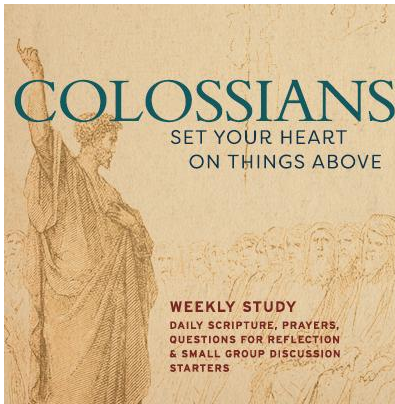




WEEKLY STUDY

Colossians - Week 1

It is easy to put our focus on the demands of the day and the things that stress us out. Without even knowing it we can place our trust in things that will inevitably let us down. In the book of Colossians, Paul teaches the early Christians to “set their hearts on things above.” It is a call to anchor our motivations, thoughts, and values not in earthly things but in the eternal, in Jesus. While maintaining our earthly responsibilities, the people who follow Jesus can set our hearts higher and find meaning, power, and peace. We have begun an 11-week study of Colossians where we will set our hearts and our minds on Jesus and find the way to truly live! This week, may you daily discover that Jesus is the center of everything!

For those of you continuing to pray through the Psalms daily, you will read Psalms 113-119 this week.

Please note our prayer focus for the week in the box below. Join us in seeing what God will do as we unite in prayer.

Peace of Christ,
Pastor Mark Youngman

If you are studying with your Providence Small Group or Discipleship Group, you can share from your own daily reflections and consider the Group Discussion questions below. If you would like to get connected visit prov.church/smallgroups.

Prayer Focus:

- Pray through world events this week. Pray that Christ will be known by more people to be central, supreme, and sufficient.

DAILY STUDY

MONDAY: COLOSSIANS 1.1-8 (NIV)

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

² To God's holy people in Colossae, the faithful brothers and sisters in Christ:

Grace and peace to you from God our Father.

³ We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, ⁴ because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all God's people—⁵ the faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven and about which you have already heard in the true message of the gospel ⁶ that has come to you. In the same way, the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world—just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God's grace. ⁷ You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, ⁸ and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.

- Paul wrote to the believers (holy people) in the city of Colossae. He wrote about the “true message of the gospel.” Those are important words in a world where many untrue words get airtime. Paul wanted to keep the church focused on the fact that Jesus is the most essential (centrality of Christ), the most important (supremacy of Christ), and he is all we need (the sufficiency of Christ). If you think about all of the messaging around Jesus today, it's understandable that one could be confused about who Jesus is. The same was true when the Christian movement was just beginning. What we say about who Jesus Christ is (Christology) matters. Consider what it means in your daily life to believe that Jesus is central, supreme, and sufficient.

- **Prayer Prompt: I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2.20)**
- *God, I want Jesus Christ to reign in my life. I don't want to make him smaller or more manageable to my finite mind. Jesus. Jesus. Jesus. Amen.*

TUESDAY: 1 CORINTHIANS 9.1-2

Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not the result of my work in the Lord? ² Even though I may not be an apostle to others, surely I am to you! For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

- Paul was expressing his apostleship of Christ Jesus. He wasn't one of the 12 disciples who spent time with Jesus, but he did have an encounter with the risen Jesus on the road to Damascus. It was the will of God that he be considered an apostle. Why does this matter? Paul's personal transformation through the saving work of Jesus Christ set him apart from the many other voices. It mattered to the people of Corinth, it mattered to the people of Colossae and it matters to us today. Once you have had an encounter with Jesus, your testimony carries a certain weight. When was the last time you shared with another person about what Jesus has done in your life?
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- **Prayer Prompt: At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there.¹⁰ Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"¹¹ "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin." (John 8.9-11)**
- *Jesus, I want to have a fresh encounter with you. I want others to see and hear the truth of the gospel through my life and through my words. Amen.*

WEDNESDAY: EPHESIANS 1.1 (NIV)

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,

To God's holy people in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus:

² *Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

- Paul addressed the Colossian believers as the holy and faithful brothers and sisters in Christ, and we see this important distinction in a few other places as well. Paul wrote to encourage followers of Jesus especially when he couldn't do so in person. He wanted to remind them that, while they still live in this world, they are set apart. It's a gift to us today as well. Can you imagine how Paul might address us today?
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- **Prayer Prompt: But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. (1 Peter 2.9)**

- *God, you have called me out to be a part of the royal priesthood of all believers. I am your special possession! Remind me today that I am designed to declare your praises. Amen.*

THURSDAY: ROMANS 1.8 (NIV)

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world.

- As you can see throughout this week's reading, Paul was consistent in how he addressed the communities of believers that he felt responsible for. He often thanked God for the church. As much as he would heap praise (and rebuke) the followers of Jesus, he always recognized that God was the cause of the goodness in his people. This is an important reality for the people of Providence Church. We recognize that "God did it!" on a regular basis.

We see signs of faithfulness among the people of the church? We thank God.
We have an extravagant Christmas offering to give away to others? We thank God.
What are things in your life for which you thank God?

- **Prayer Prompt: God did it for us. Out of sheer generosity he put us in right standing with himself. A pure gift. He got us out of the mess we're in and restored us to where he always wanted us to be. And he did it by means of Jesus Christ. (Romans 3.24, MSG)**
- *God, you are the One behind every good thing in this world. Let my faithfulness point to your goodness! Amen.*

FRIDAY: 1 CORINTHIANS 13.12-13 (NIV)

For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

¹³ *And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.*

- The themes of faith, hope and love are found in several places in Paul's writings. Most notably, perhaps, here in 1 Corinthians 13. Three things remain even as we wait to see Jesus face to face, they are faith, hope and love. Go back to Colossians 1.1-8 (Monday's reading) and see if you can find these themes there. Why do you think these three themes appear in Paul's writings?

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- **Prayer Prompt: We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Thessalonians 1.3)**
 - *Almighty God, you are faithful to produce in us the virtues of faith, hope and love. May the love I share today be purely inspired by the hope I have in you. Amen.*

SATURDAY: ROMANS 5.1-2 (NIV)

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,² through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God.

- We are justified through faith and we have peace with God because of the sufficiency of Jesus. He is all that we need. So often we are tempted to place Jesus among a list of good things that help us to accomplish our goals. The point that Paul makes is that we don't need to add anything to Jesus to make him "work" for our lives. He's it. In him, we are good. Good with God. Secure for eternity. How do you respond to this promise?
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- **Prayer Prompt: But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." (2 Corinthians 12.9)**
- *God, I have all I need in your Son Jesus Christ. I am sorry for the many things I trust in besides him. Amen.*

GROUP DISCUSSION

Use the questions below to guide your conversation.

1. Paul wrote Colossians in part because false teaching threatened the church's understanding of Jesus. Why do you think having a right understanding of who Jesus is matters so much? What can happen when our view of Jesus becomes distorted, even in seemingly small ways?
2. This week we were given three words to help frame our understanding of Jesus throughout Colossians: centrality, supremacy, and sufficiency. Jesus is at the center of everything, above everything, and enough for everything. Which of these three truths stands out most to you right now, and why?
3. Colossians warns us that something does not have to appear openly opposed to Jesus to begin taking his place. Even good things can become more central to us than Christ. What are some things that can slowly move toward the center of our lives or receive an importance that belongs to Jesus? How can we recognize when that is beginning to happen?
4. Paul connects knowing the truth about Christ with the way believers actually live. We do not live faithfully in order to earn salvation; our lives change because of who Jesus is and what He has done. How does having Jesus at the center change the way we approach our relationships, decisions, priorities, fears, or responsibilities?
5. The sermon closed with the reminder that sometimes what we need most is simply Jesus—the real, living Jesus. Where in your life right now do you most need to remember that Jesus is central, Jesus is supreme, and Jesus is enough? What might it look like to set your heart on him in that area this week? How can we pray for you this week?