



There is no more lofty vision of the person and work of Christ than the one we find in Paul's short letter to the Colossians. If you love rich and vibrant theological reflection, then Colossians is certainly the book for you.

Paul's goal, however, is never theology for the sake of theology. He doesn't allow us the luxury of allowing our vision of Christ to fill our heads, without changing our hearts and weaving its way into the fabric of our daily lives. Everyone of his letters are intensely practical. He is dealing with real people who are trying to live out their faith against all the background noise of their culture and busyness of real life.

So Paul is more than willing to talk about the challenges of work, home and relationships, but his starting place is always Christ.

- Before you start to put back the pieces of a difficult marriage, here is what you need to know about Christ.
- Before you navigate a day that is so busy that you feel like you'll lose your mind, here is what you need to know about Christ.
- Before you tackle a strained relationship or challenging work environment, here is what you need to know about Christ.

As a matter of fact, Paul tells us, the grander our vision of Christ the more deeply meaningful and intensely practical our relationship with him (and everyone else, for that matter) becomes.

READ THE BOOK OF COLOSSIANS

1. The early church would have initially been exposed to Paul's letter to the Colossians in a single hearing. What are your general impressions of the book as you read it through from beginning to end?
2. The Book of Colossians is known for its theology. It gives us one of the most refined and sophisticated portraits of Christ in the entire New Testament.
 - a. When you hear the word "Theology," what comes to mind?
 - b. There are two opposite and equally dangerous extremes we need to avoid in our approach to theology. There are some who love theology for the sake of theology; and there are others who avoid it at all cost. Which group do you tend to gravitate toward?
 - c. What are the dangers of loving theology for the sake of theology?
 - d. What are the dangers of avoiding it all together?

READ COLOSSIANS 1:15-20

1. The entire book of Colossians is built around this magnificent hymn about Christ. List everything this passage tells us about Christ.
2. Which traits that Paul enumerates in this short hymn are most intriguing to you? Why?
3. If you could sum up what Paul is telling us about Christ in this hymn in a single sentence, what would it be?
4. If Christ holds the entire universe together, what does that tell us about his ability to lead and direct our lives?
5. Why do you think we have such a hard time trusting Christ, even though he is far more capable of leading and directing our lives to a meaningful end than we are?

READ COLOSSIANS 1:9-12

1. Paul lays out his vision for the Colossians in this short prayer. How would you describe his overall goal for the Colossians?
2. What is the difference between the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives (spiritual wisdom and understanding) and the wisdom and understanding we come by on our own?
3. Paul describes four things that characterize a life that is worthy of the gospel and pleasing to Christ. What are they?
4. How would our lives be different if we consistently pursued these traits with the help of the Holy Spirit?
5. Take the time to make Paul's prayer for the Colossians your own. Ask God to lead you into a life that is pleasing to Him.

Unless otherwise noted all Scripture references are from The New International Version (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011).

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