

Confident Christianity



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Introduction: Good Book Guides

Every Bible-study group is different—yours may take place in a church building, in a home or in a cafe, on a train, over a leisurely mid-morning coffee or squashed into a 30-minute lunch break. Your group may include new Christians, mature Christians, non-Christians, mums and tots, students, businessmen or teens. That's why we've designed these *Good Book Guides* to be flexible for use in many different situations.

Our aim in each session is to uncover the meaning of a passage, and see how it fits into the 'big picture' of the Bible. But that can never be the end. We also need to appropriately apply what we have discovered to our lives. Let's take a look at what is included:

- ↔ **Talkabout:** most groups need to 'break the ice' at the beginning of a session, and here's the question that will do that. It's designed to get people talking around a subject that will be covered in the course of the Bible study.
- ↓ **Investigate:** the Bible text for each session is broken up into manageable chunks, with questions that aim to help you understand what the passage is about. **The Leader's Guide** contains **guidance on questions**, and sometimes ☑ additional 'follow-up' questions.
- ⋮ **Explore more (optional):** these questions will help you connect what you have learned to other parts of the Bible, so you can begin to fit it all together like a jig-saw.
- **Apply:** As you go through a Bible study, you'll keep coming across **apply** sections. The first part has questions to get the group discussing what the Bible teaching means in practice for you and your church. The second part, ☑ **getting personal**, is an opportunity for you to think, plan and pray about the changes that you personally may need to make as a result of what you have learned.
- ↑ **Pray:** We want to encourage prayer that is rooted in God's Word—in line with His concerns, purposes and promises. So each session ends with an opportunity to review the truths and challenges highlighted by the Bible study, and turn them into prayers of request and thanksgiving.

The **Leader's Guide** and introduction provide historical background information, explanations of the Bible texts for each session, ideas for **optional extra** activities, and guidance on how best to help people uncover the truths of God's Word.

Why study Colossians?

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 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 fulfillment 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 that 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 enticing us to add to what Jesus has 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.



Colossians 1 v 1-14

JESUS OUR CONFIDENCE



talkabout

1. What things do you give thanks to God 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 v 1-8

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 v 5. In what ways does hope motivate faith and love?



4. The New Testament describes conversion to Christ in various ways. What is unusual about Paul's description in v 5-8?

- Why is this change not simply a matter of intellectual understanding?

> Read 1 v 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 v 9?

6. Why are these things important (see v 10-11)?

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





getting personal

What we praise 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?*

▶ Read 1 v 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's have confidence when faced with the challenge to endure with patience and joy (see v 11)?



explore more

Read 1 Thessalonians 1 v 1-10.

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



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' life, v 8?)



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.

