

In this bible study, we're going to be using the techniques that we learned in "How to Read the Bible" and "How to Read the Bible – Part 2".

Week 1:

The 1st thing we want to do is:

1) Identify the type of literature that Colossians is

A) Its didactic or teaching literature, so

1) Colossians was written to the church at the city of Colossae.

2) It deals with a specific issue but does it in a timeless, universal way.

3) It was written in the 1st century, so historical and cultural context is critical.

2) Paul's letters follow a typical pattern of doctrinal truth followed up by a section of how to apply that truth. 88% of Paul's commands (telling us how to live) occur in the 2nd half of his letters.

A) the 1st half of Colossians is devoted to doctrine while the 2nd half is how to live out that doctrine (our duty). Chapters 1&2 are doctrinal while chapters 3&4 are duty.

B) other ways of saying this is the 1st half is principle, the 2nd half is practice, or right doctrine leads to right living or orthodoxy leads to ortho-praxis.

3) The structure of Paul's letters

A) the writer identifies himself – in Colossians, its Paul & Timothy, verse 1

B) the names of the recipients, the church at Colossae, verse 2

C) he always gives a greeting, verse 2

D) there's almost always a thanksgiving/prayer section, verses 3-14

E) the main body or thought of the letter, C1V15 – C4V6

F) the farewell or good-bye, C4V7-18

4) Get some background as to why Paul wrote this letter to the Colossians. In study bibles, this is usually at the beginning of Colossians. A bible commentary will also give you this information. In Colossians, its to combat errors that have crept into the church about who Jesus really is. Some people wanted to combine Christianity with other religions. This is called syncretism. It winds up denying that Jesus is God Almighty and our only Savior. He may only be a great teacher or one of a number of prophets or just one way to heaven instead of the only way. In Colossae, it was Gnosticism that tried to combine Christianity with it.

5) The next step is to read Colossians all the way thru in one setting. You can do this if the book is a small book, like Colossians is. Then read it again all the way thru in one setting. Then read it again and again and again. This will help you to get Paul's flow of what he's trying to say. I know this may sound repetitious but its important to really see his flow of thought.

6) Now analyze the book's content by making an outline of the book. One person's outline may differ from another person's as long as they cover the same things. Here are some examples of an outline for Colossians:

Example 1; A very simple outline

What Christ has done C1V1-C2V23

What Christians should do C3V1-C4V18

Example 2;

I) Paul's prayer for the church C1V1-14

II) Supremacy of Christ C1V15-C2V3

III) Paul's warning to the church C2V4-23

IV) Rules for holy living C3V1-C4V1

V) Farewell C4V2-18

Example 3;

Chapter 1

Paul and the church at Colossae

1) Paul's praise for this church (C1V1-14, 24-29)

2) Paul's prayer for this church (C1V9-14)

3) Paul's proclamation to this church (C1V24-29)

Christ and the church at Colossae

1) Who Christ is (C1V15)

2) What Christ has done (C1V16-23)

3) He is the head of the church (C1V18-19, 21-23)

Chapter 2

1) Paul's wish for the 2 church's (C2V107)

2) Paul's warning for the 2 church's (C2V8-23)

Chapter 3

1) Holy living, the principles (C3V1-17)

2) Holy living, the people (C3V18-25, C4V1)

Chapter 4

1) Paul's challenge (C4V2-6)

2) Paul's co-workers (C4V7-14)

3) Paul's greetings (C4V15)

4) Paul's commands (C4V16-17)

5) Paul's good-bye (C4V18)

Example 4;

1) Intro (C1V1-14)

2) the Preeminence of Christ (C1V15-C2V3)

3) the Freedom in Christ (C2V4-23)

4) the Position of the believer (C3V1-4)

5) the Practice of the believer (C3V5-C4V6)

6) the Conclusion (C4V7-18)

Example 5;

1) the person and work of Jesus (C1V1-C2V3)

Paul's greetings C1V1-8)

Paul's prayer (C1V9-14)

Supremacy of Jesus C1V15-18)

Supremacy of work (C1V9-C2V3)

2) the Heresies (C2V4-23)

Standing up against false teachers (C2V4-8)

The Truth (C2V9-15)

Obligations of the Truth (C2V16-23)

3) Living like Jesus (C3V1-C4V1

Think like a 'live' person (C3V1-4)

Live like a 'dead' person (C3V5-10)

What unity looks like (C3V11-17)

What Christ looks like (C3V18-C4V1

4) in conclusion (C4V2-18)

What message are you sending to other people (C4V2-6)

What Jesus are you worshipping (C4V7-18)