

COLOSSIANS

A QUESTION & ANSWER STUDY GUIDE

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COLOSSIANS: A QUESTION & ANSWER STUDY GUIDE

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Quotations of Scripture are from the New King James Version.

COLOSSIANS: A QUESTION & ANSWER STUDY GUIDE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One4

Chapter Two24

Chapter Three38

Chapter Four63

CHAPTER ONE

1. Who sent this epistle?

“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother” (Colossians 1:1). While collective pronouns like “we” do appear at first (1:3, 4, 28), including Timothy in the correspondence, individual pronouns like “I” quickly overtake them (24, 25, 29), showing that the primary sender is Paul.

2. Who were the recipients?

“To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (Colossians 1:2). His address is to the faithful in the city of Colosse. There is no previous mention of this church in Scripture, but it will become apparent that Philemon is a member of this congregation

and there is noticeable overlap with this epistle and the one sent to Ephesus.

3. How did the sender and recipients know one another?

“We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints” (Colossians 1:3-4). Evidently, they were not directly acquainted. Paul and Timothy had only “heard of” the faith of the Colossians. They did not have to be involved in planting this congregation to take an interest in their edification.

What they knew about this church was positive: faith in Christ and love for the saints. There does not appear to be a corrective motive in what is written, just general admonitions.

4. Where was their hope centered?

COLOSSIANS: A QUESTION & ANSWER STUDY GUIDE

“Because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven” (Colossians 1:5). By definition, hope cannot be about anything presently visible or tangible (Romans 8:24-25), so it is off earth. Heaven is the goal (2nd Corinthians 5:1; John 14:2-3).

5. Where did their hope come from?

“Of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel” (Colossians 1:5). Heavenly hope is only conferred through God’s power to salvation (Romans 1:16). Everything outside the gospel is hopeless.

6. As of this writing, how far had the gospel spread?

“Which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth” (Colossians 1:6) and *“The gospel which you heard, which was*

preached to every creature under heaven” (23). Jesus had commanded this in the great commission (Mark 16:15) and within a generation it had been accomplished, which is not to say it does not need to be refreshed each generation, but to emphasize how it was possible. Without any hierarchy larger than or other than local churches of Christ (Ephesians 3:10-11; 1st Timothy 3:15), and without any sending agency besides the local church (Acts 13:1-3), the gospel had gone to the ends of the earth.

7. Who taught the Colossians?

“As you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, who also declared to us your love in the Spirit” (Colossians 1:7-8). It was not Paul or any other apostle, nor Timothy, but Epaphras from whom the Colossians learned. Recall that Paul and Timothy had only “heard” about the Colossians (1:3-4), without knowing them face-to-face

yet. Epaphras planted this church and then communicated about them to Paul, with whom he was imprisoned in Rome (4:12; Philemon 23).

8. What did Paul and Timothy pray for the Colossians about?

“We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints” (Colossians 1:3-4).

“For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and

COLOSSIANS: A QUESTION & ANSWER STUDY GUIDE

longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father”
(Colossians 1:9-12).

They were asking for the Colossians to:

- 1) Know the will of God,
- 2) Live the will of God,
- 3) Be strong with patience, and
- 4) Give thanks.

9. What has the Father *“qualified us”* to be?

“Who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light” (Colossians 1:12). Just as heirs of an earthly fortune cannot qualify themselves to receive the benefit, but are qualified by the relationship to their fathers who bequeath gifts to them, so it is God, the beneficent Father, who qualifies Christians by grace (Ephesians 2:9; Romans 6:23) to partake of the heavenly inheritance. This *“inheritance of the saints in the light”*

clearly refers to that which is above, again specifying where our hope is.

10. What has the Father *“delivered us from?”*

“He has delivered us from the power of darkness” (Colossians 1:13). In contrast to the *“inheritance of the saints in the light,”* it is *“darkness”* we have been delivered from by God. Darkness is a common description of sin (John 1:1-5; 3:19; Romans 13:12; Ephesians 5:8).

11. What has the Father *“conveyed us into?”*

“He has... conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love” (Colossians 1:13). Upon deliverance from darkness, Christians enter Christ’s kingdom. The kingdom is not yet to come, but was established in the generation of Jesus’ contemporaries (Mark 9:1). It was opened at the same time the church was built (Matthew 16:18-19). This

kingdom will be handed from Jesus to the Father at the “end” (1st Corinthians 15:24-25).

12. What do we have in the Son of God’s love?

“In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins” (Colossians 1:14). To redeem is to buy back or to ransom. Redemption in Christ is the price He paid to get us from Satan, and that price was His blood. What he redeemed us from was our sins.

13. Who is the Son in relation to the Father?

“He is the image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15). Just as anyone in the empire could recognize Caesar without ever meeting him because his image adorned the currency (Matthew 22:20-21), so anyone acquainted with Christ knows what God is like through Him (John 14:7-11). God is invisible (John 5:37; 1st Timothy 1:17), but knowing Jesus changes that (John 1:18; Hebrews 1:1-3).

14. Who is the Son in relation to “*all creation?*”

“The firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist” (Colossians 1:15-17).

Jesus Christ is firstborn over all creation, not in the sense of birth order (Exodus 4:22 – Israel was not literally God’s firstborn, but His privileged offspring), as if He is part of God’s creation, but in the sense of the rights of primogeniture (Deuteronomy 21:17), being the senior heir of all that is God’s. What is meant by His “*firstborn*” status is explicitly stated in the passage; everything that exists was made by Him and through Him and for Him.

It was all created “*by Him*” and “*through Him*” (Genesis 1:1, 26; John 1:1-3, 10; Hebrews 1:1-3, 10; Romans

COLOSSIANS: A QUESTION & ANSWER STUDY GUIDE

11:36; Ephesians 3:9; 1st Corinthians 8:6). More than that, it was created for Him (Revelation 4:11).

That He is *“before all things”* speaks to His eternity (John 8:58; Revelation 22:13).

That *“in Him all things consist”* means that He continues to hold it all together (Hebrews 1:1-3).

Since He is the Creator even of heavenly and invisible things, including principalities and powers, angels are under His command (Hebrews 1:5-14; Luke 2:12-13; Revelation 5).

15. What is the body and what is the Son’s relation to it?

“And He is the head of the body, the church” (Colossians 1:18).

COLOSSIANS: A QUESTION & ANSWER STUDY GUIDE

The “*body*” is the “*church*” (Colossians 1:24; Ephesians 1:22-23) and Christ is its “*head*” (Ephesians 5:22-24).

As “*head*” over it, Jesus is exercising His universal authority (Matthew 28:20), which is especially fitting because He built the church (Matthew 16:18) and bought the church (Acts 20:28).

There is and must be a 1:1 ratio of head to body. Christ is the only authority over the universal church, being its Savior (Ephesians 5:23) and the only possible Savior there can be (Acts 4:12). Calling the pope or any man the church’s head or president is blasphemy. There is only one body (Ephesians 4:4; 2:16; Colossians 3:15; Romans 12:4-5; 1st Corinthians 12:12-13) without denominational division. Every church other than the one recorded in the New Testament is an affront the will of God.

- 16. In view of His relation to the Father, creation, and the body, what does the Son deserve?**

“Who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence” (Colossians 1:18). Jesus deserves “preeminence!” He is first in everything, outranking all others. He is #1.

17. What pleased the Father?

“For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross” (Colossians 1:19-20).

It pleased God that the fullness dwells in Jesus. Specifically, it is *“the fullness of the Godhead”* (2:9) which dwells in Him, but Paul did not use that phrase until further on in the epistle. Before getting to that, thus far, the Son of God is revealed to be: Redeemer (1:14), Image of the invisible God (15), Creator (15-17), Head of the

church (18), and Firstborn from the dead (18). Thus, He is deserving of preeminence. The fullness is His.

Accordingly, it is He by whom reconciliation is possible between heaven and earth. His crucifixion enabled that to happen.

18. What had “*wicked works*” done?

“And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works” (Colossians 1:21). Sin causes estrangement (Isaiah 59:1-2; Romans 8:5-8), which is why reconciliation is needed.

19. How was reconciliation achieved?

“Yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death” (Colossians 1:21-22), *“and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven... blood of His cross”* (20). Only

the sacrifice of Jesus' body and blood on the cross could achieve reconciliation (Romans 5:6-11).

20. Being reconciled, what have those once alienated become?

"To present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight" (Colossians 1:22). Upon reconciliation, one must quit the sin that previously alienated him from God. It is not acceptable to excuse unrighteousness with "I'm only human," "Nobody's perfect," or "We're all sinners." The standard is now holiness, blamelessness, and irreproachability. We are called to this (1st Thessalonians 4:7; 1st Peter 1:15-16).

21. How do Christians remain *"holy, and blameless, and above reproach?"*

COLOSSIANS: A QUESTION & ANSWER STUDY GUIDE

“If indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel” (Colossians 1:23).

Only if faith continues without straying may one remain in that condition which reconciliation affords. There is a real risk in departure (Hebrews 3:12-15; 4:11; 10:39). Souls once saved can be not only lost again, but worsened (Hebrews 10:26-31; 2nd Peter 2:20-22).

In order to prevent apostasy, in order to continue in faith, one must be grounded (Matthew 7:24-27) and steadfast (1st Corinthians 15:58).

22. What did the Colossians have in common with *“every creature under heaven?”*

“The gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister” (Colossians 1:23). Within about three decades

from Pentecost, the gospel had gone forth into the whole earth. The same straightforward message of salvation needs to spread abroad now. Gimmicks and innovations are unwarranted; all that is needed is the message of the cross.

23. Whom did Paul suffer for?

“I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church” (Colossians 1:24). Inasmuch as the apostle was yet unacquainted with this church, his use of “you” here is interesting. He was writing from prison (4:3, 10, 18) and his incarceration began with accusations stemming from his inclusion of the gentiles (Acts 21:28). Thus, all gentile Christians are beneficiaries of his persecution. Indeed, the whole body of Christ, the universal church, benefits from what he experienced.

COLOSSIANS: A QUESTION & ANSWER STUDY GUIDE

He took Jesus literally when He taught to rejoice in suffering (Matthew 5:10-12) because it put him in good company.

As he continued to suffer, Paul was gradually filling up in his own flesh what was lacking in Christ's afflictions (Acts 9:16; Galatians 6:17).

24. What was he a *“minister”* of?

“The gospel... of which I, Paul, became a minister” (Colossians 1:23) and *“The church of which I became a minister”* (Colossians 1:24-25). A *“minister,”* by definition, is a servant. Paul served the gospel and he served the church. There is nothing wrong with referring to a preacher as a minister of the gospel, a minister of the church, a minister of the New Testament (2nd Corinthians 3:6), or a minister of Jesus Christ (1st Timothy 4:6), but it is not a reference to rank or authority at all. It is a humble thing to be called a servant.

25. How did he become a minister?

“According to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God” (Colossians 1:25). His role of service was given to him by God (Acts 26:16-18).

Here he refers to it as “stewardship,” which is a type of service that does involve some management and overseeing (Galatians 4:2; Titus 1:7). His particular ministry includes apostleship, so he exercised authority that not every minister would have.

26. Is the gospel mysterious?

“The mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles” (Colossians 1:26-27). It had been a mystery in ages past (1st Peter 1:10-12),

but is now a revelation (Ephesians 3:1-5). It is meant to be made known! Specifically, what was once a mystery even to the Israelites is now a revelation even to the Gentiles!

27. *“What are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles?”*

“Which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27).

Christ is in the Christian through faith (Ephesians 3:17), repentance (Galatians 2:20), and obedience (John 14:23). With Him abiding in us, we have hope of a glorious hereafter.

28. **Why is Christ preached?**

“Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this end I also labor, striving according

COLOSSIANS: A QUESTION & ANSWER STUDY GUIDE

to His working which works in me mightily” (Colossians 1:28-29).

The perfection of every man, that is completeness or maturity, is the absolute goal of preaching Christ in all its forms, including teaching and warning. Immaturity must be overcome (Hebrews 5:12-14; 1st Corinthians 3:1-3) as growth is essential (2nd Peter 3:18).

CHAPTER TWO

1. For whom did Paul bear conflict?

“For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh” (Colossians 2:1). Still referring his “striving” (Colossians 1:29), he was specifically concerned for the brethren under his influence whom he had not personally met. Face-to-face teaching can be much more beneficial than writing alone (2nd John 12; 3rd John 13-14).

2. To what end was he conflicted?

“That their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ” (Colossians 2:2). This is a continuation of his previously referenced “striving” to

“present every man perfect in Christ” (Colossians 1:28-29). Their maturity would be proven by their encouraged hearts, by their growth together in love (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12), and by the confidence that comes from understanding and knowledge.

3. Where are knowledge and wisdom hidden?

“The knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:2-3). Wisdom and knowledge are in God (Proverbs 1:7). Knowing Him forms the basis for all necessary understanding.

4. What was the apostle trying to avoid?

“Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words” (Colossians 2:4). He reminded them to go to the Lord for knowledge because he feared they

might fall for some scheme of the devil (2nd Corinthians 11:3-4).

5. How was Paul with the Colossians?

“For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit” (Colossians 2:5). He had similar encouragement for brethren elsewhere (1st Corinthians 5:3-4; 1st Thessalonians 2:17), but seemed intent on encouraging these Christians he was unacquainted with.

6. Why was he joyful?

“Rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ” (Colossians 2:5). The Colossians were exemplary Christians in that the church was orderly (1st Corinthians 14:40) and established (Acts 16:5). He could rejoice to observe this church had it all together.

7. How are Christians to “walk?”

COLOSSIANS: A QUESTION & ANSWER STUDY GUIDE

“As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him” (Colossians 2:6). Their conduct was to be consistent with their conversion. Having repented of the works of the flesh, they weren’t to turn back to the worldly elements.

8. **Is Christ in the Christian or is the Christian in Christ?**

Yes. Both must be true. *“To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27)* and *“As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him” (Colossians 2:6)* indicate Christ must be in us and we must be in Him.

9. **Describe the condition Paul expected of them *“in the faith.”***

“Rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with

thanksgiving” (Colossians 2:7). Lacking root is what causes the seed sown on stony ground to wither away (Matthew 13:5-6, 20-21). Christians need to be rooted and established in faith to prevent eventual departure.

10. What did he warn them against?

“Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ” (Colossians 2:8). He warned them that philosophy, tradition, and worldliness could cheat them out of Christ.

11. Why must Christians be so focused on Christ and wary of everything else?

“For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power” (Colossians 2:9-10). We need to be on guard of all else because only Christ makes us

complete (John 1:16; Ephesians 1:3)! He does that because He has the fullness of deity within Him (Hebrews 1:3; Philippians 2:6; Matthew 1:23) and that makes Him head of all principality and power (Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:21; Hebrews 1:4; Revelation 1:5).

12. What kind of circumcision do Christians undergo?

“In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ” (Colossians 2:11).

There had been a *“circumcision made in the flesh by hands”* (Ephesians 2:11) which definitely applied to the Israelites (Genesis 17:9-14), but it is no longer relevant (Galatians 5:2, 6). Now, the only circumcision that matters is of the heart (Romans 2:28-29; cf. Philippians 3:3).

Although many brethren conflate this *“circumcision made without hands”* with the *“baptism”* mentioned in the

following verse, that does not fit because baptism is very much a hands-on procedure. Rather, the explanation is that this circumcision is done *“by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh.”* That is a description of repentance, which is what precedes baptism.

13. How is baptism described?

“Buried with Him in baptism” (Colossians 2:12). Burial describes the method by which baptism is carried out, a going down into water and a coming up out of it (Acts 8:38-39). Burial also describes baptism’s goal of dying to sin and rising to new life (Romans 6:1-14).

14. How is one *“raised with”* Christ?

“In which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead” (Colossians 2:12). Baptism is still the answer! To rise with Christ, one must first die and be buried with Him; that’s

why Paul can say, *“In which you also were raised,”* referring to baptism. While God gets the credit for raising us (Ephesians 2:4-6), we must choose to rise (Ephesians 5:14).

15. What is the outcome of having been *“made alive together with Him?”*

“And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses” (Colossians 2:13). The result of having died, been buried, and risen with Christ in repentance and baptism is that sins are forgiven. Until one experiences this full process, sins are retained.

16. What got nailed to the cross?

“Having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken

it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross” (Colossians 2:14). The Old Testament was, literally, God’s handwriting (Exodus 31:18). It was against us and Christ did put it to death at the cross (Ephesians 2:14-16). Although it can be said and sung that our sins were nailed to the cross, that specific phrase is employed in Scripture to describe the end of the Old Law. Whereas Christ left the cross and the grave thereafter, the Law of Moses remains crucified, never to be revived.

17. What did Christ triumph over?

“Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it” (Colossians 2:15). Principalities and powers on earth combined forces to eliminate Jesus (Acts 4:25-27), but the cross could not keep Him dead (Acts 2:24). In that He arose, He disarmed those political powers opposed to Him, making a grand show of it, and thereby not only triumphing over them, but doing so in “it,” that is “the

cross.” This is evident in that Christians now “boast... in the cross of our Lord” (Galatians 6:14) because its message saves us (1st Corinthians 1:18).

18. What is no longer relevant for judging others?

“So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths” (Colossians 2:16). Inasmuch as the requirements against us have been nailed to the cross, that law can no longer be rightly used as any standard of judgment whatsoever. That includes dietary restrictions and holidays. None of it applies anymore.

19. Why have those things become irrelevant?

“Which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ” (Colossians 2:17). The object that casts a shadow must be more important than the shadow, itself (Hebrews 10:1). The dietary restrictions of the former covenant (Leviticus 11) merely foreshadowed the food

and drink which Jesus provides (John 4:14; 6:27, 32-35, 48-58). The Sabbath-keeping of the Law of Moses (Exodus 20:8-11) also foreshadows the rest still awaiting us in heaven (Hebrews 4:1-11).

20. How could a Christian be cheated of his reward?

“Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind” (Colossians 2:18).

“False humility” would include fasting to be seen by men (Matthew 6:16-18), restricting food, and vows of celibacy (1st Timothy 4:1-5).

“Worship of angels” is senseless because the angels of God plainly refuse to be worshiped (Revelation 22:8-9). Effort has been taken to demonstrate that they have no authority

like Christ's (Hebrews 1:5-14). Ultimately, they will be subject to judgment by the saints (1st Corinthians 6:3).

"Intruding into those things which he has not seen" (NKJV/KJV) is inaccurate as the word "not" is an insertion. Correct renderings include: *"dwelling in the things which he hath seen"* (ASV), *"taking his stand on visions he has seen"* (NAS), and *"going on in detail about visions"* (ESV). Whether or not the person saw what they claimed is beside the point. It did not need to be discussed, regardless. Some visions are the result of mind-altering substances (Proverbs 23:31-33). Psychosis is real (Deuteronomy 28:28). Dreams usually are not revelatory (Ecclesiastes 5:3). Not even every revelation needed to be expounded upon ad infinitum (1st Corinthians 14:26-33). Not every revelatory vision was lawful to relate to others (2nd Corinthians 12:1-7).

- 21. Why would doing those things deprive one of the reward?**

“And not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God” (Colossians 2:19). By those false manifestations of religion, one is separated from Christ who is Head of the body, and, therefore, from the body, too. A different path has been chosen and it leads away from the Lord.

22. **Why are “regulations” – such as “Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle” – unimportant?**

“Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations — ‘Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,’ which all concern things which perish with the using — according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh” (Colossians 2:20-23).

The regulations are irrelevant because they focus on what is so temporary that it is eliminated as it is used, and, most seriously, because these regulations were instituted by man, not God. All of this was directly addressed by Jesus (Mark 7:1-23).

This is the first remark from Paul in this epistle which appears critical of the Colossians: *“Why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations?”* Either they were starting to get involved in these errors or they were being exposed to them and he was warning them to keep away.

CHAPTER THREE

1. Upon what do the following instructions depend?

“If then you were raised with Christ” (Colossians 3:1) refers to the resurrection which follows burial in baptism (Colossians 2:12). None of what comes next is relevant if a person has not first died to sin and arisen to new life.

2. Why should a Christian seek things above?

“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is” (Colossians 3:1). Because one was raised with Christ, it necessarily follows that he seek out the things pertaining to Christ. If He is situated above, then that is where the disciple’s focus ought to be.

3. What is Christ doing now?

“Christ is sitting at the right hand of God” (Colossians 3:1). He is seated at God’s right hand. That location is a position of power and authority (Ephesians 1:20-23; 1st Peter 3:22) and that posture is one implying He finished what He set out to do (Hebrews 10:11-14).

4. Whose responsibility is one’s state of mind?

“Set your mind on things above” (Colossians 3:2) is an imperative directed to individuals. Mindset is a personal duty. Outside forces have influence on mindset, but each person must choose how to think.

5. What does a Christian not need to be mentally focused on?

“Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth” (Colossians 3:2). The world is passing away (1st John 2:15-17; Matthew 6:19-20).

6. Why should a Christian's mindset be so?

"For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3). A Christian's life is not his own (Galatians 2:20, but Christ's (1st Corinthians 6:19-20).

7. What will happen to us at Christ's next appearance?

"When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory" (Colossians 3:4). The hereafter affords us glorious bodies through transformation (Philippians 3:20-21). In heaven, we will shine like the sun (Matthew 13:41-43)!

8. What needs to happen to *"your members which are on the earth?"*

"Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth" (Colossians 3:5). Jesus has asserted that we should be willing to amputate body parts if we keep using them

to sin (Matthew 5:7-30; 18:1-9). How much more should we be willing to sever thoughts and behaviors that interrupt godliness?

9. Which earthly members are enumerated by Paul?

“Your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry” (Colossians 3:5).

- 1) *“Fornication”*: Illicit sexual intercourse, including adultery, homosexuality, bestiality, and heterosexual copulation without the benefit of marriage (1st Corinthians 6:12-7:5; 1st Thessalonians 4:3-8).
- 2) *“Uncleanness”*: In a physical sense, just dirtiness (Matthew 23:27), but applied to behavior with implications concerning morality (1st Thessalonians

COLOSSIANS: A QUESTION & ANSWER STUDY GUIDE

2:3), almost always mentioned morally in the context of sexual purity (2nd Corinthians 12:21; Ephesians 4:19; 5:3; Colossians 3:5; 1st Thessalonians 4:7). It is an intentionally generic word meant to cover a broad range of immorality, especially conduct that would suggest sexuality without being specific. Thus, when an unmarried couple wonders if they've "gone too far," the answer is almost certainly affirmative.

- 3) *"Passion"*: From the Greek *pathos*, it refers to "affection," which may not seem sinful, but its only application in the New Testament is to sexual sin (1st Thessalonians 4:3-5), including homosexuality (Romans 1:26-27).
- 4) *"Evil desire"*: Not all desire is wrong (Luke 22:15; Philippians 1:23), but desire that is evil certainly is (Titus 2:11-12; 1st John 2:15-17).

COLOSSIANS: A QUESTION & ANSWER STUDY GUIDE

- 5) “Covetousness” is the sinful desire to be constantly gaining in material wealth (Luke 12:13-34). It implies discontentment (Hebrews 13:5) based on ingratitude (2nd Timothy 3:1-2). In this one place in Scripture, covetousness is equated to “idolatry,” which ought to be run away from (1st Corinthians 10:14), because it sets an object as greater than the Lord.

“But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds” (Colossians 3:8-9).

- 1) “Anger”: It is not that anger is always wrong – of course, it isn’t (Mark 3:5), but it should be arrived at slowly and deliberately (James 1:19-20), and must not lead to sin (Ephesians 4:26). This anger generally belongs to God (Romans 12:9) and should not characterize any person.

COLOSSIANS: A QUESTION & ANSWER STUDY GUIDE

- 2) *“Wrath”*: The Greek word literally means “hard breathing” and thus “fierceness.” It refers to passionate anger that has not been well thought out (Acts 19:28).
- 3) *“Malice”*: This is, very simply, badness. It is the opposite of innocence (1st Corinthians 14:40).
- 4) *“Blasphemy”*: Injurious speaking. The word often applies to vilification against God (Matthew 27:39-40; Luke 22:64-65; Revelation 13:6), but can certainly be used of vilifying men (Romans 3:8; Titus 3:2). It is not right under any circumstances inasmuch as Michael refused to blaspheme even Satan (Jude 9).
- 5) *“Filthy language”*: Exactly what it sounds like – obscenity, profanity, foul language. The exact words that qualify will vary across cultures and

generations, so they are not specified, but we know what they are (Ephesians 4:29).

- 6) *“Lie”*: Speaking falsehood. To lie is to say something other than what is true (James 3:14; 1st John 1:6). It is to speak from the devil’s resources (John 8:44). Liars go to hell (Revelation 21:8).

10. Why should we *“put to death”* our earthly members?

“Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them” (Colossians 3:6-7).

First, earthly members must perish because God’s wrath will come down on sinners (John 3:36; Romans 1:18; 2:8-9). The fear of hell is a proper motive for repentance.

COLOSSIANS: A QUESTION & ANSWER STUDY GUIDE

Second, earthly members must perish because it is out of character for the new man to keep the old man's ways alive and active (1st Peter 4:1-3).

Take notice that it is possible to live in sin. It is a poor defense against the truth of Jesus' doctrine on divorce and remarriage (Matthew 5:32; 19:9) to say that the adultery committed is a one-and-done deed and to suggest adultery cannot be lived in, thus permitting the adulterers to continue in their sinful marriage. Unrighteous behavior can, and most often is, lived in.

11. What is the primary characteristic of *"the new man?"*

"The new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him" (Colossians 3:10).

Ongoing renewal (Romans 12:2; 2nd Corinthians 4:16; Ephesians 4:23) according to Christ's image (Romans

8:29; 2nd Corinthians 3:18) is the chief quality of a Christian.

12. Why are there no ethnic nor social distinctions in Christ?

“There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all” (Colossians 3:11). The Lord is everything. He fills in all the gaps (Galatians 3:26-28). Cultural and racial differences are meaningless in His presence, so that, in Him there is unity (1st Corinthians 12:13).

13. In contrast to what has been *“put off,”* what do God’s elect *“put on?”*

“Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one

COLOSSIANS: A QUESTION & ANSWER STUDY GUIDE

another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection” (Colossians 3:12-14).

- 1) *“Tender mercies”* is more accurately translated *“bowels of mercies”* (KJV). The word is once in the New Testament used in the literal sense (Acts 1:18), but in all other cases is figurative (2nd Corinthians 7:15; 1st John 3:17), indicating whatever quality being described comes from the guts. Mercy is that quality which might spare another punishment (Hebrews 10:28).
- 2) *“Kindness”*: Moral goodness, integrity, benignity. It is this quality on God’s part that makes man’s salvation possible (Romans 11:22; Titus 3:4).
- 3) *“Humility”*: Whereas Paul has previously criticized false humility in this epistle (2:18, 23), here he

COLOSSIANS: A QUESTION & ANSWER STUDY GUIDE

encourages the genuine article. It is a quality of character that pursues the interest of others above one's own (Philippians 2:3-4). It is in contrast to self-exaltation

- 4) *“Meekness”*: Manuscripts vary on this word, with different Greek words, both meaning meekness, being supplied. The term used in the manuscript upon which the King James is based is not one used elsewhere. The one employed by the manuscript behind the ESV and NASB use a word that does appear in other verses. It is the opposite of sternness or harshness, but only coming from someone capable of those qualities (1st Corinthians 4:21). It is the trait needed in restoring wayward souls to prevent one's own stumbling (Galatians 6:1).
- 5) *“Longsuffering”*: Forbearance, endurance. It means putting up with ill treatment, not out of acceptance

COLOSSIANS: A QUESTION & ANSWER STUDY GUIDE

or approval, but in order to eventually forgive, as God has done (1st Timothy 1:12-16). We look to Job and the prophets for our human examples (James 5:10-11).

- 6) *“Bearing with one another”*: To forbear is literally to “put up with” (Strong), “to bear with, endure” (Vine). It refers to endurance under persecution (1st Corinthians 4:12; 2nd Thessalonians 1:4), patience to receive the word (2nd Timothy 4:3; Hebrews 13:22), and tolerance of fellow Christians (Ephesians 4:2) while awaiting another’s repentance.
- 7) *“Forgiving one another”*: By definition, it is “to grant as a favor” (Strong), and is thus used to mean giving in many instances (Romans 8:32; 1st Corinthians 2:12). It also applies, as it does here, to the granting of pardon for wrongdoing (Luke 7:41-43; 1st Corinthians 2:7; Colossians 2:13).

Forgiveness is to be done “even as Christ forgave you” (cf. Ephesians 4:32), which requires us to be eager to forgive (Matthew 6:14-15; 18:21-35). Nevertheless, His grace is not irresistible, nor his election unconditional. The Lord forgives those who meet His conditions of pardon – namely faith, confession, repentance, and baptism. Similarly, Christians forgive when certain conditions are fulfilled – namely repentance (Luke 17:3-4). To forgive immediately and unconditionally is to extend false hope to the erring, implying they have nothing further to do to make right.

We cannot rightly set the terms of forgiveness as lower than what God requires because forgiveness belongs to Him (Daniel 9:9).

- 8) “Love”: Love is best described by Paul to the Corinthians (1st Corinthians 13:1-8) when it is

described as “*more excellent*” than spiritual gifts (12:31) because it outlasts them (13:8).

14. Why is love “*above all these?*”

“Above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection” (Colossians 3:14). It is the glue that holds everything else together, being the fulfillment of every law (Romans 13:8-10), which is why it comprises the first and second greatest commandments (Matthew 22:36-40). It is described in this “*above all*” way elsewhere because it “*covers a multitude of sins*” (1st Peter 4:8), which fits its placement in Colossians 3 relative to longsuffering, forbearance, and forgiveness.

15. Where should the peace of God prevail?

“And let the peace of God rule in your hearts” (Colossians 3:15). Peace must rule over the heart first since the issues of life spring from it (Proverbs 4:23). The Lord’s peace is

in the heart because it is unlike the peace of others (John 14:27); it does not depend on outside conditions.

16. Where are the elect called to?

“You were called in one body” (Colossians 3:15). The oneness of the body is as basic as the oneness of the Spirit, hope, Lord, faith, baptism, and God (Ephesians 4:4-6) and this body is Christ’s church over which He is head (Colossians 1:18, 24). We have been called to peace in a united body. Our relations with brethren matter!

17. Before moving on from the list of put-ons, what else is commanded?

“Be thankful” (Colossians 3:15). Paul has already provided the Colossians with prompts for gratitude (1:3-6, 12; 2:6-7), mostly focusing on their saving faith and hope.

18. **Comparing Colossians 3:16-17 with Ephesians 5:18-20, what is the equivalent of *“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom?”***

| | |
|---|---|
| <i>“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom” (Colossians 3:16_a).</i> | <i>“And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18).</i> |
| <i>“Teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Colossians 3:16_b).</i> | <i>“Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Ephesians 5:19).</i> |
| <i>And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him” (Colossians 3:17).</i> | <i>“Giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 5:20).</i> |

By reviewing these texts side by side, we can see that this is the same as being filled with the Spirit.

19. What kind of music is authorized in New Testament worship?

“Singing,” specifically “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs” (Colossians 3:16). Although musical instruments were readily available (Matthew 11:17; 1st Corinthians 13:1; 14:7-8), there is no New Testament example of their use in worship. Singing, though, is both exemplified (Matthew 26:30; Acts 16:25) and commanded (Romans 15:9; 1st Corinthians 14:15; Hebrews 2:12; James 5:13).

20. To whom should singing be directed?

“Teaching and admonishing one another” and “singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Colossians 3:16). Songs can be addressed to our fellow worshipers in order to teach them, which demands lyrical scrutiny (James 3:1), and they can be addressed to the Lord, expressing grace – meaning gratitude (Luke 17:9; 1st Corinthians 15:57; 2nd Corinthians 8:16; 9:15).

21. Explain what is meant by doing all in Jesus' *"name."*

"And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Colossians 3:17). As both this verse and its parallel (Ephesians 5:20) indicate, this includes praying in the name of Jesus, but that is only part of it. Paul here commands all action to be undertaken in this name, which means by His authority. This includes baptizing (Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5), preaching (Acts 9:27, 29), withdrawing from the erring (1st Corinthians 5:4; 2nd Thessalonians 3:6), and ministering to the sick (James 5:14). Simply pronouncing His name over a certain deed is meaningless (Acts 19:13-16). His name deserves reverence (Philippians 2:9-10).

22. How should prayer be addressed?

"Giving thanks to God the Father through Him" (Colossians 3:17). Prayer should be addressed to God, in Jesus' name

(Romans 7:25). Jesus, specifically, does not want to be prayed to (John 16:23). Any examples that appear to contradict this should be examined carefully to observe that those who spoke directly to Jesus were people to whom Jesus appeared (Acts 7:56, 59).

The biblical method of praying to the Father, through Christ or in Christ's name, along with praying in the Holy Spirit (Jude 20; Romans 8:26) involves the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In contrast, praying to anyone but the Father excludes the rest of the divine nature.

23. What is the duty of wives?

“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord” (Colossians 3:18). This subject is repeatedly addressed in the New Testament (Titus 2:5; 1st Peter 3:1), which is consistent with the general theme of female subjection (1st Corinthians 11:3; 14:34-35; 1st Timothy 2:11-14), as was established at the beginning (Genesis

3:16). In this passage, as in its parallel (Ephesians 5:22), the emphasis is the submission owed by the woman to her “own husband”. Generally, women should not be pursuing leadership, but this is especially out of place in the home.

That this is “*fitting in the Lord*” means that it is not a mere social construct, only relevant in certain cultures. Rather, wherever the Lord holds authority, women need to submit to their husbands.

24. What is the duty of husbands?

“Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them” (Colossians 3:19). Paul’s admonition to the Colossians in this regard is quite succinct compared to the parallel instruction provided to the Ephesians (Ephesians 5:25-29), which he was counting on them to read. This love is to be selfless and sacrificial.

While women are required to submit to men, men should not turn that into an excuse to be domineering or unkind. He must not be *“bitter”*, which is simply the negative way of expressing the prior positive commandment to *“love”*. Husbands must practice *“understanding”* in marriage (1st Peter 3:7).

25. What is the duty of children?

“Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord” (Colossians 3:20). Children require structure and guidance, which is why God gave them mothers and fathers (Hebrews 12:9-11). This verse presents the command as absolute, whereas the parallel (Ephesians 6:1) is clear that *“in all things”* should be understood as all things *“in the Lord”*.

Since the Lord is pleased by children obeying parents, disobedience would be disastrous.

26. What is the duty of fathers?

“Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged” (Colossians 3:21). Corporal punishment is certainly necessary (Proverbs 23:13-14), but so is verbal correction (Proverbs 29:15). It is incumbent upon fathers to recognize which is needed in the moment. It is also important to be involved beyond discipline.

27. What is the duty of bondservants?

“Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God” (Colossians 3:22). While it is preferable to seek emancipation (1st Corinthians 7:21), the reality is that many peoples in many countries across the ages have been in bondage. Christians need to honor Christ in whatever circumstance they find themselves, including servitude (Ephesians 6:5-8; 1st Timothy 6:1-6; Titus 2:9-10).

28. Why should every action be done *“heartily?”*

“And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ” (Colossians 3:23-24). This is the summary of the preceding instructions. Wives must submit *“as is fitting in the Lord”* (18), children must obey because *this is well pleasing to the Lord*” (20), and servants must obey, *“fearing God”* (22). Every role must be fulfilled with diligence (Ecclesiastes 9:10), and the knowledge that whomever we serve, whether they know it or not, is a proxy for serving the Lord. When it is challenging to obey a husband, a parent, or a boss, just remember that doing so is really a way to obey God.

29. What will become of the wrongdoer?

“But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has

COLOSSIANS: A QUESTION & ANSWER STUDY GUIDE

done, and there is no partiality” (Colossians 3:25). Knowing that the Lord will “reward” those who do as they should (24) is good motivation, but so is knowing He will repay wrongdoers! We can submit even when those we submit to are wrong, not seeking our own vengeance, neither rebelling, because we know God will settle it.

CHAPTER FOUR

1. What is the duty of masters?

“Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven” (Colossians 4:1).

Although bondage and servitude were not directly prohibited by the Lord, He, through His apostle, set forth rules whereby the godly would conduct themselves in this situation.

It is immoral to capture people for this purpose. *“The law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy... for kidnappers” (1st Timothy 1:9-10 NKJV).* What this and one other translation (NAS) call *“kidnappers”*, others refer to as *“menstealers”* (KJV, ASV) or *“enslavers”* (ESV) or *“slave traders”* (NIV).

It is immoral to withhold wages from laborers. *“Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days. Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth”* (James 5:1-4). God pronounced woe on those who expected work to be unpaid (Jeremiah 22:13; Malachi 3:5). In fact, the Law of Moses required such prompt payment that laborers received their hire at the end of each workday (Leviticus 19:13); to do otherwise was considered oppression (Deuteronomy 24:14-15). Jesus’ story of the eleventh-hour laborers indicated same-day payment was very much the norm of His time (Matthew 20:8).

By the time justice and fairness are factored into the role of the master, what might have been called slavery would not appear as such to our eyes. Even after slavery has been abolished, what is just and fair ought to be practiced by employers in all situations.

Remember that, in Christ, those who otherwise would not be getting along together are able to dwell in peace (Isaiah 11:1-10).

2. How should our praying be characterized?

“Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving” (Colossians 4:2). Prayer should be continuous (Romans 12:12; Acts 2:42), watchful (Mark 14:38) – as all that we do should be (1st Corinthians 16:13; 1st Peter 5:8), and thankful (Philippians 4:6).

3. What did Paul request for himself and his companions?

COLOSSIANS: A QUESTION & ANSWER STUDY GUIDE

“Meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak” (Colossians 4:3-4).

While commanding the Colossians to pray, he specifically asked for prayer for his company. In particular, he wanted opportunities for the gospel to be proclaimed; opportunities for preaching are frequently likened unto doors in Scripture (Acts 14:27; 1st Corinthians 16:9; 2nd Corinthians 2:12; Matthew 16:19).

He had this goal set despite his incarceration, which had never hindered him in the past (Acts 28:30-31).

Prayers should never be selfish (James 4:3), and neither should prayer requests.

4. How should our behavior in the presence of unbelievers be characterized?

COLOSSIANS: A QUESTION & ANSWER STUDY GUIDE

“Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time” (Colossians 4:5).

The impression we leave on unbelievers matters tremendously, causing them to recognize their opposition is unfounded (1st Peter 2:11-12, 15-16; Titus 2:8) and leading them to glorify God (Matthew 5:16).

In every regard, time is a precious and finite commodity (James 4:13-17; Proverbs 16:9; Psalm 90:12); it must be used in a way that leads others to Christ!

5. How should our speech be characterized?

“Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one” (Colossians 4:6).

As the *“salt of the earth”* (Matthew 5:13), everything we do must be well seasoned. Jesus was in the habit of

speaking “*gracious words*” (Luke 4:22), so we ought to be, as well. We need to speak “*truth in love*” (Ephesians 4:15), without any “*corrupt word*” escaping (29), always aware that what comes from the mouth came from the heart first (Matthew 12:34-35).

Note, especially, that the speech referred to includes knowing how to “*answer*” because we should expect our faith to be questioned (1st Peter 3:15).

6. Who were Tychicus and Onesimus and what was their task?

“Tychicus, a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me. I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that he may know your circumstances and comfort your hearts, with Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will make known to you all things which are happening here” (Colossians 4:7-9).

COLOSSIANS: A QUESTION & ANSWER STUDY GUIDE

Each one is described as *“faithful”* as well as *“a beloved brother”* – fine commendations from the apostle.

Tychicus was from Asia (Acts 20:4) and had at least met the elders of Ephesus previously (17). Paul told Timothy, who had previously worked in Ephesus (1st Timothy 1:3), that he was sending Tychicus to Ephesus (2nd Timothy 4:12). The Ephesians were told he was there to inform them about Paul’s situation (Ephesians 6:21-22), the same reason he was in Colosse.

Onesimus, is described to the Colossians as *“one of you”*, whereby Paul introduced them to a new member of the congregation that most of them were previously unacquainted with. Paul had converted him during his house arrest in Rome (Philemon 10-19); Onesimus was a runaway slave whose master was Philemon, a member of the church in Colosse.

7. Who were Aristarchus, Mark, and Jesus Justus, collectively and individually?

“Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, with Mark the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him), and Jesus who is called Justus. These are my only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are of the circumcision; they have proved to be a comfort to me” (Colossians 4:10-11).

Collectively, these three men were Paul’s *“only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are of the circumcision”*, meaning the only companions he had in his gospel work who were also Jewish. All the others – Tychicus and Onesimus who were previously mentioned, and Epaphras, Luke, and Demas whom he mentions next – must all be gentiles. Moreover, these Jewish Christians in his entourage had *“proved to be a comfort”*, which would be quite needful as he was then incarcerated (Colossians 4:18).

COLOSSIANS: A QUESTION & ANSWER STUDY GUIDE

Aristarchus was an established *“traveling companion”* of Paul’s who was from Thessalonica in Macedonia (Acts 19:29; 20:4; 27:2; Philemon 24). In the present text, Aristarchus is Paul’s *“fellow prisoner”* (Colossians 4:10), which probably does not mean that he was incarcerated like the apostle, as there is zero indication anyone else had been arrested or was awaiting a hearing from Caesar, but that he chose to stay with Paul during his imprisonment.

Mark, here identified as a *“cousin”* or nephew (KJV) to Barnabas was the son of a sister in Jerusalem named Mary in whose home disciples met (Acts 12:12, 25). Mark was his surname, and his first name was John. He was present as *“assistant”* to Paul and Barnabas during their first major preaching tour (Acts 13:5), but, for reasons unstated, John Mark *“departed from them”* at their second port-of-call (Acts 13:13). His departure and the decision whether to include him on a subsequent journey broke up Paul and

Barnabas's partnership (Acts 15:36-40). Even so, Paul later regarded him as *"useful to me"* (2nd Timothy 4:11).

Nothing is known about Jesus Justus beyond this verse. His existence goes to show that while Jesus of Nazareth is the only Christ (Acts 4:10, 12) and only Lord (Ephesians 4:4-6), the name Jesus is not so exclusive. Most of us have known a Jésus or two and that is not blasphemous.

8. Who else saluted the Colossian brethren?

"Epaphras, who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. For I bear him witness that he has a great zeal for you, and those who are in Laodicea, and those in Hierapolis. Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you" (Colossians 4:12-14).

COLOSSIANS: A QUESTION & ANSWER STUDY GUIDE

Epaphras has already been introduced as the brother who planted this church (Colossians 1:7). He was with Paul in prison at the time of this writing (Philemon 23).

Luke is only here identified by his occupation as a physician. He was one of Paul's coworkers in the gospel (Philemon 24), and at one point was his only companion (2nd Timothy 4:11).

Although Demas was present with Paul when he wrote this epistle and Philemon (Philemon 24), by the time he wrote Second Timothy, which could have not have been much later, Demas had forsaken him for love of the world (2nd Timothy 4:10).

9. Whom were the Colossians told to greet on Paul's behalf?

"Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea, and Nymphas and the church that is in his house" (Colossians 4:15).

The church of the Laodiceans is only mentioned in this epistle (Colossians 2:1; 4:13, 15, 16) and in the Revelation (Revelation 1:11; 3:14-22), by which time they had become lukewarm.

Nymphas is unknown beyond this verse. The person is male according to the masculine pronoun in some versions (KJV, NKJV), but female according to the feminine pronoun in others (NASB, ESV, NIV), which also present the name as *“Nympha”* rather than *“Nymphas”*, but that is not supported by the Greek. One version leaves this person neutral with use of *“their”* (ASV). These variations are not based on translation, but upon the manuscripts from which they are translated. Given that the name is a compound of two words meaning “bride” or “daughter-in-law” and “gift”, it is probably preferable to perceive this person as a woman. Ultimately, his or her sex is immaterial to our present grasp of the material written.

Evidently, the church in Laodicea met in this person's house. This was a common practice (Romans 16:5; 1st Corinthians 16:19; Philemon 2), but some gathering places were decidedly not houses (1st Corinthians 11:22, 34). The church in Jerusalem began by assembling at the temple (Acts 2:46). One church met in a school (Acts 19:9). Another met in an unspecified "upper room" (Acts 20:8), although that was probably at someone's home. What matters is that a church comes together "in one place" (1st Corinthians 11:20; 14:23), not what that place is.

10. What interaction did Paul want the Colossians and Laodiceans to undertake?

"Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea" (Colossians 4:16).

COLOSSIANS: A QUESTION & ANSWER STUDY GUIDE

The apostle was instructing an exchange of written materials. This falls within the realm of legitimate church co-operation. While certain modern practices of church co-operation are unauthorized, this is definitively appropriate.

By this, we recognize that, upon being written, the New Testament entered into immediate circulation (cf. 2nd Peter 3:15-16). There would not have been a lengthy period of passing these materials down orally.

Public reading of Scripture, as a stand-alone function (1st Timothy 4:13), is appropriate in church (1st Thessalonians 5:27).

While it might confuse some, *“the epistle from Laodicea”* can be easily identified. Paul, writing from prison in Rome, was not discerning that one church in Asia was writing to another. *“The epistle from Laodicea”* was one he had written. It is not an epistle to Laodicea, some lost letter of

COLOSSIANS: A QUESTION & ANSWER STUDY GUIDE

his, but from there. This can best be explained as a letter that was in circulation, which the Laodiceans would get, even if it had not been addressed to them, and which they, in turn, would pass on to Colosse. No other epistle than Paul's to the Ephesians make sense here. Consider all the parallels between these letters:

| | Colossians | Ephesians |
|-----------|--|---|
| 1 | <i>"Redemption through His blood"</i> (1:14) | <i>"Redemption through His blood"</i> (1:7) |
| 2 | Prayers <i>"do not cease"</i> (1:9) | Prayers <i>"do not cease"</i> (1:16-17) |
| 3 | <i>"Inheritance of the saints"</i> (1:12) | <i>"Inheritance of the saints"</i> (1:18) |
| 4 | <i>"All things"</i> in Christ (1:16) | <i>"All things"</i> in Christ (1:10) |
| 5 | Principalities (1:16) | Principalities (1:21) |
| 6 | His mighty power (1:29) | His mighty power (1:19) |
| 7 | Head of the body/church (1:18-19) | Head of the body/church (1:22-23) |
| 8 | <i>"Mystery"</i> revealed (1:25-26) | <i>"Mystery"</i> revealed (3:2-3) |
| 9 | Made known (1:26-27) | Made known (3:4-5) |
| 10 | Perfect man (1:28) | Perfect man (4:13) |

COLOSSIANS: A QUESTION & ANSWER STUDY GUIDE

| | | |
|-----------|--|--|
| 11 | Dead in sin made alive (2:13) | Dead in sin made alive (2:1) |
| 12 | Abolished Law in His flesh (2:14) | Abolished Law in His flesh (2:14-15) |
| 13 | Growth of the body (2:19) | Growth of the body (2:21-22) |
| 14 | Put off/on (3:8-10) | Put off/on (4:21-24) |
| 15 | <i>"Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs"</i> (3:16) | <i>"Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs"</i> (5:19) |
| 16 | Thank God in Jesus' name (3:17) | Thank God in Jesus' name (5:20) |
| 17 | <i>"Wives, submit to your own husbands"</i> (3:18) | <i>"Wives, submit to your own husbands"</i> (5:22) |
| 18 | <i>"Husbands, love your wives"</i> (3:19) | <i>"Husbands, love your wives"</i> (5:25) |
| 19 | <i>"Children, obey"</i> (3:20) | <i>"Children, obey"</i> (6:1) |
| 20 | <i>"Fathers, do not provoke"</i> (3:21) | <i>"Fathers, do not provoke"</i> (6:4) |
| 21 | Bondservants, obey (3:22) | Bondservants, obey (6:5) |
| 22 | Reward from the Lord (3:24) | Reward from the Lord (6:8) |
| 23 | <i>"There is no partiality"</i> (3:25) | <i>"There is no partiality"</i> (6:9) |
| 24 | Masters, be fair (4:1) | Masters, be fair (6:9) |
| 25 | Prayer requested for Paul's preaching (4:3) | Prayer requested for Paul's preaching (6:19) |
| 26 | <i>"Redeeming the time"</i> (4:5) | <i>"Redeeming the time"</i> (5:16) |

11. What charge was given to Archippus?

“And say to Archippus, ‘Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it’” (Colossians 4:17).

Archippus was Paul’s “fellow soldier” (Philemon 2), and, apparently, a member of Philemon’s household and a member of the church meeting in that home. Taking heed to his ministry probably meant the same thing as Timothy being told to fulfill his ministry, which was to “do the work of an evangelist” (2nd Timothy 4:5).

12. How does the epistle conclude?

“This salutation by my own hand — Paul. Remember my chains. Grace be with you. Amen” (Colossians 4:18).

Although Paul might employ a brother to be his scribe (Romans 16:22), he always signed every letter, personally

COLOSSIANS: A QUESTION & ANSWER STUDY GUIDE

(2nd Thessalonians 3:27; cf. 1st Corinthians 16:21; Galatians 6:11; Philemon 19), which helps us determine that those letters which are not attributed to any particular writer, such as Hebrews, could not have been his work.

Paul did not want his circumstances as a prisoner to be forgotten. Christians must remember our brethren who are being persecuted (Hebrews 13:3).