

READING THE

# BIBLE

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COLOSSIANS

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**FIRST UNITED  
METHODIST CHURCH**  
BLUE SPRINGS

# BACKGROUND

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## **How do I read the bible?**

This is one of the biggest questions I get as a pastor. The simplest answer is pick up a bible, turn to Genesis 1, and start reading.

The more nuanced answer is what we will lead you through in this four-week exercise. Two of the most common ways to read the bible are devotional reading and bible study.

## **What is devotional reading?**

Devotional reading is focusing on listening to what God is trying to say through the scripture for you today.

Devotional reading is focused on your heart. It is reading the scripture as if it is God's love story to you today. What does God want you to know about his character, your situation, or how to love other people well in your current context?

## **What is bible study?**

Bible study is different than devotional reading. If devotional reading is focused on the heart, bible study is focused on the head. Bible study aims to answer such questions as to what other passages does this text reference, what did the original language say that we miss in English, or what is the context of the original audience?

Both are important for us to understand scripture and what God is saying to us through his living word. This four-week guide through Colossians will attempt to blend the different disciplines together as we walk through one of Paul's deepest theological letters.

As you read, notice where you feel God moving in yourself. Does this make you think something deeper or does this make your heart twinge?

# INSTRUCTIONS

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Each day, Monday through Friday, you will have a task to complete to walk through the four chapters of Colossians. We conveniently put a check box by each day if you like the satisfaction of completing a task like I do.

Monday and Wednesday you will read half of the chapter. When you read, underline or highlight at least three words or phrases that stick out to you. These might be thoughts that you have questions about, a powerful truth that you've never thought about before, or make you celebrate the goodness of God.

Tuesday and Thursday you will read and reflect on the half of the chapter you read the day prior. The breakdown might have a devotional feel to it as it looks at how to apply the scripture to your life today or more informational as we look at the background of the scripture. Please answer the reflection questions at the end with at least three sentences. This will help reinforce what you read and apply it to your life.

Friday you will have a prayer that encapsulates the chapter's theme and possibly our response to God. Before you start the prayer, take a moment to silence your mind and dwell on the goodness of God. Be intentional in your time of prayer, so that you can also be listening to the Holy Spirit, who is already at work in your life.



**MONDAY**  
**Read**



**TUESDAY**  
**Breakdown**



**WEDNESDAY**  
**Read**



**THURSDAY**  
**Breakdown**



**FRIDAY**  
**Pray**

# COLOSSIANS 1



■ **MONDAY** Read: **Colossians 1:1-14**

## GREETING

<sup>1</sup> From Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God's will, and Timothy our brother. <sup>2</sup> To the holy and faithful brothers and sisters in Christ in Colossae. Grace and peace to you from God our Father.

## THANKSGIVING AND PRAYER FOR THE COLOSSIANS

<sup>3</sup> We always give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you. <sup>4</sup> We've done this since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and your love for all God's people.

<sup>5</sup> You have this faith and love because of the hope reserved for you in heaven. You previously heard about this hope through the true message, the good news, <sup>6</sup> which has come to you. This message has been bearing fruit and growing among you since the day you heard and truly understood God's grace, in the same way that it is bearing fruit and growing in the whole world. <sup>7</sup> You learned it from Epaphras, who is the fellow slave we love and Christ's faithful minister for your sake. <sup>8</sup> He informed us of your love in the Spirit.

<sup>9</sup> Because of this, since the day we heard about you, we haven't stopped praying for you and asking for you to be filled with the knowledge of God's will, with all wisdom and spiritual understanding. <sup>10</sup> We're praying this so that you can live lives that are worthy of the Lord and pleasing to him in every way: by producing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God; <sup>11</sup> by being strengthened through his glorious might so that you endure everything and have patience; <sup>12</sup> and by giving thanks with joy to the Father. He made it so you could take part in the inheritance, in light granted to God's holy people. <sup>13</sup> He rescued us from the control of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son he loves. <sup>14</sup> He set us free through the Son and forgave our sins.

## TUESDAY Breakdown



Ever feel like you are taken for granted? If so, you're not alone.

When we don't receive the thanks we feel we deserve, we find ourselves getting angry. Ungratefulness creeps in quickly and is easy to justify.

"Really, a thank you note isn't too much to ask."

"I did all that work, and it's like he didn't even notice."

Sound familiar? Paul, the writer of *Colossians*, knows what it's like to feel like your good work goes unnoticed.

Paul traveled the Mediterranean preaching about Jesus and starting churches along the way. Some saw Paul's faithfulness as a gift and overflowed with thankfulness. Others questioned Paul's motives and second-guessed his teaching after he left (*1 Corinthians 1:11-12, 2 Corinthians 10:1-2, 2 Corinthians 12:19-21*).

In *Colossians 1*, the apostle Paul gives us insight into how we change our hearts toward the people around us. We pray.

The Message paraphrases *Colossians 1:3* this way: "Our prayers for you are always spilling over into thanksgivings. We can't quit thanking God our Father and Jesus our Messiah for you!"

Paul prayed consistently for the people God put in his path, and as he prayed, his heart aligned with God's heart for His people.

Ungratefulness sneaks into our lives in all sorts of ways. It happens when we compare our lives to someone else's, when we refuse to overlook an offense, when we get too busy to see God at work all around us.

But as we pray, the Holy Spirit reminds us of all that we do have and thankfulness overflows. Jesus gently whispers, "Show the same grace I've shown you," and thankfulness overflows. As we pray, we're forced to slow down and take stock of what we've seen, felt, and experienced. And thankfulness overflows.

**Reflect:**

Write three things in your life you're thankful for right now. Why is it important to remember these things?

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What is one way you can show gratitude toward those who encourage you and support you in your faith?

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## WEDNESDAY Read: Colossians 1:15-29



### HYMN ABOUT CHRIST'S WORK

<sup>15</sup>The Son is the image of the invisible God, the one who is first over all creation, <sup>16</sup>Because all things were created by him: both in the heavens and on the earth, the things that are visible and the things that are invisible. Whether they are thrones or powers, or rulers or authorities, all things were created through him and for him. <sup>17</sup>He existed before all things, and all things are held together in him. <sup>18</sup>He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the one who is firstborn from among the dead so that he might occupy the first place in everything. <sup>19</sup>Because all the fullness of God was pleased to live in him, <sup>20</sup>and he reconciled all things to himself through him—whether things on earth or in the heavens. He brought peace through the blood of his cross.

<sup>21</sup>Once you were alienated from God and you were enemies with him in your minds, which was shown by your evil actions. <sup>22</sup>But now he has reconciled you by his physical body through death, to present you before God as a people who are holy, faultless, and without blame. <sup>23</sup>But you need to remain well established and rooted in faith and not shift away from the hope given in the good news that you heard. This message has been preached throughout all creation under heaven. And I, Paul, became a servant of this good news.

### PAUL'S SERVICE FOR THE CHURCH

<sup>24</sup>Now I'm happy to be suffering for you. I'm completing what is missing from Christ's sufferings with my own body. I'm doing this for the sake of his body, which is the church. <sup>25</sup>I became a servant of the church by God's commission, which was given to me for you, in order to complete God's word. <sup>26</sup>I'm completing it with a secret plan[c] that has been hidden for ages and generations but which has now been revealed to his holy people. <sup>27</sup>God wanted to make the glorious riches of this secret plan[d] known among the Gentiles, which is Christ living in you, the hope of glory. <sup>28</sup>This is what we preach as we warn and teach every person with all wisdom so that we might present each one mature in Christ. <sup>29</sup>I work hard and struggle for this goal with his energy, which works in me powerfully.

## THURSDAY Breakdown



The crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus is the singular most important event in human history. Scandalous to Jews and foolishness to Greeks, the cross was the ultimate manifestation of the glory of God. The world's ways were condemned. The devil was dethroned and defeated. And God opened up a way, through the blood of Jesus, to a life of loving union with him. However, the arena in which we live out our relationship with God is not the prayer closet but our relationships with one another. Author Richard Rohr has written a lovely prayer that shows us how our life with God cannot be separated from our life with others. They really are, as Jesus taught, two sides of the same coin. I invite you to read this prayer slowly, allowing each truth to inform your life and your relationships.

I thank you, Lord Jesus, for becoming a human being so I do not have to pretend or try to be God. I thank you, Lord Jesus, for becoming finite and limited so that I do not have to pretend that I am infinite and limitless. I thank you, crucified God, for becoming mortal so I do not have to try to make myself immortal. I thank you, Lord Jesus, for becoming inferior so I do not have to pretend that I am superior to anyone... I thank you for becoming weak, so that I don't have to be strong. I thank you for being willing to be considered imperfect and strange, so I do not have to be perfect and normal. I thank you, Lord Jesus, for being willing to be disapproved of, so I do not have to try so hard to be approved and liked. I thank you for being considered a failure, so I do not have to give my life trying to pretend I'm a success. I thank you for being wrong by the standards of religion and state, so I do not have to be right anywhere. I thank you for being poor in every way, so I do not have to be rich in any way. I thank you, Lord Jesus, for being all of the things humanity despises and fears, so I can accept myself and others in you.

As Rohr says, we can be thankful for God's call for us "to die" to the manipulative and controlling ways of the world in order to embrace the crucified way of Jesus. Why? Because it is the pathway of Jesus to a life of power and resurrection.



**Reflect:**

Which line of Rohr's prayer do you identify with most? Why?

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What is one area of your life that you can rest in the perfection of Christ instead of striving for your own success?

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## FRIDAY Prayer



*Today we will pray Rohr's prayer from yesterday's devotional. As you pray, let go of the ways in which you try to succeed through your own merit. Let the Holy Spirit work in your life to let go and let God be the focus.*

I thank you, Lord Jesus, for becoming a human being so I do not have to pretend or try to be God. I thank you, Lord Jesus, for becoming finite and limited so that I do not have to pretend that I am infinite and limitless. I thank you, crucified God, for becoming mortal so I do not have to try to make myself immortal. I thank you, Lord Jesus, for becoming inferior so I do not have to pretend that I am superior to anyone... I thank you for becoming weak, so that I don't have to be strong. I thank you for being willing to be considered imperfect and strange, so I do not have to be perfect and normal. I thank you, Lord Jesus, for being willing to be disapproved of, so I do not have to try so hard to be approved and liked. I thank you for being considered a failure, so I do not have to give my life trying to pretend I'm a success. I thank you for being wrong by the standards of religion and state, so I do not have to be right anywhere. I thank you for being poor in every way, so I do not have to be rich in any way. I thank you, Lord Jesus, for being all of the things humanity despises and fears, so I can accept myself and others in you.

# THE SON

IS THE IMAGE OF  
THE INVISIBLE GOD,  
THE ONE WHO IS  
**FIRST OVER ALL**

CREATION

COLOSSIANS 1:15

# COLOSSIANS 2



## MONDAY Read: Colossians 2:1-15

<sup>1</sup> I want you to know how much I struggle for you, for those in Laodicea, and for all who haven't known me personally. <sup>2</sup> My goal is that their hearts would be encouraged and united together in love so that they might have all the riches of assurance that come with understanding, so that they might have the knowledge of the secret plan of God, namely Christ. <sup>3</sup> All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in him. <sup>4</sup> I'm telling you this so that no one deceives you with convincing arguments, <sup>5</sup> because even though I am absent physically, I'm with you in spirit. I'm happy to see the discipline and stability of your faith in Christ.

### ERROR THREATENING THE CHURCH

<sup>6</sup> So live in Christ Jesus the Lord in the same way as you received him. <sup>7</sup> Be rooted and built up in him, be established in faith, and overflow with thanksgiving just as you were taught. <sup>8</sup> See to it that nobody enslaves you with philosophy and foolish deception, which conform to human traditions and the way the world thinks and acts rather than Christ. <sup>9</sup> All the fullness of deity lives in Christ's body. <sup>10</sup> And you have been filled by him, who is the head of every ruler and authority. <sup>11</sup> In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not administered by human hands. The circumcision of Christ is realized in the stripping away of the whole self-dominated by sin. <sup>12</sup> You were buried with him through baptism and raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. <sup>13</sup> When you were dead because of the things you had done wrong and because your body wasn't circumcised, God made you alive with Christ and forgave all the things you had done wrong. <sup>14</sup> He destroyed the record of the debt we owed, with its requirements that worked against us. He canceled it by nailing it to the cross. <sup>15</sup> When he disarmed the rulers and authorities, he exposed them to public disgrace by leading them in a triumphal parade.

## TUESDAY Breakdown



As we begin our study today, again note that the historical background of Colossians is essential to understanding Paul's purposes in writing as well as applying his teaching rightly. False teachers in Colossae promoted a "higher spirituality" that, besides Jesus, demanded submission to heavenly intermediaries and ascetic rules, among other things, for true holiness (Colossians 2:16–23). Consequently, the apostle wrote to the Colossians to stress the preeminence and sufficiency of Christ, not so that Christians might think true spirituality has to do only with having a personal relationship with Jesus (at the exclusion of fellowship with His church), but to show that salvation rests on Christ alone, as proclaimed in the apostolic gospel (1:1–23).

Today's passage offers a profound reflection on the sufficiency of Jesus. In Christ, Paul explains, are "hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (2:3). The apostle is not saying that there are secrets about Jesus hidden to all the church except for a select few; rather, he means that every Christian has access to wisdom and knowledge sufficient for holy living in Jesus. Paul likely draws on Old Testament wisdom here and its linking of wisdom and knowledge. Knowledge is equivalent to the intellectual content of the faith, and wisdom is the ability to see reality as God does, enabling people to apply knowledge in a life that pleases the Creator and creates godly abundance (*Proverbs 2; Ecclesiastes 2:26*). We are being told in *Colossians 2:3* that everything we need to know about the Father and how to properly interpret reality and live to His glory is accessible to all believers in His Son. Matthew Henry comments, "The treasures of wisdom are hidden not from us, but for us, in Christ."

Yet the wisdom and knowledge in Christ is hidden to the world in a different sense. Paul elsewhere speaks of the wisdom of Jesus and His cross as foolish to fallen humanity, not because the idea of an atonement is too hard for people to grasp but because they lack the moral ability to see themselves and the world as God does. Apart from divine grace, people cannot rejoice in the cross, the means whereby the Lord atoned for sin, maintained His righteousness, and absolved His people (*Romans 3:21–26; 1 Corinthians 1:18–25*).

Unless the Spirit opens the eyes of sinners, they remain blind to the truth and sufficiency of the gospel (*Romans 1:18–32*).

The gospel is scandalous to unbelievers even though Christ is the wisdom of God (*1 Corinthians 1:18–31*). But it is important to note that the message is to be scandalous, not our actions. We must take care not to add to the offense of the gospel by being rude and self-righteous, even though we must always clearly proclaim God’s salvation. Let us pray for unbelievers we know, and even for ourselves, that all might see the sufficiency of Christ.

**Reflect:**

When did you meet Jesus? How has your relationship with Jesus grown since then?

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What’s one practice that’s allowed your relationship with Jesus to grow deeper?

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What would it look like to invite Jesus into something new today? Think of an area where you don’t feel dependent on Jesus, and ask Him to join you there.

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## WEDNESDAY Read: Colossians 2:16-23



<sup>16</sup> So don't let anyone judge you about eating or drinking or about a festival, a new moon observance, or sabbaths.

<sup>17</sup> These religious practices are only a shadow of what was coming—the body that cast the shadow is Christ. <sup>18</sup> Don't let anyone who wants to practice harsh self-denial and worship angels rob you of the prize. They go into detail about what they have seen in visions and have become unjustifiably arrogant by their selfish way of thinking.

<sup>19</sup> They don't stay connected to the head. The head nourishes and supports the whole body through the joints and ligaments, so the body grows with a growth that is from God.

<sup>20</sup> If you died with Christ to the way the world thinks and acts, why do you submit to rules and regulations as though you were living in the world? <sup>21</sup> "Don't handle!" "Don't taste!" "Don't touch!" <sup>22</sup> All these things cease to exist when they are used. Such rules are human commandments and teachings. <sup>23</sup> They look like they are wise with this self-made religion and their self-denial by the harsh treatment of the body, but they are no help against indulging in selfish immoral behavior.

## THURSDAY Breakdown



The divisions broke down something like this: band kids, ROTC kids, jocks, smokers, geeks, preppies, and finally, the ultra-cool kids who transcended all other groups.

Long after high school ends, many of us can still recall the cliques that filled our lunchrooms. To belong to a particular group, you had to dress, talk, and act a certain way. You had to like the same things, like the same people, and, yes, dislike the same people. Life in a clique was about judging others and being judged.

In *Colossians*, Paul is warning the church in Colossae not to judge one another based on ceremonial religious laws. Religious people in Paul's day clung to Old Testament tradition and added many rules of their own. If you did not precisely follow these burdensome laws, you were unfit to be part of their group.

In *Colossians 2:17-19*, Paul reminds the church that we find our identity in Christ, not our traditions or denominations. We are loved and accepted, not for what we do but because we're His.

"Don't tolerate people who try to run your life, ordering you to bow and scrape, insisting that you join their obsession with angels and that you seek out visions" (*Colossians 18, MSG*). Paul says people like this have lost touch with Jesus, the reason for our faith.

Jesus fulfilled all the laws in the Old Testament (*Matthew 5:17*). He is the head of the church and the one who calls the shots. When we follow Jesus' example and His lead, we might find ourselves outside others' expectations. But we'll always be right where we need to be.



**Reflect:**

Is there a group at work, school, or socially where you find yourself trying to fit in?

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How might you be compromising your relationship with Jesus to do so?

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Do you see cliques within the church? What's one way you can help bridge those gaps in your church family?

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## FRIDAY Prayer



*Today our prayer comes to us from a Methodist prayer of unity. This prayer is for unity in our communities, across broken bridges, and ultimately peace that we may only see in the world to come. However, we can still hope for and embody that unity for the people around us. As you pray, allow the Holy Spirit to use you as a peacemaker.*

Gracious God,

We are a people who strive with one another, but we remember. We remember Joseph whose brothers threw him away, but he forgave them and became their salvation.

We remember Jacob and Esau who fought in their mother's womb, but they became reconciled on the battlefield.

We remember your people, who suffered in exile, and Queen Esther who took a stand 'for such a time as this' to end the strife.

And still we strive against one another.

Our brothers strive against sisters,

Mothers and fathers strive against daughters and sons

We strive among races, among nations, among classes

We strive across the miles and across the ages

We strive in the Christian family, in the human family

But Jesus prayed for our unity.

Almighty God, You reconciled us to yourself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.

You created one humanity out of the two.

You have broken down the dividing wall of hostility.

You say there is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, slave nor free . . .

You say, "How good it is for us to dwell in unity."

You say "There's plenty good room."

You say, "Git on board, there's room for many more."

You say, "Lay down your sword and shield down by the riverside and study war no more."

Amen.

**BE ROOTED**

AND BUILT UP **IN HIM**

**BE ESTABLISHED**

IN **FAITH,**

**AND OVERFLOW**

WITH **THANKSGIVING**

JUST AS YOU  
WERE TAUGHT.

COLOSSIANS 2:7

# COLOSSIANS 3



## MONDAY Read: Colossians 3:1-17

### YOUR LIFE HIDDEN IN CHRIST

<sup>1</sup>Therefore, if you were raised with Christ, look for the things that are above where Christ is sitting at God's right side. <sup>2</sup>Think about the things above and not things on earth. <sup>3</sup>You died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup>When Christ, who is your life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.

<sup>5</sup>So put to death the parts of your life that belong to the earth, such as sexual immorality, moral corruption, lust, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry). <sup>6</sup>The wrath of God is coming upon disobedient people because of these things. <sup>7</sup>You used to live this way, when you were alive to these things. <sup>8</sup>But now set aside these things, such as anger, rage, malice, slander, and obscene language. <sup>9</sup>Don't lie to each other. Take off the old human nature with its practices <sup>10</sup>and put on the new nature, which is renewed in knowledge by conforming to the image of the one who created it. <sup>11</sup>In this image there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all things and in all people.

<sup>12</sup>Therefore, as God's choice, holy and loved, put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. <sup>13</sup>Be tolerant with each other and, if someone has a complaint against anyone, forgive each other. As the Lord forgave you, so also forgive each other. <sup>14</sup>And over all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. <sup>15</sup>The peace of Christ must control your hearts—a peace into which you were called in one body. And be thankful people. <sup>16</sup>The word of Christ must live in you richly. Teach and warn each other with all wisdom by singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Sing to God with gratitude in your hearts. <sup>17</sup>Whatever you do, whether in speech or action, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus and give thanks to God the Father through him.

## TUESDAY Breakdown



Born in the former Yugoslavia, Mother Teresa joined the Sisters of Loretto in Ireland at age seventeen, and within a year was sent to Calcutta, India. There, she witnessed the profound suffering of the poor who lived and died on the streets. In 1950, she founded the Missionaries of Charity, a religious order dedicated to serving the sick and dying in the city's slums. In 1979, she won the Nobel Peace Prize for her work. By 2015, there were more than 5,600 workers serving in 844 communities around the world. Mother Teresa made no distinction between being open to the heart of Christ in prayer and being open to the hearts of others, especially the hearts of the poor. Here is how she describes what it really means to love others in Jesus' name:

It is easy to love people far away. It is not always easy to love those close to us. It is easier to give a cup of rice to relieve hunger than to relieve the loneliness and pain of someone unloved in your own home. Bring love into your home for this is where our love for each other must start. The greatest disease in the West today is not TB (tuberculosis) or leprosy; it is being unwanted, unloved, and uncared for. We can cure physical diseases with medicine, but the only cure for loneliness, despair, and hopelessness is love. There are many in the world who are dying for a piece of bread but there are many more dying for a little love... At the end of life we will not be judged by how many diplomas we have received, how much money we have made, how many great things we have done. We will be judged by "I was hungry and you gave me something to eat. I was naked and you clothed me. I was homeless and you took me in."

And Mother Teresa, in following the way of Christ by loving one person at a time, changed the world.

**Reflect:**

Describe a time where it was hard to love someone who is close to you?

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Who is someone who you could make feel loved and less lonely today? Make a plan to love someone well today.

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## WEDNESDAY Read: Colossians 3:18-25



<sup>18</sup>Wives, submit to your husbands in a way that is appropriate in the Lord. <sup>19</sup>Husbands, love your wives and don't be harsh with them. <sup>20</sup>Children, obey your parents in everything, because this pleases the Lord. <sup>21</sup>Parents, don't provoke your children in a way that ends up discouraging them.

<sup>22</sup>Slaves, obey your masters on earth in everything. Don't just obey like people pleasers when they are watching. Instead, obey with the single motivation of fearing the Lord. <sup>23</sup>Whatever you do, do it from the heart for the Lord and not for people. <sup>24</sup>You know that you will receive an inheritance as a reward. You serve the Lord Christ. <sup>25</sup>But evildoers will receive their reward for their evil actions. There is no discrimination.

## THURSDAY Breakdown



Having described in 3:12–17 some characteristics of the new humanity in Christ—humanity as it should be—Paul in verses 18–21 depicts what this means for family relationships. This progression conveys two fundamental truths: First, living as new people starts at home; our families should be the first to see our new life in Christ, even if it can be harder to be Christlike toward them than others. Second, Jesus’ disciples are not concerned merely with “otherworldly” realities, for He calls us to die to self in all our relationships.

Paul addresses wives, husbands, and children in today’s passage. His words are strange to our culture, for the notion of a wife’s submission to her husband is rejected as passé, and some days it seems that obeying one’s parents is also now optional. Modern scholars uncomfortable with verse 18 range from evangelicals who say it is a temporary rule adopted to make Christianity palatable to first-century Romans to liberal theologians who call the text oppressive and deny its divine authority.

In addressing these issues, Christian men especially must recognize that female oppression has for too long been among us. Women have not always been treated like the divine image-bearers they are (Genesis). Napoleon Bonaparte’s comment that “women are nothing but machines for producing children” reflects past sentiments of many Westerners, including, sadly, many in the church. Still, female oppression and the misuse of Scripture to justify it does not mean Paul’s rules were temporary. Similarities exist between *Colossians 3:18–21* and first-century cultural norms, but the apostle’s guide for families has Christian ideas (love, pleasing the Lord, not discouraging children) woven throughout. It is hard to keep these ideas and discard the unpopular injunctions. Paul’s confrontation with paganism also makes it unlikely at best that he shaped his ethics to make Christianity more acceptable to non-Christians.

The triune God defines equality differently than our culture, and His Word judges us, not vice versa (*1 Corinthians 1:18–25*). He shows us that equality and submission are not mutually exclusive. The Father



and the Son are coequal in deity and dignity, but the Son submits Himself to the Father (*John 1:1–4; 5:19–20*). Similarly, husbands and wives are of equal value, though wives submit themselves to their own husbands.

**Reflect:**

What difficulties do you have with this section of scripture?

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How do you reconcile scripture when you struggle with what it says?

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## FRIDAY Prayer



*Today's prayer is the Wesley Covenant Prayer. Traditionally groups would pray this prayer as they came together for small groups and bible study. As you pray, allow the Holy Spirit to reconnect your soul with the author and perfecter of your faith.*

I am no longer my own, but yours.

Put me to what you will, place me with whom you will.

Put me to doing, put me to suffering.

Let me be put to work for you or set aside for you,

Praised for you or criticized for you.

Let me be full, let me be empty.

Let me have all things, let me have nothing.

I freely and fully surrender all things to your glory and service.

And now, O wonderful and holy God,

Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer,

you are mine, and I am yours.

So be it.

And the covenant which I have made on earth,

Let it also be made in heaven.

Amen.

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THEREFORE,  
AS **GOD'S CHOICE**  
**HOLY & LOVED**

— PUT ON —

**COMPASSION, KINDNESS,  
HUMILITY, GENTLENESS,  
AND PATIENCE.**

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COLOSSIANS 3:12

# COLOSSIANS 4



## MONDAY Read: Colossians 4:1-6

<sup>1</sup> Masters, be just and fair to your slaves, knowing that you yourselves have a master in heaven.

<sup>2</sup> Keep on praying and guard your prayers with thanksgiving.

<sup>3</sup> At the same time, pray for us also. Pray that God would open a door for the word so we can preach the secret plan of Christ—which is why I'm in chains. <sup>4</sup> Pray that I might be able to make it as clear as I ought to when I preach. <sup>5</sup> Act wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. <sup>6</sup> Your speech should always be gracious and sprinkled with insight so that you may know how to respond to every person.

## TUESDAY Breakdown



Charles Spurgeon, often called the “Prince of Preachers,” had this to say about Colossians 4:2.

Why should the church continue in prayer? For several reasons, and the first is, God will answer the church when it prays! It is not possible that God should refuse to hear prayer; it is possible for God to bid the sun stand still and the moon to stay her monthly march. It is possible for God to bid the waves freeze in the sea—possible for him to quench the light of the stars in eternal darkness. But it is not possible for him to refuse to hear prayer that is based on his promise and offered in faith. He can reverse nature, but he cannot reverse his own nature, and he must do this before he can forbear to hear and answer prayer. Prayer should be mingled with praise. God is as pleased to give us his blessing as ever we are to receive it. It is as much to his honor as it is to our comfort. He takes more pleasure in our prayers than we do in his answers. Therefore, we ought to come boldly. We ought to come with thankfulness in our hearts and on our lips and join the hymn of praise with the cry of prayer.

Even though Spurgeon sees that it is impossible for God not to hear a prayer, there are times when it seems that God is distant in our lives. In those times, it may be difficult to pray. It may be difficult to see the light at the end of the tunnel. It may seem like it would be easier to lower your head and shove your way through the problems life throws at you. However, this is when Spurgeon’s words ring all the truer. When we are at our lowest, God can pull us to our highest points. When we are in the darkest pit, God’s love can shine the brightest. This is when God can defy nature itself and bring new life into your situation. Often God’s power is seen through our closest friends. Today, we reflect on who has been an answered prayer for us in our lives as well as how can we be used by God and answer someone else’s prayer.

**Reflect:**

How have you experienced God's love through others during a hard time?

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Who do you know who is in a dark place? What is one way you love that person well today?

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Do you know someone who has an ongoing struggle? What would it look like to care for that person over a longer period of time?

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## WEDNESDAY Read: Colossians 4:7-18



### FINAL GREETING

<sup>7</sup>Tychicus, our dearly loved brother, faithful minister, and fellow slave in the Lord, will inform you about everything that has happened to me. <sup>8</sup>This is why I sent him to you, so that you'll know all about us and so he can encourage your hearts. <sup>9</sup>I sent him with Onesimus, our faithful and dearly loved brother, who is one of you. They will let you know about everything here.

<sup>10</sup>Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, says hello to you. So does Mark, Barnabas' cousin (you received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him). <sup>11</sup>Jesus, called Justus, also says hello. These are my only fellow workers for God's kingdom who are Jewish converts. They have been an encouragement to me. <sup>12</sup>Epaphras, who is one of you, says hello. He's a slave of Christ Jesus who always wrestles for you in prayers so that you will stand firm and be fully mature and complete in the entire will of God. <sup>13</sup>I can vouch for him that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and Hierapolis. <sup>14</sup>Luke, the dearly loved physician, and Demas say hello.

<sup>15</sup>Say hello to the brothers and sisters in Laodicea, along with Nympha and the church that meets in her house. <sup>16</sup>After this letter has been read to you publicly, make sure that the church in Laodicea reads it and that you read the one from Laodicea. <sup>17</sup>And tell Archippus, "See to it that you complete the ministry that you received in the Lord."

<sup>18</sup>I, Paul, am writing this greeting personally. Remember that I'm in prison. Grace be with you.

## THURSDAY Breakdown



After Paul came to know Jesus, he traveled extensively, starting churches wherever he went.

Much of the New Testament is made up of Paul's letters to the people he mentored and the churches he helped start. His letters answer specific questions church leaders were asking. They caution, challenge, and even course-correct those who might be going astray.

But no matter how personal Paul's letters got, they were shared, read aloud, and passed around from church to church so everyone could grow in their knowledge and understanding of God.

"After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea" (*Colossians 4:16*).

Just like Paul encouraged the early churches to swap letters and learn from one another's successes and failures, we can learn from each other's experiences of who God is and how He's shown up for us.

The church is a place of great diversity. Someone in another state or part of the world is seeing God show up in ways we may not know are possible. And as wise as our pastors and teachers are, no one knows everything there is to know about God (*1 Corinthians 13:12*).

Too often, we find the authors and speakers we like, and we stick to them. We look for people of a similar age and stage of life, and we stick together.

Each person bears God's image uniquely and has something to contribute to our greater understanding of God and His kingdom. What might we miss out on by only reading and listening to people who are like us?

*1 Thessalonians 5:21* encourages us to test everything and hold fast to what is good. We don't have to fear branching out and learning from others. We have the Holy Spirit as our guide and the Bible as our firm foundation.



So read and listen. Test and see what aligns with Scripture. All the wisdom, history, knowledge God has poured out on His people past and present is yours for the taking.

**Reflect:**

When's the last time you read or listened to someone from another church or denomination? How did that experience expand your view of God?

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Why do think Christians tend to fall into camps? What's one way you can pursue uncommon unity in your own learning?

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## FRIDAY Prayer



*Today we pray the prayer attributed to St. Francis of Assisi. No matter how many times you have prayed this, come to the words with fresh eyes. As you pray, allow the Holy Spirit to reveal to you how you could be more selfless.*

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:  
where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon;  
where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light;  
where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek  
to be consoled as to console,  
to be understood as to understand,  
to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive,  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Amen.

# BREAKDOWN AND PRAYER RESOURCES:

Peter Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Relationship: Day by Day*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017)

Charles Spurgeon, *CSB Spurgeon Study Bible*, (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017)

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/call-to-worship-and-prayer-for-unity-and-reconciliation-for-the-ninth-sunda>

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/blog/the-wesley-covenant-prayer-and-the-baptismal-covenant>

<https://newspring.cc/devotionals/colossians-a-28-day-bible-study>

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/scripture/colossians/?type=devotional&sort=scripture>

<https://www.ourcatholicprayers.com/the-prayer-of-st-francis.html>



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