



*Colossians: Knowing  
Christ in All His  
Fullness*



**PCC Spring Bible  
Conference**

**Dr. Doug Cullum  
May 17 - 19, 2009**



## Introduction

*For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority (Colossians 2:9-10).*

With these words, the Apostle Paul succinctly summarized the foundational thesis of his letter to the Colossian church. Fullness of life is graciously offered and found only in a living and growing relationship with God through Christ. This year's Bible Conference will journey with the apostle through the Colossian epistle. Along the way we will be invited to consider afresh God's provision for vibrant and faithful Christian living and the challenges that are pressed upon us by the culture in which we live.

You are welcome to engage in these sessions in whatever way works best for you. Some will want to prepare carefully for each session by reading the Bible passages ahead of time and following the suggestions included in this booklet. Others may not be able to find the time to prepare ahead, but will simply come to the sessions to take advantage of an opportunity to study and hear the Word. Still others will be able to find time to prepare for some sessions but not all.

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Wherever you find yourself, the goal of these sessions is to help you move forward in your walk with our Lord Jesus, immerse yourself in the Word, and be strengthened in your inner person to the glory of God. So whatever your circumstances, come as you are. Take this opportunity to grow in your knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

**Preparation suggestions for the conference as a whole:**

- Read the letter whole letter of Colossians, at one sitting if possible.
- What are your major impressions? What themes strike you as particularly important? Are there any words that seem significant
- What are the major sections in this epistle, and how do they relate to each other?
- If you were to summarize the doctrinal truths of Colossians, what would you include in your list?

The pages that follow provide space for your study notes:









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## **Sunday Worship, May 17**

8:30, 10:00, and 11:30 p.m.

### ***The Gracious Potential of Life in Christ***

Colossians 1:1-14

*And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God (Colossians 1:10).*

Paul's letter to the Colossians is remarkably applicable to the culture in which we live. From his prison cell in Rome, the apostle Paul had heard of the resilience of the Colossian believers in resisting a subtle form of false teaching. At the root of this false teaching was the lure of superior knowledge and the fullness of life that could be found in it.

Over the centuries since Paul first penned this letter, the same themes have been played over and over again, in various forms, as human-centered philosophies of life claim that the Christian gospel is passé. People are looking everywhere to find meaning and fullness in life.

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### **Preparation suggestions:**

Read Colossians 1:1-14.

- What are some ways that people in 21st-century North American culture seek to find meaning and fullness in life?
- How does Paul describe his recipients in verse 2? Note the phrases Paul uses to describe their character and relationship with God. Note also the language he uses to describe their location.
- Summarize Paul's prayer of commendation in verses 3-8. What do you learn about the foundation of the life of faith?
- What is the relationship between verses 3-8 and verses 9-14? Summarize the content of Paul's prayer in verses 9-14.
- What great acts of God's grace had the Colossian people experienced (12-14)?

The pages that follow provide space for your study and session notes:















## Sunday Afternoon, May 17

1:30 p.m.

### *The Lordship of Christ*

Colossians 1:15-23

*For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. (Colossians 1:19-20).*

In Colossians 1:15-23 we find one of the loftiest and most exalted descriptions of the Lord Jesus in all of scripture. Most New Testament scholars concur that these verses are a reflection of an early Christian hymn about the divinity of Jesus. In these verses we find a description of the supremacy and majesty of Christ. To put it another way, it is a description of the *Lordship* of Christ.

Of course, if Jesus Christ is truly Lord, then there are huge implications for those who seek to live for God. What are some of the implications of the Lordship of Christ for our everyday lives?



**Preparation suggestions:**

- Read Colossians 1:15-23.
- What do you learn about the Son from verses 15-20?
- How do you understand the relationship between the first (15-20) and second (21-23) paragraphs of this section?
- Contrast the Colossians' pre-Christian experience (21) with their experience in Christ (22). What do you learn about purpose or goal of the work of Christ (22)?
- What role or responsibility do believers have in maintaining their relationship with God through Christ (23)?

The pages that follow provide space for your study and session notes:

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**Sunday Afternoon, May 17**

2:45 p.m.

***Rooted and Built Up: The Path to  
Christian Maturity***

Colossians 2:6-23

*So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness (Colossians 2:6-7).*

With this passage, we come to the very heart of Paul's letter to the Colossians. Paul set the tone in chapter 1 by his words of affirmation for their faith, his prayer for them, and by his marvelous hymn of praise to the Lordship of Christ. But now Paul has finished setting the stage, and is ready to move into the matters that are his very reason for writing the epistle. In 2:6-7, Paul states the theme that encapsulates the content of the whole letter. One commentator put it this way: "In many ways these two verses sum up everything the writer has to say" (Lincoln, NIB XI, 620). Here is an exhortation—a command—to the original readers to carry on their faith in the path of Christian growth and maturity. Just as Christ was the beginning point of their faith, so cultivation of their relationship with Christ was the means of continuing in and deepening their faith.



**Preparation suggestions:**

- Read Colossians 2:6-23.
- What do you learn about the defining characteristics of the Christian life from verses 6-7?
- What are the distinctive benefits of life “in Christ” (9-15)?
- How do the warnings of this section (8, 16-23) relate to the positive truths contained in 6-7, and 9-15?

The pages that follow provide space for your study and session notes:

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**Monday, May 18**

6:30 p.m.

***The Upward Call***

Colossians 3:1-11

*Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God (Colossians 3:1).*

With chapter 3, Paul comes to his major practical exhortations and admonitions of the epistle. This is where the rubber meets the road in the everyday lives of his readers. Up to this point, Paul's teaching has been largely high-level, doctrinal instruction. Now Paul moves to the application of Christ's Lordship in the details of everyday life.

Paul's foundational exhortation extends through 3:17. We will consider it in two parts tonight. First, we will deal with 3:1-11, where Paul boldly addresses the decisive response believers must have toward anything contrary to our new life in Christ.

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**Preparation suggestions:**

- Read Colossians 3: 1-11.
- From verses 1-4, summarize the ground or basis of Paul’s exhortation that follows in verses 5-11.
- List the imperatives or commands found in 3:1-11. On the basis of these, how do you understand the responsibility of the believer in living a new life in Christ? What is Christ’s part? What is our part?

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**Monday, May 18**

7:45 p.m.

***Comprehensive Christianity***

Colossians 3:12-17

*And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him (Colossians 3:17).*

In 3:1-11, we heard Paul's pointed exhortation about the sorts of things that must be rooted out of our lives if we are to truly respond to God's upward call. Now, in 3:12-17, Paul offers a positive statement of the sort of qualities and actions that are to replace those things that are unfitting for life in Christ. Here is a picture of the sort of Christianity in which every area of our lives is permeated with the fullness and Lordship of Christ. Paul insists that Christ's Lordship cannot be compartmentalized or relegated only to certain, self-chosen aspects of our lives, but rather God's call for every believer is that Christ should reign as Lord in every part of our being.

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**Preparation suggestions:**

Read Colossians 3:12-17.

- List the terms Paul uses to describe the Colossian believers in verse 12. What do you learn about God's heart toward his children?
- List the imperatives or commands found in 3:12-17. What qualities are to be present in the lives of those who follow Jesus?
- In what ways might verse 17 serve as a summary of the teachings of this section?

The pages that follow provide space for your study and session notes:

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**Tuesday, May 19**

6:30 p.m.

***Heavenly Living in Earthly Places***

Colossians 3:18-4:1

*Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for people, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving (Colossians 3:23-24).*

The funnel-like application of Paul's admonitions continues to move narrower and narrower. In these verses Paul moves right through the front door and into the privacy of our homes. Indeed, Paul is convinced that there is *nothing* outside of the provision of fullness of life in Christ, and *nothing* in our lives can be separated from Christ's Lordship.

In many ways, this passage is a condensed version—or first draft—of Paul's similar exhortations in Ephesians. Therefore, we will take a look at some of the insights found in both versions.

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Preparation suggestions:

- Read Colossians 3:18-4:1 and Ephesians 5:21-33.
- How do you understand the relationship between the instructions of 3:18-4:1 and the section that precedes it? (And, how do you see the relationship of Ephesians 5:21-33 with the section that precedes it?)
- What do you imagine was the typical role of husbands, wives, children, and slaves in the 1<sup>st</sup> century? If you have opportunity, do some research in your study Bible, commentaries, and any other sources you may have.
- Against the backdrop of 1<sup>st</sup> century culture, what strikes you about the exhortations given here?

The pages that follow provide space for your study and session notes:

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**Tuesday, May 19**

7:45 p.m.

***Christ's Fullness in the Nitty Gritty of Life***

Colossians 4:2-18

*Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful . . . Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity (Colossians 4:2, 5).*

In chapter 4 we come to the end of our journey through Paul's letter to the Colossians. It has been a journey in which Paul has repeatedly unpacked the both the foundation and the implications of his main theme: *Just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness . . . For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority (2:6-7, 9).*

Now Paul comes to an assorted medley of concluding exhortations and words of greeting.

The emphasis is on ordinary life. Paul is insistent to the end that the fullness of Christ's Lordship must be and can be fleshed out in the ordinary routines of our lives. Life goes on—and so must the sovereign reign of Christ in everything we are and all we do.

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**Preparation suggestions:**

- Read Colossians 4:2-18.
- List the final instructions that Paul gives in 4:2-6. What do you learn about the life of faith? What do you learn about Paul?
- From Paul’s final greetings in 4:7-18, what strikes you about life in the community of faith? What are the qualities and behaviors that Paul finds commendable in the Christian community?

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### **Post conference reflection**

- As you look back over your study of Colossians, what major truths or themes bubble to the surface?
- What are 3 or 4 items you will take away with you?
- What do you hope will be different about your walk with God as a result of your immersion in God's Word in Colossians? What will it take on your part?
- Take a moment to write a prayer of gratitude and commitment:





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