

**Observation: What does it say?**

**Start by looking for the basics:**

**Who** – Who is performing or receiving the action?

**What** – What is occurring?

**When** – When is it occurring? Is there a sequence of events?

**Where** – Where is the action occurring? Does the location change within the paragraph? **Why** – What is the goal or purpose for the action? Who benefits?

**How** – What is the means or manner for accomplishing the action?

**Key Words** (especially theologically important terms)

**Important Connectives** - Indicate relationships within and between paragraphs; such as... after, then, as, until, before, when, now, while, because, for, since, so, therefore, thus, in order that, but.

**Grammatical Construction** - How does each word function in the sentence?

Verbs - What are the actions? Note the tense of the verb (when is the action performed) Is there a list of commands?

Noun - name of a person, place, thing or quality

Adjective & Adverb - modifies or describes something

**Figures of speech** - Non-literal language (e.g. “I am the bread of life”)

**Comparison:** points out the similarities between two or more related ideas, or simply joining like ideas. “...he will be **like** a tree firmly planted ...”(Ps.1:2-3)

**Contrast:** points out dissimilarities between thoughts or ideas. This indicator is often easily identified by the use of the word “but.” “Now the deeds of the flesh are evident... **But** the fruit of the Spirit is...” (Galatians 5:19-23)

**Questions:** structure is built around questions posed and answered by the author (or a hypothetical opponent created by the author). “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase?” (Rom. 6:1)

**Repetition:** reiteration of the same word or phrase (when a similar but not exact word, phrase or idea is repeated it is known as continuity)

**Progression of Ideas:** the movement of ideas from general to particular (Matt. 6:1-18) or particular to gen. (Jas 2).

**Cause to Effect:** the passage first states the cause and then directly correlates the effects. Romans 1:18-31 demonstrates the cause (rejection of God) and the effect (God gave them over). See also Romans 6:23.

**Effect to Cause:** opposite of cause to effect, the author states the effect and then substantiates it by stating the cause. In Romans 8:18-27 Paul describes the effect of longing, and in 8:28-30 he describes the cause, which is our certain future glorification.

**Summarization:** the author gathers the main ideas he has been trying to communicate and restates them in a summary. For examples see Hebrews 8:1-2 and Joshua 12.

## **Interpretation: What does it mean?**

Observation is answering ‘what does it say?’ In interpretation you are asking ‘what does this mean?’ Or better ‘what does Paul mean here?’ As you observe, ask lots of questions like

What does this word mean?

Why does he use this analogy?

What does Paul mean when he says we “were dead”?

Answering these questions is interpretation. Remember creativity in interpretation is not a virtue. Start your search for answers within the immediate context. Also, consider what others say now (your small group, pastor...) as well as in the past (commentaries). **Your goal is to discern the author’s intended meaning.**

## **Application: How does this touch my life?**

Once you have discovered the universal principle(s) from the text, then you move to application. How does this truth connect to my life? By putting your application in words you begin to hold yourself accountable for becoming a doer of the Word. Some basic guidelines for application are: 1) focus on the main themes expressed by the author; 2) keep it short; 3) make it practical. An example of an application from Matthew 28:18-20 is “Wherever I am, I should proclaim the gospel to all men in hope of making some disciples.” Consider the following questions for application:

- Is there an example for me to follow or avoid? (Genesis 34; Joshua 1:9) • Is there a sin or error for me to avoid? (1 Cor. 5:1)
- Is there a promise for me to claim? (Heb. 13:5)
- Is there a prayer for me to repeat? (Eph. 3:14-21)
- Is there a command for me to obey? (2 Timothy 2:22)
- Is there a condition for me to meet? (John 15:5)
- Is there a verse for me to memorize? (Psalm 119:11)
- Is there conviction from the Spirit to which I must respond? (1 Thess. 5:19)

Relate the application to your various relationships. Ask yourself, How should this application affect my attitudes, thoughts or actions:

- In relationship to God
- In relationship to myself
- In relationship to my family
- In relationship to my Christian friends
- In relationship to my non-Christians friends and the world relationship to my adversary

## **Create a plan of action**

So, what will I do today, or this week, or this month to implement this application? Who will I ask to hold me accountable? How and when will I evaluate my progress? A plan of action for our application from Matthew 28 might look something like this:

By the power of the Holy Spirit I commit myself to asking my neighbor to lunch this week. I commit to daily pray for his salvation and for the opportunity to present a verbal witness to him during lunch. I will ask my Bible study leader to hold me accountable to initiate this plan by asking me next week if I have followed through.

Colossians 1:1-8

Observations and Questions

How does Paul describe himself? Why does he describe himself this way?

What words does he use to describe the recipients in the first verses? And what does he say about them in the rest of the passage?

Where is Colossae? What can you find out about it?

What are some reasons you might think Paul would write them a letter (he has probably never been there)?

What does Paul say about the gospel?

What do you learn about Epaphras?

### Making it personal

*First thing each morning, prayerfully read through the passage. Start by asking God to use His word to transform you (to transform your heart, mind, words, how you treat people etc). Just read it slowly, soaking in it. Come, not to figure things out or with a pen in hand, but come thoughtfully and prayerfully, believing in faith that this is God's very word. Come at another time to write down your observations and work through the passage.*

*A verse about the power of the word - Romans 12:2*

The text says the gospel is bearing fruit and increasing. What has this looked like in your life personally since you came to faith in Christ? Where would you like to see more fruit in your life? What would it look like for the gospel to be bearing fruit and increasing in our midst (in our lives, in CRU, on campus etc) and beyond? Dream .....

Paul is nurturing this community. Who has God put in your care? What steps do you need to take with them? What would you like to apply from this passage to these relationships?

Using SPECK, what are some other applications you would like to make?

Colossians 1:9-14  
Observations and Questions

What is Paul's response to what he has heard? What do you think it means that he has "not ceased" to pray for them? Can you think of other scripture where Paul talks about prayer like this?

What does Paul ask? Why do they need these things?

He mentions in verse 10 that they might be "bearing fruit." What does this fruit look like? Look at John 15:1-11. What did Jesus say about bearing fruit?

Giving thanks (vs 12) is also a theme in Paul's writings. Find others verses in his writings that speak of this. Why do you think this is a theme for Paul?

What does the word "qualified" mean? What does this say about us?

What is the "great rescue" that has taken place? Describe

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In the Colossians passage:

In what way can you follow Paul's example? Think about people God has entrusted to your care. How do you want to pray for them?

What can you learn about God? About yourself?

Spend time thinking about what Christ has done for you. To whom do you belong? (Psalm 100:3)

Using SPECK what are some other applications you would like to make?

Colossians 1:15-23

Observations from each verse

v.15 Christ is the image of invisible God

Questions about the observations

What does "image" mean?

List the unique things this passage says about Christ. Find any cross references that speak of these unique characteristics.

What do you learn about the Colossians and us? About Paul?

Summarize this passage in your own words.

Considering why Paul wrote this letter, why would he write about Christ in this way? How does this passage fit into the whole of the letter?

### Making it Personal

*Spend time soaking in this passage. Take time to quiet yourself, asking God to teach you and transform you. Read the passage slowly, soaking in it. Do this each day or several times throughout the week.*

***What is a phrase or verse that sticks out to you?** Think about that phrase or verse and lift it up in prayer to God. Come back to those words throughout the day letting them turn into a prayer to God.*

***A verse about the power of the truth of God's word - John 8:31-32***

In the Colossians passage:

What does this passage mean for my life? What implications does this passage have for my life? My stuff? My time? My decisions? My future? etc.... It may help to think through the individual verses and what the implication that verse has for your life. Using SPECK may help with this.



Colossians 1:24-2:7

Observations and Questions

Make a list of all the things you observe and learn about Paul from this passage.

Write down the word "mystery" on a page and list anything you observe and learn about it from this passage.

What does Paul say about his sufferings? (Other verses that may help in understanding his view on his sufferings - 2Cor 1:3-7, 2Cor 4:7-8, Phil 1:12-14, and 2Tim 2:8-10) Why does he rejoice in his sufferings?

What do you observe and learn about the word “mystery”? What does it refer to? Find other verses that talk about the mystery.

What do you learn about Paul’s motivation and purpose? What was the power behind it?

Why is Paul concerned about them being deluded? Why is knowledge (v.3) important?

Think about verses 6-7. What kind of images are used here? Paul wants them to stand firm. Why is this so important, in light of the book?

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***What is a phrase or verse that sticks out to you? Think about that phrase or verse and lift it up in prayer to God. Come back to those words throughout the day letting them turn into a prayer to God.***

***A verse about the power of the truth of God’s word - Psalm 1***

Take time thinking about verses 27 and 2:2 and the words “Christ in you” and “Christ Himself”. Why is this so powerful?

Paul took his call and stewardship seriously? What does it mean for you to be a steward of the gospel? How can you participate in presenting “every man” complete in Christ? What keeps you from living out Christ’s mission?

How can you apply verse 6 and 7 for yourself? Who are a couple people you can invest in to help establish in their faith?

Use SPECK for other applications.

Colossians 2:8-15  
Observations and Questions

What does it say about the the deception (v.8)? What is it in accordance to?

Notice all the times it says, "in Him" or "He." Count how many times it uses these. Make a list of all it says about Christ.

What themes are repeated in this passage from what we have studied so far?

What do you learn about baptism from these verses?

Describe the great triumph in these verses. What is the "certificate of debt"??

How does this passage follow the last passage? How does it fit into the book? What difference would knowing these things make in the Colossians lives?

### Making it Personal

*Read through this passage several times slowly focusing on "in Him" or "He." Find space in this time to focus on Christ, who He is and what He has done for you. **A verse about the benefits of God's word - Psalm 19***

What are things today that take people captive? Are there ideas you are aware of that you can be taken captive by?

Are you experiencing Christ's forgiveness? Reflect on verse 13-14. Are there any areas that are difficult for you to receive His forgiveness?

How do you want to apply this passage?

Who can you share this message with this week?

Colossians 2:16-23  
Observations and Questions

How does this passage relate to the passage before and the the context of the book?

What are some warnings Paul gives? Why do you think he gives these warnings?

What does it appear the false teachers were teaching?

Use words from the text that describe the false teachers and their teaching?

### Making it Personal

*Read through this passage several times slowly. Take note of the few times it mentions "Christ." Find space in this time to focus on Christ, who He is and what He has done for you. **A verse about the benefits of God's word - 1Peter 2:2,3.***

What is the difference between self-denial for self- denials sake and biblical self-denial? (see Gal 3:1-3, Phil 3:1-8, Rom 6:8-13, and Gal 5:13-15)

Are there areas of your life you feel like you need to follow a "rule" or "list" to be a good Christian or to be righteous? What are the place of standards in our lives?

How can spiritual disciplines be helpful in our growth and holiness?

How do you you want to apply this passage in you life?

Colossians 3:1-11  
Observations and Questions

How is this passage connected to what we have studied so far?

What are commands that Paul gives? What contrasts do you observe?

What are things that are true of the Colossians?

What do you think it means to “set your mind” (verse 2) on something? Or to “keep seeking the things above” (verse 1)? What are things above?

What are characteristics of the old self? Why does Paul say to put these aside?

### Making it Personal

*Prayerfully read through the passage. Ask God to use His word to renew your heart and mind. Read it slowly, several times. Come with open hands, thoughtfully and prayerfully, believing in faith that this is God's very word that renews, restores and leads. **A verse about the eternal word of God - 1Peter 1:22-25***

The passage speaks of keep seeking the things above and setting your mind on things above. What does that mean for your life right now? in school? relationships? decisions to be made? the future?

As you look at the characteristics of the old self, is there an area you are prone to, that you need to put aside? What is an action plan for yourself in regards to it?

*For thought:*The passage starts off talking about our mind and what is true. Much seems to hinge on on that we are raised up with Christ. Why is this significant? How does this make a difference in your life?



Colossians 3:12-17  
Observations and Questions

What is true of the Colossians? How would knowing this make a difference in their lives?

What commands does Paul give throughout this passage?

What does it mean to “**put on**” or to “clothe” yourself with ....? How do we do that? (see Gal 6:16, John 15, Eph 4:20-24)

What do you think it means to “bear” with someone? Look at verses as to how Christ forgave us. How would displaying these qualities make a difference in our lives?

The passage speaks of **thankfulness** several times. Why would he say to be thankful? What is the benefit of thanksgiving?

Think about the word of Christ “**richly dwell**” within you. What does “richly” mean? What does “dwell” mean?

### Making it Personal

*Read the passage slowly and prayerfully. Come back to it at different times in the day, maybe for just a few minutes at a time, to allow your heart to dwell on it. **A verse about the word of God - Colossians 3:16***

Read these verses on Christ, as our example: Phil 2:1-8, Matthew 27:11-14, 1 Peter 2:21-25

How are you doing right now in “putting” on these things? Pick one area to ask God to help you with.

How are you doing in thankfulness? How do you think thankfulness is connected to our view of God?

How are you doing dwelling in God’s Word? How can you make dwelling on His word more apart of your life?

Colossians 3:18-4:6  
Observations and Questions

Relate this passage to what we have studied so far. How does it relate to the previous passage?

List the people he addresses and the commands for each. Write an interpretative question for each.

How would following Paul's instructions affect their relationships?

What does this passage say about work? What would the impact you think be if this instruction is applied about work?

What do you learn about prayer? What does it mean to be "devoted" to prayer?

How are the Colossians to relate to outsiders? Why do you think Paul includes these instructions?

### Making it Personal

*Read the passage slowly and prayerfully. Use this opportunity to pray for the different relationships you have in your life. **A verse about the power of the word of God - PS 119:105,130,160***

If applied how would this passage affect how you do work and relate to those around you?

How would you like to grow in earnestness in your prayer life?

How are you doing right now in making the most of every opportunity? Is there an opportunity you need to seize before the semester ends?

Colossians 4:2-18  
Observations and Questions

List the names of the people mentioned and what it says about them. Look up cross references and see what else you can learn about them. This will give you a fuller picture.

What stands out to you about these people? What example did they set? What do you learn about their character?

If you could ask one of them a question what would you ask?

Write a summary about these people, describing their life and service?

### Making it Personal

*Read the passage slowly and prayerfully. What words sticks out to you and why? Read the Hiding Place Quote about a more "modern" day faithful servant. **Verses about the word of God - PS 119:161,162, 105***

What would you like to apply from the people in this passage and their example?

## Colossians Overview

Reread the entire book of Colossians.

Look back over each section we covered. Come up with a title for each section we covered or list a few points that capture that section. If you are up for it, come up with a brief outline.

What was the context and the purpose of the book?

What are some themes you notice throughout the book? Key words?

What are some topics and issues that are dealt with?

What are some of your favorite verses?

What do you learn about Christ?

What do you learn about your relationship with Christ?

What have you been challenged by in Colossians?

What are 1 or 2 things you want to take away and apply?