

Mark Meynell

# Colossians & Philemon

*Confident Christianity*



 7-Session Bible Study

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Colossians and Philemon: Confident Christianity

A Good Book Guide

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# Contents

Introduction	4
Why Study Colossians and Philemon?	5
1. Jesus Our Confidence <i>Colossians 1:1-14</i>	7
2. Jesus Our Lord <i>Colossians 1:15-23</i>	13
3. Jesus Our Rock <i>Colossians 1:24 – 2:7</i>	19
4. Jesus Our Fullness <i>Colossians 2:8-23</i>	25
5. Jesus Our Lifestyle <i>Colossians 3:1 – 4:1</i>	31
6. Jesus Our Ministry <i>Colossians 4:2-18</i>	37
7. Jesus Our Unity <i>Philemon v 1-25</i>	43
Leader's Guide	51



# Introduction

One of the Bible writers described God's word as "a lamp for my feet, a light on my path" (Psalm 119:105, NIV). God gave us the Bible to tell us about who he is and what he wants for us. He speaks through it by his Spirit and lights our way through life.

That means that we need to look carefully at the Bible and uncover its meaning—but we also need to apply what we've discovered to our lives.

Good Book Guides are designed to help you do just that. The sessions in this book are interactive and easy to lead. They're perfect for use in groups or for personal study.

Let's take a look at what is included in each session.

**Talkabout:** Every session starts with an ice-breaker question, designed to get people talking around a subject that links to the Bible study.

**Investigate:** These questions help you explore what the passage is about.

**Apply:** These questions are designed to get you thinking practically: what does this Bible teaching mean for you and your church?

**Explore More:** These optional sections help you to go deeper or to explore another part of the Bible which connects with the main passage.

**Getting Personal:** These sections are a chance for personal reflection. Some groups may feel comfortable discussing these, but you may prefer to look at them quietly as individuals instead—or leave them out.

**Pray:** Here, you're invited to pray in the light of the truths and challenges you've seen in the study.

Each session is also designed to be easily split into two! Watch out for the **Apply** section that comes halfway through, and stop there if you haven't got time to do the whole thing in one go.

In the back of the book, you'll find a **Leader's Guide**, which provides helpful notes on every question, along with everything else that group leaders need in order to facilitate a great session and help the group uncover the riches of God's light-giving word.

# Why Study Colossians and Philemon?

It happens all the time...

People who start out well as Christians can end up light years from the gospel of Jesus Christ, caught up in weird and not-so-wonderful cults, movements and traditions. And not just individuals but whole churches and church movements. They may still talk about Jesus, but their focus has shifted from the fundamental truths of who he is and what he has done to other things: rituals, rapturous experiences, morality or an intense engagement with ideas and schools of thought. These other things become the focus of our Christianity. It seems that Jesus Christ and his saving death are no longer enough.

This kind of teaching was the reason why Paul wrote his letter to the Colossian church. He recognised the fall-out of “moving on” from the gospel—we become unsure of God’s forgiveness because it no longer depends solely on Jesus; we become proud of what we do; and ultimately, these new ways of thinking and alternative spiritualities completely fail to deliver the new life and fulfilment that they promise.

But Paul shows us not just the *better* way but the *only true* way to grow and be fruitful as a Christian believer. And it starts by understanding exactly who Jesus Christ is: the God who created and sustains the world—indeed the very reason that we exist at all. The fact that this awesome ruler of the universe became a man and died to reconcile us to God is the heart of the Christian gospel, which not only saves us but is also the only basis for genuine Christian growth.

Undoubtedly, Christians today face the same danger. These six studies can help us resist the fine-sounding arguments that entice us to add to what Jesus has already done. Only if we are convinced about the true identity of Christ, and certain that he alone is all we need to grow, will we mature into confident Christians.

The six studies in this Good Book Guide will help groups and individuals find the way to achieve true Christian growth into confidence and fruitfulness.

*NOTE: With the exception of session 7, this study guide was put together using the 1984 edition of the New International Version of the Bible. Unless otherwise indicated, all Bible quotations come from that translation. Occasionally this is different from the 2011 NIV.*



## Colossians & Philemon

c. 60-61 AD

c. 54-56

Paul in Ephesus.  
Epaphras is converted  
and takes the gospel  
to Colossae.

c. 60-61

Paul writes Colossians,  
Ephesians and  
Philemon while under  
house arrest in Rome.

c. 62

Paul released.

# 1

## Jesus Our Confidence

### Colossians 1:1-14

#### Talkabout

1. What things do you give thanks to God for and/or pray for the most?

In his opening paragraphs, Paul tells the Colossians what is filling his prayers; and even though he has never met them, it is the Colossians themselves!

#### Investigate

 **Read Colossians 1:1-8**

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#### DICTIONARY

**Holy** (v 2): set apart, pure.  
**Grace** (v 2): undeserved kindness.

**Saints** (v 4): Christians. (This word literally means “distinctive people”.)

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Having heard news of the Colossians from their friend Epaphras (v 7, 8), Paul is greatly encouraged because all the signs point to their walk with Jesus being genuine.



2. What evidence is there for the Colossians' conversion?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Read verse 5. In what ways does hope motivate faith and love, do you think?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. The New Testament describes conversion to Christ in various ways. What is unusual about Paul's description in verses 5-8?
  - Why is this change not simply a matter of intellectual understanding?

### **Read Colossians 1:9-11**

Paul's prayer moves naturally from thanking God to asking God, because he recognises that Epaphras' news is just the start. What matters now is how these Colossian Christians grow to maturity. We sometimes find it difficult to pray for people that we have never met. Paul has no such trouble, and his prayer takes us to the heart of what is most important in the Christian life.

5. What does Paul specifically pray for in verse 9?

6. Why are these things important? (See verses 10-11.)

7. What is the link between knowledge and wisdom, and good works (v 9-10)?

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## Getting Personal | OPTIONAL

What we praise God for and pray for reveals what is most important to us. When was the last time you thanked God for the faith, love and hope of your friends and family? Or prayed for these things to grow?

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### Read Colossians 1:12-14

It's crucial to recognise that Paul is not expecting the Colossians to "turn over a new leaf" in their lives, as if they could suddenly decide to be good. The spiritual growth he prays for comes from a deeper appreciation of what God has already done for and in them.

8. Note the tense of these verses (past, present or future). List all the things that the Father has done. How did he achieve them?

9. So how can a Christian have confidence when faced with the challenge to endure with patience and joy? (See verse 11.)

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## Explore More | OPTIONAL

### Read 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

- What are the similarities and differences between Paul's prayers in this passage and the one in Colossians 1:3-14?

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## Apply

10. What are the challenges from this passage for our priorities in prayer?
11. What will the cost be for us, if we are to be faithful followers of Christ?
12. How can we contribute to the gospel bearing fruit? (Clue: How did it bear fruit in the Colossians' lives, according to verse 6?)

## Pray

*Thank God for...*

- *the gospel of grace, which gives spiritual failures confidence to live for God.*
- *those you know who live a life of faith, love and hope.*
- *the fact that the gospel is still bearing fruit all over the world (and thank him for specific places you are familiar with).*

*Ask God...*

- *to deepen your knowledge of God's will so that you might live to please God.*
- *to bring others to hear and understand God's grace.*
- *to help you endure by his strengthening power.*