

JESUS CHRIST, OUR ALL IN ALL

A Study of Colossians

STUDY ONE

A Letter for Then and Now

Colossians 1:1–8

We look at the truth recorded in the first century, and we realize it may have been written then, but it has everything to do with how we live now.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

BEFORE bank tellers can detect a *counterfeit* twenty-dollar bill, they must first fully acquaint themselves with a *genuine* twenty-dollar bill. Only then can they guard against deception. Christians, too, must follow the same steps of learning and upholding God’s truth before they’re able to recognize and reject falsehood . . . *and how urgent is to the call to do so!* The consequences are far more drastic than losing a few bucks.

The apostle Paul always felt this urgency—especially so with the fledgling church in Colossae where false teachers immediately crept in to corrupt what God had started. These false teachers assaulted the church with doctrines of mysticism, asceticism, and legalism—empty philosophies that give no spiritual profit, only false pride.

After hearing of this attack on truth, the apostle Paul composed a short letter exhorting the Colossian believers back to ground zero: the supremacy of Jesus Christ who is sufficient to be our all in all. In other words, Paul equipped them to reject corrupting falsehoods by returning them to the heart and center of God’s truth and plan.

The effectiveness of Paul’s little letter reaches beyond the borders of that small town, stretching across time to equip Christians today to engage in the same activity. There’s always an urgent need for Christians to revisit the basics of biblical truth, understand them, and gain discernment to reject what’s phony and dangerous.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

A Letter for Then and Now

Colossians 1:1–8

For this reason, Pastor Chuck Swindoll turns our attention to Paul’s penetrating epistle, Colossians. This initial study kicks off a ten-part series to help you establish afresh Christ as Lord in your heart so you can live wisely, freely, and confidently in Him.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

First, pray for the Spirit to illuminate your mind and strengthen you through His Word. Think seriously about what you hope to gain from this study and series, and write your prayer below.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

In these *Searching the Scriptures* studies, we use the same four-step Bible study method Pastor Chuck has used for more than fifty years—whether in his private devotions, research for an article, or preparation for a sermon. These steps include:

1. *Observation*: We read what the text says, perceiving how each word fits in sentences, how each sentence fits in paragraphs, and how each paragraph fits in the book.
2. *Interpretation*: We understand what the text means, delving into word studies, ancient culture, history, and theology.
3. *Correlation*: We compare the passage with other biblical passages that address similar topics, whether they be historical, theological, or applicable.
4. *Application*: We integrate into our lives biblical truths and principles, obeying Jesus’ commands, believing Jesus’ promises, and walking with Jesus always.



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If you do not have these books authored by Pastor Chuck—*Searching the Scriptures*, *The Swindoll Study Bible*, or the *Insights on Colossians* commentary—now would be the perfect time to add these resources to your library to enrich your study of the book of Colossians.

Before we grab our magnifying glass for verse-by-verse observation, Pastor Chuck recommends getting the big picture of the book’s message as well as the author’s motivation for writing it. Take a look at Pastor Chuck’s article on Colossians at insight.org as well as his overview chart of Colossians below.

COLOSSIANS

	Christ Is Our Lord		... Our Life	... Our Love
	Lord of creation <hr/>	Lord of our walk <hr/>	Our mind <hr/>	Love for “outsiders” <hr/>
	Lord of the church <hr/>	Lord of our salvation <hr/>	Our body <hr/>	Love for believers <hr/>
	Lord of ministry <hr/>	Lord of our growth <hr/>	Our attitude <hr/>	
			Our actions <hr/>	
	CHAPTER 1	CHAPTER 2	CHAPTER 3	CHAPTER 4
Subject	Instruction	Warnings	Exhortations	Reminders
Christ	His person and work		His peace and presence	
Emphasis	Doctrinal and corrective		Practical and reassuring	
Theme	Christ is our supreme Lord and sufficient Savior.			
Key Verses	2:9–10			
Christ in Colossians	Jesus is the supreme Lord of the church and the world, the all-sufficient Savior in whom the fullness of Deity dwells (1:13–20; 2:9).			

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The better you get to know the truth, the clearer you will see counterfeit information that’s given out and falsely called truth. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



A Letter for Then and Now

Colossians 1:1–8



Observation: A Warm Greeting

Begin observation by carefully reading *Colossians 1:1–8*.

Who wrote the letter with Paul? _____

What words did Paul use to give a warm and encouraging greeting to the Colossian church?

In our fast-paced world, it's easy to forget a gracious conversation opening and just get right to the point. Before jumping into other matters, remember to bring a few words of encouragement. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Who proclaimed the gospel to the people in Colossae (*Colossians 1:7*)? How did the gospel change their lives (1:4–5)?



A Letter for Then and Now
Colossians 1:1–8

How did Paul connect the lives of the Colossian believers with the global church and universal story of God?

Even though Paul had never stood face-to-face with those who received his letter, he expressed genuine gratitude for what had taken place among them. Even more, Paul prayed for them.

When you begin to pray for people, it does something to you. You feel closer to them. There's a love bond that begins to form between you. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Faith, Love, Hope

During interpretation, we consult our Bible study resources to help us better understand the biblical text. Often these resources bring to life what we read. Take as much time as you've allotted and read Bible dictionary articles written about the people and places mentioned in Colossians 1:1–8. Jot down at least one new thing you learned about each.

If you do not own a Bible dictionary, Pastor Chuck suggests adding *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary* to your library.

Do some research on *Paul*. Why did Paul, a Jew, care so deeply about a seemingly random group of folks living in Greco-Roman Colossae?



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Colossians 1:1–8

What is significant about *Colossae's* location and cultural background? What happened to Colossae in the early AD 60s?

Why were *Timothy* and *Epaphras* important in Paul's ministry?

In *Colossians 1:4–5*, what three Christian virtues were active among the Colossians? (Hint: Paul expressed thanksgiving for them.) What is the connection among these three virtues in the life of the believer?



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Colossians 1:1–8

Paul mentioned the source of a Christian's love for others in *Colossians 1:8*. What is that source, and why is it significant for all Christians?

When our lives are anchored in a solid faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, there will be a love for others that begins to grow. It'll surprise you how soft your heart will become toward others. You will see them as people like you, people with needs, people who are facing situations that are beyond them, just like you. And that'll help build that love and harmony and unity.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

No one enters this world with the good news of Jesus Christ already imbedded in him or her. Like the people in Colossae, everyone needs an Epaphras to share the gospel with them so they, too, can understand the grace of God in truth. God does not give us His Word to keep it for ourselves but to richly offer it to others.



Correlation: Saved by Grace through Faith

In just two verses (*Colossians 1:4–5*), Paul gave the Colossian believers a summary of the salvation they experienced: how they heard of God's grace, put their faith in Christ, looked up in hope, and looked out in love. *Ephesians 2:1–10* reveals more detail about Christ's redeeming work, which nicely complements our study above.

Read and summarize *Ephesians 2:1–10*. What truths in this passage correlate with Colossians 1:1–8?



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A changed life . . . a new outlook . . . a new way to relate with people . . . hope in the one who defeated the grave. These are just a few of Jesus' great gifts to us—all because of the riches of God's mercy displayed in the great love with which He loves us.



Application: Filled with the Word of Christ

Now, let's root God's Word in our lives by looking at Pastor Chuck's three application principles for Colossians 1:1–8.

As I've learned over the years, God did not give us His truth to merely satisfy our curiosity. He gave us His truth to change our lives. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Principle One: Read Colossians Repeatedly

Pastor Chuck recommends you read through the entire letter once per study in this ten-part series. Ideally, then, you'll read through the letter ten times. Make a plan below of how you would like to accomplish this exercise. It might be once per sitting, a chapter a day, and so on.

Principle Two: Discuss Colossians Frequently

Chat about what you read! Tell your friends what you're learning. Discuss it with your family at the dinner table. Use its truths in your prayers, and let it preach truth to your heart. What is one way you hope to discuss Colossians during your study?



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Principle Three: Accept Colossians Personally

Each time you read, look for promises to believe, truths to embrace, exhortations to follow, and warnings to heed. What is one thing you want to remember and accept from this study?

Paul did not begin his letter to the Colossians by pointing out their errors. Instead, he had them recall their taste of God's grace, their changed lives, their new hope, and the loving community God had planted right there in Colossae. The same divine gardening has continued through the centuries into our own era extending to us the same benefits received by them.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for Your Word that lives and abides forever. May this letter become a love letter to me because I know this letter was not written only for the church in Colossae but for all believers for all time. May we—through the patient, comforting truth of the Scriptures—glean hope and a reason to persevere. Make me stable, confident, and assured of the truth as You teach it in this letter. Please bless the time I have set apart for this study—that I might use it in a very special way for Your glory. In the name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.

