

Colossians

5 Days

Enhanced Bible Reading Guide



DEEP ROOTED *Daily*



Kathy Howard

Get Ready To Grow

God has revealed Himself, His ways, and purposes to us in the Bible. If we want to know Him more fully and please Him with our lives, we must plant ourselves in His Word. Then, as our spiritual roots grow deep in Scripture, we will become healthy, vibrant, and fruitful disciples.

However, many Christians lack confidence when it comes to handling Scripture. We aren't sure where to read, how to understand what we read, or how to apply it. There are many devotionals and Bible studies available that will do much of the work for us. But there's no substitute for going to the Word for ourselves.

This resource is not a devotional or Bible study. It is an expanded Bible reading plan with questions and prompts designed to guide you to understand and apply what you read. Some readings have brief commentary that shares helpful information.

This *Deep Rooted Daily Enhanced Bible Reading Guide* provides a framework to help you read and study the Bible on your own. It is formatted around the 4 R Bible study method, which is an inductive study method simple enough to use every day. Each day you will Read the passage, Record your observations, Reflect on the meaning, and finally Respond to God's Word.

Note: You will find more information about the 4 R Bible study method at the end of this guide that can help you take your daily reading to the next level.

May God produce fruit in your life from your time in His Word!

Kathy





How to Use This Guide

- **Gather your tools** – The only thing you must have is a Bible. (If you only use one translation, a word-for-word translation like the ESV, RSV, or NASB is best for study.) You may also want highlighters to observe the text, a pen to write with, and a journal or notebook to write in if you're using a digital version of this guide.
- **Read the introduction to the book** – Knowing the background of a Bible book greatly aids correct understanding of the book itself. The introduction – included in this guide – shares pertinent information like author, audience, setting, and purpose of the Bible book.
- **Read the daily Bible passage** – Before you read any of the commentary or questions, read the Bible text. If you have time, read it in more than one translation to enhance your understanding.
- **Read any commentary and answer the questions** – If you want to deepen your study beyond what's provided in the guide, see the "4 R Bible Study Method" appendix for suggestions.



Introduction to Colossians



The Bible was not written in a vacuum. It was written within a specific set of circumstances. Since the Bible has just one meaning – the one God originally gave it – the original circumstances surrounding the book can bring clarity. The context of the book impacts the way we interpret the meaning. This is especially true for the epistles (letters) of the Bible like Colossians. The following information will give us a solid foundation for digging into this book of the Bible.

AUTHOR

The Apostle Paul identifies himself as the author along with Timothy who is with him.

RECIPIENTS

The primary recipient was the church at Colossae, a city not mentioned in the book of Acts. Colossae was in the Roman province of Asia (modern day Turkey). It was 100 miles east of Ephesus and just 10 miles from Laodicea. Although the Colossians were the primary recipients Paul also asked them to send the letter on to the church in Laodicea (4:16).

DATE & PLACE OF ORIGIN

Although the sender and recipients are clearly identified in the letter, we are less sure about from where and when Paul wrote. We do know Paul was imprisoned when he wrote (4:10, 18), but scholars debate over which imprisonment. A few suggest Ephesus, but we have no solid evidence for an Ephesian imprisonment. Others suggest Paul's two-year imprisonment in Caesarea. But the traditional understanding is that Paul wrote Colossians during his first Roman imprisonment about A.D. 60-62.

The letter was delivered by Tychicus & Onesimus (4:7-8). Onesimus was from Colossae. We learn more about him in Paul's letter to Philemon who was a leader in the church in Colossae. Onesimus (probably a runaway slave) wronged Philemon and fled to Rome where he encountered Paul and was saved (Philemon 1:10).

BACKGROUND

Paul had not been to Colossae (2:1). Epaphras, who was one of Paul's ministry partners, had founded the church there (1:7). Although Paul had not met these believers in person, he had heard about their faith and been praying for them (1:3-4, 9).

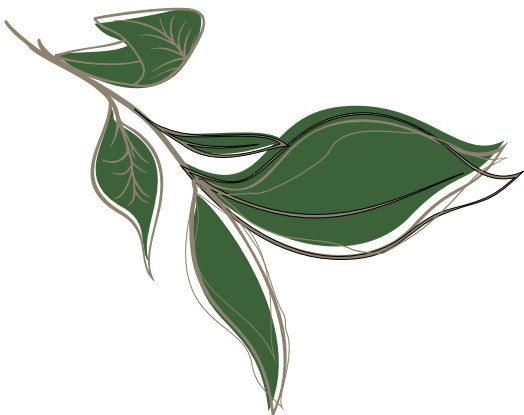
PURPOSE

False teachers had infiltrated the Colossian church. Although not specifically identified, it seems to be some combination of legalism, paganism, and Gnosticism. This teaching was leading them away from the truth of the Gospel and the sufficiency of Christ. Some of the believers seemed to also be struggling turning away from their old pagan practices. Paul wrote to refute the false teaching, encourage them to stand firm in the truth, and to live a holy life in Christ. Here are a few specific points from the text that Paul wrote about:

- Encourage them to spiritual maturity (2:2)
- Warn them against false teaching & charge them to protect themselves (2:4, 8, 16)
- They were following rules and regulations (2:20)
- Call to holiness, to put on new self in Christ (3:1-17)
- Encourage godly relationships (3:18-4:1)

THEME

Colossians beautifully proclaims the supremacy and sufficiency of Christ!



DAY ONE



READ: COLOSSIANS 1:1-14

The letter opens with a traditional ancient greeting. Paul identifies himself and establishes his spiritual authority by describing himself as “an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God.” He did put himself in a place of authority, but God Himself called Paul. He greets the believers in Colossae with a prayer for grace and peace from God.

RECORD:

What evidence do you see for how the church in Colossae began?

Make a list of everything you learn about Epaphras. Also see Colossians 4:12 and Philemon 1:23.

The body of the letter begins with Paul’s prayer of thanksgiving. What did Paul thank God for in relation to the Colossians?

Apparently, the Colossians were characterized by love for other believers. What fostered this love?



Verses 9-14 records Paul's prayer for the Colossians. Make a list of everything Paul prayed for these believers. First indicate the primary requests. Then note what will result from each of these.

I love the prayers of Paul we have in Scripture. It is so easy for us to only pray about the physical and temporal needs of others. Paul's example shows us how important it is to pray for the spiritual well-being of others. Plus, his prayers instruct us in how we can do that!

REFLECT:

What truths do you learn about the gospel in this passage?

In what ways should the gospel impact the daily life of a believer? The way we live? The way we interact with others?

RESPOND:

Use verses 13-14 to express your gratitude to God for your salvation. If you have never been delivered from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of God, don't wait! Give your life to Christ today.

How does God want you to respond to His Word today?



DAY TWO

READ: COLOSSIANS 1:15-23 & 2:1-5

Today's passage begins with one of the highest "Christological" statements in Scripture. In the original language, verses 15-20 have a poetic, almost hymn-like quality. Here Paul magnifies God the Son and highlights many foundational truths about the person of Jesus. Paul's description of the supremacy of Christ also reveals something especially sinister about the false teaching that was infiltrating the Colossian church. Apparently, it was attempting to erode the person of Christ. Here Paul reminds them of the truth they'd been taught and challenges them to stand firm in God's truth.

RECORD:

Use verses 15-20 to make a list about all the facts/truths about Jesus it teaches.

What do you learn in this passage about Paul's ministry?

What do you learn about Paul's goals in ministry for the church?

What evidence do you see in this passage that Paul had not ever met the Christians in Colossae or Laodicea?

What hints of the nature of the false teaching that had infiltrated the Colossians do you see in 2:2-4?

REFLECT:

How does this passage teach/support the full divinity of Jesus?

What does Paul teach about reconciliation? Our need for it? How God provides it?

Paul specifically and clearly teaches the divinity of Christ here. Any doctrine, church, or faith that teaches that Christ is anything less than fully God is heretical. This false teaching is still prevalent today. One distinguishing mark of a cult or false religion is what they teach about Jesus. Jesus is fully God and nothing less.

The term “firstborn of all creation” does not imply that Jesus was created. Like the Father and the Holy Spirit, the Son is eternal. Instead “firstborn” refers to privilege and preeminence. Jesus was the first to be resurrected (vs 18), paving the way for all who belong to Him.

What will be the proof in our lives that we have been reconciled to God?

Perseverance to the end is not a work that saves us, but rather proof that God has saved us.

What is the “mystery” Paul wrote about in verses 26-27?

Paul uses the word “mystery” to describe the central truth of Christ and our salvation. Although God proclaimed the promise centuries before Jesus came to earth. The timing and its full nature were not revealed until Christ died and rose. This glorious mystery is “Christ in us, the hope of glory!” Add to this the specific invitation from to the Gentiles! We are saved through Christ becomes He comes to dwell in us and guarantees our eternal salvation!

RESPOND:

How careful are you about protecting God’s truth in your own heart and mind? How can protect yourself and others from false teaching?

How does God want you to respond to His Word today?

DAY THREE



READ: COLOSSIANS 2:6-23

Today's verses begin with a "therefore." Receiving Jesus' salvation is not our end goal. As Paul put it, now we must "walk in him." Paul appeals to the Colossians – and to us - to live out their salvation. Salvation is not a one-time event, it is a continual process. After we come to Jesus the first time, we must follow Him for a life time. As Paul emphasizes in this passage, this includes identifying and rejecting false teaching and false teachers.

RECORD:

Mark all the commands to believers you see in this passage. What are they?

What sources of false teaching does Paul cite in verse 8?

Make a list of everything God has done for believers through Jesus.

Describe the results of Jesus' work on the cross. (See verses 13-15.)



It is our responsibility as believers to guard against false teaching. In verse 8, Paul commanded the believers to guard against false teaching. In verses 9-15 he reminded them of foundational truths about the nature of Christ, Jesus' work on the cross, and what God has done in believers. Then in verses 16-23, Paul highlights some of the issues and false teaching plaguing the church in Colossae. Salvation in Christ is not about adhering to rules or keeping the Law. We cannot do it. These things were simply a shadow of what Christ would do. They all pointed to Him. The things the false teachers were trying to push on the Colossians were not of Christ.

Based on verses 16-23, what seemed to be some of the false teaching/doctrine infiltrating the church?

Describe the nature of the false teaching/teachers. Where did they come from? What was their motivations?

REFLECT:

What primary truth did Paul emphasize about Jesus in this passage?

Summarize Paul's teaching in this passage in 2-3 sentences.



RESPOND:

Are you ever tempted to fall back into following the trappings of religion where it's comfortable and "safe?" Or do you truly follow Christ wherever He leads?

How does God want you to respond to His Word today?



DAY FOUR

READ: COLOSSIANS 3:1-17

As Paul often does in his letters, after he expounds on the spiritual truths of our salvation, he turns to practical application. If God has done THIS in our lives, this then is what should result. Today's passage begins with an "if, then." If we are saved - if we belong to Jesus - we have died to ourselves and our old way of life. Therefore, our lives should look differently. We should live differently. These verses are packed with "imperatives" – essentially commands. Although originally for these Colossians who were straying from the pure gospel due to false teaching, this word is for us today! If we belong to Christ, this then is how we should live!

RECORD:

Make a list of all the commands/imperatives you see in this passage.

Create a two-column table. Head one column "Put Off" and the other "Put On." Fill in the columns with everything you find in verses 5-17. Here, Paul compares our old life before Christ to our new life in Christ. He contrasts what we should "put off" from our old life with what we should "put on" in our new life. Comparisons and contrasts are literary tools used often in Scripture.



How does/will God respond to these practices of the old nature? (see verse 6)

What specific attitudes and actions does Paul list that would promote unity within the body of Christ?

REFLECT:

Why is it vital to recognize that all Christians are equal in Christ? What are the far-reaching ramifications if we don't internalize this truth?

How does the renewal of our new selves (vs 10) impact all our earthly relationships?

In verse 12, Paul describes believers as "chosen, holy and beloved." How does this truth about who we are in Christ lay a foundation for putting on the new self?

DAY FOUR



What is the role of God's Word in our lives and the church body?

In what way can verse 17 be a guiding principle for your life?

RESPOND:

How does God want you to respond to His Word today?

DAY FIVE



READ: COLOSSIANS 3:18-25 & 4:1-18

Yesterday's reading ended with a spiritual principle that carries over into today's passage. Paul told the Colossian believers and all believers to "do everything in the name of Jesus." Our lives should be lived for His glory. Our thoughts, attitudes, actions, and speech should please Him and glorify His name in the world. Colossians 3:18-25 and 4:1-6 give us specific examples and more direction for what this looks like in our daily lives – in our personal relationships and in the world.

RECORD:

Underline or highlight every key phrase that emphasizes what our proper motivation should be in all our relationships.

Make a list of all the commands Paul gave about specific relationships.

According to verses 24-25, what two things should we leave to God to take care of?

Paul did not condone slavery. He was merely attempting to help believers live for Christ within the constraints of their culture. His relationship instructs pushed them closer to equality under Christ than the world around them. His instructions to husbands, fathers, and masters were radical for the time. Today, we can apply his instructions to slaves and masters to any relationships of authority like employers and employees.



In 4:3-4, Paul asked them to pray for him as he shared the Gospel. What were his specific requests?

A theme ran through this first part of today's passage. Believers should live in a way to please God and glorify His name in the world. In our family and work relationships and in our dealings with unbelievers.

In the latter half of chapter 4, Paul wraps up his letter with commendations of the messengers, the typical greetings, and his closing. Tychicus and Onesimus apparently delivered the letter.

It was important that Paul commend the letter carriers to the Colossians. Tychicus, the primary letter carrier, would have been the one to read the letter to the church. He would have expounded on Paul's teaching and answered any questions. The church needed to know he was trustworthy and capable. Onesimus is the same as the runaway slave of the book of Philemon. Which means Philemon apparently released him to return to Paul.

Paul sends greetings from three fellow workers who are Jewish – Mark, Aristarchus, and Jesus/Justus. Perhaps Paul pointed out this detail to let them know that not all Jewish believers thought Gentiles must first be circumcised. (This was apparently some of the false teaching.)

What additional information do you learn about Epaphras?

What did Paul want them to do with the letter after they read it?

**REFLECT:**

What common foundation/motivation should we have for all our relationships?

What do you learn from today's passage about prayer?

What do we learn about how to relate to a lost world from 4:5-6?

RESPOND:

How would your relationships change if you: 1) related to others with simply pleasing Christ as your motivation; 2) didn't worry about what others "owed" you; and 3) left all vengeance to God?

What are your big takeaways from Colossians? Did God use it to change your understanding of any spiritual truth? To challenge you in any way?

4 R Bible Study Method



The 4 R Bible study method is a basic way to dig a little deeper into any biblical passage. This “inductive” method uses careful observation (record) to discover what the passage says. We start with observation, so we can more accurately interpret (reflect) God’s meaning. Personal application (respond) is our last step and end goal. You don’t need extra tools or resources. All you need is your Bible, a pen, a notebook or journal, and a humble, teachable attitude. The “R” repetition makes it memorable! You can take it anywhere!

1. Read - A reading plan will help with consistency and context. Choose one that is manageable with the time you have.

- Read prayerfully – Ask God to give you understanding and to help you be willing to apply His truth.
- Read multiple times – It’s easy to miss details and even deep truth with just one reading.
- Read in different translations - Reading in different translations will increase understanding.

2. Record - Before we can understand what a passage means we must know what it says. Our goal in this step is to carefully observe the passage and record what we find. See Appendix Two: “10 Things to Observe in a Bible Passage” for specific help.

3. Reflect – Look back over your recorded observations to help you recognize and understand God’s original meaning of the passage. God’s Word has one original meaning, but endless application. Be sure to consider how the literary genre, the historical, cultural and literary contexts, and Scripture’s Meta-Narrative (big picture) impacts the meaning.

4 R Bible Study Method



4. Respond - Knowledge of God's Word is never the end game. Application that leads to spiritual transformation is always our goal. So, once we've read and understood, let's ask God to show us how to apply these truths to our lives. God tells us some of the ways He wants to use His Word in our lives. In the following passage we see four broad categories for life application:

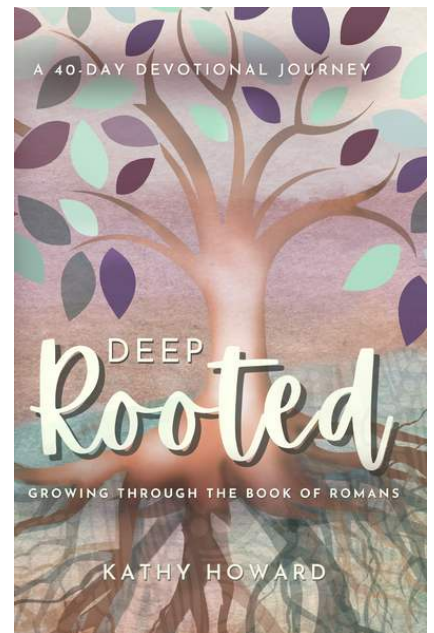
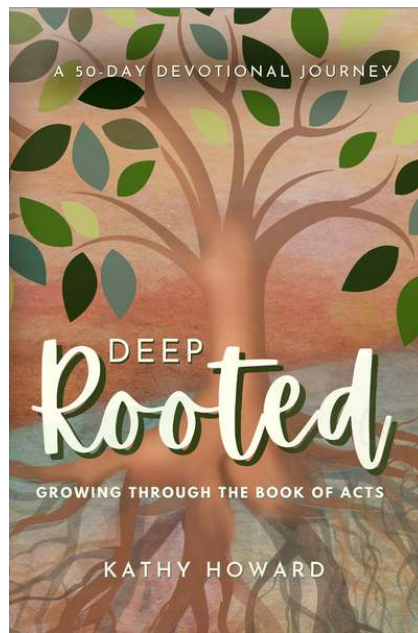
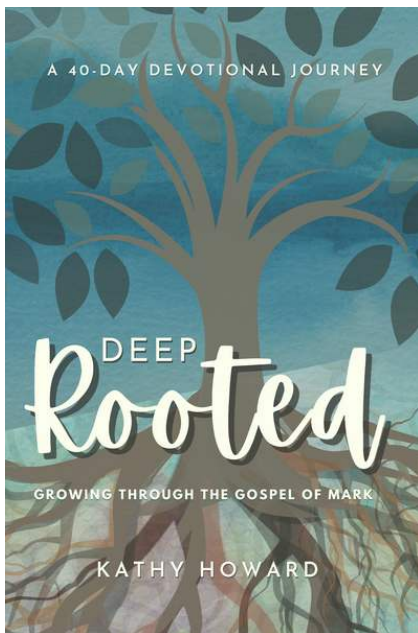
All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 ESV

- Teaching (doctrine) – Correct our thinking. God wants us to hold correct beliefs about Him, salvation, His church, and His kingdom. Correct thinking leads to correct behavior.
- Reproof (rebuke) – Repent of any sin in our lives. God's Word reveals what's wrong and call us to stop wrong behavior.
- Correction (obedience) – God's Word also instills right behavior by giving us commands and principles to follow.
- Training (spiritual growth) – God uses Scripture to shape our character and underlying attitudes.

For more on solid Bible study methods, visit www.KathyHoward.org

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