



21 DAYS OF PRAYER

A STUDY ON COLOSSIANS
GOD HAS MADE HIS POWER AVAILABLE FOR YOU

DEAR FRIEND

If ever there was a time in our lives that we need to recommit ourselves in prayer, it is this current season. With all that we have gone through and many having trouble or experiencing spiritual apathy in their lives, we must lean into God's presence like never before.

This year, I felt led to kick off the year by helping you go through a book of the Bible that I think is appropriate for the season. The book of Colossians was written to a church that was experiencing a very difficult problem – they were on the verge of losing their understanding of the power by which the Christian life is lived. Therefore, this letter is a proclamation and explanation of the power of the Christian life through Christ.

For many of you, you need to remember the power that Christ has given you. You are equipped to not just get through this season, but to thrive in the middle of it. The purpose of this guide is to help you understand this book and to give you questions to journal or think about as well as prayers to pray.

On the next page, you will find a how-to guide about this guide.

Lastly, I just want to say that I'm proud of you. The fact that you are reading this means that you do greatly desire to grow in your relationship with Jesus. That is to be commended and hear me say that it's a privilege to be your pastor and I believe the Lord is going to help you with this effort.

Remember: Start strong and finish strong. You are loved today! Let's seek God like never before!

Prayer changes everything!

Pastor Dusty Dean

HOW TO USE THIS PRAYER GUIDE:

In this guide, we're going to take a deep dive into the book of Colossians. Each day over the next 21 days, we'll focus on specific passages throughout the book.

Here is a specific guide of the sections that will be included each day and how you can effectively use these sections to help you grow spiritually.

Section 1: Scripture Reading

The Scripture reading is a passage of Scripture that we want you to study. You will notice that we only reference the passage and do not include it. That is because we want to encourage you to open a physical Bible, preferably not an electronic form, and read the text.

Once you have read the passage, reread it a second time and use a highlighter or pen to underline key words that stand out to you in the text.

Section 2: Devotional Thought

The devotional thought features a short thought about the topic for you to consider.

Section 3: Application

This section is designed to help you take the devotional and scripture reading and make it personal. Some choose to journal about the questions provided while others choose to simply meditate on the questions. Whatever works best for you is what we advise although there is great value in having a past record to look at and see how you have grown throughout the years in God.

Section 4: Prayer

The prayer provided is simply a model to help you get started. Take some time and really lean into God. I recommend that you spend at least 5 minutes on the Bible reading and devotional thought, 5 minutes on the application and 5 minutes in prayer as a base or starting point adding time where you feel you should appropriately.

PERSONAL PRAYER TARGETS:

We encourage you to use this section to write down things and people you'll pray for over the next 21 Days. Take time to pray for them every single day.

I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:1-4).

MY GOVERNMENT

President: _____

National Leaders: _____

State leaders: _____

City leaders: _____

MY FAMILY

Spouse: _____

Children: _____

Parents: _____

Siblings: _____

Extended Family: _____

MY CHURCH

Pastors: _____

Small group leader: _____

Small group members: _____

MY LIFE

Employer: _____

Co-workers: _____

Employees: _____

Teachers and professors: _____

THOSE I AM INFLUENCING

THOSE WHO NEED GOD

MY NEEDS

THE GOSPEL OF HOPE

Sunday
January 10

Scripture Focus:

Colossians 1:1-8; Galatians 5:16-26

Devotional Thought:

As I said in my opening letter, I think a lot of people are in need of hope. 2020 was hard for a lot of people and things just seem to be heavy in most directions that you look. That is why the beginning of Colossians is such a breath of fresh air because it begins with the hope of the Gospel. Said another way: Hope is awakened by the Gospel.

If you are a Christian, it is possible that the Gospel has lost its allure. Many Christians think of the Gospel as a message for people who do not yet know Jesus. But here, Paul commends the church for its continued growth in the Gospel.

The truth is that while non-believers need the Gospel to understand their sin and need for Jesus, believers need the Gospel for the very same reason.

A life centered on Jesus is a life centered on the Gospel. The more we get to know Jesus, the more aware we are of our sin, and the more grateful we are that Jesus made a way for us to overcome sin. The Gospel is true. Paul also calls this gospel “the word of truth.” That is what marks its realism. Dorothy Sayers, the great Christian philosopher, said, “The test of any religion is not whether it pleases us or is comfortable, but whether it is true.” Be rest assured this Gospel is true.

It’s crucial for you to understand that learning to walk by the Spirit doesn’t come naturally. Just because you go to church services or friend some people who are Christians won’t just naturally make you like Christ. Following the Holy Spirit’s lead takes practice, and we don’t always get it right (Galatians 5:16-17). On those days, especially, it is such a gift to remember the forgiveness and right standing Jesus bought for us on the cross.

Application

- What do you need forgiveness for today? The more we are honest about our sin the more we understand how much Jesus has done for us.
- Confess your sin to the Lord, and ask for forgiveness. He will give it to you freely!

Prayer

Jesus, thank you for covering my sin, freeing me from the power of death, and giving me the power of the Holy Spirit. The Gospel is the best news that only gets better. Help me to remember that I, too, am a sinner in need of a Savior. Forgive me for _____, and help me to follow your leading in every part of my life.

KEEP GETTING TO KNOW JESUS

Monday
January 11th

Scripture Focus:

Colossians 1:9-14; John 3:19-21; John 8:12; Ephesians 5:8; I John 1:5-7

Devotional Thought:

This is one of the most important passages in all of Colossians neatly tucked into the first chapter. In it, Paul prays for the Holy Spirit to give the church understanding and wisdom so they can bear good spiritual fruit. He also encourages them to be thankful for the inheritance awaiting them in God's kingdom.

Here's the truth about those early Christians: It wasn't enough that that they just know Jesus. They needed to continue to grow in their knowledge of Him. The apostle wanted them to go on and grow up.

Any relationship takes time to develop and grows stronger over time. You never meet someone once and claim that you're now the closest that you could ever be with them. Frequency is one of the ways that intimacy gets developed. But the truth is that many Christians often remain spiritual babies their entire lives. They never grow up and as a result, the church becomes weak and turns many people away and off. Paul knows that they must grow.

That's why Paul wants the Colossians, and us, to keep getting to know the Lord. As we do, we'll find endless reasons to be thankful. We'll be able to see what the Lord has done and what He is doing. And, we'll grow more confident in His promises to come through for us.

I want to encourage you today to continue onward in this faithful pursuit to know Jesus deeper. Perhaps you feel like you know nothing about Jesus, and it has created intimidation in you. I can assure you that the more you know, the more that you'll realize that there is so many areas to grow. God's love and his ways are vastly infinite and beyond our growing understanding. But take each day and learn more about Him. And as you do, you'll grow to trust Him.

Application:

- In what ways do you want to grow to know Jesus more?
- In what ways do you feel like you have grown to know Jesus in the past?
- How does the Lord's faithfulness in the past encourage you to be hopeful for the future?

Prayer:

God, thank You for all of the things You have done for me. Thank You for all the things You are doing behind the scenes. Thank You for all the things that are yet to come. Continue to fill me with Your Spirit so I can experience all the good things You have to offer. Give me wisdom and endurance to keep following you even when things get hard.

JESUS IS GREATER THAN EVERYTHING

Tuesday
January 12

Scripture Focus:

Colossians 1:15-17, 2 Peter 3:18

Devotional Thought:

Colossians 1:15 says Jesus is “the image of the invisible God.” This statement cannot be emphasized enough. Since the appearance of Jesus on this earth two thousand years ago, Christians have believed that the man called Jesus of Nazareth is and was God the Creator; that the eternal Son dwelt in a human body. Every other doctrine of Christianity flows out of that great truth. If it be denied, one has denied the heart of Christian faith and has embraced heresy. It’s crucial that you understand this.

Hebrews 1:3 says Jesus has “the exact imprint of his nature and upholds the universe by the word of his power.”

Before Jesus, God revealed Himself through the Law and the prophets. But when Jesus came on the scene, He tangibly revealed who God is. He is God in the flesh!

Paul certainly writes from his own experience on the Damascus road where prior he had believed that Jesus was a blasphemer and liar. He hated the name of Jesus, but then the Damascus Road experience took place (Read about it in Acts 9). One experience with the living God changed his life.

There is a richness to the text that you are reading today because you are learning so much about Jesus. That Jesus was present at creation, that He came before all things and reigns supreme over all things. Consider the idea that all things are held together by Him. What incredible power is in Him! It is a power that you can trust and lean into. To worship Jesus is to put Him in His rightful place. He is worthy of our praise.

Application

When we’re worried about the future, stressed at work, or tempted to sin, remember that everything in this world, and not of this world, is under Jesus’ authority. He has power over anything we face.

- Is there any area of life you have forgotten Jesus is supreme over?
- What do you need to surrender to Him today?

Prayer

Jesus, I exalt you. Thank you for reconciling me to the Father. You reveal His character and love for me. You love me so much you died for me! It is easy to allow my mind and heart to become wrapped up in _____. I surrender this to you. If there are other areas of my life where I’m holding back or not seeing your power, please show me. You are good, and I want to surrender everything to you.

WE ARE A PART OF SOMETHING BIGGER THAN OURSELVES

Wednesday
January 13

Scripture Focus:

Colossians 1:18-29; Romans 12:1-21; I Corinthians 12:1-31

Devotional Thought:

In this passage, we learn that Christ is the head of the church, and each of us is part of the church body. This is crucial for us to remember. The church is something new and different from any other organization or organism among men. The church isn't a religious country club that operates for the enjoyment of those who attend. It's not a collection of emotional misfits who are waiting for heaven.

Instead, Paul points out the two central parts of the church—the head and the body. The church is a body, full of appendages of arms and legs and pieces that formulate the body. But it is the head that tells the body what to do. Without the head, the body begins to move out of control.

We each have a role to play to keep the body going. What good is just an ear or just a finger? It's every part working together that makes a body whole. But equally as important is that each member of the body remember the importance of the head. Each individual is directly related to the Head. Your connectedness and functionality as the body must be driven by the body's connectedness to the Head.

It is the head that opens doors, provides energy, wisdom, comfort and forgiveness and it is the body's job to walk through those doors. Both have a purpose, both have a part to play.

Paul is reminding us that our lives are not our own. We belong to Christ, and we are part of something bigger than ourselves. When we submit ourselves to Jesus, and then to each other, we experience the amazing plans God has for us.

Application

Is Jesus the head of your life? Consider the following:

- How often do you make decisions with Him in mind?
- Do you carry on your relationships considering what He will think?
- Does the way you work through problems show that He is in control?
- Is there any part of your life you don't let Jesus or others into? Why or why not?
- What's one step you can take today to submit that area to Jesus?

Prayer

Jesus, help me relinquish control of my life to you. You are everything God is in human form, and I can trust you. Thank you for making a way for me to be part of the body. Show me where I'm missing out on the blessing of being under your authority and a part of the church.

DON'T STOP AT ONE

Thursday
January 14

Scripture Focus:

Colossians 1:21-23; Hebrews 10:24-25

Devotional Thought:

Because of Jesus' sacrifice, we are considered "holy and blameless and above reproach" by God Himself. How incredible is it to truly understand this!

What is it that happens in the life of a person who realizes that Christ has saved them?

First, there is an inner reversal of attitude. When you come into contact personally with Jesus, we experience reconciliation. All the estrangement, hurt and brokenness from our sin that alienated us from him is removed. God is no longer an enemy or a judge, but as a loving father. This begins a changed life because of an inner reversal of the view of who God is.

Secondly is a delight to serve and be used by this amazing God even in the midst of personal pain. Instead of you being the central character in your story, you realize that God is the central character in your story and you don't mind it – you long through a deep sense of gratitude to thank God for using you to make His own name great. It's the higher honor. Although Paul endured much sacrifice and pain in his service of Jesus, he said, "I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church."

The last thing is that you choose to let Christ be revealed through you. You don't just serve, you become a personal witness to others of his power and strength. Most Christians in our churches understand that Christ died for the forgiveness of their sins—they believed that and came to Christ because of that—but that is where most of them stop. Relatively few, it seems, ever go on to grasp the fact that Jesus died for them that he might live in them.

We want to encourage you: Do not stop at one. Let him work and continue to work and grow you in making His name great!

Application

- Was 2020 a year of growth in your relationship with Jesus?
- Do you feel like you live a life that reveals Jesus to others? How so?

Prayer

Jesus, thank you that my standing with you is not based on my actions but on your sacrifice for me. Help me to hold fast to your truth even when the world tries to convince me I shouldn't. Bring men and women who love you into my life to bolster my faith, and help me to encourage others.

GOD WANTS TO BE KNOWN

Friday
January 15

NOTE: Tomorrow, Saturday, January 16th is our weekly prayer service at 9am. We encourage you to attend and pray together with others believers in person or online.

Scripture Focus:

Colossians 1:24-29; Ephesians 3:1-13; Romans 8:9-11

Devotional Thought:

Today, let's circle back to yesterday's devotion by examining the third aspect of a growing Christian life—revealing the glory of God to others around us.

In the passage that you are reading today, you'll notice the great mystery that is revealed—the process by which God is going to save and rescue humanity. Think on this: Nowhere in the Old Testament will you find this solution. It is foreshadowed but not directly shared. But now, the mystery of God is revealed through Jesus' life. God made himself known to us through His Son. And His Son, Jesus, made a way for us to know God as well.

What a privilege to know God and to share this good news with the world! That's why Paul says he is proud to suffer for the sake of Christ. That's why he says, "To this end, I labor, striving with all the energy he (Jesus) so powerfully works in me."

Paul understood the importance of sharing this mystery with others. Preaching and teaching landed Paul in jail, got him shipwrecked, and nearly killed on multiple occasions. But to experience God's supernatural partnership and to see people come to know Jesus fully — it was worth every minute of suffering.

The world knows nothing of this mystery. You will never find it mentioned by the media, except by Christians. You will never learn about it in the great universities of the world. In all secular wisdom and knowledge there is no recognition of this incomparable source of change in a human life. It is found only in the gospel of Jesus

Christ. That is why this message is such a powerful, world transforming, revolutionary statement, and why we ought to give ourselves to understanding it more than any other thing in life.

Application

- Who do you know who needs to hear about Jesus and the hope He offers?
- What are some ways you can show that person Jesus' love and encourage them with the Gospel?

Prayer:

God, thank You for sending Jesus as the ultimate sacrifice for our sins. Thank You for loving us so deeply and intimately. Continue to reveal Your glory to me, so I may experience more of You. Give me opportunities to love and share Your Gospel with those around me. You are so good and so generous to share your wisdom with me!

DON'T BE DECEIVED

Saturday
January 16

Scripture Focus:

Colossians 2:1-5; I Corinthians 13:1-13

Devotional Thought:

Paul is concerned that the church might be dissuaded from the faith by false teachings which, on their surface, appear to be “fine-sounding arguments.” Paul wanted Colossae to be aware so they would not be deceived. Not a lot has changed over the years. Deception about Jesus is rampant. There are so many bad bible teachers and people claiming to love God who teach horrible things.

Two things help against being deceived: first, a well ordered, disciplined life. The spirit of our age says, do whatever you feel like doing, respond to whatever you like. Deny yourself nothing.

Paul, however, delights that the Colossians are orderly and disciplined. They make themselves do right whether they feel like doing it or not. A disciplined life will always be hard to deceive. Gordon McDonald's book, *Ordering Your Private World*, is helpful in assisting many to discipline their lives in right and proper ways to discover the freedom of disciplined living.

I have always wanted to be able to play the piano, or some musical instrument. I envy people who are able to sit at a piano and play it, seemingly without effort. But I cannot do that, because I have never disciplined myself to study and practice music. Thus, I have no freedom in this area. Almost any discipline will help us resist error and Paul compliments the Colossians on their orderly life, for it makes them resistant to deceit.

Second, the apostle delights to see how firm is their faith in Christ. They understood clearly that it was Christ who held them, not they who held Christ. When they strayed, he would send someone to them to point it out to them, or stop them by some circumstance that would make it difficult for error to take root among them. A

strong faith in the presence of Jesus is a powerful safeguard against being misled.

Application

- Are there any ideas you hear that make you wonder: “Does this align with what God says?”
- Practice being vulnerable. So many people are afraid to reach out and ask because of a fear of looking silly. Reach out to a believer you respect and trust. Ask them to help you understand what the Bible says about that idea.

Prayer

Father, show me if I am being led astray by any false teachings that, on the surface, sound fine. Help me to know what is true of you and to welcome correction from people who love me and love you.

JESUS IS YOUR STRENGTH

Sunday
January 17

Scripture Focus:

Colossians 2:6-7

Devotional Thought:

The verses we are studying today are verses that I would urge you to try to memorize. The reason is because in them lies the keys to an exciting and thrilling life with Jesus. I believe if you'll do these three things, you'll find health and excitement in your life.

The first key is being rooted in Christ. When you are rooted in Christ, you are planted with deep roots. Those roots are the ones that hold you when life gets difficult or hard. I constantly am trying to teach our church that coming to church isn't enough, you have to become planted in a faith family. You must plant deep roots. Even while in exile, God commanded the Israelites in Jeremiah 29 to plant deep roots. It's not as important to me that HC is THE church although I think it's a great one. I'm more concerned with you planting roots at A church.

The second key is to be built up. When you plant strong roots, you enable yourself to grow. So much of what I've learned about faith has not come by someone sitting me down and saying, "Do this, don't do this.." Much of my growth can be attributed to gleaning while simply being. Some call it osmosis. I was in an environment of health and because of that, I gleaned and grew. Get in as many healthy environments for your soul and watch how you start to grow and be built.

The third key is to be strengthened in the faith. This can really open happen through experience. Walking with God through life is crucial. There are things at 37 that I'm still learning about God that my father has learned at 64. They aren't things that can be learned from a book, or else maybe I could have learned them by now. They are things that can only be learned through experience. With that experience comes strengthening.

If you do these three things in a Christian life, something will happen: You will find life filled with zest, vitality and excitement.

Application

- What practical steps can you take each day to pursue following Jesus?
- How can you seek the truth and continue to grow in your understanding of it?
- Do you express your gratitude to God in all situations? It is easy to have a thankful posture when things are going well, but what steps can we take to be grateful in all circumstances?

Prayer

Jesus, help me to follow you today. Help me to remember all that I've read and heard from you. May your Word change my heart and perspective day by day until it becomes instinctive to look to you for help. Thank you for always loving me and helping grow.

YOU HAVE ALL THAT YOU NEED

Monday
January 18

Scripture Focus:

Colossians 2:8-10; 2 Peter 1:3-11

Devotional Thought:

Paul wants the church to know that Jesus is more than a teacher or a good man. Jesus is fully divine and fully man. God in the flesh. Said in another way, all of God is present wherever Jesus is.

And that truth is that Paul wants to remind the Colossians. All that they could ever need is already with them, if they have Jesus.

This matters because a good teacher can't forgive sin – only God can. But since "the whole fullness of deity" dwells in Jesus, He has the power and authority to cover our sin and declare us right before God.

People were telling the Colossians that faith in Jesus was fine, but they also needed to observe certain rituals to be right with God. Paul wants them (and us) to know nothing could be farther from the truth!

Paul's response to this is essentially this: Why would you need anything more? What more can these false teachers add to that? What new experience, what other additional divine person can you receive than what you have already received when you have Jesus? It may be that we need to discover more of what it means to have Christ in our heart; that is a lifelong process. We should always be growing in appreciation of what it means to have him, but the point is (and it is a very important one): you do not need anything more than you already have. You merely need to understand more of what you have received.

We don't have to follow Old Testament ceremonies, earn a seminary degree, keep up superstitions, or check a bunch of boxes to earn favor with God. Jesus' work was complete. In Him, we have everything we need (1 Peter 1:3).

Application

- Where is your trust, really? Think about the motives behind your spiritual actions.
- Is there anything you're doing because you want to impress God rather than get to know God?

Prayer

Jesus, thank you. Because of your sacrifice on the cross, I am welcomed into God's presence as His beloved child. I'm no longer trapped in a cycle of doing more and trying harder. Everything You did was enough.

HOW DO YOU KNOW WHAT'S TRUE?

Tuesday
January 19

Scripture Focus:

Colossians 2:8-15; Romans 6:1-14; Galatians 2:20

Devotional Thought:

Paul tells believers to be careful about what they accept as truth. Often, we'll accept an idea or way of doing things because it sounds good or it's what we've always done.

Instead, Paul encourages us to place our trust in Christ and Christ alone. Jesus is the ultimate ruler and king of all, so He is the one we look to for truth and understanding. We can stand up to tradition, peer pressure, and any other "spirits of the world" because we have direct access to the Creator.

The "Spirits of the world" are the world rulers of darkness who keep inserting into human thinking wrong ideas, dangerous thoughts, attitudes and teachings that build strife with one another. I love Paul's declaration about them. Paul declares that when Jesus died he seized these powers by the throat, chained them, and dragged them in triumph behind him, like a Roman general marching through the streets of Rome, his chained captives walking behind in total defeat.

That is why John can say "Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world." There is no need, therefore, to give way to evil teaching or evil temptations, for we have a Power and a Person within who is superior to anything Satan can throw against us—the world, the flesh or the devil! That is the teaching of this passage. We see who God is through Jesus and through His Word. When we get still and listen, we can hear the quiet voice of the Lord. His Spirit illuminates the Scriptures as we read, revealing God's promises and plans for our life.

Application

- Do you have a hard time telling the difference between God's ideas and the world's ideas? If so, why?
- Did any philosophies or empty deceits come to mind as you were reading? How can you replace these ideas with God's truth?

Prayer

Father, I know your words are true. I know your voice is steady and constant when the rest of the world is not. Show me how to trust you and you alone. No matter how loud the world gets, continue to reveal yourself to me and guiding me in the right direction and protecting me from the captivity of the enemy. You are good and I love you.

YOUR DEBT IS PAID IN FULL

Wednesday
January 20

Scripture Focus:

Colossians 2:14-15, Luke 7:36-50

Devotional Thought:

Financial debt can feel challenging, and even overwhelming. However, spiritual debt is much more dangerous, because its impact is eternal.

All of us have a spiritual debt we cannot pay, but the Bible tells us God has paid our debt! He canceled the payment due for our sins and instead accepted the payment His Son Jesus provided when He died on the cross (Colossians 2:14). God grants this freedom to all who choose to follow Jesus (Colossians 2:13).

That condemnation is now removed by the death of Christ on our behalf. He paid for all our sins, the sins we committed in the past, the sins we are going to commit today, and the sins we will commit in the future. Sin is no longer an issue in our relationship with God. It affects our fellowship but not our relationship. He has fully dealt with it. We need to acknowledge our sin in order to enter into the benefit of that forgiveness, but forgiveness is already there in the heart of God. What a wonderful truth! I do not think I rejoice in anything more than the fact that my sins, my mistakes, my failures, my unloving words, my unkind attitudes and my selfish actions have been forgiven. Every day God gives me a new slate, a new unspoiled day, to live through by his grace. Our sins have been forgiven. Paul sees them as “nailed to the cross,” so they no longer can condemn us. The law is not done away with, but the condemnation of it is.

Jesus once encountered a woman who recognized the depth of her sin (Luke 7:36-50). Her love toward Jesus overflowed into service because she was so grateful to experience forgiveness. She received forgiveness for her spiritual debt, and it changed her life forever. She was made free and then told to “go and sin no more.” Likewise, accepting God’s payment for our spiritual debt means our obligation is paid in full, enabling us to live as his free children.

I love the hymn that many of us sang as children, “Jesus Paid it All.” The chorus to the song proclaims, “Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe; sin had left a crimson stain, He washed it white as snow.”

Application

- How should knowing Jesus has paid your spiritual debt change the way you live?
- Who needs to hear about how you became spiritually debt-free?

Prayer

Jesus, thank you for canceling my spiritual debt through the cross—a debt I could never pay. Help me to show my gratitude by living in the wonder of my freedom in you!

ONLY ONE OPINION MATTERS

Thursday
January 21

Scripture Focus:

Colossians 2:16-23; Romans 7:4-6

Devotional Thought:

When Paul wrote this letter, there was a lot of confusion about the Christian life. These early Christians were facing a ton of philosophical intermingling of belief systems that were confusing and misleading. We face the same thing. Here are a few ideas that can hurt believers from this passage:

The first is empty ritualism. Some people were adding a performance component, saying that to be good Christians they should still observe the Sabbath as well as Jewish festivals and dietary rules. It was empty performance. Many Christians think they have to perform for God to love them. God isn't fooled by performance. He knows the heart.

The second is mysticism. This is false humility. In those days, people were claiming to have greater knowledge spiritually than others. Today, it's the focus of one's self. Self focus, inward focus, false humility can cripple a Christian life. "You have it all, now discover it.

The third is extremism. In Colossians 2:20-23, people were attempting to be obsessive and thus overly religious in their extreme self-imposed acts. Martin Luther before becoming a Christian would lie naked in a cell in the cold weather and torture himself to attempt to find peace in his heart. Today, this is what we refer to as legalism. Legalism are man made extremes that God has not asked for and are used to judge others. Legalists often create extreme forms of discipline and then judge others for not holding them too.

If you do good works, but somehow lose Christ as the central focus, you've ultimately missed the point. When these things take over even here in this place, return to Him. He will restore and comfort us when we fail and falter, and in submission to him we will find the freedom we seek.

Application

- Do you ever feel like you don't measure up as a Christian? What makes you feel that way? Ask the Lord to make you aware of when feelings of inadequacy arise and to remind you that His grace and salvation make you compete in Him.
- Do you judge Christians by what they do or don't do? Are you guilty of imposing performance standards on Christians around you? If so, ask the Lord to soften your heart and make you aware when you are quick to judge others.

Prayer

Jesus, thank you for salvation, for dying on the cross to pay for my sins. Help me to remember that I am complete in you. I don't have to exhaust myself with rules and performances to be loved by You. Help me to rest in your salvation and to resist the temptation to compare myself or others to any standard you did not call us to.

WHERE IS YOUR MIND FOCUSED?

Friday
January 22

Scripture Focus:

Colossians 3:2-3

Devotional Thought:

In today's text, Paul encourages readers to set their minds on things above. What are the things above that Paul is talking about here? It's the hope that we talked about near the beginning of these devotionals. The hope of Gospel and the fact that Jesus has saved us is the greatest place of peace that you can take yourself.

Paul is teaching believers to try to develop the habit of gratitude of what the Lord has already done for you and what he's doing now.

This is not a form of escapism. It is not something you try to keep your mind on all day long, to the exclusion of business, family or home. It is rather something that when your mind is occupied with your family, work problems, or whatever, you also bring into it this extra dimension. Christ is part of that situation. That is what Paul means when he says, "your life is hid with Christ in God." Christ is involved with your activities. Remind yourself that whatever you are involved in includes also the person of the Lord himself. His wisdom, power and knowledge are all available to you. That is what Paul means. It ought to awaken our loving gratitude.

We often only think about what awaits us in eternity when faced with death's reality. But Paul is saying we should live every day with eternity in mind. Eternal life began the moment we put our trust in Jesus. But while we're still living on this earth, we're consistently confronted with other priorities, other value systems.

The kingdom values love, mercy, kindness, and humility. When we gave our lives to Jesus, our old selves died. We find our new lives with Jesus, chasing after what matters to Him.

Application

- What is your mind set on most of the time?
- Ask Jesus what He sees in that situation or area of your life. Where are there differences between what matters to you and what matters in eternity?
- How does time with the Lord help change your perspective on what you see?

Prayer

Father, help me to begin to see things through Jesus' eyes. Give me strength and guidance to read your Word every day. Help me to have the insight and faith to see how my life here can reflect heaven. Help me to think on things that are pure and just and worthy of your praise.

PUT AWAY WHAT NO LONGER FITS

Saturday
January 23

Scripture Focus:

Colossians 3:5-8; Romans 8:12-13; 2 Corinthians 5:14-17

Devotional Thought:

Everywhere in the New Testament, there are admonitions to “put off” and to “put on”. Of course the language is similar to that of clothing. If you are young and walk into the house dirty, your mother probably told you to “take off your dirty clothes.”

For whatever reason, there has been a hesitancy from churches to talk too much about “putting off” certain things. Perhaps it comes from a desire to not want to offend, but Pastors talk a lot about what to put on and not a lot about what to put off. Consequently, I think there are a lot of Christians that have put on clean clothes over dirty ones. It’s deceptive and even charming, but the problem is that we’re still dirty.

Here in the plainest language, Paul tells us what we must “Put to death whatever belongs to your earthly nature”.

Angry, slanderous, lustful, jealous, obscene — this is who we used to be, not who are we now. Paul has strong words to describe what to do with these old ways of living: “Put to death ... put them all away ... put off the old self.”

Before Jesus, we lived to satisfy physical cravings and sin. But then we were made alive in Christ! We became new creations, and with that comes a new way of living.

The same way a butterfly no longer acts like a caterpillar, we have been transformed. Our old ways of living no longer suit our new life in Christ. Paul’s challenge to put our old ways to death is more than a call to morality; it’s a call to live out a new identity.

Application

- What do you need to put away or put to death from who you were before Jesus? Would you be vulnerable and share that with someone today?
- How does your life look different now than when first started following Jesus?
- What are you thankful to have left behind in your old life before Jesus?

Prayer

Father, thank you for your Word. Thank you for making me a new creation and a co-heir with Christ. Thank you that I get to put to death my old way of living, and experience a Spirit-filled life with You. Help me to see if there is anything I still need to release. Thank you for sending your Son so I can live life to the full.

YOU CAN DO IT!

Sunday
January 24

Scripture Focus:

Colossians 3:9-10; Romans 12:1-2; Ephesians 1:22-23

Devotional Thought:

When we're saved, we become a new creation. We have a new life, with new ways of thinking and doing. Once again in this passage, Paul lists several attitudes and ways of living to renounce. He mentions anger, rage, malice, slander and filthy language.

Perhaps you see this list of things and think to yourself, "How in the world could I possibly do this? This seems impossible." What I want you to know is that it is not impossible. Remember that because of your salvation, you have new clothes that you can put on. We are asked to stop because we can. We can think differently, act differently and live differently. You are no longer what you once were.

You have the Spirit of the living God inside of you that is maturing you and growing you. You can stop! You begin to stop by taking your life and your thoughts to God and saying, "What do you think? What would you have me do?" This is how we learn to "discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:2).

Changing our mindset is key because new ways of thinking lead to new ways of living. As our thoughts change, our actions follow. Things we used to do may not fit in the new life we've been given. People we used to listen to may not seem wise any longer.

This is all part of putting off the old self and putting on the new one. As we learn who we are in Christ, we start to see and carry ourselves differently.

Application

- As you begin your day, commit to taking each thought you have to God. Ask Him to show you His thoughts on your thoughts.
- Consider unfollowing social media accounts that remind you of who you used to be or make it harder to be who He's called you to be.
- Not sure where to start? Ask a more mature Christian for advice on how renewing your mind can become a habit.

Prayer

Lord, direct my mindset and fill me with your Spirit as I begin my day. Help me to see the world as you do and to live in a way that draws people to you.

Scripture Focus:

Colossians 3:12-14; 1 Peter 2:9-10

Devotional Thought:

In this section of Colossians, Paul has listed several different things to put off and to put on. In this set of verses, Paul shows us a few of the things that we have the opportunity to put on. We must mention these, because so many people think that Christianity is a list of things not to do. Here, just a few of the tremendous benefits of following Jesus come into fold.

Clothing yourself with compassion speaks to a sense of sympathy or empathy with those around you. Instead of seeing them through the lens of frustration or annoyance, you begin to feel the things that may be contributing to their current life circumstance. The Bible says that when Jesus saw some people, he had pity on them. He has compassion.

Kindness is another trait. Kindness is compassion in action. Sympathy feels, but kindness chooses to demonstrate through an act. It shows itself in many ways: A smile, a compliment, an invitation or an offer to help. Can you think of any Christians in your life that don't put on kindness? How would we be viewed if we all put this on more often?

What about humility? John Stott called it, "the rarest and fairest of all Christian virtues. It's the exact opposite of the worst of sins, which is pride. It's through humility that we're able to consider others better than ourselves.

Gentleness is another that is listed. It's strength under control. Christ was described in Scripture as "meek and lowly of heart." He could have displayed his strength with great vibrato and force, but he chose to be gentle. Gentleness is one of the greatest quality that wins others to us.

These are only but a few of the qualities mentioned and the more that you become like Jesus, the more that your character will reflect Jesus. Each of these terms could be used of him, but now, they become grace gifts given to us by the Father for our lives.

So every day, we put on these traits like we would a wedding ring. It's a decision we make before the day begins to treat others, not as the world does, but with the same love Jesus showed us.

Application

- Look back at how Paul describes God's chosen ones. Are these words you would use to describe yourself? Why or why not?
- What's one way you could show kindness to someone today?

Prayer

Father, thank you for choosing me and for bringing me into your family. You love me with an everlasting love. Help me to go and do the same. Show me where I need to be humble. Give me opportunities to show patience and bring this verse to mind when I'm struggling to forgive.

WHEN GOD'S WORD DWELLS IN US

Tuesday
January 26

Scripture Focus:

Colossians 3:16; Psalm 19:7-11

Devotional Thought:

Today, we're studying Colossians 3:16 where each of us are instructed to "Let the word of Christ dwell among you richly."

Letting God's Word dwell in us means we spend time reading Scripture, memorizing it, and letting it change our hearts, words, and behaviors. What we learn here is that the Bible should be well known by Christians. It's the central thing in teaching us how to live. Its insight is unrivaled and its wisdom is unparalleled and it helps you to know the bridegroom on a greater level.

If I handed you a book right now and said that inside of it were all the secrets to understanding exactly how your spouse thinks and operates, do you think you would read it? Of course you would. You have a desire to know your spouse and understand them.

The same should be true with our heavenly father. We ought to know and understand it. There is nothing that even remotely approaches it in its view of reality. If you want wisdom for this world, make sure you are garnering that wisdom from the one who gives it.

Lastly, notice how the study of the Bible isn't meant to be simply personal but with others. When we share what God is teaching us through Scripture, God can use our story to teach others. When someone needs advice or when we ourselves need guidance, we can look to the Bible for wise counsel. When we read God's Word and discover His character, we worship with a deeper understanding of the One who created us.

Letting God's Word fill our hearts and minds changes us. Psalm 19 says the Bible revives our souls, makes us wise, brings joy, and instructs us how to live (Psalm 19:7-11). God wants to bless us through His Word. We receive that blessing as we let Scripture fill our lives.

Application

- What is one step you can take to let God's Word dwell in you?

Prayer

Father, use the Bible to change my heart and my mind. Let Your words affect every area of my life.

WHO ARE YOU SUBMITTING TO?

Wednesday
January 27

Scripture Focus:

Colossians 3:18-25; Colossians 4:1; Matthew 6:33

Devotional Thought:

Colossians 3:18-25 is perhaps one of the most controversial and frustrating sections for some in the entire Bible. In this section, Paul covers the whole hierarchy of human relationships in these verses. From children to parents, to spouses, to bosses, we all serve and are to submit to someone.

The word “submit” has become a word viewed with disdain. When Paul asks wives to submit to their husbands in verse 18, many women balk at such an ask. The problem is that the meaning has been distorted.

A few things that must be stated: First, submission doesn't cancel out equality. Submission is not a word for women, it's a word for all. Paul says that Christians are to submit to one another and the greatest example of submission is when Jesus submits to the Father. In truth, he delighted in it and yet in no way did he question the equality amongst the Godhead. Submission isn't about inequality, it means “to put yourself under for a good and proper purpose.”

Secondly, submission can't be demanded. The Father didn't demand in of the son. It's a voluntary act. As we love one another, submission because easier because of the trust and safety that comes in love.

The attitude we're to take into our relationships is summarized in the second half of Colossians 3:24 – “you are serving the Lord Christ.” We are to humbly submit to and obey those with authority over us. When we obey other people, we are obeying God. That always brings Him glory, models Jesus' humility to others, and makes for smoother relationships with others.

Jesus tells us “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (Matthew 6:33). So even when submitting to others isn't easy, we do it because we trust God to handle our concerns and meet our needs.

Application

- Do you struggle to show respect to your parents, spouse, or boss? Do you find it difficult to serve and obey them?
- Would your attitude change if you approached serving them like you were serving Jesus? How?

Prayer

Father, help me to remember I am serving you when I serve others because you tell us that service is how we show your love. Give me the humility I need today to serve and obey for your sake.

BEING STEADFAST AND FAITHFUL

Thursday
January 28

Scripture Focus:

Colossians 4:2-6; Romans 16:17-20

Devotional Thought:

Paul encourages the church to pray diligently and with a grateful heart. Continually re-aligning with Christ is what it takes to be steadfast and faithful. We cannot do better by simply trying harder. We need constant connection with Jesus to live out the Gospel. In this passage, the writer urges the reader to “watch and pray.” This is the same command that Jesus gave the disciples in the garden.

It underscores the incredibly deceptive and dangerous world that we live in today. At all times, you are under subtle attack from the enemy so it’s important to watch and pray so that our peace isn’t restricted.

And not only pray for yourself but, as Paul suggests here, pray for others too, for open doors for those who are ministering. Paul is in prison, limited, in chains, and he is asking that God will set him free to proclaim the gospel.

Earlier in this letter we learned what that is: “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” That is the central message of the Christian faith. It is a new way to live: Jesus Christ in you. By his grace and strength, you can be what you ought to be! That is what Paul wants freedom to declare.

Finally, he instructs them to consider how they’re sharing the Gospel in their own circles – to think about how they’re living as well as what they’re saying.

Paul doesn’t give us a formula for sharing the Gospel. Instead, Paul reminds us that if we have a gracious heart connected to God and are willing to be led by the Spirit, we’ll always know just what to say.

Application

- When was the last time you prayed for your words to make a difference instead of jumping right in?
- What would it look like to approach today’s conversations with grace?

Prayer

Lord, help me to be mindful of how I speak and act. Help me avoid those who can cause divisions and create obstacles to understanding Scripture. Give me the wisdom to see smooth talk and flattery for what they are. Help me to grow in wisdom so I can discern between good and evil, knowing You will crush Satan and give me victory. Let me continue to walk in grace toward others, knowing you are with me always.

BEING WISE WITH YOUR WORDS AND DAYS

Friday
January 29

Scripture Focus:

Colossians 4:5-6; 1 Peter 3:14-17

Devotional Thought:

We get a finite number of hours in a day and a finite number of days on this earth. Being wise about how we use them starts with being aware that others are watching.

People see how we live and are drawing conclusions about Jesus based on our actions, not just our words. When our walk matches our talk, it gets people's attention.

"How can you be so calm?"

"How do you always see the best in everyone?"

"I can't believe you forgave her! I'm not sure I could ever do that."

One of the realizations that I had a few years ago was that there was never a time in my life that I wasn't leading and someone wasn't watching. Leaders get privilege. They get the opportunity to influence those around them. But with that privilege comes great responsibility and as Christians, Christ has asked us to be His ambassadors to the world. As a Christian, you are an influencer, whether you like it or not.

Ordinary conversations can become opportunities to share the Gospel when we live the way Jesus did. That's why Paul also reminds the church to be gracious in their speech.

We never know when we'll have an opportunity to share the reason for our hope. So being wise toward outsiders also means being ready to explain your faith with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15-16).

Application

- Are there any areas of your life where your actions don't match what you say you believe?
- For the next 24 hours, try approaching every conversation with this question in mind: "Jesus, how can I be wise and make the best use of this time?"

Prayer

Jesus, thank you for being gracious toward me and for leaving such a great example of how to walk in wisdom toward outsiders. You always knew exactly what to say, and you were never afraid of not fitting in or being taken advantage of. Show me where my walk isn't matching my talk so I can be more like you.

SHARE YOUR LIFE WITH OTHERS

Saturday
January 30

Scripture Focus:

Colossians 4:7-18

Devotional Thought:

We have come to the close of this 21 Days together. I hope it's encouraged you and helped you and brought hope for the future to your life.

As we come to the end of the book, the final words are intentional and poignant. From encouragers to informants, prayer warriors to hosts of in-home churches, Paul names nine different people who play a vital role in his life and ministry. Paul knew he could not do what God called him to do alone, and neither can we.

While we may not be planting churches or traveling missionaries, sharing our lives as we share the Gospel is just as important for us as it was for Paul.

How do we get this group of people, as Paul had? It all starts with surrender. As we surrender our lives and our will to God, we can ask Him to open our eyes to see the people we can do life and ministry with.

That doesn't mean we hide at home and hope they come to the door with a sign that says, "I'm the person you prayed for!" (But that would be amazing!) Instead, we get out and get involved.

Meet the neighbors. Open up to people around you. Get onto the Dream Team at church. But, most of all, be expectant that the Lord will honor your heart to serve Him.

Application

- Who is the person (or people) God put in your mind as you read this passage?
- Who do you feel God prompting you to let into your life and do ministry with?

Prayer

Father, I know I can't go through life alone. I need You, and I need Your people. Please open my eyes and bring the people You want me to do life with. Thank You for the truth that You don't want me to do life and ministry alone.



THEHEARTLANDCHURCH.COM