

Welcome to day 1 of our Colossians study! I'm so glad you are here, and I pray this study blesses you as well as those in your lives! I also pray that we can encourage and lift one another up as we study through God's Word together!

SCRIPTURE: Colossians 1:1-4

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To God's holy people in Colossae, the faithful brothers and sisters in Christ: Grace and peace to you from God our Father. We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all God's people...

OBSERVATIONS: Can you imagine greeting someone this way? It was a common thing for Paul to start off his letters like this. And what a blessing it must have been to those receiving it!

I also love that Paul points out he is an apostle by the WILL of God! He went through an amazing transformation and is something he'll never forget. I'm sure most of you had something specific happen in your life when you moved from living in darkness, to living in the light by accepting Christ into your heart!

He's brought me out of the miry pit and for that I'm forever grateful. Let's take some time today to reflect on our own salvation...where we've come from...and where we are today! Think of all the blessings that are seen in your life, and even remember those that you received before you were saved, because they were there dear sisters, we probably just didn't recognize them!

APPLICATION: Take some time today to encourage others! Pray for them, and shoot them a quick email to let them know that you are thinking of them, praying for them, and what a blessing they have been to you!

PRAYER: Dear Lord, please don't ever let me forget all that you have done for me, and all that you've delivered me from. I'm forever grateful to be living in your presence! Please help me to be an encouragement to others, and be a faithful sister in Christ.

NOTE: If you have not yet accepted Christ as your personal savior and do not have a relationship with our Almighty Father, please feel free to email me at Erica@confessionsofahomeschooler.com



SCRIPTURE: Colossians 1:5-8

...the faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven and about which you have already heard in the true message of the gospel that has come to you. In the same way, the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world—just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God's grace. You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.

OBSERVATION: Is your life bearing the fruit and growing throughout your community? Or have you become stagnant and luke-warm? Remember the fire you felt when you were first saved, and how you longed to be in the Word, and to be around other Christians?

I love how Paul points out that these people learned from a fellow servant. That is us dear sisters! We are all servants for Christ, and there are a few questions I have today:

Am I being obedient to what God has called me to do?

Am I living boldly as a witness for Jesus Christ?

Can people tell that I am a Christian by looking at my life?

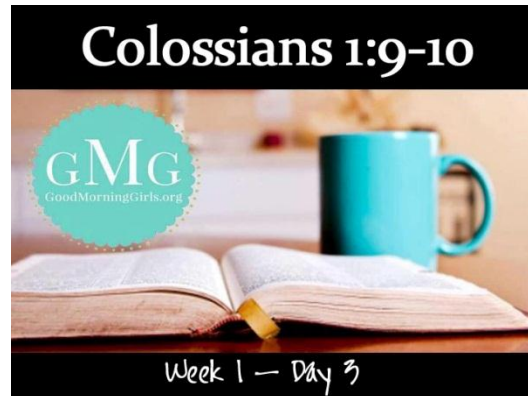
Am I sharing the love of Christ with those around me?...including my own family?

I am thankful that once I accepted the Gospel message, my life changed dramatically, I live in a new light now, and I don't partake in things I used to. And I'm also thankful for those who shared the gospel with me!

APPLICATION: Let's not lose sight of the hope that is stored up for us in heaven that came when we first heard the beautiful gospel message! Let our lives be a testimony of

the hope that lies within so that others might ask, and let us be ready with an encouraging answer! We don't have to do it on our own, but through the Spirit!

PRAYER: Dear Lord, I thank you for saving me! I pray that my life is a reflection of that change, and that I can be a good witness for Christ, and an encouragement to those around me!



SCRIPTURE: Colossians 1:9-10

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God,

OBSERVATION: Why was Paul praying for the Colossians to have knowledge of His will? Because they were under siege of people who were telling them that God was not enough. Paul was essentially praying that they wouldn't get caught up in every "wind of doctrine" so to speak.

This reminds me that we need to keep God's Word as the plumb line in our life. That we test everything we hear by His words and not our own feelings, thoughts, or by that of others as well.

Spiritual ignorance is something that can greatly hinder us. And especially when we're new Christians it's even more important to be in the Word regularly so we are not being swayed by the things of the world.

As more mature Christians, we are also to be in the Word daily as well. The best way to be able to have God's Words firmly rooted in our hearts is to put them there! When we are tested, God has a wonderful way of bringing those things back to our minds and hearts. I really think that it is a necessity to be constantly growing in the knowledge of God. That way we our lives are bearing fruit continually as well, and those around us will see Jesus within us and be encouraged!

APPLICATION: Make it a PRIORITY to be in the Word daily! Some good ideas: Read through the Bible in a year programs, studies like this online one, and small group studies

at your church or with friends. Some of my favorite women's studies are by Beth Moore and Kay Arthur's Precepts studies. You can check them both out here:

<http://www.lifeway.com/> and <http://store.precept.org>

PRAYER: Dear Lord, please give me a burning desire to be in Your Word daily! Help me to imprint it on my heart, and be able to recall it whenever needed to bless and encourage others! Also help me to be steadfast on the path You have set before me, and not be swayed by all of the lures of this world! Amen.

COMMENTS: I'd love to hear some of your favorite ways to stay in the Word!



SCRIPTURE: Colossians 1:11-12

...being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light.

OBSERVATION: One of the things that continually blows me away is God's goodness. He doesn't expect us to do anything on our own and Paul's verses here are a wonderful reminder of that. We are strengthened with all power according to HIS glorious might! He gives us the endurance and patience we need to face each day and every circumstance.

Not only that but He has qualified me and all of you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light! What? W.O.W.

I'm so unworthy in so many ways, but God sees past all of that and just asks me to follow Him and He will lead my steps, equip me, and strengthen me to do His will.

"Worry occurs when we've overvalued something that is corruptible and overestimated our role in preserving them." When we fix our hearts exclusively on Jesus, our hearts find rest. The Rock of ages does not move."

~ One year at His feet devotional.

APPLICATION: Worry less! I'm a worrier, and God's Word is a constant reminder to me that I need not worry. Not only does it not do anything to help or change the situation, but it's a waste of time. God is in control, and all I need to do is have faith in Him.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, I leave my worry at your feet. I freely give it to you and ask that you increase my faith so that I can be fully reliant on You and not my own understanding or strength! Please give me the endurance, patience, and strength to face what is before me. Help me to not worry about tomorrow or the next day, but be thankful for today and live in a way that is pleasing in Your sight! Amen.



SCRIPTURE: Colossians 1:13-14

For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

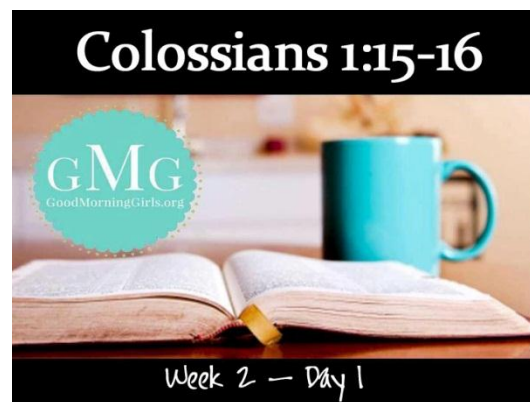
OBSERVATION: Before we were saved, we were naturally overcome by the things of this world. But now that we are delivered from that darkness, we're free! We're now walking in light instead of darkness, and Jesus Christ is ruling over our lives. We have been forgiven for our sins, and are blameless in His sight! What a relief!

I definitely made some questionable choices before I was saved, and so I've seen great transformation in my life thanks to my Almighty Father! I really think that this week has spoken to me in regards to remembering the miry pit I was lifted out of!

It was a good week to reflect, and be thankful for all the blessings that have been bestowed upon me. Now I need to turn that around and make it a priority to live my life focused on Jesus and hopefully be a blessing to those around me as well!

APPLICATION: My goal right now is to be a good witness for Christ. Can people tell that I'm a Christian by the way I live? Do family members see a change in me? Will my children grow in the presence of a loving, encouraging mother? I hope that each day I choose to live in God's will, obeying His commands, and living in a way that shows God's love to those around me.

PRAYER: Dear Father, I know that I am not always a good witness for Your love. I pray that you would create in me a clean heart. That I would diligently seek You in all things, that I would put You first above all else, and that You would equip me to be a blessing to those you put in my path. Amen.



SCRIPTURE: Colossians 1:15-16

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.

OBSERVATION: I love how God gives us full disclosure here. For anyone struggling with who Christ is, here you go. Jesus reflects all of the perfections of God for us, literally meaning that God is manifest through Christ for us to see! This verse is a graphic description of the person of Christ, begotten of the Father before anything else was made.

I'm so thankful that God chose to reveal Himself to us in such a tangible way. The disciples actually got to see and touch Jesus! Wow! They literally had Him walking among them, dining with Him, and watching first hand as He performed many miracles!

I also think it's interesting that even seeing this, some of them still doubted, and in Peter's case even denied Him. To me that just means that as humans we are clearly fallible! I always think if I were there I would never doubt again, but the disciples show us that isn't necessarily the case. With so many worldly things pulling us away from the gospel, I think it's something we need to always guard our hearts from.

APPLICATION: Pray on a daily basis for God to increase my faith, and that He would fill

me daily with His Holy Spirit so that I might walk in a way that is worthy to His calling on my life!

PRAYER: Father, thank you so much for your Word! It is a beautiful reflection of You that can speak right into my life on a daily basis if I am just willing to hear. I pray that you would speak loudly in my life, help to increase my faith in You, and rid me of any doubts I might have! Amen!



SCRIPTURE: Colossians 1:17-18

He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And He is the head of the body, the church; He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything He might have the supremacy.

OBSERVATION: We live in an area with lots of snakes...rattlesnakes to be exact. And the only way to deal with them is to chop off their heads (sorry, but it's true). Anything less than that and they're still slithering around and deadly. (Please understand I'm actually an animal rights type gal, but when it comes to my babies safety and that of a venomous snake...well...you mamas understand.)

Anyway, yesterday we learned about Christ as ruler over all creation. And today we are learning about the glory of Christ to the redeemed. That would be you and me ladies! Colossians 1:17-18 is a no-nonsense verse that lets us know that Christ is in charge. He is our head, and we are His body/church.

Now, back to the snake...if you remove its head what happens? The thing finally dies and is no longer effective as it once was. Oh sure its body might slither around a little while longer, but it's moving around aimlessly, definitely in the dark so to speak! The same thing will happen with us if we cut off Jesus from our lives. We need to be working in unity with Christ, not pulling in different directions from His leading on our lives.

- So what does this say about how we are to view the church?
- What does this say about our own responsibilities to the church?
- What does this say about our own personal relationship with Christ?

What is the church? WE are the church! The people! It's not some building that people visit once a week, it's the people who are there collecting to worship God. It's our brothers and sisters in Christ. It is us. And Christ is head over us, or at least He should be. If He is not head over your life today, then right now is the time to change that!

APPLICATION: Devote time to be in the Word daily so that I can make Christ head over my life!

PRAYER: Dear Lord, I thank you for your Word! I pray that you would use this study to fill me with the knowledge of Your will in all spiritual understanding and wisdom. I pray that I would no longer lean on my own understanding, but on Your Word! Amen



SCRIPTURE: Colossians 1:19-20

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

OBSERVATION: I would absolutely lay down my life for my children. And it is through this relationship that God has revealed much of His love for me. Before that I couldn't really imagine anyone truly and freely giving their life for another person.

I think sometimes in studying the Bible it can give us a sense of presuming that we have full grasp on the things of God. That they might just become stale facts and stories that we've read time and time again. But I think it's also important not to lose that feeling of awe and wonder that we first had as a new Christian.

Today's verses help to remind me that all of God's fullness dwells in Christ! And that He lives still as our permanent representative in heaven. He has made peace through His own bloodshed. For me, for you, and for all of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

APPLICATION: Do we have a burning desire for Christ in our hearts? Is He our all in all, our place of comfort, and our place of joy? If not, this is where we need to place our focus! Making Jesus our all in all!

PRAYER: Dear Lord please give me a burning desire for You! Let me seek You first above

all else, and give You priority in everything I do. May my daily words and actions be glorifying to You, and thus a blessing to everyone around me. Amen!



SCRIPTURE: Colossians 1:21-22

Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation-

OBSERVATION: Colossians started by reminding us who God is, who Christ is, and who we ought to be. Now we're getting to the heart of the epistle...who we were before salvation, and who we are today! While we were once separated from our Creator, we are now in relationship with Him and what a glorious place to be!

Yesterday I talked a little about being in awe of God, and in today's verses it's coming out in full force! Ladies, despite how you may "feel", you are saved through Christ, and you have been fully reconciled! You are chosen, beloved, holy in His sight, and without blemish! YOU are beautiful to our Almighty Father!

APPLICATION: I want to remember, but not dwell on where I came from. I've been lifted from a miry pit and am forever thankful! Now I can look forward to what God is doing in my life, and take time each day to marvel in His glory!

PRAYER: Dear Lord, help remind me of your glory through my faithfulness in reading Your Word daily! Please work in my life, and let me bear wonderful fruit all for Your glory! Amen.



SCRIPTURE: 1 Colossians 1:23

...if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

OBSERVATION: Yesterday we learned what Christ did for us, and now God is so good to give us things to help us walk in a way that is worthy! Continue in our faith, be established and firm, do not move from the hope held out in the Gospel!

That means that we are in the Word daily and that we test everything against it so we aren't swayed by every wind of doctrine!

Another important thing that really sticks out to me here is that the gospel has clearly been proclaimed to every creature under heaven. That means that we've all heard it, what we chose to do with that information it is the question at hand.

APPLICATION: Take a few minutes today to answer these questions honestly:

Have we accepted Christ as our savior?

Are we sharing the hope that lies within us?

Is God the center of our lives?

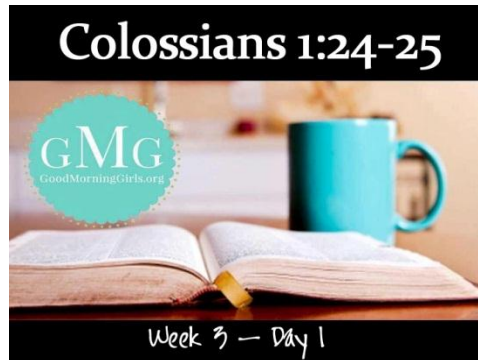
Can people tell we are Christian by the way we live?

PRAYER: Dear Lord, I pray that you would make your light shine brightly through my life! That I would always be ready to share the hope that lies within me, and that I am living boldly for You! I pray that you would keep me firm in my faith and that I would not be swayed from Your Gospel!

*"Then let us adore and give Him His right.
All glory and power and wisdom and might,*

All honor and blessing with angels above,
And thanks never ceasing, and infinite love."

- Wesley



SCRIPTURE: Colossians 1:24-25

Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness—

OBSERVATION: I am always humbled by Paul's fervent attitude towards preaching the Gospel message. In today's verses he is referring to the suffering he has incurred in relation to his preaching the gospel message to pagans as a whole. Nothing seems to dissuade him from achieving his purpose, the commission by God to share the Word in its entirety.

In our country, there are not religious persecutions taking place like there are in other areas. And I often wonder how I would handle that type of suffering for the gospel. Would I really be so bold as to share Christ with those in countries where it was illegal to do so?

And then I think about where I am. I am free to own a bible, or a dozen if I choose to. I'm free to hand them out on street corners, talk to neighbors, and show God's love to those around me. But yet even with all of this freedom, sometimes I can be afraid to speak out! Worried about what others will think I suppose.

Thankfully, as I've grown in my walk with the Lord, I'm much more open with how I live my life. I do not hide the fact that I'm a Christian, and do my best to be willing to share the gospel with anyone around me who is in need.

APPLICATION: Take a few minutes today to ask yourself these questions:

Am I living boldly for Christ?

Do my words and actions reflect my Christian beliefs?

Am I ready and willing to share the gospel with those around me?

PRAYER: Dear Lord, please help me to live boldly for You! I pray you would remove any fear of man that may dwell in me. And as I commit your Word into my heart, may I be always ready to share the Gospel with those around me. Amen.



SCRIPTURE: Colossians 1:26-27

...the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord's people. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

OBSERVATION: The mystery referred to in these verses is simply the Gospel message. It contains things that are mysteries to us when we are unsaved, but once we accept Christ as our savior, they are made known to us! Christ is the riches of the Gospel, and all fullness dwells in Him.

I love how he makes it clear that God has "chosen" to make known the glorious riches of the gospel! And when Paul mentions the Gentiles, basically he is saying that the truth of the gospel was to be preached to all mankind! So God has chosen to share His gospel message with the whole world so that all would be saved.

And for that I am fully thankful! We serve the Almighty God ladies, one who cares about each of us individually and wishes to see us all saved! Despite our previous actions, sins, and the like, He draws us all to Him out of His great love for us!

A friend of mine always closes her emails with this saying: "You are loved by an Almighty God!" and I love reading that anytime I get an email from her! What a blessing and wonderful reminder of our Father's sweet love for us!

APPLICATION: Post John 3:16 on a sticky note by your kitchen sink for you to read anytime you're doing dishes! Take some time today to be thankful for God's love for us! If you have children, make sure to share this information with them as well!

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ~ John 3:16

PRAYER: Dear Lord, thank you so much for your love for me! I am forever grateful and thankful that you sent your beloved Son to atone for my sins. Please help me to live in a way that will glorify You and bless those around me! Amen.



SCRIPTURE: Colossians 1:28-29

He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. ²⁹To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.

OBSERVATION: Verses like this always make me think of my children and how it is my responsibility to train them in the way they should go so when they are old they do not wonder. If I can be a good example for them, being in the Word regularly, and encouraging and bringing them up in the knowledge of our Lord, then I have done my job.

If not, then I am certainly falling short of my calling as a mother. And knowing that I can't do that all on my own, I love how Paul reminds us that he is doing everything through the strength of God.

I am weak, and definitely fall short in so many areas, but God has and will equip me as a wife, mother, and homeschooler just as He has called me to these things. Thankfully I am not alone!

And not only through being in His Word, but He's also gracious to surround me with Godly Christian women who can encourage and lift me up as I travel along this path.

APPLICATION: Just as God placed Godly women around me when I was first starting out am I now returning that blessing, and being an encouragement to other young mothers and homeschoolers? Take some time today to call a fellow sister and encourage her in her calling!

PRAYER: Dear Lord, thank you so much for the blessings you have given to me. I pray

that I would be faithful with what You have called me to, as well as an encouragement to other young mothers and homeschooling families! Amen.



SCRIPTURE: Colossians 2:1-3

I want you to know how hard I am contending for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally. My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

OBSERVATION: Paul is explaining here that everything he does is for the good of those around him, even those he has not met. His goal is to encourage and unite the people so that they might know Christ. And Christ is where we will find all of the treasures of God! Through Him we will receive all knowledge, wisdom, and then have a truly joy-filled life.

I would love to take on Paul's goal of sharing the gospel with everyone, and uniting others in love! I think of this type of work as mission work, and before looking outside my city, state, or country, I think we must first look within the confines of our own family.

Am I a missionary to my own family? Do they see me serving them with a willing heart? Am I a blessing to them, and also teaching them to be a blessing to others? As a mother, and a wife, my first ministry remains my family.

God has blessed me with a wonderful husband, and charge over four of his most beautiful children. Before serving in other places, I first try to serve diligently at home. Certainly I have a blog, and I truly view that as a ministry to homeschooling families, but before my blog on the priority list, is my family.

It can be a hard balance to serve others as well as at home, but I don't want my children growing up thinking mom was too busy for them. My focus right now needs to be on my little guys, helping to train them in the way they should go. Putting their needs above others, but then also teaching them compassion and how to serve others as well. Children are a gift of the Lord, and must be treated as such.

Whatever is good and perfect comes down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens. He never changes or casts a shifting shadow. He chose to give

birth to us by giving us his true word. And we, out of all creation, became his prized possession. ~ James 1:1-18 (NLT)

APPLICATION: This week I am going to make it a priority to put my family first. Put away technology and spend some one on one time with my family, and place more priority on our family devotion time together as well. If you aren't currently doing family devotions, I encourage you to check out "Our 24 Family Ways" by Sally Clarkson. It is a wonderful daily family devotional that requires absolutely zero prep work on your part!

PRAYER: Dear Lord, please help me to keep my priorities straight, putting You above all else. Show me how to best serve my family and keep them my first ministry. Make it clear to me areas where I am lacking in this effort, as well as an open heart to make changes needed in order to succeed at the calling to which you have placed before me! In Jesus name, Amen.



SCRIPTURE: Colossians 2:4-5

I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how disciplined you are and how firm your faith in Christ is.

OBSERVATION: I think as someone who has been a Christian for a while, we might have a tendency to let our guard down a little. And Paul is clearly warning those of Laodicea to be careful not to be swayed by every wind of doctrine.

No matter how long we've been saved, the only real way to keep our focus on God and walk in His will is to be in His Word regularly. Doing studies such as this one, and committing His words to your heart is the best way to be prepared for opposition, doubts, and unbelief.

Through our knowledge of the Word we can honor God, and we will remain steadfast in our walk with the Lord.

This brings me back to my children, near and dear to my heart. As a mother my job is to train them, bring them up in the knowledge and wisdom of the Lord so that they are firm in their faith. There will come a time when I am no longer present in body with them on a daily basis, and they need to have God's Word firmly rooted in their hearts as well so that they can stand strong against other teachings, temptations, and the like.

APPLICATION: Get my children in the Word! I wrote a post awhile back on getting us in the Word together, and also encouraging them to be in the Word on their own. I realize this is harder for younger children, but they have such wonderful Children's Bibles now, along with picture board books, that you can at least have them spend some time flipping through the books on their own while you all do a quiet time with God.

Here is a post on creating a family quiet time:

<http://www.confessionsofahomeschooler.com/blog/2011/06/not-so-quiet-time-for-mom.html>

PRAYER: Dear Lord, please help me to not be distracted by the business of our days. Remind me to make it a priority to have a quiet time in the Word with my children daily. Help me to create in them a habit of turning to Your Word in all circumstances and hiding it in their hearts! In Jesus name, Amen.



SCRIPTURE: Colossians 2:6-7

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

OBSERVATION: I think it can be very easy to let the initial fervent that you had when you were saved, lose its immediacy. These verses are a warning, and an encouragement to continue living steadfast for God. Just like our yards, if we don't tend to them regularly, they get over run with weeds, grass dies, bushes and shrubs get overgrown, and they turn into a big mess! But if we take regular care of our yards, their beauty definitely reflects our commitment and care!

If we want our walk to remain strong, we need to maintain it...regularly...in other words, daily. We should be living and acting wholly under the influence of God's presence in our lives!

This means that we look to Him for everything, every decision we make, every direction we go. That we would continually act out of full faith in Him, and belief that His will for our lives is best. Not just seeking Him when things go wrong, or we need help. But God desires to have that relationship with us constantly, in good times and bad.

APPLICATION: Take a few minutes to write down the answers to these questions:

Do I seek God FIRST, or do I seek something else first? (Friends, etc)

Do I seek God regarding everything I do? Even the small things?

Am I ceaselessly praying over everything?

What ways can I improve this area of my life, so I am seeking to do God's will in every area of my life?

PRAYER: Dear Lord, thank You so much for Your faithfulness in my life, even when I am not faithful in return. I pray that You would show me areas where I need to improve so that I might continue living for You, that I might be firmly rooted and continually strengthened in my faith, and that my life might be a glorious witness to Your glory! Amen.



SCRIPTURE: Colossians 2:8

See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.

OBSERVATION: These verses are a definite warning. "See to it" here (greek: blepo) means to Watch out!, Beware! Take heed! When I read this verse I was immediately reminded of 2 Corinthians 10:5 "...we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."

There have been many times in my married life that I've brought up past wrongs during an argument, or had my mind wonder off with thoughts that weren't beneficial to me at all. I've had to remind myself to take those thoughts captive!

In these verses we are reminded that we need to be careful with our thoughts, to keep them focused on Christ rather than all of the other spiritual garbage that might be floating around by various means...especially false and deceptive teachers.

There are so many popular TV pastors and teachers, that it is imperative that we hold everything accountable to what the Word actually says, and not allow other deceptive philosophies to creep into our lives.

One of my favorite studies I've done are the precept studies by Kay Arthur. She shows one how to study their own bible, instead of relying on others to teach it to us. They have been very helpful in showing me how to understand God's Word for myself!

APPLICATION: Am I continually watchful for false teaching creeping into my life? Or have I let my guard down? Do I have a discerning spirit that keeps me committed to the Word of God? Likewise am I making sure that my thoughts as well as my actions are obedient to Christ?

PRAYER: Dear Father, thank you for allowing me to glean from this study. I pray that You would show me areas that I need improvement, as well as worldly things that I may have allowed to seep into my life. I pray that I would be fully committed to You, and not be swayed by false teachers. I pray for a discerning spirit that will serve to strengthen my faith! Amen.



SCRIPTURE: Colossians 2:9-10

For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority.

OBSERVATION: To me these verses reflect the spiritual fullness that can only be found in Christ. So far our verses this week have talked about being careful not to be swayed by

false teachings, worldly philosophies, and even our own understanding. Now today we are reminded that we should be solely determined to live through the sufficiency of Christ in our lives.

We can find wholeness in Him, be completely filled, satisfied, and content with our lives. What a great thing that would be! And that reminds me that none of us are perfect, the work of God is not yet finished in us, and that if we allow it, God's grace will continue to work in our lives until we see Him face to face! We don't have to be perfect now, just open and willing to allow Him to work through us.

APPLICATION: Am I running my life, or am I allowing the Holy Spirit to lead me through my day? I'm a planner. The real question for me is whether or not I'm flexible enough to allow God to work in my life on a daily basis. Even if it involves a disruption to my pre-planned schedule? My application for today is to be open to whatever God has for us today. To be flexible, and allow Him to work through me. Even if that means taking time out of school to attend to a character issue with my children.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, thank You so much for Your Word. I pray that You would show me tangible ways to keep my focus on You. I pray that I would be thankful in all circumstances, and be open to accomplishing Your will in my daily life. Amen.



SCRIPTURE: Colossians 2:11-12

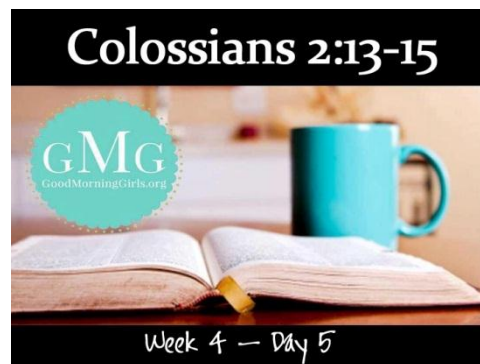
In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your old self, ruled by the flesh, was put off when you were circumcised by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.

OBSERVATION: In these verses Paul is referring to the law of the time where the act of circumcision was an ordinance by which all sin was to be renounced, and the person was now devoted to God and to a holy life. Now it's being used as a metaphor to show how through Christ our sinful nature is put away and now we are to live in a way that reflects Christ in us. With this type of circumcision, it is our hearts that are changed!

Before we were ruled by our own flesh, but how we are ruled by the Spirit of God! We've put away our old self and are now living our lives through Christ our Savior. These verses also make me think about how much I've changed since being saved, and how far I've come as a Christian as well.

APPLICATION: If you've been saved awhile, are you maturing? Are you seeing fruit from your life, or have you become stagnant, no longer serving with the veracity as you did when you were first saved?

PRAYER: Dear Lord, thank You for Your salvation. I pray that I would study to show myself worthy of the calling which You have laid before me. I pray that You would show me areas of improvement so that my life would be a testimony of Your faithfulness. I pray that I would continue to grow in my faith and mature as a Christian so I might be used greatly by You. Amen.



SCRIPTURE: Colossians 2:13-15

When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

OBSERVATION: If we have asked Christ into our hearts, to be Lord and Savior over our life, then we are freed from any previous sins. I know there are a lot of people who have past sins that they might not be proud of, I am one of them. But continually reflecting on those sins, and holding them over ourselves as a condemnation is not what God expects, or wants.

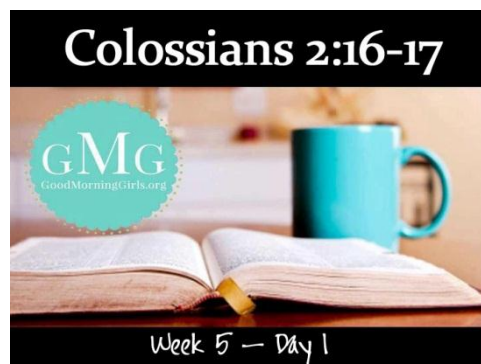
These verses say that our indebtedness is cancelled, taken away, and nailed to the cross. It doesn't say that they are partially removed, sort of covered, and kind of canceled.

Psalms 103:12 says that God has removed our transgressions from us as far as the east is from the west. Isaiah 38:17 says that He has cast all of our sins behind His back. And Hebrews 8:12 says He will remember our sins no more.

If God has forgotten our sins, shouldn't we also? I know that it is certainly easier said than done, but remember that we answer to God. We stand before Him in judgment, so it is He who we should be concerned with. If we are saved through faith, we are covered by Christ's blood. End of story!

APPLICATION: Is there something you've been holding on to? Are you condemning yourself for past iniquities? Let go of those today! Take some time on your knees before the Lord, and lay all of your sins before Him. Cast your cares on the Lord and He will sustain you! (Ps 55:22)

PRAYER: Dear Lord, thank you so much for your forgiveness of my sins. I cast any burdens I've been carrying to this point at Your feet, help me to leave them there, and think of them no more! I have been made alive again in Christ, and choose to live my life for You from this point forward. Please renew the fire in my heart for Your Word, and let me live in a way pleasing to You. Amen.



SCRIPTURE: Colossians 2:16-17

Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

OBSERVATION: I think what Paul is referring to is what we call "legalism". Jesus fulfilled the law, and it is not our job to judge others for what they choose to do. I think, instead, we need to focus on whether or not our lives are acceptable and pleasing to the Lord by what we say and do.

This reminds me of Matthew 7:5 where we are told to "first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye." Meaning that we should look at our own issues first!

Romans 14:10-13 - You, then, why do you judge your brother or sister? Or why do you treat them with contempt? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. It is written: "'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will acknowledge God.'" So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God. Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister.

Christ is our reality and our substance. As long as we are abiding in Him, we will seek to do that which glorifies and pleases Him. It is His opinion of us that counts, not what others say or think. The important thing is that we worship Christ, and do all things to His glory! And yes, that might also mean that we choose to abstain from certain actions or activities because we know that it may stumble another brother or sister in Christ.

APPLICATION: Take an honest look at ourselves today. Am I judging others, even if it is unintentional? Am I taking part in something that might be a stumbling block to those around me? What is my motivation for doing the things that I do? Am I doing everything out of honor for the Lord, or am I doing some things out of my own selfish desire?

PRAYER: Dear Lord, please help me to refrain from judging others. Help me to instead learn to pray for and serve those in need, and share Your love with them. Please reveal anything in my life that might be a stumbling block to others around me, or that is not honoring to You. Thank you for Your Word that guides and strengthens me! In Your name I pray. Amen.



SCRIPTURE: Colossians 2:18-21

Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you. Such a person also goes into great detail about what they have seen; they are puffed up with idle notions by their unspiritual mind. They have lost connection with the head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.

Since you died with Christ to the elemental spiritual forces of this world, why, as though you still belonged to the world, do you submit to its rules: "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!"?

OBSERVATION: I would hate to fall so far away from the Lord that I lost connection with Him! These verses describe people who those who have turned away from the Gospel

and are now puffed up with their own pride and religious rules. Instead of holding Jesus as their Savior, instead their own works are taking precedence here.

Ephesians 4:15-17 "Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking."

Our old selves have been crucified, and now we are new creations in Christ! These verses are a warning to us to make sure we are in close union with Jesus, and living in a way that is honoring and pleasing to the Lord, instead of letting ourselves be influenced by worldly principles.

Are we making choices to please man, or God? As a homeschooler this is a big question for me. There is a lot of opposition to homeschooling, and this can even come from our close family members. One question I had to answer early on was whether or not I could stay the course homeschooling, knowing that some family members do not approve?

APPLICATION: Let's take a minute and think about how we are living our lives. What do people around us see? Do they know we are Christians by our actions and words? Do they see someone who is glowing with Love for God? Do we choose to act based on what God has called us to do? Do we choose to act based on what others think we should do, or what we think will please others?

PRAYER: Dear Lord, please help me to keep you as my priority and focus. I pray that everything I do will be out of love for You. I pray you would not let the fear of man be a snare to me, but that I would stay strong for what You have called me to do! Please reveal in me any areas where I am not living for You and help me to change those things into a blessing for You! In Jesus name, Amen.



SCRIPTURE: Colossians 2:22-23

These rules, which have to do with things that are all destined to perish with use, are based on merely human commands and teachings. Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

OBSERVATION: These verses were a little hard for me to understand, but I think Paul is telling us that what we eat and what we drink, is of no eternal value to us. At that time they had certain ceremonies and religious laws that they followed. These religious leaders might appear more “holy” or “wise” outwardly, but we are not to be fooled by them.

Paul is warning us here, that legalistic submission to these types of regulations can essentially replace our own devotion and focus on Christ. Our pride and flesh are built up by such legalism, but unfortunately our relationship with Christ is not.

Through Christ we are justified by faith, not by our works. The commandments and laws made by man do not have significance in the eternal. It is our relationship with Christ that is of eternal value for us. It is by the grace of God that we are strengthened and it is through His salvation that we are redeemed and made useful for His glory.

APPLICATION: Am I caught up in rules that I think are required for a religious appearance? Or am I focused on what God is calling me to do? How is my walk with the Lord? Am I taking time daily to be in His Word? Am I seeking Him in all things? Am I a useful tool for God's work?

PRAYER: Dear Lord, please help cleanse me of any self-righteousness. Let me live a life walking in Your Spirit. I am thankful that You are my strength, and that my faith would grow stronger as I study Your Word. Please make me useful for Your Kingdom. In Jesus name. Amen.



SCRIPTURE: Colossians 3:1-4

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on

earthly things. 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.

OBSERVATION: Once we are saved, we are now fully open to the work of the Lord. We are instructed here to set our minds on eternal things, and not earthly things. Whenever I see instructions such as these in the Bible, I know that it means that my natural tendency will instead be to focus on earthly things. If it were not so, then we would not need a warning such as this.

Galatians 5:16 So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

I do not think it means that we cannot enjoy our lives on earth, but on the flip side, it is easy to become obsessed with earthly things. These things can eat up all of our time, and take our focus away from where it should be.

Today these might be things like facebook, cars, nice houses, climbing the corporate ladder, golf, scrapbooking, etc. You can fill in the blank with whatever takes your focus off of God here.

I think we need to be careful to keep the Bible as the “plumb line” in our lives. Let it be our moral compass, and our guide to how we are spending our time, and where we are spending our money.

After all, it isn't really our money or our time to begin with. Everything we have has come as a blessing from God. And He has also given us the freedom to choose how we use it. We can financially bless those in need, or we can focus on our own selfish desires. We can spend time with our children, or push them off to spend time with our electronic devices.

Please don't get me wrong, I think there can be a balance here. None of these things in themselves are bad, but I think our devotion to them is what can ultimately stand in the way of our having a strong relationship with God.

APPLICATION: Take a few minutes today to make a list of where you spend your time. Make a list of where you spend most of your money. Take a mental note of where you might need to adjust your focus so that these areas clearly show that God is the priority in your life. If you have children, and haven't already done so, now is a great time to show them about how to handle money. We show them to give 10% to God, 10% to savings, and then the rest they are free to do what they choose. At Christmas time, we always pack Operation Christmas Child boxes. We all go to the Dollar Store and let them pick out items for their boxes. I supply basic necessities for the boxes, and the kids use their chore money to pay for toys, games, and other fun additions! If you haven't heard of Operation Christmas Child visit <https://www.samaritanspurse.org/> !

PRAYER: Dear Lord, I am so thankful for Your Word and Your love for me. I pray that my life would be a blessing to You. I also pray that my life would reflect my love for You. That You would help keep my focus on the eternal, and not on earthly things. I would love nothing more than to be welcomed into Your presence with the words “Well done, good and faithful servant.” In Your name I pray. Amen.



SCRIPTURE: Colossians 3:5-6

Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.

OBSERVATION: God's grace is what has allowed us to put off our old self and its fleshly desires. I saw a huge transformation in my husband when he got saved, as well as in myself. These verses are a reminder that as Christians, saved by faith through grace, we are to cast off old destructive habits, and instead live according to God's will.

In relation to yesterday's verses where we are instructed to keep our focus on things above, now we are exhorted to rid ourselves of earthly desires. Our sins have been covered by Christ's death on the cross. The old has given way to the new, and we no longer live as we once did. Instead of serving ourselves, now we are serving God!

Romans 8:13 "For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live,"

Through Christ it is possible to put aside our fleshly desires, and truly walk in the Spirit!

APPLICATION: Are there things in my life that I am doing that might not be glorifying to God? Have I truly rid myself of previous sinful desires, or habits? If not, take some time today in prayer to place those things at the feet of Jesus. Ask God to take them from you, and replace them with His love.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, thank you so much for being my strength and my shield! Please take away any old fleshly desires that I am holding onto and replace them with Your love. Show me how to use my life to bless others, and let me live walking in Your light. In Your name I pray. Amen.



SCRIPTURE: Colossians 3:7-8

You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.

OBSERVATION: Today's verses continue what we were talking about last week. Again Paul is reminding us of the things that should be put behind us as we now walk as Christians, and live our lives for Christ. Living any other way would be hurtful to our testimony as Christians. When we chose to allow these things into our lives, we are not only tarnishing our names, but that of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Thankfully, the Bible says that those who are saved, are dead to sin. Its power gradually lessens as we experience God's grace in our lives. This doesn't mean that we'll never sin again, or that we will now lead perfect lives. But it does mean that we'll have that conviction to live our lives with a Godly focus.

Previously we lived for ourselves, satisfying our own fleshly desires. But now we live for Christ. Whatever we do, is done out of reverence for Him. He is our comfort and our guide now, and prayerfully all that is done will be done through and for Jesus.

APPLICATION: Take a few minutes to examine our lives and see if there is anything we are doing, or participating in, that is contrary to what God would want for us.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, thank you so much for the grace you have given to me. I pray that you would reveal anything in me or that I am participating in that is not glorifying to You. I pray that I would be open to change those things, and that I would be useful for Your kingdom. In Jesus name, amen.



SCRIPTURE: Colossians 3:9-11

Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

OBSERVATION: Clearly these scriptures encourage us to turn our focus from our old lives, and now focus on being renewed through Christ. The Colossians had continued on with a pattern of lying, and here Paul exhorts them to put off their old ways and be renewed by Christ Jesus.

He is encouraging them and us, to make an effort. Just as children tend to become like their parents, so we become similar to where we are putting our focus on as well. To be renewed in the image of our Creator, we must know who our Creator is. If our image of God is wrong, our lives will not be consistent with His will either. The best way to make sure we are in line with God is to be in His Word daily, and to bring everything before Him in prayer.

If we are in constant communion with the Lord, then our lives will reflect that dedication. And only then will we be living according to His plan for our lives instead of our own.

And finally, in Christ we are all the same...sinners saved by grace. No one is higher than another, or more valuable. The gospel rids us of all unrighteousness and we are fully covered by Christ's sacrifice.

APPLICATION: To make sure that I am devoting time and energy to the Lord each day. Pray over everything, and be in constant communication with the Lord so I can be renewed in His image daily!

PRAYER: Dear Lord, thank you so much for your grace and mercy in my life! Through faith You have saved me for good works. Please cleanse my heart, and make me a vessel that can be used by You. In Jesus name, amen!



SCRIPTURE: Colossians 3:12

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

OBSERVATION: In the past few verses Paul has been exhorting us to put off our old habits, and instead turn our focus on to Jesus. And now we get words that are encouraging and sweet to read! Compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. What a wonderful world it would be if everyone adhered to these words.

As a homeschooling mom, I have plenty of occasions to work on these character traits in my children as well as myself. I am not naturally a patient person, but to get through a homeschooling day a certain amount of patience, kindness, gentleness, and compassion is required!

And starting off each day in prayer asking God to guide me, and give me strength and patience has helped tremendously. I've often found that my children feed off of my attitude, and so if I can be patient and encouraging to them, they will respond positively. Conversely, if I am yelling or short tempered with them the day doesn't usually end well.

I always think that when we are exhorted, then encouraged in the Word it is to warn us. Patience is not our natural tendency, but it has eternal rewards. If I can be patient with my children, hopefully they will in turn be patient with others, and so on.

APPLICATION: Start each day in prayer and the Word. Pray that God would equip me with whatever is needed to successfully navigate through that day. Make a mental note to myself whenever I am starting to lose patience, and instead take a few breaths and remember that I am training up the next generation and a few drops of kindness and patience will go a long way!

PRAYER: Dear Lord, thank you so much for my salvation. Please help me to live in a way that is pleasing to you. I pray that each day I will seek You and live in such a way that glorifies you and passes down to my children. Please continue to equip me for that which You have called me to. In Jesus name, amen.



SCRIPTURE: Colossians 3:13

Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

OBSERVATION: Forgiveness can be a hard thing. But I believe that at the root of bitterness lies pride. We feel that someone has done us wrong, and they do not deserve to be forgiven, or that by forgiving them we are saying it is okay to treat us that way. But in those thoughts we are mainly concerned with ourselves, and our own well being. No one likes to be hurt, betrayed, or treated poorly, but unfortunately it does happen.

However, the only one hurt by bitterness is ourselves. The Bible encourages us to forgive just as Christ forgave us. That is a big calling to follow through on, and definitely easier said than done.

As a mom, I am always trying to teach my children to bless those who persecute you. Or in our house we say "Bless those who are mean to you". And sibling rivalry with four kids who spend 24 hours a day together is inevitable.

Recently we did a challenge where if someone did something mean to another person, the offended person had to think of something nice they could in return. We gave examples of nice things they could do, and we talked about how it would be hard to continue to be mean to someone who was being so nice to you in return. I loved seeing them participate that day. Although it was just a daily challenge for them, a few weeks later I noticed one of my children thinking out loud about something nice they could do for their sister after she had been mean to them. Apparently it stuck and now it's kind of a game to see who can be the nicest. Now that's my kind of game!

APPLICATION: Come up with a way to forgive in your home. An idea I had was to spend time writing nice things down on paper strips then putting them in a jar. Each day have your children draw a name and a nice task that they can complete that day. At the end of the day see if everyone noticed the nice tasks that were done for them!

PRAYER: Dear Father, thank you so much for Your forgiveness of my sins, through Christ I am fully covered and blameless in Your sight. Please help me to forgive others as you

have forgiven me. And show me ways to teach my children how they can forgive others as well. In Jesus name, amen.



SCRIPTURE: Colossians 3:14

And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

OBSERVATION: Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. ... And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love. ~ 1 Corinthians 4-7, 13.

Loving someone is a tall order. It requires that we put away our selfish desires, and lift another person above ourselves. And this is exactly what God calls us to do. Without love there is no point. And through love, we can cover a multitude of sins.

I love this last sentencebinds them all together in perfect unity. God is love, and He binds us together in perfect unity. If we are all focusing on God, and doing what pleases Him, then we will by default be blessing others just as they will be blessing us!

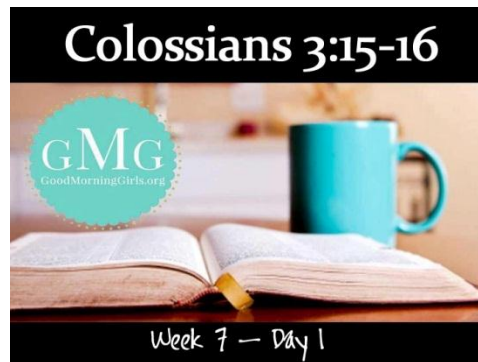
What a wonderful way to live. And while we cannot control how others will behave, we can at least start in our own homes. We can show love, forgiveness, kindness, gentleness, and patience to those around us.

God's love binds us and completes us. Without that we will seek to fill the holes in our lives with worldly things only to be disappointed. To love God with all our heart, soul, and mind, and honor others above ourselves is to fulfill God's perfect will for us.

APPLICATION: Come to God each morning in prayer. Ask for patience, forgiveness, and love for others, even those that are hard for us to love. Make a list of people to pray for and whoever else God brings to mind, even if it is someone difficult to love. Commit to praying that God will fill you with His love for others.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, thank you so much for the love you showed to me when I was a sinner, and now as a Christian. Please help me to do the same for others, even those

who are difficult for me to love. Please give me Your love for them and show me how I can be a blessing to those around me. In Jesus name, amen.



SCRIPTURE: Colossians 3:15-16

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.

OBSERVATION: Oh how sweet these verses are to me today! I love reading about God's peace, and letting the message of Christ dwell among us richly as we teach and admonish one another! And that's exactly what we are doing through this study and all of the wonderful comments and insights we have shared with one another!

Also, as a mom, being thankful and teaching my children through God's wisdom is such a blessing. As a homeschooler I have plenty of opportunities to use God's Word to encourage, exhort, and disciple my children.

If Christ is ruling in my heart, there will be peace, there will be thankfulness, and He will dwell richly among us. I think of an old little school house where we things are simple, and we aren't distracted by a million things going on each day. Where we can sit together and sing hymns and songs from the Spirit and just worship God.

While that's far from what my normal daily routine is, what a wonderful reality it can become if we are really seeking God's will in our lives. Taking time to worship together as a family, time to share and talk, and time to give thanks together for what God has blessed us with is a commodity in today's world that cannot be replaced.

APPLICATION: Type this verse on a sticky note and hang it somewhere you will see it regularly. Let it be your inspiration as you go through each day whether it be homeschooling, at your job, in your neighborhood or wherever you might go!

PRAYER: Dear Lord, I thank you so much for Your Words that are as sweet as honey to

my soul. They comfort me and encourage me and lift me up. These verses are such a blessing to me and I pray that You would bring them to the front of my mind regularly so that I might truly live them. And share them with my family as well, teaching my children to do the same. In Jesus name I pray, amen.



SCRIPTURE: Colossians 3:17

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.

OBSERVATION: This is one of my favorite verses in all the Bible. And I can honestly say it's inspired me through many a homeschooling day! Sometimes as a stay at home mom and homeschooler, I can feel overwhelmed, tired, frustrated, low on patience, and even insignificant in my duties and callings.

Sometimes the repetitive laundry loads, or cleaning of toilets, spilled milk, crumbs, wrappers and the like don't seem like they hold any value in today's world. And they very well might not. But in God's eternal world, they do.

It is in the mundane that He works miracles in our lives. It's through the hundredth time of cleaning up a mess, the millionth time of reading the same story to our toddler, and the bazillionth changed diaper, the that His will is being accomplished.

If God has chosen to place these things in front of us, then they aren't really mundane. They are our way of serving our families, teaching them up in His Word, and building relationship with the precious children He's entrusted to us!

It's easy to "feel" God in the mountain-top experiences, but most of our time is spent doing the ordinary, mundane tasks that it takes to run a home. But ladies, the home is where it all starts. Our home is our first ministry. And raising up future generations in His Word has eternal value! And that's something you can take with you.

APPLICATION: Take the challenge to do everything to the glory of God with a cheerful and thankful heart. Treat each of your children, your husband, and any other live-in persons as though you are serving Jesus Himself. And indeed, by willingly serving those He has put in our charge, we are! He has blessed each of us greatly and YOU are

valuable to Him!

PRAYER: Dear Lord, thank you so much for all you have blessed me with. Please help me to find value in the ordinary tasks you have laid before me. Help me to do all things with a willing heart, all for your glory, and in everything give thanksgiving. Bring to my mind that all of the little things that might annoy me, are gifts from You and I am honored to serve You through them. In Jesus name I pray, amen.



SCRIPTURE: Colossians 3:18-19

Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.

OBSERVATION: This is always a tough verse for me. I sort of like to be in charge. Just a little bit. Okay, a lot.

Submitting to someone else in today's world isn't usually received with open arms. As a matter of fact the word 'submission' even tends to lend itself to weakness. But taking these verses in context with God's character, and His Word, submitting to our husbands is simply God's way of keeping everything in perfect unity. And just as yesterday's verses reveal, the submission referred to here is our WILLING submission to our husbands. Submission in this case is for the mutual good and edification, and the glory of God.

I'm thankful that we are looking at both verses today though, as it reminds me that as I'm willingly submitting to my husband, so He is also loving me in return. Prayerfully he is also seeking God in all things. And as head of our homes, he is responsible for cleansing us by the washing with water through the Word and presenting us without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. (Eph. 5:25-27)

We happen to be in one of those instances right now where I don't particularly feel like submitting to my husband on a certain matter. I am humbled to read this gentle reminder this evening, but also thankful that my husband is seeking God's will for our lives, and He often reveals things to my husband in a much clearer fashion. While to me He's clearly reminding me to trust Him and willingly submit to the direction He is leading

my husband.

APPLICATION: For me, today's application is to submit to God's calling on our family. To trust my husband and follow his lead. If there is something on your plate similar, I encourage you to pray that God would help you trust in Him and respect your husband's leading.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, thank you so much for your Word! It is always a light to daily life, and I love how it is a sweet and gentle reminder to us. I pray that I am seeking You in all things, and that through my devotion to You, I will also willingly submit to my husband as well. I know you have ordained him as head over our home, please help me to respect that position, and support Your calling on our lives.



SCRIPTURE: Colossians 3:20-22

Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged. Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord.

OBSERVATION: Oh how I love to spout off this verse to my children! But yet, it is important to explain to them that we all have a purpose and a place in the Kingdom of God. Just as husbands submit to the Lord, wives submit to their husbands, and children submit to their parents. We all have a place and a calling. And each one is important in the eyes of the Lord.

I don't hold this verse over their heads, or use it as some sort of discipline, but we do bring it out to show them that they have a responsibility to God just as we do. And as they get older, and possibly get jobs, they'll also have to submit to God themselves as well as their employers.

Quickly, I'd also like to mention that as parents we are also called not to 'embitter', or in some versions 'provoke' or 'exasperate' our children. Continually finding fault with children will be discouraging them, and pushing them away from the love of Christ not

towards it. We need to be careful not to discourage, but instead encourage our children. Using God's Word, we can lift them up, not so they become prideful, but so that they gain Godly wisdom and desire to please our heavenly Father just as they will their earthly father.

So in all things we are to lead them back to Jesus, encouraging, exhorting, and discipling them in His Word and will.

APPLICATION: Today my application is to keep God's Word in mind while teaching my children. Not to yell at them, make them feel incompetent, or insignificant, but to listen to them, pay attention to what they have to say, and encourage them in their day. If a situation arises, I will use that as an opportunity to train them up as God would have me do.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, thank you so much for the children you have blessed me with. I pray that each day I would be a Godly example for them. That You would give me the best words to use, and actions to take to encourage, exhort, and disciple them for Your glory. Thank You for putting these precious children in my care, may I treat them as the gifts from You that they are. In Jesus name I pray, amen.



SCRIPTURE: Colossians 3:23-25

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs, and there is no favoritism.

OBSERVATION: I think today's verse sums up what we've been reading all week. And that is to do all things as though we are working directly for the Lord, because indeed we are. Everything we have is a blessing given to us from Him. Our jobs, our families, our homes, our children, our lives.

We do not own any of these things, nor are they something we deserve. But we have been entrusted with them as a blessing by God, and they should be treated as such.

Even though we might work for a boss, or as a servant to our families and others, we need to keep that which has eternal value in the forefront of our minds.

Keeping our focus on God and doing all things out of our love for Him will greatly help the attitudes we have in our daily lives. It will also bless those around us as we share His love, and do all things for the glory of Him who has blessed us greatly.

There is no way to repay Jesus for what He has done for us on the cross. But we can show our love and devotion through our daily lives. Through serving those around us and showing others how to do the same.

It is times like this that I am reminded of what my children see on a daily basis. If they're always watching mom huff around the house complaining of all I have to do, I'm not presenting a very Godly view in regards to the calling on a homeschooling mom. While I realize the importance of the role I've been called to, all they are seeing is something they do not want to be when they grow up. And how sad is that?

As a Christian, I want to show them that I'm content with where God has me. That I do things, even things I don't want to do, willingly out of submission to Him, and... *gasp* ...even joyfully! It is at that point that we start to leave a Godly legacy for our children. One that is passed down from generation to generation. And that my beloved sisters is something that has eternal value and is worth fighting for!

APPLICATION: Take a minute today to think about your priorities. What God has placed before you. Are you serving with God's heart, or a bitter one? Are you serving willfully or begrudgingly? Take some time to pray today that God would soften your heart, and help you to serve in a way that is pleasing to Him.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, thank you so much for my family, home, friends, and church. Please help me to keep my priorities straight, and focus my time on that which has eternal value in Your Kingdom. Help me to serve willingly, and with a cheerful and thankful heart as You have blessed me greatly. In Jesus name I pray, amen.



SCRIPTURE: Colossians 4:1-3

Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven. Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains.

OBSERVATION: The work ethic in today's society has gone drastically downhill. Employers treat employees worse, and employees treat their employers worse. I think teaching our children to submit to their bosses, and be good employees is important.

As Christians, we have a wonderful platform to share the gospel in our work areas. We can stand out by showing up on time, not clocking out early, not taking extra breaks etc. Doing the work we are being paid for.

And similarly, as we are elevated to managerial positions, we can also treat our employees fairly and with importance. We can pray that God will open up doors for us to share the gospel with others, and encourage, pray for, and lift up those in need.

As a stay-at-home mom, I can do the same with my children. By showing them respect, and teaching them how to do the same for others we are raising up future generations of employees, managers, congressmen and women, and even presidents.

APPLICATION: Take some time today to talk to your children about what it's like to work for someone else, and what it means to be a loyal and dedicated employee and why that honors the Lord. If applicable use your husband as an example, showing why he goes to work on time each day, and is loyal to his company. If you don't have children, but instead are a single, working parent or woman, apply this directly by being a loyal employee. Showing your boss what a blessing it is to have an employee that can be counted on, that does things without being told, and that goes above the call of duty. This will speak volumes for God's kingdom as those non-believers around you observe.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, I thank you so much for my husband's job, and for all You have done to support our family. I pray for those in our group who are employees and bosses, that they would be a blessing to their bosses, as well as to their employees. I also pray for those who are unemployed seeking work that You would bring them the perfect job where they can be a light for You. Please remind me daily to devote myself to prayer and that I would be thankful for all You have blessed me with. In Jesus name I pray, amen.



SCRIPTURE: Colossians 4:4-6

Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

OBSERVATION: Paul typically closes his letters with a reminder to keep our eyes on God. To be careful how we act, be graceful with others, and be in prayer and thanksgiving with everything.

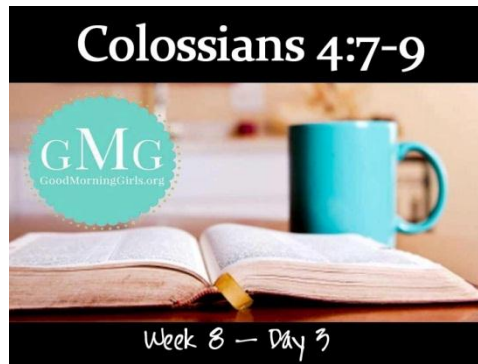
In these verses he is also exhorting us to be careful how we treat outsiders, or in our case non-Christians. In this verse Paul might have even been talking about believers who are outside of correct Biblical teaching as well. He encourages us to be in constant prayer that God would open doors for us to share the gospel message with others, and that we would be ready to 'proclaim the mystery of Christ' to all who ask.

2 Timothy 4:22 ~ Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage--with great patience and careful instruction.

We are the church, and Paul reminds us quite clearly that we are the conduit to which He will spread His Word throughout the world. As others observe us living as Christians and prayerfully being a Godly example, we are speaking...quite loudly...His message.

APPLICATION: The best way through trials is to be thankful...in all circumstances right? Commit a time daily to be in the Word and in prayer. As our study is nearing its close, don't stop from seeking God's Word daily. Just as Paul exhorts the Colossians to keep watch on how they are acting, and to be in prayer and give thanks regularly, let's devote time to do the same.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, thank you so much for this study and for speaking Your Word into my heart. Please help me to be faithful to devote time each day to seek your will, read Your Word, and be in prayer which is communication with You. Help me to be strong, living boldly for You. Replace my will with Yours so that I might be used mightily by You. In Jesus name I pray, amen.



SCRIPTURE: Colossians 4:7-9

Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts. He is coming with Onesimus, our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you. They will tell you everything that is happening here.

OBSERVATION: In closing his letter, Paul's primary interest here is to build up his fellow servants and encourage those in the church of their competence as well as His own love for the people there.

In this last chapter he's now referred to the fact that he is in chains for the gospel, but has not forgotten his calling, nor let his circumstances affect his devotion to the Lord.

Sometimes we can think it is hard to be a servant of Christ, and indeed for Paul and many others it is. People all over the world are persecuted for following Christ, and even imprisoned or killed for their faith.

In this country however we are not. We are free to own, carry, and share Bibles as we wish. We can speak God's Word out loud, we do not have to meet in secret, and we can even share our faith with others without harm.

I always wish that I had Paul's devotion, and am not certain I could hold up under such extreme conditions. But thankfully at the present time God has not place those kinds of things before me. He has only asked that I be a light for Him where I am. That I serve my family and others He places before me. That I stand strong in my faith, and that I'm a Godly example to those around me.

APPLICATION: I was not raised in a Christian home, but it was a loving home and I adore my parents and extended family immensely. However there are times when I have to be bold for God even if it means offending my own family. I am called to stand up for certain values, to say no to certain things, and to live as a Christian in a world where that might not be the popular choice. My continual application is to be bold for God regardless of what others, even my own family members, might say.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, I am so thankful for Your salvation. That you came after me, seeking to win me for Your Kingdom. I pray that I would stand bold for my faith regardless of

what others around me might think or say. That I would live as a Godly example for my children and others even when it is hard. And I pray for those in other countries who are persecuted for their faith in You. Let us stand strong, continually strengthened by Your Word, not wavering, compromising, or losing our faith. In Jesus name I pray, amen.



SCRIPTURE: Colossians 4:10-12

My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.) Jesus, who is called Justus, also sends greetings. These are the only Jews among my co-workers for the kingdom of God, and they have proved a comfort to me. Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.

OBSERVATION: It always amazes me that even from prison, Paul is concerned for and seeking to help the Colossians. He sends help and encouragement, as well as prayers and instructions for them so that their ministry would not be in vain.

Since he is currently in prison, he isn't able to come to them in person, but makes an amazing effort to continue to encourage, exhort, and lift up others.

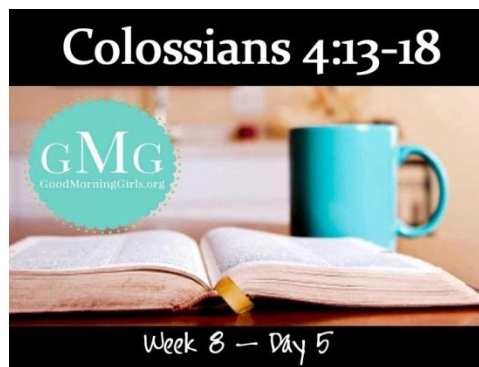
I have a dear friend who moved away a few years ago. And at first we were great about calling and keeping in touch. Over the last year I realized that though I think of her often, I am not calling as frequently. But she is always on my heart, and I am inspired by Paul here not to forget those who might be out of my reach physically.

But we can certainly reach people through prayer, and of course the use of modern technology like the phone and internet. Sometimes just reaching out to someone you haven't heard from in a while, or someone who might have moved away, is a great way to encourage them and show them that they are not alone. It also shows them that God has not forgotten about them or left them as He puts them on your heart.

Sometimes just letting someone know you are praying for them, and in Paul's words 'wrestling' for them, is an amazing encouragement for them to stand firm in the will of God!

APPLICATION: Think about those God has placed in your life. Take a minute to write down some people you can pray for regularly. Shoot them an email, text, or give them a call to let them know you are thinking about them and are praying for them!

PRAYER: Dear Lord, thank you so much for this study and all I have gleaned from Your Word. I pray that you would help me to stand strong in Your will, and encourage others to do the same. Please prompt me to act as you bring people to my mind who need prayer and encouragement. Don't allow me to let the prompting slip by or ignored, but instead help me to take a few minutes to encourage a friend, family member, or stranger in need. In Jesus name I pray, amen.



SCRIPTURE: Colossians 4:13-18

I vouch for him that he is working hard for you and for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis. Our dear friend Luke, the doctor, and Demas send greetings. Give my greetings to the brothers and sisters at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house. After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea. Tell Archippus: "See to it that you complete the ministry you have received in the Lord." I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

OBSERVATION: I like how Paul ends this letter encouraging the Colossians to share their letter with the Laodiceans, and visa versa. In this way he creates a bond and form of unity between the two. Now instead of feeling alone, and even compromising their stance for God, they have received much support, and can together hold one another

up for the furthering of God's Kingdom. He also encourages them to complete the ministry they have been given through God's strength.

I am greatly encouraged by the fact that these people are praying for those in other cities! Today I think we are fortunate to pray for those in our immediate area, and even our own pastor, let alone believers in other places!

One thing we have done in our family to encourage our children to pray for others, besides their own needs, is we created a prayer wall. It houses pictures of missionaries and children all over the world that our family has committed to supporting. While we support them financially, it is also imperative that we support them prayerfully as well. The prayer wall is a wonderful visual reminder for us. And daily we take turns during prayer time to cover each one in prayer.

Paul closes his letter exactly how it is began, in celebration of God's grace in their lives. In the same way his letter encourages us today that we, participating in God's salvation through Christ, will be sustained through His grace and mercy in our lives.

APPLICATION: I want to take a quick minute to thank you all for continuing through this study as a group. Your comments have been a great blessing to me as well as many others. This study has been wonderfully revealing and timely in my own life as well.

Please take some time today to reach out to one of the other ladies in our group whose comment might have encouraged you or prompted you to pray for them and let them know! In Christ, be blessed and encouraged beloved sisters! If you don't have someone you connected with, take some time with your own family to pray for someone else dear to you, another family, friend, or acquaintance.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, I thank you so much for Your Word which speaks so clearly into our lives and for all of these sweet ladies who You have knit together for this study. I pray that we might have formed a bond with another that will continue. I pray for each of them that they were encouraged and inspired to be Godly women seeking hard after You and keeping Your kingdom as a priority in their lives. And I pray for those ladies who might have fallen behind that You would inspire them to continue on in Your Word, seeking And I pray for those ladies who might have fallen behind that You would inspire them to continue on in Your Word, seeking Your will daily. Bless them and keep them safe in all circumstances. In Your precious Son's name I pray, amen.