy and sufficiency of Jesus Christ. He is our source of the knowledge of God, our access into the presence of God, and our restoration into the image of God. Followers of Christ will also discover the essential call to impact our world in a day when empty philosophies and deceptions are prevalent just as they were when this book was written.

This study of Colossians will guide you to:

**Connect** in authentic community as you and your group share the joys and struggles of life- praying together for big things.

**Grow** in biblical truth by searching the scripture and actively applying this truth to your life.

**Engage** joyfully in helping people find and follow Jesus by practicing simple discipleship tools that tune your heart to those who are far from God.

## PERSONAL STUDY + PRAYER

Each lesson in this study begins with personal study sections designed for individuals to walk through the book of Colossians verse by verse. The Survey contains the big picture and background information for the book. Lessons 1-8 focus on studying the passages in detail. The Synthesis is a place to record an overall summary of the content and flow of the book.

In each lesson, you will learn and use a number of basic Bible study methods. These methods fit under three fundamental skills that are meant to be practiced in order each week.

**Observe:** What do I see?

**Interpret:** What does it mean?

**Apply:** How does it work?

These skills are summarized in the Bible Study Tools Overview in the Appendix on pages 84-89.

Every time we study the Bible, we should begin with prayer thanking Him for the gift of His Word and asking for His Spirit to guide our study.

## GROUP DISCUSSION

At the end of every lesson, there is a Group Discussion Guide that provides an outline of a balanced plan for the time you spend together as a group - connecting, growing and engaging.

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# SURVEY

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# SURVEY

## WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA?

Surveying a book like Colossians allows you to grasp the big picture and the overall flow of the book before getting caught up in the details. Begin this crucial first step by taking a few minutes to read straight through Colossians without stopping. Then answer the questions below before reading the background information that follows.

**1.** How would you describe Paul's audience? Are they believers or unbelievers? Are they spiritually mature or immature? What issues are they facing?

**2.** What are the major themes or big ideas in this book? (Hint: Look for repeated words and ideas.)

**3.** Now that you have read through the entire book, what are Paul's purposes in writing it? Be as specific as you can.

Note: Portions of the following background information on the book of Colossians have been compiled from The Bible Knowledge Commentary and The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia.

## AUTHORSHIP

The Pauline authorship of Colossians is supported by abundant evidence both in and out of the book. Colossians has three personal references to Paul in the first person (1:1; 1:23; 4:18) and numerous references to Paul's associates, such as Tychicus (4:7), Onesimus (4:9), Aristarchus (4:10), Mark (4:10), Justus (4:11), Epaphras (4:12), Luke (4:14), Demas (4:14), and Archippus (4:17). The style and content of Colossians is similar to Ephesians, written about the same time and probably alluded to as "the letter from Laodicea" (4:16).

While 34 Greek words are unique to Colossians, they are characteristic of the theme of the book and fit the thoughts of Paul. Words in this category include "visible" (1:16), "supremacy" (1:18), "fill up" (1:24), "philosophy" (2:8), and "Deity" (2:9).

The conclusion of Ephesians confirms that Tychicus was the carrier of both it and Colossians (Ephesians 6:21; Colossians 4:7). This helps confirm Paul as the author of the Colossian epistle. The external evidence for Paul's authorship is strong, despite the claim of some that the heresy combated in the book is second-century Gnosticism. But there is good reason to believe that the heresy addressed in Colossians (at least in its incipient form) had appeared already in Paul's lifetime. And in view of Paul's other encounters with heresies, in books which are unquestionably his, it seems clear that he authored Colossians (1 Corinthians 15; Galatians 1-2; 2 Thessalonians 2).

## COLOSSAE

Colossae was a city of Phrygia and stood at the head of a gorge where two rivers unite and on the great highway traversing the country from Ephesus to the Euphrates valley. Its history is chiefly associated with that of the two cities Hierapolis and Laodicea. Historically, it was a place of great importance.

We surmise from Colossians 2:1 that it is not likely that Paul visited the place in person; but the city's Christianization was due to the efforts of Epaphras and Timothy (Colossians 1:1,7), and it was the home of Philemon and Epaphras. That a church was established there early in church history is evident from Colossians 4:12-13; Revelation 1:11; 3:14.

As the neighboring cities of Hierapolis and Laodicea increased in importance, Colossae declined. There were many Jews living there and a chief article of commerce, for which the place was renowned, was the collossinus, a peculiar wool probably of a purple color. In religion, the people were especially lax, worshipping

angels. Of them, Michael was the chief and the protecting saint of the city. It is said that once he appeared to the people, saving the city in time of a flood.

During the 7th and 8th centuries, Colossae was overrun by the Saracens; in the 12th century the church was destroyed by the Turks and the city disappeared. The ruins of the church, the stone foundation of a large theater, and a necropolis with stones of a peculiar shape are still to be seen.

#### DATE AND PLACE OF WRITING

Colossians was written from Rome during Paul's first imprisonment there as recorded in Acts 28:30. At the same time, Paul wrote Ephesians and Philemon (ca. A.D. 60-62). In Philemon 1:9, Paul referred to himself as "a prisoner of Christ Jesus." Ephesians also contains references to Paul's being a "prisoner" (Ephesians 3:1; 4:1). And Ephesians refers to Tychicus' carrying the epistles from Paul to their destinations (Ephesians 6:21; Colossians 4:7).

Since the record of Acts ends around A.D. 60-62, Colossians was probably written during this two-year imprisonment. And since neither Colossians, Ephesians, nor Philemon mention the outcome of Paul's trial, anticipated in Philippians 1:19-21, it can be assumed that Colossians was written before Philippians.

#### PURPOSE

The circumstances that prompted the writing of Colossians seem to be the special heresy that arose there which later (in the second century) developed into Gnosticism. It contained several characteristics. (1) It was Jewish, stressing the need for observing Old Testament laws and ceremonies. (2) It was philosophical, laying emphasis on some special or deeper knowledge. (3) It involved the worship of angels as mediators to God (2:18). (4) It was exclusivistic, stressing the special privilege and "perfection" of those select few who belonged to this philosophical elite. (5) It was also Christological. But this seminal Gnosticism denied the deity of Christ, thus calling forth one of the greatest declarations of Christ's deity found anywhere in Scripture (1:15-16; 2:9).

Three purposes seem to have been in Paul's mind as he wrote Colossians. First, he sought to show the deity and supremacy of Christ in the face of the Colossian heresy (1:18; 2:9). Second, he wanted to lead believers into spiritual maturity (1:28; 2:6-7). Third, he wanted to inform them about his state of affairs and to elicit their prayers on his behalf (4:2-8).

Colossians 1:1-14

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# LESSON ONE

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# OBSERVE

Every time we study the Bible, the first thing to ask is, “What do I see?”. This is the crucial skill of observation, and it lays the groundwork for the rest of our study. We will learn a new observation skill each week to practice along with the others we have already learned. This week, simply read the passage below, and then write one or two observations for each verse in the margin. Our observations might identify people, places, or events, point out repeated words or key terms, record important connections between words and sentences, or even point out something missing that we expected to see. The first few have been done for you.

## COLOSSIANS 1:1-14

Record your observations in the margin as you read the passage.

Paul identifies  
as an apostle

<sup>1</sup> Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

<sup>2</sup> To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are at Colossae: Grace to

you and peace from God our Father. <sup>3</sup> We give thanks to God, the Father of

our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, <sup>4</sup> since we heard of your faith in

Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints; <sup>5</sup> because of the

hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word

of truth, the gospel <sup>6</sup> which has come to you, just as in all the world also it

is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you

also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth;

<sup>7</sup> just as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow bond-servant, who

is a faithful servant of Christ on our behalf, <sup>8</sup> and he also informed us of your

love in the Spirit. <sup>9</sup> For this reason also, since the day we heard of it,

we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, <sup>10</sup> so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; <sup>11</sup> strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously <sup>12</sup> giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. <sup>13</sup> For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, <sup>14</sup> in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

**1.** What key themes does Paul introduce at the beginning of this letter? Do any of these themes correspond to the themes for the book you discovered during your survey in the previous lesson?

**2.** Based on your observations, what is the general tone in the beginning of this letter?

# INTERPRET

Our observation of Colossians 1:1-14 should have stirred up questions like, “What is an apostle?” How do we answer such questions? Fortunately, we do not have to run to a commentary or study Bible for the answers (though these are helpful tools to check our conclusions)! The most important interpretation skill is to use the context. Look for important clues in the sentences and paragraphs that come before and after the verses in question. Try to follow the author's flow of thought through the whole chapter. Using the context may take you to the previous section and cause you to read ahead in the book for clues. A second skill is to study cross references. These are simply other passages in any book of the Bible that are somehow related to the verses you are studying. Each lesson typically has cross references to look up. See the Appendix on page 86 for more on how to find these on your own.

**1.** The word gospel simply means “good news.” What particular good news are Paul and Timothy speaking of in 1:5? (See Romans 1:16-17 and 1 Corinthians 15:1-6) How does the rest of this passage demonstrate why this message is such good news?

**2.** In verses 9-12, why does Paul pray for these believers to be filled with knowledge, wisdom, and understanding? What should these things produce in our lives? (See Romans 12:2 and James 3:17)

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**3.** According to this passage, what has God done for us so that we can “walk in a manner worthy of the Lord”? (See Acts 26:18, Romans 8:2-4, and Ephesians 1:19-20)

**4.** In verse 12, for what “inheritance” are we to be thankful? How does it relate to the redemption provided to us in 1:14? (See Colossians 3:24, Romans 8:23, and Ephesians 1:13-14)

# APPLY

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Our Bible study is only complete once we apply what we've learned. Begin by answering a few reflection questions designed to demonstrate how each passage relates to our own lives. Next, step back and look at the passage as a whole and list potential principles. A "principle" is simply a fact or command stated or implied in a particular passage that is practically relevant to our lives. A principle is not specific to a particular person or time. A couple of examples are provided for you on the next page. Finally, decide on specific action steps that you will begin to take right away to apply the principle in your daily life and consider how the principle impacts the relationships in your life.

## **3 Steps to Apply -> Reflect, List Principles, Make a Plan**

**1.** If we are to please God "in all respects," then which areas of your life would not be pleasing to Him? What needs to change so that those areas of your life are realigned to His will and desire?

**2.** Are you trying to please God and do good works in your own strength? How can you depend on His Spirit this week in a new way?

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**3.** Prayerfully determine the main biblical truth or principle that God revealed to you during your study. A few questions to ask are:

Is there a promise for me to claim?

Is there a truth for me to believe?

Is there a command for me to obey?

**4.** What specifically will you do this week to begin applying this principle in your daily life? Determine how this truth or principle impacts the relationships in our life where you live, work, and play.

Create a personal application statement that expresses how you will apply this truth in your life.

# GROUP GUIDE

## CONNECT

Spend a few minutes catching up with each other. Share something you are celebrating or something that disappointed you during the last week.

Ask 1-2 people to take 5 minutes and share how they found Jesus and began to follow Him. Set a timer!

## GROW

### MEMORIZE THE WORD

One of the most powerful spiritual practices for followers of Jesus is to memorize and meditate on His Word. Discuss how your group will encourage one another to memorize during this study. See page 80 for suggested passages in Colossians.

### DISCUSS THE PASSAGE

#### **Observe**

Discuss the skill of observing the text. Briefly share some observations.

Discuss Questions 1 and 2

#### **Interpret**

Discuss skills of using the context and cross references.

Focus on Questions 1, 2 and 3

## ENGAGE

#### **Apply**

Review the importance of applying God's Word.

Focus on Questions 1 and 2

Take some time to share one another's personal application statements and steps to follow through with it.

### PRAY BIG

Spend some time praying for each other. Make the focus of prayer time about personal applications.

Colossians 1:15-23

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# LESSON TWO

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# OBSERVE

Continue to make observations; answering the question "What do I see?"

## COLOSSIANS 1:15-23

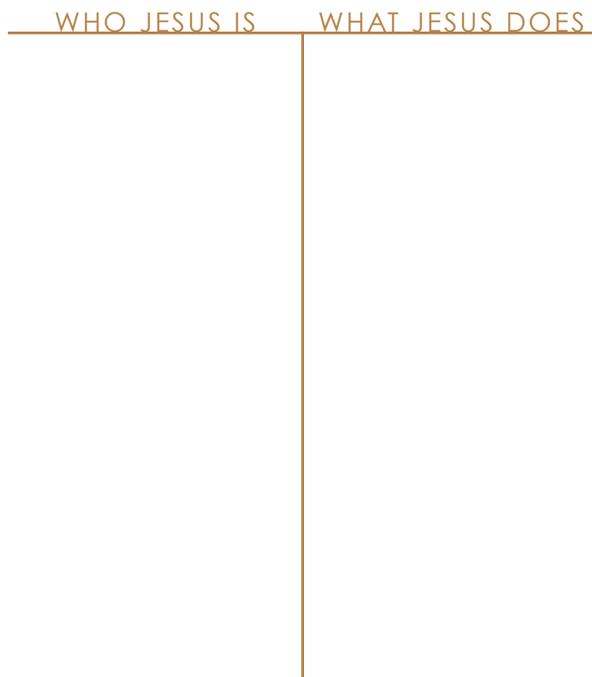
Record your observations in the margin as you read the passage.

<sup>15</sup> He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. <sup>16</sup> For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. <sup>17</sup> He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup> He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. <sup>19</sup> For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, <sup>20</sup> and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven. <sup>21</sup> And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, <sup>22</sup> yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach— <sup>23</sup> if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.

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1. Circle every description of the person of Jesus.

2. Underline every description of what Jesus does.



# INTERPRET

As you answer the questions below, continue using your first two interpretive skills (use the context and study cross references), and add this third one - look up key words (such as “image” and “firstborn” in this passage). While doing so in English is helpful, looking them up in Greek is far better and is surprisingly easy thanks to the internet. Go to [lumina.bible.org](http://lumina.bible.org). Simply search for the passage at the top of the screen, and the relevant text will appear. Be sure that “NET2” is your selected Bible in the drop down box, and then select the tab for “Greek” on the right side of the screen. Now hovering over any word in English will highlight the corresponding Greek term and reveal its Strong’s definition in the opposite window. For even further study, you can select a word, click the magnifying glass above it, then choose to run a “Word Search,” “Strong’s Search,” or “Word Study.” The first will provide all Biblical references that use the English term. The second will provide all Biblical references that use the Greek term. And the third will provide the full definition and derivatives of the Greek term. What used to take multiple books & many hours now takes one internet browser & a few seconds!

1. In what ways does Paul establish both the deity and humanity of Jesus in this passage? What happens if you deny one or the other?

Answer the next two questions about Paul’s description of Christ as the “firstborn” in verses 15 and 18:

2. What range of meanings can this word have (See Luke 2:7, Hebrews 11:28, 12:22-23, Psalm 89:27, and Romans 8:29)?

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**3.** What is the likeliest meaning of the word in this passage considering the surrounding context? Paul’s description of Christ as “firstborn” both in 1:15 and 1:18 marks 2 different sections in this passage.

**4.** How does Paul’s description of Christ change from 1:15-18a to 1:18b-20?

**5.** Use verses 20-23 to answer the following questions about reconciliation ...

What is it?

Why is it needed?

How was it made possible?

Who will enjoy it? (See Romans 8:20-21)

When will it be finally accomplished?

**6.** Explain the “if” statement of verse 23 in your own words. In particular, what is at stake by our continuance in the faith? Does our continued growth determine whether we are presented to Christ as saved or how Christ evaluates us at our inevitable presentation to Him? (See 1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 1 John 2:27-28; 2 Timothy 2:10-13, 15.)

# APPLY

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**1.** In what ways does Jesus occupy the first place in your life? In what areas do other people or other things take priority over Jesus?

**2.** What truths about Christ do you want to remember when sharing about your faith in Him with others who do not know Him?

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**3.** Prayerfully determine the main biblical truth or principle that God revealed to you during your study. Remember, a principle is a fact stated or implied in a passage that is relevant to our lives and not specific to a particular person or time. A few questions to ask are:

Is there a promise for me to claim?

Is there a truth for me to believe?

Is there a command for me to obey?

**4.** What specifically will you do this week to begin applying this principle in your daily life? Determine how this truth or principle impacts the relationships in our life where you live, work, and play.

Create a personal application statement that expresses how you will apply this truth in your life.

# GROUP GUIDE

## CONNECT

How was your week? Share a highlight or something that discouraged you during the last week.

Share how you did applying God's Word in your daily life during the last week.

Ask 1-2 people to take 5 minutes and share how they found Jesus and began to follow Him. Set a timer!

## GROW

### MEMORIZE THE WORD

Spend a few minutes reviewing the verses you are memorizing.

### DISCUSS THE PASSAGE

#### **Observe**

Discuss your observations about who Jesus is and what Jesus does.

#### **Interpret**

Discuss the skill of looking up key words.

Focus on Questions 1, 2 and 5

## ENGAGE

#### **Apply**

Review the importance of applying God's Word to our lives.

Focus on Question 1

Take some time to share one another's personal application statements and their plans to follow through with it.

### PRAY BIG

Spend some time praying for each other - primarily about personal applications.

Colossians 1:24-2:5

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# LESSON THREE

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## COLOSSIANS 1:24-2:5

Record your observations in the margin as you read the passage.

<sup>24</sup> Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions. <sup>25</sup> Of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, so that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God, <sup>26</sup> that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints, <sup>27</sup> to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. <sup>28</sup> We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. <sup>29</sup> For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.

<sup>21</sup> For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face, <sup>2</sup> that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together

in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself, <sup>3</sup> in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. <sup>4</sup> I say this so that no one will delude you with persuasive argument. <sup>5</sup> For even though I am absent in body, nevertheless I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good discipline and the stability of your faith in Christ.

**1.** Underline any verb within this passage.

**2.** Highlight any repeated theme or phrase within this passage.

(Also, include words and phrases that are closely related, even if not exact duplicates (such as “philosophy” and “elementary principles of the world”). You will also want to highlight things that are repeated in other passages (such as “elementary principles” found also in 2:20). Repeated concepts reveal something important to the author’s argument or provide clues to understanding his flow of thought.)

# INTERPRET

A skill that is a bridge between observation and interpretation is to create and answer your own questions. The chart below provides examples of the types of questions you might ask.

WHO IS	WHAT IS THE	WHY DID THE AUTHOR	HOW
...Paul talking about? ...accomplishing the action? ...benefiting from the action?	...meaning of this word? ...significance of this phrase? ...implication of this statement? ...relationship between these phrases?	...choose this word? ...include this phrase, statement, or command? ...not say _____?	...was this action accomplished? ...will this situation occur?

1. Create and answer any two of your own interpretive questions from this passage.

2. How does 1:24-2:5 relate to 1:15-23? (Hint: Notice the change of subject from “you” in 1:15-23 to “I” here.)

3. Answer the following questions about Paul's role as a minister from this passage ...

Why does Paul refer to his role as a "stewardship" in 1:25? (See Luke 16:2-4; 1 Corinthians 9:17; Ephesians 3:2)

What were the responsibilities of his role as a minister?

What was the goal or purpose of these responsibilities?

What resources had God provided to carry out these responsibilities?

What was lacking in Christ's afflictions that Paul was filling up? (See 2 Corinthians 1:3-7; 4:7-18; Philippians 1:12-14; 2 Timothy 2:8-10) In contrast, what was NOT lacking in Christ's afflictions? (See Hebrews 7:27; 9:12, 28; 10:10)

What does it mean to strive according to Christ's power in verse 29? (See Ephesians 1:18-21 and Philippians 2:12-13) How do we practically depend on the strength of the Lord?

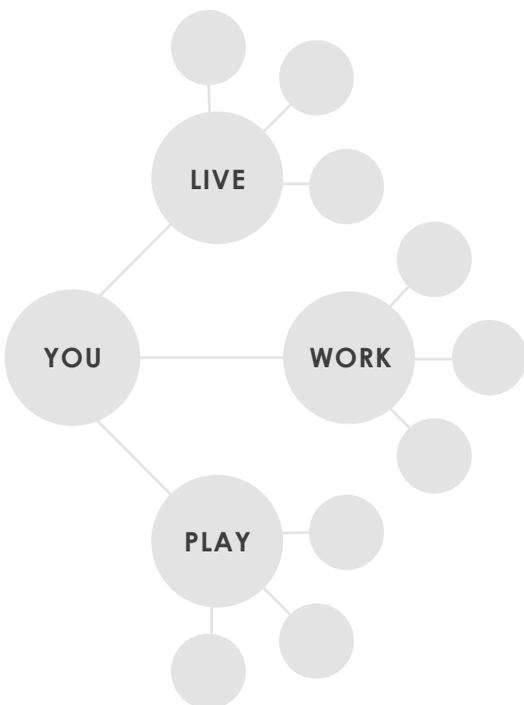
# APPLY

## LIVE, WORK, PLAY MAP

In Jesus's time, a "family" would include workers, extended family, and people residing in their home. For us, our circle can also include our family, our friends, coworkers, neighbors and acquaintances. It can include the guy at the gas station that you see at each fill up or the barista that serves you that mocha latte each morning. It is anyone that we commonly encounter on a regular basis which gives us the ability to have influence in their lives.

Often when Jesus or His disciples found people that were open to the gospel, He would eventually share the message with their entire network. Jesus met the woman at the well (John 4), and after revealing His message and who He was as Messiah, she was amazed and told her whole town AND many believed! We want to see the same happen. As followers of Jesus, we are participants in a greater story of God's plan of salvation. We are representatives of Christ wherever and with whomever we find ourselves.

Draw your own network: Think about the people in your spheres in influence. With whom do you live, work, and play? Be as exhaustive as possible and brainstorm away! Also, think about people that are just beyond your normal spheres. People that are that next step out- perhaps an acquaintance that you don't know well, a neighbor who is different from you ethnically, socially, or economically; a community member that the Holy Spirit has put in your path but is more a stranger than friend? Be creative and think outside the box on this one!



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**1.** In what ways are you participating in seeing every person find and follow Jesus?

**2.** As you think about your spheres of influence where you live, work, and play, can you identify people by name who do not know Jesus at all?

**3.** Prayerfully determine the main biblical truth or principle that God revealed to you during your study. A few questions to ask are:

Is there a promise for me to claim?

Is there a truth for me to believe?

Is there a command for me to obey?

**4.** What specifically will you do this week to begin applying this principle in your daily life? Determine how this truth or principle impacts the relationships in our life where you live, work, and play.

Create a personal application statement that expresses how you will apply this truth in your life.

# GROUP GUIDE

## CONNECT

How was your week? What highs or lows did you encounter this week?

Share how you did applying God's Word in your daily life during the last week.

Ask 1-2 people to take 5 minutes and share how they found Jesus and began to follow Him. Set a timer!

## GROW

### MEMORIZE THE WORD

Spend a few minutes reviewing the verses you are memorizing.

### DISCUSS THE PASSAGE

#### **Observe**

Focus on Question 2

#### **Interpret**

Discuss the skill of asking and answering your own interpretive questions. Share some of these.

Focus on Questions 2 and 3

## ENGAGE

### **Apply**

Discuss Question 1

Share your Live, Work, Play maps as a group. How has thinking about the people who are near to you but maybe far from God begun to change you?

### PRAY BIG

Make a list of one person from each group member's map. Spend some time praying for these friends. Ask God for opportunities to deepen friendships and practically bless them with His love. Ask God to reveal Himself to them and open their eyes to His power and freedom.

Our group is praying for these friends to find and follow Jesus:

Colossians 2:6-15

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# LESSON FOUR

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## COLOSSIANS 2:6-15

Record your observations in the margin as you read the passage.

<sup>6</sup> Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,  
<sup>7</sup> having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.  
<sup>8</sup> See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. <sup>9</sup> For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, <sup>10</sup> and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority; <sup>11</sup> and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; <sup>12</sup> having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. <sup>13</sup> When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our

transgressions, <sup>14</sup> having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. <sup>15</sup> When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.

1. Circle every occurrence of the key phrase “in Him” in this passage.

2. Fill out this table with every pair of contrasting themes in this passage ...

empty	fullness
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4. What was the “circumcision” that Paul referred to in 2:11? How were we “circumcised in Christ”? How is it similar/different from physical circumcision (See Genesis 17:1-14, Romans 4:9-12, and Philippians 3:2-3)?

5. What did Paul mean by the “certificate of debt” in 2:14?

6. Which rulers and authorities did Christ disarm according to 2:15 (See Colossians 1:13, 16; 2:10; Ephesians 1:20-23; 6:12)? What was the significance of the “public display” He made of them?

# APPLY

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**1.** Do you consistently feel guilt for your sin and failures even though Christ has already canceled our debt and forgiven all of our sin once and for all? If so, why?

**2.** Prayerfully determine the main biblical truth or principle that God revealed to you during your study. A few questions to ask are:

Is there a promise for me to claim?

Is there a truth for me to believe?

Is there a command for me to obey?

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**3.** What specifically will you do this week to begin applying this principle in your daily life? Determine how this truth or principle impacts the relationships in our life where you live, work, and play.

Create a personal application statement that expresses how you will apply this truth in your life.

# GROUP GUIDE

## CONNECT

How was your week? Did you see God working in any specific ways?

Share how you did applying God's Word in your daily life during the last week.

Have any remaining people share in 5 minutes how they found Jesus and began to follow Him.  
Set a timer!

## GROW

### MEMORIZE THE WORD

Spend a few minutes reviewing the verses you are memorizing.

### DISCUSS THE PASSAGE

#### **Observe**

Discuss the contrasting themes seen in this passage.

#### **Interpret**

Focus on Questions 2, 3 and 5

## ENGAGE

#### **Apply**

Focus on Question 1

Take some time to share one another's personal application statements and their plans to follow through with it.

### PRAY BIG

Spend some time praying for each other - primarily about personal applications.

Continue to pray boldly for the people from your group's Live, Work, Play maps and for opportunities to engage with them.

Colossians 2:16-23

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# LESSON FIVE

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## COLOSSIANS 2:16-23

Record your observations in the margin as you read the passage.

<sup>16</sup> Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day—<sup>17</sup> things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ. <sup>18</sup> Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind, <sup>19</sup> and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God. <sup>20</sup> If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, <sup>21</sup> “Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!” <sup>22</sup> (which all refer to things destined to perish with use)—in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? <sup>23</sup> These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence.

This week begin to box connecting words:

**Comparison** | Either points out similarities between two or more related ideas, or simply joins like ideas. Comparison words include: and, like, as, just as, also, so also, even so (e.g. “joints **and** ligaments” 2:19).

**Contrast** | Points out dissimilarities between ideas. Contrast words include: but, rather, yet, however (e.g. “things which are a mere shadow ... **but** the substance belongs ....” 2:17).

**Purpose** | Indicates the intended goal of an idea or action, whether or not it was realized. Purpose words include: that, so that, in order that (e.g. “filled with the knowledge of His will ... **so that** you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord” 1:9-10).

**Result** | Very similar to “purpose,” but indicates the actual consequence, whether or not it was intended. Result words include: that, so that, as a result, with the result that (e.g. “I have sent him to you ... **that** you may know about our circumstances” 4:8).

1. Box every connecting word within this passage.

2. Circle every description or reference to the false teaching that Paul combats within this passage.



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**3.** How has Christ's death on the cross changed the New Testament believer's relationship to the Old Testament law? (See Romans 7:6 and 10:4) Why was there a need for a change? (See Deuteronomy 5:29 and Galatians 3:21)

**4.** Why were the mystical activities of verse 18 so troubling to Paul? How did "self-abasement" and "the worship of angels" and even "visions" describe the activities of these false teachers?

**5.** What is the difference between asceticism, or self-denial for the sake of self-denial, and biblical self-denial? (See Galatians 3:1-3; Philippians 3:1-8; Romans 6:8-13; Galatians 5:13-18) Why are the decrees of verse 21 of no value against indulgence of the flesh?

# APPLY

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**1.** Do similar dangers that threatened the Colossians exist today for us? If so, how should we respond to them?

**2.** How can we diligently practice spiritual disciplines like fasting, prayer, and Bible meditation without falling into the same dangers that threatened the Colossians?

---

**3.** Prayerfully determine the main biblical truth or principle that God revealed to you during your study. A few questions to ask are:

Is there a promise for me to claim?

Is there a truth for me to believe?

Is there a command for me to obey?

**4.** What specifically will you do this week to begin applying this principle in your daily life? Determine how this truth or principle impacts the relationships in our life where you live, work, and play.

Create a personal application statement that expresses how you will apply this truth in your life.

# GROUP GUIDE

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## CONNECT

What are you thankful for this week? What are you asking God for currently?

Share how you did applying God's Word in your daily life during the last week.

## GROW

### MEMORIZE THE WORD

Spend a few minutes reviewing the verses you are memorizing.

### DISCUSS THE PASSAGE

#### **Observe**

Discuss observations you saw in this passage.

#### **Interpret**

Focus on Questions 3, 4 and 5

## ENGAGE

#### **Apply**

Focus on Question 1 and 2

Take some time to share one another's personal application statements and their plans to follow through with it.

### PRAY BIG

Spend some time praying for each other - primarily about personal applications.

Continue to pray for the people from your group's Live, Work, Play maps. Share about any opportunities God has given to deepen friendships.

Colossians 3:1-11

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# LESSON SIX

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## COLOSSIANS 3:1-11

Record your observations in the margin as you read the passage.

<sup>1</sup> Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. <sup>3</sup> For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup> When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. <sup>5</sup> Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. <sup>6</sup> For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, <sup>7</sup> and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. <sup>8</sup> But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. <sup>9</sup> Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, <sup>10</sup> and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him— <sup>11</sup> a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.

Circle all key words and highlight all repeated words or phrases and continue to *box connecting words*. Here are four more types to box this week:

**Cause** | Expresses the basis or cause of an action. Cause words include: because, since, and sometimes for (e.g. “Do not lie to one another since you laid aside the old self” 3:9).

**Explanation** | What follows further explains the previous idea, giving reasons why it is true, or why it occurred, or simply adding additional information. Look for the key word for (e.g. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ” 3:3).

**Inference** | Provides a logical consequence, conclusion, or summary to the previous discussion. Inference words include: therefore, for this reason (e.g. Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead” 3:5).

**Condition** | Presents a condition that must occur before a certain action or conclusion can occur. The statement may or may not reflect reality (i.e. it could be hypothetical). Key word is if (e.g. If he comes to you, welcome him” 4:10).

1. List all character qualities and behaviors associated with both the “old self” and the “new self” in the table below.

OLD SELF	NEW SELF

# INTERPRET

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Here is a fourth interpretive skill- compare multiple translations. This packet uses the New American Standard (NASB) translation. As you tackle the questions below, look up the passage in other translations and compare to the NASB to look for helpful clues or clearer wording. The New King James Version (NKJV), like the NASB, is a fairly word-for-word translation of the Greek text, and therefore, quite accurate for Bible study. The New International Version (NIV) and the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) are excellent phrase-to-phrase translations of the Greek and are thus often easier to read. Another excellent phrase-to-phrase Bible, which includes extensive translation notes, is the New English Translation (NET) available online for free at [www.bible.org](http://www.bible.org). You can find and compare numerous English translations of any Bible passage at [www.biblestudytools.com](http://www.biblestudytools.com).

1. Create and answer any two of your own interpretive questions from this passage.

2. How does Paul describe the mindset we are to have in verses 1-4? How do we practically maintain this mindset daily? (See Romans 8:5-8 and Philippians 3:15-19)

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**3.** Why is Paul so concerned with sins of speech in verses 8-9a? (See Luke 6:45 and Ephesians 4:25, 29)

**4.** Define the following terms from this passage and determine whether they refer to an individual person or to a group of people. (Hint: be sure to compare multiple translations of verses 9-10.)

**Old man/self:**

See Romans 6:6-7, Ephesians 4:20-24, and Galatians 2:20.

**New man/self:**

See Ephesians 2:15, 4:20-24, and 2 Corinthians 5:17.

**5.** According to verses 10-11, how does Paul describe the transformation process of the “new man/self”?

# APPLY

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**1.** What attitudes or actions in your life need to be put to death so that you can better maintain a mindset on eternity?

**2.** Are you pursuing spiritual change all by yourself or have you found some fellow brothers and sisters with whom you can be transparent and accountable?

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**3.** Prayerfully determine the main biblical truth or principle that God revealed to you during your study. A few questions to ask are:

Is there a promise for me to claim?

Is there a truth for me to believe?

Is there a command for me to obey?

**4.** What specifically will you do this week to begin applying this principle in your daily life? Determine how this truth or principle impacts the relationships in our life where you live, work, and play.

Create a personal application statement that expresses how you will apply this truth in your life.

# GROUP GUIDE

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## CONNECT

Share a highlight or something that discouraged you during the last week.

Share how you did applying God's Word in your daily life during the last week.

## GROW

### MEMORIZE THE WORD

Spend a few minutes reviewing the verses you are memorizing.

### DISCUSS THE PASSAGE

#### **Observe**

Discuss the character qualities and behaviors associated with the “old self” and “the new self.”

#### **Interpret**

Discuss the skill of comparing multiple translations.

Focus on Questions 2, 3 and 5

## ENGAGE

#### **Apply**

Focus on Question 1 and 2

Take some time to share one another's personal application statements and their plans to follow through with it.

### PRAY BIG

Spend some time praying for each other - primarily about personal applications.

Continue to pray for the people from your group's Live, Work, Play maps.

### SHARE THE GOSPEL

Review the 3 Circles Gospel on page 83 in the Appendix. Take a few minutes to practice sharing it in pairs.

Colossians 3:12-4:1

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# LESSON SEVEN

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# OBSERVE

## COLOSSIANS 3:12-4:1

Record your observations in the margin as you read the passage.

<sup>12</sup> So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; <sup>13</sup> bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. <sup>14</sup> Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. <sup>15</sup> Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. <sup>16</sup> Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. <sup>17</sup> Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father. <sup>18</sup> Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. <sup>19</sup> Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them. <sup>20</sup> Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord. <sup>21</sup> Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so that they will not lose heart. <sup>22</sup> Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who

merely please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.<sup>23</sup> Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men,<sup>24</sup> knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.<sup>25</sup> For he who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality.

4<sup>1</sup> Masters, grant to your slaves justice and fairness, knowing that you too have a Master in heaven.

**1.** Paul outlines various relationships in 3:18-4:1. List the responsibilities and motivations for each in the table below.

RELATIONSHIP	RESPONSIBILITY	MOTIVATION



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**3.** Compare Colossians 3:15-17 to Ephesians 5:18-20. What do these two passages teach us about the relationship between the “word of Christ” and the “Spirit”? Can you be powerfully filled with the Spirit apart from being grounded in the Word of Christ?

**4.** How do you reconcile Paul’s distinction between different groups of people in 3:18-4:1 with his earlier statement in 3:11 that there is “no distinction” between different peoples in Christ?

# APPLY

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**1.** Look at the family role/positions mentioned in 3:18-4:1. Which of these most apply to you personally at this time in your life? How are you doing in this role lately? How can you do better this week?

**2.** Paul emphasized our responsibility to forgive one another as Christ has forgiven us. Is there a specific person or situation that you have been slow to extend forgiveness? If so, what practical steps do you need to take this week?

---

**3.** Prayerfully determine the main biblical truth or principle that God revealed to you during your study. A few questions to ask are:

Is there a promise for me to claim?

Is there a truth for me to believe?

Is there a command for me to obey?

**4.** What specifically will you do this week to begin applying this principle in your daily life? Determine how this truth or principle impacts the relationships in our life where you live, work, and play.

Create a personal application statement that expresses how you will apply this truth in your life.

# GROUP GUIDE

## CONNECT

What are you thankful for this week? What are you asking God for currently?

Share how you did applying God's Word in your daily life during the last week.

## GROW

### MEMORIZE THE WORD

Spend a few minutes reviewing the verses you are memorizing.

### DISCUSS THE PASSAGE

#### **Observe**

Discuss the relationships, responsibilities and motivations in this passage.

#### **Interpret**

Focus on Questions 2, 3 and 5

## ENGAGE

#### **Apply**

Focus on Question 1 and 2

Practice some spiritual conversation starters in groups of 2-3.

Take some time to share one another's personal application statements and their plans to follow through with it.

### PRAY BIG

Spend some time praying for each other - primarily about personal applications.

Continue to pray for the people from your group's Live, Work, Play maps. Share about any opportunities God has given to start spiritual conversations and pray for more!

Colossians 4:2-18

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# LESSON EIGHT

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## COLOSSIANS 4:2-18

Record your observations in the margin as you read the passage.

<sup>2</sup> Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; <sup>3</sup> praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; <sup>4</sup> that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak. <sup>5</sup> Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. <sup>6</sup> Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person. <sup>7</sup> As to all my affairs, Tychicus, our beloved brother and faithful servant and fellow bond-servant in the Lord, will bring you information. <sup>8</sup> For I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts; <sup>9</sup> and with him Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of your number. They will inform you about the whole situation here. <sup>10</sup> Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings; and also Barnabas's cousin Mark (about whom you received instructions; if he comes to you, welcome him); <sup>11</sup> and also Jesus who is called Justus; these are the only fellow workers for the

kingdom of God who are from the circumcision, and they have proved to be an encouragement to me. <sup>12</sup>Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bonds slave of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God. <sup>13</sup>For I testify for him that he has a deep concern for you and for those who are in Laodicea and Hierapolis. <sup>14</sup>Luke, the beloved physician, sends you his greetings, and also Demas. <sup>15</sup>Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea and also Nympha and the church that is in her house. <sup>16</sup>When this letter is read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and you, for your part read [m]y letter that is coming from Laodicea. <sup>17</sup>Say to Archippus, "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it." <sup>18</sup>I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my imprisonment. Grace be with you.

We have no new observation skills this week. As in previous weeks, read the passage, underline the verbs, circle the key words, box any connecting words, and highlight repeated words or phrases. Then, write your observations and questions on the following page. Now that you have practiced all the basic skills, feel free to add your own techniques. Some like to use colored highlighters or pencils to mark verbs, key words, and connecting words. Many find it helpful to add arrows connecting related ideas or symbols to highlight important names.



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**4.** Why does Paul use the imagery of “seasoned with salt” to describe the kind of speech necessary to respond to each person (Matthew 5:13)? What characteristics does salt possess that make it an appropriate image for wise speech?

**5.** What does this passage reveal about the individual and ministerial needs Paul had as a servant of the Lord? What characteristics were true of him and his ministry that made him effective?

# APPLY

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1. Why is it such a struggle to remain devoted and alert in prayer? Furthermore, do our prayers tend towards the self-interest or gospel proclamation? What practical steps can we take to grow in prayer for the lost?

## HOW TO START A SPIRITUAL CONVERSATION

The parables that Jesus told created an interest in His Kingdom- the characteristics, the hopes, and the realities of the gospel. Sometimes, Jesus wouldn't even mention that He was Messiah; sometimes He did pointedly. Jesus made the gospel accessible to those who would hear and didn't apologize for who He was. Sadly, we have become conditioned to put on a filter and not speak of Jesus- because we imagine that it is awkward, pushy, or politically incorrect. We need to take off this filter and grow in boldness and love as we share stories about who He is and what He is about. There was no doubt that He was marking himself as special, as a spiritual being, and often, much more than that!

Likewise, "marking ourselves as spiritual" can help us gauge whether others are interested in God and His message. Some people will "lean in" as you speak about such topics, asking additional questions, sharing their own beliefs, telling about their own journey. Some will not; they will "lean back" and change the topic, become silent, or shut down altogether. Allow the Holy Spirit to prompt you as you initiate and let Him do the work of speaking to a person's soul.

Practice talking with your spouse, children, or friend about two or three of the following "interest creating" topics:

- Recently, God/Jesus has been teaching me that...
- I am realizing more and more that God has blessed me by...
- I use to struggle with (insert fear, stronghold, idolatry) but now I see God wants me to believe...
- I decided to follow Jesus because...

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Think of common topics that come up as you meet people - for example: career, living situation, family history, educational background. Pick one of these and tell how God changed your path in the past, or how He is guiding you in the present.

As you practice talking about these things, try to end with a learning question such as, "Have you ever considered God in this way before?" OR "Do you think God is teaching/blessing/asking you to believe anything right now?" Your questions are to gauge a response and to allow space for them to interact with your story. Now, be prayerful and alert as to who God wants you to share with this week!

Create a personal application statement that expresses how you will apply this truth in your life.

# GROUP GUIDE

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## CONNECT

How was your week? What highs or lows did you encounter this week?

Share how you did applying God's Word in your daily life during the last week.

## GROW

### MEMORIZE THE WORD

Spend a few minutes reviewing the verses you are memorizing.

### DISCUSS THE PASSAGE

#### **Observe**

Discuss the observations you saw in this passage

#### **Interpret**

Focus on Questions 2, 3 and 4

## ENGAGE

### **Apply**

Focus on Question 1 and 2

Take some time to share one another's personal application statements and their plans to follow through with it.

### PRAY BIG

Spend some time praying for each other - primarily about personal applications.

Continue to pray for the people from your group's Live, Work, Play maps. Share about any opportunities God has given to start spiritual conversations.

### HOW TO START A SPIRITUAL CONVERSATION

Take some time to practice starting a conversation in groups of 2-3.

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# SYNTHESIS

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# SYNTHESIS

During this study, we have observed, interpreted, and applied the entire book of Colossians. That is no small task! Now it is time to draw our detailed study to a useful conclusion with a process known as synthesis. Our goal is to create an overall summary of the book of Colossians that we can quickly review any time in the future to remind us of the flow and content of the book.

Create summary sentences or phrases for each chapter of Colossians:

**Chapter 1**

**Chapter 2**

**Chapter 3**

**Chapter 4**

Create a list of the theological truths and life lessons you learned for the first time or have been reminded of from your study of Colossians. As an example of a theological truth, you might write, “I was taught that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are found in Jesus.” An example of a life lesson might be, “This book reminded me that the church’s goal is to present every man complete in Christ through a process that comes with great cost and struggle.”

### **Theological truths I’ve learned**

### **Life lessons I’ve learned**

### **Personal Applications**

List the most significant ways that you personally have applied biblical truth during this study.



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# APPENDIX

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Memorize the Word  
Engage Toolbox  
Bible Study Tools Overview  
Additional Study Resources

# MEMORIZE THE WORD

One of the most powerful spiritual practices for followers of Jesus is to memorize and meditate on His Word.

As a group or individually, choose from the following sections of Colossians to commit to memory during this study.

## WALK WORTHY

1:9-14

<sup>9</sup> For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, <sup>10</sup> so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; <sup>11</sup> strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously <sup>12</sup> giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. <sup>13</sup> For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, <sup>14</sup> in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

## JESUS

1:15-20

<sup>15</sup> He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. <sup>16</sup> For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities - all things have been created through Him and for Him. <sup>17</sup> He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup> He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. <sup>19</sup> For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, <sup>20</sup> and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

## MINDSET

3:1-4

<sup>1</sup> Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. <sup>3</sup> For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup> When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

## PUT ON

3:12-17

<sup>12</sup> So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; <sup>13</sup> bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. <sup>14</sup> Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. <sup>15</sup> Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body ; and be thankful. <sup>16</sup> Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. <sup>17</sup> Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

# ENGAGE TOOLBOX

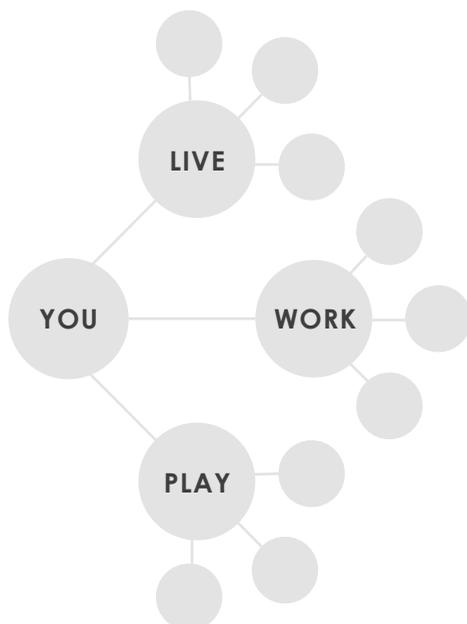
## LIVE, WORK, PLAY MAP

In Jesus's time, a "family" would include workers, extended family, and people residing in their home. For us, our circle can also include our family, our friends, coworkers, neighbors and acquaintances. It can include the guy at the gas station that you see at each fill up or the barista that serves you that mocha latte each morning. It is anyone that we commonly encounter on a regular basis which gives us the ability to have influence in their lives.

Often when Jesus or His disciples found people that were open to the gospel, He would eventually share the message with their entire network. Jesus met the woman at the well (John 4), and after revealing His message and who He was as Messiah, she was amazed and told her whole town AND many believed! We want to see the same happen. As followers of Jesus, we are participants in a greater story of God's plan of salvation. We are representatives of Christ wherever and with whomever we find ourselves.

Think about the people in your sphere of influence; the people with whom you live, work, and play. Write down at least three names in each of these spheres on the Live, Work, Play Map. Be ready to share it with your group.

Also, think about people that are just beyond your normal spheres. People that are that next step out- perhaps an acquaintance that you don't know well, a neighbor who is different from you ethnically or social-economically, a community member that the Holy Spirit has put in your path but is more a stranger than friend. Be creative and think outside the box!



## **EVERY NEIGHBOR PRAYER LIST**

We are called to be observant, expectant, and involved with the people God is bringing across our paths where we Live, Work, and Play. He wants us to pray that many will know Him as Father and as Savior, as He draws them to Himself and His Kingdom (John 6:44). Jesus modeled prayer for those who were like “sheep without a shepherd (Mark 6:32-34).” Jesus’s own ministry of compassion (Matthew 14:14, 15:32) to those who were on the fringes of society, those who had no status or reputation, was a beautiful example of who we are to be praying for and seeking to include in our daily lives- those who are outside our comfort zones, but fully loved and wanted by our God.

When we gather as a group we will pray for these people. Who is God impressing upon you from your Live, Work, and Play network? Who are the people who might be seeking His Kingdom, who are asking hard questions, who are far from Christ and need a better hope?

Using your Live, Work, and Play network, create an Every Neighbor Prayer list with a least one name from everyone in your group. This list will include the names of those you are hoping to bless with the gospel through service, acts of love, conversation, and/or Bible study. Pray boldly for God to reveal Himself to them and open their eyes to His power and freedom.

You may meet someone new this week or renew an old relationship from the past. Is this someone God is asking you to put on the Every Neighbor Prayer list, to actively pray big for their salvation? Add them to the board. Each week, take time to update your group, and let’s see what God will do!

## **HOW TO START A SPIRITUAL CONVERSATION**

The parables that Jesus told created an interest in His Kingdom- the characteristics, the hopes, and the realities of the gospel. Sometimes, Jesus wouldn’t even mention that He was Messiah; sometimes He did pointedly. Jesus made the gospel accessible to those who would hear and didn’t apologize for who He was. Sadly, we have become conditioned to put on a filter and not speak of Jesus because we imagine that it is awkward, pushy, or politically incorrect. We need to take off this filter and grow in boldness and love as we share stories about who He is and what He is about. There was no doubt that He was marking Himself as special, as a spiritual being, and often, much more than that!

Likewise, “marking ourselves as spiritual” can help us gauge whether others are interested in God and His message. Some people will “lean in” as you speak about such topics, asking additional questions, sharing their own beliefs, telling about their own journey. Some will not; they will “lean back” and change the topic, become silent, or shut down altogether. Allow the Holy Spirit to prompt you as you initiate and let Him do the work of speaking to a person’s soul.

Practice talking with your spouse, children, or a friend about two or three of the following “interest creating” topics:

1. Recently, God/Jesus has been teaching me that...
2. I am realizing more and more that God has blessed me by...
3. I used to struggle with (insert fear, stronghold, idolatry) but now I see God wants me to believe...
4. I decided to follow Jesus because...
5. Think of common topics that come up as you meet people—for example: career, living situation, family history, educational background. Pick one of these and tell how God changed your path in the past, or how He is guiding you in the present.

As you practice talking about these things, try to end with a learning question such as, “Have you ever considered God in this way before?” OR “Do you think God is teaching/blessing/asking you to believe anything right now?” Your questions are to gauge a response and to allow space for them to interact with your story. Now, be prayerful and alert as to who God wants you to share with this week!

### **PRAYER STORIES**

Another way to create interest is prayer stories. Most people in today’s world still value prayer. Think of someone in your Live, Work, and Play network has expressed a need, struggle, or unmet desire. Can you do one of the following this week?

Share how God has answered a prayer in your life, something specific and real and transforming.

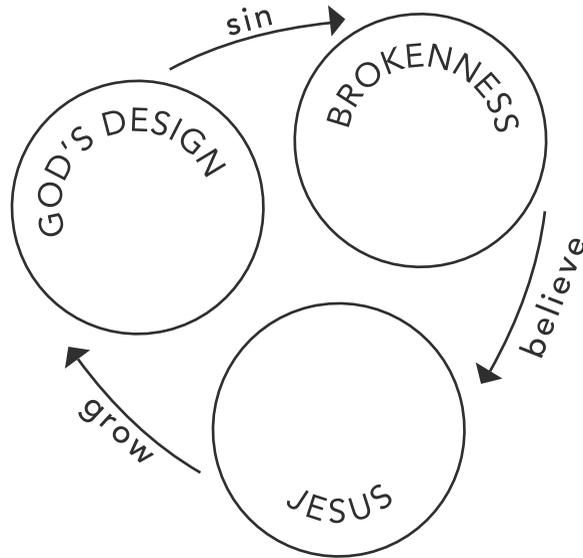
Make a point to tell them that you are praying to God in Jesus’s name for their need. Check back with them with the expectation that God will move!

Pray face-to-face with your friend. Again, check back and see what God has done!

## THE GOSPEL

**God's Plan** | Out of His great love, God created this world and the people in it (us) to live in relationship with Him. He gave us a great purpose to multiply in number and to create a culture of goodness on the earth in partnership with Him.  
Genesis 1:26-28

**Brokenness** | Tragically, we chose to reject God's plan (the Bible calls this sin) which resulted in relational brokenness between us and God (the Bible calls this death).  
Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23



This broken relationship with God also resulted in broken relationships with other people and with the world we were designed to care for.  
Ephesians 2:1-3

**Jesus** | But God did not leave us in brokenness! He sent His own Son Jesus to rescue us. Jesus lived the life we could not live (without sin) and died the death we deserved. Then God raised Him from the dead to demonstrate His defeat of sin and death.  
Romans 5:8, Ephesians 2:4-6

Because of God's amazing grace toward us, we can now simply believe in what Jesus did for us and we are restored in our relationship with God and forgiven.  
John 3:16, Ephesians 2:8

We now live the incredible adventure of following Jesus - partnering with Him to grow in maturity and to proclaim His goodness to broken world around us.  
1 Corinthians 5:17, Colossians 2:6-7, Ephesians 2:10

**Where do you see yourself in this diagram?**

# BIBLE STUDY TOOLS OVERVIEW

## OBSERVE

Every time we study the Bible, the first thing to ask is, “What do I see?” This is the crucial skill of observation, which lays the groundwork for the rest of our study. Here are four tasks involved in observation which should be performed in the order below:

**OBSERVATION TASK 1** | *Mark up the passage by visually identifying the following specific elements:*

**Underline all verbs.** A verb is a word or group of words used to indicate either that an action is taking place (“we will reign with Him”) or that a state or condition exists (“we are faithless”). Verbs are often the most significant indicators of the author’s flow of thought.

**Circle key words or phrases.** These are words or short phrases that are important theologically or thematically (they set the theme or main idea for the passage).

**Highlight repeated words or phrases.** Also, include words and phrases that are closely related even if not exact duplicates (such as “suffer hardship” and “endure suffering”). You’ll also want to highlight things that are repeated from previous passages.

**Box connecting words.** These important words indicate the logical connection between words, phrases, and clauses. Here are eight types of common connecting words to look for:

1. Comparison points out similarities between two or more related ideas, or simply joins like ideas. Comparison words include: and, like, as, just as, also, so also, even so.
2. Contrast points out dissimilarities between ideas. Contrast words include: but, rather, yet, however.
3. Purpose indicates the intended goal of an idea or action, whether or not it was realized. Purpose words include: that, so that, in order that.
4. Result is similar to “purpose,” but indicates the actual consequence, whether or not it was intended. Result words include: that, so that, as a result, with the result that.
5. Cause expresses the basis or cause of an action. Cause words include: because, since, and sometimes for.

**6.** Explanation is what follows and further explains the previous idea, giving reasons why it is true, why it occurred, or simply adding additional information. Look for the key word “for.”

**7.** Inference provides a logical consequence, conclusion, or summary to the previous discussion. Inference words include: therefore, for this reason.

**8.** Condition presents a condition that must occur before a certain action or conclusion can take place. The statement may or may not reflect reality (i.e., it could be hypothetical). Key word is “if.”

**OBSERVATION TASK 2** | *List 2–3 primary themes you see in the passage each week.*

A primary theme is the big idea, the central truth, or command that the passage focuses on. After reading the passage, write your themes as single words or short phrases. Identifying these themes at the beginning of your study will help you develop a good overall grasp of the passage.

**OBSERVATION TASK 3** | *Write two or more observations per verse.*

Our observations might identify people, places, or events, point out repeated words or key terms, record important connections between words and sentences, or even point out something missing that we expected to see.

**OBSERVATION TASK 4** | *Record your own interpretive questions.*

Here are a few examples:

WHO IS	WHAT IS THE	WHY DID THE AUTHOR	HOW
...Paul talking about?	...meaning of this word?	...choose this word?	...was this action accomplished?
...accomplishing the action?	...significance of this phrase?	...include this phrase, statement, or command?	...will this situation occur?
...benefiting from the action?	...implication of this statement?	...not say _____ ?	
	...relationship between these phrases?		

**INTERPRET**

Our observation of a passage should stir interesting yet challenging questions, leading us to the second stage of our Bible study: interpretation. Fortunately, we do not have to run to a commentary or study Bible for answers (though these are helpful tools to check our conclusions). Use the following six methods, as needed, to tackle a variety of questions.

**INTERPRETATION METHOD 1** | *Use the context.*

Look for important clues in the sentences and paragraphs that come before and after the verse in question. Try to follow the author’s flow of thought through the whole chapter. This may take you to the previous lesson, so have it handy as a review. You may need to read ahead for clues.

## INTERPRETATION METHOD 2 | *Study cross-references.*

Cross references are simply other passages in any book of the Bible that are somehow related to the verses you are studying. They often prove incredibly helpful as you seek to understand your passage. A few such cross references can be found in the margins of most English Bibles, but more can be found by visiting the online reference [lumina.bible.org](http://lumina.bible.org). Simply search for the passage at the top of the screen, and the relevant text will appear. Be sure that “NET2” is your selected Bible in the drop down box, and then select the tab for “Notes” on the right side of the screen. Now, anytime you select one of the numbered annotations above particular words or verses, you can immediately see the relevant Biblical or historical context for that term or passage. This is a great tool for answering tough questions!

## INTERPRETATION METHOD 3 | *Look up key words.*

While looking up a key word in English is helpful, doing so in Greek provides deeper understanding and is surprisingly easy, thanks to online tools such as [lumina.bible.org](http://lumina.bible.org). Simply search for the passage at the top of the screen, and the relevant text will appear. Be sure that “NET2” is your selected Bible in the drop down box, and then select the tab for “Greek” on the right side of the screen. Now hovering over any word in English will highlight the corresponding Greek term and reveal its Strong’s definition in the opposite window. For even further study, you can select a word, click the magnifying glass above it, then choose to run a “Word Search,” “Strong’s Search,” or “Word Study.” The first will provide all Biblical references that use the English term. The second will provide all Biblical references that use the Greek term. And the third will provide the full definition and derivatives of the Greek term. What used to take multiple books & many hours now takes one internet browser & a few seconds!

## INTERPRETATION METHOD 4 | *Look up background information.*

You can find helpful insights by looking up confusing names or words in a Bible dictionary or by looking up the particular verses you are studying in a background commentary. One of the best dictionaries is *The New Bible Dictionary* by Wood & Marshall. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary* by Craig Keener is another excellent example of a verse-by-verse background commentary.

## INTERPRETATION METHOD 5 | *Tackle tough questions step-by-step.*

When trying to answer the most challenging questions, follow this four-step process:

- 1.** List all the options. Always start by brainstorming every possible answer to your question.
- 2.** List pros and cons for each option. See all the evidence you can find that either argues for or against a particular option. This evidence comes from your study of key words, the grammar of the sentence, the context of surrounding verses and the book as a whole, cross references to other books, and comparison with your overall understanding of Christian theology.
- 3.** Choose the most likely option. Look at your evidence for each option. Typically, evidence from the immediate context is most important, followed closely by evidence from the book as a whole. Evidence from other books of the Bible, or from Christian theology as a whole, does not carry quite as much weight unless the solution contradicts a clear passage elsewhere or a major tenant of Christian doctrine. In that case, since Scripture never lies and God cannot contradict Himself, you must eliminate that option.
- 4.** Decide on your certainty level. Once you have chosen the best solution, step back for a second and humbly gauge how certain you are of its accuracy (90% = I am very sure this is correct vs. 60% = This solution is just a bit more likely than the others!). Finally, talk with others and check commentaries or reference books to see what solutions they have chosen and why.

#### INTERPRETATION METHOD 6 | *Compare multiple translations.*

This packet uses the New American Standard (NASB) translation. You can often find helpful interpretive clues by comparing this translation with other translations. The New King James Version (NKJV), like the NASB, is a fairly word-for-word translation of the Greek text. The New International Version (NIV) and the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) are excellent phrase-to-phrase translations of the Greek and thus often easier to read. Another excellent phrase-to-phrase Bible, which includes extensive translation notes, is the New English Translation (NET) available online for free at [net.bible.org](http://net.bible.org). You can find and compare numerous translations of any Bible passage at [www.biblestudytools.com](http://www.biblestudytools.com).

## **APPLY**

Our Bible Study is not over until we practically apply what we have learned to our everyday lives. And, we know that because we are relational by nature, our learning and growth can and should impact other people in our lives.

The Relational Application section in this study provides an opportunity to connect the personal application of God's word with the relational spheres we live in.

### **APPLICATION TASK 1**

Prayerfully determine the main biblical truth or principle that God revealed to you during your study. A principle is a fact stated or implied in a passage that is relevant to our lives and not specific to a particular person or time. A few questions to ask are:

- Is there a promise for me to claim?
- Is there a truth for me to believe?
- Is there a command for me to obey?

### **APPLICATION TASK 2**

Determine how this truth impacts the four main relational areas in your life.

God:

- How does this truth stretch me in my relationship with God?
- Is there something from which I need to confess and repent?
- Are there some characteristics of God of which I am reminded to praise or worship Him?

Family/Friends:

- How does this truth impact my relationship with my family or friends?
- How could I share this truth with these loved ones?
- Is there something or someone specific I can pray for?

Work:

- Is there an opportunity to integrate this truth in my work environment?
- Is there a next step of ministry I can take based on this truth?
- How does this truth impact my attitude, decision-making and conversations at work?

Service:

- How does this truth change my view of the people in the world around me?
- Is there a way to care for, serve or reach out to the others based on this truth?
- Is there a next step of ministry I can take based on this truth?

Pray that Bible translation ministries will make significant progress in unreached areas of the world.

SERVICE  
GOD

Praise God each morning this week for the gift of His Word.

Meditate on each lesson's memory verse during each week of this study.

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**MAIN TRUTH:**  
**A healthy, righteous life is rooted in God's word**

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Look for ways to winsomely speak truth into the conversations I have at work.

WORK  
FAMILY/FRIENDS

Ask my spouse what God is showing him/her through the Word this week.

# ADDITIONAL STUDY RESOURCES

## ONLINE RESOURCES

[biblestudytools.com](http://biblestudytools.com) | Word studies

[lumina.bible.org](http://lumina.bible.org) | Word studies

[soniclight.com](http://soniclight.com) | Commentary

[bestcommentaries.com](http://bestcommentaries.com) | Commentary database

## DISCIPLESHIP/BIBLE STUDY RESOURCES

*Living By the Book*

by Howard Hendricks and Charles Swindoll

A more in-depth book on how to study the Bible using the tools discussed in this packet.

*The Master Plan of Evangelism*

by Robert Coleman

A highly motivational analysis of Jesus' own principles of evangelism and discipleship.

*The Lost Art of Disciple Making*

by Leroy Eims

This practical resource will give you a detailed structure to follow and great content to cover as you begin to disciple a new believer.

*A Survey of Bible Doctrine*

by Charles Ryrie

An easy-to-read, relatively short systematic theology primer that you can walk a new believer through to ground them in the faith.

*Essentials of the Faith*

by Grace Bible Church, College Station, TX

This small group Bible study packet walks a new believer through the fundamental trusts and practices of the Christian faith in ten self-paced lessons.

Note: Grace Bible Church does not always agree with the views of these commentaries. These are good tools to help understand hard passages, but the particular theological views reflect the author, of the commentary and not those of Grace Bible Church.





**WE HELP PEOPLE FIND & FOLLOW JESUS**