

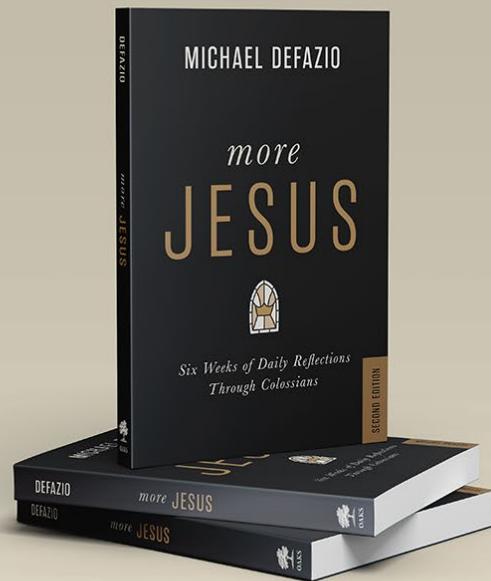
# COLOSSIANS

MICHAEL DEFAZIO

*13 Sessions*



*A Companion Book*



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## APPROACHING COLOSSIANS (1:1-2)

### Opening Thoughts

- Why Colossians?
- When and why Paul wrote Colossians –

Colossians 1:1-2

- “grace and peace”
- Everything Paul touches turns to . . .
- Every worldview has two things. Paul gives us his:
  - Goal:
  - Means:

### Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. What is the most important letter you have ever written or received? What makes it stand out?
2. What role has Colossians played in the shaping of your faith up to this point (that you are aware of)?
3. Generally speaking, what do you expect from studying the Bible? What do you want from this study of Colossians?
4. What do you know about Paul coming into this study? What is the significance of him being an “Apostle”?
5. When you read the “grace and peace” line in Paul’s letters, how often do you slow down and think through what he’s saying? What are we missing when we fail to take a close look?

## INTERRUPT FORGETTING (1:1-14)

### Opening Thoughts

- Looking back and ahead . . .
- What is going on in 1:1-14?

Remember *who you are* (1:1-2)

- “in Colossae, in Christ”
- “saints” / “holy people”

Remember *what God has done* (1:3-8)

- Faith (and) love (from) hope –
- The “fruit” of the gospel

Remember *where God is taking you* (1:9-14)

- Growing in *wisdom* . . .
- “walking worthily”

Those who fall first drift; those who drift first forget; so . . .

### Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. What was going on in Colossae and how does that compare to our culture?
2. When was the last time you were tempted to think Jesus wasn’t sufficient to provide everything you need?
3. In what way have you seen God move in your life and in the lives of those around you?
4. Which of the things Paul prays for is most encouraging to you? Which is the one that you’re most excited about becoming?

## THE SUPREMACY OF CHRIST (1:15-20)

## Opening Thoughts

- Once more, the situation of Colossians –
- What Paul has said so far –

## Christ's Sufficiency and Supremacy (1:15-20)

- Christ is . . .
  - Sufficient Supreme
  - Supreme Sufficient
- Note Paul's emphasis on *totality* and *power* –
- Note the unique ("poetic") structure –

Christ's place in creation

### *Christ holds all things together*

Christ's place in reconciliation

- Pulling it all together . . .
  - What does Paul say and why?
  - Why stay with Jesus?

### *Questions for Discussion and Reflection*

1. What persons, institutions, or ideas compete with Jesus for your devotion?
2. What merits or strengths do these things/people have? What can they offer?
3. How does their power and promise compare to the credentials of Jesus?
4. What phrase from Colossians 1:15-20 stands out to you the most, and why?

# THE NECESSITY OF FAITH (1:21-23)

## Opening Thoughts and Overview

- Why spend a whole session on these few verses?
- Walking through Colossians 1:21-23 . . .

## Theological Issues Raised in 1:21-23

- Universalism
  - Why does this issue matter?
  - What motivates the current growth of universalism?
  - Does this view hold up to scrutiny? Why not?
- Calvinism
  - How do I interpret Colossians 1:21-23?
  - What is a (typical) “Calvinist” reading of Colossians 1:21-23?
  - Where do we agree?

## Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. When “theological” debates begin, how do you feel?
2. Why is it valuable for you to think through such things?
3. Why do you think universalism is on the rise? Do you find this idea compelling? Do you think it aligns with Scripture? Why or why not?
4. With respect to Calvinism, which interpretation do you find more satisfactory? Do you think this is an issue the church should divide over?
5. Why is it important to end by focusing on areas where we agree?

## THE RELIABILITY OF PAUL (1:24-2:5)

Paul Defends His Reliability (1:24-2:5)

- How does this section fit into Paul's argument? Why does he stress his own reliability?
- Note the structure:

*Paul rejoices in his suffering for them (1:24)*

*Paul speaks of Jesus as mystery and wisdom (1:25-28)*

*Paul labors for their maturity (1:29)*

*Paul speaks of Jesus as mystery and wisdom (2:1-3)*

*Paul rejoices in their growth apart from him (2:4-5)*

What Else We Learn From 1:24-2:5

- (1) Our work is . . .
- (2) Our work is . . .
- (3) Our work is . . .

### Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. Does Paul make it harder or easier for you to follow Jesus? Why?
2. Why can we just not choose to follow Jesus and take only the parts of Paul that we like?
3. What does Paul mean when he says he fills up what is lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions?
4. How do the lessons we learn about Paul's ministry relate to the work God has called you to do?

## JUST KEEP WALKING (2:6-15)

### Opening Thoughts

- Why is this sometimes seen as “Colossians in brief”?
- Paul’s “Thesis” –

Continue in Christ (2:6-15)

- Col 2:6-7
  - What Paul “received” . . .
  - Metaphors for spiritual maturity –
- Col 2:8
  - The context for what Paul is saying . . .
  - Tests to apply to ideas to “here is how you should live”
- Col 2:9-15
  - You won’t find a better . . .
  - You won’t find a better . . .

### Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. What would you say so far is the message of Colossians in your own words?
2. Which of Paul’s metaphors for spiritual maturity is most compelling to you?
3. What ideas compete with Jesus in attempting to guide the way you live? How do they measure up to the tests suggested by 2:8?
4. What do we learn about the person and work (identity and mission) of Christ in 2:9-15? What are the practical consequences of forgetting these truths?

## AVOID DEAD ENDS (2:16-23)

Colossians 2:16-23: *What are we talking about?*

- Generally, we're talking about various paths to . . .
- Specifically, we're looking at various (religious) practices –

Colossians 2:16-23: *What are we saying about these things?*

- Question: Are such things still ever helpful to us? If so, under what circumstances?
- Clear teaching: We must not allow others to \_\_\_\_\_ these practices on us.
- Implications:

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### *Questions for Discussion and Reflection*

1. What spiritual practices do you think are most important for growing in spiritual maturity?
2. How might these practices help and/or hinder your growth in Christ?
3. What was wrong with the various practices Paul is criticizing in Colossians?
4. What religious rituals have been imposed on you improperly – practices that are not sanctioned by Scripture as a matter of obedience?
5. What is something you learned from this text that you must never forget?

## SPIRITUAL FORMATION (3:1-17)

### Opening Thoughts

#### Biblical Anchors for Spiritual Formation

- Our \_\_\_\_\_ rooted in Christ's \_\_\_\_\_ work
  - Spiritual formation without the finished work of Christ . . .
  - What is grace “opposed” to according to Dallas Willard?
- Replacing below/old with \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_
  - Paul’s metaphors for formation –
  - Restoration of the original pattern for humanity –
- Individuals in community
  - Personal but not . . .
  - In Christ we have a new \_\_\_\_\_ identity
  - Paul takes us to church!
- New habits of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ (draw the image below!)

### Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. How badly do you want to become more like Jesus? Why?
2. What efforts have you made to grow in the past? What seems to have worked?
3. What can happen if we forget any of the anchors identified in this lesson?
4. What does God want you to do next?

## UNDERSTANDING AND REPLACING OUR SIN (3:1-17)

Reviewing the Basics of 3:1-17

Note the form of Paul's lists

- Sins of \_\_\_\_\_ 5+1 (idolatry)
- Sins of \_\_\_\_\_ 5+1 (deceit)
- Expressions of \_\_\_\_\_ 7+1 (love)

A Model for How This Works:

- We want. When we don't get things, we become angry.
- Questions to ask when we're angry:
  - Is my desire legitimate/good?
  - Am I appropriately angry?
  - What would love have me do next?

### *Questions for Discussion and Reflection*

1. How angry are you?
2. When have you handled anger in constructive ways? When have you handled it in destructive ways?
3. Where in your life can you identify the pattern suggested by how Paul describes our sin (unmet desires leading to anger)?
4. What are you angry about right now? What would this model have you do?
5. What difference does it make for all this what Christ provides us with everything we need?

## CHRIST'S SUFFICIENCY AT HOME AND WORK (3:18-4:1)

### General Observations

- Why does Paul talk about family and work?
- How does Paul talk about family and work?

### Specific Insights

- Marriage:
  - To what extent is Paul upholding patriarchy? What should we do with this?
  - What Paul says is clear and should be criticized with great caution.
  - o To wives:
  - o To husbands:
- Parenting:
  - Parents are clearly the \_\_\_\_\_ in the home.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ are singled out and admonished against pushing too hard.

Conclusion: How you treat the members of your own household demonstrates . . .

### *Questions for Discussion and Reflection*

1. What are the primary convictions that drive your approach to family? Where did you get them?
2. What is the most repeated word in this section? Why is that important?
3. How has Paul's teaching about roles in marriage and parenting been abused?
4. What are the positive possibilities of families operating according to Paul's instructions?

## ON SLAVERY AND WORK (3:18-4:1)

Col 3:18-4:1 – On Slavery and (the Absence of) Abolition

- The Bible and Slavery –
- Paul is not pro-slavery (1 Cor 7:21) but he does not call or work for outright abolition. Why?
- Paul does not call for outright abolition. He even encourages acceptance and working with the system, but he always sows seeds of its demise.

Col 3:18-4:1 – On Work

- Paul's instructions should help shape our doctrine of work.
  - The key to working well is to have a Christ-centered \_\_\_\_\_.
  - Here's the Question: What \_\_\_\_\_ us to work hard?
- This applies in different ways to “employees” and “employers”
  - If I answer to someone, remember . . .
  - If others answer to me, remember . . .

### *Questions for Discussion and Reflection*

1. What is at stake for us in this discussion about slavery?
2. What have you heard in the past about what the Bible says (or does not say) about slavery? How does this hold up to what we learned from this text?
3. What can you do to simultaneously uphold the authority of Scripture and fight slavery (and its underlying supports) wherever you see it?
4. How hard do you work? Why?
5. How does Colossians 3:18-4:1 impact the way you currently approach your job?

## LIFE ON MISSION (4:2-18)

### Opening Thoughts

Elements of Life on Mission (Colossians 4:2-18)

- Hardship
  - Note the shape of their Scripture intake –
  - Note Paul's assumptions about his letters –
- Team
  - Why so many names?
  - Note some of the specifics . . .
- Deeds/Words
  - *Walk* wisely –
  - *Speak* well . . .
- Prayer
  - How does Paul describe missional prayer?
  - How important is prayer to mission?

### Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. Which of these elements of mission is missing from your life?
2. Why is it important to remember that life on mission brings hardship?
3. How does Paul's comments about the letter to the Laodiceans shape your view of Scripture?
4. Why does Paul start with prayer? How well does your current prayer life reflect God's mission?

## FINAL THOUGHTS ON COLOSSIANS

### What I Hope You Remember

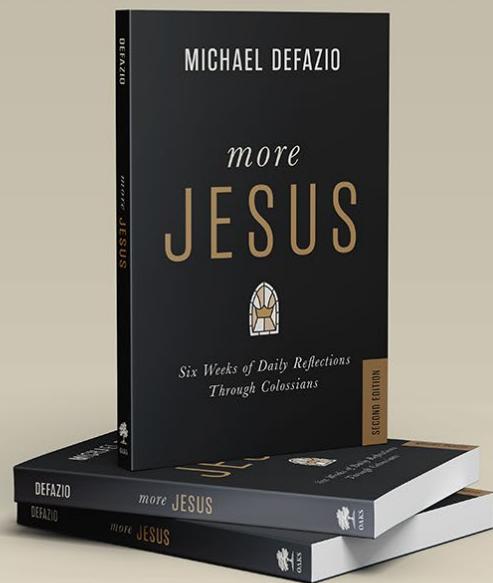
- Remember to meditate on the words of these letters.
- Remember the church.
  - The church is that body over which . . .
  - The church is God's appointed means of . . .
- Remember how sanctification works.
  - Basic Convictions:
    - o
    - o
  - Basic Pattern:
- Remember that Jesus is enough . . .

Where you go from here . . . (is up to you!)

### *Questions for Discussion and Reflection*

1. What are the five most important things you have learned about Jesus in this study (whether new information or reminder of what you already knew)?
2. How confident are you that Jesus is sufficient to provide everything you need?
3. What is something you have learned that you can share with someone else to encourage them?
4. How is God calling you to respond to what you've learned in this study of Colossians?

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