

# Foundations: Colossians

These studies were based on the Holman Christian Standard Bible. If you are using a Bible like the NIV or ESV you will simply find that some of the phrasing is different. If you do want to use the HCSB then you can go online and find it at: [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com)

We have laid them out in landscape so you can fold them and keep them in your Bible as you do the studies.

You can do these studies individually or with someone else, or with someone else keeping you accountable for doing them. Some people might find it helpful to do the passages before the talk, some after to reinforce what has been said, it really is dependent on what works for you.

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## A bit of background...

The town of Colossae was a small town, which was a part of a group of towns including Hieropolis (Col 4:13) and Laodecia (Col 2:1; 4:13, 15; Rev 3:14-22). It was a town that Paul, as far as we know had not visited (Col 2:1), nor was planning to. Paul spent far more time in Ephesus (Acts 18:19-22; 19:1-24<sup>1</sup>) (see v8), which as the largest city in the area.



Nevertheless Paul was concerned about the church both in Colossae and at Laodecia, whom he also wrote to (4:16), though we have lost that letter in history. The rumour, at least, was that the Colossians were chasing after some false ideas of what it means to be a Christian. We are not sure exactly what these ideas are, they at least contain some elements of Jewish thought, though probably it was a case of people just mixing a number of ideas to come up with their own religion. Paul deals this with this by reminding them of who Jesus is, how they are saved, how they are not saved and how they are to live. It is worth keeping an eye out for these themes and where they pop up in the book.

<sup>1</sup> 19:8 tells us he was there for 3 months.



*Pray.*

Thank God for all the ordinary people that God has used to bring his Gospel to the world, especially into your life.

## **Study 4: What do you Hope for?**

*Read Colossians 1:1-7*

Draw a diagram showing the relationship between faith, hope, love and the Gospel in this section.

Does anything here surprise you?

Does what you hope for drive what you do in life?

*Pray*

Thank God for the hope we have in the Gospel and pray that it would drive you to but your faith in Jesus and love His people.

## **Study 5: Praying for Church**

*Read Colossians 1:9-14*

List the things that Paul prays for for the Colossians:

Why does he pray for these things, how are they connected?

*Pray*

Pray for these things for the Soma community.

## **Study 6: Its all about Him**

*Read Colossians 1:15-20*

Can you draw a diagram of the scope of Jesus rule?

Where do we fit in?

In what way does your life not reflect these verses?

*Pray*

That people will recognize the rule of Jesus in their lives and that the community of Soma will reflect this rule.

## **Study 7: The Gospel in Three Steps**

*Read Colossians 1:21-23*

In Colossians 1:21-23 there is a nice neat summary of the Gospel. What are the three steps that we see:

...once...

But now...

If...

How would you make a Gospel tract of these verses?

*Pray*

That you would be reminded of this great gospel of grace and that at Soma we would be constantly reminded of that Gospel and seek to make it known to the world.

## Study 8: Stepping into Isaiah

To understand the next section we need to understand some sections of Isaiah, so we will take a break from Colossians to have a look at these sections. One of the characters in Isaiah is one called the Suffering Servant.

Read through the following sections of Isaiah about the Servant and work out which did Jesus fulfill and which, as Paul writes, were not yet fulfilled:

Passage in Isaiah	Fulfilled by Jesus	Not yet fulfilled
Is 42:1-4		
Is 49:1-6		
Is 50:4-9		
Is 52:13-53:12		

In summary what was the Suffering Servant to do?

How did he do it?

To what extent did Jesus fulfill this?

To what extent is there still work to be done?

*Pray*

That God would give us wisdom and insight as we look at this difficult part of the Bible.

## Study 9: Paul's Ministry

Read Colossians 1:24-29

(NB it is worth noting that the word 'mystery' doesn't mean a puzzle to work out, but an unveiling of something that was hidden).

What themes overlap between this passage and the passages in Isaiah?

How does understanding the Suffering Servant help you understand this passage?

How does Paul make the mystery known?

*Pray*

Pray that the Soma community will emulate Paul's example here.

## Study 10: Goals for the Church

Read Colossians 2:1-7

What are the desires that Paul has for churches?

What have you seen in the earlier part of the letter that show how he seeks to achieve that desire?

What of these goals do you need to work on more?

*Pray*

That the Soma community will achieve these desires, at least in part!

## Study 11: The Cross and Philosophy

Read Colossians 2:8-15

What is the warning that he gives in v8?

In what way might we be in danger of following 'empty deceit'?

What sorts of ways does Paul describe Jesus death on the cross?

How might you describe the connection to what Jesus has done, and how God sees us, to someone who is not a Christian?

*Pray*

That we would not be taken captive by different teaching and remain faithful to the Gospel.

## Study 12: Being lead astray by Law

Read Colossians 2:16-17

This section deals with temptations of not living under the Gospel of grace.

What do you think lies behind the temptations of 2:16?

What is the connection to 2:8?

What is the solution that Paul offers in 2:17?

How might you be tempted to fall into the same or similar temptation?

How might we see the Soma community fall into the same or similar temptation?

*Pray*

That the community in Soma will not fall into this temptation and will focus on the Gospel of grace.

## Study 13: Being Lead Astray by Experience

Read Colossians 2:16-23

This section also deals with temptations of not living under the Gospel of the grace, but in a slightly different way.

What do think lies behind the temptations of 2:18?

How is it the same and different to the ones in 2:16?

Why is this a failure (2:20-23)?

Why is this a danger (2:19)?

Looking back over the rest of the chapter, what does Paul offer as the solution?

How might you be tempted to fall into the same or similar temptation?

How might we see the Soma community fall into the same or similar temptation?

*Pray*

That the community in Soma will not fall into this temptation and will focus on the Gospel of grace.

## Study 14: Who are you?

Read Colossians 3:1-4

Try and draw this passage diagrammatically. What's the problem?

What is the instruction that Paul gives his readers in 3:2?

How might that work out in your day to day life?

How does this effect the way you think of yourself?

*Pray*

That you would have a clear picture of who you are and where you live in Christ.

## Study 15: Killing Sin

*Read* Colossians 3:5-11

What is Paul's attitude to the 'old life' we have (3:5)?

What's another word you might use for the verb?

What's the list of things that are to be executed in the old life?

Which one on this list do you need to lose?

*Pray*

That God would help you repent of these sins

## Study 16: Christian Clothing

*Read* Colossians 3:12-17

What are the things that we are clothe ourselves with in this passage? (list them out)

How is doing this different to living out religion or doing the things in chapter 2?

Which one do you need to work on more?

Which one do you think the Soma community needs to work on more?

*Pray*

For yourself and the Soma community to clothe ourselves in the right way

## Study 17: Keeping it in the Family

*Read* Colossians 3:18-4:1

This passage deals with a number of different roles in the household (slaves used to live with the people they served as a part of the household).

Which of these roles apply to you?

How can you be better at these roles?

Are there others you might need to add (e.g. housemate)? How do you think Paul would address this role?

*Pray*

That God would help you to fulfill the roles He has placed you in.

## Study 18: Praying for Paul

*Read* 4:2-6

At the start of this letter Paul prays for the Colossians, here, at the end of the letter, he asks them to pray for him.

What does he ask them to pray for specifically?

What does also ask of them in their lives?

Why is that important?

*Pray*

That you and the rest of the Soma community would do a great job of

## Study 19: Ordinary People

*Read* 4:7-18

Go back to study 3 and have a look at the people that are mentioned in this section.

What do we know of (assuming they are all the same people):

Tychicus (Acts 20:4, 2 Tim 4:12, Titus 3:12)

Aristarchus (Acts 19:29, 20:4, 27:2)

Onesimus: (Philemon 8-22)

Mark (Acts 15:36-41, 1 Peter 5:13, 2 Tim 4:11)

Demas (2 Tim 4:10)

Luke (Luke 1:1-4, Acts 1:1-3, 2 Tim 4:11)

Who are the guys that have been good to Paul, Who are less reliable?

*Pray*

That God would use the people of Soma despite our failings and frailties

## Study 20: One more look...

*Read* the whole book again and list out:

What have you learned and been challenged by? What questions do you still have?

What themes do you now see running through the book that you may not have before?

*Pray*

Thanking God for all that you have learned and ask that it be reflected in your life.