



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

PHILIPPIANS
& COLOSSIANS

Week 4

Vain Mysticism

Colossians 2:18-19

OPENING
up to the Word

Who is the most dangerous mystic? (a) tarot card reader, (b) voodoo queen, (c) snake-oil salesman, (d) palm reader, (e) witch or wizard.

DIGGING
into the Word

1. How were false teachers in Paul's day calling for additions to worship that perverted the gospel (v. 18)? How are they doing so today?

2. Paul again uses the analogy of the head and the body (v. 19). How does he use this analogy to focus the readers on Christ? What do we need for spiritual growth?

LIVING
out the Word

1. How can you tell the difference between humility and false humility? In what ways do you indulge in false humility? Are you proud about it?

2. What spiritual practices connect you directly to Christ as your head, your leader?

3. How has God caused you to grow?

WINDOW
on the Word

*The New Testament church worshiped God. Christ was God in the flesh, the eternal, uncreated Son of God, so he was also worshiped. **Angels**, however, were created (1:15-16); they were not objects of worship for Christians (2:18).*

Vain Asceticism

DAY 23

Colossians 2:20-23

What would be the most difficult for you to eliminate from your life? (a) TV, (b) social media, (c) alcohol, (d) caffeine, (e) sugar and sweets.

1. Why do “basic principles,” elemental to human traditions and “hollow and deceptive” philosophies (v. 8), no longer bind the Christian (vs. 20-22)?

2. How does asceticism (taboos in eating, drinking, and touching) impose a false sense of spirituality (vs. 21-23)?

3. Do prohibitions restrain sensual indulgence (v. 23)? Why not?

1. What set of human rules dominate your life? (a) no sugar, (b) no red meat, (c) fad diets, (d) no alcohol, (e) no tobacco.

2. How does living in moderation help your physical health? Your spiritual health? Do you feel Christians can use tobacco moderately? Do you feel sexual abstinence is a religious necessity for anyone?

3. How do you control your desire for sensual indulgence? Or does God control it (1:11)?

*Paul sees **regulations** on eating and drinking and contact with “uncleanness” as human commands and teaching. These regulations may have come from a proto-gnostic teaching that would have added rules even beyond the ones mentioned in verse 14 (Mosaic), which Christ cancelled on the cross.*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

Up, Up and Away!

Colossians 3:1-4

OPENING
up to the Word

How high have you gone? (a) top of the Empire State Building, (b) peak of Mt. McKinley, (c) Boeing 747.

DIGGING
into the Word

1. After Paul explains that the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross was effective to give us salvation (ch. 2), he turns now to Christ's active role. What is his "position" now (3:1)? Do you feel being "seated at the right hand of God:" (3:1) is a literal description of a geographical place where Jesus is a figurative reference?

2. How is a Christ-follower's life "hidden with Christ in God? (vs. 3)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Can you truthfully say that Christ "is your life" (vs.4)? Explain.

2. How much does your daily life overlap with Christ's life? (a) worlds apart, (b) near, (c) touching, (d) partially overlapping, (e) hidden in Christ.

WINDOW
on the Word

Notice Paul's development of the subject. God, through Christ, has called the Colossians (1:1-14). Christ, the image of God, had created the universe as the Son (1:15-29). Christ's experience on the cross raises Christianity above human philosophies, legalism, mysticism and asceticism (ch. 2). Now, Christians in whom the Lord lives have a new life, consistent with the grace that God had already given to them (ch. 3).



“For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.”

Colossians 3:3-4

The New Walk With Christ

Colossians 3:5-11

OPENING
up to the Word

A familiar Christian song is *I'll Walk With God*.
Have you taken *his hand to lean upon*?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What five elements here summarize Paul's concept of our "earthly nature"? (v. 5)? How would you further define each element? Consider Paul's list in Galatians 5:19-21.

2. Do you feel God imposes his "wrath" on us or do the consequences of our actions, motivated by our earthly nature, cause us to experience wrath?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Which one of the actions in verse 8 is a particular weakness in your life?

2. Are you prejudiced against any ethnic, cultural or religious groups? Can you change your attitude by learning more about those groups, and asking Christ to change your heart?

WINDOW
on the Word

*Paul connects **Christian conduct** in everyday life to the grace freely given by God through the cross of Jesus Christ. Since Christ's ascension raises Christians to the heavenly throne (vs. 1-4), their conduct should reflect God's love and Christ's grace. This conduct must include how Christians speak to all people, because they represent Christ to the world.*

Chosen for Peace

DAY 26

Colossians 3:12-17

When is it appropriate to be clothed with the following? (a) bow tie, (b) necktie, (c) bolo tie, (d) tie-dye.

1. As God's chosen people, how will Christians be clothed (vs. 12-14)?
 2. How should Christians take care of complaints against each other (vs. 13-15)?
 3. What response should come from the heart of peace that beats with the word of Christ (vs. 15-17)?
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1. Consider your spiritual clothing. What's your best suit you have been given by God's grace?
 2. When did you last receive a complaint? How did you react?
 3. Why not sing a psalm, hymn or spiritual song of gratitude to God (vs. 16-17)?
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Paul uses **sartorial language**—that of clothing. In verse nine he says we must be stripped of the old self in much the same way as we discard a garment. In verses 10-14, we are enabled by the work of Christ and the grace of God to put on the clothing of the new self.

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

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WINDOW

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“And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

Colossians 3:17

The Christian Home

DAY 27

Colossians 3:18-21

How is your household structured? (a) patriarchal, (b) matriarchal, (c) egalitarian, (d) democratic, (e) anarchic.

1. What is Paul's advice to wives and husbands (vs. 18-19)? Were these concepts intended for that patriarchal society or universally, for all cultures? Compare with Eph. 5:21-33.

2. Next, Paul looks to the children. How were children to respond to parents, whether their parents were Christian or not (v. 20; see Eph 6:1-3)?

3. How were fathers to be responsible for loving parenting (v. 21)? Compare with Ephesians 6:4. Does this advice apply to mothers, too?

1. Are you a husband or wife? How applicable are Paul's words for you? Do men really understand Paul's message about sacrificial love?

2. How do you continue to show respect for your parents?

3. Fathers and mothers, how do you nurture and inspire your children so they are not provoked to rebellion?

*Today debates rage over the question of **husband-wife relationships**, especially over the term "submit" in 3:18. Paul used a form of the Greek word hypotasso, which can mean "subject oneself," and was understood to be an action toward an individual worthy of respect. In Ephesians 5:21, Paul called Christians to observe the principle of mutual submission in order to maintain love and unity. In marriage, he followed the creation order to present a model for resolving conflict and building a loving relationship. Sometimes love may be expressed by leaving decisions to one's spouse.*

OPENING

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Christian Work

Colossians 3:22-4:1

OPENING
up to the Word

If you had to be a slave, who would you prefer to serve? (a) Pharaoh, (b) Caesar, (c) Thomas Jefferson, (d) Philemon.

DIGGING
into the Word

1. In a culture that included master/slave economies, how did Paul call on Christian slaves to respond to masters (vs. 22-25)?
2. Paul acknowledges that abuse did occur in that culture (vs. 24-25). What principle enabled the slave to remain Christian in conduct?
3. For masters who were Christians, what was to guide their daily interaction with their slaves (4:1)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Slavery is widely accepted as evil—Christians today agree that it cannot be tolerated. Yet, in New Testament times, it appears the body of Christ did not “take a stand” against slavery. Why, in your opinion?
2. If you come in contact with abusiveness, how do you determine when to speak out and when to simply cope with it?

WINDOW
on the Word

***Cultural context** is important for understanding Paul's writings. In the first century, the Roman Empire continued the practice of enslaving its enemies and using captives to provide less expensive labor. The Jewish culture also used master/slave economies to resolve indebtedness and as retribution for some crimes. Onesimus (4:9) became a Christian while the slave of the Christian master Philemon, who lived in Colosse.*

Dedicated to the One I Love

Colossians 4:2-6

Remember the line of the song—*This is dedicated to the one I love*? Who is this person in your life?

1. Paul turns to advice for Christian behavior. What ingredients create effective prayer (vs. 2-4)?
 2. What were the Colossians asked to pray for (vs. 3-4)?
 3. Gracious communication takes thoughtfulness. Why is what we say so important (vs. 5-6)?
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1. Is prayer an important part of your life?
 2. Talk to God today about your loves, your joys, your thankfulness for his blessings.
 3. How do you speak to those you do not know, recognize or consider as fellow Christians? (a) sparingly, (b) respectfully, (c) graciously.
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Paul was a communicator. *He had communicated the gospel message to the gentiles in Colosse (1:24-29). He further taught in this letter that Jesus is the fullness of God and of the fullness of the believer (2:9-10) and is also the reality (v. 17). The word of Christ was to inspire Christians as they taught and admonished one another (3:16-17). Here Paul called for communication with God (4:2) and gracious speech with those outside the faith (4:5-6).*

DAY 29

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

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on the Word

Fellow Workers For the Kingdom

How are you contributing to the kingdom of God? Are you a professional worker in a ministry or church? Or are you in a secular occupation? Have you ever thought it would be better to be a ministry professional as opposed to working in what you might think of as a mundane job or business?

How you earn your living, or who signs your paycheck, is not the way to judge whether or not you work for the kingdom. Working for the kingdom involves serving others in the name of Jesus Christ. This is not done only by ordained ministers, missionaries and workers in Christian ministries. It is also done by lay Christians through their relationships with other people—on the job, in the marketplace, at school, through memberships in clubs and organizations or simply with friends, neighbors and family.

When Paul writes of Aristarchus, Mark and Justus as “fellow workers for the kingdom” (Col 4:11) he is speaking of men who, like Paul, supported himself through a secular profession. Paul and his fellow workers did not sequester themselves in a building with a sign identifying it as a church—rather, they were out in the world, sharing the good news.

The bottom line of “kingdom work” is not how you draw your paycheck. It’s how your life, skills and abilities promote the kingdom of God.

With a Little Help From My Friends

DAY 30

Colossians 4:7-18

Do you get by with a little help from your friends? Who are your friends? Do you think they are good or bad for you?

1. What characteristics made Tychicus valuable to Paul's ministry (vs. 7-8)? See Acts 20:4.
2. How would Onesimus benefit by being accompanied by Tychicus (v. 9)? See Paul's letter to Philemon.
3. Consider Paul's list of co-workers here (vs. 10-14). Who do you recognize from the account in Acts?
4. In Paul's final greetings and farewell, what are his desires for this letter (vs. 15-18)?

1. When have you assisted in the reconciliation of someone? Were you like Tychicus? Or Paul, as we read his requests in the book of Philemon?
2. With whom do you best identify in Paul's list of co-workers? How would Paul write about your contributions to ministry?
3. Are you completing the work you have received from the Lord (v. 17)?

*Paul had a turbulent relationship with **John Mark**, cousin of Barnabas. Mark accompanied Paul on his first journey to Asia Minor (Ac 13:5), but had deserted Paul in Pamphylia (15:38). So sharp was the contention that Barnabas split from Paul and took Mark with him to Cyprus. Paul took Silas with him to Greece (15:36-40). Thus, two missionary teams were formed. By the time Colossians was written, however, Mark was again with Paul (Col 4:10). Paul told Timothy that Mark was helpful to his ministry (2Ti 4:11).*

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