

July 19, 2026

God's Good News Story: The Church Alive & Growing

***Colossians: Christ: Our Lord, Our Life, Our Love
Praying Like Paul: A 5 Point Model for the Church***

Today we begin a new 6 week series in the Book of Colossians. Imagine navigating a ship through foggy waters. Without a reliable chart and compass, you're lost—adrift, vulnerable to every current and hidden rock. The Colossian church faced spiritual fog: false teachings, philosophies, and legalism threatened to pull them off course.

Paul writes Colossians, probably around 60-62 AD. While he was under house arrest in Rome. Colossians is labeled on of Paul's 'Prison Epistles', along with Philemon, Ephesians and Philippians. Colossians is described as a spiritual "chart and compass," reminding believers that Christ alone is our true North—our Supreme Lord and sufficient Savior. Below is an overview chart by Dr. Charles Swindoll.

COLOSSIANS

	Christ Is Our Lord		... Our Life		... Our Love
	<u>Lord of creation</u>	<u>Lord of our walk</u>	<u>Our mind</u>	<u>Love for "outsiders"</u>	
	<u>Lord of the church</u>	<u>Lord of our salvation</u>	<u>Our body</u>	<u>Love for believers</u>	
	<u>Lord of ministry</u>	<u>Lord of our growth</u>	<u>Our attitude</u>		
			<u>Our actions</u>		
	CHAPTER 1	CHAPTER 2	CHAPTER 3	CHAPTER 4	
Subject	Instruction	Warnings	Exhortations	Reminders	
Christ	His person and work			His peace and presence	
Emphasis	Doctrinal and corrective			Practical and reassuring	
Theme	Christ is our supreme Lord and sufficient Savior.				
Key Verses	2:9–10				
Christ in Colossians	Jesus is the supreme Lord of the church and the world, the all-sufficient Savior in whom the fullness of Deity dwells (1:13–20; 2:9).				

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THE CITY: Colossae was a small, cosmopolitan city in Asia Minor, once significant but by Paul's day overshadowed by its neighbors. It was a crossroads of ideas and cultures, with a large Jewish population and a constant influx of new philosophies and religious teachings from the East. This made Colossae fertile ground for all kinds of religious speculation and heresy, as spiritual "hucksters" peddled their ideas to anyone who would listen.

THE CHURCH: Remarkably, the church in Colossae wasn't founded by Paul himself—he had never even visited them. Instead, the church was the fruit of Paul's ministry in Ephesus, where men like Epaphras and Philemon came to faith and brought the gospel back to their hometown. Epaphras, in particular, was instrumental in planting the church and sharing the message with neighboring cities like Laodicea and Hierapolis. This reminds us that God often uses ordinary believers, not just apostles or full-time ministers, to start and grow His church—even in small, out-of-the-way places.

THE CRISIS: But a crisis soon arose. False teachers began to threaten the church's foundation by introducing new doctrines that diminished the person and work of Christ. The crisis in Colossae began when a dangerous blend of false teachings started to infiltrate the young congregation, prompting their leader, Epaphras, to seek Paul's counsel in a Roman prison. This "Colossian Heresy" was a deceptive mix

of Eastern philosophy, Jewish legalism, and early Gnosticism. These "spiritual aristocrats" claimed to be "in the know," promising a path to spiritual perfection through secret wisdom, the worship of angelic mediators, and rigid adherence to man-made rules and dietary laws. They taught that matter was inherently evil and that a holy God remained distant, requiring a series of spiritual "emanations" to bridge the gap between heaven and earth.

At its core, this crisis was an attack on the sufficiency and preeminence of Jesus Christ. By presenting Christ as merely one of many spiritual beings, the false teachers were effectively dethroning Him and robbing the believers of their "fullness" in Him.

Paul's response was not to argue every minor point of their philosophy, but to lift up the person of Jesus as the "Supreme Lord" who is the visible image of the invisible God. He reminded the church that because all the fullness of the Deity dwells in Christ bodily, they were already "complete in Him" and needed no other formulas, rituals, or philosophies to reach spiritual maturity.

Paul, writing from prison, addresses this urgent situation—not with condemnation, but with a letter that lifts up the supremacy of Jesus Christ. He reminds the Colossians that the gospel centers not on human philosophy or religious systems, but on the preeminent Christ, who alone is sufficient for salvation and spiritual growth.,

Church family, imagine for a moment you're the captain of a ship, sailing through dense fog. You can't see the horizon, and the shoreline is hidden. What do you need most? A reliable chart and a trustworthy compass. Without them, you're at the mercy of every current and hidden rock.

The church in Colossae was sailing through spiritual fog. False teachings, empty philosophies, and legalism threatened to pull them off course. Paul writes this letter as a spiritual "*chart and compass*"—*to help believers stay on course, not drifting into the dangers of making Christianity a mere philosophy, nor getting trapped in a rigid, lifeless legalism* (Swindoll).

Today, we begin our journey through Colossians with Paul's opening words—a foundation for a church that is truly alive and growing.

Praying Like Paul—A Model for the Church

Colossians 1:1–14

Introduction

Church, what if our prayers for each other looked like Paul's prayer for the Colossians? In these verses, Paul doesn't just talk about prayer—he shows us how to pray for a church that's alive, fruitful, and anchored in Christ. Let's walk through Paul's prayer, verse by verse, and let it shape our prayers for each other today.

Point 1: Thank God for Gospel Growth

Verses 1–5:

This letter is from Paul, chosen by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and from our brother Timothy. ² We are writing to God’s holy people in the city of Colosse, who are faithful brothers and sisters in Christ. May God our Father give you grace and peace. ³ We always pray for you, and we give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴ For we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and your love for all of God’s people, ⁵ which come from your confident hope of what God has reserved for you in heaven. You have had this expectation ever since you first heard the truth of the Good News.

Paul starts with gratitude. He sees faith, love, and hope springing up because the gospel is alive and bearing fruit—not just in Colossae, but all over the world.

Application: Let’s be a church that thanks God for every sign of His grace and for the gospel’s power to change lives—here and everywhere.

Point 2: Pray for Lives Changed by the Good News

Verses 6–7:

⁶ This same Good News that came to you is going out all over the world. It is bearing fruit everywhere by changing lives, just as it changed your lives from the day you first heard and understood the truth about God’s wonderful grace. ⁷ You learned about the Good News from Epaphras, our beloved co-worker. He is Christ’s faithful servant, and he is helping us on your behalf.

Paul’s prayer recognizes that the Good News—the gospel—is not static. It is “bearing fruit and increasing” everywhere it goes, including in Colossae. Through the faithful witness of Epaphras, lives were changed, and the church was born.

Application: Let’s pray for the gospel to keep changing lives among us. May we see new fruit—hearts transformed, relationships restored, and people coming to know the grace of God in truth. Let’s pray that our church would be a place where the Good News is always at work, just as it was in Colossae.

Point 3: Ask God for Deeper Understanding

Verses 8–10:

⁸ He (Epaphras) has told us about the love for others that the Holy Spirit has given you. ⁹ So we have not stopped praying for you since we first heard about you. We ask God to give you complete knowledge of His will and to give you spiritual wisdom and understanding. ¹⁰ Then the way you live will always honor and please the Lord, and your lives will produce every kind of good fruit. All the while, you will grow as you learn to know God better and better.

Paul's prayer moves from gratitude to a request for deeper spiritual understanding. He knows that knowing God's will leads to a life that pleases Him and bears fruit. Paul sets the stage for his focus on the priority of Christ and the need to have a deeper understanding of Christ. When Christ is at the center, everything else falls into place. When He is not, everything falls apart.

Application: Let's pray for each other to grow in wisdom, so our lives reflect God's heart and purpose.

Point 4: Rely on God for Strength, Endurance & Patience

Verses 11–12:¹¹ *We also pray that you will be strengthened with all His glorious power so you will have all the endurance and patience you need. May you be filled with joy, ¹² always thanking the Father. He has enabled you to share in the inheritance that belongs to His people, who live in the light.*

Paul prays for the Colossians to be strengthened with all of God's glorious power—not just so they can get by, but so they can endure with joy and gratitude, no matter what comes their way. As Warren Wiersbe reminds us, “*Joy is not something we work up; it is something the Spirit works in.*” True endurance and patience aren't the products of sheer willpower or easy circumstances; they are gifts of God's Spirit at work within us. There is a kind of patience that simply survives, but Paul prays for something deeper—a joyful patience, even when life is hard or people are difficult. This joy is independent of circumstances and is a fruit of the Spirit, not a product of our environment. Paul himself modeled this, writing from prison yet overflowing with thanksgiving and hope. Swindoll's “chart and compass” perspective shows us that Christ keeps us on course—not just by giving us rules, but by empowering us from within to face every trial with a thankful heart. So, when we pray for strength, let's remember we're asking for more than just survival; we're asking for the Spirit's joy and gratitude to shine through us, becoming a living testimony to the world of God's sustaining grace.

Application: Let's pray for God's power to help us persevere, and for hearts that overflow with thankfulness, no matter what we face.

Point 5: Remember God's Rescue & Redemption

Verses 13–14:

¹³ For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, ¹⁴ who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins.

Paul ends by reminding the church of the gospel foundation: God has rescued us, brought us into Christ's Kingdom, and forgiven our sins. Paul's words here are a triumphant declaration of what God has accomplished for every believer. We were once trapped in the kingdom of darkness—lost, powerless, and separated from God by our sin. But God, in His mercy, didn't leave us there. He “rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son.” This is not just a change of scenery; it's a total change of citizenship and identity. Through Christ, we are no longer defined by our past or by the powers that once held us captive. Jesus “purchased our freedom and forgave our sins”—a complete redemption that breaks every chain and wipes every slate clean.

As Swindoll's chart reminds us, Christ is not only our Lord but our sufficient Savior, and as Warren Wiersbe notes, this rescue is the greatest miracle of all. When we pray, let's never forget that our foundation is the finished work of Jesus—He is our hope, our freedom, and our new life.

Let's pray with confidence, knowing that we stand forgiven and free in the Kingdom of God's beloved Son.

Application: Let's anchor our prayers in the finished work of Jesus—our hope, our freedom, our new life.

Church, let's pray like Paul:

- Thanking God for gospel growth
- Praying for lives changed by the Good News
- Asking for deeper understanding
- Relying on God for strength
- Remembering His rescue and redemption

TAKE AWAY: Church, today we've seen that Paul's prayer for the Colossians is more than ancient words—it's a living model for us. He thanks God for faith, love, and hope springing up wherever the gospel takes root, and he prays for lives transformed by the Good News, for deeper understanding, for strength to endure, and for hearts that overflow with gratitude.

Paul reminds us that the gospel isn't just a philosophy or a set of rules—it centers on Jesus Christ, the One who rescues us from darkness and brings us into His kingdom. If you're searching for real change, for hope that lasts, for a foundation that will never fail, look to Christ. He alone is enough.

Today, let His truth take root in your heart—believe in Him, receive His forgiveness, and step into the fullness of life only He can give.

May our prayers shape us into a church alive and growing, for the glory of Christ

Our prayer should be...

“Lord Jesus, we thank You that You are our Supreme Lord. Root us deeply in faith, love, and hope. Grow us in knowledge and wisdom. Bear fruit in our lives and in our church. Keep us on course, guided by Your truth and grace. In Your name, Amen.”

Colossians 1:1-14 New Living Translation Follows

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