

A man with a beard and a white baseball cap is shown in profile, looking out over a large stadium filled with spectators. The sky is a clear, vibrant blue. The man's face and cap are rendered in a halftone dot pattern, while the background is a sharp, clear photograph.

JESUS WON

A SERIES IN COLOSSIANS

STUDY GUIDE



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INTRODUCTION

Written by Nicholas Kelley

Pastoral Intern

I remember the day like it was yesterday. On the television, there were people surrounding the Supreme Court building with a reporter in the center of the screen telling the watching world that “same sex ‘marriage’ was now legal in our land.” “The Church won’t stand for this,” I told myself. To my surprise, many have in recent years stood for just that. You need look no further than the state of the Methodist Church with all its fracturing and division to see how Christians are embracing immorality. Last year, I was watching a video of a convocation ceremony for an Ivy-league university’s once faithful divinity department. It opened with a rendition of the Lord’s Prayer adapted to include she/her and they/them pronouns. I laughed for a second, and then I became deeply sad.

It’s frustrating to watch as so-called “Christian communities” renounce the Truth of God’s Word. The Church once had a monumental impact on the world, and now they embrace sin and lies. It would be easy for us to become discouraged and to think that the Lord is fumbling His plans. The Church at Colossae had reason to be disheartened as well. Colossian believers watched as their brothers and sisters were being taken captive by “philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ” (Colossians 2:8). Paul was writing to a church that could have given up and let the enemy take over. But they were not that kind of people; they were resilient, filled with faith and love because of the hope laid up for them in Heaven (Colossians 1:4-5).

Christianity may not be as popular as secularism. The Church may even flounder at times. But take comfort in knowing that the message we preach will never become irrelevant because it is true, because the fields are ripe for harvest, and because God has promised a yield. King Jesus won at Calvary, claiming victory over sin and death, but we are still called to play the game. While society buckles under the weight of its sin, the Church must stand together as one team with one winning playbook: the Word of God. Without Scripture, the Church will have little effect on the world. So how can you play your part on the team? Study God’s Word. We’ve provided this resource to help you.

WEEK 1

Written by Nicholas Kelley

Pastoral Intern

Read Colossians 1:1-8

If I had to choose the top 5 things I am most thankful for, Christian friendships would be on that list. I remember in middle school I had told several friends about my struggle with anxiety. While most of these guys offered generic unhelpful platitudes, one friend sticks out in my memory as having given me Biblical solutions to my worry. He could have given me a quick response and moved on with his life, but he didn't. He was different because he was Christian. Unlike my other friends, he led me back to the Lord by reciting Bible verses that he had written down just in case I had another one of these anxious spells. Years later, I hear of the ways that he blessed other people through his spiritual wisdom and caring heart, and I can't help but thank the Lord that he was there when I needed a brother in Christ.

Christians in every age are called to stand in stark contrast to the dark and gloomy backdrop of a wayward culture. We must be different from the world so that we can emulate the character of God and bring Him glory. We must be different so that we can show atheists, agnostics, Muslims, Mormons, Hindus, and any other person of any other faith that our Lord is the true God of life-giving restoration. And we must be different because our holiness helps fellow Christians to be different as well.

Years ago, I was sitting in a math class in high school when several people were conversing about what so-and-so did and how appalled they were that they did it. I happily joined in to offer my thoughts. At the end of the class, the teacher pulled me aside and with a stern face told me that Christians do not gossip. I did not like her very much that day, but she was right, and she said something I needed to hear. Had she let me walk out the door without saying anything, I would have kept doing what everyone else was doing. I needed someone different to remind me that I am called to be different as well.

Paul wrote to a group of "different" people. While most of the world was being led astray by non-Christian ideologies and harmful philosophies, there was a group of faithful saints in the Colossian church who possessed a strong faith in our Lord, a love for God and for neighbor that far surpassed the world's, and a hope in the promise of eternal life. They were so strong in the

Lord that the word was spreading about their spiritual vitality and Paul had heard and was thankful for it. When the Pandemic wreaked havoc on our world, it threatened to disintegrate churches in more secular regions. For instance, there was a pastor in Canada whose church was subjected to strict laws prohibiting them from gathering on the Lord's Day. Rather than obeying his government's mandate, the pastor chose to continue meeting as a church body. He was arrested and made to spend time in jail. Churches worldwide heard of this man's boldness in defying government, but more than that, they witnessed a man whose faith, love, and hope for God transcended the threats of a mere man. You may not see it, but whether you live set apart for Christ—whether you choose faith, love, and hope in the middle of adversity—will leave a lasting impression upon fellow-Christians and the world.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. How would you define faith, love, and hope? Who should we have faith in? Who should we love? What should we have hope for?
2. Think of a recent season of adversity. Did you choose faith, love, and hope during that time?
3. What are some steps you can take to build faith, love, and hope?
4. Are your family, friends, and neighbors led closer or farther from God when you are around?

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES:

Day 1: Hebrews 11:1

Day 2: Proverbs 3:5-6

Day 3: Jeremiah 29:11

Day 4: 2 Corinthians 4:18

Day 5: 1 John 4:7-8

WEEK 2

Written by Nicholas Kelley

Pastoral Intern

Read: Colossians 1:9-23

"Pre-millennial dispensationalism" is what I overheard a group of seminary students "geeking out" over in the corner of my favorite restaurant only a 5-minute walk from campus. Seminary students were everywhere in the neighborhood speaking a holier-than-thou language, incomprehensible to the common man. "How are we to reach the unsaved if all we have is head knowledge without heart transformation," I remember asking myself. We were all taught big words in 3 and a half hour long lectures that served us well whenever we wanted to impress people with our knowledge.

I had become frustrated with the intellectual ivory tower elitists who thought they knew everything and used doctrine to sound smart. I remember meditating on Paul's famous remarks: "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal." "That's it, everyone here sounds like a clanging symbol!" I thought to myself. It took me a while to realize that Paul was not suggesting that we abandon theology or cringe at doctrinal jargon. He is saying that the reason we dive into the word and into good Christian books is so that we may know God and make Him known to a lost and dying world. A godly intellect is powered by love, not ego.

Theology is a good thing that demands our attention. If we are to love Christ, we must seek to know Him and the only way we shall arrive at a knowledge of Him is by reading His Word. Here in Colossians 1:9-23, Paul writes one of the most stunning passages in all of Scripture and paints for us a picture of Christ's work in redeeming us wayward sheep. He describes our Lord as the "image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation." He then goes on to state that all things were made by Him, that He is before all things, and that all things were created through and for Him. Verse 19 says, "For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell." Here is a doctrine to think about: Christ, the one who hung on a Roman Cross to pay the penalty for your sins is God Himself! You would have never heard such splendid truth had you not read the Scriptures.

In verse 9 Paul tells the Colossians that he prays that they might be "filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding" so that they will walk worthily, please God,

bear spiritual fruit, and so increase in the knowledge of God. Theology is not only a necessity, but also a practice of pleasure. Water provides hydration to the parched, but it does more than that. It brings satisfaction that food cannot provide in the moment. In the same way, if you want to live and be filled with life, drink from the flowing fountain of the Word. Meditate on doctrine. Think about God's character. Do this daily, and I guarantee you will be blessed.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. What comes to your mind when you think of the word "theology"?
2. What are some of the attributes/characteristics of God? (Ex. Loving, Sovereign, etc...)
3. How can good theology help you? How can poor theology hurt you?
4. What are some steps to help you as you begin to learn about God?

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES:

Day 1: 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Day 2: John 1:1-14

Day 3: Hebrews 6:1-20

Day 4: Jeremiah 4:22

Day 5: 2 Peter 1:2

WEEK 3

Written by Nicholas Kelley

Pastoral Intern

Read: Colossians 1:24-2:10

Every summer my family stays in a cottage on the shore of Lake Erie. One time, on our way to the Lake, we stopped by a produce stand and purchased what looked like a delicious watermelon. Before lunch the next day I began to cut it open. As I broke through the rind with the knife, it began to produce a hissing noise, followed by a putrid odor. Before I had cut the melon in half, I reached for the trash can.

In the same way, false teachers often look interesting on the outside. They may have the coolest “kicks” or hang out with a-list celebrities. Many of them are smooth with their words and offer the most entertaining sermons, but all is not how it looks. They are rotten to the core once you begin to study them a little while longer.

False teachers are also everywhere and in places you least expect them. Like weeds, they grow out of fertile soil, often interspersed between plants worth keeping. Sometimes the hardest task of the gardener is discerning what is invasive and what is not. This morning as I was scrolling through my Instagram feed, I saw a news article about a book that is set to be published later this year. Many considered the author to be one of the best scholars in the study of Old Testament History. A self-identifying evangelical, he always stood for the truth, until he didn't. The description of the book tells all. Not only does he now endorse homosexuality, but he also believes that God does as well.

I would have never thought in a million years this man would teach such blatant error, but here we are. The Church in Colossae was like our church is today, susceptible to false teaching of all kinds. The heretics of that day and in that place taught that Jesus was not God and that the spirits and powers of the heavens were to be worshipped. In response, Paul included in his letter to the Colossians these remarks: “See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily” (Colossians 2:8-9). The command that Paul gave to the Colossians in that day applies to us in our context as well.

This might sound juvenile, but if we are to remain in the truth we must meditate on the Truth. I have heard countless stories of young men and women who grew up in a Christian environment, and as they entered university they began to sit under secular teaching. For too long their minds were fed by the ideologies of our day and far too little did they saturate themselves in Scripture. As a result, they walked away from the faith and embraced the religion of secularism.

There are some practical steps we can take to ensure that we do not end up wandering off into error. One tip is to ask your pastor what books, preachers, and ministries he recommends and which ones he thinks you should avoid. Chances are he probably already has a list. Another tip is to ask your pastor questions about theology. Many of the pastors at Crossroads either have degrees from college and seminary or are well-read on these issues. They would be more than willing to answer your questions. The last piece of advice is the stereotypical Sunday-school answer, and that is to read your Bible. Everyone knows that there is spiritual power in the Word of God and that it transforms hearts and minds, but few take their Bible Study time seriously. Jesus says in Matthew 7:24, "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock." Obey Christ's Word and He will hold you fast. If you don't build your foundation on Scripture, you will build it on something else, and that "something else" will surely fail.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. Can you think of any false teachers? Who are some faithful teachers?
2. Have you ever believed any wrong ideas about God's character or the Gospel? If so, how were you negatively affected by those ideas?
3. What are some questions about the Bible or theology that you could ask your pastor?
4. Do you regularly study the Bible with intentionality? How could you make your Bible study time more effective?

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES:

Day 1: Ezekiel 13:9

Day 2: Jeremiah 14:14

Day 3: Matthew 24:24

Day 4: 2 Timothy 4:3-4

Day 5: Acts 20:28-30

WEEK 4

Written by Michael Searles

Worship Pastor

Read: Colossians 2:11-23

Have you ever thought about the difference between your body and your flesh? They are often used interchangeably in conversation. For Paul, however, they are two vastly different things.

Our bodies were created for God by God (1 Corinthians 3:13, Romans 11:36). Sure, they can be used for sinful purposes, but they also can be used to honor Him and bring glory to His name! Our flesh, however, is something that is innately sinful and rebellious against our Lord and must be put to death at all costs.

Our text leads us to believe that people in the Colossian church were being bombarded left and right by different teachings on how to live holy lives. Many false teachers insisted on certain dietary restrictions, celebrating pagan festivals, and mysticism, as if these things could make one righteous before a Holy God. There was an emphasis on outward physical practices to severely discipline the body in hopes of achieving some spiritual goal.

But Paul destroys this false teaching by pointing out that following Old Testament ceremonial law is of no value in stopping the real problem: the flesh. Our external bodies are not the issue, nor is what we handle, taste, and touch (to quote Paul). It is our internal sin nature that needs to be addressed if we are to please God.

Paul's solution? A circumcision of the heart. He calls us to become more like Christ by, "putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ..." If our desire is to be more like Him, we must die to our flesh and live by the Spirit. Christ died, was buried, and rose again. So must we die to our flesh, bury the past, and be raised to life again through faith in God.

We owed a debt through our trespasses and iniquities; one we could never repay. But Jesus took our debt and nailed it to the Cross, put to shame the power of sin and death, and gave us victory in Him. It is the grace of God that makes us righteous before Him, not any set of actions or rules.

So let us today allow Christ to cut off our flesh so that we might live a life that is pleasing to Him, presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice to the one who gave His life for ours.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. How do you allow Christ to rid you of your flesh, or in Paul's words be, "...circumcised with a circumcision made without hands...?"
2. In what ways have you allowed manufactured requirements to influence your actions more than the leadership of the Holy Spirit?
3. How can you tell the difference between the two?
4. What steps can you take today to start putting to death the desires of the flesh?

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES:

Day 1: Deuteronomy 30:6

Day 2: Romans 8:5-7

Day 3: Galatians 5:24

Day 4: Romans 6:6,12

Day 5: Romans 8:13

WEEK 5

Written by Mike Mahek

Shelby Campus and Missions Pastor

Read: Colossians 3:1-17

What should a Christian's life look like? Paul describes the changes that take place in the lives of believers. Once you are raised with Christ, you are no longer what you have been. Your mind and focus are radically changed. You've been given a new heart, new desires, and a new way of thinking.

The Bible uses very powerful words to show us how we are to battle with sin. Scripture says that Christ followers must kill the sin of their past by putting off the old self which is full of sin and selfishness. How do we do that? We put on the new self by growing in the knowledge of God. We honor Christ with our entire being. In verses 12-18, we read about the character traits of an authentic Christian, which are the very same characteristics of Christ Jesus. He was full of compassion, so we seek fully compassionate hearts. He was kind, humble, meek, and patient, and so we are to be kind, humble, meek, and patient. He was all these things, so we must seek to become all these things. Though we will never fully be like Jesus, we are still called to proactively put aside the past and move forward by imitating Christ.

How can we take on this enormous challenge? Look at verse 17. Do everything in the name of Christ Jesus, giving thanks... When we recognize the enormity of what He has done for us we can't help but be overwhelmed with gratitude. He took wretched, sinful rebels and not only paid for our freedom, but adopted us into His family. May we never forget the significance of Calvary; it is what motivates us to live like He did and to love like He does. When we begin to consider our desperate hopelessness without Him, and when we experience the unwarranted salvation of our souls from the depths of despair, our response becomes one of love and thanksgiving. We must let our love for Christ and our gratitude for His sacrifice drive our actions. Why do we love? We love because He first loved us.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. Take a moment to read Galatians 5:22-23. What fruits of the Spirit are you bearing right now? Which fruits do you need to work on cultivating?
2. What practical steps can you take to conform yourself to the image of Christ?
3. Do you remain thankful for God's saving work even when times are difficult?
4. Who are some people in our church you can go to help you along your walk with Christ?

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES:

Day 1: Romans 3:19-26

Day 2: Ephesians 2:1-10

Day 3: Romans 12:1-21

Day 4: Galatians 2:15-21

Day 5: Philippians 4:4-10

WEEK 6

Written by Nicholas Kelley

Pastoral Intern

Read: Colossians 3:18-21

If you were a kid or even a parent in the 70's you may remember a show called The Waltons, which featured a large family living in rural Virginia during the middle of the Great Depression. The Walton family became for so many Americans the ideal picture of the home, in much the same way Mayberry was once the ideal town. The show was warm and inviting because, throughout its 9-season run, you see a romanticized depiction of how family life could be. Each Walton, whether it was the patriarch, the matriarch, the littlest, or the oldest child, gave their time and energy to meaningful work around the house. It was the only way they could get by. The home you saw on the screen is unlike so many modern homes in which often family members serve themselves. The Waltons were a collective team, sacrificing for each other's good even if not perfectly.

Your home could never look like the Walton home, after all the show depicted life nearly 100 years ago. But there is one good principle we can gain from it to better our families, one that is first found in Scripture. The principle is this: for the home to remain strong, each person must play their part. Paul states in Colossians 3:18-21, "Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged."

Married women, it is your God-given responsibility to submit to your husband's leadership. I am neither married nor a woman, so I can't say I know what it's like to follow this command. I'm sure it's more difficult than I could ever imagine. After all, men are just as flawed as women. Yet, this is the commandment that God gives to you. As long as your husband does not want you to sin, know that it is good for you to follow his leadership. Will he make mistakes? I'm sure he will. But it is better to occasionally miss the mark in the right direction than to make no mistakes going in the wrong direction!

Married men, know that your wife needs your love and admiration. Yes, lead and guide her, and even make decisions, but don't forget that your main job is to love her like Christ

loved His Church. How did Jesus love His Church? He died and gave Himself up for her (Ephesians 5:25). That means that in your day-to-day actions, you are sacrificing your wants and desires, and you are seeking to bless her in any way that you can. Your wife may even respect you more if you love her well.

Fathers, it would be easy to nitpick every little thing that your child does wrong. Know that your temperament can encourage or discourage your kids. Not only will your personality affect them when they are young, but it can profoundly change how they think, behave, and feel emotions going into adulthood.

Children, if you want to honor Jesus, love your parents well. They have given their love, affection, energy, and time into taking care of you. More than that they are assigned by God the great responsibility of training you in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Their jobs are stressful, let alone all the time and energy they put into caring for you. By obeying your parents, you not only glorify God, but you bless them as well.

If the home is to be strong, every member of the family must play their part. Take some time to work through this week's questions as a family. If you are single or widowed, there are also questions for you.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. Women, how well do you submit to your husband's leadership? What could you do better?
2. Men, are you actively showing your wife love? What could you do better?
3. Children, what are some ways you can help your mom and dad around the house?
4. Singles, what character traits might you be working on now to become better spouses and parents in the future?
5. Widows/widowers, how might you encourage families in your church community?

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES:

Day 1: Ephesians 5:22-27

Day 2: Genesis 2:23-24

Day 3: Psalm 127:3-4

Day 4: Proverbs 22:6

Day 5: Ephesians 6:1-3

WEEK 7

Written by Jesse Rider

Mansfield Campus and Family Pastor

Read: Colossians 3:22-4:1

"Whatever" is a word that can have many different meanings depending on the user and the tone. For instance, if you ask your child to take out the trash, and they are feeling moody that day, they might respond with an irritating "whatever!" Or if you're a married man, your wife may ask you what outfit you like better, and to her disappointment you respond "whatever." When Paul writes "whatever" he is simply referring to all the tasks, projects, jobs, side-jobs that are required of you to do. Paul is not skirting around certain duties, responsibilities, or even occupations. He speaks to lawyers and to carpenters whose tasks vary greatly. In the modern context his words apply to janitors and corporate CEO's pouring trash into trucks and money into departments. Now that we have identified what Paul means by the word "whatever" what are we supposed to do with it? Simply put, we are to do whatever we do for God's glory. We are to work as a form of worship. That not only means worshipping through song but in attitude, effort, and heart. Our work reflects our relationship with Christ and has the potential to bring glory to His name. There should be something different about how we work, but more importantly there should be something different in why we work.

We can serve Christ through our work not because He needs us to, but because this is a form of worship.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. What would the difference in work be if you worked to please God instead of a boss?
2. How can you live this verse out in a secular setting?
3. What makes living this verse out difficult?
4. How would people describe your work ethic and effort? Is your work a representation of worship or a representation of something else?
5. What are specific changes you can implement now?

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES:

Day 1: Philippians 2:14-16

Day 2: Psalm 128:1-2

Day 3: 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12

Day 4: Genesis 2:15

Day 5: 1 Peter 4:10

WEEK 8

Written by Chris Standridge

Ontario Campus and Communities Pastor

Read: Colossians 4:2-18

Is there anything worse than being on the outside looking in? No one likes the feeling of being on the outside of an inside joke. When we don't get invited to that party or that gathering, we feel like we're on the outside. Studies have even shown that one of the biggest negative side effects of social media is looking at others' lives and feeling like we're missing out- especially when a group of friends are together in a picture, and we weren't invited. We go to extreme measures just to get the inside scoop or stay in the loop simply because nothing feels worse than being on the outside.

In Colossians 4, the Apostle Paul was writing a letter to a group of Jesus followers. When it came to the Gospel, Christianity, or the Church, these letter recipients were "insiders." To all "insiders," even us today, Jesus gave a commission and a command. In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." He gave insiders a great commission to reach outsiders. How do we do that? Through obeying a great commandment. In Matthew 22, Jesus said to insiders, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

According to the teachings of Jesus, His followers can make insiders out of outsiders through disciple-making. How do we earn the right to make disciples of those outside the faith? We earn the right by loving insiders and outsiders. Paul writes in Colossians to specify for his readers and for us today that we should walk in wisdom toward outsiders. What does that look like? Wisdom walking takes three paths.

First, walk your walk: make the best use of your time. Christians should have a good reputation and live intentionally among unbelievers in our world. We should always be on the lookout for an opportunity to practically live out the good news of the gospel, especially when outsiders are watching.

Secondly, talk your talk: marinated in grace and seasoned with salt. Our casual conversations and our proclamations of Jesus Christ should start with a grace that flows from the heart and words seasoned with the purifying salt of sanctification. Remember, you are called to be a witness to the world, not a judge or a prosecutor!

Lastly, be ready to give an answer. When you walk your walk and talk your talk, it catches the attention of the outsider. They may have questions about what makes you different and by whose words and ways you live. Be prepared to share the hope of Jesus you have found.

By these things, the believer will play an active role in welcoming the outsider. And there is no greater joy than seeing someone on the outside become an inside part of the family of God.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. How does it make you feel to be left out of something others are participating in?
2. Is there any evidence in your life that you either are or have a desire to be a disciple-maker like Jesus called you to? What are they? If you don't have any disciple-making proof, what step do you need to take to be obedient to Christ's commission?
3. In what ways does the walk and talk that outsiders see not align with the model of Jesus? What action steps should you take to live and speak more consistently with the way of the Savior?
4. Has anyone ever seen anything peculiar or compelling about your faith so that they ask you to explain it? How did you handle that question at that moment?



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