

FRESH FAITH

INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY



COLOSSIANS & PHILEMON

Fresh Faith

Colossians & Philemon Inductive Study

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Getting Started

Learning how to study the Bible for ourselves is one of the most important skills we can acquire as Christians. This proficiency assists us in becoming true disciples of Christ, *equipping* us for life. Knowing God’s Word and intentionally putting it into action gives us the ability to walk according to His will daily.

²⁰ Now may the God of peace—who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, and ratified an eternal covenant with His blood ²¹may He equip you with all you need for doing His will. May He produce in you, through the power of Jesus Christ, every good thing that is pleasing to Him. All glory to him forever and ever! Amen.

~Hebrews 13:20-21~

Daily Homework:

Each day will require approximately 15 minutes of study, (you can do it!)

- **Days 1-2** will include reading and making general observations of the text.
- **Days 3-4** will involve defining some key words and interpreting the text in context.
- **Day 5** will incorporate applying the text and having a plan for action for our daily lives.

Symbols:

Marking up the scriptures with some simple symbols can help you to recognize key words, repetitive phrases, themes, places, times, etc. Consider using the following symbols to enhance your study. Make your own:

Symbol	Meaning	Example
	God	Father
	Jesus	Lord
	Holy Spirit	Spirit
	Time reference	before, after, immediately, etc.
	Key words or phrases	turned aside to idle talk
	Geographical locations	Ephesus

You will need:

- **The Bible:** We will use the *New King James Version (NKJV)* for this study, however, you will also be asked to read passages in the *New Living Translation (NLT)*. We also recommend the *New American Standard Bible (NASB)*, and the *English Standard Version (ESV)* for different choices.
- **Access to online Bible study helps:** blueletterbible.org, preceptaustin.org, biblehub.com, or biblegateway.com are all good study resources.
- To view a quick Blue Letter Bible tutorial, visit www.youtube.com/reliancewomen.

Introduction to Colossians

Many Christians today have a voracious appetite for inspirational messages giving no regard to biblical accuracy. Like toddlers who eat anything off the ground, these believers eagerly devour tantalizing words not discerning they've just ingested poison. Accurate doctrine matters and has everything to do with how we live our lives. Biblical accuracy was a problem for the Colossian church. Colossae was located in the region of the "Seven churches" from the book of Revelation. It was about 100 miles east of Ephesus in Asia Minor (modern day Turkey) and 12 miles from Laodicea. One of three cities (Colossae, Hierapolis, and Laodicea) that formed a popular trade route, Colossae, had a mixture of different backgrounds which made for an interesting culture. At one point, Colossae had been a large, populous city, however, it had become a small town at the time the Apostle Paul wrote this letter, from Rome, sometime between A.D. 60–62. The people of Colossae were mainly Greeks and Phrygians, with an unusually large Jewish population. The area was famous for its soft wool. ¹Acts 19:10 tells us the message of the gospel spread "throughout the province of Asia" and over a two-year period, "all in that region, heard the word of the Lord" which would've included the town of Colossae. Epaphras, who founded the church, was likely converted during that time (1:6–7, 4:12–13, also Acts 19:10). The Apostle Paul had received a report from Epaphras saying because of the mixed culture some dangerous teachings were emerging and seeping into the church. These heresies were possibly from Gnosticism ("to know" a higher knowledge, the practice of esoteric mysticism) and were attacking Christology (the theological study of the person and deeds of Jesus). Some scholars say they were being taught that Jesus wasn't actually God, denigrating the deity of Christ. Whatever the actual heresy, the Apostle Paul writes to the believers at this church, from his prison in Rome, declaring the supremacy and sufficiency of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. Jesus is the supreme Lord of the church and of the world, in whom the fullness of Christ's deity dwells. Norman Geisler in his book "A Popular Survey of the New Testament" writes, "The church made up of mostly Gentiles (1:27; 2:13), had a problem with doctrine. They were influenced by "vain" philosophy (2:8), composed of an incipient form of Gnosticism (vv. 8–10), legalism (vv.11–17), mysticism (vv.18–19), and asceticism (vv. 20–23)".² Tychicus, a co-worker of Paul's, and Onesimus, Philemon's

¹ Jensen, I. (1981). *Jensen's survey of the new testament*. Moody Publishing: Chicago. Pg. 336.

² Geisler, N. (2007). *A popular survey of the new testament*. Baker Publishing: Grand Rapids. Pg. 190

bondservant (Colossians 4:7; Philemon 1:10–12) were commissioned to deliver this letter and give a full report on all the happenings of Paul to the church in Colossae. The books of Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon make up a group known as “the prison epistles” and were written at the same time which is noted by some of their similarities. Ephesians and Colossians are often called “the twin epistles.” It was thought that an earthquake destroyed this city in A.D. 60.

The truth will always be under attack. Nothing needs to be added to the Word of God, no matter how tasty it is, because our sufficiency comes from Jesus alone. As we study this letter, we will discover the depths and riches of our intimate relationship with Christ, who is all and in all! (3:11)

Lesson One

Colossians 1: In A Nutshell

The Apostle Paul was disturbed by the reports of false doctrine he was hearing regarding the church housed in Colossae. Gnosticism, legalism, and mysticism were as varied as the diverse culture they germinated from in this trade route town. Paul was so grieved he thought it critically important to write to the believers in Colossae reminding them of the victory they have in **Jesus, our hope**. Jesus, the Lord God and Father of all, who is above all, through all, and in you all (Ephesians 4:6) and this is the hope that they've heard from the beginning through the truth of the Gospel. **The supremacy of Christ** is the only reason we live, move and have our being (Acts 17:28). Once we were enemies of the cross but now, we are partakers of His inheritance (Philippians 3:18, Colossians 1:12). Therefore, instead of us asking, "**Who am I?**" we can boldly proclaim and tell the world **Who I Am!** Once we truly understand and embrace this truth for ourselves, then we can take it to the world by **making Him known**. That's Colossians 1 in a nutshell.

Colossians 1: The Text (NKJV)

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, 2 To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ *who are* in Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 3 We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, 4 since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints; 5 because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, 6 which has come to you, as *it has* also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as *it is* also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth; 7 as you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, 8 who also declared to us your love in the Spirit. 9 For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing *Him*, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; 12 giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the

light. 13 He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed *us* into the kingdom of the Son of His love, 14 in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. 15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. 17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. 18 And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. 19 For it pleased *the Father that* in Him all the fullness should dwell, 20 and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. 21 And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled 22 in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight— 23 if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister. 24 I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church, 25 of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, 26 the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. 27 To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. 28 Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. 29 To this *end* I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.

Day Three: Interpretation

1) Choose 3 words from the text to define. Please use the *NKJV* for uniformity in group discussion.

- _____ from verse # _____

Strong's concordance or Bible dictionary:

Dictionary:

Synonyms:

Antonyms:

- _____ from verse # _____

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2) Pick one of the words above and find a cross reference (another scripture) with a similar meaning.

(Hint: do a Bible word search using a word you defined or a synonym.)

3) Now find another scripture with the opposite meaning.

(Hint: do a Bible word search using an antonym of the above word.)

Day Five: Applications and Action

1) List 1-3 ways you can apply this week's lesson to your own life.

2) Now form one of the above applications into a personal question for you and for others to contemplate.

3) Answer your question fully.

4) What action can I take this week toward change in light of this lesson?

5) Write out one verse from this chapter that the Lord used to minister to you this week. Commit it to memory.

Extra: Illustrate your lesson

Think of a biblical story, personal story, or something going on in our world or culture that relates to our area of study this week. Share it with the group if time permits.

Lesson Two

Colossian 2: In A Nutshell

The Apostle Paul is a protective shepherd and desires the followers of Jesus to have complete wisdom and knowledge, which is revealed through **God's mysterious plan**. He tells them this, so they won't be deceived by crafty well-thought-out arguments which are nothing more than high sounding nonsense. Instead, they should continue in what they've been taught through the Gospel. In Christ lives all **the fullness of God** and they can **identify with Christ** through His death, burial, and resurrection from the dead. He has paid the ultimate price to impute His righteousness to His sons and daughters. Paul had such a heart for believers not only to experience salvation but that they would also follow God in an authentic relationship free of legalistic rules and regulations. He wants them to be **set free from legalism** and be truly transformed when they grow in genuine community with others who desire to continue in the truth of God's Word. That's Colossians 2 in a nutshell.

Colossians 2: The Text (NKJV)

1 For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and *for* as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, 2 that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and *attaining* to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. 4 Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words. 5 For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your *good* order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. 6 As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, 7 rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. 8 Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. 9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; 10 and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power. 11 In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, 12 buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with *Him* through faith in the working

of God, who raised Him from the dead. 13 And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses 14 having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. 15 Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it. 16 So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, 17 which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ. 18 Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in *false* humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, 19 and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase *that is* from God. 20 *though* living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations— 21 “Do not touch, do not taste, do no handle,” 22 which all concern things which perish with the using—according to the commandments and doctrines of men? 23 These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, *false* humility, and neglect of the body, *but are* of no Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as value against the indulgence of the flesh.

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(Hint: do a Bible word search using a word you defined or a synonym.)

3) Now find another scripture with the opposite meaning.

(Hint: do a Bible word search using an antonym of the above word.)

Day Five: Applications and Action

1) List 1-3 ways you can apply this week's lesson to your own life.

2) Now form one of the above applications into a personal question for you and for others to contemplate.

3) Answer your question fully.

4) What action can I take this week toward change in light of this lesson?

5) Write out one verse from this chapter that the Lord used to minister to you this week. Commit it to memory.

Extra: Illustrate your lesson

Think of a biblical story, personal story, or something going on in our world or culture that relates to our area of study this week. Share it with the group if time permits.

Lesson Three

Colossian 3: In A Nutshell

Last week, we were reminded that following religious rules and regulations does little to renew our Spirits. This week, we will be challenged to turn away from legalism and **seek those things which are above**. Wisdom from above requires shedding some behaviors familiar to our old nature and in its place, we are to become **image bearers of Jesus**. Now that we have “put off” our old sinful nature, Christ gives us a new wardrobe, we can “put on” things like tender mercies, kindness, and humility to name a few. This new nature also allows us to **love one another** in a way that will speak volumes to the world around us. The act of truly loving one will require submission in all shapes and sizes. We must learn, **submission is God’s design** in our marriages, the church, the workplace, our communities, and government. Submission is God’s way to bring order and rule to every part of life. That’s Colossians 3 in a nutshell.

Colossians 3: The Text (NKJV)

1 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. 5 Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, 7 in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. 8 But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, 10 and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, 11 where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all. 12 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. 14 But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. 15 And let the peace of God rule in

your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. 17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. 18 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. 19 Husbands love your wives and do not be bitter toward them. 20 Children obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord. 21 Fathers do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. 22 Bondservants obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. 23 And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. 25 But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality.

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3) Now find another scripture with the opposite meaning.

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1) List 1-3 ways you can apply this week's lesson to your own life.

2) Now form one of the above applications into a personal question for you and for others to contemplate.

3) Answer your question fully.

4) What action can I take this week toward change in light of this lesson?

5) Write out one verse from this chapter that the Lord used to minister to you this week. Commit it to memory.

Extra: Illustrate your lesson

Think of a biblical story, personal story, or something going on in our world or culture that relates to our area of study this week. Share it with the group if time permits.

Lesson Four

Colossian 4: In A Nutshell

In his farewell thoughts, Paul transitions from those who must submit under authority (chapter 3) now to those who are in authority. When we have any kind of supervision over another, whether it be a church leader, boss, manager, etc., treating people properly is important. As believers, we must remember we are ***in authority and under authority*** because we have a master as well. Paul encourages his followers to live faithful lives by praying earnestly and ***walking wisely among non-believers***. Paul then commissions his team members and announces how ***each one playing their part*** assists in the overall vision and is important to building the Kingdom. As a leader, Paul continues to give directions to those under his charge and he has a special exhortation for Archippus, who was a “fellow soldier” and housed a church in his home possibly with his parents (Philemon 1), who he urges to ***“take heed to the ministry you have received from the Lord.”*** That’s Colossians 4 in a nutshell.

Colossians 4: The Text (NKJV)

1 Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven. 2 Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; 3 meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, 4 that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak. 5 Walk in wisdom toward those *who are* outside, redeeming the time. 6 *Let* your speech always *be* with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one. 7 Tychicus, a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me. 8 I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that he may know your circumstances and comfort your hearts, 9 with Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is *one* of you. They will make known to you all things which *are happening* here. 10 Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, with Mark the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him), 11 and Jesus who is called Justus. These *are*

my only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are of the circumcision; they have proved to be a comfort to me. 12 Epaphras, who is *one* of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. 13 For I bear him witness that he has a great zeal for you, and those who are in Laodicea, and those in Hierapolis. 14 Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you. 15 Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea, and Nymphas and the church that *is* in his house. 16 Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the *epistle* from Laodicea. 17 And say to Archippus, “Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it.” 18 This salutation by my own hand—Paul. Remember my chains. Grace *be* with you. Amen.

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2) Now form one of the above applications into a personal question for you and for others to contemplate.

3) Answer your question fully.

4) What action can I take this week toward change in light of this lesson?

5) Write out one verse from this chapter that the Lord used to minister to you this week. Commit it to memory.

Extra: Illustrate your lesson

Think of a biblical story, personal story, or something going on in our world or culture that relates to our area of study this week. Share it with the group if time permits.

Lesson Five

Philemon: In A Nutshell

The letter to Philemon tells **a beautiful story of grace** through forgiveness, redemption and restoration. The Apostle Paul writes from his prison cell in Rome (A.D. 60–62) to his friend and co-laborer, Philemon, who lives near Colossae and house's the church. Inscribed around the same time as Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians, Philemon is the shortest of Paul's letters, composed about six years earlier than his last epistle, 2 Timothy. Paul pleads to Philemon to arise to the commands of Jesus by extending grace, forgiveness, and generosity to his former household servant, Onesimus. It was suspected that Onesimus stole money and goods from his master (V. 18), Philemon, and fled to Rome to hide in the city. After **a divine encounter** with Paul, Onesimus, comes to Christ (V.10). Hence, now this tender letter to Philemon from Paul, pleading for his **restoration and reconciliation** of this new brother in Christ. If any of Paul's letters exude the brevity of Jesus' sacrifice for us, it's this one. This heartfelt plea echoes the very heart of Jesus and **His redemptive plan** for us. Not only does Paul exhibit great love for his friend and fellow worker in ministry but now for this new convert, Onesimus, treating him just as Christ proclaims, "a new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17). That is Philemon in a nutshell.

Philemon: The Text (NKJV)

1 Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy *our* brother, To Philemon our beloved *friend* and fellow laborer, 2 to the beloved Apphia, Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house: 3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 4 I thank my God, making mention of you always in my prayers, 5 hearing of your love and faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints, 6 that the sharing of your faith may become effective by the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus. 7 For we have great joy and consolation in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed by you, brother. 8 Therefore, though I might be very bold in Christ to command you what is fitting, 9 *yet* for love's sake I rather appeal *to you*—being such a one as Paul, the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ— 10 I appeal to you for my son

Onesimus, whom I have begotten *while* in my chains, 11 who once was unprofitable to you, but now is profitable to you and to me. 12 I am sending him back. You therefore receive him, that is, my own heart, 13 whom I wished to keep with me, that on your behalf he might minister to me in my chains for the gospel. 14 But without your consent I wanted to do nothing, that your good deed might not be by compulsion, as it were, but voluntary. 15 For perhaps he departed for a while for this *purpose*, that you might receive him forever, 16 no longer as a slave but more than a slave—a beloved brother, especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord. 17 If then you count me as a partner, receive him as *you would* me. 18 But if he has wronged you or owes anything, put that on my account. 19 I, Paul, am writing with my own hand. I will repay—not to mention to you that you owe me even your own self besides. 20 Yes, brother, let me have joy from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in the Lord.

21 Having confidence in your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say. 22 But, meanwhile, also prepare a guest room for me, for I trust that through your prayers I shall be granted to you. 23 Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, 24 as *do* Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow laborers. 25 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with your spirit. Amen.

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