

COLOSSIANS

Walking in Strength & Power



A Devotional Bible Study
by Sue LeBoutillier

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❧ *Colossians—Walking in Strength & Power* ❧

*May you be strengthened with all power,
according to his glorious might,
for all endurance and patience with joy.*
Colossians 1:11

The key words in the above verse — *strengthen*, *power*, and *endurance* — express the core message of this Bible study. Whenever we study God’s Word it’s like spiritual exercise, we *strengthen our spiritual condition*. A *strengthened faith* helps us combat threats that come against our hearts and minds, both from within and without.

Proverbs 14:12 tells us:

*There is a way that seems right to a man,
but in the end it leads to death.*

So, there is a lot at stake! We can’t afford to cobble together bits and pieces of spiritual thoughts that *seem right*, or *feel right*. Neither can we afford to neglect our spiritual health altogether. We need regular habits of investigating, studying, hearing, building precept-upon-precept until we find ourselves *filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding* (Colossians 1:9).

As you study through Colossians, I pray you will use each portion of Scripture as a means to *strengthen* your faith and your spiritual understanding. God’s Word is so rich and dense that the baby in Christ, as well as the mature believer, can all receive new and vital insights that apply to your unique lives each day, as the Holy Spirit opens your hearts and minds.

This will be a verse-by-verse Bible study in a four-day-a-week format. As a bonus, over the course of these nine weeks, you’ll write out the entire **book of Colossians** in your own handwriting. So, choose a notebook or pretty journal for writing your verses each day.

When you begin to write, you may want to double-space to give yourself some extra room for the suggested markings that will come up in this study guide.

This study guide is intended to be completed independently **before** you listen to the teaching. If you're meeting with a friend or small group, the ideal method would be to 1) study the Scriptures on your own first (including writing in your journal), 2) listen to the teaching (privately or in your group), and then 3) discuss the week's lesson and pray together about applying the passages to your life.

May the Lord richly bless you as you study His Word!

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To listen to the audio teachings for this Bible Study go to:
ccontario.com/womens-studies

The best translation of the Bible to use is the one you understand best and using more than one translation can be a useful aid in your study! This study guide was created using a combination of the ESV (English Standard Version) and the NIV (New International Version 1984).



Week One — Introduction

I'm glad you've joined us for this Women of the Word Bible Study. The first step in any Bible study is to gather information and gain a big picture perspective of the book. That's what Week One is about — introduction and preparation. We'll do that in three steps:

Step 1: Listen

If you were with us at our first gathering, then you all have been briefed on the history and purpose of this book. But, if you missed that gathering, or if you're picking up this study guide at a later date, you'll want to go to our website and listen to the Introduction. This can be found at:

www.ccontario.com/wow/colossians
Week One—Introduction

Step 2: Gather

Once you've listened to that overview, you're ready for step two.

Remember, our goal is **Spiritual Strength Training**! We want to be spiritually fit in order to be able to stand our ground and flourish in any situation that the Lord allows in our lives.

In the same way that physical strength training is helped along by special equipment like weights; spiritual training can be helped by special equipment as well. Some of the equipment that will help you most, will be:

- You own **Bible** — preferably one in which you don't mind doing some occasional underlining.
- A **notebook or journal** — either something very simple, or something beautiful and inspiring.
- This **study guide**.

Step 3: Read

You'll also need a little *time* each day, once we begin our daily studies in order to read and write your passages, think through what you've read, answer the questions and pray about what you've studied.

Now that you have gathered what you need, let's ease into our study by simply **READING** the whole book of **Colossians** today. This is always a good approach when beginning a new study — read the entire letter in one sitting. There are only 95 verses in this letter, and it should take you only about 15 minutes to read all four chapters.

Step 4: Select

I have already chosen **verse 11** as a theme for both this chapter AND our entire study. Now, as a result of reading the entire book, it's *your* turn to select a verse or a phrase that made an impact on you—

Step 5: Pray

This is not the final step due to importance, but rather, it's a step that will carry forward for each day of study. I encourage you to always begin your time in the Word by yielding your heart to the Lord. Think of that phrase — *yielding* — just like the traffic sign. You give preference to the other driver to lead the way. That's what we want the Holy Spirit to do in our lives as we investigate His Word — lead the way!

May you be blessed in your study!

Sue

Week Two — Colossians 1:1-14

Now it's time to begin your detailed study of Colossians. The heading for each week (*above*) will indicate the entire passage to be studied during the week. It would be a good approach to begin each day, by reading the entire *weekly passage*, and then, as you write your daily verses in your journal, concentrate on the words you are actually writing for each day.

You may or may not keep this little study booklet — but, chances are, after investing your time in writing all ninety-five verses by hand, you'll keep your journal or notebook for a long time to come and treasure it!

Let's Begin...

Day 1:

 **READ** and **WRITE Colossians 1:1-2** in your journal.

The first two verses contain the *greeting* of this letter. In our modern letters, we customarily list whom the letter is written *to*, at the top, and whom the letter is written *from*, at the bottom. But I think there is something quite satisfying in getting it all out in the open at the beginning.

- To whom was this letter written?
- From whom was this letter sent?

If you have any sort of Roman Catholic background, your perspective of the word *saints* may be quite different than what Paul actually meant in **v.2**. Even if you do a quick online dictionary search for the word *saint*, you will probably still not run into the sense that Paul meant.

Since we often like to let Scripture interpret Scripture, let's find a definition of a *saint* by reading another passage.

Read **Romans 1:7** and **1 Corinthians 1:2**.

- With those passages in mind, write your own definition of *saint*:

- There are two five-letter words that the Apostle Paul often begins (and sometimes ends) his letters with. These words provide a foundation for all of the possibilities that our relationship with the Lord can build upon. What are these two words in **v.2**?

_____ and _____

Day 2:

 **READ** and **WRITE** Colossians 1:3-6 in your journal.

Faith, Love & Hope: How would you like to receive a letter from someone telling you how thankful they are for you? How grateful they are that you are in the family of God? How they are constantly praying for you! WOW! That would make *me* feel pretty valued and loved. Especially if they hadn't even met me!

That is what I hear in Paul's heart as he begins to correspond with this Church Body whom he has never personally met.

- From **v.4**, what two things had Paul heard about the people in this Church?

- What was the reason they possessed those two virtues (**v.5**)?

Having *faith* in Jesus Christ is an obvious requirement and privilege of being part of the Body of Christ. But Paul also *heard* about their *love for the saints*.

- Do you think loving others is an automatic part of faith in Christ?

We always thank
God our Father,
the Father of
our Lord Jesus
Christ when we
pray for you.

Colossians 1:3

- Read **John 13:34-35**. How do these two passages relate?
- What are some things that characterize *love for the saints*? In other words, what does it look like?
- If someone observed the group of believers that you belonged to, do you think they would notice your love for each other? How?

Paul said the Gospel was *bearing fruit and increasing* (v.6). He already mentioned *faith*, *hope*, and *love* as fruitful by-products, but we can expect other expressions of the Gospel in our lives as well.

Read these passages, and note other positive changes people may experience when they understand and embrace the Gospel:

- Psalm 42:2 —
- Acts 2:42 —
- 1 Thessalonians 1:9 —

Day 3:

 READ and WRITE Colossians 1:7-10 in your journal.

The Gospel: Yesterday, we read that the *Gospel*, or *Good News*, about salvation through Jesus Christ was *increasing in the whole world* and *bearing fruit* in the lives of believers (v.6).

- Who was credited with sharing the Gospel of Jesus with the Colossians? (v.7)
- What fond label did this earn him from the Apostle Paul? (v.7)
- What report did he give Paul of the Colossian believers? (v.8):

Who wouldn't like to be described as a *faithful minister*? That phrase actually inspires me. It challenges me to make a spiritual goal to also be called a *faithful minister*.

- What opportunities has God placed in your life for you to be a faithful minister?
- Is there an area that you have neglected, or not fully recognized, as an opportunity? What practical changes are needed for you to be termed *faithful*?

Effective Prayer: Paul revealed his prayer life, and his example can be very inspirational. Use this space to list four/five concepts you see in v.9-10 to pray spiritually, and specifically, for people in your life:

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Over whom are you praying these things?

Now take a moment to actually PRAY!
We *strengthen our faith* by praying for others.

Day 4:

 READ and WRITE Colossians 1:11-14 in your journal.

Strength and Power: It's been said that '*strong is the new skinny*'. It's certainly a benefit to be physically strong enough to handle what life tosses your way. In 1 Timothy 4:8, the Apostle Paul said: "***while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.***"

As Paul communicated to the Colossians, he prayed that those believers would be ***strengthened with power***.

- What are some benefits of spiritual strength that you see in v.11?

Read Ephesians 1:18-20.

- Who is the *power* for?
- What is the *power* like?

Strength requires **training** — this is true both physically and spiritually! Although Paul *prayed* for the believers to be strengthened, we understand that WE have a part to play in our strength training as well.

- Read **Hebrews 5:13-14**. Explain how we can impact our own spiritual training.

- Read **Hebrews 12:9-11**. Explain a process used by God to train us.
- What has this training looked like in your life? Can you think of an example?

So Thankful: Use **v.12-13** to list things He has done for you that you could not possibly accomplish on your own:

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Romans 4:20 tells us [*Abraham*] ***grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God***. Find a way today to express to someone what God has done for you that you could not have accomplished yourself, thus giving glory to God and *growing strong* in your faith.

I therefore, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love.

Ephesians 4:1-2

This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Week Three — Colossians 1:15-23

Day 1:

 READ and WRITE Colossians 1:15-16 in your journal.

Who HE is: The next nine verses are some of the most theologically rich in all of the New Testament. Let's begin by marking a little in your journal.

Highlight the first two words, '**He is**'. That phrase will be repeated three more times in tomorrow's passage, so it will be helpful for us to start a list of exactly '**WHO HE IS**' from this chapter.

List the two things that **v.15** declares about Jesus.

- **v.15: He is** _____
- **v.15: the** _____

Read **John 14:7-10**.

- What did Jesus say about His relationship with God the Father?

All Things: In your journal, draw a box around the two occurrences of the phrase '**all things**'. (Tomorrow's verses also continue the theme of *all things*.)

What are and *where* are *all things* listed in **v.16**?

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Is there anything you can think of that exists outside of this list?

Three prepositions are used to elaborate *how* and *why all things* were created in **v.16**. List them:

_____ Him _____ Him _____ Him

This is a simple, but profound Biblical truth. Our faith is strengthened by allowing this concept to saturate our minds and our decisions. For example, “*Since Jesus created me for His pleasure and His purpose, how should I handle xyz situation?*”

- Consider a situation or a decision you’re facing. How might this truth help with an answer?

Day 2:

✞ READ and WRITE Colossians 1:17-20 in your journal.

Who HE is: Grab that highlighter and continue highlighting your list of ‘*He is*’ findings with three more in **v.17-18**. Now, complete this list:

- v.17: He is _____
- v.18: He is _____
- v.18: He is _____

These fundamental truths improve both our spiritual knowledge and our spiritual health.

All Things: In your journal, draw a box around the phrases ‘*all things*’. (You should find three in today’s verses.)

Read **Hebrews 1:2-3**. It says that Jesus is _____ of ALL THINGS and also that **He is...** _____

Read **John 1:1-5**. **V.2** says **He was** _____
and ALL THINGS were _____

Also, read **Revelation 4:11**.

Do you see the beautiful thread of consistency through Scripture? The Holy Spirit inspired different authors to write the same truths about *who Jesus is*. Basically, it's ALL about HIM! Oh, how easily we can make life all about US.

It is impossible to **deny** the historical existence of Jesus of Nazareth. But it is very popular in the religious culture around us to **dethrone** Him as the Son of God and the ONLY avenue to know God.

The people in Colossae believed in Jesus, but they faced influence from outside sources, who attacked or twisted their core beliefs.

- Which of the truths in today's lesson do you feel is challenged the most in your culture or in your circle of influence? Why?

Day 3: _____

✞ READ and WRITE **Colossians 1:21-22** in your journal.

Until now, our study has been about Who **Jesus is**. Today, we have the unpleasant task of looking at who **I am**. In your journal, highlight the words '**and you**' that contrast with your previously highlighted, '**He is**'.

- From **v.21**, list the things that characterize *who I am*:

Have you ever caught your image in a store window or your phone camera and thought “*Seriously—is this what I look like?*” I suppose it’s happened to all of us — it’s a bit of a downer. We like to think we look better than we actually do. In the same way, this verse is a serious look at reality. Let’s do a double take at what we really look like:

Read **Ephesians 2:1-3**.

- What additional characteristics do you find?

Read **Romans 6:17**.

- What was our former condition?

Good News: It’s always important to fully understand the bad news to fully appreciate the good news. So with our less-than-beautiful, evil, hostile, slavery-inspired reflection in view — let’s remind ourselves that Jesus ***delivered us* (v.13), *transferred us* (v.13), *redeemed us* (v.14), *forgave us* (v.14), *reconciled us* (v.20,22)** in order to present us to God with what type of new appearances listed in **v.22**?

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I think the nation of Israel, while in slavery in Egypt, provides a good comparison to our own condition before Jesus invaded our lives and saved us from destruction. We had no ability to free ourselves, and we were helpless without a deliverer to transfer us to another reality.

Since this *before and after* is what we are studying — take some time today to thank Jesus for what He has done for you! Use these verses as a basis for your prayer. Remember ***Abraham grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God.*** *We will, too!*

*We don’t make our own peace with God,
Jesus made peace for us through His work on the cross.*

Day 4: _____

 READ and WRITE Colossians 1:23 in your journal.

Continuing in the Faith: Because Jesus *made peace by the blood of His cross* (v.20), and because I accepted that gift and became one of His children, my appearance before God has changed. Now I'm described as *holy, blameless* and *above reproach*.

But today's verse begins with a word that could be troublesome — *If!* Misunderstanding that word could head you in the wrong direction. You could begin to think that your new life in Christ is somehow dependent on your ability to be *stable* and *steadfast*.

So, let's lean on other Scriptures to help us make sure we understand.

Read Ephesians 2:8-9 and fill in the missing words:

By _____ you have been saved, through _____ ... not a result of _____ it is the _____ of God.

You entered the Kingdom through *faith*, and you **continue through faith**. You didn't get in by works, so you can't continue by works.

The whole key to properly understanding this verse is found by asking, *on what was their hope?* Fill in the missing words from v.23:

...not shifting from the _____ of the _____.

Paul was equipping the saints to hold firm to the Gospel of Jesus, the Gospel of grace, the Gospel of faith. It IS a requirement for me to continue to believe that Jesus has paid the penalty for my sins. If I deny that truth, what is left? There is no other Gospel!

List the three words in this verse (that all begin with the letter s) that Paul used to describe *holding fast*:

_____ not _____

This is the task set before us —
accept God's gracious gift and continue in that faith!

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Week Four — Colossians 1:24—2:5

Day 1:

 READ and WRITE Colossians 1:24-26 in your journal.

Becoming a Minister: Last week we explored the preeminence of Jesus Christ — and, along the way, we got a glimpse of our own depravity. Now, we'll observe the ministry of Apostle Paul:

- How did he describe himself in **v.23 & v.25**?
- Paul's gift was given by God for whose benefit in **v.25**?
- How did he describe his purpose in **v.25**?
- What is the Gospel referred to in **v.26**?

The believers reading this letter did not know Paul personally, but they had heard about Jesus from his spiritual offspring — Epaphras. But they could hear Paul's passion for the saints as he described his calling to spread the Gospel. I would guess they were inspired by him.

- Do you surround yourself with people who inspire you?
- In what way do you think you are an inspiration to others?

How would you consider yourself a '*minister of the Gospel*' in the sphere God has placed you?

Rejoice in Sufferings: Read **v.24** again. If we're not careful, this can be another misunderstood verse. We know it's NOT saying that Paul is somehow finishing what Jesus left unfinished. That wouldn't agree with the rest of Scripture. On the cross, Jesus said, "*It is finished!*"

- What personal attitude was Paul suffering from?
- For whose sake was he suffering?
- To whose afflictions was he likening his sufferings?

Read **John 15:18-21**.

- How do you think Paul's life was a fulfillment of what Jesus said?

Is there a place in your life to suffer in identification with Christ's afflictions, for the sake of His Body, the Church? We're not called to be Apostles like Paul, but we are called to be '*servants of Jesus*'.

Meditate on this — ask the Lord to show you His plan for being 'like Him' in His sufferings.

Day 2:

 **READ** and **WRITE** Colossians 1:27-29 in your journal.

Gotta love a mystery: In your journal (v.24-29), underline these related phrases: *His Body, the Church, the mystery, His saints*. These all represent concepts that were unknown in former times. They were hidden — they were a mystery.

Consider God's covenant with Abraham — the above phrases had no presence in that first covenant — but they have everything to do with the NEW covenant, which can be summarized by the last seven words in v.27. Write it out here:

Jesus lives IN ME—this is my strength for today and my hope for tomorrow! Who can you share that with today?

It's All About Him: Circle the first word in **v.28**. It would be inappropriate to replace "Him we proclaim" with a word like "this we proclaim" because our faith rests on a PERSON, not an idea!

Everyone Mature in Christ: Paul's desire was to see *mature* followers of Christ. He wasn't interested in merely hearing *professions* of faith, but in forming *grown-ups* in the faith.

List three things that come to mind that enable a believer to grow from a child in Christ to a grown-up in Christ.

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His Energy: Take note of the effort-related words in **v.29**:

♦toil ♦struggling ♦energy ♦powerfully ♦works

As we've been thinking about spiritual strength training, and likening it to physical strength training — this verse forms a fantastic end to the first chapter. It reminds us that:

- There is **toil** and **struggle** in the life of a Christian, the same way there is toil and struggle in any type of physical training.
- Because we have "*Christ in us*", we have the opportunity to use all of HIS **energy** to meet the needs of the ministry God has given us.
- If we choose to rely on the strength offered by the Holy Spirit, rather than the strength that resides in our own flesh, He will **work powerfully** in us.

Paul was toiling to proclaim Christ and make mature believers.

- What is YOUR calling—what type of area has God called you to toil in right now?

Ask God to meet the needs of your mission with HIS power and energy, through the work of the Holy Spirit in your life.

Day 3:

✎ READ and WRITE Colossians 2:1-2 in your journal.

It Takes Work: Remember those effort-related words from yesterday? Paul said [because of the message of Christ], “***I toil, struggling with all his energy.***” He’s not done talking about this.

- What does he want his readers to know in v.1?

Let’s think about **how** he toiled. Remember, he had never physically met these people, so apart from writing this one letter, what do you think he may have been specifically doing on their behalf?

Has the Lord nudging your heart to labor in prayer for someone?
Do you sometimes need endurance to toil in this way?

These words from a spiritual giant, like the Apostle Paul, give me encouragement that it’s okay if prayer feels like work! It can sometimes require toil, struggle, endurance — but I need to remember that I’m laboring with the *strength* that God himself supplies.

A Noble Purpose: I also appreciate that Paul makes his mission statement clear. What was Paul expressing as his **goals** in v.2? (You might want to consult a couple other translations for added interest):

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In a similar way, who is God calling YOU to “***encourage in heart and unite in love***”?

Day 4:

✎ READ and WRITE Colossians 2:3-5 in your journal.

Paul had been laboring in prayer, AND now in communication, so that the believers would be strong in their understanding of Jesus Christ, whom he called God's _____. (v.2)

In your journal, draw a box around the phrase, '*all the treasures*'. Paul wanted them to know that IN CHRIST, are hidden ALL the treasures of _____ and _____.

Here is a very important question: Do I really believe it is *Christ in me* that produces wisdom and knowledge? Or do I leave plenty room in my heart and mind for wisdom from other sources around me?

Read these Scriptures and comment on further insights you receive:

1 Corinthians 8:1b —

Ephesians 4:17-18 —

2 Peter 1:3-4 —

1 John 4:1-3 —

I hope each of us has improved our spiritual strength through these lessons. My prayer is that the *fine-sounding arguments*, advanced by the world around us, will stand out easily as the counterfeits they are.

I pray that we will be...*steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the* Lord... so that our spiritual condition can be described with the words that Paul uses in v.5...

In good order and with firmness of our faith!

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Week Five — Colossians 2:6-15

Day 1:

 READ and WRITE Colossians 2:6-7 in your journal.

Therefore: This section might just as well begin with the phrase, ‘*because of this*’, because, whenever we see **therefore** in Scripture, we ask, *what is it there for*?

The Colossians were believers — they had **received Christ the Lord**.

- In v.6, with what physical action did Paul charge them?
- What does that mean in practical terms to you?
- Paul loved using metaphors to make his point. Share how the first word in v.7 relates to your faith:

The last three words of our passage are, **abounding in thanksgiving**. It seems completely appropriate now, to **walk** out our faith in Jesus, through thankfulness — truly abounding in thankfulness!

End today’s study by...

- ☐ Thanking God for His past work in your life.
- ☐ Thanking God for His present work in your life.
- ☐ Thanking God for the people He has placed in your life.
- ☐ Verbally share one of the above areas of thankfulness with someone today.

Day 2:

✞ READ and WRITE Colossians 2:8-10 in your journal.

See to it: This is another interesting Biblical phrase that always grabs my attention. It is a gentle warning to *pay particular heed*.

- In v.8, what potential harm could happen to us as we are walking out our faith?

From v.8, list the enemies we are warned about, who could capture our minds (Use another translation or two for more insight or clarity).

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How can a person be taken captive in the battle for our mind? List some specific real-life battlegrounds (i.e., classroom setting).

Are you currently living near any of these battlegrounds that you listed? We can't always *move or change our position* in order to put distance between us and the battle. But we *can* be alert, armed, and ready.

- Is there a specific area that the Holy Spirit has revealed to you, where you must improve your guard?

In Him: As we *walk* the path God has for us, we *will* encounter the tricks of the enemy. **V.9-10** remind us of an important truth that we are protected *in Him* because He lives *in* us.

v.10 We have been _____ *in Him* (Jesus).

v.9 *In Him* (Jesus) the whole fullness of the _____ dwells.

As we connect the dots, we see that...

- all of God (the whole fullness) is *in Jesus*,
- we are *in Jesus* and He (through His Holy Spirit) is *in us*!

This means we have access to the power of God, as we face the enemy of our minds. Jesus is ***the head of all rule and authority*** (v.10). In other words, He's the boss of everyone, whether they know it or not!

Day 3:

 **READ** and **WRITE** Colossians 2:11-12 in your journal.

In Him: If you're writing these passages from the ESV, you may have already noticed the phrase, *In Him*, has appeared five times between verses 6 and 11. In your journal, underline those phrases now.

We'll focus here on the *in Him* found in **v.11**. The Apostle didn't shrink back from using graphic metaphors to get his point across, as he mentioned the concept of circumcision. First, a couple thoughts about the nature of circumcision:

- ⇒ It was introduced as an outward sign of the covenant that God made with Abraham and all of his descendants after him — a sort of ethnic badge.
- ⇒ It was always intended to symbolize an inward change of the heart, as a person makes a choice to belong to Christ.

Read **Romans 2:28-29** and **Philippians 3:3**.

- How do these passages support the idea that our hearts are fundamentally changed when we come to Christ?

Let's make a list of our 'in Him' metaphor collection:

1. We **received** Christ, and now have an opportunity to walk in Him.
2. We were **rooted** in Him, so that we can be built up and grow.
3. He is the ruler and authority of all things, and we have been **filled** in Him.
4. In Him, we have allowed our heart to be spiritually surgically **changed** to reflect our relationship with God, our Maker.

Two more metaphors — In your journal, underline 'with Him' that appears twice in v.12. What are the two picture images in this verse?

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- Why do you think these are such powerful images?

The powerful working of God: I love this phrase for several reasons: First, this study is entitled, "**Walking in Strength and Power**". Secondly, I can rejoice in what God has done in my past — when the POWER of God transformed me from an enemy of God to a child of God. Lastly, it reminds me that He has given us access to His POWER to work in and through us in the present.

Meditate on this verse today!

Day 4: _____

✎ READ and WRITE Colossians 2:13-14 in your journal.

"It seems like I do everything around here!" Have you said that? I would be shocked to find a Mom who hasn't said that at least once or twice. But, when it comes to the regeneration and spiritual work Jesus does in our hearts, He *does* have a right to say that — He really does do everything! Let's unpack these three verses:

- What do *we* look like in **v.13**, in terms of our spiritual appearance and activity?

(I'm afraid dead people don't have much power—right?)

- Now, make a list of everything God does/has done for you and me (**v.13-14**):

Remember, the thesis statement of our Scripture this week — *'just as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, WALK in Him'*. The point is moving forward, growing up, and living for Christ. But, in our excitement to live for Jesus, we can easily fall into a strange idea that *we* are the ones *doing everything*.

The truth is, sometimes we **are** doing things — in our dead, uncircumcised flesh. It's not good or fruitful, nor does it propel us forward in our *walk*. It's just spinning wheels — a lot of action with no progress.

- Read **2 Peter 1:3**, and note any additional insights:

Have you ever felt you needed to clean *yourself* up to be forgiven, and in good standing with God? How do these verses change your thinking?

Have you been trying to walk forward in your life in Jesus in *your own* strength and power? Without tapping into what Jesus has already done for you?

*Meditating on these verses today will
shape our thinking in the right direction.*

[illegible]

Week Six — Colossians 2:16-23

Day 1:

 **READ** and **WRITE Colossians 2:16-17** in your journal.

Therefore: With our second *therefore* in this chapter, we again ask, *what is it there for?* Our answer is that the Apostle has been carefully building an argument in this letter for the exclusive importance of Jesus Christ in the life of a believer. We call this the supremacy of Christ.

This week's verses give us insight into the purpose of Paul's letter in the first place — to address a crisis coming against the Colossian Church that sprouted from pseudo-truths that leaked in. Hopefully, we can apply these same arguments to modern lies circulating in our culture.

- In **v.16**, what, would you guess, were some of the religious/cultural expectations and ideas directed at these believers?
- What comes to your mind as contemporary counterparts, based on your own life experiences?
- In **v.17**, what was Paul's argument as to why devotion to these things shouldn't be the main focus in their life in Christ?

Our passage opened with *let no one pass judgment on you*, and if we read ahead a few words into tomorrow's reading, we find the phrase, *let no one disqualify you*. How do you think that disqualification could happen?

Now it's time to consider our own life and actions. If you have any twisted ideas or philosophies of what you **must** do in order to make your walk acceptable to God, now is the time to really pour over these Scriptures, to confront any false realities and preach the Gospel to yourself that *the reality is found in Christ* (v.17 NIV).

Day 2:

✞ READ and WRITE Colossians 2:18-19 in your journal.

More Fine Sounding Arguments: Earlier in this chapter, Paul warned against *plausible arguments (fine-sounding arguments* NIV). These are man-made religious ideas, activities, or attention to spiritual details that can consume a person, and turn their focus away from Jesus and onto their accomplishments.

- List more of the religious threats to the Colossian church you see in v.18:
- Look up and define *asceticism*:
- In v.18, what does Paul point out as a natural result in the human mind to devoting oneself to religious requirements?

- Add anything that you have observed along these lines from your own experiences in life.

Can you see a puffed-up mind at work in extreme religious groups, who trouble our world today? It seems that extreme devotion to a set of religious rules tends to make us humans think we are superior to others, and this can set in motion a course of evil.

Hold fast to the Head: Paul gives an antidote to this messy business of following religious methods — ***hold fast to the Head*** — meaning Christ Jesus, rather than holding onto legal requirements.

Read **1 Corinthians 12:12-13**.

- Keeping in mind the analogy of a head and a body, which represents Jesus (the Head) and His Church (the Body), reword **v.19**, explaining how Christians are intended to grow...
- As a member, a part of the whole Body, what is your particular responsibility in this growth?

Day 3:

 **READ and WRITE Colossians 2:20-22** in your journal.

Do not ... do not ... do not: This is a perfect description of legalistic religion. It's often defined more, by what we don't do, than by what we do. Adhering to rules that someone has told us are *'the way to really know God, or really please God'*, actually pleases our ego instead.

Read **Matthew 15:1-20**.

- Write a brief statement summarizing what Jesus said about the relationship between food/mouth/words:

The Apostle Paul was warning the believers in *that century*, with the false teachings coming at *them*. Now, we should consider what *our* experience is like. To tell you the truth, I don't see a lot of asceticism invading my world — it might be relevant in some countries, but I don't think we Americans like to deny ourselves anything. So, it's not a popular false-gospel here.

But the opposite — a message of health, wealth and happiness is certainly a relevant foe of the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Let's investigate what God's Word says about the idea that God wants you wealthy, healthy, and happy. Consider these passages and note observations about how it applies to your life:

- **Matthew 6:19**
- **Matthew 6:24**
- **Luke 12:15**
- **1 Timothy 6:10**
- **Hebrews 13:5**

Day 4:

 READ and WRITE Colossians 2:23 in your journal.

As we wrap up the warnings from chapter two, let's be reminded of the main point of this letter: *"That you may be **filled** with the knowledge of Jesus and **strengthened** in Him, so as to **walk** in a way that pleases God and become fruitful in this life."* (my paraphrase)

- Self-made religious ideas all have an appearance of what (v.23)?
- But they are not able to do what (v.23)?

If we desire to **walk in a manner worthy of the Lord** (v.10), it must be accomplished by **His** power, working through us. Putting our energy into these sideline things provides no ability to stop that nasty flesh, and actually feeds it and makes it stronger.

So we ask: *how do we walk in the power of God?* It comes down to a *new nature* — a *divine nature*!

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature. 2 Peter 1:3-4 (ESV)

When we believe in Christ for salvation, we become God's children and He shares with us His divine _____ (v.4)

- birds fly due to the *nature* of their species;
- lions are carnivorous — it's their *nature*;

The strength we need to please God actually comes from the nature He has imparted to us at our new birth.

Meditate on the 2 Peter passage above today, and ask God to help you grasp the reality of partaking of the divine nature.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Week Seven — Colossians 3:1-11

Day 1:

 **READ and WRITE Colossians 3:1-2** in your journal.

The first word of this chapter '*If*' could be better understood, '*Since*'. We know Paul didn't write in chapter divisions, so a glance back at the final verses of chapter two remind us that regulations only provide an illusion of victory over sin, while not restraining our sinful nature at all. We need a completely *new* nature.

Victory over our sinful nature happens when we embrace the new (eternal) nature our God has shared with us.

In your journal, underline or mark all words that point us 'up': *raised, above, etc.*

Read **Ephesians 1:20-22**.

- Based on this passage and **v.1** in our current text, why do you think it makes sense for a child of God to be focusing on and seeking out things *above*?

What does this look like? How does a Christian women '*set her mind on things above*'? List at least three practical and specific ways:

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-

Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.

Colossians 3:2

In order to set our minds on things above, we need to turn our minds away from things on earth. What does that mean? How does a Christian women '*set her mind away from things that are on earth*'? List at least three practical and specific ways:

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-
-

How do you think the '*setting of our minds*' enables us to curb the temptations we face from our flesh, the world around us, and the devil?

Day 2: _____

✞ READ and WRITE Colossians 3:3-4 in your journal.

Dead and Hidden: As we *set our minds on things above*, we become less focused on things *below*. The reason is...

- (v.3) *you have* _____. How much consideration to her environment do you think a corpse pays? I know, that's morbid — but hopefully, it helps us understand the text!
- (v.3) *and your life is* _____ *with Christ in God*. You may keep precious jewels or family treasures *hidden* from plain sight, where they are protected and safe, rather than exposed and vulnerable. Again, maybe this illustration helps us understand the text!

Read Ephesians 1:13-14.

- List other words used for the same protection. Explain their meaning:

Note: This hidden condition doesn't mean that people can't detect that you are a believer. Your testimony should not be hidden, and your *lamp* should not be under a *basket*. Instead, we think of this like the root of a plant — that portion of the organism that is unseen and hidden underground. Even if the top, exposed portion is affected somehow, the hidden portion of the plant is sustained, will recover and bring forth more growth.

Now appearing: The promise we have, as children of God, is that we share in Jesus' inheritance. Fill in these missing words:

- (v.4) When Christ _____ appears, then you also will _____ with him in glory.

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

- In v.17, we are told the length of time we will be with the Lord. How long will it be?
- In v.18, we are instructed on what to do with this information. What is it?

Have you actually used this wonderful piece of hope to encourage someone lately? Exercise your faith today by sharing this encouragement with at least one person!

Let's bring **Colossians 3:1-4** around full circle. Because our life is hidden in Christ, we are identified as belonging to Him, and we will be seated with Him in Heaven, and inherit with Him. Now, return to **v.1** and write out the directive we have been given:

Because we have died with Christ, we have the spiritual power to slay the earthly, fleshly desires that want to control us. Paul called this "reckoning" ourselves dead to sin but alive in Christ.

Bible Exposition Commentary¹

Day 3: _____

✞ READ and WRITE **Colossians 3:5-7** in your journal.

Slay the Earthly: Don't you appreciate how the Apostle plainly and graphically tells how we should walk through this life? We're not told to ignore, or avoid, or reject the earthly, but to ***put it to death!***

Verse 5 contains a list of what we call *sensual sins* because they arise from our senses.

- List the sins from **v.5** that we are to rid our lives of:

- Now, write some things that are not listed in this passage, but come to your mind, that are of our earthly nature and are out of agreement with the life of a believer:

- (v.6) tells us that it is because of these things that _____ is coming.
- (v.7) tells us that *we too once* _____ *in them* (the earthly passions).

But the key to putting these sensual sins out of our life doesn't lie in knowledge, self-control or trying harder to avoid them. The key lies back in the beginning of this chapter. Fill in the missing words:

(V.1) IF then you have been _____ with Christ...

(V.5) Put to death therefore what is _____ in you.

Read **Romans 7:5-6**.

You see, as Christians, our relationship to sin has completely changed. We were once slaves to sin, but now, we no longer have to obey the pull and persuasion of sin. We have been *raised with Christ*, raised above captivity to our sensual desires.

What are some helpful steps as we desire to walk in our new nature in Christ, and put to death the elements of our old nature?

Step One: Reckon yourself dead to sin. This is the essence of the verse at the bottom of this page. Realize it is a possibility to not obey the voice of sin in your life.

*So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin
and alive to God in Christ Jesus.*

Romans 6:11

Step Two: Take action against sin. This is the essence of passages like **Colossians 3:5**. The action of ‘*putting to death*’ or ‘*putting away*’ is what we call repentance — changing your mind, and walking in the other direction.

There are some practical things we can do to help us with step two. Depending on what particular struggles you have...

- ❖ If it’s a place, don’t go there. ❖ If it’s an image, turn away.
- ❖ If it’s a liquid, don’t drink it. ❖ If it’s social media, don’t click.
- ❖ If it’s a person, part company.

That may sound overly simplistic, but it does help us remember that the temptation to sin is not the same thing as engaging in sin. Temptations will come and go throughout our life, but we don’t need to obey them.

- What is the Holy Spirit speaking to your heart? What needs to be slain?

*Now ask God for strength and wisdom
to be successful with God’s awesome power!*

Day 4: _____

 **READ** and **WRITE Colossians 2:8-11** in your journal.

Take off the Old, Put on the New: One more day of self-confrontation!

- From **v.8-9**, list the social sins to be removed from our lives:

These might be more slippery to detect than the sensual sins we faced yesterday because there is something down deep that often considers these '*sins in good standing*'. Maybe, we believe *everyone* does a little deceiving, a little losing of the temper, a little repeating of information about someone, etc.

When we don't really believe an attitude is all *that* terrible, it seems to easily form a habit, and before we know it, we have a habit of anger, a habit of slander, or a habit of lying.

Paul is encouraging us as believers in Christ to remove those habits like we might remove muddy work clothes. We are to re-dress ourselves with attitudes that are in agreement with our *new nature*!

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.
The old has passed away, behold, the new has come*

2 Corinthians 5:17

There is one final concept today that should bring us hope. When we are born again, we are made *new* — that is called our justification before God. It only happens ONCE.

V.10 reminds us that we are also *being* _____ *in knowledge after the image of our creator*. This is our sanctification — it can happen EVERY DAY! One blessing of being In Christ is that He is renewing us day by day into His likeness.

List any social sins (which you might euphemistically call *bad habits*) that you have been struggling with but you know God has been speaking to you about 'putting off':

Confess these to the Lord.

*Ask for His strength to continue to identify what is not pleasing to Him
and provide you the power to take appropriate action!*

This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, providing a template for handwriting practice or general writing. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the page.

Week Eight — Colossians 3:12-4:1

Day 1:

✧ READ and WRITE Colossians 3:12-14 in your journal.

A New Wardrobe: Continuing the analogy of taking off the nasty clothes and putting on the new, there are actually EIGHT new outfits mentioned in these three verses.

- First, from **v.12**, list two adjectives that describe us, as God's children:

Read **John 15:16, 19**.

- Write a sentence that explains God's choice regarding you.

Because He chose us to be His *image bearers* in this world and because we are set apart and loved and given a new nature, we can walk in agreement with HIS character and put on the wardrobe that expresses HIS beauty. List eight virtues in today's passage:



Which new wardrobe piece do you find the most challenging right now in your life?

Using a concordance, find that virtue portrayed in the character of Jesus. For example, if compassion is most difficult, find an example of Jesus showing compassion for the crowds. Now, spend time in prayer, asking God to enable you to follow Him in this area.

Forgiveness: In **v.13**, we are commanded to forgive offenses

- What is the reason given?

Love: Above all, we are to put on love.

- What is the function of love in **v.14**?

Explain what this looks like in real-life situations, maybe through a personal example.

Day 2:

 **READ** and **WRITE** Colossians 3:15-17 in your journal.

I often say, “*it’s simple, just not easy*”. Taking off the things that are *not* in agreement with Jesus, and putting on things that *are* in agreement, is very simple — it’s just not always easy. It requires yielding to the Spirit of Jesus in order to ‘*let things happen*’. For example:

- **(v.15)** Let the _____ rule in _____.
- **(v.16)** Let the _____ dwell in you _____.

There is also a repetition of the practice of **giving thanks** in these three verses. In your journal, underline each instance of *thanks*, or *thanksgiving*.

- What do you think is significant about this common thread of gratitude?

List the practices from **v.16** that should be an active part of our lives (either personally, or with other believers):

Share some practical real-life applications for those activities:

Whatever you do: I dislike the contemporary one word response that many people, especially teens, like to use — *whatever*. But, I love the Apostle's phrase, '*whatever you do*' (**v.17**), because it makes these concepts individual and practical. *Whatever we do* depends on *who* we are and *what* God has put in our lane.

- What is God stirring up in your heart *to do*?

- What are your instructions in **v.17** with regard to *what you do*?

Day 3:

 **READ and WRITE Colossians 3:18-21** in your journal.

One Happy Family: These two days of our study will be very relational and practical! For many, these words aren't new information, but God's Word is living and active, and even when we meet familiar passages, we can expect to be changed by our time spent in the Word!

Read **1 Peter 3:1**.

- From that passage, and from **v.18** in our current text, what is the command to wives?

Fill in the qualifying adjective before the word *husbands* in the Peter passage: "Wives, be subject to your _____ husbands."

- How does that one word shed more light on the directive?

Read **Ephesians 5:22-24**.

- Who does the husband symbolize?
- Who does the wife symbolize?

- With the Ephesians passage in mind, and the exhortation to wives in our current text — why do you think it is *'fitting in the Lord'* for a wife to hold this position or rank in the family?

Read **1 Peter 3:7**.

- From that passage and from our current text in **v.19**, what is commanded of the husband?

Since wives are exhorted to fall in rank in the family unit and husbands are exhorted to love, show honor and understanding, not being harsh, do you think it's possible that our natural bent in our relationships is toward the opposite?

Read **Genesis 3** about the *Fall of Man*, paying particular attention to the result, or the curse of sin in **v.16-19**.

- Now, write your thoughts on why we may naturally relate to one another in the family in the way we do:

We must not think of submission as slavery or subjugation. The word comes from the military vocabulary and simply means "to arrange under rank." That one soldier is a private and another is a colonel does not mean that one man is necessarily better than the other. It only means that they have different ranks.

Bible Exposition Commentary²

If you are married, is there a particular area of reverence to the Lord, through submission to your husband, that God is asking of you?

Children and Parents: Note God's created order for children and parents in **v.20-21**:

- Children have a responsibility to:

- Fathers (and mothers) have a responsibility to:
 - What is the reason?

- Again, what do you think might be our natural inclination as parents because of our sinful nature?

Can you testify to God empowering you to overcome behaviors that are not encouraging to your children like yelling, losing your temper, frustration, or lofty expectations?

- Note any victories that God has given you in this area:

Day 4: _____

✂ READ and WRITE Colossians 3:22-25, and 4:1 in your journal.

Slaves & Masters; Employees & Employers: The cultural context of this passage existed in a society with many types of slaves and masters. We can't personally relate to this in western society, but I see no reason why all of these exhortations cannot not be just as viable in a workplace environment.

If you are primarily an employee (or even a volunteer), make a list of three things that seem most significant in this conversation. If you are primarily a boss (master), make your list from your perspective.

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In the same way that husbands and wives were not to only offer respect **IF** the spouse was a Christian; so too, workers are exhorted to work hard, honor, and please, no matter the spiritual condition of their superior.

- (v.23) *They are to work heartily* _____
and not _____ .

Does it come naturally to go to work, thinking you are '*working for the Lord*'? What practical advice would you give a friend who is struggling in their work environment with a boss or employee?

*And let us not grow weary of doing good,
for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.*

Galatians 6:9

[illegible]

Week Nine — Colossians 4:2-18

Day 1:

 READ and WRITE Colossians 4:2-4 in your journal.

PRAY, PRAY, PRAY: Adverbs are words that ADD to the verb. They may tell us *how* or *when* something was/is done.

- What words add to the subject of prayer in v.2?

Since you know that God is sovereign, you might wonder, *'isn't God going to do what He's going to do anyway? Why so much focus on prayer?'* Well, God had chosen to govern the world in fellowship with His people. We *are* now the Body of Christ and we are partners with God, or as Peter said (**1 Peter 1:4**), *partakers of the divine nature*.

What do these passages add to the *how*, and *when*, and *quantity* of prayer?

- Matthew 6:5-13
- Luke 10:2
- Ephesians 6:18-20
- 1 Thessalonians 5:17

Where is our focus: Of all the things Paul could have requested prayer for, put into your own words his request in v.4:

Paul's was an eternity-centered prayer request. I so wish more of my requests had that focus.

- List one or two eternity-centered prayer requests that spring up from your current life and circumstances:

Day 2:

✞ READ and WRITE Colossians 4:5-6 in your journal.

What will they think? In general, it's not a great idea to be concerned about what people think. However, in this context, Paul gave some good tips for sharing our faith with outsiders, who may be watching and thinking about our lives.

In the NIV, v.4 says *"Pray that I may proclaim it [the gospel] clearly, as I should."* We know that proclaiming the Gospel was on his mind. With that in view, list some of the tips he exhorted US to be thinking about from today's verses:

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It's been said that *time* is the one truly non-renewable commodity. Once that minute or hour has passed, it is never able to be retrieved. Oh, how easy it is for us to delay or postpone sharing something of ourselves, and the God who has saved us, with outsiders—we can find a hundred excuses.

Perhaps, it's best to stop right here, and ask God to show you how to make the best use of your time today. Write your thoughts and then do exactly what He shows you:

Well-seasoned words: Do you have a friend, like I do, who always seems to know the perfect thing to say, even when I don't? Our words are important, as we say, our *talk* needs to match our *walk*. What do these Scripture have to add to this conversation?

- Psalm 19:14
- Ephesians 4:15
- Ephesians 4:29
- 1 Peter 3:15

The Christian's walk and talk must be in harmony with each other. When character, conduct, and conversation are all working together, it makes for a powerful witness.

Bible Exposition Commentary³

Day 3:

✍ READ and WRITE Colossians 4:7-15 in your journal.

Today's verses contain a large amount of writing — it just happened that way due to the long closing greetings in this letter. If you need to, just shift a couple of verses to tomorrow's writing.

About Tychicus: Epaphras was the one who brought Paul news from the Colossians, but it seems he would not return to them very soon, so Paul sent Tychicus and Onesimus on the return mission instead. (Tychicus is also mentioned in **Acts 20:4** and **Ephesians 6:21-22**.)

- How did Paul describe Tychicus in this passage?

- How did he describe Onesimus?

Insights into a True Prayer Warrior: Since Epaphras spent time with Paul in confinement in Rome, Paul was able to observe his character and his daily prayer habits. When Epaphras prayed — Paul knew it and he wanted the believers back home to know it too. He wanted them to know how genuine he was toward them. From **v.12-13**...

- How did he pray?
- What did he pray?
- For whom did he pray?

Whenever we are inspired by someone's prayer life, we can't just be students, we have to become apprentices! It would be a great waste to merely be people who *talk about prayer*, or say we *believe in prayer*, we must become people who actually *take time to pray*!

Today, once again, let's take up this challenge, put down our pens and actually pray for those whom God has put into our realm of influence.

❖ Pray specifically ❖ Pray passionately ❖ Pray Scripturally

Follow the example found in these men of God, and use the tools you have learned from this study.

Day 4: _____

 READ and **WRITE** Colossians 4:16-18 in your journal.

For the Many and For the One: One thing about Paul—he definitely embraced the apostolic ministry God had entrusted to him. His final instructions in **v.16-17** were directed at an entire region of people and then, one individual.

To the masses, he said: *“hey, make sure this letter is circulated and read aloud and mulled over and taken to heart—that everyone would know the heart of the Lord on these matters”*

To the individual, he said: *“tell Archippus to make sure he carries out the ministry the Lord gave him to do”*

How would you feel if, out of an entire region of people, God called you out by name saying, “_____, *be sure to fulfill the ministry that I’ve given you to do*”?

To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of His calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by His power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you.

2 Thessalonians 1:11-12

That is the sense that I would hope to leave us all with, in this study.

- We've asked God to **strengthen** us with His power for endurance
- We have asked that we be **filled** with the knowledge of His will
- We have considered the **walk** that God intends for us

...and now the last thing left is just to — **do it!**

Prayerfully, list at least two general things that you know God has stirred up in your heart to fulfill. These are things that any Christian could list:

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Now, list at least two specific things that you sense God is calling you to walk out in your life—specific things that He has given ONLY to you to accomplish.

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In the same way that Paul closes this letter with, "**Grace be with you**". my prayer for all of us is:

"Lord, please enable our hearts and minds to be strengthened by your power to keep the ministry you have entrusted to us in focus, to be faithful doers of your word and your will and to bring glory to YOUR name here on earth — Amen"

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REFERENCES

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- 1— **Wiersbe, Warren W.** *The Bible Exposition Commentary — New Testament, Vol 2.* Colorado Springs, CO: Victor, 2001
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- 2— **Wiersbe, Warren W.** *The Bible Exposition Commentary — New Testament, Vol 2.* Colorado Springs, CO: Victor, 2001
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- **Joshua** — The Path of Promise, From the Jordan into Canaan
- **Judges** — A Time of Turning
- **Ruth** — Rescue and Rest
- **1 Samuel** — The Coming King
- **Jonah** — The Call of Compassion

New Testament:

- **The Way of Jesus** — The Sermon on the Mount from Matthew
- **Simply Jesus** — The “I AMs” of Christ in the Gospel of John
- **Acts** — Walking in the Spirit, The First Days of the Last Days
- **Galatians** — Finding Grace in a Demanding World
- **Philippians** — Finding Joy in a Disjointed World
- **Colossians** — Walking in Strength and Power
- **Titus** — While We Wait
- **James** — Real Faith for Daily Life
- **1 & 2 Peter** — Hope, Holiness and Humility in a Hostile World
- **1,2,3 John** — Light, Love and Logic, Lessons from the Apostle John