



**KEEP  
FAITH  
AND  
CARRY  
ON**

.....  
**COLOSSIANS**

### **April - June 2023 | Trinity Church Golden Grove**

Colossae was an small city, near two thriving towns in the Locus Valley - Laodicea and Hierapolis, near the Mediterranean (Fig 1). Out of all the cities in the New Testament, Colossae has never been excavated by modern archaeologists. A massive earthquake destroyed the city around AD66 and it was never rebuilt. All the remains today is a large hill (Fig 2) and blocks of masonry (Fig 3). Interestingly, in 2008 Flinders University tried to send a team to excavate the ancient city but they still haven't been able to secure funding.

What we know about the church and early Christian community at Colossae comes primarily from what Paul and Timothy wrote, about 6 years before the earthquake shook the city.

When Paul wrote to them (and a letter to the church at Laodicea, 4:13-16, which we no longer have) it was still a new church plant. The 3 churches worked closely together sharing people and ministry resources. The Colossian church was planted by Epaphras who also planted churches in Laodicea, and Hierapolis a few years earlier. Epaphras was deeply invested in the churches he planted, praying they would mature in Christ (4:13). He visited Paul in prison to tell him those in Colossae were thriving as new believer, but were also facing pressure from their culture tempting them to to turn away from Jesus. While Paul never visited Colossae, he had deep affection for them and so writes to encouraged them to become firm in their faith in Christ (2:2-5). Paul also knew many of the team in Colossae as they had spent time with him in other regions planting and growing churches (4:7-12. There are also a similar list of names Paul gives in his letter to Philemon too).

In the face of mounting pressure to turn away from Jesus, we can summarise the letter of Colossians like this: **Keep faith and carry on.**

So, how do Paul and Timothy encourage the Colossians to keep faith and carry on? By giving them a huge dose of the supremacy of Jesus, the one those in the church turned to and have faith in. Colossians is full of some of the riches Christology in the entire bible. Here's a snapshot"

- God loves Jesus 1:13
- Jesus is the visible image of God who we can see and relate to, 1:15
- Creation came about in and through him, 1:16
- Jesus holds all things together, 1:17
- Jesus is the head of the church. 1:18
- Jesus is first to rise to new life, 1:18
- Has the supremacy over all things and people, 1:18
- God was pleased to dwell in Jesus's body, 1:19
- God reconciled all things, to himself, through Jesus, 1:20
- Jesus makes peace with all creation through his blood, 1:20
- Jesus reconciles you to God, presenting you holy to him, 1:21
- Jesus is the hope of glory to come, 1:27
- Jesus works in us to bring us to maturity, 1:28-29
- The secrets of things of God are revealed in Jesus, 2:2-3
- Jesus is the head over all powers and authority, 2:10
- Jesus cuts away our sin, as circumcision cuts away flesh in the body, 2:11
- God makes us alive with Jesus, 2:13
- Jesus unites all peoples under him, 3:11

The lofty, high view of Jesus (especially in 1:15-20) is a great reminder to the new believers in a church plant that they already possessed all they need in Christ: Judaism had nothing more to offer them. What's more, Paul even goes so far as to say that Judaism is just like another pagan religion, full of philosophies, (2:8) and human traditions, (2:8,22) and to follow it is to return to the same type of religion they had recently abandoned (2:4-23).

He then explains what this new life in Christ look like: A putting on of the new nature Jesus gave them, which he applies in detail to three areas of life: the home, workplaces (3:18-4:1) and the world (4:2-6), before asking them to pray he'd keep being missional, and finally cheering them on and encouraging them with other gospel workers - Tychicus and Onesimus - who will take his letter to them.

My prayer for our time in Colossians is that we would be so blown away by the supremacy of Christ, that we'd carry on in the faith, even as we face temptations and challenges.

*Luke Dahlenburg*

# LOCATION

Images copyright 2014, David A. deSilva | Map copyright 2018, Mark Meynell

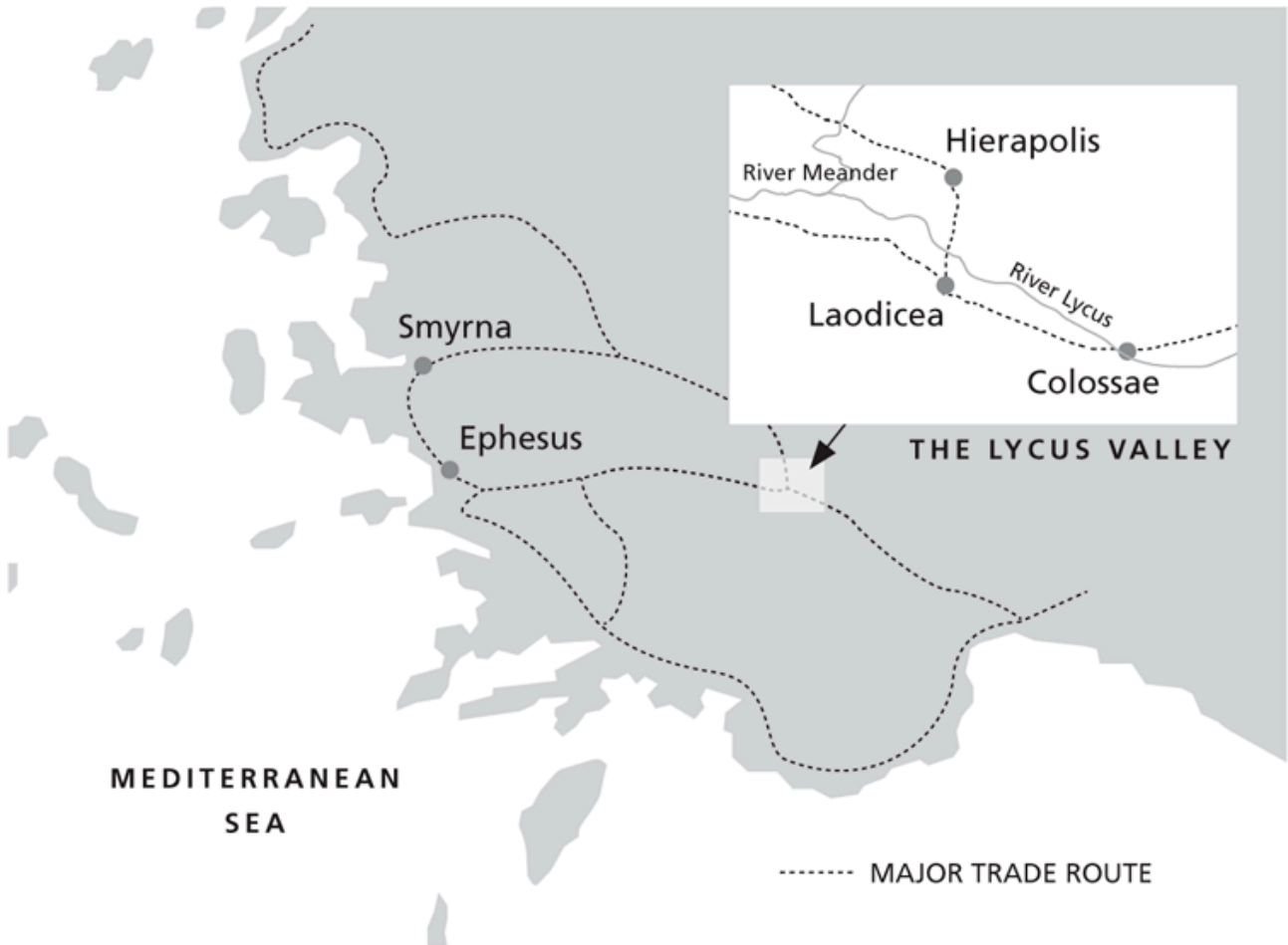


Fig 1. Map of the 3 churches planted by Epaphras – Hierapolis, Laodicea and Colossae



Fig 2. View of modern Colossae



Fig 3. Remains of a Necropolis at Colossae

# SERIES OUTLINE

---

#	Date	Talk Title	Passage	
1	30 Apr	Carry On In The Gospel	Colossians 1:1-14	Isaiah 60:1-3
2	May 7	Keep Faith In The Supreme Son	Colossians 1:15-23	Isaiah 40:25-31
3	May 14	Carry On In The Full Riches Of Jesus	Colossians 1:24-2:5	Isaiah 52:13-15
4	May 21	Keep Being Built Up In Christ	Colossians 2:6-15	Isaiah 53:1-6
5	May 28	Keep Faith In Jesus, Not Rules or Religion	Colossians 2:16-23	Isaiah 1:10-14
6	Jun 4	Keep Your Mind On Jesus & Things Above	Colossians 3:1-17	Isaiah 61:10-11
7	Jun 11	Carry On With Jesus In Your Relationships	Colossians 3:18-4:1	Deuteronomy 6:4-9
8	Jun 18	Keep The Heat Of Mission Stoked	Colossians 4:2-18	Isaiah 52:7-10

## TRINITY KIDS

---

The series in Colossians starts the last Sunday of the school holidays and ends 2 weeks before the end of term 2. June 25 is a once off talk on prayer from Matthew 6:5-13 and July 2 is the first in a mini-series on the Psalms.

Both younger and older kids will be using material from KidsWise.

## COMMUNITY GROUPS

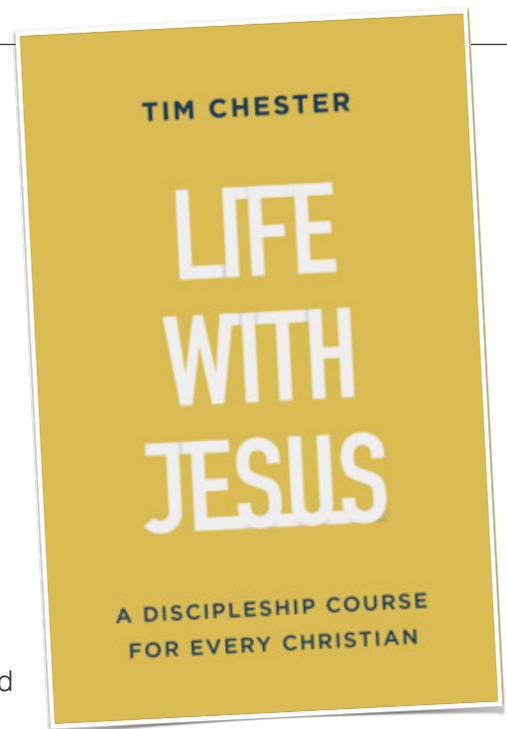
---

Our Community Groups will look at a discipleship book by Tim Chester called, *Life With Jesus* to compliment the talks in Colossians. *Life With Jesus* helps us all think about what it means to keep faith in Jesus and follow him, when we, like the Colossians, also face temptations to turn away from him.

Grab a copy and work through 2 chapters each week. We will also have interviews each week of May from people sharing highlights of the book.

Books available from Koorong or The Good Book at \$15 each. Or, \$9 for the eBook.

If you get through the book, then apply the Swedish Method to each passage the week before it is preached on.



# SWEDISH METHOD

---

## Introduction

Share how God's word has impacted you over the last week and then read Sunday's up-coming passage together.

## Ask the following questions of the text

Begin by working out a structure and a big ideas as a group and then ask:

1. What stands out for you from this passage?
2. What is difficult to understand from this passage?
3. How does this passage point forward to Jesus?
4. How might this passage shape how you live as a follower of Jesus in the coming week?

## Pray together

Pray in response to God's word.

# TALK OVERVIEWS

---

## Talk #1 - Colossians 1:1-14, Carry On In The Gospel

The opening is Paul and Timothy's prayer for them, centred on how the gospel of Jesus has changed them. Accepting Jesus was to reject of all other gods and ideologies, a huge thing in Ancient Rome! This new alliance to Jesus inspires a deep love of God and people as evidence of the grace of God to them. Their prayer ends with Jesus and their rescue out of darkness, into light. It's a prayer about carrying on in the gospel and flourishing more and more. Paul's prayer is a model and example of the priorities that should pepper our prayer life too. It's also an encouragement and challenge to go deeper in our relationships with others to accurately know their spiritual health so that we can pray richly for them.

## Talk #2- Colossians 1:15-23, Keep Faith In The Supreme Son

This incredibly dense few verses is all about the supremacy of Jesus. If, as Epaphras had told Paul, that the Colossians were tempted to turn away from Jesus, this section is like a weld to firm up faith in Jesus. As 2:23 says, if you continue to be established in the faith. Nothing is greater than Jesus, keep faith in him. We should ask ourselves if this is our view of Jesus too and if so, take comfort in all the trials and temptations we face that as the supreme one, his rescue of us (2:20) means he's working to present us before God as his holy people (2:22). This section also drips with praise for Jesus - something all the incredible truths should point us to.

## Talk #3- Colossians 1:24-2:5, Carry On In The Full Riches Of Jesus

The riches (1:27) are of course Jesus and all that has Paul has just said. So wonderful and precious is Jesus, that Paul's own life is aimed at making Jesus known and encouraging God's

people more and more (1:25, 2:2). As we look at what maturity in Jesus is, we are reminded that it's primarily about going deeper in to the mystery of Christ (1:26), rather than engaging in fine sounding arguments (2:4). We should all ask - are we firm in the faith (2:5) and eager to see people mature in Jesus? The Colossians Christian's were tempted to turn away from Jesus and into other mystical things. Modern parallels abound, may we be ever more convinced that in Jesus, the fullness of God is found and may our ministry models keep him as the focus and not other things (2:4).

#### **Talk #4 - Colossians 2:6-15, Keep Being Built Up In Christ**

The *so then* of 2:6, cuts deeper into the temptations that the Colossians faced - philosophies and traditions that can't built you up. As 2:9 says, the fullness of the deity lives in Jesus who you have been united with. 2:11-15 then unpacks what Christ has done in us, though faith, baptism, and on the Cross. This frames what life in Jesus is all about - being strengthen by his Cross and being reminded of all the benefits he gives you. Christianity is built for daily life, whereas a philosophy has no ability to give us a full life like Jesus can. In a complex, competing world of ideologies and opinions, these verses remind us of the simplicity of the Christian faith, of how we grow through our union with Christ and how being built up in Christ is what really matters.

#### **Talk #5 - Colossians 2:16-23, Keep Faith In Jesus, Not Rules or Religion**

Therefore (2:16), now brings us to some of the trickiest verses. While we don't know the specific details, Paul and Timothy give us enough for us to see that the context the new Christian's at Colossae faced was a mix of Judaism and other spiritual practices pushing in on them. It seems as if the common thinking was: "A little bit of Jesus, a dash of angel worship, visions and a few special holidays should mature you real quick." The genius of Paul's writing here is that having Christ, the new believers already possessed all they needed: Judaism had nothing more to offer them. And, because of the supremacy of Jesus, there is no need to seek other visions or mystical practices. As Paul concludes in 2:23, this stuff looks good, but, it can't stop the desires of our bodies that control us. This is why keeping faith in Jesus matters, not rules or religion. It would be good for us to think long and hard about how we practice Christianity, making sure that our practices are actually drawing us closer to Jesus, holiness, joy and love, and not pushing people away. The don't and do better's and try harder's are deadly to grace and faith in Jesus.

#### **Talk #6 - Colossians 3:1-17, Keep Your Mind On Jesus & Things Above**

3:1 is a movement into what life with Jesus looks like. If, as 2:23 said, that other things can't help us be holy, these 17 verses show us the way forward. And it's all about keeping our hearts and minds on Jesus (3:1-2). This flows into our how we deal with remaining sin (3:5-9) and how we view the community of believers. Only in Christ can we put all these off, and put on (3:10) a new self. This self is being renewed and causes the community to respond with praise, joy, thanksgiving and to live in peace with others (3:11-17). It's not that we excuse sin, or don't feel the

painful affects of it (3:13-14) but, because of Christ, we are forgiven as the supreme son has forgiven us and let his flow into our relationships with others. The challenges for us, is to live as a community, thinking about others, in the name of Jesus (3:17) and being peaceful in our interactions. This is where the supremacy of Jesus lands - in us and among us. This will be a confronting few verses as each of us will find something hard in them. But, let us resolve to keep our minds on Christ, and we will find a way forward.

### **Talk #7 - Colossians 3:18-4:1, Carry On With Jesus In Your Relationships**

The implications of the gospel now turn from in the church, to the family and work. These few verses have lots of cultural baggage attached to them, but, we need to remember that Jesus is good news for our relationships. The repeated phrase, *the Lord* (3:18,20,22,24,24) reminds us that our relationships are now informed by our relationships the the Lord Jesus. Seeing this is like a golden ticket, unpacking the way the gospel helps us work, live and relate to the most intimate and time consuming parts of our life - family and work. Just a note on slavery: We would have loved Paul to speak out against it more than he did, but, hindsight gives us an generation advantage and we need to reflect carefully. What Colossians and Philemon (Written to similar people at a similar time) do, as F. F. Bruce notes is to, "bring us into an atmosphere in which the institution of slavery could only wilt and die." As Australia Michal Bird aptly says: "Paul was no William Wilberforce, but without Paul we might never have had William Wilberforce."

### **Talk #8 - Colossians 4:2-18, Keep The Heat Of Mission Stoked**

As the letter ends, Paul asks for missional prayer (4:2-6). He also gives us an example of how to behave in a world that isn't full of grace and forgiveness like the church and our families are. The emphasis is now on words and actions towards non-Christian's (4:4-6) so that we may help people see the supremacy of Jesus. The final section is deeply personal and community focused. Never were God's people to remain alone or do ministry in isolation from one another! We keep the heat of mission stoked not only through prayer and winsome words, but, by encouraging each other in the faith and work of God. God has given us a way of proclaiming Jesus to others - may we use these inputs for his mission and find our joy from others in Christ too.