

The Thread

Discovering The Thread of the Gospel Through The Big-Picture Story of the Bible

Part 4: The Gospel At Work

Lesson 46: A Letter From Paul, Part 2 (Colossians)



Session Snapshot

Narrative Passage: Colossians 1:15-23

Gospel Focus: Ephesians 1:3-4

Student Takeaways:

- Students will understand the amazing, wonderful, awesome supremacy of Christ as communicated by Paul.
- Students will understand that part of being saved by faith in Christ is that God sees us as holy and blameless.
- Students will be challenged to grasp the truth that through Christ, God sees them as blameless and guilt-free, and express how this truth drives away any guilt and shame they may feel.



Overview

We are starting to delve into what are called “the epistles,” letters that were written to various churches that started popping up after Christ’s death and resurrection. This lesson will move away from the story of Acts in chronological form, and instead will begin to dive into these letters written to help the followers of Christ who were increasing all over. As you may recall, Paul wrote many of his letters while awaiting trial in Rome. As he would hear reports (in this case from Timothy), he would take time to respond to their needs. The church in Colossae needed encouragement, teaching, and the helpful hand of Paul’s guidance. Colossians is an amazingly powerful little book that packs a big punch. Your students will love it.



Teacher Prep Video

Each *Thread* lesson comes with a Teacher Prep Video. These are short videos designed to help you grasp the main point of the lesson as you prepare to teach.

To access your *Thread* lesson 46 Teacher Prep Video, login to your Lesson Manager, navigate to lesson 46, and click on the “Background” tab. You’ll notice the Teacher Prep Video near the top of the Lesson Manager window.



Bible Background

The Bible Background is designed to help you provide the basic context for the passages you’ll be studying.

- **What do we mean by “context”?** In every ym360 Bible study lesson we encourage teachers to help students know who wrote a particular book, when it was written, and why it was written.
- **Why teach context?** Grasping the big-picture view of God’s story of redemption is difficult for teenagers without understanding the context of the books and passages they’re studying.

Colossians

Author: The Apostle Paul identified himself as the author of Colossians.

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Time frame: Most people believe Colossians was written sometime between A.D. 61 and 63, during Paul's first imprisonment in Rome (Acts 28:17-31).

Purpose: Ultimately, this letter's purpose is to emphasize the supremacy of Christ over everything. Paul was writing to combat the spread of false teachings among the church at Colossae. The exact heresy being refuted is not certain and may have been a blend of multiple influences. The legalism, mysticism, and asceticism corrupting the pure faith in Colossae were moving attention away from Christ, placing it instead on self-discipline and the awe of other spiritual things.

Ephesians

Author: The Apostle Paul wrote the letters to the Ephesians and Titus. Of course we know Paul as the one-time chief enemy of the Church. After his miraculous conversion on the road to Damascus, Paul would go on to have a position of great importance in the early Church and beyond. He wrote 13 of the 27 books of the New Testament.

Time frame: Ephesians was probably written by Paul from prison in the latter years of his life, sometime around 60 or 61 AD.

Purpose: Paul had a very close relationship with the church in Ephesus. It seems as if the motivation for the letter was simply that the church would know how he was faring in his imprisonment. But, true to form, Paul couldn't help but teach. The letter covers general teaching on the work of Christ to redeem believers, unity among believers, and how believers are supposed to conduct themselves.



Lesson Plan

The Lesson Plan contains four elements:

- An introductory activity called Getting Started designed to prepare teenagers to engage with God and the truth of His Word.
- A section entitled The Story featuring a narrative from Scripture that helps teenagers know God better through learning the story of the Bible.
- A special emphasis entitled The Thread where teenagers discover the Gospel thread coursing throughout the story of the Bible.
- An application-focused segment called Wrapping Up helping teenagers ask the question, "How am I impacted by what I learned today?"

Getting Started

- **Goal:** To help students begin to understand the awe that Christ is truly the one that is supreme over all.
- **Set-Up:** Either arrange to print out pictures of beautiful nature scenes, or find a video on YouTube that shows powerful scenes of amazing natural landscapes.

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FIRST, explain that in today's lesson you're going to look at what it means to be in awe of God, who He is, and what He has done. Say something like the following:

- **Awesome is a word we use a lot. We use it to discuss our favorite flavor of pizza, or to describe what you're going to do with your friends. The problem is that these aren't the kind of uses the word was meant for. "Awesome" literally means to, "Invoke awe." In other words this applies to those moments you are left speechless as you take in something too overwhelmingly great to express.**

Remind students that it really is AWE-SOME to consider who God is and what He has made. Encourage them to think back to all of those events like Creation, the Flood, the parting of the Red Sea, and obviously Jesus' miraculous birth, death, and resurrection. Say something like:

- **We've looked at God through the Bible. However, did you ever think that we can see His fingerprints on everything around us? We are going to take a moment and watch a video (or look at pictures, depending on what you decided). As you look at these, I want you to think about where you see God in it.**

NEXT, show the video or images. When you have finished, say something like this:

- **Think about some more facts. Have you ever pondered just how awe-inspiring God is? God has His hand on things we see and things we don't. Have you ever taken a moment to think about how God existed before anything else and yet created everything? What does that make you think?**

FINALLY, say something like:

- **Learning about how big our God really is can strengthen our faith. If we have a relationship with a God we can know everything about, then He doesn't know more than we do. Have you ever thought about the reality that we need a God that is indescribable, and more than we totally grasp? This is what we are going to dive into as a part of our lesson today. God is much more than we can think or imagine.**

Transition to The Story.

The Story

- **Goal:** Students will understand the amazing, wonderful, awesome supremacy of Christ as communicated by Paul.
- **Set-Up:** Students will need a Bible or a Bible app. You may find a dry-erase board is helpful to jot down some notes, but it's not essential.

Connecting The Dots

As you teach The Thread, there will naturally be some gaps in the story. This is an optional way for you to fill in some of the gaps between the last lesson you taught and this one. Use it as a way to review and/or to connect the dots to the events surrounding the passage.

- **Colossae was probably the smallest and least important city that Paul wrote to, however his con-**

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cerns about their belief systems were strong enough that he felt he had to write the Colossians to remedy the issue.

- The Colossian Church as a whole was mixing a little from this religion and a little from that one to create its own “brand” of Christianity.
- Historically, Colossae had been a prosperous city, famous for its fabric dyes. Yet, when Paul wrote this letter the city was on the decline. Interestingly, historians have noted an earthquake took out this city a short time after this epistle was written (60 AD).
- It would have been easy to focus on the issues of Colossae. Instead Paul opted to focus on the solution, which was a better understanding of Jesus.

FIRST, start by having students turn to Colossians 1:15-17. While they’re finding it, provide some of the basic background for the book using the Bible Background. Then, read or have a student read this passage. Say something like:

- **This week we’re continuing our look at the “epistles.” Does anyone have any idea what these were?**
 - o Answer: “Epistles” were letters that were written as various churches started cropping up after Christ’s death and resurrection. Explain to students that this lesson will continue what you started last week: moving away from the story of the Bible in its chronological form. Instead, explain that you will begin to dive into these letters written to help the followers of Christ who were emerging all over this part of the world.
- **In looking at this passage as a whole what are the first things that jump out at you and why?**
 - o Answers will vary.
- **Let’s break the passage down a little. Looking at just verses 15-17 what is this saying about who Christ is?**
 - o Answers will vary. Make sure to point out that when Jesus came to earth, everything about Him gave us a glimpse into being able to see with our eyes what God “looked” like.
- **What does Paul say about creation in these passages, and more specifically, Jesus’ role in it?**
 - o Jesus has existed before anything else. Not only was everything created by Him, but FOR Him.

NEXT, read or have a student read verses 18-20. Ask:

- **What does it mean that Christ is head of the church, and that He is first of everything?**
 - o Answer: Christ isn’t just in charge of the church, He is the reason the church exists. It will be important to remind students that when we belong to Christ, we ARE the church. Paul is not talking about just the believers in Colossae, he is saying that any of us who follow Jesus come together under His headship.
- **What does it mean when it is saying that fullness of God lived in Christ and that through His blood everything was reconciled and made at peace?**
 - o Answer: Make sure to talk about what it means to be “reconciled.” Christ’s death made a way to restore our relationship with God. This is the point of this entire study. We must remind students (and ourselves) that before Christ, our relationship was broken before God. There was no way to get back to Him, or “fix” it. But through Christ’s blood shed on the cross for our sins, death no longer has a hold on those who choose to profess faith in Christ.

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THEN, read or have a student read verses 21-23. Ask:

- **What is this passage saying about our own relationship with Christ? What does this idea of reconciliation do for those of us who grab hold of it?**
 - o Answer: We were considered enemies of God because nothing we could do would make it right with Him. When we understand what Christ has done and choose to believe it, then something miraculous happens. We are seen as blameless. He sees us without any fault at all.
- **Does that mean that we will never mess up ever again? Explain.**
 - o Answer: No. We still have a sin nature and will still sin. What it means is that when we are clothed in who Christ is and what He did, God sees us through Jesus' sacrifice.

Finish by saying something like:

- **This passage makes it clear that Christ is in charge of everything, especially our lives. He always has been. We just don't always like to believe that. Yet, shedding His blood on the cross and overcoming death meant that Jesus made a way back to a relationship with God. And in that relationship, God sees us as something totally different in Christ. He sees us as redeemed.**

If students don't have any questions, transition into The Thread and see where you can trace the connection of the Gospel to the big-picture narrative of Scripture.

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FIRST, instruct students to turn to Ephesians 1. If you choose, while they are finding the book of Ephesians, provide them with some brief context for the book by referencing the Bible Background. When you've finished, read or have a student read Ephesians 1:3-4. Then lead students in a discussion. Begin by saying something like:

- **Let's take a moment and put our hands over our eyes. Now separate our fingers a little so we are only seeing through the gaps. Everyone take a moment and look at the room in this way. It changes our perspective in the way we see everyone around us and the room at large. Now imagine you had a set of glasses so that this is how you saw the world around you. It would be a totally different perspective. When we come into a relationship with Christ, God starts to see us through a different perspective entirely. He sees us blameless and holy, not because of what we do, but because of who Jesus is and what He did.**
- **When you think of the fact of how God sees us, why would we want to praise God in the way the start of this passage does?**
 - o Answers will vary. Point out that when we profess faith in Him and what He has done, then we become "united" with Him. In other words, when we become one in Christ we can start to see His love for us. When we start to see this, we want to thank Him for who He is and what He has done.
- **What do you think about this idea that before God created anything, He was thinking about us?**
 - o Answers will vary. Again focus on the power of God's love. It caused Him to do whatever it took to restore the relationship we were meant to have with Him.

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FINALLY, say something like:

- **This passage is a perfect example of something that totally is so hard to really comprehend. When we trust to be one with Christ, to come into a relationship with Him, we rest in a peace that passes understanding. We praise God who blesses us and sees us as blameless when we are united with Christ. What an amazing gift we've been given!**

If your students don't have any more questions, transition into the Wrapping Up section.

Wrapping Up

- **Goal:** Students will be challenged to grasp the truth that through Christ, God sees them as blameless and guilt-free, and express how this truth drives away any guilt and shame they may feel.
- **Set-Up:** Provide pen and paper or notecards for students.

FIRST, explain to students that when you discuss topics like you had today, it's easy to gloss over them because it has so much to do with how God sees us. It's hard to internalize how these truths impact our lives. Distribute the pieces of paper or notecards you've gathered. Then say something like:

- **God sees us differently when we are in relationship with Him. Take a moment and contemplate your own relationship with the Lord. On the paper you have, I want you to draw a picture that represents your faith walk with the Lord. There are no "rules," just that you are honest where you are with Him.**

Give students a few moments to do this, then ask students to look at their picture and to split up into groups of three or four. Have them share their picture with each person in their small group. After you have given them a few moments to share with each other, ask them to write the word: BLAMELESS at the bottom of their page and GUILTLESS at the top of their paper in very large letters. Ask them to look at their papers as you talk, then say something like:

- **Looking at your paper, wherever you are on your faith walk with Jesus, He sees you as blameless and without guilt. If your paper shows someone who keeps the Lord far away from you, take a moment and answer for yourself why that is. Is He pursuing you and you would rather keep Him far away from you? If you feel like you can't quite get to Him, why is that? Take a moment and truly contemplate your drawing. Now realize that when you are in a relationship with Jesus, He can only see you as blameless and guiltless. It doesn't mean we won't mess up and don't need to repent when we are wrong. That's about wanting to be in a relationship with Him though. When we want to be in a relationship with Him, then we desire to be close to Him.**

Ask if anyone wants to share anything that has stood out to them from their drawings or from what you just said.

FINALLY, finish by saying something like:

- **We serve a very big God. It can seem strange that He made everything and all Creation was**

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made to reflect His glory. As we finish up today, think about the safety that comes with serving a God that would do anything to make right our relationship with Him. It's a powerful, wonderful truth that should shape the way we see ourselves and the world.

Close in prayer for your group.

- **If you've purchased the *Tracing The Thread* devotional journal, remind students that they'll be working through Week 46 this week. Encourage them to keep up with the daily devotions, and to give memorizing this week's verse their best shot.**
- **If you'll be utilizing the digital devotions included in the *Thread* curriculum, remind students how you'll be making them available, i.e., Instagram, Facebook, etc.**
- **Use the Social Media guide to stay in touch with students via text or Twitter, and to encourage them to follow through with reading their devotions.**

We Want To Hear From You . . .

- Do you have questions about a lesson?
- Something that worked particularly well you want to share?
- Something that didn't work you want to bring up?

We value your feedback! Please do not hesitate to email us with your questions, comments, or concerns, at feedback@youthministry360.com.