

Bible Reading Notes

April 2019 – Colossians

These notes are easy to install on most phones or tablets.

Install the 'PrayerMate' App and you'll find it under 'subscribe to online feeds' and 'Devotional'. It's called St Philemon's Bible Notes. If you have any problems, email alicecornes@gmail.com

How to use these Bible reading notes

These Bible reading notes are a resource to help you dig into God's word and allow it to change your life. 'A little and often' is a good motto. If you miss a day (or several!), don't feel guilty or try to catch up; just pick up wherever the notes have got to. Here's a guide to get the most out of these notes:

1. Find a time and place where you can be quiet but awake.
2. Ask God to help you understand.
3. Use the notes to help you think about the passage:
 - *'Read' sections get you thinking for yourself about the verses.*
 - *'Apply' sections suggest how they make a difference to you and how to pray in response.*
4. Pray about what you have read.
5. Look for an opportunity to share with someone what God has told you.

Monday 1st April

Am I a proper Christian? Do I have all I need to live the Christian life? What will make me more godly/mature as a Christian? If you ever ask any of these, or know someone asking them, Colossians is the letter for you! It was written to a church who were hearing that they needed more than Jesus. Paul writes to show that in Christ, they already have everything they need.

Read Colossians 1:1-6a

- What authority does Paul write with? v1
- How do he and Timothy see the Colossian church?
- What are the 2 reasons they are thankful to God for the Colossians? v4
- Why do the Colossians have this faith and love? v5-6

Apply

- Do you ever doubt if you are a 'proper' Christian? If so, do you have the marks of one: any faith in Christ and love for other Christians?
- If you don't think you trust Christ personally, or love his people differently from others, do ask for God's help to know Jesus, and please discuss with a Christian friend/church leader.
- If you do have faith in Christ and love for other Christians (however up and down!), thank God that you've heard the true gospel and that you have a hope in heaven to look forward to!

Tuesday 2nd April

Do you remember who first shared the gospel with you? In today's verses, Paul wants to assure the Colossians they've heard the correct and full gospel.

Read Colossians 1:6-8

- Gospel literally means 'good news'. What happens when the gospel is shared and understood? v6
- 'God's grace' is central to the true gospel message. How would you explain 'God's grace' in your own words? If you're struggling, you could learn a definition at the bottom of today's notes.
- How can the Colossians be sure they heard the 'right' gospel? v7

Apply

- Can you remember when you first heard the gospel and understood it? Whether you can or not, thank God for the person/people who shared it with you. Also, why not drop the person a message to say thank you as well?
- Pray that the gospel would be bearing fruit and growing in your local area and across the world. If your church has mission partners, do pray for gospel growth in their work.

NB: A definition of grace: God being kind to people who don't deserve it through Jesus. KIND TO NEW CN

Wednesday 3rd April

How would you respond to news that people you haven't met have heard the gospel & have become Christians? Having heard about the Colossians' faith, Paul's first reaction was to pray!

Read Colossians 1:9-12

- If the Colossians already seem to be doing well as Christians, why do you think Paul is so keen to pray for them?
- What does he want the outcome of his prayer to be? (There are at least 7 things he'd like to happen)

Apply

- How would the answer to this prayer look in your life?
- How can the things Paul prays for shape the things you pray for?
- Pray this prayer for yourself and other Christians you know.

Thursday 4th April

Did you realise that becoming a Christian involves a change of address? Following on from yesterday's passage, here Paul is expanding on why the Colossian Christians can be thankful.

Read Colossians 1:13-14

- In what sense has the Christian 'changed address?'
- Why is our new home so much better? v13 (NEW LINE so they don't get given the answer to the first question immediately)
- Paul wants the Colossians to know that they have everything they need in Jesus. What has He achieved for His people in v14? How would you explain that in your own words?

Apply

- Thank God, that because of Christ you're no longer under the power of darkness, but are safely in the kingdom of Jesus (which will be seen fully when He returns).
- Did you realise that through Christ God has paid the full price required to ensure you are His (redemption), and that He's fully forgiven your sins? Thank Him that this is true, ask for His help to trust it when it's hard to remember

Friday 5th April

Where do we need to go to really see what God is like?

Read Colossians 1:15-17

- Who does God's Son reveal to us? v15a
- How is the Son described? v15b-17

NB: Firstborn is a title - referring to the Son's status as heir of creation, it's not implying that the Son had a beginning. Ask someone at church if you want more information on that.

Apply

- When a non-Christian comments that we can't know what God is like, or even if there is a God, how does this passage help you respond?
- How is this description of Jesus different to how you normally think of Him? How does seeing His greatness help you to follow Him today?
- Thank Jesus for who He is. **LOVELY MIX OF PERSONALLY RELATING TO JESUS AND TRANSFORMING OUR MINDS AND WORKING OUT WHAT TO DO WITH WHAT WE'RE LEARNING PRACTICALLY. ...ALSO LOVELY LENGTH.** If anything, eg Sat 6th, could be longer. But that's by far the best way round to have it!
NB: NO NEED FOR BIBLE PASSAGES.

Saturday 6th April

‘Who is the greatest?’ Is a question that could refer to a footballer, world leader, artist, or scientist. But who is the greatest person ever? The only answer is below!

Read Colossians 1:18-20

- What does Christ have authority over? v18
- Why does He have all that authority? v19-20

Apply

- Thank God that Jesus showed Himself to be supreme over death, and thank Him for the hope that gives you in the face of death.
- Do you ever find yourself wondering whether following Jesus is really worth it? Whether there are better options out there? What stands out from this passage to motivate you to keep following Christ?

Sunday 7th April

What is so amazing about the gospel? For whatever reason, you might not feel it's amazing at the moment. Read on to see why it is.

Read Colossians 1:22-23

- What was our relationship with God like before we were Christians? v21
- How did that change because of Christ? v22
- What do we need to hold on to to keep going as Christians? v23

Apply

- What difference does it make knowing you were an enemy of God before He saved you?
- Thank God that because of Christ you are holy in His sight, completely clean before Him.
- What is most likely to draw you away from the hope of the gospel? What will help you to continue to go on trusting Christ?

Monday 8th April

How is it possible for suffering and joy to go together? The apostle Paul shows us how in the following verses describing his ministry.

Read Colossians 1:24-29

- Why did Paul think it was worth suffering to share the gospel with the church? v24*-25
- What is the message of God that Paul has to share? v25-27
- Who is at the centre of Paul's teaching? Why?

*Christ's afflictions (sufferings on the cross) are totally sufficient to achieve salvation (v20,22). The 'lack' is that the gospel message about Christ's afflictions isn't widely known, which is why Paul is willing to suffer to make the gospel known.

Apply

- Thank God for those who were/are willing to suffer to share the gospel with you.
- Pray for your church leaders to be Christ-centred in their teaching and to be sustained by Christ's energy in their ministry.
- Are you wondering how to become more mature as a Christian? Paul says it's being taught about Christ (v28). Are Christian podcasts/books/blogs etc you read Christ-centred? It could be worth listening to something else if they aren't.

Tuesday 9th April

What will stop us being deceived as Christians?

Read Colossians 2:1-5

- We saw yesterday that Paul is working hard to make Christ known. What is his goal in doing this? v1-2
- Why is it so important that they know Christ well? v3
- What danger is there to lead them away from Christ? v4

Apply

- Pray that as Christ is taught your church would be encouraged and united, having understanding, and so knowing Christ.
- How often is Christ the one you go to in search of wisdom and knowledge? What will help you do this?
- What 'fine-sounding' arguments are you exposed to day to day? How do they draw you away from Christ and towards other things? What will help you to turn to Christ instead?

Wednesday 10th April

What is the Christian life all about? Colossians 2:6-7 are often seen as the heart of the letter, the thing that Paul really desires his hearers to take on board. Why not commit them to memory during this month?

Read Colossians 2:6-7

- How does Paul describe becoming a Christian?
- What then does growth as a Christian look like?
- Given what we've seen so far in Colossians, why does 'overflowing with thankfulness' fit with being a Christian?

Apply

- How is 'receiving Christ Jesus as Lord' different from how you might normally think of/describe becoming a Christian?
- To what extent are you 'continuing to live your life' in Christ now? What would it look like for you to be more rooted and built up in Christ?
- Give thanks to God for Christ, ask for help to grow in thankfulness for all He's done for you

ONE THING TO WORK ON: END OF THE MONTH?

Thursday 11th April

What are the biggest dangers you face today? Global warming? Crime? Terrorism?

The big danger we're warned about here is ideas.

Read Colossians 2:8-12

- How powerful are the philosophies (ideas) that Paul is warning about? v8a
- What is the problem with them? v8
- Why is Christ so much better? v9-12 (about 6 reasons!)

Apply

- What ideas are you hearing that tempt you to depend on human/worldly thinking rather than on Christ?
- What is it about who Christ is that gives you confidence to trust Him instead?
- What is it about what Christ has done for you that gives you confidence to rely on Him instead?
- Thank Christ for who He is and what He's done for you. Pray for your whole life ahead that you won't ever be taken captive by ideas that aren't based on Christ.

Friday 12th April

Was Jesus' death a tragedy? In a sense yes, but in the biggest sense we see here that it was a victory.

Read Colossians 2:13-15

- How did our situation change because of Christ?
v13
- How was this change possible? v13b-14
- In what way was the cross a triumph over the powers and authorities (both evil spiritual authorities and human ones at the time)? v15

Apply

- Do you remember that because of Christ you are spiritually alive rather than spiritually dead? (You can't be in the middle!) Thank Him for giving you life.
- Do you ever feel condemned by your sin? Picture it nailed to the cross and paid for there. Thank God.
- In the West we often don't think about evil spiritual powers, but the Bible is clear they are there. Praise God that because of the cross we can be sure that Christ has victory over all evil, and we don't have to fear.

Saturday 13th April

Have you ever felt you aren't a 'good enough' Christian because of things you've drunk or eaten? Or religious traditions/festivals that you haven't kept? Here Paul is dealing with that issue head on. This is some of the false teaching that Paul has been warning about so far in the letter.

Read Colossians 2:16-17

- What warning is there to Christians in v16?
- Food laws and observing certain festivals/days of the week were required for the Old Testament Jews. But, what does Paul say was the point of them? v17

Apply

- Thank God that because of Christ and His work on the cross (see v13-15) you aren't required to keep certain festivals, or avoid certain foods.
- How does knowing festivals and food laws are a shadow of what Christ brings help you read the Old Testament?

Sunday 14th April

Have you ever felt you aren't a 'good enough' Christian because you haven't had certain experiences or visions? This is the next area of false teaching that Paul addresses.

Read Colossians 2:18-19

- What type of person is Paul warning about in v18?
- This person might seem 'super spiritual', but what is their real state v19*?

* Christ is the head of the church (Col 1:18)

Apply

- Why might we be tempted to feel inadequate compared to people who claim to have had spiritual visions/experiences?
- What do we need to remember about Christ at those times?
- Thank God, that because of Christ's death on the cross you are safely part of His body and that visions and/or experiences don't change that.

Monday 15th April

What is the best way to grow in godliness? Self-help books/blog posts/tweets out there give plenty of 'rules' to follow to be a 'better' person. Such ideas can be found in churches/Christian materials too. These verses show the limits of rules for the Christian.

Read Colossians 2:20-23

- The Christian has died with Christ, how is our relationship to the world different now? v20
- What are the type of rules the world tells us to follow? Why are they appealing? v21-23
- Why are such rules unable to bring about real change? v23b (See back to 2:11 for how Christ changed us from the inside)

Apply

- Rules such as 'don't watch 18 rated films' or 'don't go clubbing' might have wisdom to them, but following them in and of themselves won't get rid of our sinful desires. Only Christ has the power to deal with those. What 'rules' are you following to try to grow as a Christian?
- How will remembering that you are united to Christ affect how you approach those rules?

Tuesday 16th April

Where would you say you are right now? In one sense, the answer is likely to be your bedroom/living room/on the train. But these verses show that in a spiritual sense, you are actually somewhere else!

Read Colossians 3:1-4

- What has happened to the Christian spiritually?
v1, v3
- Where is the Christian currently 'located'? v3
- What does the Christian have to look forward to?
v4
- How is the Christian meant to live in response to their unity with Christ? v1-2

Apply

- Thank God that because of Christ you are completely secure with Him. - You don't have to rely on 'rules' we saw yesterday to be secure in your salvation.
- Where do you tend to set your heart and your mind during the day? What would it look like to set your focus on Christ instead?

Wednesday 17th April

We're pausing Colossians to have an 'Easter break'.

What is the most amazing gift another person has given to you? This passage shows us Jesus willingly giving us the greatest gift He could

Read Mark 14:17-26

- What is the awful surprise at the Passover meal? v17-21
- What are the consequences for Jesus' betrayer?
- What do the bread and wine that Jesus gives His disciples represent? v22-24
- Who will benefit from Jesus' body and blood (ie His death)* v24?

Apply

- Jesus' betrayer, Judas, had looked like all the other disciples and had taken part in ministry with them and with Jesus. How is he a warning to us?
 - Thank Jesus that He willingly gave you Himself, His own body and blood, so that you could be in relationship with God. Pray that non-Christian friends and family would realise that this Easter.
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*A covenant in the Bible is the basis upon which we relate to God and He to us. Jesus is saying that relationship is now dependent on His blood.

Thursday 18th April

Who does our salvation depend on? This passage is clear that it certainly doesn't depend on us!

Read Mark 14:32-42

- What are the differences between Jesus and His disciples in this passage?
- What stands out about how Jesus feels before His death? v33-35
- What is He going to face? v36

NB: The cup refers to God's wrath/anger at human sin (eg. Jeremiah 25:15)

Apply

- We are so like the disciples - unreliable and weak. Praise God that Jesus is the opposite and that our salvation is dependent on Him rather than on us.
- Thank Jesus that He was willing to take God's wrath, that you deserve, on Himself.

Friday 19th April

Why would the one who is more powerful than anyone choose not to use that power for their own benefit?

Read Mark 15:21-32

- Try to picture what Jesus went through from these verses*
- What did Jesus experience from those around Him? v27-32
- From what we saw yesterday, why is it so important that Jesus didn't choose to 'save Himself'? v31

* If you have time, read Psalm 22. Huge amounts of Jesus' experience was predicted hundreds of years beforehand, eg Psalm 22:6-8, 18. Jesus looked weak, but actually it was all part of God's plan.

Apply

- Ask God's forgiveness for how you rejected Jesus before following Him, and for the times you're aware you've turned away from Him even this week. Pray for God's mercy on those you know who still reject Him.
- Thank Jesus that He willingly experienced rejection, shame and crucifixion itself to save you.

Saturday 20th April

Why was Jesus' death the turning point in history?

Read Mark 15:33-41

- What was the strange phenomenon happened at Jesus' crucifixion? V33

NB: Darkness was a symbol of God's judgement in the Old Testament, eg Exodus 10:21-22, Amos 5:18.

- Who was experiencing God's judgement? v34
Why is that so shocking?
- What was a consequence of Jesus' death? v38
(the temple curtain was what kept people out of God's presence)
- What impact did Jesus' death have on the centurion? v39
- The disciples had vanished, who was present at the crucifixion? v40-41

Apply

- Thank Jesus that He was willingly forsaken by God so that you don't have to be.
- Thank Jesus that because of His death access to God is now possible.
- Pray that this Easter many local people, friends and family would react to Jesus like the centurion.
- Pray that like the women in the passage, we would stick with Jesus even when it's the unpopular thing to do.

Sunday 21st April

He is risen! - Happy Easter!

Read Mark 16:1-8

- What were the women planning to do? v1
- What were they concerned about? v3
- What was the surprise? v4-5
- Why did they not need to be afraid? v6-7
- Why do you think Peter is particularly mentioned in v7?
- What held the women back from sharing the news? v8

Apply

- Praise God that Jesus defeated death - He is risen!
- Praise God that Jesus is merciful to those who fail Him (e.g. Peter). This is great news for us!
- Ask for forgiveness for when fear stops us of speaking of the amazing news about Jesus we have to share. Ask God for courage to help you speak about Jesus, even today.

Monday 22nd April

Did you realise that being a Christian involves killing things?!

We're back to Colossians...

Read Colossians 3:5-8

- Paul has just shown (v1-4) that Christians are totally secure with Christ and united with Him. What should we put to death as a result? v5
- What other reasons are given for putting sin to death? v6-7
- What else do we need to get rid of?

Apply

- To what extent is your security with Christ your motivation for fighting sin? How can it be more of a motivation for you?
- What areas of sin from the verses are a particular struggle for you? What would it look like for you to put those things to death? Is there a Christian friend who can support you in this?
- Pray for God's help to remember your security with Christ and to put your sin to death as a result.

Tuesday 23rd April

What or who could possibly unite Man City and Man U fans? Or Remainers and Brexiteers? Christ gives us a whole new identity, as well as establishing a unity between peoples that no one else could.

Read Colossians 3:9-11

- Why should Christians not lie to each other?
- The Christian has discarded the old self (like an old, ugly outfit), and put on the new self (like a clean, totally unspoilt outfit). What is happening to the new self that the Christian is 'wearing'? 10b
- What difference does this new identity make to the usual divisions between people? v11

Apply

- Do you know the temptation to 'stretch the truth' so that you look better than you are at church? How do you respond to 'how are you?' Lying doesn't fit with our new selves. Ask for forgiveness and pray for help to speak truthfully.
- Thank God for your new self that is being made more like Him. It is possible to live differently!
- To what extent is your church divided by class/race/education/age? Are there any at church you avoid spending time with because they aren't like you? Ask for forgiveness, and pray that your church would grow in reflecting the unity that it already has in Christ.

Wednesday 24th April

How is it possible to love people at church who we don't naturally get on with? The following verses fit into a whole chapter detailing how who we are in Christ affects everything.

Read Colossians 3:12-14

- What identity do Christians have because of Christ? v12a
- What 'outfit' should we wear as a result? v12b
- How should we treat those we don't get on with or who have hurt us? Why? v13
- Why is love the most important item of 'clothing'? v14

Apply

- Do you know that if you are trusting in Christ you are chosen by God? Do you realise that you are holy and dearly loved? Praise God for that. Ask Him to help you remember His kindness to you.
- To what extent do you see your church family as God's chosen people who are holy and dearly loved? What would it look like for you to put on the 'clothing' Paul mentions in v12 in your relationships with people at church?
- Is there any one you especially struggle to get on with? Ask for God's help to bear with them, to love them and to forgive them if they've hurt you.

Thursday 25th April

What is at the centre of your church's life together? What do you think is the centre of the congregation's life outside of church? These verses show Who needs to be at the centre of everything.

Read Colossians 3:15-17

- What should be at the centre of relationships at church? Why?
- 'Message of Christ' = 'gospel'. What function should the gospel have in the life of the church?
- What should define how Christians live generally? v17 Why is there always reason to give thanks to God? (Think back to what He has done through Christ in Colossians.)

Apply

- Peace has been achieved with God and with other Christians through Christ. Is this evident in the relationships in your church? Give thanks if it is, and, if not, pray that it would be increasingly so.
- Did you realise that songs have a role in Christians teaching and admonishing each other? Pray for the message of Christ to dwell richly among you as a church.
- Back in Col 2:6 we saw that the Christian life is all about living in Christ. How does v17 approach how you live in all areas of your life today?

Friday 26th April

In Chapter 3 we've been seeing how the fact that we've been 'raised with Christ' and are united with Him affects our relationship to sin and to the church. Now we see how other relationships are affected.

Read Colossians 3:18-21

- How should wives & husbands live for Christ in their marriage? Why? v18-19
- How should children and parents relate to each other? Why? v20-21

Apply

Our culture hates the idea of submission. The Bible says otherwise. Jesus Himself willingly submitted to His Father. Christian wives willingly submitting to their husbands is seen by God as good, 'fitting in the Lord'.*

- If you are a wife, how can you grow in submitting to your husband's leadership? Maybe discuss this with him, and ask for forgiveness if you are aware of ways that you've been undermining him.
- If you are a husband, how can you grow in loving your wife? What can you do today to show your love for her? Maybe ask her if there is something she would appreciate from you, and ask for forgiveness if you have been harsh with her.

- If you have children, teach them that obeying you isn't simply what they should do, but is something that pleases God!
- If you are a child still living at home, ask for God's help to obey your parent/s/carer today. Ask for forgiveness if there are ways you haven't done this.
- If you aren't married, pray for married couples/families at church. Who could you encourage/support in their family life? If you would like to be married, what sort of characteristics does this passage imply are important to look out for in a potential spouse?

*(This never means submitting to physical, emotional, or sexual abuse - please talk to someone trusted who can help if that is something you face).

Saturday 27th April

God teaches us about work. If you don't have a job, here's what to pray for workers in your church family.

Read Colossians 3:22-4:1

Slavery isn't shown as good in the New Testament, but Christian slaves and masters are shown that the new identity they have in Christ affects their working roles. This passage applies to our work today.

- What should a Christian's attitude be to their work and to their boss? v22-23
- Why should they work like this? v24-25*
- How should Master's behave and why? 4v1

*This isn't saying the Christian isn't fully forgiven. Rather, being a Christian doesn't mean that wrong behaviour at work doesn't matter.

Apply

- How does the attitude called for here compare to your work place? Are there ways that you aren't working with all your heart? Ask God for forgiveness and pray for help to change. Thank God that change is possible because of Christ.
- If you have responsibility over others at work, to what extent do you treat them fairly? How can you grow in this? Do they realise that you are working for your 'Master in Heaven'? How can you grow in showing them this?

Sunday 28th April

Here Paul continues to show how our unity with Christ should affect how we live, with a particular focus on prayer and relating to non-Christians.

Read Colossians 4:2-6

- What kind of priority should prayer have? v2
Why do you think being watchful and thankful is important for prayer?
- What else does Paul want prayer for? v3-4 What does that tell us about the role of prayer in the gospel being shared?
- How should the Colossians relate to non-Christians around them? v5-6

Apply

- What holds you back from being 'devoted to prayer'? What could help you with this? How would being 'watchful & thankful' help shape the prayers that you do pray?
- Does your church have any mission partners? If so, pray that God would open a door for them to proclaim Christ and that they'd do it clearly.
- Who are the non-Christians you interact with day-to-day? What would it look like for you to act wisely in your interactions with them? How could your conversation grow in being full of grace but also seasoned with salt? (i.e. distinctive)

Monday 29th April

Who are the Christians you know who you value most? Why? In today's passage we meet some Christians who were especially dear to Paul.

Read Colossians 4:7-11

- What kind of relationship does Paul have with Tychicus and Onesimus?
- What does he value in them?
- What does Paul sending them to the Colossians show about his care for the church?
- Paul is sometimes seen as a super-solo Christian. How do v10-11 show that isn't the case?

Apply

- Thank God for those who have been 'dear brothers' (or sisters) to you (maybe get in touch to thank them for the encouragement that they have been to you in your faith).
- Pray that Christians in your church would have a strong sense of gospel partnership and friendship with each other and a desire to encourage others.

Tuesday 30th April

What will be an indicator of our love and concern for other Christians? Ephaphras (who originally shared the gospel with the Colossians 1:7) showed his ongoing love and concern for them by prayer.

Read Colossians 4:12-18

- What stands out about how Ephaphras' prayer is described? v12
- What does he pray for the Colossians? v12b How does this prayer fit with what we've seen in the letter as a whole?
- What kind of partnership was there between these early Christians and churches? v13-18

Apply

- To what extent is your love and concern for other Christians reflected in your prayer for them? What might it look like for you to 'wrestle in prayer' for other believers?
- Pray that Christians in your small group/church/family would 'stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured'.
- Thank God that your church is part of a wider church family in this country and all over the world, pray that your partnership with other churches/mission partners could grow.