

SLOW FOOD: COLOSSIANS

The idea behind the Slow Food studies is to explore a single point of interest in each passage rather than to embark upon an exhaustive exposition. The questions may be used as a jumping-off point for personal meditation. The first person singular is normally used to encourage personal application; it can be pluralised for group study. Cross-references chase up one or two ideas in the section. Studies may be combined at will.

Colossians is one of Paul's Prison Letters, written (from Rome, Ephesus or somewhere else) in the early 50s or early 60s AD, along with *Ephesians*, *Philemon* and possibly *Philippians*. Colosse is a town in south-east Asia Minor (modern Turkey). Paul had not personally visited it; the church there was founded by Epaphras. It had its share of problems – what church or school doesn't?

Recommended commentaries include N.T Wright in the Tyndale series; Tom Wright *Paul for Everyone: the Prison Letters* (SPCK); R.C.Lucas *The Message of Colossians and Philemon* (BST).

Preview	On a quick read-through of this letter, how much of it seems relevant to me where I am?	1:18-20	If I'm tempted to put myself first today, what should make me reconsider? <i>John 3:30; Eph 1:22; 2 Cor 5:15.</i>
1:1-2	Where am I? Who am I? <i>2 Cor 5:17; Phil 3:20; 1 Cor 15:10.</i>	1:21-23	Could I go off the rails today? <i>Jer 17:9; 1 Cor 10:12; Rom 6:2-4.</i>
1:3-6	Is believing the gospel something I can be proud of? <i>Rom 1:16-17; 2 Tim 1:12; Rom 3:27-28.</i>	1:24-27	What aspects of my ministry are like Paul's? <i>2 Tim 2:10; 1 Cor 4:1-2; Eph 3:16.</i>
1:7-8	In what ways should I model myself on Epaphras? <i>Col. 4:12-13; Philem. 23; James 5:16b-17.</i>	1:28-29	Is teaching a strain? <i>Acts 20:35; 1 Thess 2:9; Phil 4:13.</i>
1:9-11	Which bits of Paul's prayer am I (un)likely to need today? <i>Note. 'With joy' may be taken with v11 or v12. Eph. 1:17; John 15:16; Ps. 18:28-29.</i>	2:1-5	Do I need a Paul to keep my faith strong? <i>Acts 3:20; Isa 32:2; 2 Tim 1:6-7.</i>
1:12-14	Even if it's Monday morning, what reasons are there for being generally optimistic? <i>1 Pet. 1:4; 1:18-19; 2:9; Ps. 36:8.</i>	2:6-7	What is God's design for Christian maturity? <i>1 Pet 5:10; 2 Pet 1:3-8; 3:18.</i>
1:15-17	How big is my vision of Jesus? <i>Heb 1:3; John 1:18; Rev 1:13-18; Isa 52:13.</i>	2:8	Is the Christian faith anti-intellectual? <i>1 Cor 1:18-2:16.</i>
		2:9-12	Can one detect tendencies in human thinking (e.g. in university courses, school curricula or the media) that diminish the person and work

- of Christ? *1 Pet 2:7-8; Dan 1:17; Eph 4:14.*
- 2:13-15 What differences have Christ's death and resurrection made to me? *Rom 8:1-4; 1 Cor 6:19-20; Gal 2:20.*
- 2:16-19 Do the things that separate us from other believers matter or not? *1 Cor 3:4; Luke 9:50; Gal 2:14.*
- 2:20-23 How unworldly and ascetic am I expected to be? *1 John 2:15-17; 1 Cor 9:27; 1 Tim 6:17-19.*
- 3:1-4 Is it safe to put all my spiritual eggs in the 'Christ' basket, or should I keep a few in the 'world' basket just in case? *James 1:8; John 17:14-19; Gal 6:14.*
- 3:5-8 How much of an attitude change needs to occur once one becomes a Christian? *1 Thess 4:3, 7; 1 Cor 6:9b-11; Phil 3:15.*
- 3:9-11 Why? *Eph 4:22-24; Isa 53:6; Gal 3:28.*
- 3:12-14 Is 'Christian love' hopelessly unrealistic in the places I'm likely to find myself in this week (e.g. school, home, local church)? *Col 4:6; 1 Cor 13:4-6; Gal 6:10.*
- 3:15-17 What kind of community would result if we all behaved like this? *Matt 5:13, 14; Gal 5:13-15; Rev 22:1-2.*
- 3:18-21 How far are these injunctions practicable when applied to my family set-up? *Exod 20:12; Prov 19:31; 1 Tim 3:4-5.*
- 3:22-4:1 In what spirit should I deal with those above me and those below me in the workplace? *Tit 2:9-10; James 5:4-6; Job 31:13.*
- 4:2-4 If anybody is speaking about Christ where I am, how should I pray for them (or ask others to pray for me)? *1 Pet 4:11a; Acts 13:3, 14:27.*
- 4:5-6 How can I witness to 'not-yet Christians'? *1 Pet 3:15; 2 Tim 2:24-25; 1 Cor 9:19-23.*
- 4:7-9 How have I been encouraged by other Christians, and how can I encourage them? *Philemon 10; Acts 28:15; 2 Cor 1:4.*
- 4:10-13 What can I learn from the story of John Mark? *Mark 14:51(?); Acts 12:12, 25; 13:5, 13; 15:37-39; Col 4:10; Philemon 24; 2 Tim 4:11b; 1 Pet 5:13; Mark 1:1-16:8 (!).*
- 4:14-18 What encouragements or challenges can I find in these final greetings? *2 Tim 4:10-11a; Rom 16:3-5a; 2 Thess 3:16-18.*
- Review What are the consequences of my being 'in Christ'?