

LESSON 5 Individual Book Study

It might seem easier to rely on a few favorite Bible verses to guide and nourish us spiritually, but we need a full diet of God's Word to grow into the stature of Christ. We must eat heartily of God's Word day after day to reach this goal. Jesus said, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty" (John 6:35). As the bread of life, Jesus is our source of life. To better understand our life in Christ, we need to study what each book of the Bible says about Him. Our belief increases with our knowledge.

When the people asked Jesus what they could do to please God, His answer was that God wanted everyone to believe in His Son. When we believe in Him, then we can do what God wants and please Him (John 6:28–29).

The Plan

- A. The Benefits of Book Study
- B. The Approach to an Individual Book
- C. The Book of Colossians

The Goals

- 1. Identify personal benefits of individual book studies.
- 2. List the three main steps in book study.
- 3. Identify main ideas in the book of Colossians.

A. THE BENEFITS OF BOOK STUDY

Goal 1. Identify personal benefits of individual book studies.

In time your studies of each book of the Bible will provide you with strong familiarity of God's whole revelation. You will be able to see how the events of the Bible fit together and will be better informed and spiritually prepared for the fulfillment of prophecy regarding Christ's second coming. You will build a solid foundation for other studies on specific spiritual lessons and truths.

A very important benefit of studying God's Word book by book is being able to see particular teachings in context. Often we can understand the intended meaning of a passage only when we see its context. Thus, familiarity with the whole Bible will help you to recognize and resist false teachings. They are as widespread today as they were in the early church. Many of the epistles in the New Testament deal directly with false teachings that arose with the rapid spread of the gospel right after Christ's death and resurrection.

The greatest benefit of studying the Bible book by book is that the Bible will become the living Word in you. Any time you have problems, you will be able to turn to teaching in the Bible to strengthen your faith and instruct you in what to do.

Application

- 1 List three personal benefits of individual book studies.
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B. THE APPROACH TO AN INDIVIDUAL BOOK

Goal 2. List the three main steps in book study.

You begin the study of a book by reading it through. When you complete a book you begin to see the whole picture. It would be wise to read Colossians, or any book you are going to study, two or more times before you begin writing notes or trying to answer too many questions. This will give you a general impression about the main subject of the book, and it will let you know how the author feels. These feelings might be of despair, encouragement, worship, hope, joy, concern, sorrow, humility, judgment, or some other human emotion. Your reading will reveal key words and phrases that are repeated throughout the book.

The first step is to read and observe until you see what the author is saying. This step takes time and patience as well as a desire to know what God's Word says.


The second step is to interpret what the author means. Use the three rules of interpretation we described in Lesson 4. Ask questions, pay attention to the context, and read related Scriptures. Also, notice the literary style, the language, and the organization of ideas. Write notes based on what these things show you. Sum up the meaning of the book. Pick out the book's main points and show their relationship to each other in a brief written form. Use your own words. Once you have done this, the book becomes alive to you and can become a part of you.

The third step is to apply this living force to your life. You must allow what you learn about Christ to transform your character and your actions. When this happens, your life will be a light to others. You will be able to show them the way to Christ

Application

2 Name the three main steps in your approach to studying a book of the Bible.

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C. THE BOOK OF COLOSSIANS

Goal 3. Identify main ideas in the book of Colossians.

Before you go any further in this lesson, read Colossians. If you are using the Good News Bible: Today's English Version, be sure to read the "Introduction" and "Outline of Contents" at the beginning of Colossians. This brief description tells that Paul wrote this letter to the church at Colossae to oppose the false teachings there. His main point is that Jesus Christ is able to give full salvation.


After you have read the book once, continue your study by rereading and making notes on your first impressions of the book. Notice how often these words or ideas are repeated: "faith," "set free," "life in Christ." Notice repeated words as you read; they help you to identify main ideas.

Application

3 What seems to be Paul's mood or feeling as he writes this letter? See verses 1:2–14; 1:24; and 2:1–2, 5 for help.

- a)** Irritation
- b)** Pity
- c)** Concern

4 Which statement gives a main idea from the book of Colossians? Read verses 2:10 and 3:11 for help.

- a)** We receive full life through union with Christ.
 - b)** We will receive full life in heaven.
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Colossians is written in the literary style of the letter. The writer, Paul, is discussing the false teachings about salvation. He uses figures of speech to help the people picture what union with Christ really means. For example, in verse 2:8, he says, “See to it that no one takes you captive.” When we are united with Christ, we are set free from man-made rules regarding salvation. Salvation is not imprisonment.

Paul also uses different ways of organizing his ideas to emphasize his main points. Make notes on what you find and then complete the following exercises.

Application

5 Fill in the blank spaces with the correct word or words:

- a)** Paul uses three figures of speech to illustrate the complete change in our lives that comes from union with Christ. Verses 2:11–12 and 20 symbolize this change.

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- b)** There are several illustrations of our life in Christ. In verses 1:18 and 2:19, the church is compared to a which is controlled by Christ who is the In verses 3:9–14 our new life is compared to



How To Make An Outline

A. First main idea

1. First major point related to first main idea
 - a. Minor point
 - b. Minor point
2. Second major point related to first main idea
 - a. Minor point
 - b. Minor point

B. Second main idea

1. First major point related to second main idea
 - a. Minor point
 - b. Minor point
2. Second major point related to second main idea

6 For each main point described in the left column, write the number that represents the way of organizing ideas named in the right column.

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| ... a Verses 2:12–13, 20, and 3:1 refer to life in Christ. | 1) Contrast and comparison |
| ... b Verses 3:10–11 refer to all Christians as being the same in Christ. | 2) Repetition |
| ... c Verses 2:20 and 3:1, 5, 9–10 refer to the relationships between sin, death, and life. | 3) Reasons and results |

It is helpful to put the teaching of a book into context by comparing it with related teachings in other books. The book of Colossians has several references to Ephesians. One of these references is Ephesians 2:1–10, where we read about passing from death to life.

Example of An Outline of Colossians

- A. Greetings and prayers
 1. Thanks for the people
 2. Prayers for the people
- B. The nature and work of Christ
 1. What Christ is like
 - a. The full nature of God
 - b. Creator and Savior
 2. What Christ does for us
 - a. Makes us His friends
 - b. Gives us power to serve

- C. The new life in Christ
 - 1. A life of strength
 - 2. A life of freedom
 - 3. A life of new relations
 - a. Relations with God
 - b. Relations with people

Application

7 Ephesians 2:10 says, “For we are God’s
 created in Christ Jesus to
 which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

The thoughts in this verse were not new to you because they relate to what you have already learned from your study of Colossians. It reminds us again that the Bible consists of many books, but it is still one book.

Application

8 Write a brief summary of what the study meant to you.



Only as you prayerfully consider the teachings in God’s Word and respond to them that you can benefit from your study. Knowledge alone is not enough. You must apply what you have learned and allow God to fit your life into His plan.

None of us would say that we have arrived at a point where we could claim living 100% the life described in Colossians. Yet God has helped us, and we claim His promises for continued help.

Application

9 To enter God's presence I must not allow myself

- a)** to be shaken from the hope I have gained.
- b)** to visit another church.

10 To preach Christ to others I must use

- a)** the strength Christ supplies.
- b)** whatever strength I have in myself.

11 See to it that no one enslaves you by using

- a)** heavy iron chains.
- b)** the deceit of human wisdom.

12 Be fair with others, remembering that

- a)** they might try to get even with you.
- b)** you, too, have a Master in heaven.



This completes our lesson on Colossians. You will want to study Colossians further when you see how it relates to other books. Also, it holds precious truths to enrich your devotional life. May God bless as you apply your skills to this book and other books of the Bible.

Check Your Answers

1 Be familiar with the whole Bible, recognize and resist false teaching, have the living Word in you.

You may wish to list other personal benefits that you have learned from experience.

7 workmanship, do good works

2 Read and observe, interpret, apply.

8 Your own answer. It may be that the study helped you realize how full your life in Christ can be. It may be that you have found a truth you can apply in teaching others.

3 c) Concern; Paul feels love for these Christians

(1:3, “always thank God”; 1:9, “have not stopped praying for you”). He cares enough for them to suffer (1:24) for them and to work hard (2:1) for them and to encourage them in their faith (2:2).

9 a) to be shaken from the hope I have gained.

4 a) We receive full life through union with Christ. Christ is the key to our lives (2:3). Christ is mentioned at least 38 times as Christ, 12 times as Jesus, Lord, or Son, and many times as He or Him. Repeated words help to identify main ideas.

10 a) the strength Christ supplies.

5 a) circumcision, burial, death; all these suggest being cut apart from.

b) body, head, new clothing.

11 b) the deceit of human wisdom.

- 6 a 2)** Repetition; the idea of being raised from death to life is mentioned in each verse.
 - b 3)** Reasons and results; as a result of our new life, we are all the same in Christ: “Christ is all, Christ is all in all.”
 - c 1)** Contrast and comparison; our death to sin (2:20) is like putting to death our earthly desires (3:5) just as our life in Christ (3:1) is like putting on a new self (3:9, 10).
- 12b)** you too have a Master in heaven.