

COLOSSIANS

Colossians: Walking Worthy with Christ

by Christa Lord

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INTRODUCTION

When someone is described as mature, what do you think of? Maybe an adult, or perhaps a child who acts like an adult. Maybe you imagine an older person who has lived a long, rich life and has gained invaluable wisdom along the way. When we say that a person is mature, we might mean that they are wise, controlled, and responsible—or simply aged. Growth and development define maturity. A mature tree is as tall as it will ever be. A mature investment has gained as much interest as it will in a certain time period.

But when we talk about *spiritual* maturity, we use the term a little differently. Maturity refers not only to the *process* of becoming like Christ but also to the *completion* of that process. This process is described as “growing in faith” or “walking in Christ.” As we learn and understand who God is, we gradually become more like Him. The Holy Spirit works in us as we obey Christ’s commands.

Maturity doesn’t necessarily correlate with age. As people age, they can develop their qualities and wisdom; however, not every person matures into wisdom. Kids often admire the adults around them. In fact, they expect adults to know all the answers and to navigate life confidently. But as kids become teenagers, they start to realize that adults don’t have it all together.

This realization can shake us a bit and cause us to wonder who *can* we look up to? If everyone is trying to figure things out as they go and making mistakes in the process, is there anyone we can follow confidently?

Colossians answers this question by showing us Jesus Christ. He is the only One we can trust completely, and He is the only person worth imitating entirely. As God, Jesus is entirely good and loving. He is

sovereign and powerful and wise. To show us perfectly what it is like to live a righteous life, Jesus even took on human nature and lived on Earth. We can follow His example of trusting and obeying God by applying the same principles to whatever situation we find ourselves in today.

And this idea is what Colossians is about. Paul wrote to this church to show them that Jesus Christ was their foundation for loving God and loving others—for growing in faith. He describes the way that Jesus transforms us when we begin to follow Him. Finally, Paul shows these believers what it would look like for them to act like Jesus in their own culture.

Like Paul, we desire for believers to pursue Christ with all their hearts and to live like Him. This study aims both to teach truth and to guide believers in their walk with Christ. Our highest hope is for you to walk worthy of Jesus, bear the fruit of good works, and increase in the knowledge of God (Col. 1:10).

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

After each Teacher's Lesson, you will begin the Student Lesson. The Student Lesson includes. . .

▶ **THE TEACHER'S LESSON OUTLINE**

This will contain blanks for you to fill in while listening to the Teacher's Lesson. Feel free to make your own notes here as well.

▶ **THREE READING SESSIONS**

These are to be completed individually by students after the Teacher's Lesson. Because there are only three, you have the flexibility to complete them whenever you want during each week.

◉ **QUESTIONS**

Each reading session will feature a passage of Scripture for you to read, as well as some content-focused questions to answer.

◉ **CHECK YOUR BEARINGS**

At the end of each of these sessions, you'll be prompted to think about how you might apply a point from the Scripture text in your life.

◉ **TRAIL MAP**

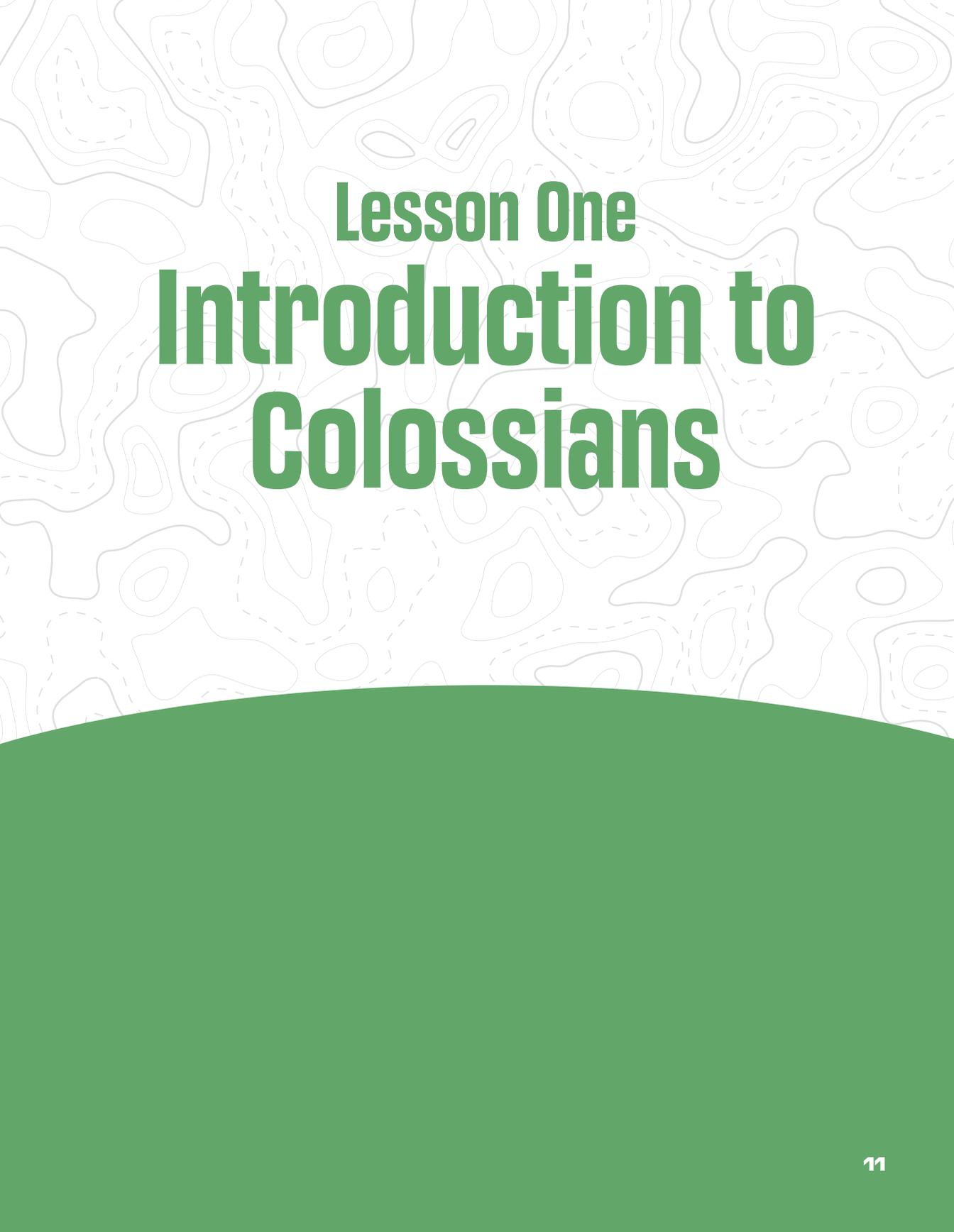
At the end of the week, you can read the next lesson's Scripture text from Colossians. You don't have to write an answer here. Just think about the question.

▶ **SCRIPTURE MEMORY**

An optional Scripture memory list is included.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

Lesson	Scripture	Signature
1	1 Timothy 4:8	
2	Ephesians 5:8-9	
3	Titus 3:5-6	
4	Ephesians 4:15-16	
5	Romans 12:4-5	
6	Colossians 2:6-7	
7	Romans 14:17-19	
8	Colossians 3:1-2	
9	Colossians 3:9-10	
10	Psalms 103:8-10	
11	Colossians 3:16-17	
12	Galatians 5:13-14	
13	Colossians 4:5-6	



Lesson One
Introduction to
Colossians

LESSON OUTLINE • COLOSSIANS 1:1-8

The _____ of Colossians

- ▶ _____ authored this epistle.
 - ⦿ Paul _____ this letter.
 - ⦿ Paul had _____ this church.
 - ⦿ Paul wrote out of _____ concern for this church.
 - ⦿ Paul wrote a similar letter to the _____ church.
- ▶ Paul wrote to the church at Colossae (1:1-2).
 - ⦿ Colossae was a _____, diverse city.
 - ⦿ The Colossian church was primarily _____.

Themes and Characteristics of the Letter

- ▶ _____ is the foundation for our spiritual growth.
- ▶ Christ _____ changes our actions and desires.
- ▶ Christians should continue to _____ spiritually.

Paul's _____ (1:3-8)

- ▶ This church was known for Christian faith and _____ (1:3-4).
- ▶ Paul rejoiced over the _____ at Colossae (1:5-8).
 - ⦿ The gospel provides a future _____ (1:5).
 - ⦿ The gospel keeps producing _____ (1:6).
- ▶ _____ was a messenger of the gospel (1:7-8).

DAY 1

- ▶ Read **Colossians 1:3-6** again. What is the gospel doing in the Colossian church (v. 6)?
-

We might think that the gospel exists only to spark a belief in Christ. But the work doesn't stop there. Even after we begin to follow Christ, God continues to use the gospel to change us.

What is the gospel—this “good news”? Jesus Himself preached this good news, presenting it as the “kingdom of God.” This kingdom is filled with people who turn away from sin and toward God’s righteousness. This kingdom offers life, wholeness, and joy. Its citizens live honestly, humbly, and lovingly.

The path into this kingdom is through Jesus Christ. Only through Him will we escape sin. On our own, we are weak and powerless to stop sinning. But if we surrender to God, He will help us turn away from sin and its outcome—death.

The gospel continues to be relevant throughout our lives. As followers of Jesus, we live in the new kingdom of God, transforming bit by bit through Christ.

- ▶ Read **2 Peter 1:1-11** and fill in the blanks to complete the summaries.

- ◉ **Verse 3**—Through His power, God has given us
-
-

- ◉ **Verse 4**—God’s ultimate goal for us, made known through these promises, is that we may partake, or participate, in
-

- ◉ **Verses 5-7**—We should add, or supplement, these characteristics to our faith:

- ---
- ---

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____



CHECK YOUR BEARINGS

When it comes to Christian living, we can easily fall into one of two extremes.

- **Some of us live like our spiritual maturity depends entirely on us.** We forget that Christ works within us. If we try to mature spiritually on our own, our mistakes will devastate us. Our perfectionism will burn us out.
- **And then some of us put in little effort at all, perhaps in an attempt to avoid legalism.** We tell ourselves that God will work things out anyway. If we hold this view, we will grow slowly—if at all. God does work in us through many influences in our life, but His work accelerates in pace with our faith and obedience.

Both extremes miss the mark of what Christ wants for us. He wants us to both:

1. *Rely* on Him to work in us
 2. *Strive* to live in a godly way
- It's difficult to hold both of these ideas in balance. Do you tend toward one of these extremes—trying to produce change on your own, or not putting in much effort at all? How so? How can you remind yourself to depend on Christ and obey Him?

DAY 2

We learn about Christ primarily through God's Word, but God also teaches us His truth through teachers, pastors, books, and even everyday conversations. If we stay alert, we can recognize God's truth in much of what we see and hear.

But this is just one part of learning. In addition to hearing truth, we must also receive it with humility.

► Read **Luke 8:4-15** and answer the question.

○ What does the seed represent (v. 11)? _____

► Complete the table below. In the second column, write what each soil represents.

Type of Soil
(vv. 5-8)

Meaning (vv. 12-15)

Roadside	
Rocky	
Thorns	
Good	



CHECK YOUR BEARINGS

- ▶ Think about which soil best represents your heart when you hear God's Word. What things might distract you from receiving and applying God's truth?

- ▶ How can you better avoid these distractions?

After telling this parable, Jesus shares another picture of those who hear and do God's Word (Luke 8:16). Jesus described a lighted lamp placed on a stand for everyone to see. It'd be foolish to light a lamp and then just hide it under a bed. Likewise, why would we spend time learning God's truth but never show it through our actions?

As Jesus spoke, His mother and brothers approached, and someone told Him that His family wanted to see Him. Jesus explained that His true family were those who hear the Word of God and do it (v. 21). If we accept and obey Christ's words, we too can be close to Him.

Don't stop listening to God's Word. Take every opportunity to learn, and challenge yourself to put truth into practice.

DAY 3

As noted in the Teacher's Lesson, Ephesians shares many similar themes with Colossians. Paul even begins the letters with similar greetings and prayers. In the opening of Ephesians, Paul doesn't explicitly mention the gospel, but he does reference it by describing our redemption.

► Read **Ephesians 1:3-8** and match the question to the correct answer.

	Verse 3 – What has God given us in Christ?	A. Every spiritual blessing
	Verse 4 – When God chose us, what did He intend for us to be?	B. His children
	Verse 5 – Now that God has adopted us, what are we?	C. Holy and blameless
	Verse 7 – What two things do we have in Christ?	D. The riches of His grace
	Verses 7-8 – What has God shared with us?	E. Redemption and forgiveness



CHECK YOUR BEARINGS

- ▶ In this passage, how would you describe God's attitude toward us?

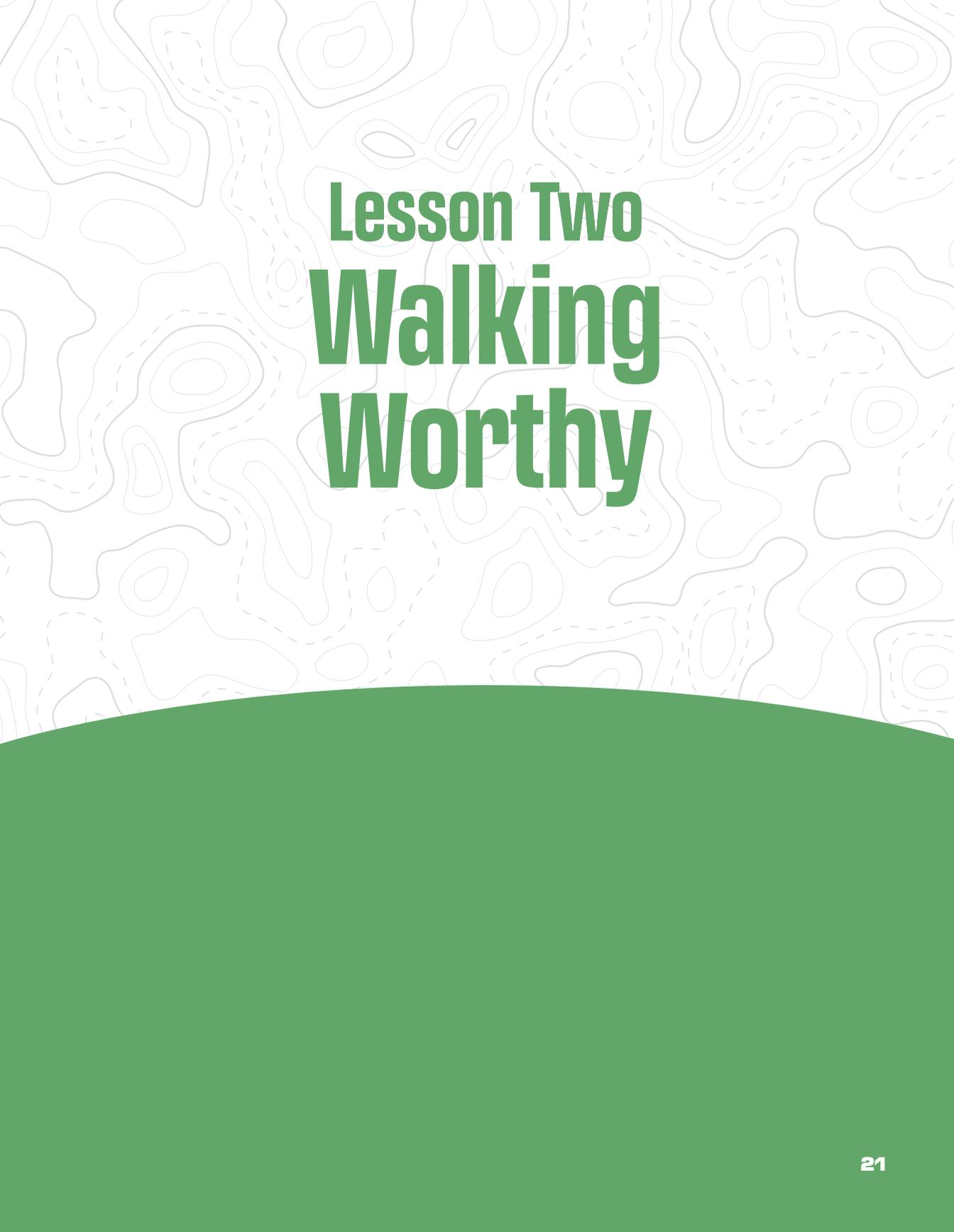
It's one thing to have this attitude out of a general goodwill, but God offers us His love even though we have wronged Him. We committed offenses against God Himself. We rejected Him, but He pained Himself to save us from our sin, and He continues to love us and help us.

So if we want to live in the gospel, we must show to others the same selfless love that God gave us.



TRAIL MAP

Read **Colossians 1:9-12**. What does Paul pray for the Colossian believers?
What does he hope for them?

The background of the page is a light green topographic map with white contour lines. A solid green curved bar is positioned at the bottom of the page.

Lesson Two

Walking

Worthy

LESSON OUTLINE • COLOSSIANS 1:9-12

Paul's _____ for Believers (vv. 9-11)

- ▶ To _____ in knowledge of God's will with wisdom and understanding (v. 9)
 - ⊙ We learn about God's will through _____.
 - ⊙ _____ is applying our knowledge of God.
 - ⊙ We learn and understand better with _____ and _____.
- ▶ Walking worthy of God and desiring to please Him in all things (v. 10)
 - ⊙ Walking is an _____ process.
 - ⊙ Walking worthy of God means _____ who we are in Christ.
 - ⊙ Pleasing God means _____ Him rather than sin.
- ▶ Bearing fruit in every good _____ (v. 10)
 - ⊙ "Fruit" describes how we _____ out our faith.
 - ⊙ _____ results in doing good works.
- ▶ Increasing in the _____ of God (v. 10)
- ▶ Strengthened for endurance and _____ (v. 11)
 - ⊙ This strength comes from _____.
 - ⊙ We can _____ over God's care.

DAY 1

- ▶ Read the summary below of **Colossians 1:9-12**. God wants our faith to be active. To show the dynamic nature of faith, underline or highlight all the **action** words.

Because of this [that the Colossians had received the gospel], from the first day we heard of it, we have not stopped praying for you and asking . . .

that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will

in all wisdom and spiritual understanding

walking worthily of the Lord

desiring to please Him in all things

producing fruit in every good work

and increasing in the knowledge of God

strengthened with all power

according to the might of His glory

in all perseverance and patience

with joy giving thanks to the father

who has made us fit to take part in the share of the saints
in light.

- ▶ Answer the following questions.
 - ◉ In verse 9, what does Paul say should come along with our knowledge of God's will?

Knowledge by itself isn't enough to change us. In addition to learning about God, we must also allow the Holy Spirit to help us understand and apply what we learn. Wisdom is applying our knowledge well.

- ▶ Read Paul's prayer in **Ephesians 1:15-19**. In verse 18, what two things does Paul want the believers to know?

1. _____

2. _____



CHECK YOUR BEARINGS

- ▶ What is the hope we have in God? See **Romans 8:18, 23-25**.

- ▶ What is our inheritance? See **1 Peter 1:3-4, 9**.

If we keep our hope and inheritance in mind, we can face our daily cares and troubles with greater confidence in Christ. Not only can we look forward to a future time when we'll be perfect with Christ, but we can take advantage of our inheritance right now. No matter how much sin is in the world, we know that God is working.

DAY 2

From a human standpoint, God's wisdom doesn't make sense. Most people would trade real, lasting good for pleasure and comfort now. After all, how can we know for sure that we'll receive good things in the future? It doesn't make sense, humanly speaking, that we should make eternal life our goal instead of pleasure. But following Christ means sacrificing present comfort to gain the best future comfort.

► Read **1 Corinthians 1:18–31** and answer the questions.

- ◉ Is the world able to know God through its own wisdom (v. 21)?

- ◉ Who embodies the power and wisdom of God (v. 24)?

Using irony, Paul calls God's wisdom "foolishness." God's wisdom appears foolish to the world, yet it is absolute truth. God's wisdom is so powerful because it's His alone. No one else can take credit for it.

- ◉ Why does God choose the "weak and foolish" (v. 29)?

God's power shines through clearly when we depend on His strength to obey Him. God isn't looking for spiritual superheroes with impressive Christian résumés. He invites us as we are—with all our weaknesses, struggles, and failures—to rely on Him to live out His words.

DAY 3

► Read **1 Corinthians 2:6-16** and answer the following questions.

- ◉ How does Paul describe God's wisdom (v. 7)?

We can know God, relate to Him, and learn about Him. But we cannot *fully* comprehend God. We can never fully understand everything about Him or His thoughts, because God is entirely different from us. We have similar examples from our world, things that we know a little about but can't fully understand—dark matter, creating life, why there's a light in the refrigerator but not the freezer. But we have a better chance of figuring out these things than we do of fully understanding God.

Paul describes God's wisdom as a mystery—we know what God has chosen to share with us, but we can't fully understand it.

- ◉ How does God reveal His wisdom to us (v. 10)?

- ◉ Without the Spirit, can we receive God's wisdom (v. 14)?

God's wisdom must be revealed to us supernaturally, and we have to be willing to receive it. Jesus told His disciples the same thing when they asked why He taught with parables instead of plain teaching (see Matt. 13:10-17).

God reveals His wisdom supernaturally because He wants our faith to rest on Him alone (see 1 Cor. 2:5). We can't accept the truths of God through our own finite understanding or through the world's wisdom.

- ◉ Whose mind do we have to help us (v. 16)?



CHECK YOUR BEARINGS

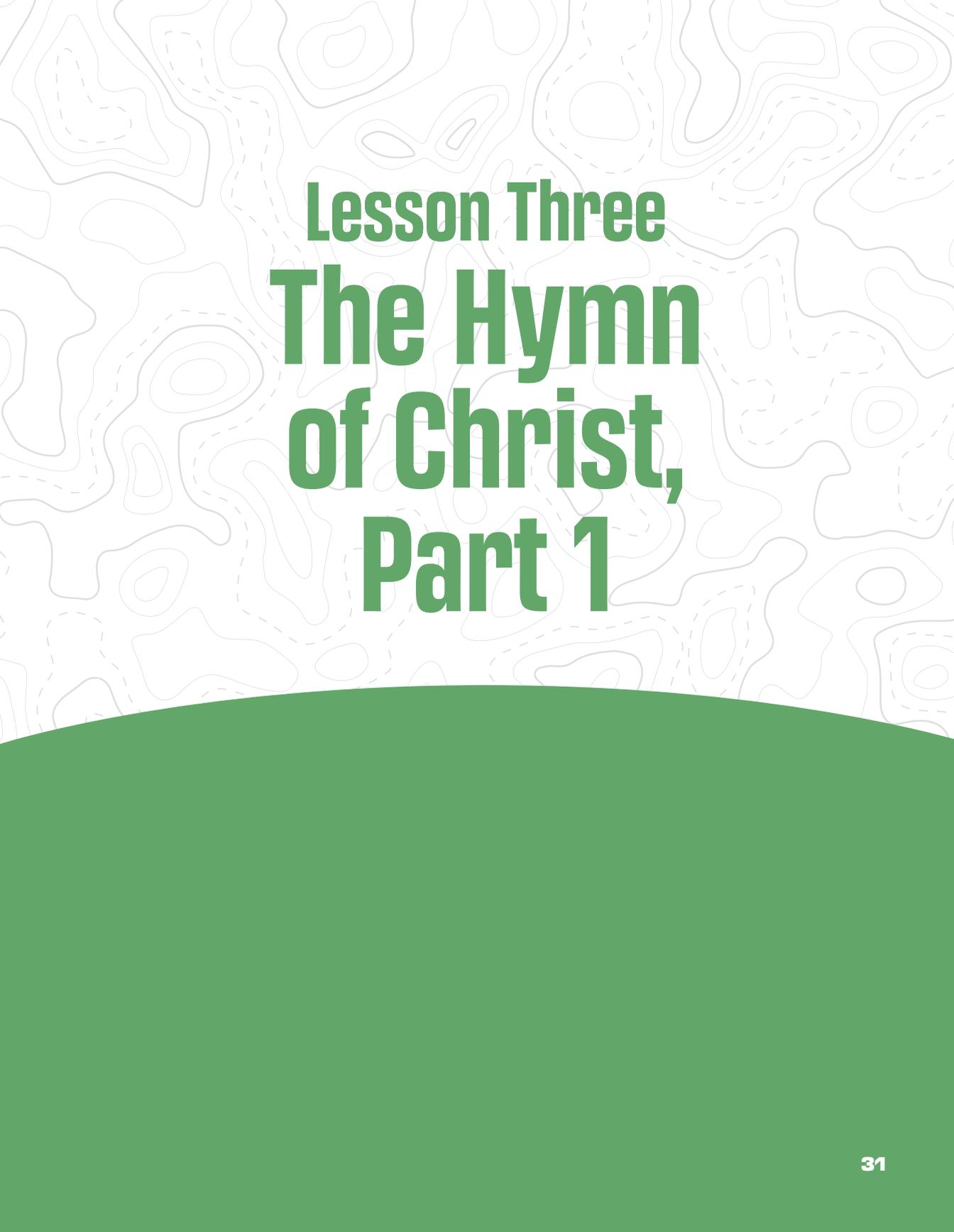
Receiving and understanding God's truth depends on two things:

- 1.** Humility
 - 2.** Depending on the Holy Spirit
- ▶ Are you willing to learn from God—and not just learn but also apply His wisdom? What makes it difficult to do this?



TRAIL MAP

Read **Colossians 1:13-17**. What do you think it means that Jesus is the “first-born” (v. 15)?



Lesson Three
The Hymn
of Christ,
Part 1

COLOSSIANS 1:13-17

In Colossians 1:13–20, Paul arranges his points in a chiastic form. This is a funnel shape intended to emphasize Paul’s main point—that Christ is the founder and sustainer of the church.

- A.** Christ is the redeemer (vv. 13–14).
- B.** Christ as the image of God (v. 15)
 - C.** Christ as creator and sustainer (vv. 16–17)
 - D.** Christ is the head of the church (v. 18).
 - C!** Christ as the beginning of all, the firstborn from the dead (v. 18)
- B!** Christ has the fullness of God dwelling in Him (v. 19).
- A!** Christ as reconciler (v. 20)

Because Christ is the head of the church, He is the ultimate authority for the belief and practice of His followers. Later in this letter, Paul argues that Christ alone is the foundation for our spiritual growth.

LESSON OUTLINE

Christ the _____ (vv. 13-14)

- ▶ God _____ and transferred us into light (v. 13).
 - ◉ Just as light and darkness are opposites, Jesus and _____ have no part in each other.
 - ◉ Jesus _____ us from the power of sin.
- ▶ Christ brought us back to God (v. 14).
- ▶ Christ _____ our sins (v. 14).

Christ the _____ of God (v. 15)

- ▶ We can't physically _____ God.
- ▶ But Jesus gave us a perfect _____ of what God is like.

Christ the _____ of All Creation (v. 15)

- ▶ The firstborn in a family held special _____ and duties.
- ▶ The firstborn received favor and an _____.

Christ the _____ (vv. 16-17)

- ▶ God made heaven and Earth, visible and _____ (v. 16).
- ▶ God made _____ authority and power (v. 16).
- ▶ Christ _____ all of these things (v. 17).
- ▶ Christ _____ all things (v. 17).

DAY 1

Colossians 1:13–20 describes Jesus' authority over all areas of life—material and spiritual. Christ has the power to forgive sin, heal sickness, reverse death, and deliver God's judgment.

While Jesus ministered on Earth, He didn't insist that He was God and demand that people worship Him. Instead, He perfectly reflected the Father and allowed people to make up their minds about who He was. Each person had to decide personally whether to believe and follow Him—or to condemn and reject Him.

► Read **Luke 5:17-26** and answer the questions. In this story, Jesus does something that only God can do. He then leaves people to decide for themselves what to believe about Him.

- ◉ Who were part of the audience as Jesus was teaching (v. 17)?

- ◉ How did the sick man's friends reveal their faith in Jesus? What do you think they wanted Jesus to do (vv. 18–19)?

- ◉ Surprisingly, Jesus didn't heal the man right away. What did He do first (v. 20)?

- ◉ Why did Jesus' words bother the Pharisees and experts of the Law (v. 21)?

- ◉ Though they didn't object out loud, their indignation didn't escape Jesus. How did Jesus demonstrate that He had the power to forgive sin (v. 24)?

- ◉ In verse 26, how did people respond when they saw what happened?

 **CHECK YOUR BEARINGS**

Like the people who witnessed Jesus' miracles, we have to make up our minds about Jesus and accept Him by faith.

- ▶ Take some time to think about Jesus' authority to forgive sin. Why can only God forgive sin?

We tend to focus on God's healing power—often reflected in our prayer requests. It's good to ask God to ease suffering, heal sick people, or mend broken relationships. But if we focus only on His healing power, we can easily forget how incredible it is that God can forgive our sins.

DAY 2

After Jesus' ascension into heaven, His followers waited for the promised arrival of the Holy Spirit. After they received the Holy Spirit, they all praised God and miraculously proclaimed God's truth by speaking in different languages. People were confused, and they thought that maybe these disciples were drunk. Peter explained that their actions—and the coming of Jesus—were actually the fulfillment of God's promises.

Peter then shared a powerful message and rebuke to the people listening. Remember, these were the same people who had recently demanded that Jesus be executed. Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection were still very fresh events in their minds.

► Read **Acts 2:22-36** and fill in the blanks in the summary of this passage.

Jesus did _____
with the power of God. This showed God's approval of Him (v. 22). Jesus was killed unjustly by the Jews—even though it was part of God's plan for redemption (v. 23). But God raised Jesus from the dead, because it was _____ for death to hold Him in its power (v. 24).

_____ prophesied Christ's resurrection (v. 25). David could not have been speaking merely of his own physical death because his _____ still existed with them (v. 29). Rather, he was speaking of the _____ (v. 31). This was _____ (v. 32).



CHECK YOUR BEARINGS

Every person you know will die one day. Death is unescapable. The fear of death has driven people to do some astounding things, like carrying out adrenaline-fueled rescues and spending millions on anti-aging research. Death is one of the most powerful forces in our world. Everything dies.

But death has no power over Jesus. Christ brought people back from the dead. He Himself rose again from the dead after three days. Only Christ has the power to refuse death and to give life.

- ▶ How does Jesus' power over death affect your concerns for the future?

- ▶ Does this make you more or less comfortable trusting God's promises for the future? Why?

DAY 3

God gave the Apostle John visions of the future—visions that were confusing, terrifying, and incredible. After giving messages for seven churches, God revealed to John who would initiate the events of the last days and judge sin.

► Read **Revelation 5:1-14** and answer the questions.

- ◉ John saw an angel holding a book with seven seals. Why did John weep at the angel's words (vv. 2-4)?

- ◉ But there was one who was found worthy to open the book. Who was this (v. 5)?

This is a reference to Jesus as the Messiah. His coming was foretold throughout Israel's history—what He would be like, what He would do, and even that He would be a descendant of King David. Jesus' connection to David revealed Jesus' status as king.

- ◉ He appeared as a slain _____ with seven horns and eyes (v. 6).
- ◉ When He took the book, the 24 elders worshiped Him. They said He was worthy because He was _____ and had _____ (v. 9) people with His blood.

- ◉ Then thousands sang and said that the Lamb was worthy to receive power, _____, wisdom, _____, _____ and _____ (v. 12).



CHECK YOUR BEARINGS

- ▶ When the book opened, God's judgment on sin began in the form of cataclysmic events on the earth. Note verses 9 and 12. In your own words, why is Jesus worthy to open the book?



Read **Colossians 1:18-23**. How did Christ reconcile us to God?