

REFLECT

Seven Days with Colossians

God has a “rich and glorious secret” for you—and for all peoples.

You may be new to the Bible. You may have spent long hours enjoying its treasures. Whether you need a guide to get started or tools to dig deeper, this resource can help. Over seven days, we will look at one full book of the Bible from different angles and glimpse “the hidden treasures of wisdom and knowledge” that God wants to give you.

God’s plan is to make known his secret to his people, this rich and glorious secret which he has for all peoples. And the secret is that Christ is in you, which means that you will share in the glory of God.

Colossians 1:27

Here’s what you can look forward to:

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COLOSSIANS

WELCOME

Thank you for starting this week-long journey through the book of Colossians! The more you delve into Scripture, the more you'll notice how different facets of God's Word illuminate our lives. It's no surprise that the Bible compares God's Word to a shining light:

Your word is a lamp to guide me
and a light for my path.

Psalm 119:105

But Scripture also cuts deep into our hearts, revealing our need for a relationship with God and opening our eyes to truth:

The word of God is alive and active, sharper than any double-edged sword. **Hebrews 4:12a**

The Bible, with all its prismatic angles, warm illumination, and sharp edges, is our guide to growing closer to God. The more we engage with its message of God's love for us in Jesus Christ, the more our lives are transformed. And the more we reflect God's light back, as Jesus teaches.

"You are like light for the whole world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid.... In the same way your light must shine before people, so that they will see the good things you do and praise your Father in heaven."
Matthew 5:14, 16

In this seven-day study with Colossians, we invite you to experience the power of Scripture for yourself. You'll grow familiar with these timeless—and timely—words of Paul. You'll discover how this book of the Bible connects to Scripture's broader story of redemption and love. We encourage you to commit these seven days to fully engaging with this study, trusting that God will work in your life through his Word (**Isaiah 55:11**).

To help you navigate this journey, each day will focus on a different facet of Colossians, allowing you to gain a fuller view of its themes, context, and message. On the next page you'll learn how to REFLECT! We've also provided the full text of Paul's letter to the Colossians, complete with space for your own notes and reflections, at the end of this study.

We pray this resource blesses you over the next seven days!

Welcome

HOW TO REFLECT

The REFLECT model helps readers connect with longer sections of Scripture. As you start to see themes, patterns, and connections, you will glimpse the beauty and wisdom waiting for you in God's Word—and grow in confidence in his guidance and in the depth of his love for you.

How great are God's riches! How deep are his wisdom and knowledge!

Romans 11:33a

SEVEN WAYS TO LOOK AT SCRIPTURE

READ	R	Read the passage through without stopping. Get oriented. Look for structure and surprises. What stands out to you?
EXPAND	E	Expand your scope. Explore the context of this passage. Where is it set in history, and in the rest of the Bible? What are its main themes and word pictures?
FIND	F	Look for other places in the Bible that address similar themes. Is this passage using other passages from the Bible? How do these connections enhance your understanding?
LEARN	L	Which parts draw you in? Which parts challenge you? Get ready to chew on them and think about them. Start to make this Scripture your own by memorization.
EXPRESS	E	Use the passage to shape your own prayers to God. How does using the blueprint of Scripture for prayer change the way you pray—or read?
CHALLENGE	C	Challenge yourself. What is God asking you to do today? Share this passage and its truths with someone in your life to encourage them and hold yourself accountable.
TREASURE	T	Read the whole passage again with fresh eyes. How have you changed? What new beauties do you see as you take another look?

How to REFLECT

DAY 1: READ

BEGIN: *God, be with me as I read your Word.*

FOCUS: Orient yourself to Paul's letter to the Colossians.

READING: Read through the entire book of Colossians.

For this reason we have always prayed for you, ever since we heard about you. We ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will, with all the wisdom and understanding that his Spirit gives.

Colossians 1:9

Welcome to Colossians! This is a letter from the apostle Paul to a young church. Written in Greek, it was later divided into four chapters with just over ninety verses. Today, you'll read straight through

Colossians without stopping. Depending on your translation, it is between 1,900 and 2,450 words long. It will take just 10–15 minutes to read the whole thing! Use your favorite printed Bible or app, or read the text here, starting on page 18.

ORIENT

First, review this general outline of the letter to get a sense of what you will discover as you read:

- **Colossians 1:1–14:** Introduction and Paul's Prayer of Thanksgiving
- **Colossians 1:15–23:** Meditation on the Person and Work of Christ
- **Colossians 1:24–2:5:** Paul's Service in the Church
- **Colossians 2:6–3:4:** Fullness of Life in Jesus
- **Colossians 3:5–17:** Putting off the Old Life, Putting on the New Life
- **Colossians 3:18–4:1:** Instructions for Christian Living
- **Colossians 4:2–6:** Instructions for Prayer and Witnessing to Unbelievers
- **Colossians 4:7–18:** Final Greetings

AS YOU READ

- Mark any verses, words, or phrases that stand out to you. What do you like? What confuses you? What surprises you?

- Pay special attention to connecting words like *therefore, so, because, for, then ...*

AT THE END

- Write down any questions you have, about Colossians or about how this Scripture might apply to you. You will come back to these later.
- Had you read many verses from Colossians before? Did they sound different when you encountered them as part of the whole letter?

RESPOND

Pray for God to bless your time in Colossians over the next several days. Ask him to give you understanding as you delve deeper into Scripture.

GO DEEPER

If you have extra time, choose a different Bible translation. Read through Colossians again, noting the differences you see between the translations. Do you prefer one over the other? Why?

COLOSSIANS

Day 1: Read

COLOSSIANS

Day 1: Read

DAY 2: EXPAND

BEGIN: *God, be with me as I read your Word.*

FOCUS: Look at the context of Colossians to deepen your understanding of this letter.

READING: Read the specific references listed below. If you have time, read all of Colossians again.

Since you have accepted Christ Jesus as Lord, live in union with him. Keep your roots deep in him, build your lives on him, and become stronger in your faith, as you were taught. And be filled with thanksgiving. **Colossians 2:6–7**

Since God chose to speak through human authors, each book of the Bible is also situated in history, in time and place. Understanding the context of Scripture can help us see its message more clearly and relate it to our own lives today.

As you read, see how many references you can find to people, places, or events surrounding the Christians in Colossae. Where is Paul? Who are the people named at the beginning and the end? What kinds of struggles are the Colossians facing? These questions can help you find clues. Here are a few things to know about the setting of Colossians:

- Colossae was situated in modern-day Turkey. It was near Laodicea, home to another first-century church. Paul tells these churches to exchange the letters written to them so both congregations could receive instruction and encouragement (4:16). We do not have Paul's letter to Laodicea. Some scholars connect it with Paul's letter to the Ephesians; Ephesus was a nearby port city.
- The Colossians first heard the gospel from Epaphras, a friend of Paul (1:7–8). Epaphras

was active in sharing the gospel in other local cities. He sends his greetings to the Colossians through Paul (4:12–13).

- Paul wrote this letter during one of his many imprisonments for preaching the gospel (4:18).
- Slavery was common in the Roman Empire and the social hierarchy was strict. But Onesimus (mentioned in 4:9) is a slave. Paul addresses freedom and slavery in several places in this letter (3:10–11; 3:22–4:1).
- Overall, Paul is writing to encourage the Colossians. They have a strong witness of Christian love, and their hope in Jesus is evident (1:4–5). For this, Paul gives thanks!
- Paul reminds the Colossians to remain strong in their faith, rejecting the wisdom of humans (2:4, 8). Like all early Christians, the Colossians were a religious minority and would have heard arguments tempting them to abandon their newfound faith. They also faced false teachers who mixed God's truth with excessive rules that divided the body of Christ (2:16–19). Paul cautions them to focus on Jesus.

What are the most interesting things you are learning about Colossians so far?

RESPOND

Pray that God would help you learn the lessons that the Colossians learned from Paul centuries ago. Ask for a newfound focus on Jesus, and for your

own Christian witness to be one of love and hope. And ask God to help you bring you into deeper unity with other people in his church.

Day 2: Expand

COLOSSIANS

GO DEEPER

Colossians bears many similarities to Paul's other letters to first-century churches and Christians. It has a special connection to Philemon, where we

learn more about Onesimus. Read that short letter. Compare it with Colossians. Are there any other names that appear in both letters?

MY NOTES AND QUESTIONS

A large grid of small dots for taking notes and questions.

Day 2: Expand

DAY 3: FIND

BEGIN: *God, be with me as I read your Word.*

FOCUS: Look at other places in the Bible that illuminate the truths of this letter.

READING: Read the verses listed below. If you have time, read the entire book of Colossians again.

Your real life is Christ and when he appears, then you too will appear with him and share his glory!

Colossians 3:4

God used many writers to bring us his Word, but the Bible tells us there is one Author telling one story from beginning to end. When we look across Scripture, we see multiple facets of the same truths reflected throughout. All of God's Word points us toward Jesus Christ—the fulfillment of all of God's promises to us!

This theme is prominent in Colossians as Paul reminds us to focus on our relationship with Christ. And Colossians has many more connections to other parts of Scripture. We'll chew on three themes today to glimpse how Colossians fits into the bigger picture of God's Word.

You can look up today's related passages in your Bible, or find them here starting on page 22.

THE SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL

In **Colossians 1:6**, Paul sees the gospel spreading throughout the world, just as Jesus commanded in his Great Commission (**Matthew 28:19–20**). The gospel is reaching not only the Jews, but all nations (**Colossians 3:11**, **Zechariah 2:11**), fulfilling God's promise to unify all people through Christ.

RESPOND

Ask God to use your time in his Word to encourage you with the promises that point to Jesus. Ask him to fill your mind with the wisdom of Scripture and your heart with the peace of Christ.

OLD AND NEW COVENANTS

In **Colossians 2:11**, Paul references the covenant of circumcision first made with Abraham (**Genesis 17**). The new covenant through Jesus Christ was foretold in Old Testament passages like **Jeremiah 31:31–34**, where God promises to transform the hearts of his people. Paul reminds the Colossians that this spiritual circumcision has freed them from sin and made them one in Christ. In **Colossians 2:12**, Paul compares their baptism to being buried with Christ, echoing **Romans 6:3–5**.

PRICELESS WISDOM, PERFECT PEACE

In **Colossians 1:15–17**, Paul proclaims that Jesus Christ is the image of God, just as our Savior said during his earthly ministry (**John 14:9**). Paul reminds the Colossians that no earthly wisdom can rival Christ, through whom all things were made (**John 1:3**) and who rules over all (**Proverbs 8:22–31**; **Colossians 2:9–10**). In Jesus, we find an all-powerful and all-wise ruler who brings perfect peace (**Colossians 1:20**; **Isaiah 9:6–7**; **Isaiah 26:3**).

Did any of these connections surprise you? What other connections to other Scriptures do you see?

COLOSSIANS

Day 3: Find

COLOSSIANS

GO DEEPER

In **Colossians 2:7**, Paul urges the Colossians to remain rooted in Christ. This wise advice echoes Old Testament passages like **Psalms 1** and **Jeremiah**

17:7–8, where God promises that those who trust in him will flourish. Read these passages and meditate on what they mean for you today.

MY NOTES AND QUESTIONS

A large grid of small dots for taking notes and questions.

Day 3: Find

DAY 4: LEARN

BEGIN: *God, be with me as I read your Word.*

FOCUS: Make God's Word your own by memorizing verses from this letter.

READING: Read the verses listed below. If you have time, read the entire book of Colossians again.

Your speech should always be pleasant and interesting, and you should know how to give the right answer to everyone. **Colossians 4:6**

The Bible is full of commands to remember. Memorization is a tested way for us to more fully experience God's Word and connect with its Author. When we hide God's Word in our heart, we start to make it our own. We can call to mind its wisdom in difficult or stressful

moments. We can meditate on God's promises when we feel afraid or discouraged. And we are better equipped to share the gospel with everyone around us—something Paul encourages the Colossians to do (**Colossians 4:5–6**).

MEMORIZATION TIPS

You can memorize Scripture in a variety of different ways. Start small if you need to, but don't underestimate yourself—you can memorize much more than you think! Try studying the verses, then cover them and test your memory. Repeat the verses routinely until reciting them becomes second nature.

Write the verses out and put them in your line of sight throughout the day. Set a reminder on your phone for five-minute breaks to rehearse your verses. Imagine how much more value you'll take away from this seven-day study in Colossians if you hide several key pieces of truth in your heart!

PASSAGES

These passages from Colossians are good for memorizing. Read them through and choose one or more to commit to memory this week:

- **Colossians 1:3–6:** A prayer of thanksgiving
- **Colossians 1:15–20:** Meditation on the person and work of Christ
- **Colossians 1:20–23:** How God reconciles the world to himself through Christ
- **Colossians 2:6–7:** The fullness of life we experience in Christ
- **Colossians 2:9–10:** The divine nature of Jesus
- **Colossians 2:13–15:** From death in the law to life in Christ
- **Colossians 3:1–4:** Keep a heavenward focus

- **Colossians 3:12–15:** Living together in Christ
- **Colossians 4:5–6:** Wisdom for interacting with unbelievers

What benefits could you see for your own life from memorizing more Scripture?

RESPOND

Pray that God would give you the desire and discipline to memorize at least one passage in Colossians this week. Ask him to help you make a habit of hiding Scripture in your heart as you seek to grow in his Word.

Day 4: Learn

GO DEEPER

In many of his letters, Paul communicates like a father sharing wisdom with his spiritual children. Read **Proverbs 4**, where a father gives instruction

to his son. Meditate on the benefits you will reap if you pursue God's wisdom. Consider how memorizing Scripture can help you in this quest.

MY NOTES AND QUESTIONS

A large grid of small dots for taking notes and questions.

Day 4: Learn

DAY 5: EXPRESS

BEGIN: *God, be with me as I read your Word.*

FOCUS: Use this Bible passage to shape your own prayer to God.

READING: Read the passage listed below and use it (along with other passages in Colossians, if desired) to shape your own prayer. If you have time, read the entire book of Colossians again.

Be persistent in prayer, and keep alert as you pray, giving thanks to God.

Colossians 4:2

The Bible is more than a map to help us navigate the world with God's wisdom. It's also a blueprint for our prayers.

Prayer is communicating with God. We tell him our needs and desires. We praise him for his blessings. We confess our sins, ask his forgiveness, and request his help in growing to be more like Christ. We beg for his intervention for the evil and suffering we see and experience in the world. Scripture tells us that we can boldly approach God

in prayer at any moment, trusting that he will be listening like a loving Father to his child.

Paul understood the power of prayer. All his letters contain prayers, and many also have sections of poetry or hymns that can easily be translated into prayers. These portions of God's Word are designed to be memorized, repeated, sung, and pondered. We can use these words from Scripture to enrich our own communication with God and grow a deeper appreciation for his Word.

TRY IT

Most scholars see **Colossians 1:15–20** as a poem or hymn. Its literary form offers a helpful template for creating a prayer based on Scripture, which you can do by following these steps:

- Start by reading the passage. What stands out to you?
- Identify Paul's key points here. Write them down. What truths and images is Paul communicating? Where does he direct our focus?
- Meditate on the key points you identified. What do these truths from Scripture mean for your life? What emotions do you feel as you consider the riches of Christ's love for you?
- Write down a prayer inspired by your time in this passage.
- Read through your prayer quietly or out loud, expressing your thanksgiving to God for this time in his Word.

What did you learn from this process? In what ways can you continue to use Scripture to help shape your prayers and grow your faith?

RESPOND

Use your personal prayer time to communicate with God today. Ask him to help you adopt a pattern of praying regularly and commit to using his Word to inspire your prayers.

GO DEEPER

Choose another passage from Colossians that stood out to you during your reading this week. Following the process above, write another prayer based on this passage.

Day 5: Express

MY NOTES AND QUESTIONS

COLOSSIANS

Day 5: Express

DAY 6: CHALLENGE

BEGIN: *God, be with me as I read your Word.*

FOCUS: Seek God's wisdom to put this letter into practice and share your discoveries with others.

READING: Read the passages below. Read through the entire book of Colossians (if you have time), focusing specifically on verses you can share with others.

You are the people of God; he loved you and chose you for his own. So then, you must clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. **Colossians 3:12**

Scripture's influence has always extended beyond the personal. Wherever God's Word goes, communities and societies are transformed.

- Early Christians were known for rescuing abandoned infants and showing uncommon mercy to the poor.
- In the 18th and 19th centuries, abolitionists like William Wilberforce and Sojourner Truth relied on Scripture's teaching that each human person is created and renewed in God's image as they worked to end slavery.

- After missionaries Jim Elliot, Ed McCully, Roger Youderian, Pete Fleming, and Nate Saint were killed attempting to witness to the Huaorani people of Ecuador, their family members continued their work and saw many Huaorani come to follow Christ.

You can play a role in God's transformative work in your own community—and grow deeper in your own faith—by living out the truths of Scripture. Today, challenge yourself to step out and do something specific to follow God's direction. Take this Bible study outside your home or small group!

TRY IT

Here are some ideas for how to share the truths of Colossians with others:

- Encourage another believer with Paul's words of thanksgiving (**Colossians 1:3–6**).
- Reach out to an unbelieving friend or family member. Draw on the wisdom of **Colossians 4:5–6** to start a conversation about the gospel. You could share something that encouraged you about this Scripture study and ask whether they would like to read the Bible with you. You can also invite them to your church. Remember to pray before, during, and after your conversation, asking God to use this interaction for his purposes.
- Let someone know that you are praying for them today (**Colossians 1:9–14**, **Colossians**

4:2). Ask how you can pray specifically for their needs. Remember to set aside time to pray for them!

- Ask a trusted Christian friend to help you be accountable in your fight against sin, inspired by Paul's words in **Colossians 3:5–10**. Offer to do the same for them. As you both share areas of struggle, remember to look at **Colossians 3:12–17**. Identify biblical values that you can "put on." Commit to pray for one another to grow in holiness.

RESPOND

Pray for boldness to reach out to someone today and encourage them with God's Word. Ask God to guide you in your conversations.

Day 6: Challenge

GO DEEPER

Timothy, Epaphras, Tychicus, Onesimus, Nympha—these names are not as well known as Paul’s, but he mentions all these early Christians and more in his letter to the Colossians.

Consider your own walk with Christ. Make a

list of the believers who have been instrumental in helping you grow in your faith. Can you reach out to one of them today? Share something encouraging that you are learning in Colossians and express your thankfulness to God for them.

MY NOTES AND QUESTIONS

Grid of dots for notes and questions.

Day 6: Challenge

DAY 7: TREASURE

BEGIN: *God, be with me as I read your Word.*

FOCUS: Take another look at Colossians. What new treasures will you discover?

READING: Read through the entire book of Colossians with fresh eyes as you end this study. Take notice of what stands out.

May you be made strong with all the strength which comes from his glorious power, so that you may be able to endure everything with patience. And with joy give thanks to the Father, who has made you fit to have your share of what God has reserved for his people in the kingdom of light.

Colossians 1:11–12

After six days of reading Colossians, you might feel like you're getting a handle on Paul's letter. We hope you have developed a deeper appreciation for this portion of Scripture. As you end this study, we invite you to take one more look at Colossians as a whole.

The Bible tells us that God's Word is eternal (**Isaiah 40:8; Matthew 24:35**). It is designed to

equip us with God's knowledge and truth each day (**2 Timothy 3:16–17**). Consider what this means for your Bible reading in general. Can you ever exhaust the depths of Scripture's wisdom? Or could you ever study the Bible too much? We hope you'll agree with us that the answer is no! The more time you spend in God's Word, the more you'll be captivated by God's goodness, beauty, and grace.

TRY IT

(1) First, look back at the questions you wrote down (or have been thinking about) since your first reading of Colossians.

(2) Now, read the entire book once again. Keep your questions in mind as you read, expecting that God will show you new things. Also watch for:

- What stands out to me?
- What is unexpected or new?
- Which passage resonates with me today?

(3) When you're done, use these prompts to reflect on the experience of this seven-day study:

- Have you made any progress finding answers for your questions about Colossians?
- How did you feel during this journey through Colossians? Did you notice any changes?

- Which day was your favorite? Why?
- What are the three takeaways from this study?
- How can you use this Scripture practice in your future Bible study?

RESPOND

Pray that God would keep the lessons you learned through his Word this week fresh in your heart and mind. Ask him to help you grow into the image of Jesus and remain rooted and grounded in your Savior.

Day 7: Treasure

GO DEEPER

As you finish this study, keep up with your memorization! And take steps to plan your next journey in God's Word.

Look at the resources listed at the end of this document; read Colossians in a different Scripture

version; or use the REFLECT model to study another book of Scripture independently.

Above all, commit to keeping the habit of spending time in the Bible each day. We pray that God would richly bless your walk with Christ!

MY NOTES AND QUESTIONS

A large grid of small dots for taking notes and questions.

THE LETTER

PAUL'S LETTER TO THE COLOSSIANS

From Paul, who by God's will is an apostle of Christ Jesus, and from our brother Timothy—

² To God's people in Colossae, who are our faithful friends in union with Christ:

May God our Father give you grace and peace.

³ We always give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you. ⁴ For we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all God's people. ⁵ When the true message, the Good News, first came to you, you heard about the hope it offers. **So your faith and love are based on what you hope for, which is kept safe for you in heaven.** ⁶ The gospel keeps bringing blessings and is spreading throughout the world, just as it has among you ever since the day you first heard about the grace of God and came to know it as it really is. ⁷ You learned of God's grace from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is Christ's faithful worker on our behalf. ⁸ He has told us of the love that the Spirit has given you.

⁹ For this reason we have always prayed for you, ever since we heard about you. We ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will, with all the wisdom and understanding that his Spirit gives.

¹⁰ Then you will be able to live as the Lord wants and will always do what pleases him. Your lives will produce all kinds of good deeds, and you will grow in your knowledge of God. ¹¹⁻¹² May you be made strong with all the strength which comes from his glorious power, so that you may be able to endure everything with patience. And with joy give thanks to the Father, who has made you fit to have your share of what God has reserved for his people in the kingdom of light. ¹³ He rescued us from the power of darkness and brought us safe into the kingdom of his dear Son, ¹⁴ by whom we are set free, that is, our sins are forgiven.

¹⁵ Christ is the visible likeness of the invisible God. He is the first-born Son, superior to all created

things. ¹⁶ For through him God created everything in heaven and on earth, the seen and the unseen things, including spiritual powers, lords, rulers, and authorities. God created the whole universe through him and for him. ¹⁷ Christ existed before all things, and in union with him all things have their proper place. ¹⁸ He is the head of his body, the church; he is the source of the body's life. He is the first-born Son, who was raised from death, in order that he alone might have the first place in all things. ¹⁹ For it was by God's own decision that the Son has in himself the full nature of God. ²⁰ Through the Son, then, God decided to bring the whole universe back to himself. God made peace through his Son's blood on the cross and so brought back to himself all things, both on earth and in heaven.

²¹ At one time you were far away from God and were his enemies because of the evil things you did and thought. ²² But now, by means of the physical death of his Son, God has made you his friends, in order to bring you, holy, pure, and faultless, into his presence. ²³ You must, of course, continue faithful on a firm and sure foundation, and must not allow yourselves to be shaken from the hope you gained when you heard the gospel. It is of this gospel that I, Paul, became a servant—this gospel which has been preached to everybody in the world.

²⁴ And now I am happy about my sufferings for you, for by means of my physical sufferings I am helping to complete what still remains of Christ's sufferings on behalf of his body, the church. ²⁵ And I have been made a servant of the church by God, who gave me this task to perform for your good. It is the task of fully proclaiming his message, ²⁶ which is the secret he hid through all past ages from all human beings but has now revealed to his people. ²⁷ God's plan is to make known his secret to his people, **this rich and glorious secret** which he has for all peoples. And the secret is that Christ is

COLOSSIANS

The Letter

in you, which means that you will share in the glory of God.²⁸ So we preach Christ to everyone. With all possible wisdom we warn and teach them in order to bring each one into God's presence as a mature individual in union with Christ.²⁹ To get this done I toil and struggle, using the mighty strength which Christ supplies and which is at work in me.

2 Let me tell you how hard I have worked for you and for the people in Laodicea and for all others who do not know me personally.² I do this in order that they may be filled with courage and may be drawn together in love, and so have the full wealth of assurance which true understanding brings. In this way they will know God's secret, which is Christ himself.³ He is the key that opens all the hidden treasures of God's wisdom and knowledge.

⁴ I tell you, then, do not let anyone deceive you with false arguments, no matter how good they seem to be.⁵ For even though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, and I am glad as I see the resolute firmness with which you stand together in your faith in Christ.

⁶ Since you have accepted Christ Jesus as Lord, live in union with him.⁷ Keep your roots deep in him, build your lives on him, and become stronger in your faith, as you were taught. And be filled with thanksgiving.

⁸ See to it, then, that no one enslaves you by means of the worthless deceit of human wisdom, which comes from the teachings handed down by human beings and from the ruling spirits of the universe, and not from Christ.⁹ For the full content of divine nature lives in Christ, in his humanity,¹⁰ and you have been given full life in union with him. He is supreme over every spiritual ruler and authority.

¹¹ In union with Christ you were circumcised, not with the circumcision that is made by human beings, but with the circumcision made by Christ, which consists of being freed from the power of this sinful self.¹² For when you were baptized, you were buried with Christ, and in baptism you were also raised with Christ through your faith in the active power of God, who raised him from death.

¹³ You were at one time spiritually dead because of

your sins and because you were Gentiles without the Law. But God has now brought you to life with Christ. God forgave us all our sins;¹⁴ he canceled the unfavorable record of our debts with its binding rules and did away with it completely by nailing it to the cross.¹⁵ And on that cross Christ freed himself from the power of the spiritual rulers and authorities; he made a public spectacle of them by leading them as captives in his victory procession.

¹⁶ So let no one make rules about what you eat or drink or about holy days or the New Moon Festival or the Sabbath.¹⁷ All such things are only a shadow of things in the future; the reality is Christ.

¹⁸ Do not allow yourselves to be condemned by anyone who claims to be superior because of special visions and who insists on false humility and the worship of angels. For no reason at all, such people are all puffed up by their human way of thinking¹⁹ and have stopped holding on to Christ, who is the head of the body. Under Christ's control the whole body is nourished and held together by its joints and ligaments, and it grows as God wants it to grow.

²⁰ You have died with Christ and are set free from the ruling spirits of the universe. Why, then, do you live as though you belonged to this world? Why do you obey such rules as ²¹ "Don't handle this," "Don't taste that," "Don't touch the other"?²² All these refer to things which become useless once they are used; they are only human rules and teachings.²³ Of course such rules appear to be based on wisdom in their forced worship of angels, and false humility, and severe treatment of the body; but they have no real value in controlling physical passions.

3 You have been raised to life with Christ, so set your hearts on the things that are in heaven, where Christ sits on his throne at the right side of God.² Keep your minds fixed on things there, not on things here on earth.³ For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.⁴ Your real life is Christ and when he appears, then you too will appear with him and share his glory!

⁵ You must put to death, then, the earthly desires at work in you, such as sexual immorality,

indecenty, lust, evil passions, and greed (for greed is a form of idolatry). ⁶ Because of such things God's anger will come upon those who do not obey him. ⁷ At one time you yourselves used to live according to such desires, when your life was dominated by them.

⁸ But now you must get rid of all these things: anger, passion, and hateful feelings. No insults or obscene talk must ever come from your lips. ⁹ Do not lie to one another, for you have put off the old self with its habits ¹⁰ and have put on the new self. This is the new being which God, its Creator, is constantly renewing in his own image, in order to bring you to a full knowledge of himself. ¹¹ As a result, there is no longer any distinction between Gentiles and Jews, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarians, savages, slaves, and free, but Christ is all, Christ is in all.

¹² You are the people of God; he loved you and chose you for his own. So then, you must clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. ¹³ Be tolerant with one another and forgive one another whenever any of you has a complaint against someone else. You must forgive one another just as the Lord has forgiven you. ¹⁴ And to all these qualities add love, which binds all things together in perfect unity. ¹⁵ The peace that Christ gives is to guide you in the decisions you make; for it is to this peace that God has called you together in the one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Christ's message in all its richness must live in your hearts. Teach and instruct one another with all wisdom. Sing psalms, hymns, and sacred songs; sing to God with thanksgiving in your hearts. ¹⁷ Everything you do or say, then, should be done in the name of the Lord Jesus, as you give thanks through him to God the Father.

¹⁸ Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, for that is what you should do as Christians.

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

²⁰ Children, it is your Christian duty to obey your parents always, for that is what pleases God.

²¹ Parents, do not irritate your children, or they will become discouraged.

²² Slaves, obey your human masters in all things, not only when they are watching you because you want to gain their approval; but do it with a sincere heart because of your reverence for the Lord. ²³ Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as though you were working for the Lord and not for people. ²⁴ Remember that the Lord will give you as a reward what he has kept for his people. For Christ is the real Master you serve. ²⁵ And all wrongdoers will be repaid for the wrong things they do, because God judges everyone by the same standard.

⁴ Masters, be fair and just in the way you treat your slaves. Remember that you too have a Master in heaven.

² Be persistent in prayer, and keep alert as you pray, giving thanks to God. ³ At the same time pray also for us, so that God will give us a good opportunity to preach his message about the secret of Christ. For that is why I am now in prison. ⁴ Pray, then, that I may speak, as I should, in such a way as to make it clear.

⁵ Be wise in the way you act toward those who are not believers, making good use of every opportunity you have. ⁶ Your speech should always be pleasant and interesting, and you should know how to give the right answer to everyone.

⁷ Our dear friend Tychicus, who is a faithful worker and fellow servant in the Lord's work, will give you all the news about me. ⁸ That is why I am sending him to you, in order to cheer you up by telling you how all of us are getting along. ⁹ With him goes Onesimus, that dear and faithful friend, who belongs to your group. They will tell you everything that is happening here.

¹⁰ Aristarchus, who is in prison with me, sends you greetings, and so does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have already received instructions to welcome Mark if he comes your way.) ¹¹ Joshua, also called Justus, sends greetings too. These three are the only Jewish believers who work with me for the Kingdom of God, and they have been a great help to me.

¹² Greetings from Epaphras, another member of your group and a servant of Christ Jesus. He always

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prays fervently for you, asking God to make you stand firm, as mature and fully convinced Christians, in complete obedience to God's will. ¹³ I can personally testify to his hard work for you and for the people in Laodicea and Hierapolis. ¹⁴ Luke, our dear doctor, and Demas send you their greetings.

¹⁵ Give our best wishes to the believers in Laodicea and to Nympha and the church that meets in her house. ¹⁶ After you read this letter, make sure

that it is read also in the church at Laodicea. At the same time, you are to read the letter that the believers in Laodicea will send you. ¹⁷ And tell Archipus, "Be sure to finish the task you were given in the Lord's service."

¹⁸ With my own hand I write this: *Greetings from Paul.* Do not forget my chains!

May God's grace be with you.

The Letter

RELATED READING

Here are the Scripture passages referenced on Day 3.

MATTHEW 28:19

“Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples: baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I will be with you always, to the end of the age.”

ZECHARIAH 2:11

At that time many nations will come to the LORD and become his people. He will live among you, and you will know that he has sent me to you.

JEREMIAH 31:31–34

The LORD says, “The time is coming when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. ³² It will not be like the old covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand and led them out of Egypt. Although I was like a husband to them, they did not keep that covenant. ³³ The new covenant that I will make with the people of Israel will be this: I will put my law within them and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. ³⁴ None of them will have to teach a neighbor to know the LORD, because all will know me, from the least to the greatest. I will forgive their sins and I will no longer remember their wrongs. I, the LORD, have spoken.”

ROMANS 6:3–5

For surely you know that when we were baptized into union with Christ Jesus, we were baptized into union with his death. ⁴ By our baptism, then, we were buried with him and shared his death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from death by the glorious power of the Father, so also we might live a new life. ⁵ For since we have become one with him in dying as he did, in the same way we shall be one with him by being raised to life as he was.

JOHN 14:9

Jesus answered, “For a long time I have been with you all; yet you do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. Why, then, do you say, ‘Show us the Father?’”

JOHN 1:3

Through him God made all things; not one thing in all creation was made without him.

PROVERBS 8:22–31

“The LORD created me [Wisdom] first of all, the first of his works, long ago. ²³ I was made in the very beginning, at the first, before the world began. ²⁴ I was born before the oceans, when there were no springs of water. ²⁵ I was born before the mountains, before the hills were set in place, ²⁶ before God made the earth and its fields or even the first handful of soil. ²⁷ I was there when he set the sky in place, when he stretched the horizon across the ocean, ²⁸ when he placed the clouds in the sky, when he opened the springs of the ocean ²⁹ and ordered the waters of the sea to rise no further than he said. I was there when he laid the earth’s foundations. ³⁰ I was beside him like an architect, I was his daily source of joy, always happy in his presence— ³¹ happy with the world and pleased with the human race.”

ISAIAH 9:6

A child is born to us! A son is given to us! And he will be our ruler. He will be called, “Wonderful Counselor,” “Mighty God,” “Eternal Father,” “Prince of Peace.” ⁷ His royal power will continue to grow; his kingdom will always be at peace. He will rule as King David’s successor, basing his power on right and justice, from now until the end of time. The LORD Almighty is determined to do all this.

ISAIAH 26:3

You, LORD, give perfect peace to those who keep their purpose firm and put their trust in you.

PSALM 1

Happy are those who reject the advice of evil people, who do not follow the example of sinners or join those who have no use for God. ² Instead, they find joy in obeying the Law of the LORD, and they study it day and night. ³ They are like trees that grow beside a stream, that bear fruit at the right time, and whose leaves do not dry up. They succeed in everything they do. ⁴ But evil people

are not like this at all; they are like straw that the wind blows away. ⁵ Sinners will be condemned by God and kept apart from God's own people. ⁶ The righteous are guided and protected by the LORD, but the evil are on the way to their doom.

JEREMIAH 17:7-8

“But I will bless the person who puts his trust in me. ⁸ He is like a tree growing near a stream and sending out roots to the water. It is not afraid when hot weather comes, because its leaves stay green; it has no worries when there is no rain; it keeps on bearing fruit.”

Large grid of dots for writing.

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