

Bible Month 2019: Colossians

“Growing in the knowledge of God”

This booklet supplements the materials provided in the Bible Month magazine on Colossians.

This can be downloaded from: www.preachweb.org/biblemonth

We recommend that you read the whole book of Colossians before starting. You may find it helpful to read it in different translations- websites like www.biblegateway.com will allow you to choose from many different translations for free.

The suggested format for the group studies is

- Starter question or activity
- Discussion based on the passage
- Reflection
- Prayer

You don't have to stick to this but please do leave time for prayer and reflection as it can easily get squeezed out. Feel free to either focus on a few of the questions that interest your group or to follow up questions and discussions that interest you.

We've also included at the back some suggestions for a different type of study- meditating on a Bible passage, either alone or in groups.

Groups will need someone or a team to plan the sessions, facilitate the discussions and ensure that everything needed is provided.

Let us know how you get on!

Week One: Colossians 1:1-23



You will need: Bibles, paper and pens

Starter:

Welcome everyone to the group and introduce each other. You may need to go over how the group will work and set some ground rules.

Pray together that you will enjoy studying Colossians and learn from it.

Read: Colossians 1: 1-23

Invite members of the group to read silently through Colossians.

Alternatively, divide into four sub-groups, and ask each sub-group to read through a different section (1:1-23; 1:24 – 2:15; 2:16 – 3:17; 3:18 – 4:18).

Discuss:

Ask members of the group to jot down their thoughts on the following features of Colossians, or one of its sections:

- What do we find out about **Paul**?
- What do we find out about the **intended readers** of the letter?
- What are the major **divisions** within the letter or the section?
- What are the key **themes**?

Draw together the observations from members of the group. You could do this by using one sheet for each of the major areas of discussion: Paul, Readers, Divisions, Themes. Go through each of the sections of the chapter, and ask individuals or the groups to say what they've noticed.

- Discuss the opening section of the letter (1:1-23). How do the themes that Paul mentions relate to the book as a whole?

Reflection:

What kind of letter would you like your church to receive? What would it include? How might it encourage people in their faith? Write the opening paragraph. If you'd like to, carry on at home.

Prayer:

- Thank Jesus Christ for what he has done for us and pray for our world to be transformed by it.
- Share any prayer needs and pray for each other.

Week Two: Colossians 1:24-2:15

You will need: Bibles



Starter:

Ask the group if they can think of a time when they worked hard for something. Did they achieve it? Was it worth it?

Read: Colossians 1:24-2:15

Discuss:

- Paul says he 'rejoices' in his sufferings for the sake of the Gospel. Why do you think that is? Have you ever suffered for doing something right? How did you react?
- What is the 'mystery' Paul talks about (1:26, 2:2)?
- What does it mean to be 'mature in Christ' (1:28)? How do we know if we are mature? How can we become more mature?
- What sort of challenges do you think the Colossians were facing? How does Paul encourage them to react? (2:6-8)

Reflection:

What challenges are you or your church facing that stop you behaving in a 'mature' way? What might Paul suggest to help you? Write another paragraph for your letter that you started last week.

Prayer:

- Pray for those around the world who are suffering for their faith (you may want to look at www.opendoorsuk.org for ideas)
- Share any prayer needs and pray for each other.

Week Three: Colossians 2:16-3:17



You will need: Bibles, paper and pens

Starter:

What rules have you broken in your life? (N.B. keep it light!)

Read: Colossians 2:16-3:17

Discuss:

Ask members of the group, individually or in pairs or small groups, to identify the contrasts Paul draws in this section of the letter. Focus particularly on two sets of contrasts; the contrasts between Paul's view and that of his opponents (2:16-23), and the contrast between the old way of life and the new way of life (3:1-17).

Draw together the observations from members of the group. You could do this using paper, with one page exploring the contrast between 'opponents' and 'Paul', and another page exploring the contrast between 'new life' and 'old life.'

Think about whether there are times when it's ok to be angry- how is that different from what Paul is talking about?

Discuss what these contrasts tell us about Paul's vision of the gospel. How does life in the way of Christ today contrast with competing visions and values in wider society?

Reflection:

What are your 'clothes' like (v12)? Are you wearing love? Spend some time thinking about the message your words and actions say about you. Write another paragraph for your letter.

Prayer:

- "Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all." Pray for unity and peace in the church, in our nation, and across the world.
- Share any prayer needs and pray for each other.

Week Four: Colossians 3:18-4:18



You will need: Bibles

Starter:

Who do you live with, or is important in your life? Do you always get on?

Read: Colossians 3:18-4:18

Discuss:

Discuss the household code (3:18- 4:1):

- Which members of the household does Paul address?
- How does Paul encourage them to behave?
- How do Paul's instructions here relate to the surrounding passages, 3:1-16 and 4:2-6?
- Who are the people around Paul who make up his 'household'? (4:7-14)

Explore the current 'household arrangements' of members of the group. What are the challenges that each person faces? How do they live out their faith in that context?

Reflection and Prayer:

Paul tells the Colossians to 'devote themselves to prayer.' What does that mean?

In the light of what you have discussed over the last few weeks, what or who do you feel you need to pray for? Some ideas might include:

- Following Jesus in your day to day life and in your homes,
- To be 'clothed' with good things,
- Your church and especially church leaders,
- To be a witness to what Jesus has done for the world,
- For friends and family and their material and spiritual needs.

Pray for each other and for some of the needs you have discussed.

Reviewing Bible Month:

Share together what you have discovered during Bible Month. Write down any insights or actions that you hope to consider further in the coming weeks.

We'd love to hear how you got on. Pass on any feedback you'd like to share on to the circuit office.

If you've written a letter to your church as part of your reflections, is there anyone you feel you should share it with? Why not talk to your small group leader or your minister about whether there is an opportunity to share your thoughts?

Meditating on the Bible



Rather than use the questions for each passage, you might prefer to use a different approach to encouraging people to think about a passage.

Invite members of the group to read and reflect on a few verses, focusing on the following questions:

- a) **Teaching:** what does this text teach me about God or my faith?
- b) **Thanksgiving:** what can I praise and thank God for in this passage?
- c) **Confession:** How can this passage lead me to confess and turn away from sin?
- d) **Prayer:** How can this passage guide me in my prayer now?

Spend some time together praying through each of these areas, allowing the reflections to shape your prayer.

Discuss in the wider group the different dimensions of the text that emerged. How did the passage speak more powerfully through considering it in this way?