



COLOSSIANS
COMPLETE IN CHRIST



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WHY STUDY THE BIBLE?

The Bible is an ancient literary masterpiece. Written in multiple languages over hundreds of years, its human authors were inspired by God's Spirit to record His authoritative and life-giving Word to us. While we often think of it as one book, the Bible is actually a library of writings that tell the unified story of who God is and who we are in relation to Him. **This story ultimately leads us to Jesus.**

Jesus' life and teaching was saturated in Hebrew Scripture. Once, when asked which was the greatest commandment in the Law, Jesus responded by quoting Israel's central prayer, the Shema.

"Jesus answered, The most important is: 'Listen, Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is: 'Love your neighbor as yourself'" (Mark 12:29-31 NET).

Jesus affirmed the foundational priority for God's people - to listen to the voice of God and to respond by loving Him entirely and by loving people sacrificially.

By reading, meditating on, and studying the Bible, followers of Jesus learn to listen and respond to the Spirit as He reshapes our imaginations, affections, and behaviors through His Word. Our goal as we study the Bible is not to master its content or to simply acquire information about God. Rather, it is to encounter God personally. When we meet the living Word in the pages of the written Word, we are invited to cooperate with the Spirit to be formed into Christlike people of love (Galatians 4:19).

This Bible study will guide you to:

CONNECT in authentic community as you and your group share the joys and struggles of life and follow Jesus together.

GROW in knowledge of the truth by personally studying Scripture and actively applying its truth to your life. We know it can be all too easy to rely on what others say about God. This study encourages everyone to learn to "feed themselves" directly from God's Word, meeting Him on every page.

ENGAGE in helping people find and follow Jesus by practicing simple disciple-making tools that tune your heart toward those who are near to you but may be far from God.

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

1 PERSONAL STUDY + PRAYER

In each lesson, you will practice a basic three-step Bible study method:

Read It (Observation): What do I see?

Think it Through (Interpretation): What does it mean?

Live It (Application): What will I do now?

A full description of this method can be found in the Appendix on page 104.

Suggested Study Schedule:

Day 1 (20-30 min)

- Read the passage.
- Complete the *Observation* section to get familiar with the ideas and themes.

Day 2 (30-45 min)

- Read the passage.
- Answer the *Interpretation* questions to explore the meaning of the passage.

Note: These are simply suggested questions. Feel free to ask and answer questions that occur to you.

Day 3 (20-30 min)

- Read the passage.
- Reflect on its *Application* in your life, seeking God's specific invitation to you.

Short On Time? Simply read the passage 2-3 times during the week. This will help you to participate more fully in the group discussion.

Prayer - Jesus promised that the Spirit would guide us into truth (John 16:13). **Pray continually** as you read and study. Ask for eyes to see and ears to hear the Holy Spirit and all that He has planned to reveal to you.

2 GROUP DISCUSSION + PRAYER

Group Discussion - At the end of every lesson, there is a Group Discussion Guide that provides an outline for your group's time together. Use this guide to discuss and to synthesize the truths God's Spirit taught you this week. Note: Avoid starting on the first page of the lesson and trying to work through every question together. Instead, divide your time around a balance of connecting, growing and engaging as the guide suggests.

Prayer - The final page of the lesson has room for recording prayer needs. Establish the practice of praying together and depending on the Spirit to lead, teach, challenge and guide your group.

Lord, inspire us to read your Scriptures
and to meditate upon them day and night.
We beg you to give us real understanding
of what we need, that we in turn
may put its precepts into practice.

Yet we know that understanding
and good intentions are worthless,
unless rooted in your graceful love.

So we ask that the words of Scripture
may also be not just signs on a page,
but channels of grace into our hearts.

Every Moment Holy, Vol. 3

MEMORIZE & MEDITATE

As a group or individually, choose from the following sections of Colossians to commit to memory during this study.

WALK WORTHY

⁹ For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰ so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; ¹¹ strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. ¹³ For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. **Colossians 1:9-14**

JESUS

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities - all things have been created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. ¹⁸ He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. ¹⁹ For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, ²⁰ and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven. **Colossians 1:15-20**

MINDSET

¹ Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. ³ For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. **Colossians 3:1-4**

PUT ON

¹² So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; ¹³ bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. ¹⁴ Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. ¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body ; and be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷ Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father. **Colossians 3:12-17**

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

The Gospel is the good news of how we can be reconciled to God through Jesus.

GOD'S DESIGN

Out of God's great love, He created a world that was good. He made people to enjoy a deeply connected relationship with Him and to represent Him through our lives. (Genesis 1:26-28, 31) As a loving Father, He communicated boundaries to protect us and to allow us to fully enjoy our relationships with Him and with other people (Genesis 2:15-17).

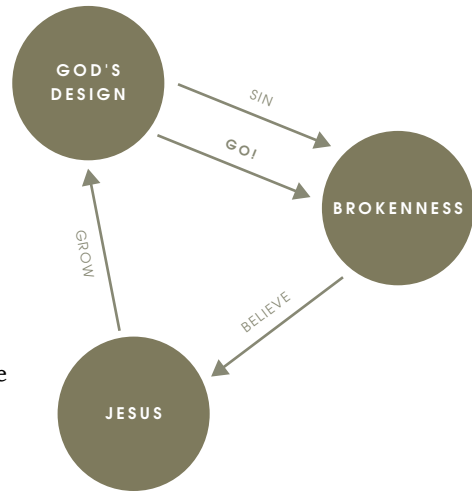
BROKENNESS

Yet, when we look around our world, brokenness and evil are evident everywhere - war, famine, disease, corruption. If we are honest, we also see brokenness and evil inside ourselves - deceit, hatred, greed, lust. This is because we have rejected God's design and chosen to follow our own way.

Our rejection of God and His ways is what the Bible calls sin. (Romans 3:23)

Our sin results in separation from God which the Bible calls death. (Romans 6:23a)

Unless our sin is forgiven, we will remain separated from God forever.



JESUS

God does not want to leave us in our sin and brokenness!

God graciously provided a way to forgive our sin and to freely give us eternal life - a life connected to God both now and forever. (Romans 6:23b; John 17:3)

God's only Son, Jesus, died in our place. He took upon Himself the penalty that we deserve because of our sin. Then, Jesus rose from the dead, and forever defeated the power of sin and death. (Romans 5:8; 1 Corinthians 15:3-5)

BELIEVE

We respond to Jesus by believing in Him for the forgiveness of our sin.

To believe in Jesus means that you no longer try to earn God's approval through what you do, nor do you deny that you need forgiveness and rescue. Instead, you accept God's free gift of eternal life. Belief or faith is simply being convinced or persuaded that something or someone is trustworthy. (John 1:12; Ephesians 2:8-9)

Everyone who believes in Jesus is forgiven of their sin and receives eternal life. We can now know God personally and experience the life we were designed to live. (John 3:16-17)

Which circle or arrow best represents your life right now?

Have you put your trust (believed) in Jesus alone to be reconciled to God?

SURVEY

SURVEY

WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA?

Surveying a book like Colossians allows you to grasp the big picture and the overall flow of the book before getting caught up in the details. Begin this crucial first step by taking a few minutes to read straight through Colossians without stopping. Then answer the questions below before reading the background information that follows.

1. How would you describe Paul's audience? Are they spiritually mature or immature? What issues are they facing?

2. What are the major themes or big ideas in this book? (Hint: Look for repeated words and ideas.)

3. Now that you have read through the entire book, what are Paul's purposes in writing it? Be as specific as you can.

BACKGROUND

Once you have completed the introductory questions on the previous page, read the following background information on the letter to the Colossians (portions have been compiled from The Bible Knowledge Commentary and The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia.)

AUTHORSHIP

The Pauline authorship of Colossians is supported by abundant evidence both in and out of the book. Colossians has three personal references to Paul in the first person (1:1; 1:23; 4:18) and numerous references to Paul's associates, such as Tychicus (4:7), Onesimus (4:9), Aristarchus (4:10), Mark (4:10), Justus (4:11), Epaphras (4:12), Luke (4:14), Demas (4:14), and Archippus (4:17). The style and content of Colossians is similar to Ephesians, written about the same time and probably alluded to as "the letter from Laodicea" (4:16).

GENRE AND SETTING

New Testament epistles or letters were written to specific churches in specific cities or geographical regions. Each had unique people, problems, cultural issues, strengths and weaknesses. Colossae was a city of Phrygia and stood at the head of a gorge where two rivers unite and on the great highway traversing the country from Ephesus to the Euphrates valley. Its history is chiefly associated with that of the two cities Hierapolis and Laodicea.

We surmise from Colossians 2:1 that it is not likely that Paul visited the place in person; but the city's Christianization was due to the efforts of Epaphras and Timothy (Colossians 1:1,7), and it was the home of Philemon and Epaphras. That a church was established there early in church history is evident from Colossians 4:12-13; Revelation 1:11; 3:14.

DATE AND PLACE OF WRITING

Colossians was written from Rome during Paul's first imprisonment there as recorded in Acts 28:30. At the same time, Paul wrote Ephesians and Philemon (ca. A.D. 60-62). In Philemon 1:9, Paul referred to himself as "a prisoner of Christ Jesus." Ephesians also contains references to Paul's being a "prisoner" (Ephesians 3:1; 4:1). And Ephesians refers to Tychicus' carrying the epistles from Paul to their destinations (Ephesians 6:21; Colossians 4:7).

PURPOSE

The circumstances that prompted the writing of Colossians seem to be the special heresy that arose there which later (in the second century) developed into Gnosticism. It contained several characteristics. (1) It was Jewish, stressing the need for observing Old Testament laws and ceremonies. (2) It was philosophical, laying emphasis on some special or deeper knowledge. (3) It involved the worship of angels as mediators to God (2:18). (4) It was exclusivistic, stressing the special privilege and "perfection" of those select few who belonged to this philosophical elite. (5) It was also Christological. But this seminal Gnosticism denied the deity of Christ, thus calling forth one of the greatest declarations of Christ's deity found anywhere in Scripture (1:15-16; 2:9).

Three purposes seem to have been in Paul's mind as he wrote Colossians. First, he sought to show the deity and supremacy of Christ in the face of the Colossian heresy (1:18; 2:9). Second, he wanted to lead believers into spiritual maturity (1:28; 2:6-7). Third, he wanted to inform them about his state of affairs and to elicit their prayers on his behalf (4:2-8).

Colossians 1:1-14

LESSON ONE

READ IT

OBSERVATION - WHAT DO I SEE?

Every time we study the Bible, the first thing to ask is “What do I see?” This is the crucial skill of observation, which lays the groundwork for the rest of your study. Simply read the passage and write one or two observations for each verse. Your observations might identify people, places, and events, point out repeated words or key terms, record important connections between words and sentences.

Record your observations in the margin as you read the passage.

COLOSSIANS 1:1-14

¹ Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,
² To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father. ³ We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, ⁴ since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints; ⁵ because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel ⁶ which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth; ⁷ just as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow bond-servant, who is a faithful servant of Christ on our behalf, ⁸ and he also informed us of your love in the Spirit. ⁹ For this reason also, since the day we heard of it,

we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰ so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; ¹¹ strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. ¹³ For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

- 1.** What key themes does Paul introduce at the beginning of this letter? Do any of these themes correspond to the themes you discovered during your survey of the letter?
- 2.** Based on your observations, what is the general tone in the beginning of this letter?
- 3.** Highlight every description of the gospel you see in this passage.

THINK IT THROUGH

INTERPRETATION - WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

INTERPRETATION SKILL: USE THE CONTEXT

Look for important clues in the sentences and paragraphs that come before and after the verse in question. Try to follow the author's flow of thought through the whole chapter. This may take you to the previous lesson, so have it handy as a review. You may need to read ahead in the book for clues.

1. The word gospel simply means “good news.” What particular good news are Paul and Timothy speaking of in 1:5-8 (see Romans 1:16-17 and 1 Corinthians 15:1-6)? How does the rest of this passage demonstrate why this message is such good news?

2. In verses 9-12, why does Paul pray for these believers to be filled with knowledge, wisdom, and understanding? What should these things produce in our lives (see Romans 12:2 and James 3:17)?

What is the connection between Paul's specific prayer and the false teaching he addresses later in the letter?

3. According to this passage, what has God done for us so that we can “walk in a manner worthy of the Lord” (see Colossians 2:6-7, Acts 26:18, and Romans 8:2-4)?

4. In verse 12, for what “inheritance” are we to be thankful? How does it relate to the redemption provided to us in 1:14 (see Colossians 3:24, Romans 8:23, and Ephesians 1:13-14)?

LIVE IT

APPLICATION - WHAT WILL I DO NOW?

The goal of application is to put God's life-giving love and truth into practice in our everyday lives. Jesus taught that those who love Him will "keep" or "observe" all that He commanded (John 14:15). This means that we will pay careful attention to His Word and to respond with the intention to do what He says.

Begin in prayer, asking God's Spirit to reveal what He is saying specifically to you. Answer the reflection questions designed to demonstrate how each passage relates to our lives.

Next, step back and look at the passage as a whole and begin to list things God has shown you including ideas, images, biblical truths and principles. A principle is simply a fact or command stated or implied in a particular passage that is relevant to our lives. A principle is not specific to a particular person or time. Finally, prayerfully decide on specific action steps that you will begin to take right away to live out biblical truth in your daily life.

STEPS TO APPLY -> REFLECT, LIST PRINCIPLES, RESPOND

1. Where do you typically turn for information and knowledge as you problem solve and make decisions?

2. Do you often find yourself studying the Bible primarily to gain more knowledge about God?

What should our main goal be for studying God's Word?

3. List some of the biblical truths, principles, ideas, or images God has revealed to you from this passage. A few questions to consider are:

Is there a promise for me to claim?

Is there a truth for me to believe?

Is there a command for me to obey?

Is God showing me a picture or image of what He desires?

How does this passage connect to what God has been saying to me lately in prayer, in conversations with fellow believers and through His word?

4. Continuing in prayer, write down the main biblical truth, principle, idea, or image that God revealed to you during your study.

5. What is God's invitation to you this week as you seek to apply what you've learned? What specific steps will you take? How could this impact relationships where you live, work, and play?

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

PRAYING FOR THE CHURCH

Paul opens his letter to the Colossians by sharing his own prayers for this newly established church. He has been consistently praying that God would give them full knowledge of all He desires so that they become able to live in a way that reflects who they are in Christ.

Read 1:9-14 again.

1. From this list of things that Paul is praying for the Colossians, choose one or two that you feel in need of in your own life. Write these needs down and begin to ask God for grace to grow in them. When your group meets again, be ready to share this scripture-based request as a way you can be prayed for throughout this study.
2. Think about your local church community, its cultural context, and some of the challenges it is facing. What specifically can you and your group be praying for your church based on Paul's prayers?

GROUP DISCUSSION

CONNECT

CARE / SHARE (choose from these)

1. Spend a few minutes catching up with each other. Share something you are celebrating or something that disappointed you during the last week.
2. Ask 1-2 people to take 5 minutes and share how they found Jesus and began to follow Him. Set a timer!

WHY ARE WE HERE?

Spend a few minutes discussing your group's purpose. Of all the things we could be doing, why are we here? Why is this time important to be present for and to prioritize?

Pray for your time together.

GROW

DISCUSS OBSERVATION (choose from these)

1. How do we observe scripture? What are we looking for and what questions are we asking?
2. Read Colossians 1:1-14. Share some of your observations.
3. What is the general tone in the beginning of this letter?
4. What are some ways you saw the gospel described?

DISCUSS INTERPRETATION

Discuss 2-3 questions.

Sum It Up - ask the group to summarize the main ideas of this passage in a sentence or two.

ENGAGE

DISCUSS APPLICATION

1. Why is it important to personally apply biblical truth to your life?
2. Choose at least one of the reflection questions to discuss as a transition to application.
3. What did God reveal to you this week and how do you plan to apply it?

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE - PRAYING FOR THE CHURCH (p. 19)

Think about your local church community, its cultural context, and some of the challenges it is facing. What specifically can you and your group be praying for your church based on Paul's prayers?

GROUP RESPONSE

What will our group do differently this week in light of all that we have learned and discussed?

PRAY

Break into small groups of 2-3 people and spend time praying for each other.

A large grid of small dots, arranged in approximately 25 rows and 40 columns, intended for writing notes or prayers.

Colossians 1:15-23

LESSON TWO

READ IT

OBSERVATION - WHAT DO I SEE?

COLOSSIANS 1:15 - 23

Record your observations in the margin as you read the passage.

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. ¹⁸ He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. ¹⁹ For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, ²⁰ and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven. ²¹ And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, ²² yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach— ²³ if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.

THINK IT THROUGH

INTERPRETATION - WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

INTERPRETATION SKILL: LOOK UP KEY WORDS

While looking up a key word in English is helpful, doing so in Greek provides deeper understanding and is surprisingly easy, thanks to online tools such as net.bible.org. Simply search for the passage at the top of the screen, and the relevant text will appear. Be sure that “NET2” is your selected Bible in the drop down box, and then select the tab for “Greek” on the right side of the screen. Now hovering over any word in English will highlight the corresponding Greek term and reveal its Strong’s definition in the opposite window. For even further study, you can select a word, click the magnifying glass above it, then choose to run a “Word Search,” “Strong’s Search,” or “Word Study.” The first will provide all Biblical references that use the English term. The second will provide all Biblical references that use the Greek term. And the third will provide the full definition and derivatives of the Greek term. What used to take multiple books and many hours now takes one internet browser and a few seconds!

1. In what ways does Paul establish both the deity and humanity of Jesus in this passage?

Why does Paul exclusively focus on the person and work of Jesus as the first topic of the letter before he more directly addresses the heresies facing the church in Colossae later in the book?

2. Paul describes Jesus as the “firstborn” in verses 15 and 18. Use the skill described above to determine the range of meanings this word can have (see Luke 2:7, Hebrews 11:28, 12:22-23, Psalm 89:27, and Romans 8:29)?

What is the likeliest meaning of the word in this passage considering the surrounding context?
Note: Paul's description of Christ as "firstborn" both in 1:15 and 1:18 marks 2 different sections in this passage.

3. According to verses 15-20, over what two realms is Jesus preeminent? How does this knowledge strengthen the Colossians' faith and help them to combat the false teaching they are facing?

4. How does Paul describe reconciliation to God through Christ in verses 20-23? What is significant about its scope and the resulting outcomes (see Romans 8:20-23)?

5. How would you explain the "if" statement of verse 23 in your own words? In particular, what is at stake by our continuance in the faith? Does our continued growth determine whether we are presented to Christ as saved or how Christ evaluates us at our inevitable presentation to Him (see 1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 1 John 2:27-28; 2 Timothy 2:10-13, 15)?

LIVE IT

APPLICATION - WHAT WILL I DO NOW?

Remember, the goal of application is to put God's life-giving love and truth into practice in our everyday lives. Begin in prayer, asking God's Spirit to reveal what He is saying specifically to you.

1. In what ways does Jesus occupy the first place in your life? In what areas do other people or other things take priority over Jesus?

2. We naturally want to talk about things that we love and that mean the most to us. What truths about Christ do you want to remember when sharing about your faith in Him with others who do not know Him?

3. Continuing in prayer, write down the main biblical truth, principle, idea, or image that God revealed to you during your study.

4. What is God's invitation to you this week as you seek to apply what you've learned? What specific steps will you take? How could this impact relationships where you live, work, and play?

ENGAGE TOOL

EVERY NEIGHBOR MAP

Jesus noticed and cared for the people around Him. He taught His disciples to do the same. As His followers, we are also called to love our neighbors, the people with whom we live, learn, work and play.

Turn to page 97 and prayerfully fill in your Every Neighbor Map. Be ready to share it with your group next week.

For more insight, watch the Every Neighbor Map video at grace-bible.org/disciplemaker.

GROUP DISCUSSION

CONNECT

CARE/SHARE (choose from these)

1. How was your week? Did you see God working in any specific ways?
2. Response: What was it like to put God's Word into practice this week?
3. Ask someone to share why they prioritize biblical community in their life.

Pray for your time together.

GROW

DISCUSS OBSERVATION (choose from these)

1. Read Colossians 1:15-23. Share some of your observations.
2. What key words did you notice?
3. What did you highlight about Jesus in this passage?

DISCUSS INTERPRETATION

Talk about the skill of looking up key words. Have someone demonstrate how to use the net.bible.org tools.

Discuss 2-3 questions.

Sum It Up - ask the group to summarize the main ideas of this passage in a sentence or two.

ENGAGE

DISCUSS APPLICATION

1. Choose at least one of the reflection questions to discuss as a transition to application.
2. What truth did God reveal to you this week and how do you plan to apply it?

ENGAGE TOOL *Every Neighbor Map* (p. 29)

Share your maps with your group or fill them out together now.

Spend some time praying for these friends. Ask God for opportunities to deepen friendships and to practically bless them with His love. Ask God to reveal Himself to them and to open their eyes to His grace.

GROUP RESPONSE

What will our group do differently this week in light of all that we have learned and discussed?

PRAY

Break into small groups of 2-3 people and spend time praying for each other.

A large grid of small dots, approximately 30 columns wide and 30 rows high, intended for writing notes or prayers.

Colossians 1:24-2:5

LESSON THREE

READ IT

OBSERVATION - WHAT DO I SEE?

Record your observations in the margin as you read the passage.

COLOSSIANS 1:24-2:5

²⁴ Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions. ²⁵ Of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, so that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God, ²⁶ that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints, ²⁷ to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. ²⁸ We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. ²⁹ For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.

²¹ For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face, ² that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together

in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself, ³ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. ⁴ I say this so that no one will delude you with persuasive argument. ⁵ For even though I am absent in body, nevertheless I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good discipline and the stability of your faith in Christ.

OBSERVATION SKILL: INTERPRETIVE QUESTIONS

Like last week, read the passage and write down your observations.

This week, we will begin to write our own questions as well. Simply record the questions that naturally come to mind as you try to understand the passage. If you need help getting started, you can use these examples:

WHO IS	WHAT IS THE	WHY DID THE AUTHOR	HOW
the author talking about? accomplishing the action? benefiting from the action?	meaning of this word? significance of this phrase? implication of this statement? relationship between these phrases?	choose this word? include this phrase, statement, or command? not say _____ ?	was this action accomplished? will this situation occur?

1. List your interpretive questions.
2. Underline any verbs you see.
3. Highlight any repeated theme or phrase within this passage.

In contrast, what was NOT lacking in Christ's afflictions (see Hebrews 7:27; 9:12, 28)?

4. Why does Paul refer to his role as a stewardship or "commission from God" in 1:25-29 (see Ephesians 3:1-3)?

What were his responsibilities and what resources were provided for him as a minister?

What was his commission's overarching purpose?

5. How does 2:1-5 further describe the maturity in Christ that Paul desires for these believers?

How do his tone and word choices in this section signal a shift between the themes of chapter 1 and the themes of chapter 2?

4. What is God's invitation to you this week as you seek to apply what you've learned? What specific steps will you take? How could this impact relationships where you live, work, and play?

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

SPIRITUAL FRIENDSHIP

In our world today, we are experiencing an epidemic of loneliness and isolation in which many of us feel the reality of being “alone together.” We may be surrounded by people in our physical and digital environments but we feel like no one really knows us.

The good news is that Jesus has invited us to experience deep friendship with Him and each other. Christ's community is where we are “knit together in love” and we can learn to authentically share our lives with each other through encouragement, challenge, and prayer.

This week, ask God to speak into this area of your life and to reveal to you what He sees and desires for you. As you pray, here are a couple of exercises to try:

1. Draw two columns on a piece of paper. Title one “Characteristics of a Spiritual Friend.” Title the other “Characteristics of Me as a Friend.” Fill in the columns with your observations. Ask the Spirit to help you to be honest. What did you learn about yourself?

Think about your current circles of friends. Do you have an “inner circle” 1-5 brothers and sisters who deeply know and love each other? If so, how can you strengthen the bonds of these friendships this week?

2. If not, one of the best ways to deepen relationships is by gathering around a table for a regular meal. Sharing food and conversation naturally creates a sense of belonging and over time can turn acquaintances into trusted friends. Who could you invite to share a meal with you this week?

GROUP DISCUSSION

CONNECT

CARE/SHARE (choose from these)

1. Spend a few minutes catching up with each other. Share high or low from the week.
2. Ask 1-2 people to take 5 minutes and share how they found Jesus and began to follow Him.
3. Response: How did you see God working as you applied His truth to your life this week?

Pray for your time together.

GROW

DISCUSS OBSERVATION (choose from these)

1. Read Colossians 1:24-2:5. Share some of your observations.
2. How does asking questions like who, what, when, where and how help us understand scripture? What were some of your own interpretive questions?

DISCUSS INTERPRETATION

Discuss 2-3 questions.

Sum It Up - ask the group to summarize the main ideas of this passage in a sentence or two.

ENGAGE

DISCUSS APPLICATION

1. Choose at least one of the reflection questions to discuss as a transition to application.
2. What truth did God reveal to you this week and how do you plan to apply it?

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE **Spiritual Friendship (P. 39)**

Read over and discuss the importance of spiritual friendship. What has been your experience with cultivating friends who truly know, love, and support you in your spiritual journey toward Christlikeness? What are some ways to grow in becoming a spiritual friend to others?

Pray for opportunities!

GROUP RESPONSE

What will our group do differently this week in light of all that we have learned and discussed?

PRAY

Break into small groups of 2-3 people and spend time praying for each other.

A large grid of small dots, approximately 30 columns wide and 30 rows high, intended for writing notes or prayers.

Colossians 2:6-15

LESSON FOUR

READ IT

OBSERVATION - WHAT DO I SEE?

Record your observations in the margin as you read the passage.

COLOSSIANS 2:6 - 15

6 Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,
7 having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.
8 See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. 9 For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, 10 and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority; 11 and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; 12 having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. 13 When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our

transgressions, ¹⁴ having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. ¹⁵ When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.

Continue to write down your observations and interpretive questions. Continue to mark the passage using the skills you have learned.

1. List any big ideas and primary themes you see in this passage.
2. Circle every occurrence of the key phrases “in Him” or “with Him.”
3. What are some of the contrasts you notice in this section?

THINK IT THROUGH

INTERPRETATION - WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

INTERPRETATION SKILL: LOOK UP BACKGROUND INFORMATION

You can find helpful insights by looking up confusing names or words in a Bible dictionary or by looking up the particular verses you are studying in a background commentary. One of the best dictionaries is *The New Bible Dictionary* by Wood & Marshall. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary* by Craig Keener is another excellent example of a verse-by-verse background commentary.

Background information can be found by visiting the online reference netbible.org. Simply search for the passage at the top of the screen, and the relevant text will appear. Be sure that “NET2” is your selected Bible in the drop down box, and then select the tab for “Notes” on the right side of the screen. Now, anytime you select one of the numbered annotations above particular words or verses, you can immediately see the relevant Biblical or historical context for that term or passage. This is a great tool for answering tough questions!

1. According to this passage, what changes has Jesus accomplished for those who are “in Him”? (Hint: look for the contrasts) How does each of these changes provide a different picture of the significance of Christ’s work?

2. How does Paul’s argument concerning the person and work of Christ in this passage begin to reveal the specific false “philosophy” or “tradition of men” the Colossians may have been facing (see Philippians 2:5-7 and Jude 1:4)?

“It is best to recognize that both Jewish and Gentile elements were present in the Colossian heresy, many of which were generally shared by the populace in the highly charged world of the first century, especially in the syncretistic and Hellenistic mood of Achaia and western Asia Minor. Many of the elements developed into the Gnosticism of the second century but with far more elaborate philosophical-religious views than are found in Colossians. The most one can say of the error in Colossians is that it was a syncretism of Jewish, Gentile, and Christian features that diminished the all-sufficiency of Christ’s salvation and His personal preeminence.”*

3. What was the “circumcision” that Paul referred to in 2:11? How were we “circumcised in Christ” (see Romans 4:9-12)?

And how is circumcision related to baptism according to 2:12?

4. What did Paul mean by the “certificate of debt” in 2:14? Use this lesson’s skill of looking up background information to answer.

5. Which rulers and authorities did Christ disarm according to 2:15 (see Colossians 1:13, 16; 2:10; Ephesians 1:20-23; 6:12)? What was the significance of the “public display” He made of them?

LIVE IT

APPLICATION - WHAT WILL I DO NOW?

Begin in prayer, asking God's Spirit to reveal what He is saying specifically to you.

1. Do you consistently feel guilt for your sin and failures even though Christ has already canceled our debt and forgiven all of our sin once and for all? If so, why?

2. Are there any misleading philosophies or human traditions that influence your head or heart more than the wisdom of Christ? If so, why are other voices so impactful?

What steps can you take to limit their influence this week?

3. Continuing in prayer, write down the main biblical truth, principle, idea, or image that God revealed to you during your study.

4. What is God's invitation to you this week as you seek to apply what you've learned? What specific steps will you take? How could this impact relationships where you live, work, and play?

ENGAGE TOOL

STARTING A SPIRITUAL CONVERSATION

Simply talking about Jesus as part of your everyday conversations is a great way to bring His light into the spiritual darkness all around us. Be sure your conversations include asking lots of questions and listening! Most people are open to talking about spiritual things IF they feel heard and respected.

Turn to page 98 and to learn how to turn conversations toward spiritual things.

Also, watch the video on Starting a Spiritual Conversation at grace-bible.org/disciplemaker.

GROUP DISCUSSION

CONNECT

CARE/SHARE (choose from these)

1. How was your week? Did you see God working in any specific ways?
2. Response: What was it like to put God's Word into practice this week?
3. Ask someone to share why they prioritize biblical community in their life.

Pray for your time together.

GROW

DISCUSS OBSERVATION (choose from these)

1. Read Colossians 2:6-15. Share some of your observations.
2. Who are some of the contrasts you noticed in this passage?
3. What stood out to you about the phrases "in Him" and "with Him?"

DISCUSS INTERPRETATION

Discuss the skill of looking up background information. How is it helpful in studying the Bible?

Discuss 2-3 questions.

Sum It Up - ask the group to summarize the main ideas of this passage in a sentence or two.

ENGAGE

DISCUSS APPLICATION

1. Choose at least one of the reflection questions to discuss as a transition to application.
2. What truth did God reveal to you this week and how do you plan to apply it?

ENGAGE TOOL **Starting a Spiritual Conversation** (P. 49)

Read over and discuss how to start a spiritual conversation. What has been your experience talking about your faith with friends? Is there a friend or neighbor you could connect with this week?

Pray for opportunities!

GROUP RESPONSE

What will our group do differently this week in light of all that we have learned and discussed?

PRAY

Break into small groups of 2-3 people and spend time praying for each other.

A large grid of small dots, arranged in approximately 30 rows and 40 columns, intended for writing notes or prayers.

Colossians 2:16-23

LESSON FIVE

READ IT

OBSERVATION - WHAT DO I SEE?

Record your observations in the margin as you read the passage.

COLOSSIANS 2:16-23

¹⁶ Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day— ¹⁷ things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ. ¹⁸ Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind, ¹⁹ and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God. ²⁰ If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, ²¹ "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!" ²² (which all refer to things destined to perish with use)—in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? ²³ These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence.

Continue to write down your observations and interpretive questions. Continue to mark the passage using the skills you have learned.

OBSERVATION SKILL: BOX CONNECTING WORDS (PART ONE)

These important words indicate the logical connection between words, phrases, and clauses.

COMPARISON: either points out similarities between two or more related ideas or simply joins like ideas. Comparison words include *and, like, as, just as, also, so also, even so*.

CONTRAST: points out dissimilarities between ideas. Contrast words include *but, rather, yet, however*.

PURPOSE: indicates the intended goal of an idea or action, whether or not it was realized. Purpose words include *that, so that, in order that*.

RESULT: very similar to “purpose,” but indicates the actual consequence, whether or not it was intended. Result words include *that, so that, as a result, with the result that*.

1. Box all connecting words in this passage especially focusing on those that show result or purpose.

2. Circle every description or reference to the false teaching that Paul combats within this passage.

3. In verses 16-17, Paul lists some practices that allude to Old Testament laws and Jewish holy days. How has Christ's death on the cross changed the New Testament believer's relationship to the Old Testament laws and festivals (see Romans 7:6 and 10:4)? Why was there a need for a change (see Deuteronomy 5:29 and Galatians 3:21)?

How does the contrast between "shadow" and "substance" in verse 17 help to clarify Paul's point?

4. Why were the activities of verse 18 so troubling to Paul? How did "self-abasement" and "the worship of angels" and even "visions" reveal the error of these false teachers?

5. What is the difference between asceticism, or self-denial for the sake of self-denial, and Christlike self-denial (see Galatians 3:1-3; Philippians 3:1-8)? Why are the decrees of verse 21 of no value against indulgence of the flesh?

LIVE IT

APPLICATION - WHAT WILL I DO NOW?

Begin in prayer, asking God's Spirit to reveal what He is saying specifically to you.

1. What similarities exist between the issues and challenges that the Colossian church faced and those that we face today in our culture?

2. Are you tempted to practice “do-it-yourself” methods to achieve spiritual maturity? What are some external influences or internal motivations that move you in this direction?

In contrast, how can we diligently practice spiritual disciplines like fasting, prayer, and Scripture meditation without falling into the same errors that the Colossians faced?

3. Continuing in prayer, write down the main biblical truth, principle, idea, or image that God revealed to you during your study.

4. What is God's invitation to you this week as you seek to apply what you've learned? What specific steps will you take? How could this impact relationships where you live, work, and play?

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

SPIRITUAL FRIENDSHIP

Fasting is described throughout Scripture as an embodied practice in which God's people temporarily abstain from food in order to seek Him. Typically, fasting means going without food for the body to reveal our soul's hunger for God but we can fast from other good things as well. Fasting reminds us that ultimately we are *dependent* on God to meet our deepest needs.

Feasting is a way God's people celebrate the goodness and provision of God in the big and small occasions of our lives. As we feast, we are reminded to *delight* in the abundance of love, joy, and peace that is available to us in Christ's kingdom. Feasting helps combat our tendencies toward scarcity, negativity, and cynicism.

Both of these practices are a way to reorient our hearts toward God and to grow in spiritual maturity. This week, ask the Spirit to help you discern if you are in need of more dependence on God or more delight in Him or both. Based on this, try one or more of these practices: If not, one of the best ways to deepen relationships is by gathering around a table for a regular meal. Sharing food and conversation naturally creates a sense of belonging and over time can turn acquaintances into trusted friends. Who could you invite to share a meal with you this week?

Fast

1. Pick a time (one meal, sunup to sundown, whole day).
2. Decide what you are fasting from (all food, sugar, coffee/tea/soda, entertainment, something else).
3. Decide what you will do during meals or times of consumption (pray, prayer walk, silence, Scripture reading).
4. Practice your fast and then spend time reflecting with God on what He revealed to you.

Feast

1. Think of something or someone you are grateful for (a recent event, blessing, or gift from God, friends, neighbors, coworkers, or family).
2. Pick a time, place, and people to celebrate with (share a meal, go out for a special treat).
3. Feast together, intentionally delighting in each other and in God, naming His goodness in your lives.
4. After your feast, reflect with God on what He revealed to you.

GROUP DISCUSSION

CONNECT

CARE/SHARE (choose from these)

1. How was your week? Share something you are celebrating or that disappointed you during the last week.
2. Response: What was it like to put God's Word into practice this week?
3. Did you have any chances to talk to friends about spiritual things?

Pray for your time together.

GROW

DISCUSS OBSERVATION (choose from these)

1. Read Colossians 2:16-23. Share some of your observations.
2. What were some of the connecting words you saw in this passage? How did seeing the connecting words help to grasp the flow of the passage?
3. What did you notice about the false teaching Paul describes?

DISCUSS INTERPRETATION

What is helpful about looking up cross references as we study Scripture?

Discuss 2-3 questions.

Sum It Up - ask the group to summarize the main ideas of this passage in a sentence or two.

ENGAGE

DISCUSS APPLICATION

1. Choose at least one of the reflection questions to discuss as a transition to application.
2. What truth did God reveal to you this week and how do you plan to apply it?

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE **Fasting and Feasting** (P. 59)

Discuss the practices of fasting and feasting. Share any experiences you have had incorporating them into your life. What benefits and challenges have you encountered?

Could your group practice a fast together on a specific day?

Is there a way to incorporate a feast into your group time during this study?

GROUP RESPONSE

What will our group do differently this week in light of all that we have learned and discussed?

PRAY

Break into small groups of 2-3 people and spend time praying for each other.

A large grid of small dots, arranged in approximately 25 rows and 40 columns, intended for writing notes or prayers.

Colossians 3:1-11

LESSON SIX

READ IT

OBSERVATION - WHAT DO I SEE?

Record your observations in the margin as you read the passage.

COLOSSIANS 3:1-11

¹ Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. ³ For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. ⁵ Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. ⁶ For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, ⁷ and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. ⁸ But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. ⁹ Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, ¹⁰ and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him— ¹¹ a renewal in which there is no distinction

between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian,
Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.

Continue to write down your observations and interpretive questions. Continue to mark the passage using the skills you have learned.

OBSERVATION SKILL: BOX CONNECTING WORDS (PART TWO)

These important words indicate the logical connection between words, phrases, and clauses.

CAUSE: expresses the basis or cause of an action. Cause words include *because*, *since*, and sometimes *for*.

EXPLANATION: what follows further explains the previous idea, giving reasons why it is true, why it occurred, or simply adding additional information. Look for the keyword *for*.

INFERENCE: provides a logical consequence, conclusion, or summary to the previous discussion. Inference words include *therefore*, *for this reason*.

CONDITION: presents a condition that must occur before a certain action or conclusion can occur. The statement may or may not reflect reality (i.e., it could be hypothetical). The key word is *if*.

1. Continue to box connecting words you see in this passage.
2. List all character qualities and behaviors associated with both the “old self” and the “new self” in the table below.

OLD SELF	NEW SELF

3. Underline all commands in this passage.

4. Why does Paul's concerns related to their old lifestyle begin with a series of misplaced desires in verse 5?

Why is Paul so concerned with sins of speech in verses 8-9a (see Luke 6:45 and Ephesians 4:25, 29)?

5. Define the following terms from this passage and determine whether they refer to an individual person or to a group of people. (Hint: be sure to compare multiple translations of verses 9-10.)

Old man/self:

See Romans 6:6-7 and Ephesians 4:20-24.

New man/self:

See Ephesians 2:15, 4:20-24, and 2 Corinthians 5:17.

6. According to verses 10-11, how does Paul describe the transformation process of the "new man/self"?

LIVE IT

APPLICATION - WHAT WILL I DO NOW?

Begin in prayer, asking God's Spirit to reveal what He is saying specifically to you.

1. What attitudes or actions in your life need to be put to death so that you can better maintain a mindset on eternity?

Do you or your church community have a tendency to focus on one set of vices (sexual sin or sins of speech) but tolerate the other? Why or why not?

2. Are you pursuing spiritual change alone or have you found some fellow brothers and sisters with whom you can be transparent and accountable?

3. Continuing in prayer, write down the main biblical truth, principle, idea, or image that God revealed to you during your study.

4. What is God's invitation to you this week as you seek to apply what you've learned? What specific steps will you take? How could this impact relationships where you live, work, and play?

ENGAGE TOOL

SHARE YOUR STORY

One of the most powerful ways to help people find Jesus is to share with them your own story of meeting and trusting in Him.

Turn to page 99 and write a simple draft of your faith story. For more insight, watch the Share Your Story video at grace-bible.org/disciplemaker.

GROUP DISCUSSION

CONNECT

CARE/SHARE (choose from these)

1. How was your week? Did you see God working in any specific ways?
2. Response: What was it like to put God's Word into practice this week?
3. Were you able to practice a fast or a feast this week? What was it like?

Pray for your time together.

GROW

DISCUSS OBSERVATION (choose from these)

1. Read Colossians 3:1-11. Share some of your observations.
2. What were some of the character qualities of the "old self" and the "new self?"
3. What commands did you notice?

DISCUSS INTERPRETATION

What are the benefits of reading a passage in another translation?

Discuss 2-3 questions.

Sum It Up - ask the group to summarize the main ideas of this passage in a sentence or two.

ENGAGE

DISCUSS APPLICATION

1. Choose at least one of the reflection questions to discuss as a transition to application.
2. What truth did God reveal to you this week and how do you plan to apply it?

ENGAGE TOOL **Share Your Story** (P. 69)

Read over and discuss how to share your story. In pairs, practice sharing a story of what God has done for you. To whom could you share your story of finding and following Jesus this week?

GROUP RESPONSE

What will our group do differently this week in light of all that we have learned and discussed?

PRAY

Break into small groups of 2-3 people and spend time praying for each other.

A large grid of small dots, arranged in approximately 25 rows and 40 columns, intended for writing notes or prayers.

Colossians 3:12-4:1

LESSON SEVEN

READ IT

OBSERVATION - WHAT DO I SEE?

Record your observations in the margin as you read the passage.

COLOSSIANS 3:12-4:1

¹² So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; ¹³ bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. ¹⁴ Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. ¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷ Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father. ¹⁸ Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. ¹⁹ Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them. ²⁰ Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord. ²¹ Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so that they will not lose heart. ²² Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who

merely please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. ²³ Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, ²⁴ knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve. ²⁵ For he who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality.

⁴ ¹ Masters, grant to your slaves justice and fairness, knowing that you too have a Master in heaven.

1. Circle the key features of this new lifestyle that Paul was calling these believers to live out.
2. Paul outlines various relationships in 3:18-4:1. List the responsibilities and motivations for each in the table below.

RELATIONSHIP	RESPONSIBILITY	MOTIVATION

3. Compare Colossians 3:15-17 to Ephesians 5:18-20. What do these two passages teach us about the relationship between the “word of Christ” and the “Spirit”? Can you be powerfully filled with the Spirit apart from being grounded in the Word of Christ?

4. How do you reconcile Paul’s distinction between different groups of people in 3:18-4:1 with his earlier statement in 3:11 that there is “no distinction” between different peoples in Christ?

5. What is the “reward of the inheritance” mentioned in verse 24 (see also Romans 8:17, 2 Timothy 4:6-8, and Revelation 2:26-27)?

LIVE IT

APPLICATION - WHAT WILL I DO NOW?

Begin in prayer, asking God's Spirit to reveal what He is saying specifically to you.

1. Are there any of the virtues mentioned in this week's passage that you feel led to "put on" this week? Which ones? Is there a friend or family member you can ask for feedback and prayer regarding this area of your character?

2. Paul emphasized our responsibility to forgive one another as Christ has forgiven us. Is there a specific person that you have been slow to extend forgiveness to or ask for forgiveness from? If so, what practical steps do you need to take this week?

3. Continuing in prayer, write down the main biblical truth, principle, idea, or image that God revealed to you during your study.

4. What is God's invitation to you this week as you seek to apply what you've learned? What specific steps will you take? How could this impact relationships where you live, work, and play?

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

ASKING FOR FORGIVENESS

Receiving and extending forgiveness is a central component of our faith in God. In fact, one of the most striking features of Christlikeness is the ability to forgive (Ephesians 4:32). Extending forgiveness to others who have hurt or harmed us is a journey of many steps. One of those steps may be to ask for forgiveness for what we have done.

Many of us have never been taught how to genuinely apologize and to ask for forgiveness. We often weaken our apologies by adding qualifiers such as "if" or "maybe" or "I guess I." The following is a basic outline of "a powerful apology," one in which we take both responsibility and initiative.

1. Own your part - ask Jesus to help you identify and clarify your contribution to the harm or rupture. Confess your sin fully to Him and receive His forgiveness.
2. Apologize in person, face-to-face. In humility, look the person in the eye.
 - a. Name what you did and how you hurt them.
 - b. Ask if there is more.
 - c. Say, "I'm sorry for ... (name the specifics of what you did and how it hurt them).
 - d. Ask, "Would you please forgive me?"

Regardless of the person's response to you, you have taken a needed first step toward repair in your relationship. Romans 12:18 says, "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all people." Continue to pray for this person as the Lord prompts and directs.

GROUP GUIDE

CONNECT

CARE/SHARE (choose from these)

1. How was your week? Did you see God working in any specific ways?
2. Response: What was it like to put God's Word into practice this week?
3. Did you have an opportunity to share your story with anyone this week?

Pray for your time together.

GROW

DISCUSS OBSERVATION (choose from these)

1. Read Colossians 3:12-4:1. Share some of your observations.
2. What were some of the ways Paul described the new lifestyle believers can grow toward?

DISCUSS INTERPRETATION

Discuss 2-3 questions.

Sum It Up - ask the group to summarize the main ideas of this passage in a sentence or two.

ENGAGE

DISCUSS APPLICATION

1. Choose at least one of the reflection questions to discuss as a transition to application.
2. What truth did God reveal to you this week and how do you plan to apply it?

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE *Asking for Forgiveness* (P. 79)

Spend some time discussing the importance of not letting unforgiveness build up in our relationships. What has been your experience with asking for forgiveness? Why is it important to be specific in our apologies?

GROUP RESPONSE

What will our group do differently this week in light of all that we have learned and discussed?

PRAY

Break into small groups of 2-3 people and spend time praying for each other.

A large grid of small dots, arranged in approximately 25 rows and 40 columns, intended for writing notes or prayers.

Colossians 4:2-18

LESSON EIGHT

READ IT

OBSERVATION - WHAT DO I SEE?

Record your observations in the margin as you read the passage.

COLOSSIANS 4:2-18

² Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; ³ praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; ⁴ that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak. ⁵ Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. ⁶ Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person. ⁷ As to all my affairs, Tychicus, our beloved brother and faithful servant and fellow bond-servant in the Lord, will bring you information. ⁸ For I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts; ⁹ and with him Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of your number. They will inform you about the whole situation here. ¹⁰ Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings; and also Barnabas's cousin Mark (about whom you received instructions; if he comes to you, welcome him); ¹¹ and also Jesus who is called Justus; these are the only fellow workers for the

kingdom of God who are from the circumcision, and they have proved to be an encouragement to me. ¹²Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bonds slave of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God. ¹³For I testify for him that he has a deep concern for you and for those who are in Laodicea and Hierapolis. ¹⁴Luke, the beloved physician, sends you his greetings, and also Demas. ¹⁵Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea and also Nympha and the church that is in her house. ¹⁶When this letter is read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and you, for your part read [m]y letter that is coming from Laodicea. ¹⁷ Say to Archippus, "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it." ¹⁸I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my imprisonment. Grace be with you.

OBSERVATION QUESTIONS

Continue to write down your observations and interpretive questions. Continue to mark the passage using the skills you have learned.

1. What themes do you notice in this passage?

2. Highlight any words or phrases Paul uses to describe the people he mentions in this section.

THINK IT THROUGH

INTERPRETATION - WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

1. Why does Paul begin his discussion in verses 2-6 with the subject of prayer? How does he characterize the nature and purpose of prayer (see also Mark 14:33-38 and Luke 18:1-8)?

2. What exactly is “wise conduct” toward outsiders (see Romans 13:7-8, 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12, and 1 Peter 2:12)?

3. Why does Paul use the imagery of “seasoned with salt” to describe the kind of speech necessary to respond to each person (Matthew 5:13)? What characteristics does salt possess that make it an appropriate image for wise speech?

4. What is significant about the number and type of people Paul mentions at the end of this letter? What does it say about Paul’s ministry philosophy and practice?

LIVE IT

APPLICATION - WHAT WILL I DO NOW?

Begin in prayer, asking God's Spirit to reveal what He is saying specifically to you.

1. Why is it such a struggle to remain devoted and alert in prayer?

Furthermore, do our prayers tend towards self-interest or gospel proclamation? What practical steps can we take to grow in prayer for the lost?

2. Who can you partner with in your life to help others find and follow Jesus?

3. Continuing in prayer, write down the main biblical truth, principle, idea, or image that God revealed to you during your study.

4. What is God's invitation to you this week as you seek to apply what you've learned? What specific steps will you take? How could this impact relationships where you live, work, and play?

ENGAGE TOOL

SHARE THE GOSPEL - 3 CIRCLES

As we pray, ask questions and listen to people with a heart of compassion, the Holy Spirit may lead us into sharing with someone how they can turn from trusting in themselves to trusting in Jesus. This simple tool using a diagram of three circles is really helpful to share the good news of the gospel with people.

Turn to page 102 and practice sharing the gospel this week. Pray for opportunities to share with non-believing friends. See a demonstration video at grace-bible.org/disciplemaker.

GROUP GUIDE

CONNECT

CARE/SHARE (choose from these)

1. How was your week? Did you see God working in any specific ways?
2. Response: What was it like to put God's Word into practice this week?
3. Did you have any opportunities to ask for forgiveness this week? What was your experience?

Pray for your time together.

GROW

DISCUSS OBSERVATION (choose from these)

1. Read Colossians 4:2-18. Share some of your observations.
2. What themes did you notice?
3. How did Paul describe the people in this section?

DISCUSS INTERPRETATION

Discuss 2-3 questions.

Sum It Up - ask the group to summarize the main ideas of this passage in a sentence or two.

ENGAGE

DISCUSS APPLICATION

1. Choose at least one of the reflection questions to discuss as a transition to application.
2. What truth did God reveal to you this week and how do you plan to apply it?

ENGAGE TOOL **Share The Gospel: 3 Circles (P. 89)**

Practice sharing the gospel in groups of 2-3.

GROUP RESPONSE

What will our group do differently this week in light of all that we have learned and discussed?

PRAY

Break into small groups of 2-3 people and spend time praying for each other and for specific friends on your Every Neighbor Maps.

PRAY

Break into small groups of 2-3 people and spend time praying for each other.

A large grid of small dots, approximately 30 columns wide and 30 rows high, intended for writing notes or prayers.

SYNTHESIS

PUT IT BACK TOGETHER

MEMORIZE

Review the passage you memorized.

WALK WORTHY

1:9-14

⁹ For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰ so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; ¹¹ strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. ¹³ For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

JESUS

1:15-20

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities - all things have been created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. ¹⁸ He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. ¹⁹ For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, ²⁰ and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

MINDSET

3:1-4

¹ Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. ³ For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

PUT ON

3:12-17

¹² So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; ¹³ bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. ¹⁴ Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. ¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body ; and be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷ Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

Before we get to the synthesis, one word of encouragement ... please realize how much you have grown as a student of God's Word through your study of Colossians! Each week, you've learned how to better observe, interpret, and apply the stories of Scripture. Those same three steps will serve you well as you continue to study God's story throughout the Bible. Continue to practice and refine these skills so that you become, "a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the Word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).

WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

Now it is time to draw our detailed study to a useful conclusion with a process known as synthesis. Our goal is to create an overall summary of the book of Colossians that we can quickly review any time in the future to remind us of the flow and content of the book.

Create summary sentences or phrases for each chapter of Colossians:

Chapter 1:

Chapter 2:

Chapter 3:

Chapter 4:

OUTLINE THE BOOK

The first step of the synthesis is to create your own outline of the book. Review the work you completed each week. Then, create your own brief outline on the next page. Feel free to use any outlining style, but here is an example of how you might start:

1. *Greeting (1:1-2)*
2. *Thanksgiving (1:3-8)*
3. *Prayer (1:9-14)*

MY COLOSSIANS OUTLINE

A large grid of dots for writing an outline. The grid consists of 20 columns and 30 rows of small, evenly spaced dots, providing a guide for writing.

APPLICATION #1

Principle from Colossians:

Verses where it's discussed:

Plan of Action: I will ...

APPLICATION #2

Principle from Colossians:

Verses where it's discussed:

Plan of Action: I will ...



APPENDIX

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LEADER HELPS

WHOLEHEARTED DEVOTION

The best preparation for leading a Bible study is following Jesus closely yourself.

- Spend time with God daily to keep your relationship with Him fresh and growing! Healthy leadership is ultimately an overflow of your personal relationship with God.
- Spend time in the passage throughout the week.
- Pray regularly with your co-leader for each person in your group.
- Prepare ahead of time and make a plan (see below) for your group time. Discuss with your co-leader.
- As a facilitator of discussion rather than a teacher, you are encouraged to be a co-learner with your group. Your job is not to know “everything.” It is acceptable to leave some questions partially answered or unresolved, trusting for clarity at a later time. Reach out to ministry leaders and pastors at your church for clarification as needed.
- Lead and walk by faith in the Holy Spirit’s work in your life and in the lives of your group members.

LEADING WELL

- Set a regular meeting place and time. Consistency helps avoid obstacles that will keep people from being there and a plan helps people know what to expect.
- Create a welcoming environment! Learn people’s names and make sure everyone is introduced to each other. Possibly have a snack each week, alternating between healthy and “less healthy.” Everyone likes a snack!
- Regularly remind people of the group’s purpose to:
CONNECT Relationally
GROW Biblically
ENGAGE Missionally
- Regularly break up into smaller groups of 2-3, starting from the very first meeting. Smaller groups help people feel known. Keep the groups no bigger than three. This will pay off in the long run.
- Stress confidentiality about what is shared in the group.
- Try reaching out to different people each week to grab lunch or coffee outside of group time as your schedule allows.

MAKE A PLAN EACH WEEK

Utilize the Group Discussion Guide (located at the end of each lesson). Divide your time into three relatively equal thirds that focus on **CONNECT**, **GROW**, **ENGAGE**. For example, if your group meets for one hour, try intentionally focusing about 20 minutes on Connect, 20 minutes on Grow, and 20 minutes on Engage. Each one of us can easily drift towards overemphasizing one category and neglecting another, which is why making a plan is an important step. Here are some leading tips for connecting, growing, and engaging.

1 / 3

CONNECT

Build group community by using the connect suggestions in the Group Discussion Guide. Depending on your group size, try getting into groups of 2-3 for an icebreaker question, to catch up on application from last week, and for prayer. The question could vary from more fun or more serious. For example: “What was a highlight and lowlight of your week?” or “How did you apply last week’s lesson?”

Then pray in the small groups. (Prayer at the beginning is a good way to help make it an emphasis.) Suggest something for them to pray for as a group, that is bigger than themselves and the group. Some ideas: For neighbors, family members, friends, or classmates who they would like to point to Jesus; for a missionary or a people group in need of the gospel.

2 / 3

GROW

Gather back as one group and have one person pray for your time in God’s Word. Discuss the passage using the Grow suggestions in the Group Discussion Guide. Summarize or read aloud the passage together.

3 / 3

ENGAGE

Read and discuss the tool or spiritual practice in the lesson. Give time to try out sharing the tool or spiritual practice as a group. Reflect on the biblical truth God revealed to you this week. Create a plan of action to apply what you have learned. Gather in small groups (of 2-3) again. Discuss your plan of action and pray for one another.

STUDY TOOLS

OBSERVE

Every time we study the Bible, the first thing to ask is, “What do I see?” This is the crucial skill of observation, which lays the groundwork for the rest of our study. Here are four tasks involved in observation which should be performed in the order below. All examples are taken from the book of Galatians.

OBSERVATION TASK 1

Mark up the passage by visually identifying the following specific elements:

Underline all verbs. A verb is a word or group of words used to indicate either that an action is taking place (“we will reign with Him”) or that a state or condition exists (“we are faithless”). Verbs are often the most significant indicators of the author’s flow of thought.

Circle key words or phrases. These are words or short phrases that are important theologically (like “gospel” in 1:6) or thematically (they set the theme or main idea for the passage) such as “approved” and “works of the law” in 3:2,5,10.

Highlight repeated words or phrases. Also, include words and phrases that are closely related even if not exact duplicates (such as “suffer hardship” and “endure suffering”). You’ll also want to highlight things that are repeated from previous passages (such as “son” in 4:23 and 4:30)

Box connecting words. These important words indicate the logical connection between words, phrases, and clauses. Here are eight types of common connecting words to look for:

1. **Comparison** either points out similarities between two or more related ideas or simply joins like ideas. Comparison words include *and, like, as, just as, also, so also, even so* (e.g., “like the Gentiles” in 2:14).
2. **Contrast** points out dissimilarities between ideas. Contrast words include *but, rather, yet, however* (e.g., “No longer I... but Christ” in 2:20).
3. **Purpose** indicates the intended goal of an idea or action, whether or not it was realized. Purpose words and phrases include *that, so that, in order that* (e.g., “Christ redeemed us... in order that in Christ Jesus...” in 3:13-14).
4. **Result** is similar to “purpose,” but indicates the actual consequence, whether or not it was intended. Result words and phrases include *that, so that, as a result, with the result that* (e.g., “The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy.” in 2:13).
5. **Cause** expresses the basis or cause of an action. Cause words include *because, since, and sometimes for*. (e.g., “Why the Law then? It was added on account of the violations,” in 3:19)
6. **Explanation** is what follows further explains the previous idea, giving reasons why it is true, why it occurred, or simply adding additional information. Look for the key word *for*. (e.g., “For prior to the coming of some men from James,” in 2:12).
7. **Inference** provides a logical consequence, conclusion, or summary to the previous discussion. Inference words and phrases include *therefore* and *for this reason*. (e.g., “Therefore, recognize that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham.” in 3:7)
8. **Condition** presents a condition that must occur before a certain action or conclusion can occur. The statement may or may not reflect reality (i.e., it could be hypothetical). Key word is *if*. (e.g., “For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no

longer based on a promise..." in 3:18)

OBSERVATION TASK 2

List 2-3 primary themes you see in the passage each week.

A primary theme is the big idea, the central truth, or command that the passage focuses on, such as "humility" in 5:16-26. After reading the passage, write your themes as single words or short phrases. Identifying these themes at the beginning of your study will help you develop a good overall grasp of the passage.

OBSERVATION TASK 3

Write two or more observations per verse.

Our observations might identify people, places, or events, point out repeated words or key terms, record important connections between words and sentences, or even point out something missing that we expected to see.

OBSERVATION TASK 4

Ask your own interpretive questions.

Here are a few examples:

WHO IS	WHAT IS THE	WHY DID THE AUTHOR	HOW
the author talking about? accomplishing the action? benefiting from the action?	meaning of this word? significance of this phrase? implication of this statement? relationship between these phrases?	choose this word? include this phrase, statement, or command? not say _____ ?	was this action accomplished? will this situation occur?

OBSERVATION TASK 5 **Figurative Language**

As every writer knows, one of the most powerful ways to emotionally engage an audience with your words is to use figurative language. FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE uses words and phrases in an unexpected way to create a vivid image in the mind of a listener. This image adds color to the author's message, holds the listener's attention, forces the listener to slow down and reflect on the idea being communicated, makes the abstract more concrete, and aids in retention of the author's point. While there are many types of figurative language, here are the eight major types you should be looking for as you study the Bible:

- 1) Simile: compares two things by using the explicit formula *like* or *as*. "He will be like a tree planted by streams of water," Psalm 1:3
- 2) Metaphor: compares two things but omits *like* or *as* and instead simply equates them (A is B) "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden;" Matthew 5:14
- 3) Metonymy: one word is substituted for another word closely associated with it, such as referring to military officers as "brass." A biblical example would be James' use of "tongue" to refer to one's speech (e.g. James 3:5).
- 4) Hyperbole: conscious exaggeration for the sake of effect or emphasis "I robbed other churches by taking wages from them to serve you;" 2 Corinthians 11:8
- 5) Personification: treating something non-human (and frequently inanimate) as though it were a human. Example: "And their tongue parades through the earth." Psalm 73:9 "Then

the moon will be ashamed and the sun be put to shame,” Isaiah 24:23

6) Anthropomorphism: attributing human characteristics, even body parts, to God.

Example: “Behold, the Lord’s hand is not so short that it cannot save; Nor is His ear so dull that it cannot hear.” Isaiah 59:1

7) Apostrophe: addressing a thing as if it were a person or an imaginary person as if he were present. Example: “WHERE, O DEATH, IS YOUR VICTORY? WHERE, O DEATH, IS YOUR STING?”

1 Corinthians 15:55

8) Symbol: a concrete image that points to or embodies other meanings. Examples include “light” used to represent God, goodness, truth, or blessing (such as in Psalm 27:1) and “throne” to represent power and authority (such as in Psalm 89:4 and 14).

INTERPRET

Our observation of a passage should stir interesting yet challenging questions, leading us to the second stage of our Bible study: interpretation. Fortunately, we do not have to run to a commentary or study Bible for answers (though these are helpful tools to check our conclusions). Use the following six methods, as needed, to tackle a variety of questions. Also, make sure to familiarize yourself with the three “Principles of Interpretation” on page 108.

INTERPRETATION METHODS

Interpretation Method 1 | Use the context.

Look for important clues in the sentences and paragraphs that come before and after the verse in question. Try to follow the author’s flow of thought through the whole chapter. This may take you to the previous lesson, so have it handy as a review. You may need to read ahead in the book for clues.

Interpretation Method 2 | Study cross-references.

Cross references are simply other passages in any book of the Bible that are somehow related to the verses you are studying. They often prove incredibly helpful as you seek to understand your passage. A few such cross references can be found in the margins of most English Bibles, but more can be found by visiting online tool such as netbible.org. Simply search for the passage at the top of the screen, and the relevant text will appear. Be sure that “NET2” is your selected Bible in the drop down box, and then select the tab for “Greek” on the right side of the screen. Now hovering over any word in English will highlight the corresponding Greek term and reveal its Strong’s definition in the opposite window. Then, you can select a word, click the magnifying glass above it, and choose to run a “Word Search” that will provide all Biblical references that use the English term.

Interpretation Method 3 | Look up key words.

While looking up a key word in English is helpful, doing so in Greek provides deeper understanding and is surprisingly easy, thanks to online tools such as netbible.org. Simply search for the passage at the top of the screen, and the relevant text will appear. Be sure that “NET2” is your selected Bible in the drop down box, and then select the tab for “Greek”

on the right side of the screen. Now hovering over any word in English will highlight the corresponding Greek term and reveal its Strong's definition in the opposite window. For even further study, you can select a word, click the magnifying glass above it, then choose to run a "Word Search," "Strong's Search," or "Word Study." The first will provide all Biblical references that use the English term. The second will provide all Biblical references that use the Greek term. And the third will provide the full definition and derivatives of the Greek term. What used to take multiple books & many hours now takes one internet browser & a few seconds!

Interpretation Method 4 | Look up background information.

You can find helpful insights by looking up confusing names or words in a Bible dictionary or by looking up the particular verses you are studying in a background commentary. One of the best dictionaries is *The New Bible Dictionary* by Wood & Marshall. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary* by Craig Keener is another excellent example of a verse-by-verse background commentary.

Background information can be found by visiting the online reference netbible.org. Simply search for the passage at the top of the screen, and the relevant text will appear. Be sure that "NET2" is your selected Bible in the drop down box, and then select the tab for "Notes" on the right side of the screen. Now, anytime you select one of the numbered annotations above particular words or verses, you can immediately see the relevant Biblical or historical context for that term or passage. This is a great tool for answering tough questions!

Interpretation Method 5 | Tackle tough questions step-by-step.

When trying to answer the most challenging questions, follow this four-step process:

1. List all the options. Always start by brainstorming every possible answer to your question.
2. List pros and cons for each option. See all the evidence you can find that either argues for or against a particular option. This evidence comes from your study of key words, the grammar of the sentence, the context of surrounding verses and the book as a whole, cross references to other books, and comparison with your overall understanding of Christian theology.
3. Choose the most likely option. Look at your evidence for each option. Typically, evidence from the immediate context is most important, followed closely by evidence from the book as a whole. Evidence from other books of the Bible, or from Christian theology as a whole, does not carry quite as much weight unless the solution contradicts a clear passage elsewhere or a major tenant of Christian doctrine. In that case, since Scripture never lies and God cannot contradict Himself, you must eliminate that option.
4. Decide on your certainty level. Once you have chosen the best solution, step back for a second and humbly gauge how certain you are of its accuracy (90% = I am very sure this is correct ... 60% = This solution is just a bit more likely than the others!). Finally, talk with others and check commentaries or reference books to see what solutions they have chosen and why.

Interpretation Method 6 | Compare multiple translations.

This packet uses the New American Standard (NASB) translation. You can often find helpful interpretive clues by comparing this translation with other translations. The New King James Version (NKJV), like the NASB, is a fairly word-for-word translation of the

Greek text. The New International Version (NIV) and the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) are excellent phrase-to-phrase translations of the Greek and thus often easier to read.

Another excellent phrase-to-phrase Bible, which includes extensive translation notes, is the New English Translation (NET) available online for free at netbible.org. You can find and compare numerous translations of any Bible passage at www.biblestudytools.com.

INTERPRETATION PRINCIPLES

There are three fundamental principles of interpretation that help us to use our interpretive skills accurately.

Interpretation Principle 1 | Discern Author's Intended Meaning

Your goal is to discern the author's intended meaning to the original audience.

Unfortunately, most people begin their Bible study by asking, "What does this passage mean to me?" While there may be multiple possible applications to my life, there is only one meaning, the author's intended meaning, and we must first seek this out. This involves three important steps:

1. Always start your study with prayer, asking the same God who composed Scripture through these ancient authors to give you insight to understand His intended meaning.
2. Avoid inserting your 21st century circumstances and theological issues into the text as they can skew understanding.
3. Work diligently to see the text from the point of view of the original readers. To do this: (a) dig into the historical and cultural background using Bible dictionaries and commentaries, and (b) spend a few moments thinking about the original audience's religious understanding by asking, "What books of the Bible did they have access to? What did they know about God? About Jesus? About salvation? etc."

Interpretation Principle 2 | Assume "Normal" Use of Language

The Bible was given to us because God desired to communicate with us, not to hide Himself from us. Therefore, we should not be looking for "hidden" meanings as we study. Instead, we should use the "normal" techniques we would use to understand any piece of literature:

1. Study the grammar. Pay attention to nouns, verbs, adjectives, and prepositions. Think through any figures of speech. Observe how phrases and clauses are connected into sentences and how sentences are linked together into paragraphs.
2. Remember that chapter divisions came later. When Paul wrote Corinthians or Luke wrote the book of Acts, they wrote single, unified stories without verse or chapter divisions. These books were meant to be read just like you would read a letter or a novel. Always keep the overall story in mind as you study each passage.

Interpretation Principle 3 | Let Scripture Interpret Scripture

This is the third and last principle of interpretation. Because God is unchangingly truthful and always consistent (John 17:17; Hebrews 3:6; James 1:17), we can, and should, expect the same of His Word. This has two practical applications:

1. Check your conclusions. Always compare your conclusions with the teachings of

scripture as a whole. If you find your interpretation of a passage contradicts the clear teaching of scripture elsewhere, you probably need to revise your conclusions.

2. Allow clear passages to illuminate ambiguous passages. Whenever you encounter a passage that is confusing or open to multiple possible interpretations, use clearer passages of scripture to guide you to the correct interpretation.

One last caution: remember that God revealed scripture progressively, not all at once. Therefore, we should not be surprised by differences between how people related to and understood God at different times in the history of scripture. For example, while Abraham needed only believe that God was faithful in order to be justified (Genesis 15:6), in the New Testament era, we must believe in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus to be saved (1 Corinthians 15:1-7).

APPLY

Our Bible study is not over until we apply what we have learned to our everyday lives. And lest we underestimate the value of this last step, remember that in God's eyes it is the person who does not just know His Word, but also obeys His Word that truly loves Him (see John 14:21). So how do we apply a passage to our lives? Application involves the following two tasks:

APPLICATION TASK 1

List potential principles from your passage.

A "principle" is simply a fact or command stated or implied in a particular passage that is practically relevant to our lives. Legitimate principles are not specific to a particular person (e.g., 1 Timothy 5:23 is just for Timothy) nor a particular time (e.g., "do not leave Jerusalem" in Acts 1:4). It is often helpful when listing principles to consider the following questions:

- Is there something to worship or thank God for?
- Is there a promise for me to claim or a truth for me to believe?
- Is there something I am convicted about that I need to change or begin doing?
- Is there something or someone I need to pray for specifically this week?
- Is there any relationship I need to work on?

APPLICATION TASK 2

Choose one principle, and create a plan to apply it to your life this week.

Once you complete your principle list, prayerfully choose the one principle you most need to work on (Do not just choose the easiest to apply!). If you felt deeply convicted about one in particular, that is probably the principle God is leading you to apply. Once you have chosen a specific principle, answer these two questions:

1. What exactly will you do differently this week to apply this principle to your life? Be specific.
2. Whom, other than the Lord, will you ask to help you follow through with this application?

CHRONOLOGY

EVENT	APPROXIMATE DATE
Crucifixion of Jesus	April 33
Pentecost (Acts 2)	May 33
Paul's conversion (Acts 9)	Summer 35
Paul in Jerusalem, 1st visit (Acts 9:26-29; Gal. 1:18-20)	35-43
Paul to Antioch (Acts 11:25-26)	Spring 43
Epistle of James written	45
Paul in Jerusalem, relief visit (Acts 11:30; Gal. 2:1-10)	Autumn 47
Paul to Antioch (Acts 12:25-13:1)	Autumn 47 – Spring 48
Paul's first missionary journey (Acts 13-14)	April 48 – September 49
Peter at Antioch (Gal. 2:11-16)	Autumn 49
Galatians written from Antioch	Autumn 49
Paul in Jerusalem, Jerusalem council (Acts 15)	Autumn 49
Paul in Antioch (Acts 15:30-35)	Winter 49/50
Paul's second missionary journey (Acts 15:36-18:22)	April 50 – September 52
1 & 2 Thessalonians written	Spring – Summer 51
Paul in Jerusalem and Antioch	End of September 52; Winter 52/53
Paul's third missionary journey (Acts 18:23-21:16)	Spring 53 – May 57
1 & 2 Corinthians written	Spring – Fall 56
Romans written	Winter 56/57
Ephesian elders visit Paul at Miletus (Acts 20)	May 57
Paul in Jerusalem	Eve of Pentecost, May 27, 57
Paul's arrest and trial before Felix (Acts 21:26-24:22)	June 57
Paul's appearance before Felix (Acts 24:24-26)	June 57
Paul's imprisonment in Caesarea (Acts 24:27)	June 57 – Aug 59
Paul's trial before Festus (Acts 25:7-12) & Agrippa (Acts 26)	July 59; Aug 59
Paul's voyage to Rome (Acts 27:1-28:29)	Aug 59 – Feb 60
Paul's first Roman imprisonment (Acts 28:30)	Feb 60 – Mar 62
Luke written	60

Acts Written	60
Ephesians written	Autumn 60
Colossians and Philemon written	Autumn 61
Philippians written	Spring 62
Paul's release	Spring 62
Mark written	62
Paul in Ephesus and Colossae	Spring – Autumn 62
Peter in Rome	62
Paul in Macedonia	Summer 62 – Winter 62/63
1 Timothy written	Autumn 62
Paul in Asia Minor	Spring 62
Peter martyred	Summer 64 (67?)
Paul in Spain and Crete	Spring 64 – Spring 66; Summer 66
Titus written	Summer 66
Paul arrested and taken to Rome	Autumn 67
2 Timothy written	Autumn 67
Paul's death	Spring 68
Matthew written	60's
Hebrews written	60's
Destruction of Jerusalem	September 2, 70
Jude written	60's or 70's
John written	80's or 90's
1,2,3 John written	80's or 90's
Revelation written	Early 90's

Adapted from Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ, Harold H. Hoehner, Zondervan, 1978.

ENGAGE TOOLS

Because God loves all people, He is constantly working to draw men and women to Himself. He invites believers to partner with Him in this great mission of redemption and restoration. We do this by helping people find and follow Jesus — this is disciple-making. Jesus summarized this calling in Matthew 28:18-20.

“And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to follow all that I commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'”

On the following pages are some foundational tools, practices, and resources to engage in helping people find and follow Jesus.

Visit grace-bible.org/disciplemaker for more resources.

EVERY NEIGHBOR MAP

Just as Jesus entered into a specific time and place, God has placed each of us into a unique context in which to share His love and to represent Him. Our context includes anyone that we commonly encounter on a regular basis which gives us the ability to have influence in their lives.

Think about the people in your spheres of influence; the people with whom you live, learn, work, and play who are near to you but might be far from God.

Also, think about people that are just beyond your normal spheres. Perhaps there is an acquaintance that you don't know well, or a neighbor who is different from you ethnically or socio-economically, or a community member that the Holy Spirit has put in your path but is more a stranger than friend. Be creative and think outside the box!

Pray Big - diligently pray for these friends to find and follow Jesus.

Map - write down at least three names in each of these spheres.

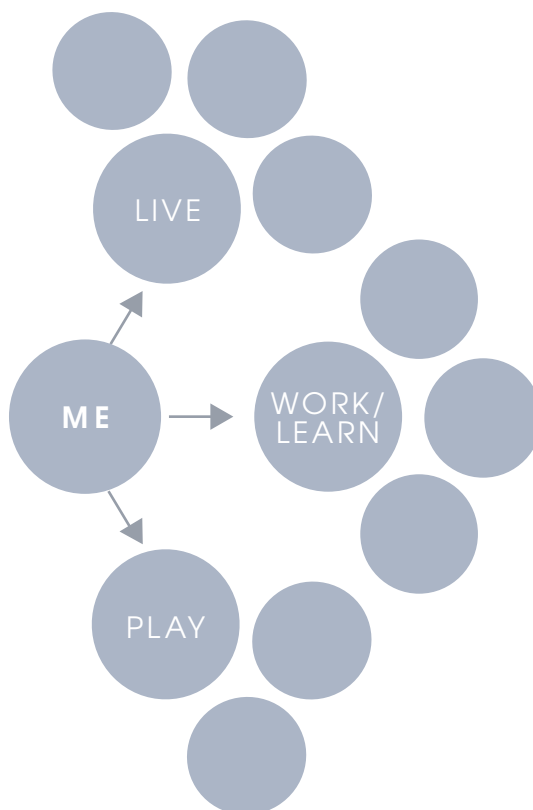
Ask God:

Who might be seeking Him or is asking hard questions about life?

Who needs acts of love and concern shown to them?

How to serve and share the love of Christ with them?

For opportunities to share your story and the gospel.



STARTING A SPIRITUAL CONVERSATION

During His life on earth, Jesus told stories using illustrations from everyday life that created an interest in His Kingdom. Jesus made His message accessible to those who would hear. Sadly, we have become conditioned to put on a filter and not speak of Jesus because we imagine that it is awkward, pushy, or politically incorrect. What would it be like to take off this filter and grow in boldness and love as we share stories about who He is and what He is about?

Marking ourselves as a “spiritual” person can help us gauge whether others are interested in God and His message. Some people will “lean in” as you speak about such topics, asking additional questions, sharing their own beliefs, telling about their own journey. Some will not; they will “lean back” and change the topic, become silent, or shut down altogether. Allow the Holy Spirit to prompt you as you initiate and let Him do the work of speaking to a person’s soul.

Practice talking about two or three of the following “interest creating” topics:

Recently, God/Jesus has been teaching me that...

I am realizing more and more that God has blessed me by...

I used to struggle with (insert fear, stronghold, idolatry) but now I see God wants me to believe...

I decided to follow Jesus because...

I’ve really been learning to pray more lately. Do you have anything in your life that I can commit to pray for?

Think of common topics that come up as you meet people, for example: career, living situation, family history, educational background. Pick one of these and tell how God changed your path in the past, or how He is guiding you in the present.

As you practice talking about these things, try to end with a learning question such as:

Have you ever considered God in this way before?

Do you think God is teaching/blessing/asking you to believe anything right now?

Do you consider yourself on a spiritual journey? What is that like?

What does your tradition say about Jesus?

Your questions are to gauge a response and to allow space for them to interact with your story.

Now, be prayerful and alert as to who God brings across your path!

SHARING YOUR STORY

You have a unique story of how you came to know and follow Jesus. Your story is one of the most powerful tools you have for helping other people find and follow Jesus as well. As you begin to let people know that you are following Jesus, simply ask, "Can I share with you the story of my spiritual journey?" Those who are interested in spiritual things are likely to demonstrate their interest in one way or another (asking questions, making a comment) and that often provides an open door to share your story.

HOW TO BEGIN

Write out your thoughts on the following topics and questions. These ideas will help you share the story of your spiritual journey, sometimes called your "testimony."

MY LIFE BEFORE JESUS

My life revolved around _____, and I found my identity, happiness and security from _____. Use an example from your personal life here. For instance, did your security come from money, your relationships, etc.?

How did this disappoint me? How was this unfulfilling? How did I come to realize this?

What was I struggling with (if anything) just before I believed in Jesus?

Note: Some people trusted Jesus when they were very young, and don't have clear memories of the time before they knew Him. If that is you, simply share this as part of your story.

HOW I FIRST BELIEVED IN JESUS

This part of your story is where you came to a transition in your life.

When and how did I first hear about Jesus?

What did I learn about the life He offers all who believe in Him?

When and why did my perspective about Jesus begin to change?

Why did I decide to believe in Jesus?

Note: Some of us may be able to point to specific times or circumstances regarding how or when we believed. For others of us, we can only point to a time period or gradual understanding. Both are great. Everyone's story is significant and the biggest point is that you now believe in Jesus.

MY LIFE SINCE I FIRST BELIEVED IN JESUS

How is my life different now? List some specific changes in your character, attitude, and perspective on life.

How am I motivated differently now? What do I live for now?

How do I experience God now?

BRING IT ALL TOGETHER

Think about your answers to the questions above, and ask yourself the following:

Is this a continuous story that makes sense?

Are there any consistent themes in my story?

Can I share my story in 3-4 minutes?

Was I clear about what I believed about Jesus?

SHARING THE GOSPEL: THE BRIDGE

In the Christian faith, the word “gospel” simply means the “good news” about Jesus - His life, death and resurrection. The message that through belief in Jesus we can enter into a loving relationship with God, experiencing forgiveness and receiving the gift of eternal life, is good news, indeed!

Let’s look at a concise and understandable way to communicate the gospel to your friends and family who do not yet know Jesus.

PEOPLE



GOD



God created people to enjoy a relationship with Him and represent Him through our lives. (Genesis 1:26-28, 31) As a loving Father, He communicated boundaries that protect and allow us to enjoy our relationship with Him and with other people. (Genesis 2:15-16)

PEOPLE



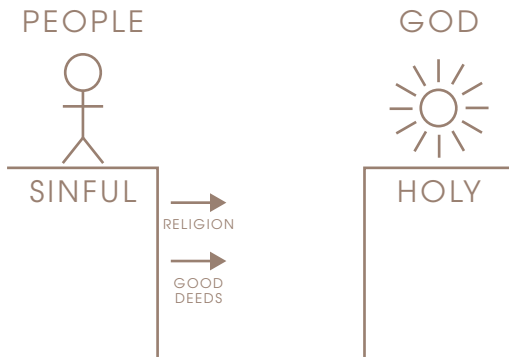
GOD



Everyone has fallen short of God’s standards. The Bible calls that “sin.” Our sin results in our separation from God. Unless our sin is forgiven, we deserve eternal punishment, separated from God forever.

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Romans 3:23

“For the wages of sin is death.” Romans 6:23a

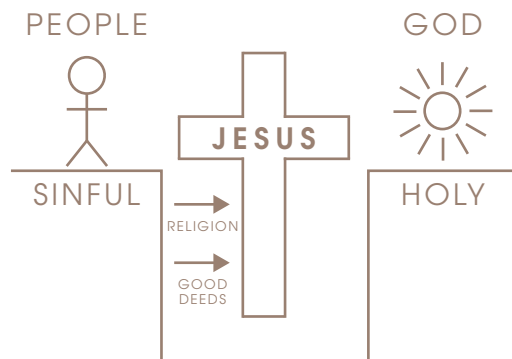


Some try to reach God through religion or by trying to be a good person. But the Bible tells us that there is only one way to God and that is through belief in His Son, Jesus Christ.

“Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me.” John 14:6

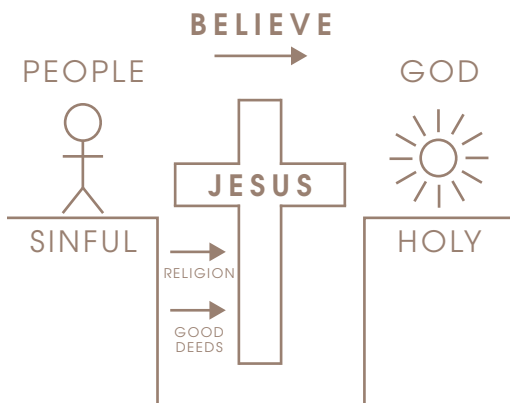
God graciously provided a way to forgive our sin and freely give us eternal life. God’s only Son Jesus died in our place. He took on Himself the punishment that our sin deserves. Then, Jesus rose from the dead. He conquered sin and death forever.

“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Romans 5:8



Everyone who believes in Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins receives eternal life. To believe in Jesus means that you no longer try to earn God’s approval through what you do, nor do you deny that you need forgiveness and salvation. Instead, you accept God’s free gift of eternal life.

“Truly, truly, I say to you, the one who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.” John 5:24



SHARING THE GOSPEL: THREE CIRCLES

In Christianity, the word “gospel” simply means the “good news” about Jesus - His life, death and resurrection. The message that through belief in Jesus we can enter into a loving relationship with God, experiencing forgiveness and receiving the gift of eternal life, is good news, indeed!

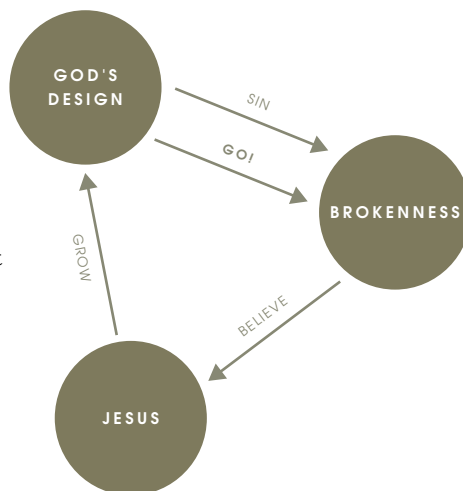
Let’s look at a concise and understandable way to communicate the gospel to your friends and family who do not yet know Jesus.

These three circles help us explain the gospel according to the Bible.

Read each section and the scripture verses that follow.

GOD’S DESIGN

Out of God’s great love, He created a world that was good. He made people to enjoy a deeply connected relationship with Him and to represent Him through our lives. (Genesis 1:26-28, 31) As a loving Father, He communicated boundaries to protect us and to allow us to fully enjoy our relationships with Him and with other people (Genesis 2:15-17).



BROKENNESS

Yet, when we look around our world, brokenness and evil are evident everywhere - war, famine, disease, corruption. If we are honest, we also see brokenness and evil inside ourselves - deceit, hatred, greed, lust. This is because we have rejected God’s design and chosen to follow our own way. Our rejection of God and His ways is what the Bible calls sin. (Romans 3:23) Our sin results in separation from God which the Bible calls death. (Romans 6:23a) Unless our sin is forgiven, we will remain separated from God forever.

JESUS

God does not want to leave us in our sin and brokenness!

God graciously provided a way to forgive our sin and to freely give us eternal life - a life connected to God both now and forever. (Romans 6:23b; John 17:3)

God’s only Son Jesus died in our place. He took upon Himself the penalty that we deserve because of our sin. Then, Jesus rose from the dead, and forever defeated the power of sin and death. (Romans 5:8; 1 Corinthians 15:3-5)

BELIEVE

We respond to Jesus by believing in Him for the forgiveness of our sin.

To believe in Jesus means that you no longer try to earn God’s approval through what you do, nor do you deny that you need forgiveness and rescue. Instead, you accept God’s free gift of eternal life. Belief or faith is simply being convinced or persuaded that something or someone is trustworthy (John 1:12; Ephesians 2:8-9).

Everyone who believes in Jesus is forgiven of their sin and receives eternal life. We can now know God personally and experience the life we were designed to live (John 3:16-17).

Which circle or arrow in the diagram best represents your life right now? Have you put your trust (believed) in Jesus alone to be reconciled to God?

POSSIBLE ANSWERS AND NEXT STEPS:

“Yes.”

Ask: “Tell me about that. When and how did that happen for you?”

Try to discern if the person is trusting in anything other than Christ alone.

Move to Grow and Go

“No, but I want to.”

Affirm their decision to believe and help them to tell God in prayer of their belief in Jesus.

Example: “Thank you God for loving me by sending your Son Jesus to die for me. I believe in His life, death and resurrection to rescue me from my sin and spiritual death. Thank you for forgiving my sins and giving me the free gift of eternal life.”

Welcome them to the Family of God!

“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.” 1 John 5:13

“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.” 2 Corinthians 5:17

Move to Grow and Go

“Not Sure” / “Not Yet” / “No.”

Ask: “What is keeping you from trusting in Jesus?”

Try to discern their willingness or unwillingness to believe.

For those willing, help answer their questions if possible.

For those unwilling, offer to pray for them and talk further at another time.

GROW

Everyone who believes in Jesus should then grow in their relationship with God. We grow by knowing God more deeply and living more like Him personally.

We begin to know Him and we become like Him by following His way of living (Ephesians 4:15).

GO

Followers of Jesus have the great calling and opportunity to go into the broken world to share the love of God and the good news of the gospel message (Matthew 28:19-20).

DISCOVERY BIBLE STUDY

Discovery Bible Study is an easy and meaningful way to read the Bible with friends in your life who do not know Jesus. The simple practice consists of reading a section of scripture and answering five basic questions. The goal is to facilitate an encounter between God's truth and your friend's heart. Be praying for God to reveal Himself to your friend through His Word.

Choose a passage of scripture, read it aloud (1-2 times).

Ask someone to retell it in their own words.
Answer these five questions:

1. What does this passage teach about God?
2. What does this passage teach about people or myself?
3. What stands out most in this passage?
4. Since God's word is true, how should I change as a result? What will I do in response to this passage?

Consider the following:

- Is there an example for me to follow?
- Is there a sin for me to avoid?
- Is there a command for me to obey?
- Is there a promise for me to claim?
- Is there a challenge for me to face?

5. With whom am I going to share this passage and what I am learning from the Bible?

Suggested Passages

Read through these 4 Core Passages about Jesus:

- John 3:1-21 (You must be born again)
- Mark 2:1-12 (Jesus has authority to forgive)
- Luke 7:36-50 (Forgive much/Love much)
- Luke 18:7-14 (Self-righteous/irreligious)

Read through the book of John.

Creation to Christ

Read through these passages for bigger picture of the Biblical narrative.

- Genesis 1:1-25
- Genesis 2:4-24
- Genesis 3:1-13
- Genesis 3:14-24
- Genesis 6:5-8
- Genesis 6:9-8:14
- Genesis 8:15-9:17
- Genesis 12:1-8, 15:1-6, 17:1-7
- Genesis 22:1-19
- Exodus 12:1-28
- Exodus 20:1-21
- Leviticus 4:1-35
- Isaiah 53
- Luke 1:26-38, 2:1-20
- Matthew 3; John 1:29-34
- Matthew 4:1-11
- John 3:1-21
- John 4:1-26, 39-42
- Luke 5:17-26
- Mark 4:35-41
- Mark 5:1-20
- John 11:1-44
- Matthew 26:17-30
- John 18:1-19:16
- Luke 23:32-56
- Luke 24:1-35
- Luke 24:36-53
- John 3:1-21

ADDITIONAL STUDY RESOURCES

ONLINE RESOURCES

netbible.org | cross references, word studies

biblestudytools.net | word studies

blueletterbible.org | word studies

planobiblechapel.org/soniclight | commentary

bestcommentaries.com | commentary database

Grace Bible Church does not always agree with the views of these commentaries. These are good tools to help understand hard passages, but the particular theological views reflect the author of the commentary and not those of Grace Bible Church.

DISCIPLESHIP/BIBLE STUDY RESOURCES

Living By the Book by Howard Hendricks and Charles Swindoll

A more in-depth book on how to study the Bible using the tools discussed in this packet.

The Master Plan of Evangelism by Robert Coleman

A highly motivational analysis of Jesus' own principles of evangelism and discipleship.

The Lost Art of Disciple Making by Leroy Eims

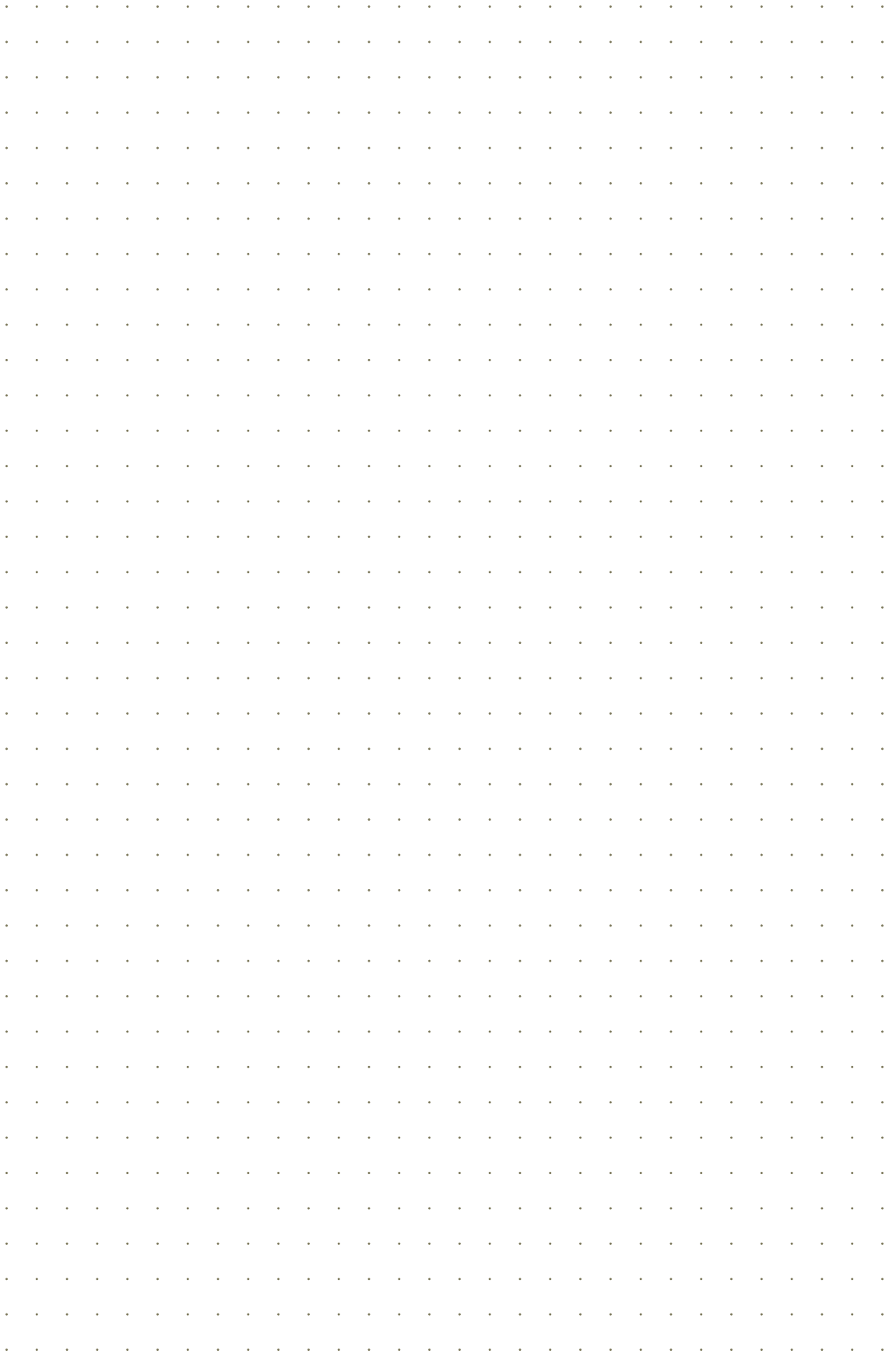
This practical resource will give you a detailed structure to follow and great content to cover as you begin to disciple a new believer.

A Survey of Bible Doctrine by Charles Ryrie

An easy-to-read, relatively short systematic theology primer that you can walk a new believer through to ground them in the faith.

Rooted by Grace Bible Church, College Station, TX

Nine conversations that establish a new believer with foundational truths and practices to follow Jesus for a lifetime. <https://www.grace-bible.org/resources/bible-study/46/rooted>



FIND MORE RESOURCES AT **GRACE-BIBLE.ORG**

The background features several large, organic, overlapping shapes. A prominent light blue shape, resembling a bowl or a cup, is positioned in the upper right. To its left is a smaller olive green shape. A thick, wavy orange shape runs across the top left. In the bottom left, there is a large, light cream-colored shape that looks like a stylized swirl or a drop. The overall composition is abstract and modern, with a dark charcoal background.

WE HELP PEOPLE FIND & FOLLOW JESUS