

# ***The Letter to the Colossians***



**GULF SHORES**

CHURCH OF CHRIST

*Gulf Shores, AL*

***BIBLE CLASS STUDY GUIDE***

***Prepared by Ray Reynolds***

**Study Guide for the Letter to the Colossians**  
**GULF SHORES CHURCH OF CHRIST (Teacher: Ray Reynolds)**  
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# ***Study Guide for the Letter to the Colossians***

**GULF SHORES CHURCH OF CHRIST (Teacher: Ray Reynolds)**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Author:**

Paul, the apostle (**Colossians 1:1**), formerly Saul of Tarsus (**Acts 8-9**) identifies himself as the author of this letter. He uses Timothy to aid him with the writing (**Colossians 1:1**). The early church unanimously accepted it as from Paul. However, there are critics of his authorship because of the likeness to Ephesians, but we should consider the similarities between Romans and Galatians. It wasn't unlike Paul to do this. In fact, both Ephesians and Colossians share similar outlines, outlook, and theme. Both letters were delivered by Tychicus along with Philemon (**Ephesians 6:21-22, Colossians 4:7-8**). Paul also puts some emphasis on Onesimus in this book (**Colossians 4:9**).

### **Date:**

It is generally accepted that Paul wrote it around 60-62 AD in the city of Rome, while in a Roman prison (**Colossians 4:4, 18**). This is why it is lumped with the other prison epistles. Paul wrote it around the same time that he wrote Philemon (see Philemon notes) but prior to Ephesians (see Ephesians notes). He also wrote another letter to the Laodiceans (**Colossians 4:16**). In fact, Paul asks this congregation to read the letter to Laodicea publically. This gives the most accurate picture of how the twenty-seven books of the New Testament were collected. Unfortunately, Paul's letter to the Laodiceans has been lost (**I Corinthians 5:9**).

### **Theme:**

This letter is about the supremacy of Christ. The people in Colossae were very affluent and familiar with popular culture. Colossae was an ancient city of about 500 years when Paul wrote this letter. It was known for a peculiar purple wool (colossinus). The city stood on a trade route from Ephesus to the Euphrates. However, the trade route changed and the neighboring cities of Laodicea and Hierapolis became the greater cities. Colossae was the last prominent city to get Paul's attention through letters.

Paul was worried about some erroneous doctrines that were beginning there. The exact origin of this false teaching is unknown. Some say it was Essenism or Gnosticism. It may have been a contemporary Judaism with a syncretism of local Phrygian ideas. Nevertheless, Paul met these errors by presenting the all-sufficient Christ. He reveals that Jesus was not superhuman, but God in the flesh. He created all things. He provides the hope of salvation (the gospel) and the means of salvation (His precious blood). In Colossians, Paul wants to present Jesus Christ as the image of the invisible God, in whom are the treasures of wisdom, knowledge, and divine perfection (**Colossians 1:15-23**). On the cross, Jesus Christ revealed His importance and freedom from corruption and newness of life is found in His death and resurrection (**Colossians 2:8-15**). Paul does not critique, condemn, or judge the Colossian heresy, but delivers a positive case for Christian truth.

### **Audience:**

The church of Colossae was the intended audience. This congregation was probably established on Paul's third missionary journey during his ministry in Ephesus. However, it is possible that the congregation was not started by Paul. We have no record of Paul ever traveling to this city (**Colossians 1:9, 2:1**), but Epaphras had a wonderful relationship with this congregation (**Colossians 1:5-7**). The church may have been established by Timothy (**Colossians 1:1**), Epaphras (**Colossians 1:7, 4:12-13**), or even those who were returned from Pentecost (**Acts 2:10**). Luke records that Phrygians were present that day.

The church was led by a Gentile preacher named Archippus (**Colossians 4:17**). The fact that the evangelist was a Gentile must have affected its outreach. The congregation would have struggled with the Jew vs. Gentile scenario as a church. This would be something the Gnostics and Judaizing teachers would have exploited. However, Paul encourages fellowship with the church at Laodicea. They needed to fellowship with other strong congregations to give them strength. Also this Colossian heresy could have influenced other churches nearby, so communication is a key.

The letter from Paul is very intriguing and challenging to all who read it. The letter deals with a lot of heretical teaching that influenced the church there, but we are blessed to take away something positive when we read it. Even the casual reader can see that the Colossian heresy was threatening the work of the church and Paul is writing to keep the church on the same page.

Paul's work in the school of Tyrannus, while in Ephesus, would have given him the opportunity to share these thoughts with many others (**Acts 19:10**). Early writings tell us he lectured daily from 11 AM to 4 PM (for two years). Paul supervised missionaries, works, and ministries like the one in Colosse, Ephesus, and Laodicea. He mentored people like Timothy, Apollos, and Epaphras who would also carry this message of hope to their home congregations and to the world.

Other significant members of this church included Philemon and Onesimus (**Philemon 1, Colossians 4:9**). Because the congregation was affluent, and well connected to others within the Christian fellowship, it may have stood for quite some time after the first century. Recently archaeologists have uncovered the ruins of an ancient church there.

Key Verses:

**Colossians 1:9-14, 1:18, 2:8, 2:13-15, 2:18-19, 3:1-7, 3:12-17, 3:20, 4:2-6, 4:16-17**

Outline:

- I. *Jesus is First Because of His Work (1:1-18)*
- II. *Jesus is First Because of His Role (1:19-29)*
- III. *Jesus is First Because of His Gospel (2:1-10)*
- IV. *Jesus is First Because of His Freedom (2:11-23)*
- V. *Jesus is First Because of His Cleansing (3:1-17)*
- VI. *Jesus is First Because of His Relationships (3:18-4:1)*
- VII. *Jesus is First Because of His Fellowship (4:2-6)*
- VIII. *Jesus is First Because of His Family (4:7-18)*

# **Study Guide for the Letter to the Colossians**

Lesson One = Jesus is First Because of His Work

**GULF SHORES CHURCH OF CHRIST (Teacher: Ray Reynolds)**

TEXT: Colossians 1:1-18

Introduction: Ephesians and Colossians share similar outlines, outlook, and theme. Both letters were delivered by Tychicus along with the book of Philemon (**Ephesians 6:21-22, Colossians 4:7-8**). The main theme of the letter to the Colossians is “Jesus is First.” Jesus is more than just our first love (as we can see in Ephesians). We should seek Him first... in ALL things. In this lesson we will notice that Jesus is first because of His kingdom work. Let’s study together....

Discussion:

## **I. His Work Gives The Kingdom A Calling (1:1-3)**

- A. Kingdom people prepare for ministry (v.1).
- B. Kingdom people pursue holiness (v.2).
- C. Kingdom people pursue faithfulness (v.2).
- D. Kingdom people pray for one another (v.3).

*What should Kingdom people understand this calling?*

## **II. His Work Gives The Kingdom A Cure (1:4-8)**

- A. Kingdom people endure through faith (v.4).
- B. Kingdom people emanate Christian love (v.4).
- C. Kingdom people expand in everlasting hope (v.5).
- D. Kingdom people experience fruitful living (v.6).
- E. Kingdom people exemplify God’s grace (v.7).
- F. Kingdom people enjoy God’s Holy Spirit (v.8).

*What must Kingdom people comprehend the cure?*

## **III. His Work Gives The Kingdom A Conviction (1:9-12)**

- A. Kingdom people are convicted to be prayerful (v.9).
- B. Kingdom people are convicted to be productive (v.10).
- C. Kingdom people are convicted to be patient (v.11).
- D. Kingdom people are convicted to be prepared (v.12).

*What should Kingdom people have strong conviction?*

## **IV. His Work Gives The Kingdom A Cause (1:13-18)**

- A. Kingdom people appreciate their redemption (vs.13-14).
- B. Kingdom people accept their role (v.15).
- C. Kingdom people acknowledge their Savior (vs.16-17).
- D. Kingdom people admire their Head (v.18).

*What must Kingdom people share the cause?*

Conclusion: Once we recognize Jesus Christ as supreme, and put Him & His kingdom first, it will transform our life. We see things through His eyes. We view the world in His perspective. We seek to understand His everlasting will. Ask yourself: “Where is Jesus in my life? Is He first?” Have you committed your life to Him? Are you faithfully walking with Him? Are you working in His kingdom?

# **Study Guide for the Letter to the Colossians**

Lesson Two = Jesus is First Because of His Role

**GULF SHORES CHURCH OF CHRIST (Teacher: Ray Reynolds)**

TEXT: Colossians 1:19-29

Introduction: The book of Colossians reveals *why* Jesus is first. In this lesson we will notice that Jesus is first because of His role. There are many roles Jesus fulfills. However, His greatest work is as our Savior. We will look at Jesus's role as our Savior in four ways. Let's study together....

Discussion:

## ***I. The Role of Jesus in Redemption (1:19-21)***

- A. Redemption is needed because we were separated as aliens (vs.19-20).
  - B. Redemption is needed because we were separated as enemies (v.21).
  - C. Redemption is needed because we were separated as evil doers (v.21).
- What do we know about God's plan of redemption?*

*Why should we seek to understand both God's role and our role?*

## ***II. The Role of Jesus in Reconciliation (1:22-23)***

- A. Reconciliation in Christ provides friendship with God (v.22).
  - B. Reconciliation in Christ provides holiness in God (v.23).
  - C. Reconciliation in Christ provides steadfastness through God (v.23).
- How can we find reconciliation outside of Christ?*

*Why do people reject the reconciliation of God?*

## ***III. The Role of Jesus in Routine (1:24-26)***

- A. It is routine that the body of Christ experience suffering in Christ (v.24).
  - B. It is routine that the body of Christ fulfill the word of God (v.25).
  - C. It is routine that the body of Christ reveal the mystery of God (v.26).
- What do we know about persecution and suffering?*

*How can we receive a greater appreciation for the mysteries of God?*

## ***IV. The Role of Jesus in Revival (1:27-29)***

- A. Revival in Christ brings the hope of glory (v.27).
  - B. Revival in Christ leads us to maturity (v.28).
  - C. Revival in Christ connects us to God's strength (v.29).
- What hope do we have? Why?*

*Do you seek revival? Why or why not? Explain.*

Conclusion: So often when we run from God, we do it to escape His punishment. However, when we run away what we are actually doing is eluding His rescue. We are avoiding our own salvation! Are you tired of running? Jesus needs to be first in your life. He deserves to be first. Have you committed your life to Him? Have you been immersed in His blood? Have you been filled with Holy Spirit? Are you walking with Him?

# **Study Guide for the Letter to the Colossians**

Lesson Three = Jesus is First Because of His Gospel

**GULF SHORES CHURCH OF CHRIST (Teacher: Ray Reynolds)**

TEXT: Colossians 2:1-10

Introduction: Colossians reveals why Jesus is first. In this lesson we will notice that Jesus is first because of His gospel. The gospel is the good news. Remember that these people were just recovering from 400 years of silence. No doubt, some people might have given up. After that long people were full of fear and doubt, but right when they needed it the most, God provided for His people. He sent Jesus to the cross and redeemed mankind. Let's study together....

Discussion:

## **I. The Gospel Encourages (2:1-3)**

- A. We are encouraged to endure conflict (v.1).
- B. We are encouraged to excel in love (v.2).
- C. We are encouraged to exhume treasures (v.3).

*Why must Christians excel in Christian love?*

*What treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ?*

## **II. The Gospel Unites (2:4-5)**

- A. The gospel does not deceive (v.4).
  - B. The gospel does not destroy or devour (v.4).
  - C. The gospel does not deviate (v.5).
- How can we know that the gospel does not do these things?*

*What are some additional benefits to the gospel of Christ?*

## **III. The Gospel Inspires (2:6-7)**

- A. An inspired Christian has no problem with receptiveness (v.6).
- B. An inspired Christian has no problem with faithfulness (v.7).
- C. An inspired Christian has no problem with thankfulness (v.7).

*What does it mean to be deeply rooted in faith?*

*How can we abound with thanksgiving?*

## **IV. The Gospel Motivates (2:8-10)**

- A. We are motivated to be steadfast (v.8).
- B. We are motivated by the Godhead (v.9).
- C. We are motivated toward maturity (v.10).

*Why would anyone attempt to cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit?*

*What are the dangers of the traditions of men?*

Conclusion: Jesus needs to be first in your life. He deserves to be first in your life. He wants to take an active role in your salvation and in your daily walk with God. Are you faithfully walking with Him and bearing fruit?

# **Study Guide for the Letter to the Colossians**

Lesson Four = Jesus is First Because of His Freedom

**GULF SHORES CHURCH OF CHRIST (Teacher: Ray Reynolds)**

TEXT: Colossians 2:11-23

Introduction: The book of Colossians reveals why Jesus is first. In this lesson we will notice that Jesus is first because of His freedom. There are at least 12 freedoms we have in Christ listed here. Let's study together....

Discussion:

- I. We Are Free From Sin (v.11)**  
*What are the benefits of being free from sin?*
- II. We Are Free From Weakness (v.12)**  
*Why should we shake off our weaknesses?*
- III. We Are Free From Death (v.13)**  
*How can we know we are free from death?*
- IV. We Are Free From the Old Law (v.14)**  
*What was the purpose of the old law? New law?*
- V. We Are Free From Satan (v.15)**  
*Are you able to defeat Satan? Explain.*
- VI. We Are Free From Legalism (v.16)**  
*Why should we be free from legalism?*
- VII. We Are Free From Lies (v.17)**  
*What can we know about the substance of the words of Christ (John 14:6)?*
- VIII. We Are Free From Ignorance (v.18)**  
*Why would we choose a life of ignorance over wisdom?*
- IX. We Are Free From Immaturity (v.19)**  
*What are the benefits of being spiritually mature?*
- X. We Are Free From the World (vs.20-21)**  
*How can we die to this world and become alive in Christ?*
- XI. We Are Free From Human Traditions (v.22)**  
*What does God think about the commandments and doctrines of men?*
- XII. We Are Free From Human Religion (v.23)**  
*What is a self-imposed religion?*

Conclusion: Jesus needs to be first in your life. He deserves to be first in your life. He wants to take an active role in your salvation and in your daily walk with God. He wants to give you freedom! Have you obeyed the gospel plan of salvation? Have you committed your life to Him? Have you been immersed in His precious blood? Have you been filled with the Holy Spirit? Are you faithfully walking with Him and bearing fruit?

# **Study Guide for the Letter to the Colossians**

Lesson Five = Jesus is First Because of His Cleansing

**GULF SHORES CHURCH OF CHRIST (Teacher: Ray Reynolds)**

TEXT: Colossians 3:1-17

Introduction: The book of Colossians reveals why Jesus is first. In this lesson we will notice that Jesus is first because of His cleansing. Let's go back and notice the previous context (**Colossians 2:12-15**). Clearly Jesus died to take away some roadblocks. Now we have some choices to make. Let's study together....

Discussion:

## ***I. When We've Been Cleansed We Seek Things Above (3:1-4)***

- A. A Christian should seek salvation (v.1).
- B. A Christian should seek heaven (v.1).
- C. A Christian should seek the Lord (v.1).
- D. A Christian should not seek earthly things (v.2).
- E. A Christian should seek life (v.3).
- F. A Christian should seek eternal glory (v.4).

*Why would anyone prefer the things below to the things above?*

*How can we seek things above?*

*What are the benefits to eternal things?*

## ***II. When We've Been Cleansed We Put Things Off (3:5-11)***

- A. A Christian should put off fornication (v.5).
- B. A Christian should put off uncleanness (v.5).
- C. A Christian should put off passion (v.5).
- D. A Christian should put off evil desire (v.5).
- E. A Christian should put off covetousness (v.5).
- F. A Christian should put off idolatry (v.5).
- G. A Christian should put off disobedience (vs.6-7).
- H. A Christian should put off anger (v.8).
- I. A Christian should put off wrath (v.8).
- J. A Christian should put off malice (v.8).
- K. A Christian should put off blasphemy (v.8).
- L. A Christian should put off filthy language (v.8).
- M. A Christian should put off lying (v.9).
- N. A Christian should put off worldliness (v.10).
- O. A Christian should put off prejudices (v.11).

*What does the Bible teach us about submitting to a watery grave, burial, death, etc.?*

*Why does Paul give such a comprehensive list of things we should put off?*

*How does that affect our Christian walk?*

*Is it difficult to put these things off? Explain?*

### **III. When We've Been Cleansed We Put Things On (3:12-17)**

- A. A Christian should put on tender mercies (v.12).
- B. A Christian should put on kindness (v.12).
- C. A Christian should put on humility (v.12).
- D. A Christian should put on meekness (v.12).
- E. A Christian should put on longsuffering (v.12).
- F. A Christian should put on forbearance (v.13).
- G. A Christian should put on forgiveness (v.13).
- H. A Christian should put on love (v.14).
- I. A Christian should put on peace (v.15).
- J. A Christian should put on thankfulness (v.15).
- K. A Christian should put on wisdom (v.16).
- L. A Christian should put on heartfelt worship (v.16).
- M. A Christian should put on good works (v.17).

*What does the Bible teach us about our new life in Christ?*

*Why is there a shorter list for things to put on vs. things to put off?*

*How can doing these things affect our Christian walk?*

*Is it difficult to put these things on? Explain.*

Conclusion: Jesus needs to be first in your life. He deserves to be first in your life. He wants to take an active role in your salvation and in your daily walk with God. He wants to give you freedom! Have you obeyed the gospel plan of salvation? Will you accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? Have you committed your life to Him? Have you been cleansed by His precious blood? Have you been filled with the Holy Spirit? Are you faithfully walking with Him and bearing fruit?

# **Study Guide for the Letter to the Colossians**

Lesson Six = Jesus is First Because of His Relationships

**GULF SHORES CHURCH OF CHRIST (Teacher: Ray Reynolds)**

TEXT: Colossians 3:18-4:1

Introduction: The book of Colossians reveals why Jesus is first. In this lesson we will notice that Jesus is first because of His relationships. The apostle Paul points out that there is not a single relationship we engage in that Christ is not a part of, because we exist in Christ. Our relationship with Him will affect our family, our work, and our overall perspective on life. Let's study together....

Discussion:

## **I. Our Relationship With Christ Affects Our Family (3:18-21)**

- A. A Christian woman should have a good relationship with her husband (3:18).
- B. A Christian man should have a good relationship with his wife (3:19).
- C. A Christian child should have a good relationship with their parents (3:20).
- D. A Christian parent should have a good relationship with their children (3:21).

*Why is submission an important part of the marriage relationship?*

*How can bitterness hinder the marriage relationship?*

*What is the significance of obedience to our parents and, at the same time, pleasing God?*

## **II. Our Relationship With Christ Affects Our Work (3:22, 4:1)**

- A. A Christian servant should have a good relationship with their master (3:22).
- B. A Christian employee should have a good relationship with their employer (3:22).
- C. A Christian master should have a good relationship with their servant (4:1).
- D. A Christian employer should have a good relationship with their employee (4:1).

*What is a bondservant?*

*Why should we work for others as if we are serving God?*

## **III. Our Relationship With Christ Affects Our Soul (3:23-25)**

- A. A Christian should have a good relationship with all men (3:23).
- B. A Christian should have a good relationship with the Father (3:23-25).
- C. A Christian should have a good relationship with the Son (3:23-25).
- D. A Christian should have a good relationship with the Holy Spirit (3:23-25).

*How can we do everything for the Lord?*

*What kind of reward should we be seeking?*

*Who is the only One who can give rewards/punishment without partiality?*

Conclusion: Jesus needs to be first in your life. He deserves to be first in your life. He wants to take an active role in your salvation and in your daily walk with God. He wants to be your Savior! Have you obeyed the gospel plan of salvation? Will you accept Jesus Christ as your Lord? Have you committed your life to Him? Have you been cleansed by His blood? Have you been filled with the Holy Spirit? Are you walking by His side?

# **Study Guide for the Letter to the Colossians**

Lesson Seven = Jesus is First Because of His Fellowship

**GULF SHORES CHURCH OF CHRIST (Teacher: Ray Reynolds)**

TEXT: Colossians 4:2-6

Introduction: The book of Colossians reveals why Jesus is first. In this lesson we will notice that Jesus is first because of His fellowship with us. He wants to strengthen our bond and relationship. Let's study together....

Discussion:

## **I. Our Fellowship Helps Us To Be Relentless in Prayer (4:2)**

- A. Relentless prayer is praying earnestly.
- B. Relentless prayer is praying vigilantly.
- C. Relentless prayer is praying gratefully.

*How can prayer strengthen our fellowship with God?*

## **II. Our Fellowship Helps Us To Be Resolute in the Work (4:3)**

- A. We should be resolute as we are considerate of workers.
- B. We should be resolute as we are conscious of opportunities.
- C. We should be resolute as we are committed to boldness.

*How can good works strengthen our fellowship with God?*

## **III. Our Fellowship Helps Us To Be Real in Ministry (4:4)**

- A. Real ministry is about caring for others.
- B. Real ministry is about compassionate toward others.
- C. Real ministry is about clarity in conviction.

*How can finding our niche in ministry strengthen our fellowship with God?*

## **IV. Our Fellowship Helps Us To Be Righteous in Living (4:5)**

- A. Righteous living is about walking in wisdom.
- B. Righteous living is about walking with endurance.
- C. Righteous living is about walking with purpose.

*How can daily living for Christ strengthen our fellowship with God?*

## **V. Our Fellowship Helps Us To Be Refined in Speech (4:6)**

- A. Our speech should be refined with grace.
- B. Our speech should be refined with character.
- C. Our speech should be refined with wisdom.

*How can our speech hinder or help strengthen our fellowship with God?*

Conclusion: The only way to improve our speech, our lifestyle, our ministry, our work, or our spiritual life is to keep fellowship with the Lord. Don't fall away from Him. Don't turn your back on Him. Keep walking in the light as He is light and that fellowship will keep you strong! Jesus needs to be first in your life. He deserves to be first in your life. He wants to be your Savior! Have you obeyed the gospel plan of salvation? Have you committed your life to Him? Have you been cleansed by His precious blood? Have you been filled with the Holy Spirit? Are walking daily by the Savior's side?

# **Study Guide for the Letter to the Colossians**

Lesson Eight = Jesus is First Because of His Family

**GULF SHORES CHURCH OF CHRIST (Teacher: Ray Reynolds)**

TEXT: Colossians 4:7-18

Introduction: The book of Colossians reveals why Jesus is first. In this last lesson for the series, we will notice that Jesus is first because of His family. The apostle Paul finishes his letter to the Colossians by recognizing other Christian workers that are a significant part of the family of God. Let's study together....

Discussion:

## **I. The Lord's Family is Known For Its Trustworthiness (4:7-14)**

- A. God's children should be dedicated servants (v.7).
- B. God's children should be reliable comforters (v.8).
- C. God's children should be concerned brethren (v.9).
- D. God's children should be hospitable friends (v.10).
- E. God's children should be dependable workers (v.11).
- F. God's children should be mature followers (v.12).
- G. God's children should be zealous witnesses (v.13)
- H. God's children should be supportive disciples (v.14).

*How can God's family become more trustworthy?*

## **II. The Lord's Family is Known For Its Togetherness (4:15-16)**

- A. God's children edify and encourage each other (v.15).
- B. God's children meet in their own homes (v.15).
- C. God's children read the Scriptures (v.16).
- D. God's children study the Scriptures (v.16).
- E. God's children teach the Scriptures (v.16).

*How can God's family grow together in unity?*

## **III. The Lord's Family is Known For Its Tenderness (4:17-18)**

- A. God's children minister to the community (v.17).
- B. God's children receive the truth and pass it on (v.17).
- C. God's children fulfill God's will (v.17).
- D. God's children support one another (v.18).
- E. God's children do not forget each other (v.18).

*How can God's family become more tender and compassionate?*

Conclusion: As we close out this series I want to draw your mind back to the last verse (v.18). Paul signed this letter with his own hand. Why is that significant? It was valuable to the church family in Colossae. He was personally attached to them. He truly loved them and wanted to see them succeed at putting Christ first in their lives. Have you committed your life to Him? Have you been cleansed by His precious blood? Have you been filled with the Holy Spirit? Are you a part of the family of God?