



COLOSSIANS

Christ the Center



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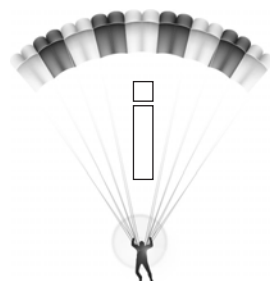
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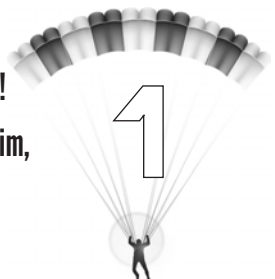
Why Study Colossians?

“The Spirit and the church: there lie the clues which can help us to understand how we get from the ancient text to the modern situation. Paul intended his letters to be read out in church (4:16), and this reminds us that we cannot understand them in a purely individualistic setting. Each mature Christian has, of course, the responsibility to ‘test all things’. But Christian truth is a corporate possession. The church is the context within which we should expect to have wrong ideas gently corrected and right ones gently suggested, and where we in turn may contribute to the same activities. This will mean active membership in a local church and perhaps a variety of Christian groups; it should also involve careful listening to Christians of other backgrounds and periods of history.”

Wright, N. T. (1986). Colossians and Philemon: an Introduction and Commentary.

Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Vol. 12, p. 43). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

In these words in his commentary on Colossians and Philemon, N.T. Wright gives us insight as to why we ought to study God’s Word in general and the epistles in particular. He commends study that is both personal and communal. We learn best in community with fellow learners. The key theme of Colossians, the centrality of Jesus Christ, is an issue that we, the present day church, struggle with just as much as they did in the church of Paul’s day. We, like they, are regularly served generous helpings of smorgasboard spirituality which is an eclectic stew of some truth, some mistruth and some outright falsehood. But how do we tell the difference? What is it that we fundamentally believe and why? We live in a day that scorns exclusivity in the realm of truth. Paul unequivocally and unapologetically proclaims Him (Col 1:28) as the fullness of God in the flesh (Col 2:9). As Eugene Peterson has written, Paul is “unswervingly confident in the conviction that Christ occupies the center of creation and salvation”. We too need that same confidence if we are to share the gospel message of Christ to our generation. It will take courage to proclaim that we have the right and only answer to a multi-option society. If we feast deeply at the table of Paul’s letter to the Colossians we will be spiritually bolstered and encouraged to do what Paul has committed himself to do. Listen to how J.B. Phillips has translated his words in Col 1:28,29 “So, naturally, we proclaim Christ! We warn everyone we meet, and we teach everyone we can, all that we know about him, so that, if possible, we may bring every man up to his full maturity in Christ. This is what I am working at all the time, with all the strength that God gives me”.





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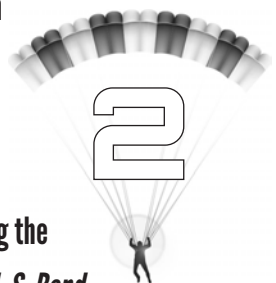
Background Information



Paul did not personally establish the church at Colossae (Col. 2:1), though the effects of his ministry at Ephesus during his third missionary journey could have been felt at Colossae; the two cities were located in the same Roman province of Asia (Acts 19:10, “all the residents of Asia”). It is possible that the church at Colossae was started through the labors of his coworker Epaphras (Col. 1:7). Thus, in a broad sense, the Colossian congregation can be considered to have been Pauline, and Paul could legitimately have written them without violating Epaphras’ authority. Although some scholars have argued on the basis of vocabulary and style that the letter represents a second-century attack on Gnosticism, its Pauline authorship is generally accepted. *Myers, A. C. (1987). The Eerdmans Bible dictionary. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.*

Letter from Paul to the church at Colossae. It is one of the Prison Epistles (along with Ephesians, Philemon, and Philippians). Traditional date and place of writing is A.D. 61 or 62 from Rome. The letter itself does not name the place where Paul was imprisoned, and Caesarea and Ephesus have been suggested as alternatives to Rome. If written from Ephesus, the time of writing would be in the mid-50s; if from Caesarea, the late 50s.

The primary purpose of Colossians was to correct false teachings that were troubling the church. *Martin, M. (2003). Colossians, Letter to The. (C. Brand, C. Draper, A. England, S. Bond, E. R. Clendenen, & T. C. Butler, Eds.) Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary. Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.*





COLOSSIANS 1

Write a question for every verse:

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COLOSSIANS 2

Write a question for every verse:

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COLOSSIANS 3

Write a question for every verse:

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COLOSSIANS 4

Write a question for every verse:

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COLOSSIANS

Context

Read the book of Colossians, describe the church at Colossae from what is written. What were the people like? What were the problems they faced? Who was involved?

Chapter 1

Chapter 2

Chapter 3

Chapter 4



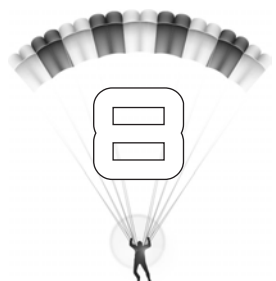


COLOSSIANS

Book Survey

1. Read the book as many times as you can.
 - A. Read it in different versions.
 - B. Do this in at least 3 different settings.
 - C. Go through the same book in Quiet Time.
2. List the major themes and highlights of the book.
 - A. Look for key words and phrases.
3. Make a loose tentative outline.
 - A. Look for major divisions in the book- also transitions on words.
 - B. Choose a title that is unique to the book.
4. Summarize the historical background of the book:
 - A. Sources to use:
 - Bible Handbook
 - Study Bible
 - Bible Dictionary
 - Commentaries
 - Concordance
 - B. Information to include:
 - To whom was it written
 - By whom was it written (Do life investigation.)
 - When was it written
 - Why was it written
5. Make a chart to summarize what you have discovered in your survey.

Make it on one sheet of paper. Use the chart on the following page or design your own. The value of such a chart is that it enables you to picture visually the contents and divisions of a book.
6. Read the book again.
7. Make an application. Consult the application page in this handout for help on making applications.





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Book Survey Chart

Survey

Book Title:

Author of Book:

Time of Book:

People in Book:

Places in Book:

Theme of Book:

Significance of Book:

Titles

Chapters

Key Verses

Themes

