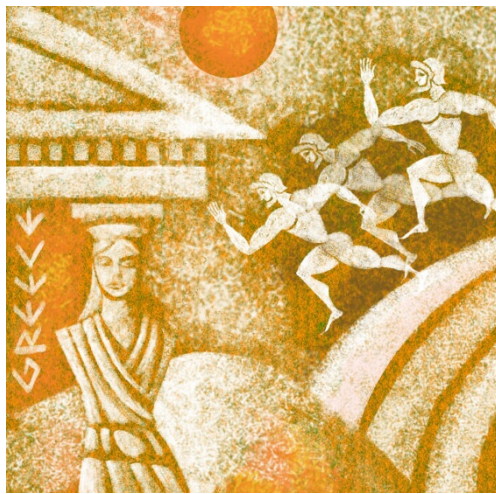


# COLOSSIANS

Κολοσσαεύς



## Calvary Bible Church Overview of The book of Colossians

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Wednesday Night Discussion Groups

Tim & Melinda Inman

Oct. 27-Nov. 10, 2010

# The Inductive Method

## Observation

What does the text say?

### Overview

Establish Context by determining Historical Background

Where does it fit in the Bible timeline?

**Ask: Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How?**

Make simple lists of people, places, and events mentioned in the text

Make simple lists of key words that are used throughout large portions of the entire book

Determine Book and Chapter Themes

Mark questions to return to later for future study

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## Chapter Studies

**Ask: Who, What, When, Where, Why and How?**

Make more thorough lists of people, places and events

Make more thorough lists of Key Words in chapter or section

Ignore chapter divisions when the theme is carried forward

Mark Contrasts, Comparisons, Expressions of Time, Terms of Conclusion

**Beginning of Interpretation:** Tie this all together by examining text verse by verse

Outline or complete Structural Analysis to break down difficult text

Examine meanings of Key Words as you study verse by verse

Meditate on text to determine paragraph themes

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## Interpretation

What does the text mean in correct context?

What principles do I see that tie to other sections of scripture?

Complete Cross References of those passages of scripture

Complete examination of Key Words: meaning, tense, voice

Notice and examine meaning of verbs & descriptive adjectives

Note commands and warnings

Consult commentaries after completing your own study

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## Application

Based on correct interpretation of the text:

What must I do?

How can I apply this truth to my life?

How does this affect me?

How does this better knowledge of God change me?

Meditate on scripture and Memorize important, applicable passages of scripture



My name is Apphia. I am Philemon's wife. The church meets in our home this Sunday—all of us, from all of the house churches in Colossae, together in one place. My husband and I were surprised to find Onesimus arriving with Paul's emissary Tychicus. Onesimus is our slave. He ran away, and my husband has been intent upon retrieving him. But, Onesimus and Tychicus stayed in someone else's home last night. Indeed, Tychicus seems determined to keep Onesimus right beside him at all times; and I am apprehensive about what will happen today, not only because of this situation, but because Tychicus and Onesimus have brought us the news that our own pastor, Epaphras, is now imprisoned with Paul. Everyone is shocked and dismayed at this news.

I hear whispered by others around me that Onesimus is now born again and has become a servant of Paul in helping to carry the gospel forward. I don't know how any of this came about; the strained relationship between Philemon and Onesimus drove him to run away. It has been a trying time for our church and for my household. All of us are now assembled in our house for this meeting of the church. Many of our church members have brought their household scribes; others wield their own papyrus and stylus. Some will copy as the letter is read aloud to us; others will copy straight from the letter afterward so that we have the words to prayerfully consider in each of our homes. All of us will memorize it.

I know our pastor, Epaphras, went to Rome to consult about a teaching that has been confusing many of us. I'm suspicious that he might also have heard that Onesimus was with Paul and so went to speak to him as well. I'm apprehensive about what these two men—Epaphras and Onesimus—might have told this eminently respected apostle and his team of helpers and co-laborers. A heresy and a runaway slave don't speak well of our lives. Therefore, I am discouraged as our meeting begins on this Sunday morning; and, I'm saddened at the imprisonment of our pastor. I'm embarrassed on behalf of my husband as well. I'm afraid we will be rebuked harshly; things are a mess.

The meeting begins, and we sing a few hymns of praise to our God. Our singing isn't as vigorous as usual; it is lackluster. We all seem to be apprehensive. Then, Tychicus hands a small sealed parchment to Archippus, who has served as our church's leader since Epaphras left for Rome. Archippus breaks the seal and begins to read the letter out loud. It is a personal letter to Philemon and is also addressed to the entire church, as well as to me and to Archippus, who is our eldest son. This is a surprise!

From the back of the room where I sit in order to manage the servants for the meal that will follow our meeting, I can see that both my son and my husband are uncomfortable. Though the letter begins by praising Philemon's love for the saints and his refreshment of the hearts of those who believe, Paul then turns to the subject of Onesimus. Everyone sits, nervous and ill at ease, as Philemon blushes and shifts uncomfortably; but then, the tension in his shoulders eases as Paul's soothing and gracious words appear to change his heart. Onesimus is right there with Tychicus, who is looking at my husband intently. Archippus pauses periodically in his reading to look up at his father with a kind and sympathetic look on his face. All of us sit quietly, letting the Holy Spirit do his work. As the letter is read, Philemon hangs his head and Onesimus sits looking down into his lap.

When the reading of this letter is completed, we all sit silently. All of our eyes seem to have been opened to the fact that we haven't been treating the slaves among us with the same sort of love and equality that we show to each other as free men and women. I know Philemon didn't; it was hard for him to see our slaves as men and women. Behind the scenes, I was often having to ease wounded hearts and hurt feelings. Then, Philemon rises to his feet and goes to Onesimus and embraces him. We all weep that the Holy Spirit has brought about reconciliation; I am especially relieved that this strife that has torn my household for a long while seems to be resolved. Tychicus looks pleased. Everyone rises to embrace Onesimus who is overwhelmed with tears of relief and joy. I whisper a kind word to him, telling him that we expect him and Tychicus to occupy the guest room tonight. He smiles at me, relieved.

Then, the church members turn to hug Philemon and praise him for his kindness and magnanimous graciousness toward Onesimus. This is how lovingly he has always treated all the free men and women. I smile at my husband over the heads of the members of the church; he smiles back his awareness that he erred in his handling of Onesimus. The Roman law is on his side; he could have taken drastic measures, even putting Onesimus to death if he chose. But, we had all hoped and prayed that he would respond with the same type of love that he shows to those who are free and not enslaved. Paul's many mentions in the letter of his own bondage have opened our eyes and convicted us all.

Once everyone settles down, Onesimus sits down in the middle of the rest of our church body, with various ones of us reaching over to place a hand on his back or his shoulder, giving him a reassuring squeeze. Others pat Philemon on the back. Everyone is smiling. Love for my church swells in my heart as I see this show of Christ-like love and forgiveness.

And then, Tychicus hands a vellum scroll to Archippus. It is sealed with wax and Paul's seal. The seal is broken, and the letter to the entire church is read out loud by my son. . . <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This is a fictional account. Apphia may have been Philemon's sister, rather than his wife; or, all three of them may have been siblings. The most probable view, however, is that Philemon and Apphia were married and that Archippus was their eldest son.

# How to Do an Overview

## Observation is the Key: What do I see?

Pray before beginning each day and ask for the guidance and help of the Holy Spirit to see clearly what God's holy words of Scripture actually say. Pray for better observation skills:

"Open my eyes, that I may see wonderful things in your law," Psalm 119: 18 (NIV).

### Why complete an Overview?

Scripture should be interpreted according to its context, not by pulling out random verses in order to "interpret" them according to our own intentions. The context of each verse, paragraph, and chapter must be determined in order to make correct interpretation. We must put each verse within the context of its paragraph, each paragraph within the context of its chapter, each chapter within the context of the book, and each book within the context of the events surrounding its writing and the historical and cultural events which also served as the catalyst or background information for the writing. **Following a method of study steps done in a certain order helps us to guarantee that we interpret according to context.**

### Overview and Observation in Colossians:

Our job is relatively easy with the book of **Colossians**. The entire book is only four chapters long. Additionally, we completed some of our observation during our Overview of Philemon; therefore, **we will only spend two weeks on our Overview of Colossians. We will review the work we did in Philemon during this overview.** And, **we will read through Colossians several times** during the two weeks Overview in order to familiarize ourselves with its content.

### What is the foundation of an Overview?

"The more time you spend in **observation**, the less time you will need to spend in interpretation, and the more accurate will be your results. The less time you spend in observation, the more time you will need to spend in interpretation, and the less accurate will be your results."<sup>2</sup>

### The Text:

**A working copy for marking is provided at the end of this handout (pg. 16-32). You may remove the working copy from this material to use for the rest of the study of the entire book, because we will break it into sections for study. However, the text for each section of the book will be provided within each study packet of material.**

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<sup>2</sup> Howard G. & William D. Hendricks, *Living by the Book*, (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2007), 43.

## **Thorough Observation is the key to establishing context.**

To observe the text thoroughly ask **who, what, when, where, why, and how** of the text. Always look for the obvious. Slow down to see what is actually there in the text, not what you *think* is there. Repeated, significant words and phrases which are key to understanding the text are always important. A key word or phrase is one that is crucial to what the author is communicating and which unlocks the meaning of the text. **What words & phrases are significant in this letter?**

### **Historical/Biblical Setting:**

Though it is tempting to find this background information in a reference tool, it is far more useful and will be retained in your memory better if you do the work of discovery yourself by focusing on the people mentioned in this book of the bible. **We examined the people mentioned in Philemon and Colossians at the same time, since these books of the bible were written and delivered at the same time.** Therefore, **time will be spent reviewing the cross references of each person mentioned, including the author, people he names, and specific recipients. These reveal the historical/biblical setting or background of both Colossians and Philemon.**

### **Geographical & Cultural Background Information:**

As we progress in our study, if it becomes obvious that you need to know some cultural or geographical information in order to understand what is going on in the passage, then pause to examine reputable reference material about cultural, extra-biblical, and geographical background information which affects this particular book, for instance the asceticism discussed in Col. 2:6-23. Compare this with what you find as you make your own observations.

### **Good bible study sources to use (hard copies are all available in the church library):**

- ***The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (ISBE)***, Eerdmans. Also available online at: <http://www.bible-history.com/isbe/>.
- ***The New Unger's Bible Dictionary***, Moody Press.
- ***How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth***, by Fee & Stuart, Zondervan.
- Additional biblical research is also available online at: <http://www.bible-history.com/>.
- Online bible study sites: [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com), [www.blueletterbible.com](http://www.blueletterbible.com), and [www.crosswalk.com](http://www.crosswalk.com).
- **Commentaries:** *The NIV Application Commentary: Colossians/Philemon*, by David E. Garland, Zondervan, and *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Colossians & Philemon*, by John MacArthur, Moody Press, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Abridged Edition*, Barker & Kohlenberger III, Zondervan.

### **Determine the type of Literature:**

When you begin to study a book of the bible you must determine what type of book it is because this information affects how you study the book. Is it History, Poetry, Prophecy, Letter, Biographical, Doctrinal, or a combination of several of these? **Because of our previous work in Philemon, we have already discovered that this is a letter from Paul to the church in Colossae.**

**Two tasks to start with:**

Examine these maps to find Colossae's location. Other cities mentioned in the letter are also on the bottom map. When you come to them in your reading, flip back here to locate them. **Is there any record of Paul visiting this city to plant a church?** Use your concordance to check.



**Map of the geographical area of the New Testament**



**Map of New Testament Asia Minor**

## Week One, Oct. 27-Nov. 3: What do I see?

After reading all of the introductory material on pages 5 & 6 and completing the two tasks on page 7, follow the below instructions. Pray before beginning your study each day. Use the working copy of Colossians in the back of this handout (pg.16-32). Remove it and place it in a three-ring binder if you intend to use the same copy of the text for all of your study. Otherwise, leave it in this handout; a copy of the text will be provided in each study unit. A copy of Philemon is on pg. 33 for easy reference.

**Focus on this: What do I see? (Worry about what it *means* later.)**

1. **Read all of Colossians (page 16-32). Read thoughtfully.** Read like you've never read it before. **Use the margins to write down observations and questions so you can investigate them later. Mark it up.**
2. **Read through the entire book thoughtfully one more time.** Determine what the key words and phrases are for the entire book. A key word or phrase is one that is crucial to understanding the meaning of the text. It is usually repeated in the book. **With a pencil, lightly circle the words you think are "key" to understanding the passage.**
3. **Pay attention to what the text says about the people you marked when you did the Philemon overview. Make notes in the margin about them.**
4. **Notice things you want to study in greater detail later and make a note in the margin.**
5. (See the information on outlining, pg. 15, and make an outline if you'd like.)

**As you complete these exercises see if you can answer the following questions:**

**Who was the author?**

**Where was he when he wrote? (Did the letter to Philemon mention this, too?)**

**When was this letter written (timeline on pg. 10-12)?**

**What was the author's purpose in writing?**

**What important topics does he discuss?**

**To whom did he write?**

**Where did these people live? Did you find it on the map?**

In this letter who all is mentioned as being “one of them”—a Colossian? So, what about the slave owner, Philemon????

Who all is mentioned in both letters?

Who were the leaders in the church?

What sections deal primarily with doctrine?

What sections deal primarily with application?

Now, pause to review your Philemon Overview material pertaining to Paul’s associates (Weeks 1 & 2 of the Philemon material). Then, focus on Colossians and take apart the text further to observe more. Your focus: *What do I see?*

\_\_\_\_\_ Mark the people mentioned in this letter. Transfer into the Colossians working copy in this study packet (pg. 16-32) the markings you used for each person or group of people when you did the Overview of Philemon. Use this transfer to review. As you mark all the people mentioned in Colossians, read through both books and see if you notice anything new about these people. A copy of Philemon is on pg. 33 for your convenience.

- Who prompted the writing of this letter? Why? What did he tell Paul and Timothy? Where? What do the people in the book of Colossians have to do with the people in the book of Philemon? How many people are mentioned in both books? Who?
- Are some people praised in this letter (the “good guys”)?
- Are there people in opposition (the “bad guys”)? Is there a problem or difficulty the church is facing because of them? What is it?
- Write these people in the margin of your working copy with space to make a list of information you discover about each of them. Jot down anything you discover. If you notice more people than you previously saw, be sure to mark them.

\_\_\_\_\_ Make a simple list of all you observe about each person or group of people in Colossians, bringing into your notes any important information you recorded in Philemon about any of these individuals. Jot down everything you learn about each of the people in Colossians. Write in a notebook or in the margin of your working copy, as you prefer.

- List all you notice about each person (include chapter and verse for future reference)
- What do you already know about the people mentioned? Write that down as well.
- Is there any instruction given to a person in either letter that tells more about the purpose of the letter to the Colossians and perhaps to Philemon?
- Are any people singled out for particular praise? Who? Why?

**Next week we’ll complete more observation of this letter.**

## New Testament Timeline from ESV Study Bible, 2008, Crossway Bibles, Wheaton, IL.

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| 5 B.C.*       | Jesus is born in Bethlehem.  |
| 4 B.C.        | Jesus' family flees to Egypt to escape from Herod's plan to kill Jesus ( <b>Matt. 2:13–18</b> ); Herod dies; Judas (of Sepphoris) and others rebel, requiring the Syrian Governor Varus to intervene throughout Palestine; Sepphoris, a city four miles from Nazareth, is destroyed by Roman soldiers; Judea, Samaria, and Idumea are given to Herod's son, Archelaus; Galilee and Perea are given to his son Antipas; Jesus' family, after returning from Egypt, resides in Nazareth ( <b>Matt. 2:19–23</b> ), a small village in southern Galilee. |
| A.D. 6        | Archelaus is exiled for incompetence; Judea becomes a Roman province; Judas the Galilean (of Gamla) leads a revolt against the tax census; the governor of Syria, Quirinius (A.D. 6–7), appoints Annas high priest (6–15).   |
| 8*            | Jesus (age 12) interacts with the teachers in the temple ( <b>Luke 2:41–50</b> ).  |
| 8*–<br>28/30  | Jesus works as a carpenter in Nazareth ( <b>Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3</b> ) and probably in neighboring villages and Sepphoris, which was being rebuilt.   |
| 28–29*        | John the Baptist begins his ministry around the Jordan River ( <b>John 1:19</b> ).   |
| 28–30*        | Jesus begins his ministry in Judea, but soon focuses his efforts in Galilee. In Jerusalem, Pharisees (like Gamaliel) train disciples (like Paul) in their tradition. They send a delegation to Galilee, but the delegation rejects Jesus' teaching. In Alexandria, Philo (20 B.C.–A.D. 50) attempts to unify Greek philosophy with Hebrew Scripture.   |
| 33 (or<br>30) | Jesus returns to Judea, is crucified, and resurrected. James the brother of Jesus becomes a believer after witnessing the resurrected Jesus ( <b>1 Cor. 15:7; Acts 12:17</b> ). Jesus ascends to the Father's right hand ( <b>Acts 1</b> ). Jesus' first followers receive the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and begin to proclaim the gospel ( <b>Acts 2</b> ).  |
| 33/34*        | Paul witnesses the resurrected Lord on the way to Damascus and is commissioned as an apostle to the nations ( <b>Acts 9; Gal. 1:15–16</b> ).   |
| 34–37         | Paul ministers in Damascus and Arabia ( <b>Acts 9:19–22; 26:20; Gal. 1:16–18</b> ).  |
| 36            | Pilate loses his position for incompetence.  |
| 36/37*        | Paul meets with Peter in Jerusalem ( <b>Acts 9:26–30; Gal. 1:18</b> ).   |
| 37–45         | Paul ministers in Syria, Tarsus, and Cilicia ( <b>Acts 9:30; Gal. 1:21</b> ).  |
| 38*           | Peter witnesses to Cornelius ( <b>Acts 10</b> ).   |
| 39            | Antipas is exiled.   |
| 40–45*        | James writes his letter to believers outside Palestine (cf. <b>James 1:1</b> ).  |
| 41–44         | Agrippa, Herod the Great's grandson, rules Palestine; he kills James the brother of John ( <b>Acts 12:2</b> ) and imprisons Peter ( <b>Acts 12:3</b> ).  |
| 42–44         | Paul receives his “thorn in the flesh” ( <b>2 Cor. 12:7</b> ).   |
| 44            | Peter leaves Jerusalem; Agrippa is killed by an “angel of the Lord” ( <b>Acts 12:23</b> ).   |
| 44–46         | Theudas persuades many Jews to sell their possessions and follow him into the wilderness where he claimed he would miraculously divide the Jordan River; Roman procurator Fadus dispatches his cavalry and beheads the would-be messiah.   |
| 44–47*        | Paul's Second Visit to Jerusalem; time of famine ( <b>Acts 11:27–30; Gal. 2:1–10</b> ).  |
| 46–47         | Paul's First Missionary Journey (with Barnabas) from Antioch to Cyprus, Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, and   |

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
|           | Lystra ( <b>Acts 13:4–14:26</b> ).   |
| 46–48     | Roman procurator Tiberius Alexander crucifies two sons (Jacob and Simon) of Judas the Galilean.  |
| 48*       | Paul writes <i>Galatians</i> , perhaps from Antioch (cf. <b>Acts 14:26–28</b> ).   |
| 48–49*    | Paul and Peter return to Jerusalem for the Apostolic Council, which, with the assistance of James, frees Gentile believers from the requirement of circumcision in opposition to Pharisaic believers ( <b>Acts 15:1–29</b> ); Paul and Barnabas return to Antioch ( <b>Acts 15:30</b> ) but split over a dispute about John Mark ( <b>Acts 15:36–40</b> ).   |
| 48/49–51* | Paul's Second Missionary Journey (with Silas) from Antioch to Syria, Cilicia, southern Galatia, Macedonia, notably Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea; and then on to Achaia, notably Athens and Corinth ( <b>Acts 15:36–18:22</b> ).   |
| 49        | Claudius expels Jews from Rome because of conflicts about Jesus ( <b>Acts 18:2</b> ); Paul befriends two refugees, Priscilla and Aquila, in Corinth ( <b>Acts 18:2–3</b> ).  |
| 49–51*    | Paul writes <i>1–2 Thessalonians</i> from Corinth ( <b>Acts 18:1, 11</b> ; also cf. <b>Acts 18:5</b> with <b>1 Thess. 1:8</b> ).   |
| 51        | Paul appears before Gallio, proconsul of Achaia ( <b>Acts 18:12–17</b> ).  |
| 50–54*    | Peter comes to Rome.   |
| 52–57*    | Paul's Third Missionary Journey from Antioch to Galatia, Phrygia, Ephesus, Macedonia, Greece ( <b>Acts 18:23–21:17</b> ).  |
| 52–55     | Paul ministers in Ephesus ( <b>Acts 19:1–20</b> ).   |
| 53–55*    | Mark writes his Gospel, containing Peter's memories of Jesus; perhaps within a decade, Matthew publishes his Gospel, which relies on Mark and other sources. Paul writes <i>1 Corinthians</i> from Ephesus ( <b>Acts 19:10</b> ).  |
| 54        | Claudius dies (edict exiling Jews repealed); Priscilla and Aquila return to Rome and host a church in their home (cf. <b>Rom. 16:3–5</b> ).  |
| 54–68     | Nero reigns.   |
| 55–56*    | Paul writes <i>2 Corinthians</i> from Macedonia ( <b>Acts 20:1, 3; 2 Cor. 1:16; 2:13; 7:5; 8:1; 9:2, 4</b> ; cf. <b>1 Cor. 16:5</b> ).   |
| 57*       | Paul winters in Corinth and writes <i>Romans</i> ( <b>Acts 20:3</b> ; cf. <b>Rom. 16:1–2</b> ; also cf. <b>Rom. 16:23</b> with <b>1 Cor. 1:14</b> ); travels to Jerusalem ( <b>Acts 21:1–16</b> ), visits with James the brother of Jesus ( <b>Acts 21:17–26</b> ), and is arrested ( <b>Acts 21:27–36; 22:22–29</b> ).  |
| 57–59     | Paul is imprisoned and transferred to Caesarea ( <b>Acts 23:23–24, 33–34</b> ).  |
| 60        | Paul begins voyage to Rome ( <b>Acts 27:1–2</b> ); he is shipwrecked for three months on the island of Malta ( <b>Acts 27:39–28:10</b> ).  |
| 60–70*    | Letter to the <i>Hebrews</i> is written.   |
| 62        | James the brother of the Lord is executed by the Sadducean high priest Ananus.   |
| 62–63*    | Peter writes his first letter ( <i>1 Peter</i> ) from Rome ( <b>1 Pet. 5:13</b> ).   |
| 62*       | Paul arrives in Rome and remains under house arrest ( <b>Acts 28:16–31</b> ); he writes <i>Ephesians</i> (see verses for <i>Colossians</i> ), <i>Philippians</i> ( <b>Phil. 1:7, 13, 17; 4:22</b> ), <i>Colossians</i> ( <b>Col. 4:3, 10, 18</b> ; cf. <b>Acts 27:2</b> with <b>Col. 4:10</b> ), <i>Philemon</i> (cf. <b>Philem. 23</b> with <b>Col. 1:7</b> ; <b>Philem. 2</b> with <b>Col. 4:17</b> ; <b>Philem. 24</b> with <b>Col. 4:10</b> ; also cf. <b>Col. 4:9</b> ). Luke, Paul's physician and companion (cf. <b>Col. 4:14</b> ), writes <i>Luke</i> and <i>Acts</i> . |
| 62–64     | Paul is released, extends his mission (probably reaching Spain), writes <i>1 Timothy</i> from Macedonia (cf. <b>1</b>  |

|              |  |
|--------------|--|
|              | <b>Tim. 1:3</b> ) and <i>Titus</i> from Nicopolis ( <b>Titus 3:12</b> ); he is rearrested in Rome ( <b>2 Tim. 1:16–17</b> ).   |
| 63–64        | Work on the temple complex is completed.   |
| 64 (July 19) | Fire in Rome; Nero blames and kills many Christians.   |
| 64–67*       | Peter writes his second letter ( <i>2 Peter</i> ). Jude writes his letter. Paul writes <i>2 Timothy</i> (cf. <b>2 Tim. 4:6–8</b> ). Paul and Peter are martyred in Rome.   |
| 66           | First Jewish-Roman War begins with a riot between Greeks and Jews at Caesarea; Roman procurator Gaius Florus (A.D. 64–66) is murdered and a Roman garrison wiped out; Menahem, son or grandson of Judas the Galilean, murders the high priest Ananias and seizes control of the temple; Nero dispatches Vespasian with three legions.  |
| 67*          | Romans destroy the Qumran community, who beforehand hid the so-called Dead Sea Scrolls in nearby caves; the church in Jerusalem flees to Pella ( <b>Matt. 24:15–16</b> ; <b>Mark 13:14</b> ; <b>Luke 21:20–22</b> ); John migrates to Ephesus with Mary, Jesus' mother.  |
| 68           | Nero commits suicide; year of the three emperors.  |
| 69           | Rebellion quelled in Galilee and Samaria; Vespasian summoned back to Rome to become emperor.   |
| 70 (Aug. 30) | Titus, Vespasian's son, after a five-month siege of Jerusalem, destroys the temple after desecrating it; the temple's menorah, Torah, and veil are removed and later put on display in a victory parade in Rome; the influence of the Sadducees ends; the Pharisee Johanan ben Zakkai escapes and convinces the Romans to allow him and others to settle in Jamnia, where they found a school. |
| 73 (May 2)*  | Before Roman general Silva breaches the fortress atop Masada following a two-year siege, 936 Jewish rebels commit suicide.   |
| 75           | Titus has an affair with the Jewish princess Berenice, sister of Agrippa II ( <b>Acts 25:13, 23</b> ), whom he later abandons because of the scandal.  |
| 77           | Pliny the Elder writes <i>Natural History</i> .  |
| 77–78        | Josephus publishes <i>Jewish War</i> in Rome.  |
| 79           | Pompeii and Herculaneum are destroyed by eruption of Vesuvius; Pliny the Elder dies attempting to investigate.   |
| 81           | The Arch of Titus, celebrating his destruction of the temple, is erected in Rome.  |
| 81–96        | Domitian, Titus's brother, persecutes Christians among the Roman nobility, including his own relatives Clemens and Domitilla.  |
| 85–95*       | John writes his letters ( <i>1–3 John</i> ), probably in Ephesus.  |
| 89–95*       | John writes his Gospel, probably in Ephesus.   |
| 93–94        | Josephus publishes <i>Jewish Antiquities</i> in Rome.  |
| 94           | Domitian exiles philosophers from Rome.  |
| 95*          | Amidst persecution, Clement, a leader in the Roman church, writes his <i>Letter to the Corinthians</i> ( <i>1 Clement</i> ) appealing for peace between the young men and elders.  |
| 95–96*       | Exiled by Domitian to Patmos, John writes <i>Revelation</i> ( <b>Rev. 1:9</b> ).   |
| 96–98        | Nerva, the first of five “good” emperors, ends official persecution.   |

\* denotes approximate date; / signifies either/or

# Observation & Interpretation

## What do I see?

### **Week Two, Nov. 3-10: What are the significant themes?**

**Read and study prayerfully each day.** “Prayer is really a key to effective Bible study. Learn to pray before, during, and after your reading of the Scriptures. Prayer is especially crucial when you come to a place in your study where you are stuck and confused.”<sup>3</sup>

#### **This week: Consider these questions**

- What was Paul & Timothy’s purpose in writing?
- Who prompted the writing of this letter?
- Was there a problem in the church?
- What was it?
- What significant themes do Paul & Timothy address, other than this problem?
- What specific instructions are given?
- What is the significance of the people who are mentioned in both letters?
- What glorious truths do you learn about Christ Jesus in this letter?

**Re-read the letter to the Colossians, keeping in mind all we’ve reviewed from our topical study about how Paul’s ministry functioned. What are the significant or key words in this letter? What words did you mark during the first week? Re-assess the words you circled. Do you still feel the words you marked initially are significant? Why?**

#### **Key Words**

Repeated significant words and phrases which are key to understanding the text are always important. A key word or phrase is one that is crucial to what the author is communicating and which unlocks the meaning of the text. In this letter the key words pull together the themes Paul & Timothy address. What are the key words?

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<sup>3</sup> Howard G. & William D. Hendricks, *Living by the Book*, (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2007), 100.

Take the entire week to complete the exercises on the following two pages.

### \_\_\_\_\_ Mark Key Words

- Using your working copy (pg. 16-32) read through Colossians and as you do mark key or significant words or phrases, each in a different way, every time you see them
- What key or significant words? Words that are significant or very important for understanding the meaning of the text and are used throughout the entire book. These repeated ideas, words, or phrases will tell you the theme the author intends to convey.
- **As you read through the entire letter, look for one or two of these significant words at a time. Mark each word the same way every time you see it. Repeat this step for each word until you've marked them all (as your time permits).**
- **Words and phrases to consider as key or significant:**
  - phrases pertaining to Christ: *in him* (or *before him, through him, etc.*)
  - these are always significant: God, Jesus, Holy Spirit
  - gospel (and synonyms, i.e., "word of truth," "the word of God," etc.)
  - wisdom, knowledge
  - encourage (this word was used in Philemon also and helps to determine this letter's purpose)
  - faith
  - prayer, pray
  - mystery
  - notice the head and body analogies that are similar to Ephesians
  - raised, have been raised
  - words pertaining to life, alive, living, to live a life, walk
  - words representing evil (basic principles of this world, the powers, authorities, deceptive philosophy, etc.)

### \_\_\_\_\_ Make a simple list of all you observe about each key word

- Note how each use of each key words relates to Paul's other uses of the same word in the letter. Write it down. The letter is short; he uses the same words throughout in order to tie the theme together.
- *How* do the key words tie together the main ideas he seeks to convey? Write your ideas down.
- Always jot down any possible application to your own life to investigate further.

### Organize your thoughts:

\_\_\_\_\_ Write a Theme which summarizes the entire book on the first blank line in the working copy. Use pencil for now. What's your hunch? This can be a few words, or as long as a paragraph and should include the author's intended theme or purpose. **What is Paul's purpose in writing to the Colossians? What does he want the Colossians to *know*? What should they *do*?** The key words you discovered should help you figure out the key theme of the book.

**Is there a key verse or verses that summarize the content of this entire letter?**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Assign preliminary Chapter Titles to each Chapter. What's your hunch?** These can contain as few or as many words as are necessary for you to feel you can look at the title and know what is contained within that particular chapter. You can alter these titles after you actually study each chapter.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Organize all your work on the Overview by summarizing the book.** Jot down a summary of what you learned in the Overview. Compile any significant information you discovered that will help you understand the content of the letter. Write a few lines that summarize the theme of the letter, and the theme of each section—at least what you're able to tell at this point in your investigation.

### **OPTIONAL: Make an Outline**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Consider making an outline of the book at this point:** Some people find that making an outline opens the text up for them. A simple outline could be made at this point if this is something you find beneficial. **Skip it if this doesn't help you.**

- **Some find it helpful to complete a word-for-word outline of each chapter as they move through each chapter study.** If you are the type of person who benefits from this type of structural work, prepare this initial outline skeleton by filling in the theme of the entire book with a theme for paragraph as Roman numerals under the theme of the entire book. Then you can add the text word-for-word under the Romans numerals, with each new paragraph being categorized by a letter of the alphabet.
- **Other people find that it helps them to break down the text from the first day they begin to study a book or section of the Bible.** Experiment with outline forms or simply breaking down the text in a way that makes grammatical structure more obvious to see if this helps you comprehend more.
- **Example:** Acts 1:8 (NIV)

But you will receive power  
when the Holy Spirit comes on you;  
and you will be My witnesses  
in Jerusalem,  
and in all Judea  
and Samaria,  
and to the ends of the earth.

**Check your background and historical work to see if you've missed any pertinent information about Colossae. Get some cultural background on the asceticism discussed in 2:6-23. Recommended Commentaries (all are in the church library):**

- ❖ *The NIV Application Commentary: Colossians/Philemon*, David E. Garland, Zondervan.
- ❖ *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, Colossians & Philemon*, John MacArthur, Moody Publishers.
- ❖ *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Abridged Edition*, Kenneth L. Barker and John R. Kohlenberger III, Zondervan.
- ❖ **See page 6 for additional study tools, including free online resources.**

# Colossians

NIV Working Copy

**Subject or Theme of entire book:**

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**Colossians 1:1-14**

**Paragraph Theme: The Big Idea of v. 1 – 14**

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**1**Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and

Timothy our brother,

**2**To the holy and faithful brothers in Christ at Colosse:

Grace and peace to you from God our Father.

**3**We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

when we pray for you, **4**because we have heard of your faith in

Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints— **5**the

faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for

you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel **6**that has come to you. All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth. **7**You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, **8**and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.

**9**For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. **10**And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, **11**being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully **12**giving thanks to the Father, who has

qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. **13**For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, **14**in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

## Colossians 1:15-23

### Paragraph Theme: The Big Idea of v. 15 – 23

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**15**He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. **16**For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. **17**He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. **18**And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. **19**For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, **20**and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

**21**Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. **22**But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation— **23**if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

## Colossians 1:24-2:5

### Paragraph Theme: The Big Idea of 1:24 – 2:5

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**24**Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. **25**I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness— **26**the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. **27**To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

**28**We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.

**29**To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.

## **Colossians 2**

**2:1**I want you to know how much I am struggling for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally. **2**My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, **3**in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. **4**I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. **5**For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how orderly you are and how firm your faith in Christ is.

## Colossians 2:6-23

### Paragraph Theme: The Big Idea of v. 6 – 23

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**6**So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, **7**rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

**8**See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.

**9**For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, **10**and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority. **11**In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, **12**having been buried with him

in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

**13**When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, **14**having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. **15**And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

**16**Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. **17**These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. **18**Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his

unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. **19**He has lost connection with the Head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.

**20**Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: **21**"Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!"?

**22**These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. **23**Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

## Colossians 3:1-17

### Paragraph Theme: The Big Idea of v. 1 – 17

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1Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of

God. 2Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

3For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

4When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

5Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. 6Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. 7You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. 8But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. 9Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off

your old self with its practices **10**and have put on the new self,  
which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its  
Creator. **11**Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or  
uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is  
all, and is in all.

**12**Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved,  
clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility,  
gentleness and patience. **13**Bear with each other and forgive  
whatever grievances you may have against one another.

Forgive as the Lord forgave you. **14**And over all these virtues  
put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

**15**Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as  
members of one body you were called to peace. And be  
thankful. **16**Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you  
teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you  
sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your

hearts to God. 17And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

**Colossians 3:18-4:6**

**Paragraph Theme: The Big Idea of 3:18 – 4:6**

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**18**Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

**19**Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.

**20**Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.

**21**Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.

**22**Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. **23**Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, **24**since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you

are serving. **25**Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there is no favoritism.

#### **Colossians 4**

**4:1**Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven.

**2**Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.

**3**And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. **4**Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. **5**Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. **6**Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

## Colossians 4:7-18

### Paragraph Theme: The Big Idea of v. 7 – 18

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7Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. 8I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts. 9He is coming with Onesimus, our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you. They will tell you everything that is happening here.

10My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.)

11Jesus, who is called Justus, also sends greetings. These are the only Jews among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have proved a comfort to me. 12Epaphras, who

is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured. **13**I vouch for him that he is working hard for you and for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis. **14**Our dear friend Luke, the doctor, and Demas send greetings. **15**Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house.

**16**After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea.

**17**Tell Archippus: "See to it that you complete the work you have received in the Lord."

**18**I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

## Philemon (NIV)

**1**Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our dear friend and fellow worker, **2**to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow soldier and to the church that meets in your home: **3**Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

**4**I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers, **5**because I hear about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints. **6**I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ. **7**Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the saints.

**8**Therefore, although in Christ I could be bold and order you to do what you ought to do, **9**yet I appeal to you on the basis of love. I then, as Paul—an old man and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus—**10**I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, who became my son while I was in chains. **11**Formerly he was useless to you, but now he has become useful both to you and to me. **12**I am sending him—who is my very heart—back to you. **13**I would have liked to keep him with me so that he could take your place in helping me while I am in chains for the gospel. **14**But I did not want to do anything without your consent, so that any favor you do will be spontaneous and not forced. **15**Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back for good— **16**no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a man and as a brother in the Lord. **17**So if you consider me a partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. **18**If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me. **19**I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand. I will pay it back—not to mention that you owe me your very self. **20**I do wish, brother, that I may have some benefit from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in Christ. **21**Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I ask. **22**And one thing more: Prepare a guest room for me, because I hope to be restored to you in answer to your prayers.

**23**Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends you greetings. **24**And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow workers. **25**The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.