

MESSAGE

PRAYING INTO THE CENTER

JESUS AT THE CENTER | COLOSSIANS 1:1-14 | APRIL 2/3, 2016 | PASTOR MATT ERICKSON

"We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you" (Colossians 1:3)

Starting with Colossians (1:1-2)

Praying from the Wells of Gratitude (Colossians 1:3-8)

Praying from the Freight Train of Need (Colossians 1:9-14)

STUDY GUIDE

1. How would you define or describe what prayer is? Why is it important in our life with God?
2. This weekend we begin a new series, "Jesus at the Center," from one of Paul's letters, "Colossians," written to an early church in Asia Minor. This week we will study the first portion of the letter, Colossians 1:1-14. Whether you are on your own or with a small group, begin your study in prayer, asking God to speak to you through His word.
3. The epistles - or letters - were written to early believers and usually read aloud all at once as part of the worship gathering. Although we are studying Colossians 1:1-14 this week, a good way to begin our journey into Colossians is to read the entire letter aloud.
4. Background: It is important to know that Paul has never directly met these believers in Colossae (see 2:1), but has influenced them through the ministry of Epaphras (1:7-8; 4:12-13), as well as perhaps through his two-year ministry in Ephesus that touched large parts of Asia (see Acts 19:10).
5. The letter begins in 1:1-2 with Paul transforming a fairly conventional greeting into a meaningful reflection of basic truths about our faith. What do you notice about Paul and Timothy's identity, the believers' identity, and God's work in these brief verses?
6. Paul begins a two-part prayer in verse 3, the first part (1:3-8) of which conveys thanksgiving to God. Why is Paul thankful for hearing about the church in Colossae?
7. With verse 6, Paul reflects on the work of God around the world? Why is he thankful?
8. How have you heard of God's work around the world? What reports of God's work around the world are you thankful for today?
9. The second part of Paul's prayer (1:9-14) turns toward intercession—or requests—of God for the believers. Paul continues a long sentence here that adds request upon request. Take some time to list out the requests that Paul makes of God here.
10. Why do you think that Paul makes these sorts of requests?
11. The prayer ends with a reflection in verses 13-14 on the reason for the joy we have from God (see 1:12). How would you summarize the reason for our joy?
12. Let's end the study today with prayer. If you are on your own, you may want to write out your own prayer of thanksgiving and intercession to God for yourself and for others. If you are with your small group, you may want to take time together in thanks and request of God for His work in you. Prayer is where the work starts, continues, and ends, so let's take time for it as part of this study.

[We continue our series, "Jesus at the Center," on the book of Colossians next week by looking at Colossians 1:15-23. Read that passage ahead of time to prepare.]

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