

# LifeGroups

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GROWING TOGETHER IN THE GOSPEL

## Growth Sheet

**Christ: Supreme, Sufficient**  
Colossians 1:1-2

### Introduction to Colossians

One thing that makes Scripture so delightful—besides the fact that it is the very Word of God—is the variety of literary genres. In the New Testament alone, we find biography (the gospels), history (the Acts), apocalyptic literature (Revelation), and personal correspondence (the epistles). The small “book” of Colossians falls into this final genre: it is a personal letter written by Paul (with Timothy) to a small church in ancient Asia Minor (modern day Turkey).

There is much about this letter we would like to know. For example, where was Paul when he wrote it? Some guess the city of Ephesus. Others say it was Rome. What year did he write it? Some believe it was in the early 50s. Others place it during the early 60s. What exactly was the problem plaguing the church at Colossae? (This is a question people have been arguing and writing about for a long time.) Some say it was an early strain of Gnosticism. Others say it was simply Judaism. Trying to answer that question is a bit like listening to someone talk on the phone, and then trying to figure out what the *other* person is saying.

Although we may never know the answers to these questions, we have everything we really need to know about Colossians in the text of the letter itself. In this brief but marvelous epistle, Paul extols the supremacy and sufficiency of Christ against those who would claim that we need something more to be truly mature. As much as the Colossians needed this message, so *we* also need to hear that *true maturity is found in Christ alone*.

This message, however, is not something that we grasp merely with our minds. It must be *lived* out in our actions. That is why Paul goes on to urge the Colossians, “As you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so *walk* in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith” (Colossians 2:6-7).

### Outline of Colossians

Understanding this central theme helps us make sense of the overall flow of the letter.

**1:1-4** After greeting the Colossians (1:1-2), Paul reports . . .

**1:3-8** why he thanks God for them (they show fruits of Christian maturity)

**1:9-14** what he is praying for them (that they would increase in Christian maturity)

**1:15-23** By giving an exalted portrait of Christ (1:15-18) and his work of redemption (1:19-23), Paul demonstrates why Christ alone is sufficient to bring about true maturity (1:15-23).

**1:24-2:5** Paul explains the nature of his ministry, the aim of which is to “present everyone mature in Christ.”

**2:6-23** Paul exhorts the Colossians



**2:6-7** to continue to walk in Christ

**2:8-23** to guard against “philosophy and empty deceit” which are unable to provide true maturity.

**3:1-4:6** to flesh out their Christian maturity in a radical rearrangement of

**3:1-4** priorities

**3:5-11** virtues

**3:12-4:6** relationships

**4:7-18** Paul closes with final remarks and greetings

### **Discussion and Application**

1. Paul was writing to young Christians who were in danger of being allured into different approaches to maturity or wholeness—approaches that did not have Christ at the very center. In our day, what ideas or programs promise personal fulfillment, wholeness, or maturity? What makes them so attractive?
2. Read 1:3-8. This is Paul’s “thanksgiving” list for the Colossians. Consider the kinds of things we tend to be grateful for. How does Paul’s list here differ from ours? What can we do to cultivate more gratitude for the kinds of items on Paul’s thanksgiving list?
3. Read 1:9-14. As Paul’s prayer for the Colossians, this section may be seen as a portrait of a Christian’s growth in maturity. Take time to pray through this list, asking that God would make these qualities true for you and your brothers and sisters in Christ.
4. Read 1:15-22. Name the many truths about Christ in this passage. These are truths we must believe and embrace in order to see how sufficient Christ is to bring about true maturity in our lives. Which of these truths do you find most delightful, and why? Which do you find most difficult to believe, and why?