

VILLAGE

CHURCH

Bible Study Notes

Intro Question: Do you ever compare your spiritual life to others?

Pray: To embody more fully true identity in Jesus.

Read: Colossians 2:16-23

Questions about the passage:

- Why does Paul warn the Colossians not to let anyone 'judge' them regarding food, drink, and religious activities? How does this connect to what's come before in v6-15?
- Why does Paul use 'shadow' and 'substance' to describe the relationship between Jewish observance and Christ?
- What is false humility and what does it look like?
- Why does Paul describe those pursuing false spirituality as having 'lost connection with the Head'?
- What is Paul's point in v.20-23 about dying with Christ and worldly regulations? What are sensual indulgences?

Questions for us:

- What are some examples of unbiblical rules or laws that Christians follow?
- How do we restrain sensual indulgences? Where do 'boundaries' fit in?
- Is there a sensual indulgence you are trying to resist that you could share and ask for help with? Take some time to reflect before sharing.

Pray: that Village would continue to grow into full Christian maturity

Homework: Commit to fighting one sensual indulgence ongoingly.

Remind: Let Tim know if you are keen for deeper Bible growth.

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Overview:

Paul's letter to the Christians of Colosse in Asia Minor is one of his shortest letters. Paul is writing to a young church that's just starting to figure out what it means to believe in Jesus and follow him. He urges them to dig into the riches of the gospel and let it shape the way they live.

This week, Paul establishes that no one can deny the Colossians their status within the Body of Christ. He then warns against regulations that "belong to the world".

Paul's aim:

Paul writes to a church he's never visited to establish his apostolic authority and relationship with them. His core aim is to ground them deeply in the gospel so they grow to maturity in Christ. Urgently underlying everything is a warning - don't drift toward the alternative teachings circulating in Colosse.

Asia Minor Map:



Asia Minor in the time of Paul

Source: N. T. Wright, *Colossians and Philemon: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 12, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 18.

Praying to see 10% of the northern suburbs in gospel-centred churches & 250 by 2030 at Village Church who grow, gather, give & go, in love & joy to the glory of God

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Questions about the passage:

Why does Paul warn the Colossians not to let anyone 'judge' them regarding food, drink, and religious activities?

Paul's warning addresses a serious threat, exclusion from God's people based on failure to observe the Law's regulations. This is not a simple criticism or disagreement. The dietary rules and festival observances marked Jewish identity, and failure to follow them implied a person did not belong to God's people. By warning against this judgment, Paul is trying to protect the Colossians from being declared outside the covenant community.

Why does Paul use 'shadow' and 'substance' to address the false teaching?

The contrast is between the old age and the new age. Jesus has begun the age to come, and Jewish regulations were designed for when God's people formed a single racial, cultural, and geographical group, which is now no longer relevant as the church becomes worldwide. The Jewish observances were the shadows cast by the approaching new age, and that reality has arrived and belongs to Jesus and so walking in shadows misses the Light.

Why does Paul warn against those who practice 'false humility' and 'worship of angels'?

Paul employs heavy irony, those opposing him spend so much time in speculations about angels that they effectively worship them instead of God. In their spiritual fervour, they miss the main point.

Why does Paul describe those pursuing false spirituality as having 'lost connection with the Head'?

While the false teaching attempts to exclude the Colossians from God's people, the true test of belonging isn't dietary observance or spiritual experiences, but connection to Jesus and participation in his life. Those promoting the false teaching face the risk of exclusion from the body.

What is Paul's point in v.20-23 about dying with Christ and worldly regulations?

Through death, Jesus broke free from the apparent dominion the powers exercised over him, and those belonging to him have already broke free from that old power. Paul warns against regulations that 'belong to the world' as at its heart is still rebellion against God. These regulations are insufficient for true holiness as they address only physical things, rather than physical things in the full reality of God's Kingdom.

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Questions for us:

- **What are some examples of unbiblical rules or laws that Christians follow?**

Here's one example from me - Catholics only eat fish on certain days.

- **How do we restrain sensual indulgences? Where do 'boundaries' fit in?**

If not through 'rules' or 'laws' then how?

- **Is there a sensual indulgence you are trying to resist that you could share and ask for help with? Take some time to reflect before sharing.**

Remember that sensual means 'senses'. So it's not just about lust. This can include our relationship to food, or to sleep, or to what we watch or chasing after thrills etc.