

Colossians & Philemon

Bible Study Guide



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Bible Study Schedule for Colossians & Philemon

Write in your
meeting dates:

_____	Week 1	Intro week
_____	Week 2	Discuss Overview of Colossians
_____	Week 3	Discuss Colossians 1:1 – 23
_____	Week 4	Discuss Colossians 1:24 – 2:5
_____	Week 5	Discuss Colossians 2:6 – 2:23
_____	Week 6	Discuss Colossians 3:1-17
_____	Week 7	Discuss Colossians 3:18 – 4:6
_____	Week 8	Discuss Colossians 4:7 – 4:18
_____	Week 9	Discuss Philemon
_____	Week 10	Discuss Personal Study Topic
_____	Week 11	Discuss Colossians & Philemon Wrap-Up

Get to know each other [20-30 minutes]

Share the basic self-intro and maybe 2 fun facts.

What do you hope to get out of this Bible study?

When was the very first time you had an awareness of God?

What is something fun you hope the group can do together sometime, outside the study?

Introduction to this Bible study [20 minutes]

(1) What has been your experience with studying the Bible?

(2) Plan to do about an hour of prep on your own during the week before you meet for your Bible study discussion. You can split it into 2 or 3 shorter times. As you study and apply God's Word, you will know Him better and see Him at work in you! (Psalm 1, John 15:7)

(3) This is an "inductive" style of Bible study. Sometimes we come to the Bible with a specific question about prayer or heaven or something. This sort of "**asking**" perspective is one great way to get into the Bible. On the other hand, in an inductive Bible study, we approach the Bible with a "**listening**" perspective. Our goal is to hear and respond to what has been written by the human author and, therefore, by the divine author, God Himself. The pattern is observe, understand, respond. Inductive style Bible study can be one of the most exciting ways to interact with the Bible, since we get to have those "aha" moments when we understand what God is saying in His Word, and therefore, saying to us.

Intro to Colossians & Philemon [30 minutes]

There is a reason we are studying Colossians and Philemon together. Both were written by Paul at the same time to the same church. Colossians was a general letter written to the whole church, while Philemon was a specific letter written to a man named Philemon and to the people in his household. Paul wanted Philemon to welcome a slave named Onesimus as a fellow brother in Christ, rather than simply as a run away slave. In Colossians, Paul teaches the church about the new identity believers have in Christ; in Philemon, Paul shows how that truth of new identity applies in a real life situation between individuals.

(1) Together, read out loud through the books of Colossians and Philemon.

(2) Share initial observations.

For example, who is Paul writing to in these letters? What are some of the topics he addresses? How does the letter to Philemon seem to build on Paul's teachings in Colossians? What else stands out?

Pray for each other [20-30 minutes]

Share 1 personal struggle where you'd like God's help this week. Leaders, take the lead in opening up a little about a current area where you need God's help.

Pray for each other. If the group is large, you might choose to split into two groups, or pray in pairs.

Look ahead [1 min]

Look ahead at next week's study to know what to prepare on your own during the week.

Decide to do something together [5 min]

Each week, you should end your study by deciding together on something fun or meaningful you can do together.

For this first week, why not pair up with someone in the group and meet for lunch?

Let's make this Bible study a community!

** This week's prep will probably take more than an hour.*

(1) Read through Colossians 2 or 3 times.

Ask God to help you hear what kinds of things He is talking about in this letter. You should try to read it from more than one translation.

(2) Note themes and key concepts.

Notice themes and key concepts often repeated throughout this book. Are there a few major ideas Paul keeps repeating or emphasizing?

Optional: Watch this summary video: thebibleproject.com/explore/colossians

Observations:

(3) Write a brief summary.

Write one to three sentences which capture the message of Colossians.

What I think God is saying to me so far:

A question I'd like to talk over with my study group:

!! IMPORTANT !!

LEADERS: *Encourage everyone to bring a question each week that they want to ask the group. Try to think of your questions ahead of time, as you do your prep during the week. Everyone has something to contribute to the discussion!*

Decide to do something together

What will you do together this week to apply God's word to your lives? Or to spend time together? Or both! Ideas: meet to study in the library, play some basketball, text prayer requests to each other, pray for each other at the same time each day, etc. You guys pick something fun and meaningful! If the whole group can't meet up, try doing things in 2s or 3s.

Read Colossians 1:1 – 2:3 a few times.

Study technique of the week: **Progression of Ideas**

What is the progression of thought in this section? Does the passage build toward a climax or seem to hover around the same points? How does the author make his point? **Break down the passage into several chunks, giving each a brief title phrase.** Ask God to help you see how these chunks are connected so that you can grasp the flow of thought in the passage.

Observations:

What I think God is saying to me at this point:

A question I'd like to talk over with my study group:

Decide to do something together

What will you do together as a group or in pairs this week?

Read this section a few times.

Study technique of the week: **Rewrite each verse in your own words.**

This is a very rewarding way to meditate on Scripture and to deepen our grasp of the detail of what God is saying.

1:24

1:25

1:26

1:27

1:28

1:29

2:1

2:2

2:3

2:4

2:5

What I think God is saying to me at this point:

A question I'd like to talk over with my study group:

Decide to do something together

What will you do together this week?

Study technique of the week: **Word Study**

Study the words "**fullness**" and "**you have been filled**" (Col 2:9-10). Paul says that all the fullness of deity dwells in Christ and that we have been filled in him. This is really important truth! We better try to understand what Paul means by these terms.

Read "*How to Do a Word Study*" on the next page.

Observations:

"fullness"

"you have been filled in him"

What I think God is saying to me at this point:

A question I'd like to talk over with my study group:

Decide to do something together

How to do a word study

(1) Get the Blue Letter Bible app.

(2) Here are the steps to doing a solid word study in Scripture:

(1) Find the Greek (or Hebrew) word which was translated into the English word you are studying.

(2) Read the brief concordance entry (Outline of Biblical Usage) of the several meanings that Greek word can have.

(3) Read every Bible verse in which that word appears.

(4) Re-read the concordance entry (Outline of Biblical Usage) which lists the several meanings of the Greek word.

(5) Now, you are ready to go back to the passage you were studying. Try to determine which of the various possible meanings for that word is intended in your passage.

(3) Watch the how-to video:

Youtube: "Using the Blue Letter Bible App to do a word study"

(there's a link on naunavs.org/biblestudy).

(4) Now, try doing a word study for yourself. Your goals are to better understand the range of uses for the words you are studying, to see where those terms appear in Scripture, and to get a more accurate sense of the way those words are being used in your passage.

Study technique of the week: **Identify the Key Sentences**

Take some time to identify 2 to 4 sentences that you see as the backbone of this section. How does the rest of the passage connect to those key sentences?

Observations:

What I think God is saying to me at this point:

A question I'd like to talk over with my study group:

Decide to do something together

Don't get in a rut. Do something different this week!

Study technique of the week: **Scripture interprets Scripture**

A great principle in understanding the Bible is: “Scripture interprets Scripture.” When you hit a difficult or unclear passage, look for cross-references to related passages. Often God will use another passage in Scripture to help you understand the one you are studying.

In this section of Colossians, Paul gives a “household code” of commands to wives, husbands, children, servants and masters. Read through this section a few times.

There is another, much more detailed household code which Paul gives in Ephesians 5:22 – 6:9. Read through that passage a few times and then go back to Colossians. Focus on the commands that directly relate to you. So, for the guys, don’t spend a lot of time reading that “wives should submit”, but instead focus on how you will one day need to “love your wife as yourself”. Ladies, focus on the commands to wives to submit to their husbands.

Do these commands seem wonderful, reasonable, hard, constraining, beautiful...? What seems to be God’s heart behind the commands? In what ways will obeying these commands (as either a husband who is to love or a wife who is to submit) come easily to you? In what ways could it be difficult?

Observations:

What I think God is saying to me at this point:

A question I'd like to talk over with my study group:

Decide to do something together

Baskin Robbins? Go to church together on Sunday? Walk and pray around campus? Text each other one thought after you spend your personal time with God each day?...

Study technique of the week: **Who are these people?**

Studying the people of Scripture can help bring some life and reality to our understanding. Look up cross-references where some of these people appear in other parts of the Bible. Focus on one or two of them and write a brief description of who they were, what they did, and why you think Paul takes time and ink to mention them in this letter.

If your Bible does not have a cross-reference system, you can use one built into the Blue Letter Bible app. Watch the video on Youtube: **Using the Blue Letter Bible app to look up cross-references**. (There's a link on naunavs.org/biblestudy).

Summaries / Observations:

What I think God is saying to me at this point:

A question I'd like to talk over with my study group:

Decide to do something together

Study technique of the week: **Mood, Tone and Intent**

This is a very emotional letter. Note words that indicate mood & tone, since these can help you grasp the intent of the passage. What does this letter “feel” like? Is the “tone of voice” used by the author descriptive, excited, stern, rejoicing...? Is the author mainly instructing, praying, describing, commanding, rebuking, asking, encouraging...? Does the tone change throughout the chapter? Do you think Paul is intentionally being “emotional” in this letter? Why or why not?

Optional: Watch this summary video: thebibleproject.com/explore/philemon

Observations:

What I think God is saying to me at this point:

A question I'd like to talk over with my study group:

Decide to do something together

Also, look ahead at next week's prep. Each person pick which topic they will study for next week.

Read through these options for your study prep this week. Pick one and tell your group what you will be studying. Look forward to sharing what you learned and to learning from what others studied.

Personal Study Topic Options:

(1) SUFFERING: As Paul is writing to Colossae and Philemon, he is in prison. He even talks about his suffering for the benefit of other believers (Colossians 1:24-2:5; 4:18). But, he doesn't seem to view it as a bad thing! Look at what Paul learned about suffering in 2 Corinthians 1:3-11 and what Jesus said about suffering in Matthew 10:16-39. Have you ever suffered because of your faith in Jesus? When that happens one day, how could these passages help you?

(2) CHRIST HYMN: Cut and paste Colossians 1:15-20 into a doc. Arrange the lines and phrases in a way that shows the structure and "logic" of this poem. Scholars see this as one of the Christ Hymns which Paul includes in his writings. What is Paul telling us about Jesus? How does this hymn/poem about Christ connect with the rest of the book of Colossians? For you personally, why is it important for you to see Jesus that way?

(3) PRAYER: Make observations on how Paul and Epaphras pray for the church in Colossae. See Colossians 1:3-14 and 4:12-13. How could you learn from them about praying for Christians you know? Use these prayers as a model, and spend some time to pray for those in your Bible study.

(4) OTHER TOPIC: Did something else come up in these books that you want to look into more? Dig into that area this week and come share your learning with your group.

Observations:

What I think God is saying to me at this point:

A question I'd like to talk over with my study group:

Decide to do something together

Take time to wrap up what God has shown you in these books.

Read through Colossians and Philemon once each.

Optional: Rewatch these videos, now that you have studied the books for a bit.

[thebibleproject.com/explore/colossians](https://www.thebibleproject.com/explore/colossians)

[thebibleproject.com/explore/philemon](https://www.thebibleproject.com/explore/philemon)

(1) What is your understanding of each book in a nutshell? Try to turn your understanding of the book's message into a summary outline, picture, illustration or story.

Colossians

Philemon

(2) What is a key verse from one or both of these books that you want to take away with you and incorporate into your life? Write out the verse and a few thoughts on why that verse stands out to you.

(3) How is God using each book to impact your life?

Decide to do something together

How could you end the semester with something fun together?