

THE BOOK OF COLOSSIANS

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- INTRODUCTION -
A NOTE FROM PASTOR DAVID

When astronauts go into orbit and see the Earth from space for the first time, they apparently all experience the same extraordinary phenomenon. Being able to see Earth hanging in the black void of space as a pale blue dot changes everything. National boundaries and political squabbling no longer seems significant. Petty concerns fade away in the overwhelming sense of the big picture.

They call this experience the Overview Effect.

Apollo 11 astronaut, and the first man on the moon, Neil Armstrong described it like this: *"It suddenly struck me that that tiny pea, pretty and blue, was the Earth. I put up my thumb and shut one eye, and my thumb blotted out the planet Earth. I didn't feel like a giant. I felt very, very small."* Floating in orbit around Earth, and in the case of the Apollo missions the Moon, gives those who see from this perspective a new take on the world and their place in it.

The book of Colossians gives us a similar overview effect that dramatically alters our perspective on reality. Rather than looking down at the pale, blue dot of earth however, the book of that Colossians beckons us to look up at the glorious, supremacy of Jesus Christ. Because when we see clearly that Jesus is Lord of all things, nothing can ever be the same again.

Everything changes.

There is a lot of chaos, anger and fear in our world today. Even now as I write this, terrorists from ISIS-K have detonated a bomb during the Kabul Airport evacuations that killed 13 U.S. service members and at least 90 Afghans. I also received a notification that a projected Category 4 hurricane is on a collision course with New Orleans. Not to mention, our country and even our church, seems to be as divided and polarized as it has ever been.

And yet, even while we find ourselves in the midst of these trying and painful times, the book of Colossians would have us look up and see that Jesus is Lord of all things.

He is before all things.

He is above all things.

He is first in all things.

So in light of who Jesus is, this Fall we are asking one simple but revolutionary question: Will you explore the book of Colossians with us and experience the Overview Effect?

I am praying that the Lord would use our time this Fall to show you the greatness of His power and presence and in so doing, increase your affections for Him.

-Pastor David

- INTRODUCTION -

A WORD FOR SMALL GROUP LEADERS

Faith Fellowship small groups exist to make disciples through Bible study, community, and mission. Accordingly, these small groups are designed to provide the context and resources to help every person at Faith Fellowship take their next step as disciples of Jesus, even if their first step is their next step.

To take steps towards this goal, we use four small group rhythms. These rhythms create the contexts where we grow in different aspects of being a disciple of Jesus. Each rhythm provides a designated time to focus on one aspect of disciple-making instead of trying to do everything at once. Additionally, the rhythms create the perfect opportunity for group leaders to raise up others in their group to lead in specific ways, creating an environment where potentially every member of the small group is engaged in making the group happen.

Bible Study

Bible Study is a time to read, study, and apply the Word of God together. We believe that intentionally growing in knowledge of God's Word in community is the key for community and individual growth as a disciple of Jesus.

D-Group

Discipleship Group (D-group) occurs on the fourth week of the month. D-Group is a time to apply the gospel to our hearts and grow deeper in the gospel through community. The overall goal of D-group is to continue to foster discipleship relationships that help each person grow to become more like Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit and to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18).

Family Time

Family time creates an informal space for having fun and eating together as a small group. When Jesus instituted the church, he created a spiritual family. The goal of the family time is to move a group from acquaintances to family, from those with shared interests to those who love and care for one another. The deeper our relationships grow, the better we will be able to apply the gospel in one another's lives.

Missional Hangout

Missional Hangouts are informal and fun gatherings that allow small groups to invest in their non-Christian friends together. Think of them as your group hosting a party for all of your non-Christian friends, neighbors, coworkers, and family. They can be dinner out, board games in, a book club in your house, or catching an Astro's game. Whatever you choose to do, the purpose is for each member of your group to invite a non-Christian friend to attend

- INTRODUCTION -
ADDITIONAL SERIES RESOURCES

As we explore the book of Colossians together, our discipleship team has provided additional resources to equip you to go deeper into this incredible book. These are also available in digital format on our website at faithfellowshipfortbend.com/colossians

Articles and Overviews

On the following pages, you will find articles and overviews that will help you better the major theological themes of the book of Colossians. We encourage you to take time to walk through these resources to prepare for the series.

Faith at Home Kit

The Faith at Home initiative is all about helping you create or continue an environment of spiritual growth in your home. For this series, we have made a Colossians at Home envelope to accompany this Disciple Guide and take you deeper into the themes of Colossians. In it, you will find ideas and resources to make it easier and more likely for you to build a God-honoring marriage, disciple your kids or grandkids, and be hospitable to your neighbors.

We have also included weekly next steps after each Small Group session to make it easier and more likely for you to bring the truths that you have learned on Sunday into the week. These next steps are categorized into the themes of home, hospitality, and hammers:

- **For Your Home:** These next steps are designed to equip you to have a great marriage shaped by the greatness of God and His Gospel. These are also intended to equip you to be an intentional parent or grandparent in order to launch your kids into the world with deep affection and endless wonder for God.
- **For Your Hospitality:** These next steps are to inspire you to be a good neighbor and work for the good of your community even when it is hard.
- **For You as a Hammer:** These next steps are tools that God can use to shape and build you from the decent cottage that you thought you would be into the palace that He wants you to become.

For more information and context on Faith at Home, consider the resources or listen to our Faith at Home sermon series at faithfellowshipforbend.com/faithathome

ESV Scripture Journal

As we often say, when life cuts us, we want to bleed God's Word. We want you so filled with Scripture so saturated with Scripture that you can't help but talk about it, share it, and apply it. That's why everyone will receive a Colossians ESV Scripture Journal this Fall. This excellent tool allows you to take extended notes alongside passages of Scripture during personal study, small group discussion and sermons.

Spotify Playlist

Songs are like sermons that you don't forget. We have curated a playlist called "Songs for Colossians" that reflect the themes of the series. These are also the songs that we will be singing during the worship service for

the next few months. We encourage you to listen to these songs for your own edification and better corporate worship. You can find the playlist posted to Spotify (@faith fellowship church) or on our website at www.faithfellowshipfortbend.com/music

Wednesday Prayer Time

If there is one thing that the book of Colossians teaches us, it is that we don't pray to a "village god."

The story goes that John Stott was visiting a church service. The pastor was on vacation so someone else prayed during their prayer time. The man started out by praying that the pastor would have a good vacation. Now, of course, there is nothing wrong with praying for a good vacation. The man then prayed for a lady in the church who was expecting a child to be born to have a safe delivery. Again, a great thing to pray for. Then he prayed for another lady who was sick in the church.

And that was it. 20 seconds of prayer and done.

John Stott said about that church, *"It's a village church with a village god. They have no interest in the world outside. There was no thinking about the poor, the oppressed, the refugees, the places of violence and world evangelism."*

Does that describe your prayer life? Are you typically just praying village prayers to a village god? Do you treat prayer like it is a secondary ministry or preparation for real ministry instead of treating prayer like it is the ministry?

Jesus said, *"My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations (Matthew 21:13)."* Not a house of preaching. Not a house of music. We put so much energy into the Word in our church, and for good reason! But do we put the same energy into our prayer ministry?

On Wednesday mornings at 7:30am, we will be gathering at the church sanctuary to pray the kind of prayers worthy of the kind of God that Colossians tells us about. If you want to pray out of the Overview Effect rather than the village, we would love for you to join us.

- INTRODUCTION -
SERIES SCHEDULE

Our study of the book of Colossians will last for much of the Fall, leading us right up to Christmas. Consider the following schedule that details how we will approach this incredibly rich, paradigm-shifting book. Remember, that this schedule is also available on our website at faithfellowshipfortbend.com/colossians.

SEPTEMBER 5 Colossians Overview

SEPTEMBER 12 Colossians 1:1-14

SEPTEMBER 19 Colossians 1:15-23

SEPTEMBER 26 Colossians 1:24-2:5

OCTOBER 3 Colossians 2:6-2:15

OCTOBER 10 Colossians 2:16-2:23

OCTOBER 17 Elders

OCTOBER 24 Deacons

OCTOBER 31 Colossians 3:1-11

NOVEMBER 7 Colossians 3:12-17

NOVEMBER 14 Colossians 3:18-21

NOVEMBER 21 Colossians 3:22-4:1

NOVEMBER 28 Colossians 4:2-18





ARTICLES AND OVERVIEWS

These articles will help you better understand the themes of the book of Colossians. We encourage you to take time to walk through these resources to enrich your personal study of this incredibly rich and practical piece of Scripture.



- OVERVIEW -
THE BOOK OF COLOSSIANS

Author

The apostle Paul wrote this letter to Christians living in the small city of Colossae. It was probably written c. A.D. 62, while Paul was in prison in Rome (Acts 27-28). This was about the same time he wrote Ephesians and Philemon. All three letters were sent with Tychicus and Onesimus.

Setting

Paul wrote his letter to the Colossians while in prison, probably in Rome. The church at Colossae was likely established during Paul's third missionary journey as he ministered for three years in Ephesus. It appears that Paul did not personally plant the church there, but instead a Colossian named Epaphras traveled to Ephesus, responded to Paul's gospel message, and returned to share the good news in Colossae.

Theme

Christ is Lord over all of creation, including the invisible realm. He has redeemed his people, enabling them to participate in his death, resurrection, and fullness.

Purpose

A dangerous teaching was threatening the church at Colossae, one that lessened Christ's role and undermined the new identity of believers "in Christ" (1:2, 28). Paul wrote to warn against this false teaching and to encourage the believers in their growth toward Christian maturity. He emphasizes Christ's authority over all evil powers. Christians are united with the risen Christ, and therefore they share in his power and authority. Paul also encourages these believers to fight against sin, pursue holiness, and live as distinctively Christian households.

Outline

- I. Greeting (1:1-2)
- II. Thanksgiving (1:3-8)
- III. Prayer (1:9-14)
- IV. Praise to Christ (1:15-20)
- V. Reconciliation to God (1:21-23)
- VI. Paul's Labor for the Gospel (1:24-2:3)
- VII. The Dangerous Teaching at Colossae (2:4-23)
- VIII. The Proper Focus: Christ and the Life Above (3:1-4)
- IX. Instructions on Living the Christian Life (3:5-4:6)
- X. Personal Greetings and Instructions (4:7-17)
- XI. Closing (4:18)

- ARTICLE -
THE SUPREMACY OF JESUS CHRIST

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.¹⁷ And 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, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

- Colossians 1:15-20 -

Every letter that the apostle Paul wrote to the early churches, the letters that we now call books of the Bible, has a major theme. For example, in Romans, it is justification by faith. In Philipians, it is the joy that Jesus brings. In the book of Colossians however, it is the absolute supremacy of Jesus Christ over all creation and of the Church.

To speak of “supremacy” is to speak of that which is “above” or “over” others. It reaches the level of the “super”, as its Latin meaning suggests. It refers to the greatest in power, authority, or rank. It is also used to describe the greatest in importance, significance, character, or achievement.

In all these areas of consideration, Jesus ranks as supreme – supreme in power, rank, glory, power, authority, and importance. He is more than a carpenter, a prophet, or a good teacher. In no uncertain terms, when Christians say that Jesus is supreme, what we mean is that Jesus Christ is God Himself.

Consider these these six ways that, not just the book of Colossians, but all of Scripture teaches the supremacy of Jesus Christ – that He is in fact God Himself.

Scripture Calls Jesus Christ “God” and “Lord”

John 1:1 says *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”*

Romans 9:5 calls him *“Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever.”*

Titus 2:13 calls him *“our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.”*

There are also many instances where the words used for “God” and “Lord” in the Old Testament are applied directly to Jesus. Probably the most staggering example of this is Philipians 2:11, where Paul says that every tongue will *“confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”* Here, he is quoting Isaiah 45:23 nearly word for word. And yet the one to whom every knee bows and every tongue swears allegiance in Isaiah 45 is none other than Yahweh Himself, the covenant Lord of Israel. For Paul’s readers, immersed in the language of the Old Testament, this verse could not be any clearer: Jesus Christ is Yahweh Himself.

Jesus Christ Claimed to be God Himself

In the face of blasphemy charges by the Jewish leaders, Jesus claimed His equality and identity with God. In John 8:58, Jesus says, *“Before Abraham was born, I am!”* The Jews understood that He was claiming to be God because “I AM” was God’s way of identifying Himself to Moses. Because they understood that Jesus was equating Himself with God, they picked up stones to kill Him.

Later, in John 10:30, Jesus said, *"I and the Father are one."* Again, the Jewish leaders attempt to stone him. Why? In John 10:33, they said, *"It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God."* In both cases, Jesus denies the blasphemy charge on the grounds that he is speaking the truth.

Scripture Shows Jesus Christ Being Worshipped and Prayed To

Many New Testament passages express praise to Jesus Christ, indicating He is to be worshipped.

In Matthew 2:11, the familiar Christmas scene portrays the wise men saw *"the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him."*

Philippians 2:11 states that *"at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow."*

In Revelation 5:14, when Jesus appears in the throne room, the elders *"the elders fell down and worshiped."*

From his birth in a stable to the throne room in heaven, it is Jesus who receives worship, glory, and honor.

Further, prayer is also offered to Jesus. Stephen calls out to the Lord Jesus as he is being stoned to death (Acts 7:59-60). Paul also prays to Him that his thorn in the flesh be removed (2 Corinthians 12:8-9).

Scripture Describes Jesus Christ as Creator, Judge and Savior

To Jesus Christ are attributed works God alone can do.

Jesus as Creator

John declares that Jesus Christ is the eternal Word who made all things, who is with God and who is God (John 1:1-18). Not one thing came into existence apart from that Word. Paul echoes this in the book of Colossians and Hebrews 1:1-4 says the same – Jesus made the world and directs it towards his intended goal. These passages also recall episodes in the Gospels like feeding multitudes, controlling the weather, and raising the dead where Jesus accomplishes things only God can do.

Jesus as Judge

In John 5:22-30 Jesus describes himself as the judge of the world. In Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus as the Son of God will judge the nations with righteousness. Paul is also emphatic that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Jesus as Savior

The Old Testament stresses that deliverance could only come from Yahweh, not man (Psa. 146:3-6). The name Jesus, announced by an angel, means "savior." He was to save his people from their sins (Matt. 1:21). His healings demonstrate Him to be the lord of life. Beyond that, He also delivers from sin and death.

Scripture Emphasizes that Jesus Christ was Preexistent prior to His Incarnation

Scripture relates that God the Son has always existed. It is not that Jesus, a human being, became God. Rather, God, the second person of the Trinity, took on a human nature in addition to his divine nature. The incarnation is not subtraction, but addition.

This is evident in a passage like Philippians 2:6-7: *“Though he was in the form of God, [he] did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.”* Jesus didn’t give up his divinity, but the status and privilege of his heavenly standing.

2 Timothy 1:9-10 also states that God gave us grace *“in Christ Jesus before the ages began, and which has now been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ.”*

Therefore, Scripture is absolutely clear: Jesus Christ is supreme over all creation as God Himself. A helpful way to remember all the ways the Scriptures speak of Christ’s deity is in the acronym **HANDS**:

Jesus Christ Shares the **H**onors Due to God (he receives worship).

Jesus Christ Shares the **A**tttributes of God (holy, righteous, all-powerful)

Jesus Christ Shares the **N**ames of God (Lord, God, Alpha and Omega)

Jesus Christ Shares in the **D**eeds that God Does (forgives sin, raises the dead, creates the world)

Jesus Christ Shares the **S**eat of God’s Throne

- ARTICLE -

MORTIFICATION AND VIVIFICATION

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. 3 For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. 5 Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. 6 On account of these the wrath of God is coming. 7 In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. 8 But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. 11 Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all. 12 Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, 13 bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. 14 And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

Colossians 3:1-14

Mortification and vivification are probably not words that you used last Tuesday. Or Wednesday. Or Thursday. They are the kind of 10 dollar theological words that we typically replace with smaller words like growth, maturity, and formation. However, sometimes it's important to use the big words. Because the big words allow for a clearer, more focused understanding of the idea being communicated.

Vivification

When thinking about the concepts of vivification and mortification, a good image to consider that has a lot of biblical backing is a garden. I'm actually envisioning my two bushes of Texas Sage as I write this by the way. These magnificent plants have grown tall and full. They also produce a beautiful and elegant purple flower that blends with its green leaves that truly makes for an Impressionists dream canvas.

Vivification basically means to quicken, animate or come to life. It means living responsively to the Holy Spirit's ongoing work where He grows us spiritually. According to Colossians 3, this is what starts to happen to us spiritually when we "seek" and "set our minds on things that are above." The result is that we begin to "put on" things like "compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience."

In terms of my Texas Sage, we're talking about water, fertilizer and sunshine leading to height, fullness and those delightful purple flowers.

Vivification involves filling ourselves with a renewed way of thinking, based on ultimate realities. This is why the Bible, prayer and the spiritual disciplines that come from them are so important and essential in the life of a believer – the Holy Spirit uses these things to renew your mind. Making sure that your thoughts are submerged in the living water of Scripture and pointed toward the full light of the Son (see what I did there) is vivification.

This is what leads to health, maturity and beauty. However, that's only one side of what is necessary for spiritual growth.

Mortification

If vivification is the water, fertilizer and sunshine that we put into the garden, then mortification is the back-breaking work of pulling up the weeds.

Mortification is killing sin. It means putting to death sinful impulses that arise from within and resisting temptation that comes from the outside. And it is important. In fact, a great pastor and sage of old named John Owen said that we ought to *“be killing sin or sin will most assuredly be killing us.”*

Think about the Texas Sage again for a minute.

If all that we do is water more Bible reading and sermon notes into our spiritual soil, but are not actively clearing out the thick, thorny attitudes and behaviors that don't belong there, then we are just leaving the ground cluttered beyond capacity, draining out all its nutrients, and essentially ensuring that we will never be happy with what grows in it.

There are things that just need to be “put to death” in us (Col. 3:5), The only good sin is dead sin. And the longer we put up with these weeds in our lives, then the longer it takes before we can grow healthy, with deep roots and visible fruit

Vivification. Mortification.

They are quite literally matters of life and death. They are what come together in God's growth plan to help you apply the gospel from spiritual study to spiritual growth. They are the fertilizer that keeps you growing toward Jesus, while keeping you clear of everything else that turns your eye away from Him.

- ARTICLE -

WORK AND HOME: THE DOCTRINE OF VOCATION

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 provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. 22 Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. 23 Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

Colossians 3:18-24

The book of Colossians is all about the Jesus' supremacy over everything. Whether thrones, dominions, rulers or authorities all things were created through Him and for Him (Colossians 1:16). This certainly includes our lives and the places where we live, work, and worship. This is how Paul concludes the book of Colossians – what the supremacy of Christ means for us at work and in the home.

Enter the Christian doctrine of vocation.

The word “vocation” comes from the Latin word for “calling.” The doctrine of vocation means that all Christians are called by God to live faithfully in three spheres: at home, at work, and in the church. It has to do with how God governs and cares for His creation by working through human beings. It also shows Christians how to live out their faith and become more like Christ in everything that they do and everywhere that they are.

The Three Spheres

According to Martin Luther, we have callings in each of the three spheres that God created for human life:

- **At Home.** This refers to the family. Marriage, becoming a father or mother, or being a son or daughter are all vocations or callings that are intended for love and service, making us more like Christ.
- **At Church.** All Christians are called to belong to a local body of believers. God “calls” pastors but He also calls elders, deacons, and all other members. As we often say, the church is not an audience; it is an army. Everyone has a part to play in the congregation.
- **At Work.** We are also called to our local communities, our jobs, and our surrounding culture. Therefore, we have vocations even in the “secular” arena, which is where Christians interact with non-believers and function as salt and light in the world. (Matt. 5:13-16)

These three spheres are all understood under the umbrella of the doctrine of the “priesthood of all believers.” This does not mean that every Christian is a minister leading a congregation or that there is no need for pastors. Rather, it means that one does not need to be a pastor in order to be a “priest.” Farmers, doctors, lawyers, mechanics, soldiers, pharmacists, husbands, wives, mothers, and children are all “priests” in that they are performing work, interceding in prayer, and bringing God’s Word into their everyday lives.

A “priest” is someone who offers sacrifices. However, because Jesus has been sacrificed once and for all, we no longer need any other sacrifice for our sin (Heb. 9:6). Instead, we are now called to present our bodies as living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1) and “*to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ*” (1 Pet. 2:5). This is what happens in the three spheres of home, at church, and at work

The Purpose of Vocation

The purpose of every vocation, according to Luther, is to love and serve our neighbors as Jesus loved and served us. Our vocations brings our neighbors into our lives whether it be our spouse, our children, our grandchildren, our fellow-citizens, the members of our church, or our customers at work. God wants us to love and serve them.

“God does not need our good works,” observed Luther. “But our neighbor does.”

John reminds us that *“In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins”* (1 John 4:10). Our relationship with God is based not on our works or our vocation, but upon Christ alone. God saves us apart from our works and then calls back into the world, into our distinct vocations and callings, to love and serve Him by loving and serving our neighbors.

Interestingly, this love and service typically does not include special “good deeds” but the ordinary tasks of everyday vocations:

- Parents changing their baby’s diaper, which Luther hailed as an act of holiness...
- Farmers plowing their fields so that people can have food...
- Contractors taking the raw materials of wood and cement and using them to make buildings...
- Software developers harnessing the technology of electricity to create computer programs...
- Teachers taking young minds and teaching it math or science...
- Custodians pushing a broom and cleaning a room...
- Mechanics restoring a car back to working condition...
- Artists painting a beautiful picture...
- Citizens casting a vote and elected officials making good laws...

These all can be offered as acts of love and service to our neighbors.

Vocation as the Mask of God

Luther stressed that God himself is living and active in and through vocation. He gives us our daily bread by means of farmers and bakers. He creates new human beings and cares for them by means of mothers and fathers. He protects us by means of lawyers and police. He proclaims His Word through the voice of pastors.

Luther looked at places in the Bible where God takes care of a city or God feeds His people and asked the question, “How is God doing this?” For example, consider a passage like Psalm 147:13 which says, *“For he strengthens the bars of your gates; he blesses your children within you. He makes peace in your borders; he fills you with the finest of wheat.”* God is taking credit for doing these things but Luther asked, “How exactly is God doing these things?”

How does God strengthen the bars of the city? Answer: by city planners, by politicians who pass good laws to protect the city.

How does God bless our children? Answer: by mothers and fathers, by teachers and pediatricians.

How does God make peace in our borders? by policeman and good lawyers, by the military

How does He fill us with the finest of wheat? By farmers and those who work in restaurants

Vocation, says Luther, is a “mask” of God: We see only the human face, performing ordinary tasks in everyday life, but behind that calling, God Himself is hidden and giving His gifts.

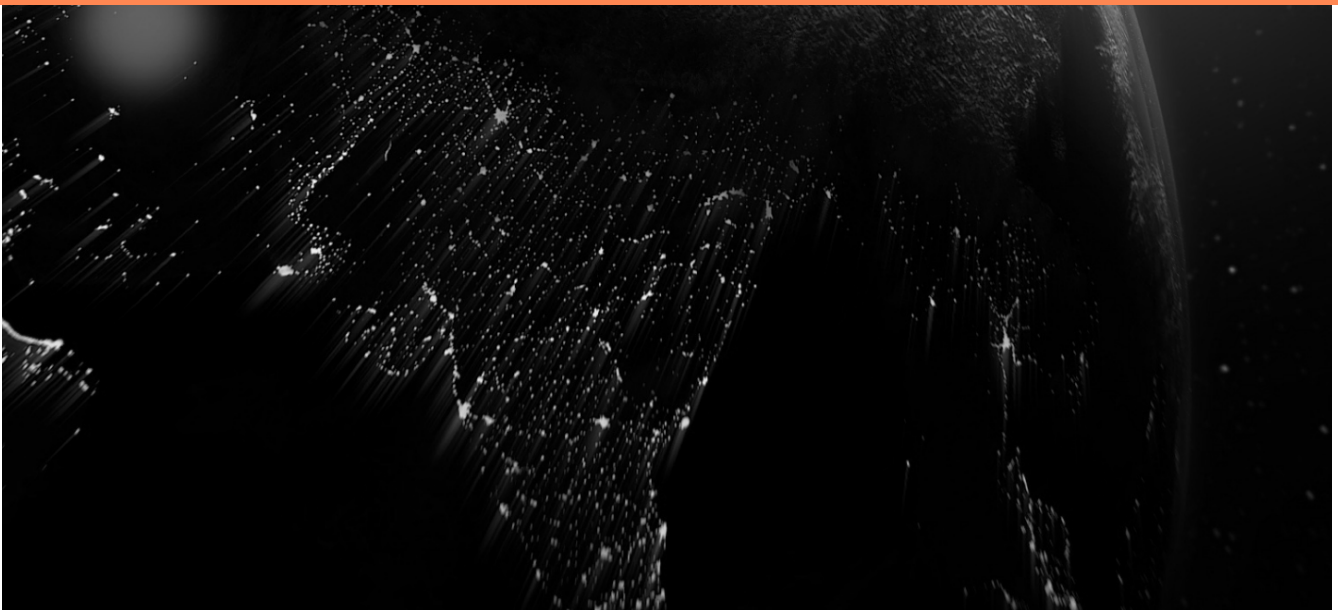
This is the pattern for all work and nothing is out of that pattern.

The beauty of the doctrine of vocation is that it brings the Gospel into ordinary life. It takes the mundane routines of ordinary life and charges them with purpose, spiritual significance, and the very presence of God. This means that there is no boring, mundane task so small. There is no business mega-deal or public policy initiative so big that transcends this pattern God has set up. Luther would even say, “God milks the cows through the vocation of the milk maid.”



SMALL GROUP GUIDES: PART ONE

Small groups at Faith Fellowship are designed to provide the context and resources to help every person at Faith Fellowship take their next step as disciples of Jesus, even if their first step is their next step. Consider these questions and ideas that cover the first half of Colossians to help you take your next step as a disciple.



- SEPTEMBER 5 -
INTRODUCING COLOSSIANS

Small groups at Faith Fellowship are designed to provide the context and resources to help every person at Faith Fellowship take their next step as disciples of Jesus, even if their first step is their next step. Consider these questions and ideas to help you take your next step as a disciple.

Interact with the Passage

Read the entire book of Colossians this week using your ESV Scripture Journal. Consider reading and meditating on one section of the book per day by using the H.E.A.R. method. Engaging the text in this way will help you better understand and discuss the Scripture with your small group.

- **Highlight:** Read and observe everything in the passage.
- **Explain:** Based on your reading, discover what the passage means in its context.
- **Apply:** Understand how the meaning of the passage affects your life.
- **Respond in Prayer:** Pray God's word back to him, asking to believe, share, and put the Bible into practice in your life and relationships.

Feel free to interact with the Scripture at your own pace throughout the week. Remember to interact with the Scripture and think through the discussion questions before you're small group meets. In small groups, we'll discuss what we learned from the Scripture the previous week as well as our answers to the discussion questions together.

Open It Up

- What's something you're excited about that's coming in the next year? What are you doing to prepare? How do you feel while you wait? As Christians, we have a lot to look forward to. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul reminds the church about the hope of the resurrection and why its reality is the foundation of our faith. For the next few weeks, we'll unpack what the resurrection means for our future as well as how the resurrection should affect our lives in the present.

Discussion Questions

- Read the book of Colossians this week. Consider reading a chapter per day. What stood out to you in your interactions with reading Scripture this week?
- Listen to the book of Colossians on the CD in your Faith at Home envelope. Consider listening in the car on your way to work or appointments. What stood out to you in your interactions with listening Scripture this week?

- Watch the Colossians Overview from The Bible Project at faithfellowshipfortbend.com/colossians. What stood out to you from this video?
- Read Colossians 1:15-20. One of the major themes in the book is the supremacy of Jesus. In fact, these verses are actually a hymn the early church sang. Your Bible translations might even format this part of the text differently, like a poem or the lyrics to a song. The section begins by saying Jesus is the image of the invisible God. How did Jesus display the character and nature of God while He was on earth? (*Hint: Consider the article on the Supremacy of Christ on page 10 of this Disciple Guide*).
- When “theological” debates begin, how do you feel? Why do you think it is valuable to think through such things? What are some best practices or even “guardrails” that are important to remember when discussing such things?
- Read Colossians 1:24-2:5. How could Paul’s perspective shape the way you view your present circumstances? What could be different about us and the way we perceive the situations we’re in if we remembered Jesus’s victory on the cross?
- Read Colossians 3:1-14. What efforts have you made to grow spiritually in the past? What seems to have worked? What has not worked? (*Hint: Consider the article on Mortification and Vivification on page 13 of this Disciple Guide*).

Next Steps for the Week

- **Home:** At home or in the car this week, choose a praise song that exalts Jesus. Listen to that song to remind you of His supremacy over all things. For bonus points, sing it with your kids or grandkids really loud!
- **Hospitality:** Send a thank you text, note, or email to a neighbor this week. In light of what you have learned from this overview of Colossians, tell them how you are praying for them this week.
- **Hammers:** Ask God to transform the way you think about Him. Pray the truth that Christ is in you would settle into your heart and mind this week.

- SEPTEMBER 12 -
COLOSSIANS 1:1-14

Small groups at Faith Fellowship are designed to provide the context and resources to help every person at Faith Fellowship take their next step as disciples of Jesus, even if their first step is their next step. Consider these questions and ideas to help you take your next step as a disciple.

Interact with the Passage

Read Colossians 1:1-14 this week by using the H.E.A.R. method in your ESV Scripture Journals. Engaging the text in this way will help you better understand and discuss the Scripture with your small group.

- **Highlight:** Read and observe everything in the passage.
- **Explain:** Based on your reading, discover what the passage means in its context.
- **Apply:** Understand how the meaning of the passage affects your life.
- **Respond in Prayer:** Pray God's word back to him, asking to believe, share, and put the Bible into practice in your life and relationships.

Feel free to interact with the Scripture at your own pace throughout the week. Remember to interact with the Scripture and think through the discussion questions before you're small group meets. In small groups, we'll discuss what we learned from the Scripture the previous week as well as our answers to the discussion questions together.

Open It Up

- Think about a time when you were less mature than you are now—maybe a story from your childhood, school days, or first day at a job. What did you do or say that showed your immaturity? As we grow in Christ, our habits, attitudes, and words change. We become more and more like Jesus the longer we follow Him. As we're going to discover in this study on Colossians, a mature faith begins with full submission to the supremacy of Jesus.

Discussion Questions

- What stood out to you in your interactions with Colossians 1:1-14 this week?
- Paul wrote Colossians from prison alongside Timothy. He penned the letter to correct some wrong theology circulating in the church in Colossae by emphasizing the supremacy of Jesus. What do you think of when you hear "the supremacy of Jesus"? How would you define supremacy?
- How would you describe a life fully submitted to the supremacy of Jesus? What would it look like? What's appealing to you most about that kind of life?

- Read Colossians 1:3-8. According to these verses, how did those in Colossae hear the gospel? Who shared it with them?
- What's interesting about Colossians is Paul didn't plant this church – Epaphras did. Paul writes to a church he's never met before, but still expresses deep care for them. What kinds of things does Paul point out about the church in these verses? How do you tend to express your love for God's people?
- Read Colossians 1:9-14. Paul mentions for the second time that he and Timothy pray for the church in Colossae. He specifically says they never stop praying for them. When has someone modeled this kind of prayer life for you?
- According to verse 9, living worthily begins with God filling us with His knowledge, wisdom, and understanding. To Paul, following God begins in the mind and heart, and then expresses itself through action. What has it looked like in your walk with Christ to grow in knowledge, wisdom, and understanding? How have you seen your mind mature?
- Consider verses 13-14. What does it mean to you that you've been rescued from the kingdom of darkness? How does that truth relate to living a life that's worthy of God?
- Living a life worthy of God is only possible through Jesus. He made a way for us to be reunited with God and gives us the Holy Spirit so we can grow in maturity. That's not to say we have to strive to be perfect in our own power. Rather, the Spirit fills us and gives us all we need to pursue maturity in Christ—all beginning with the knowledge of God. When did you first hear and understand the gospel message? Since then, how has the gospel helped you mature as a believer? How has the Spirit played a role in your maturity?

Faith at Home this Week

- **Home:** In your Faith at Home envelope, consider the first Idea Card and do the Lego Time activity with your kids, grandkids, nieces or nephews. Use a fun activity like building a Lego satellite to tell them about the supremacy of Christ and God's overview effect. Use phrases like, "*How big God is, how creative God is, how much must God love us, etc.*"
- **Hospitality:** As an expression of gratitude to God, choose one way to show someone God's love this week. Help your spouse with something on their to-do list, send a friend flowers, or mow the neighbor's lawn. As you do, pray for the person you're serving.
- **Hammers:** When you pray this week, thank God for delivering you from sin and death. Pray for His Spirit to show you what it means to live a life that reflects the salvation you've received as you study Colossians.

- SEPTEMBER 19 -
COLOSSIANS 1:15-23

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Interact with the Passage

Read Colossians 1:15-23 this week using the H.E.A.R. method in your ESV Scripture Journal. Engaging the text in this way will help you better understand and discuss the Scripture with your small group.

- **Highlight:** Read and observe everything in the passage.
- **Explain:** Based on your reading, discover what the passage means in its context.
- **Apply:** Understand how the meaning of the passage affects your life.
- **Respond in Prayer:** Pray God's word back to him, asking to believe, share, and put the Bible into practice in your life and relationships.

Feel free to interact with the Scripture at your own pace throughout the week. Remember to interact with the Scripture and think through the discussion questions before you're small group meets. In small groups, we'll discuss what we learned from the Scripture the previous week as well as our answers to the discussion questions together.

Open It Up

- How do we use the word "supreme" in our culture? As in supreme pizza, the Supreme Leader in Star Wars, the Supreme Court, etc. With those examples in mind, how would you say our culture defines supremacy? How do you think that compares to the biblical definition of supremacy?

Discussion Questions

- What stood out to you in your interactions with Colossians 1:15-23 this week?
- Read more about the image of God in Scripture in the following verses: Genesis 1:26-27; Exodus 20:4-6. According to these verses, how would you describe a biblical definition of "image"? Why do you think God didn't want images made of Him? What about a human-created image is insufficient? Why, then, is it okay that Jesus is the image of God?
- Read Colossians 1:15-16. Some people take this verse to mean that God created Jesus since Paul calls Jesus "firstborn over all creation." The early church councils deemed this view heretical, but we still see it pop up among groups such as Jehovah's Witnesses. Paul isn't saying Jesus was created. Rather, the term "firstborn" refers to Jesus's position of privilege. He exercises authority over all creation because, as we see in verse 16,

all things were made through Him and for Him. How does verse 16 describe Jesus's authority? Why do you think it matters that all things were made by and for Jesus?

- What specific things does Jesus have authority over in your life? What areas are your life are difficult for you to view as under Jesus's authority? Why?
- Read more about the deity of Christ in the following verses: John 1:1-5, 18; Hebrews. 1:1-4; Philippians 2:5-11. What truths about Jesus do we learn from these verses? How do these verses contribute to the discussion of Jesus's supremacy? How are these verses similar to what Paul says about Jesus in Colossians 1?
- Paul says faith, perseverance, and hope mark a believer who understands who Jesus is. What do you think it means to live a life that reflects Jesus's sacrifice and supremacy, practically speaking? How would this perspective of Jesus change the way someone faces suffering or encounters blessing?
- In what areas of your life do you need to remember Jesus's supremacy? What's one way you could trust Him with that area this week?

Faith at Home this Week

- **Home:** In your Faith at Home envelope, consider the first Idea Card and watch *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* with friends or family. After watching the movie together, discuss the questions given.
- **Hospitality:** Send an encouraging text, note, or email to a neighbor this week. In the note, let them know that God is in control and loves them. Remind them that you are there for them as their neighbor as well.
- **Hammers:** Commit Colossians 1:15-16 to memory this week. Write it on a notecard, create a background for your phone with the verse or put the magnet in your Faith at Home envelope on the refrigerator. Recite it to yourself to remind you of what God has done for you.

- SEPTEMBER 26 -
COLOSSIANS 1:24-2:5

Small groups at Faith Fellowship are designed to provide the context and resources to help every person at Faith Fellowship take their next step as disciples of Jesus, even if their first step is their next step. Consider these questions and ideas to help you take your next step as a disciple.

Interact with the Passage

Read Colossians 1:24-2:5 this week by using the H.E.A.R. method in your ESV Scripture Journals. Engaging the text in this way will help you better understand and discuss the Scripture with your small group.

- **Highlight:** Read and observe everything in the passage.
- **Explain:** Based on your reading, discover what the passage means in its context.
- **Apply:** Understand how the meaning of the passage affects your life.
- **Respond in Prayer:** Pray God's word back to him, asking to believe, share, and put the Bible into practice in your life and relationships.

Feel free to interact with the Scripture at your own pace throughout the week. Remember to interact with the Scripture and think through the discussion questions before you're small group meets. In small groups, we'll discuss what we learned from the Scripture the previous week as well as our answers to the discussion questions together.

Open It Up

- What's your favorite mystery book, TV show, or movie? Why is that one your favorite? This week, we are studying verses in Colossians that talk about the mystery of God. The good news is we don't have to look far to figure out the mystery—it's already been revealed to us through Christ.

Discussion Questions

- What stood out to you in your interactions with Colossians 1:24-2:5 this week?
- Even though he's in prison, how does Paul describe his attitude in verse 24? Is that your typical response to suffering? What do you think empowered Paul to be able to rejoice in prison?
- Paul counted it a joy to suffer for Jesus because Jesus suffered so much for him. How could Jesus's suffering for you shape the way you personally view pain and hardship?
- Paul rejoiced in prison because he knew he was joining in the sufferings of Christ. When he says the afflictions of Christ were "lacking," he doesn't mean Jesus's suffering on the cross wasn't enough to save us. Instead, he's talking about the suffering of the Church—we endure tribulation until the suffering of believers

ends when Christ returns. Jesus suffers alongside us and grounds our hope that one day it will all come to an end. How does Jesus's return bring you hope in times of suffering?

- Read Colossians 1:25-27. Paul knew God had called him to take the gospel to the Gentiles—to those who were outside the Jewish faith. Verses 26 and 27 remind us that the gospel isn't for an elite group of people. It's for all people who put their faith in Jesus, Jew and Gentile alike. What difference does it make in your life knowing that God chose to bring you into His family? How could that truth impact the way you treat believers you don't naturally click with?
- Read Colossians 2:1-5. Verses 2 and 3 talk about the love, understanding, wisdom, knowledge, and unity that come with knowing Christ. How might each of those things help someone stand up against false teaching?
- How have you grown in discernment since you first followed Jesus? What do you do to discern if something is true?
- Paul ends this section by mentioning that the Colossians have a firm faith. What does it mean to have a firm faith? What does a firm faith have to do with Christian maturity?
- As we grow in these truths—that there's hope beyond suffering, Christ is in us, and we should be discerning—we will become mature followers of Jesus. **What are some practical ways you could pursue growth in your faith?**

Faith at Home this Week

- **Home:** This week, go to faithfellowshipfortbend.com/faithathome/ideacards and choose an Idea Card that will help you grow in your particular life stage.
- **Hospitality:** Think of a friend or neighbor that you know is suffering and going through a hard time. Consider sending them a meal through Grub Hub or Uber Eats this week. Be sure to send them a message that you are praying for them and there for them should they need you.
- **Hammers:** Set aside time this week to connect with Jesus. Fill your time with Him with prayer, Scripture reading, and reflection.

- OCTOBER 3 -
COLOSSIANS 2:6-15

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Interact with the Passage

Read Colossians 2:6-15 this week by using the H.E.A.R. method in your ESV Scripture Journals. Engaging the text in this way will help you better understand and discuss the Scripture with your small group.

- **Highlight:** Read and observe everything in the passage.
- **Explain:** Based on your reading, discover what the passage means in its context.
- **Apply:** Understand how the meaning of the passage affects your life.
- **Respond in Prayer:** Pray God's word back to him, asking to believe, share, and put the Bible into practice in your life and relationships.

Feel free to interact with the Scripture at your own pace throughout the week. Remember to interact with the Scripture and think through the discussion questions before you're small group meets. In small groups, we'll discuss what we learned from the Scripture the previous week as well as our answers to the discussion questions together.

Open It Up

- What are some of your favorite commercials. What makes that commercial compelling? Would you say you're persuaded by every advertisement you see? What would be different about your life if you were convinced by all of them? It's sometimes easy to be persuaded to do something or to change something about our lives. Advertisers bank on that happening. In this portion of Colossians, Paul cautions the Colossian church to not be led astray by false teaching. Instead, they should find their foundation in Jesus and His gospel.

Discussion Questions

- What stood out to you in your interactions with Colossians 2:6-15 this week?
- Read Colossians 2:6-7 If we have received Christ by grace through faith, what does that say about what it means to live in Him?
- In verse 7, Paul tells the Colossians to be strengthened in their faith. He mentions giving thanks as a characteristic of strong faith. What sorts of spiritual disciplines strengthen your faith? In what ways has thanksgiving bolstered your walk with Jesus?

- The Colossians were being led astray by what Paul calls a “hollow and deceptive philosophy.” He wrote to remind the Colossians of their foundation found only in Jesus and His gospel, not in any secret society. What are some examples of “hollow and deceptive” beliefs in our world?
- We should filter everything we hear and read outside of Scripture through Jesus. We should ask: “Does this idea have its foundation in Jesus and His Word?” Why is it so important to discern the validity of ideas, books, and speakers through the lens of the Bible and Christ? What do we lose if we remove Jesus and the Bible from any “Christian” message?
- What are some ways you go about making sure something you hear or read is grounded in the truth of Scripture?
- Read Colossians 2:13-15. What difference does it make to the way you approach your relationship with God knowing that you can’t add to or take away from your salvation?
- If our salvation is finished work, why do you think we still feel the tension between sin and Christlikeness?
- How could Paul’s perspective shape the way you view your present circumstances? What could be different about us and the way we perceive the situations we’re in if we remembered Jesus’s victory on the cross?
(Hint: Consider the article on Purpose in Suffering on page 8 of this Disciple Guide).

Faith at Home this Week

- **Home:** In your Faith at Home envelope, consider the second Idea Card and watch *Amazing Grace* with friends or family. After watching the movie together, discuss the questions given.
- **Hospitality:** Go on a prayer walk around your neighborhood this week. Pray that God would identify one person in your neighborhood you can pray for and talk with.
- **Hammers:** Pray God would deepen your foundation in Him and the gospel this week. Ask Him to refresh the gospel message in you.

- OCTOBER 10 -
COLOSSIANS 2:16-23

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Interact with the Passage

Read Colossians 2:16-23 this week by using the H.E.A.R. method in your ESV Scripture Journal. Engaging the text in this way will help you better understand and discuss the Scripture with your small group.

- **Highlight:** Read and observe everything in the passage.
- **Explain:** Based on your reading, discover what the passage means in its context.
- **Apply:** Understand how the meaning of the passage affects your life.
- **Respond in Prayer:** Pray God's word back to him, asking to believe, share, and put the Bible into practice in your life and relationships.

Feel free to interact with the Scripture at your own pace throughout the week. Remember to interact with the Scripture and think through the discussion questions before you're small group meets. In small groups, we'll discuss what we learned from the Scripture the previous week as well as our answers to the discussion questions together.

Open It Up

- When you were a kid, what was your attitude toward the rules? Were you a rule follower or a rebel or something in between? Has your attitude towards the rules changed at all over the years? If so, how? Paul continues to combat the false teaching the Colossians faced in this next section of Colossians. He's going to talk about how human rules are inadequate to save and aren't necessarily founded in Christ.

Discussion Questions

- What stood out to you in your interactions with Colossians 2:16-23 this week?
- Read Colossians 2:16-17. What is the significance of the religious rituals for Paul?
- Learn more about how the religious rituals of Israel were a shadow of things to come in the following verses: Hebrews 8:1-7; 10:1-4. God's salvific plan always involved Jesus. When He ordered Israel around the Law, He showed them how He goes about saving His people. We can now see how He orchestrated all things to culminate at the death and resurrection of Jesus. How do the sacrificial system and priesthood fall short of

saving people from sin? In what ways are the priesthood and sacrificial system a “shadow” of what was to come in Christ? How does salvation through Jesus complete what the Law couldn’t do?

- Why would Paul tell the Colossians to not let anyone judge them on their diet or religious celebrations?
- What are some of the external religious practices we tend to advocate for in the Church today? Would you say those practices have a foundation in Christ? Why or why not?
- Read Colossians 2:18-19. The false teachers mentioned in these verses did not rely on Christ at all – they based everything on their own human insight. Even so, it seems the Colossians believed them enough to cause Paul to write them about it. We can fall into the same trap today. What are some other areas the Church has drifted away from Jesus?
- Read Colossians 2:20-23. The Colossians were being held by a false teaching, which said there were extra rules and practices necessary to gain access to Jesus. Are there any practices we have to adopt in order to be saved by Jesus? How does adding requirements to salvation twist the gospel into something it’s not?
- Walking with Jesus looks different for every believer. There are some things we all do—like reading our Bibles, praying, and exercising spiritual disciplines. But even those practices look different for each individual. We don’t all have to walk out our faith in the same way. What are some the unique aspects of your walk with Jesus? Would you say those things would absolutely work for or have the same effect on every believer? Why or why not?

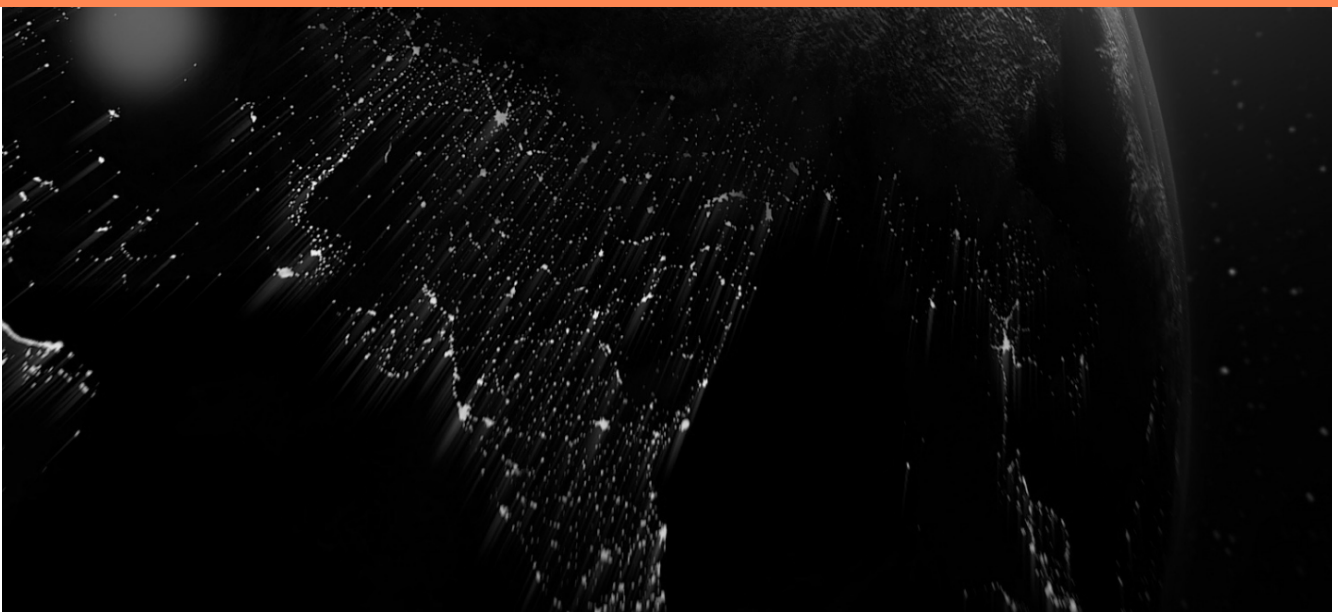
Faith at Home this Week

- **Home:** In your Faith at Home envelope, consider the second Idea Card and do the *Looking Backwards* assignment. Make plans to get coffee or tea with someone you consider a mature Christian. Ask them what God has used to mature them as they’ve followed Christ. Ask them how God used suffering and hardship to make them into the mature Christian they are today.
- **Hospitality:** Order dinner for a neighbor who is walking through a hard season this week. Drop it off yourself or get it through Grub Hub or Door Dash. Before you order, find out what your neighbor likes to eat!
- **Hammers:** Make a list of all the things you think are necessary for being a “good Christian.” Take some time to investigate Scripture to see what’s true about your list (Philippians 3 is a good place to start) and pray God renews your perception of salvation.



SMALL GROUP GUIDES: PART TWO

Small groups at Faith Fellowship are designed to provide the context and resources to help every person at Faith Fellowship take their next step as disciples of Jesus, even if their first step is their next step. Consider these questions and ideas that cover the second half of Colossians to help you take your next step as a disciple.



- OCTOBER 31 -
COLOSSIANS 3:1-11

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Interact with the Passage

Read Colossians 3:1-11 this week by using the H.E.A.R. method in your ESV Scripture Journal. Engaging the text in this way will help you better understand and discuss the Scripture with your small group.

- **Highlight:** Read and observe everything in the passage.
- **Explain:** Based on your reading, discover what the passage means in its context.
- **Apply:** Understand how the meaning of the passage affects your life.
- **Respond in Prayer:** Pray God's word back to him, asking to believe, share, and put the Bible into practice in your life and relationships.

Feel free to interact with the Scripture at your own pace throughout the week. Remember to interact with the Scripture and think through the discussion questions before you're small group meets. In small groups, we'll discuss what we learned from the Scripture the previous week as well as our answers to the discussion questions together.

Open It Up

- Describe a time when you showed up somewhere— like an event, a trip, or a celebration—wearing the wrong clothing. Throughout our study of Colossians, we have been talking about what Jesus's supremacy over all things means for us and our lives. For the next two weeks, we will explore specific ways we apply the supremacy of Christ in our lives – by taking off the old self and putting on the new. Like changing into a new outfit, we put on a whole new identity when we follow Jesus.

Discussion Questions

- What stood out to you in your interactions with Colossians 3:1-11 this week?
- The beginning of Colossians 3 forms a kind of bridge between what Paul has discussed in the first two chapters and what he will discuss now. What do verses 1-4 teach us about Jesus? About believers?
- What do you think it means to set your mind on things that are above? What does it mean to think about earthly things?

- Learn more about the “right hand of God” in the following passages: Luke 22:66–71; Acts 2:32–33; Acts 7:54–56; Rom. 8:34–39; Hebrews. 12:1–2. What do these verses reveal about the character and nature of Jesus? What difference does it make in your life knowing that Jesus intercedes for you, offers you hope, and stands in authority at the right hand of God?
- Read Colossians 3:5–11 How would you describe your old self, or who you were before Jesus?
- What does it look like to put to death the old self and its habits? How have you done this in your own life?
- Learn more about what it means to put sin to death in the following verses: Galatians 5:16–26; Romans 8:12–17. What does it mean to put sin to death? What does it mean to live by the Spirit? What’s one way you could put sin to death in your life?
- Verse 11 reminds us of the unity we have in Jesus. No religious, cultural, racial, or social divisions divide Christians any longer because Jesus demolished them when He died and rose again. His blood has redeemed all of us and none of us is above the other. How have you experienced the unity of the body of Christ? In what ways do you think Christians could improve in this area?

Faith at Home this Week

- **Home:** In your Faith at Home envelope, consider the third Idea Card and watch *Home Run* with friends or family. After watching the movie together, discuss the questions given.
- **Hospitality:** Ask God to give you a burden for the lost in your neighborhood.
- **Hammers:** Commit Colossians 3:1–3 to memory this week. Use these verses to remind yourself to keep your mind on Christ and not on the things of this world.

- NOVEMBER 7 -
COLOSSIANS 3:12-17

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Interact with the Passage

Read Colossians 3:12-17 this week by using the H.E.A.R. method in your ESV Scripture Journal. Engaging the text in this way will help you better understand and discuss the Scripture with your small group.

- **Highlight:** Read and observe everything in the passage.
- **Explain:** Based on your reading, discover what the passage means in its context.
- **Apply:** Understand how the meaning of the passage affects your life.
- **Respond in Prayer:** Pray God's word back to him, asking to believe, share, and put the Bible into practice in your life and relationships.

Feel free to interact with the Scripture at your own pace throughout the week. Remember to interact with the Scripture and think through the discussion questions before you're small group meets. In small groups, we'll discuss what we learned from the Scripture the previous week as well as our answers to the discussion questions together.

Open It Up

- How does it feel to be over or under dressed for something? What do your clothes potentially communicate about yourself to others? Throughout our study of Colossians, we have been talking about what Jesus's supremacy over all things means for us and our lives. Last week, we began exploring specific ways we apply the supremacy of Christ in our lives – by taking off the old self and putting on the new. Like changing into a new outfit, we put on a whole new identity when we follow Jesus.

Discussion Questions

- What stood out to you in your interactions with Colossians 3:12-17 this week?
- Read Colossians 3:12-14. Verse 13 says to forgive others as God has forgiven us. What does it look like to forgive someone? How have you seen forgiveness at work in your life?
- In verse 14, Paul encourages the Colossians to clothe themselves with love above all else. Why do you think Paul tells the Colossians to put on love over all the other virtues he mentions?

- Read Colossians 3:15-17. How does putting on the new self and living in Christian community bring glory to God?
- Paul encouraged the Colossian church to let the gospel—the message of Christ—dwell among them. He told them to do so through teaching through psalms, hymns, and songs. How do songs and psalms help you remember and reflect on the gospel?
- What are some of your favorite psalms, hymns, or spiritual songs? Why are they your favorites? What do they teach about God and His gospel?
- What do you think it would look like for you to do everything in Jesus's name this week? Give examples of: Parenting in the name of the Lord Jesus, shopping in the name of the Lord Jesus, talking on the phone in the name of the Lord Jesus, working in the name of the Lord Jesus, driving in the name of the Lord Jesus, eating in the name of the Lord Jesus, serving in the name of the Lord Jesus:
- What's one practical way you could take off the old self and put on the new self this week?

Faith at Home this Week

- **Home:** In your Faith at Home envelope, consider the third Idea Card and do the *Putting on the New Self* activity. Every time you get dressed or change clothes this week, repeat Colossians 3:12-14 and reflect on what it means to take off the old self and put on the new self. Pray that God would continue to remind you that you have been made new in Christ.
- **Hospitality:** Pray that God would give you a unique idea for how you can serve your neighborhood this week.
- **Hammers:** The next time you're in corporate worship or listen to a worship song, pause to consider the words you're singing. Let the truths of the song settle in as you praise God for who He is and what He's done.

- NOVEMBER 14 -
COLOSSIANS 3:18-21

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Interact with the Passage

Read Colossians 3:18-21 this week by using the H.E.A.R. method in your ESV Scripture Journal. Engaging the text in this way will help you better understand and discuss the Scripture with your small group.

- **Highlight:** Read and observe everything in the passage.
- **Explain:** Based on your reading, discover what the passage means in its context.
- **Apply:** Understand how the meaning of the passage affects your life.
- **Respond in Prayer:** Pray God's word back to him, asking to believe, share, and put the Bible into practice in your life and relationships.

Feel free to interact with the Scripture at your own pace throughout the week. Remember to interact with the Scripture and think through the discussion questions before you're small group meets. In small groups, we'll discuss what we learned from the Scripture the previous week as well as our answers to the discussion questions together.

Open It Up

- What's been the most influential relationship in your life? What's unique about that relationship? How has that person impacted you? We started talking last week about how Jesus changes our relationships with others. This week, we're going to look at two specific examples of how that plays out in our lives: marriage and parenting. Even if you're not married or don't have kids, there are timeless principles we can apply to our lives today in the relationships that matter most to us.

Discussion Questions

- What stood out to you in your interactions with Colossians 3:18-21 this week?
- Read Colossians 3:18-19. For those who are married, what's difficult about putting your spouse's interests above your own? What does it look like when it's done well? How do you feel when your spouse loves and serves you well?
- In verse 14, Paul encourages the Colossians to clothe themselves with love above all else. Why do you think Paul tells the Colossians to put on love over all the other virtues he mentions?

- Regardless of your marital status, what are some examples of marriages you're familiar with that personify the selfless service Paul talks about in this passage?
- Read Colossians 3:20-21. What was it like to obey your parents as a kid? What does that look like to honor them today?
- Learn more about parents and children in the following verses: Deuteronomy 5:16; 6:6-7; Proverbs 3:1-4, 11-12; 22:6; Colossians 3:20; 2 Timothy 3:2,14-15 How do these passages describe the proper upbringing of children? What are the rewards of obeying one's parents? Why do you think 2 Timothy 3:2 ranks disobeying parents with such other terrible sins?
- What do you think it means to not embitter or provoke your children? What are some ways you can encourage them?
- Even if you don't have kids, what are some ways you can model the selfless love of Jesus to those who are younger than you?

Faith at Home this Week

- **Home:** In your Faith at Home envelope, consider the fourth Idea Card and do the *Did You Know* activity. Consider this date night discussion guide for husbands and wives to encourage and build each other up with words of affirmation.
- **Hospitality:** Pick one person to serve this week. Choose two to three intentional actions you could do to lovingly put that person above yourself.
- **Hammers:** Pray about your specific situation in life this week—your relationships, job, school, neighborhood, family. Ask God to teach you how to honor Him in all that you do.

- NOVEMBER 21 -
COLOSSIANS 3:22-4:1

Small groups at Faith Fellowship are designed to provide the context and resources to help every person at Faith Fellowship take their next step as disciples of Jesus, even if their first step is their next step. Consider these questions and ideas to help you take your next step as a disciple.

Interact with the Passage

Read Colossians 3:22-4:1 this week by using the H.E.A.R. method in your ESV Scripture Journal. Engaging the text in this way will help you better understand and discuss the Scripture with your small group.

- **Highlight:** Read and observe everything in the passage.
- **Explain:** Based on your reading, discover what the passage means in its context.
- **Apply:** Understand how the meaning of the passage affects your life.
- **Respond in Prayer:** Pray God's word back to him, asking to believe, share, and put the Bible into practice in your life and relationships.

Feel free to interact with the Scripture at your own pace throughout the week. Remember to interact with the Scripture and think through the discussion questions before you're small group meets. In small groups, we'll discuss what we learned from the Scripture the previous week as well as our answers to the discussion questions together.

Open It Up

- After talking about how husbands and wives should treat each other and then children and parents, this chapter ends with a discussion of slaves and masters. As you probably know, slavery was common throughout the ancient world. The apostle Paul certainly knew he couldn't abolish it, but he could bring Christianity into it. This should give us insight into how modern employees and employers should relate to each other and their work. Note that if you want a thorough explanation of Christianity and slavery, listen to our sermon at www.faithfellowshipfortbend.com/topics/apologetics

Discussion Questions

- What stood out to you in your interactions with Colossians 3:22-4:1 this week?
- Read Colossians 3:22-4:1. How does Paul encourage the bondservants to act? How do you think having a holy mindset would change the way they worked?

- There are certainly parallels here with modern employment and boss- employee relationship. Another person (or company) has power over us, telling us what to do. They may reward or punish us. And it's important for us to serve well even when they're not watching. The Lord is our ultimate boss.
- What working principles do you see here? How could this affect the way you work—either as an employee or as a boss?
- What about this passage should make a Christian worker uncomfortable with such whispered workplace comments as, “The boss just walked in” or “Shh, the boss is headed our way?”
- Verse 24 says that our inheritance is from the Lord. Learn more about the inheritance of the people of God in the following verses: Ephesians 1:11-14; Hebrews 9:13-15; 1 Peter 1:3-5. Who is the guarantee of our inheritance? Who obtained it for us and how did He do it? How do you think this promise of an inheritance would have resonated with slaves who had no earthly inheritance? How does the promise of our inheritance provide us hope for what is to come?
- What's difficult about the life circumstances you're in? What are some of the blessings to this time of life? Would you say it's easier to focus on yourself in these situations, or on others and Christ? Why do you say that?
- What would it look like to focus on working for Jesus in all areas of your life? What could you do this week to honor God in your relationships and circumstances?

Faith at Home this Week

- **Home:** In your Faith at Home envelope, consider the fourth Idea Card and watch *Cinderella Man* with friends or family. After watching the movie together, discuss the questions given.
- **Hospitality:** Pick one person to serve this week. Choose two to three intentional actions you could do to lovingly put that person above yourself.
- **Hammers:** Whether you're employed or not, take a moment at the beginning of each day to remind yourself that you're working for God. Come up with a way to creatively remind yourself of that truth throughout the day—phone reminders, a sticky note, or a verse as your computer wallpaper.

- NOVEMBER 28 -
COLOSSIANS 4:2-18

Small groups at Faith Fellowship are designed to provide the context and resources to help every person at Faith Fellowship take their next step as disciples of Jesus, even if their first step is their next step. Consider these questions and ideas to help you take your next step as a disciple.

Interact with the Passage

Read Colossians 4:2-18 this week by using the H.E.A.R. method in your ESV Scripture Journal. Engaging the text in this way will help you better understand and discuss the Scripture with your small group.

- **Highlight:** Read and observe everything in the passage.
- **Explain:** Based on your reading, discover what the passage means in its context.
- **Apply:** Understand how the meaning of the passage affects your life.
- **Respond in Prayer:** Pray God's word back to him, asking to believe, share, and put the Bible into practice in your life and relationships.

Feel free to interact with the Scripture at your own pace throughout the week. Remember to interact with the Scripture and think through the discussion questions before you're small group meets. In small groups, we'll discuss what we learned from the Scripture the previous week as well as our answers to the discussion questions together.

Open It Up

- Describe someone in your life who is faithful—maybe to their work, spouse, or convictions. What do they do that shows they are faithful? As we close out this series, we are going to see some real-life examples of faithfulness to Jesus—our supreme Lord and Savior. All believers are called to daily faithfulness to God and this session will show us what that looks like.

Discussion Questions

- What stood out to you in your interactions with Colossians 4:2-18 this week?
- Read Colossians 4:2-6. What does it mean to be devoted to prayer? Who do you know who practices devotion to prayer? What does it look like to be both watchful and thankful in prayer?
- Paul tells the Colossians to be wise and gracious in interactions with those who aren't believers. He says to make the most of every opportunity. How would you describe your interactions with nonbelievers generally? What could it look like in your life to make the most of every opportunity you have with nonbelievers?

- Read Colossians 4:7-9. God used Tychicus' small faithful action of delivering the letter of Colossians for a greater purpose. What is one modern day example you can think of someone who shows small, daily faithfulness to God?
- Why do you think our culture tends to glorify the "big" actions and belittle—or ignore—the "small"? What does God value? What could faithfulness look like in your life—in your work, home, school, neighborhood, or church?
- Learn more about Onesimus in the following passage: Philemon. 8-20 According to verse 16, what was Onesimus? Looking at verse 15, what did Onesimus do? What does Paul tell Philemon to do about Onesimus? What do Philemon and Onesimus show us about reconciliation for the people of God?
- Looking back on the book of Colossians, what's one thing you want to remember from this study? How could you apply it to your life this week?

Faith at Home this Week

- **Home:** Pray that God would build you up in faithfulness this week. Ask Him for opportunities to obey Him by praying for other Christians, being a witness to nonbelievers, and comforting others.
- **Hospitality:** Tell someone about what you learned in this study of Colossians. Encourage another believers in the truths from this book or tell a nonbeliever about Jesus.
- **Hammers:** We see in Colossians 4:16 that this letter was read aloud to the believers in Colossae. Carve out time to read the entire book of Colossians out loud to yourself or listen to the audio version. Write down what you learn through that process.