

The MYSTERY

Hidden for Ages

Is Now REVEALED

A Study of the Book of Colossians

LESSON 3

This Week's Passage:

Colossians 1:9–12a

New International Version (NIV)

⁹ For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, ¹⁰ so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, ¹¹ being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, ¹² and giving joyful thanks to the Father,

Memory Verse: Colossians 1:11

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As you begin this lesson and work through the questions, read J. B. Phillips's translation of this week's passage to gain a deeper understanding of Paul's heart and message:

"... it was from [Epaphras] that we heard about your growth in Christian love, so you will understand that since we heard about you we have never missed you in our prayers. We are asking God that you may see things, as it were, from his point of view by being given spiritual insight and understanding. We also pray that your outward lives, which men see, may bring credit to your master's name, and that you may bring joy to his heart by bearing genuine Christian fruit, and that your knowledge of God may grow yet deeper. As you live this new life, we pray that you will be strengthened from God's boundless resources, so that you will find yourselves able to pass through an experience and endure it with courage. You will even be able to thank God in the midst of pain and distress...."

Day One: Read Colossians 1.

This week's passage is best understood in the context of the false ideas circulating about the gospel as well as Paul's prayer of thanksgiving in verses 3-8. The believers in Colossae had heard and believed the gospel preached to them by Epaphras, but now other voices were teaching that Paul's message was inadequate and undermining the sufficiency of Christ. Throughout the book of Colossians Paul addresses these false ideas in order to preserve the truth of the gospel.

Read Colossians 1:3–11.

1. The opening statement in verse 9, "For this reason..." refers back to God's gracious work of transformation in the new believers' lives. What evidences does Paul give of this transformation? (vv. 4-8)

2. Based on Paul's evaluation of the Colossian believers' foundation and progress in the faith (vv. 3–8) it appears they are doing well. Why then do you think Paul and Timothy would "not stop praying for [them]" (v. 9) since the day they heard about them? (Consider first the contents of Paul's prayer in verses 9–12a, and then look at Eph. 6:11–12, 18.)

Day Two: Read Colossians 1:9.

3. What did Paul and Timothy ask God to do for the Colossians? (v. 9)
4. Wisdom is required to understand God's will. The dictionary definition of wisdom is "knowledge that is gained by having many experiences in life," "the natural ability to understand things that most people cannot understand," and "knowledge of what is proper or reasonable: good sense or judgment."²
How is the "spiritual wisdom" (1:9) Paul is praying for deeper than mere worldly wisdom? Consider both the source and the results.
Prov. 9:10

Mt. 11:25

1 Cor. 2:6–16

Col. 2:2–3

Jas. 3:13–17

5. How does Paul's prayer asking God to fill [the believers] with the knowledge of his will through **all** spiritual wisdom and understanding" (1:9) refute the false idea present in Colossae that believers needed extra knowledge outside of Christ to experience fullness?
6. How can Paul's prayer inform the way you pray for others?

When Paul writes of **God's will** in verse 9, he is not referring to "some particular or special direction for one's life (as we often use the phrase 'God's will'), but a deep and abiding understanding of the revelation of Christ and all that he means for the universe...and for the Colossians...."¹

Day Three: Read Colossians 1:10–12a.

7. What would knowing God's will enable the believers to do? (v. 10a)

8. What does it look like to "live a life worthy of the Lord" (v. 10)? (vv. 10b–12a)

9. How do "bearing fruit in every good work" and "growing in the knowledge of God" (v. 10) reinforce each other?

To "live a life worthy of the Lord" (v. 10) "does not mean to walk so that one becomes worthy of the Lord or His salvation, but to walk in a manner that is consistent with and conforms to what God has done for us in Christ."³

10. In and of ourselves we don't have the ability to "live a life worthy of the Lord" (v. 10), yet this is what we are called to. How is it possible for us to fulfill this calling?
Col. 1:11a

1 Cor. 15:10

2 Cor. 12:9–10

Phil. 4:13

Day Four: Read Colossians 1:10–11.

11. Describe the strength God has made available to us? (v. 11b; Eph. 1:18–21)

12. What are the results of "being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might"? (vv. 11c–12a)

“[Endurance] is what faith, hope and love bring to an apparently impossible situation, [patience] is what they show to an apparently impossible person.”⁴

13. Consider a seemingly impossible situation or person in your life.
 - a. How does Paul’s prayer help you identify the resources God has provided for you in Christ?
 - b. How can you practically lay hold of these resources and apply them to your situation?

Day Five: Read Colossians 1:9–12a.

In this week’s passage (vv. 9–12a), Paul presents the truths of what God has done and who Christ is, insisting that all wisdom, power, and knowledge are found in Christ alone. In this way he undermines lies to the contrary.

14. The wisdom and understanding available to you through the Holy Spirit are both spiritual and practical. How can you bring the truths in this passage to bear on areas in your life where you are tempted to look outside of Christ for what you need?
15. Use the elements of this passage to write out a prayer for yourself (or someone else) asking that God would: Fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

Enable you to live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way.

Enable you to bear fruit in every good work.



Reminder: Remember to read the entire book of Colossians this week.

¹ Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 93.

² <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/wisdom>

³ <https://bible.org/seriespage/5-four-ways-walk-manner-worthy-lord-col-110b-12a>

⁴ N. T. Wright quoted in Moo, 60.