

MEFC Community Group Study Guide

For the Week of April 10th - 16th

Getting Started

1. Take a moment on the front end of your group time and scan back through Paul's letter to the church in Colossae. Four chapters. Eight months. 25 sermons. What portion(s) of this epistle are particularly sweet to you as a result of our study together?

Digging Deeper

2. Are there any particular themes, verses, phrases, or concepts that still remain unclear to you? If so, which one(s)? See if you can help one another with answers that might untie any knots that persist as you seek to understand and apply this letter together.

Open your Bible to Colossians 1:2...

3. At the beginning of our study of Colossians back in September, we began to address the issue of our identity as Christians. In verse 2, Paul refers to the recipients of this letter as "saints". In these brief chapters, he uses this word on four separate occasions (1:2, 1:4, 1:12, and 1:26 - some 40 times across all 13 of his letters...that's nearly half of all the occurrences of this word in the whole Bible). For Paul, a "saint" isn't a special class of Christian, but rather a term he used of all Christians. Interestingly, the word for "sinner" appears 68 times from Old to New Testament. Yet nearly 99% of the time, the word "sinner" appears as a synonym for "unbeliever"¹.

Why do you think we tend to have these exactly backward in the evangelical church today? Put another way, why is it that we avoid using a relatively common Bible word for Christians ("saint") but seem to have little trouble using a word for ourselves that the Bible almost never uses to describe a believer ("sinner")? Is this a problem? If so, how might we begin to address it?

4. Let's take one last look at Paul's prayer for the church in 1:9-12. What is Paul's central petition in this prayer of intercession? Do you tend to pray this way for other believers? Why or why not? Are there any parts of this prayer that aren't as typical of the way that you pray for other Christians? Which one(s)? What might be some practical results of us developing a regular rhythm of praying this way for one another?
5. Sanctification is a significant theme in this epistle. In what ways do you see Paul's burden for ongoing growth in holiness for the church in Colossae? What sorts of specific sins does he call them to put to death? What sorts of specific character qualities does he call them to cultivate? What's one specific area of needed growth in

¹ The one clear exception being Paul's own present-tense use of the word "sinner" to refer to himself in 1 Timothy 1:15.

your life in which the Lord is dealing with you at the present moment? How can your group be praying for you? How can you be praying for those in your group?

6. Obviously, one of the high-water marks of this letter is the doctrinal confession about Christ in 1:15-20. How many different truths about our Savior can you spot in these verses? Paul follows this confession with immediate practical application in 1:21-23. There's a promise for believers in these verses, but there's also a warning. Take some time to identify and discuss each one. What practical application do the doctrines in 1:15-20 as well as the promise and warning in 1:21-23 have in your life right now?

7. Colossians also obviously bears the clear marks of the forward motion of the Great Commission. Take another look at 1:6-8, 1:24-29, 4:2-6, and 4:7-18. How do these portions of the letter inform or inspire your own encouragement of believers in other local churches or your pursuit of the folks on your 'List of 5'? What's one practical step you can take toward either one of them this week?