

# MINING THE BIBLE



Colossians

---

*“The Bible is not a child’s storybook; rather it is great literature that requires thoughtful response. All its diamonds do not lie exposed on the surface. Its richness is mined only through hard intellectual and spiritual spadework.”*

*Haddon Robinson, Expository Preaching*

---

Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version<sup>®</sup> (ESV<sup>®</sup>), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

# INDEX

About 'Mining the Bible' .....	3
Overview Study .....	5
Study 1: 1:1-12.....	8
Study 2: 1:13-23 .....	12
Study 3: 1:24-2:5 .....	16
Study 4: 2:6-23.....	20
Study 5: 3:1-17.....	25
Study 6: 3:18-4:18.....	30
Review Study.....	34

# ABOUT 'MINING THE BIBLE'

## Aim

The aim of these studies is twofold. Firstly, they're designed to help you get to grips with the main message and applications of Colossians as a book. There's a second aim though, which is to help equip you to learn to study the Bible for yourself.

## How it works

Each study has two sections: Questions and Summary. The questions for each study are intended to get you thinking about the most important things that Paul wants us to understand from each passage. After each of the studies there's a short summary which explains the main point of the passage - but try not to skip straight to this if you're finding one of the questions difficult. Studying the Bible takes thought and isn't always easy, but it's important that you have patience and work hard at understanding it for yourself. If you get really stuck and confused and feel you need the help of the explanation, then do make sure you refer back to the passage again as you read it so that you can see where the points comes from in the text.

As you go through the studies, you'll occasionally come across these symbols:



#PRINCIPLE

This symbol accompanies a key principle to learn for studying the Bible.



#METHOD

This symbol accompanies a method which you might find helpful for studying the Bible.

You'll also occasionally come across blank pages with this faded symbol in the middle:



This is to keep the summaries at the end of each study separate from the questions, to help you avoid the temptation of looking across the page for the answers without first working hard at the passage yourself! You could use this space to make notes.

## Note on translations

These studies were prepared from the ESV, and it's recommended that you use either that or a translation with a similar level of accuracy to the original wording of the Biblical languages. Without going into all the reasons for this, one important one is that such translations often help make connections between ideas in different passages easier to pick up on because a common word is translated consistently.

## Introduction to Colossians

Welcome to the first booklet in the Mining the Bible series! This guide introduces some of the most fundamental and important principles and methods of Bible study, while also unearthing some of big points that God wants to teach us through Paul's letter to the Colossians.

Enjoy!

More study guides can be found at [www.miningthebible.co.uk](http://www.miningthebible.co.uk).

# OVERVIEW STUDY

## Questions:



### #METHOD – Pray before you start!

Easy tiger. Before you rush in enthusiastically, eager to explore the deep riches of this letter, let's remember that it's God, by His Spirit, who graciously gives us understanding into His word (1 Cor 2:9-13). That means the first thing we ought to do, whenever we study the Bible, is pray for His help; to grasp what He wants to teach us through it, and to respond by obediently shaping our lives in line with it.

*Read through the whole of Colossians at least twice. Have the two main questions below in mind as you read through, then try to answer them.*

### 1) What can we tell about the Colossians as a church?

- Are they doing well or badly?
- Are there any threats? If so what?
  - Are they internal (from within the church) or external (from non-Christians in the world)?
  - How serious are they?



## #PRINCIPLE – Author's Purpose

The books of the Bible aren't random collections of interesting stories and teachings - the author of each book looked at what God's people needed to hear in their situation, and wrote accordingly, inspired by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21). In

other words, they had a particular purpose in mind, for a particular audience, at a particular point in God's salvation plan. There's a reason why Paul didn't write the same letter to every church - they each had their own challenges and each needed to be encouraged by different truths. There's also a reason why God ensured this book, with its unique purpose, was preserved for us today in the canon of Scripture. If we're going to understand the distinctive things that Holy Spirit wants us to grasp through Colossians, then we need first to understand the situation of the original readers in Colosse. We'll think more about how this impacts our application in the 4<sup>th</sup> study.

### **2) Why do you think Paul might have written this letter?**

**Have a go at trying to summarise the purpose of the letter in one sentence:**

## Summary:

We don't want to go in with too many prior assumptions at this stage, in case we're tempted to read into the text what we want/expect it to say as we go through. But it is useful to at least try to identify some basic reasons why Paul is writing his letter, which we can sharpen as we study more of the book.

From what we can tell from the end of chapter 2, it seems as though there are false teachers about in Colosse, telling the church that in order to be proper Christians they need something more than the teaching they currently have. We'll think more specifically about the nature of the false teaching later on, but for now that's enough for us to make a start with.



# STUDY 1: 1:1-12

## Questions:

*Let's begin by just thinking about v1-8.*

**1) What's the tone of this introduction?**

**2) What do we learn about the Colossians?**

**3) What do we learn about the gospel?**



### #PRINCIPLE - Asking the 'Why' question

If we're going to apply what Paul is saying in the way that he intends us to (according to his purpose), then it's crucial to keep asking ourselves 'why' questions. Here are some of the important 'why' questions you'll want to think about:

- Why does he say what he says to these particular Christians in their situation?
- Why does he say it at this point in the letter?
- Why does he use this kind of language/tone?

**4) Why do you think Paul is starting off his letter like this, given what we've said about the situation in Colosse? (Connect what Paul is saying about the Colossians and the gospel with their situation)**

**5) How does what Paul says about Epaphras fit with that?**



**#METHOD - Coming up with and testing a theory**

What we've just done in these first few questions is:

1) Try to understand what the passage is saying.

2) Come up with a theory for why Paul is saying that in a) the flow of argument b) the situation/purpose of the book.

3) Test that theory to see if it fits all the detail of the passage (don't force those details to fit if they don't though! You might need to go back to the drawing board and come up with another theory).

**Application: What encouragement can we take from this?**

*Let's move on now to think about v9-12.*

**6) Why do you think we're particularly interested in Paul's prayers?**



## **#PRINCIPLE – Paul's Prayers**

You can always find the purpose of Paul's letter from looking at his prayers - it makes sense that what Paul is praying for a particular church to do/understand, he will try to achieve through his letter.

**7) What does Paul want for Colossians as a result of his praying, and what does he say is going to achieve those results?**

**8) Given what we've said about the function of Paul's prayers, what would we expect him to go on to talk about in this letter?**

## **Application:**

**1) To what extent do we want and pray for the things in v10 for ourselves? How about for others?**

**2) What do you think the implications of the connection between v9 and v10 are for what we're aiming for when we're studying the Bible?**

## Summary:

Put yourself in the shoes of a recently converted Christian in Colosse. Some bloke called Epaphras came to visit your town and explained this gospel about forgiveness of sin through the death of the Lord Jesus. When you heard, you believed along with a number of others. After Epaphras left, you increasingly began to live in the ways that he taught - trusting in Jesus, loving others in the church, and setting your hope on a promised new creation after death.

But now some other teachers have come to town saying that in order to be a proper Christian, there are all these extra things that you need to do and experience. You begin to wonder whether the things you've been concentrating on are really enough, or really the important things about the Christian life after all. 'Maybe', you think, 'we weren't taught the gospel correctly in the first place.'

Paul begins his letter to the Colossians by reassuring them that neither of those thoughts is true. He assures them that they've made a great start; their faith, love and hope are exactly the things that encourage Paul and convince him that they're doing well as a church. He also assures them that the gospel that they've heard and received from a reliable witness is the true and powerful gospel.

His desire for them, he tells them, is that they grow and are strengthened as Christians (v10-11) through understanding God's will better (v9). We tend to assume that when the Bible speaks of 'God's will' it's talking about how God wants us to live now - but very often when Paul speaks about 'God's will' he's referring to God's purposes that He has already achieved and revealed (see also Eph 1:9-10).

We'd expect then, that Paul would go on from here to explain just what part of God's will (his big plan for the universe and history) he wants them to grasp...

# STUDY 2: 1:13-23

## Questions



### #METHOD - Repeated Words

Looking out for words that are repeated is an easy first step which can be helpful in trying to identify what the overall themes of a passage are. Of course, we'll still need to work out what the passage is saying about those themes and why!

#### 1) What words in this passage get repeated multiple times?

*Note: 'Firstborn' is a word that crops up a couple of times in this passage. In Jewish society it was the firstborn son who would stand to receive the inheritance from his father. This doesn't mean that there was a point when Jesus didn't exist – in Psalm 89:27 God, speaking of King David, says 'I will make him the firstborn, the highest of the Kings of the earth', even though David was the youngest brother in his family! This is simply a way of saying that God has given Jesus an inheritance of ultimate rule.*

#### 2) What different spheres is Jesus 'firstborn' over (what are v15-17 describing? How about v18-23)? Why is He 'firstborn' of each?

- 3) How many different impressive things about Jesus can you find in v15-17? List them out.**
- 4) Why do you think Paul feels the need to say these things about Jesus to the Colossians?**
- 5) What's so magnificent about what Jesus has achieved in v18-22? Consider the situation before and after what Jesus did.**
- 6) Why do you think Paul includes the condition ("if...") in v23?**
- 7) In what way is this passage elaborating on what God's will (1:9) was and is?**



**#PRINCIPLE - Pulling things together**

Often when studying the Bible there will be details in the passage that we have questions over and struggle to understand. While it's good to work hard to try to understand these, it's imperative that we don't let them distract us from applying the overall message of the passage. In order to make sure we're applying the most important thing God is saying to us through the passage, it's helpful to try to nail down what we think the main point of the passage is in the flow of the author's argument.

**8) Try to summarise the main point of this passage in a short sentence.**

## **Application:**

**1) Spend some time thinking about each one of the list of impressive things about Jesus from v15-17 that you made.**

**2) How central is Jesus to the way you view the world each day?**

## Summary:

For hundreds of years, mankind has used telescopes to explore the universe. The idea of a telescope is simple - it makes objects that we know are enormous, but which appear small to us, seem more like the size they actually are.

In this passage, Paul is giving us a telescopic view of Jesus, helping us to appreciate just how great He really is.

Not only is Jesus the supreme creator, ruler, sustainer and goal of this creation, He's also the head of the church, those who will be raised from the dead to new creation where God has made Jesus to be ruler. Hence the conclusion of v18 'that in everything He might be pre-eminent'.

Here's the equation:

Supreme over this creation (v15-17) + supreme over new creation (v18a) = pre-eminent in every time and place! (v18b)

That He can be ruler of a new people in a new creation is only due to His incredible work of reconciling those thoroughly sinful people to God.

To the Colossian Christians who are tempted to think Jesus might be insufficient or only a small part of the Christian faith, this is the perfect tonic. As Paul lays out for us what God's will for the universe is, we find that Jesus isn't a footnote in His plan - He was, is, and will be right at the centre.

(N.B. v23 functions as a gentle warning to them; they need to keep believing in the sufficiency of what Jesus has done and not move on if they are to benefit from it.)



# STUDY 3: 1:24-2:5

## Questions:

**1) Given what we know about the nature of the false teaching in Colosse, what accusations might the Colossians be tempted to bring against Paul's ministry towards them?**

**2) What do we learn about:**

a) The goal of Paul's ministry?

b) The message or method of Paul's ministry?

**3) How would these things be reassuring to the Colossians?**

*Let's try to get our heads around v24!*



### **#PRINCIPLE - Using the context**

v24 seems difficult. We could take a systematic approach and try to come up with a neat theological answer of what this can and can't mean. This can have its uses in giving us some boundaries for interpretation. However, it is often the case that the context makes it obvious what the phrase actually means.

**4) Look back at 1:21-22. What is complete, what is incomplete? How might this fit with what Paul is doing in 1:28?**

**5) Why do you think Paul talks about his struggling? What does that demonstrate to the Colossians?**

**6) Why do you think Paul gives what he calls 'the mystery' such a big build up in 1:25-27, before revealing what it is?**

**7) Why is Paul confident in just preaching Christ?**

**8) Try to sum up in a sentence what Paul is saying here.**

# **Application:**

**1) Why is what this passage is saying such great news for us?**

**2) What implications does this have on the kind of Bible teaching we should be seeking?**

**3) If someone came to you and asked you 'what is the secret to Christian maturity?' what would you say?**

## Summary:

In 1998 Jim Carey starred in the hit film 'The Truman Show'. Carey plays Truman Burbank, a man who, as far as he is concerned is living a perfectly normal life, in an ideal sea-side town. What he doesn't realise is that his whole life has been part of one massive reality TV show. The place he lives is actually a huge TV studio; everyone he knows is really an actor. For a while it seems to us as if he'll forever live in this illusion; that is, until one day he accidentally stumbles upon a catering area backstage, and starts getting suspicious. From that point on he begins to wonder: maybe there's something more to life than this?

That might still be a bit like how the Colossian Christians were feeling. Paul has already given them reassurances of the truth they'd been taught and the start that they'd made. But with false teachers around them telling them that there was more to Christianity than what Paul has taught so far in this letter, they may still have been wondering whether they really had the full Christian experience. Maybe Paul was holding something back from them.

Paul's response in this passage is to assure them that isn't the case. His goal has always been that they be completely mature (1:28, 2:2). That's what he's been struggling to do, and what God has been giving him the energy to do (1:29). His God given ministry is not only to present part of the truth, but 'to make the word of God fully known' (1:25).

Yet what is this full word of God, this great mystery that's now been revealed? It's Jesus! (v27).

That may sound like a bit of an anti-climax if we were hoping that Paul was going to reveal some unknown secret to living the mature Christian life at this point, but actually it's incredible news for us. If in Jesus are 'all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge' (2:3, which shouldn't really surprise us given what we studied in 1:15-23!), then you have in your hands everything you need for living the mature Christian life!

# STUDY 4: 2:6-23

## Questions:

**1) In what sense do v6-7 provide a neat summary of Paul's argument so far?**

**2) What can we tell about the nature of the false teaching from this passage?**

Think especially about v8, 10, 16, 18, 20-23.

'Elemental spirits of the world' crops up as a description in v8 and v20. Using the **#PRINCIPLE - Using the context** that we learnt in the previous study, how do v20-21 help us understand what this might mean?

**3) How do v8-15 show that what the false teachers are promoting is *unnecessary*?**

**4) Why do you think Paul talks about what Jesus had done in terms of 'a circumcision made without hands' (v11)?**

**5) What do v16-23 tell us about:**

a) The reason why the false teaching isn't right?

b) The effectiveness of it?

c) The consequences of it, if it is accepted?

**6) Try to summarise what Paul is saying here about the false teaching in a sentence:**

## **Application:**

**1) What things/teachings today cause us to wonder whether we need some great experience to be a proper Christian?**

**2) Why do you think the Colossians might have been tempted to adopt these rules? Why do we like rules?**

**3) In what ways are you seeking to set rules for yourself (or others!) in order to produce godly behaviour? How effective is that going to be?**



### **#METHOD - Applying in line with the purpose**

In order to ensure we're applying the Bible in line with what God wants to teach us (i.e. the purpose of the passage), rather than just the things that are of interest to us, here are 3 questions we'll always need to ask ourselves:

- 1) Why did the original readers need to hear this in their situation?
- 2) In what ways is our situation similar?
- 3) How, then, do the same truths given to them apply to us?

## Summary:

On the surface, the false teaching in Colosse may well have appeared very attractive. It seems that it was advocating the need for a mixture of Jewish rules and rituals (v16, v21-22) and 'spiritual' experiences (v18). Supernatural experiences are obviously attractive to us because they feel like something tangible and impressive (which we can boast about to others). Rules and rituals may not immediately seem so attractive to us, but actually we tend to like having a tick box list of external actions we can and can't do, rather than engage in the much harder work of changing our character.

In reality though, this teaching was (and still is) unnecessary, ineffective and dangerously misleading.

Lewis Hamilton, the 2008 & 2014 Formula One World Champion, made a name for himself in his early years racing Go-Karts, before being signed up by McLaren. After years of successful F1 racing, it would be hard to imagine someone now trying to persuade Hamilton that what he really needed to be a proper racing driver was to trade in his F1 car for a Go-Kart!

Yet that, Paul says, is just like what these false teachers were saying. These rules and rituals were merely pictures to help us understand what Jesus would achieve (v17). So circumcision, for example, was a physical picture which marked out a people as separated from the world as God's people. But for Christians, the reality of spiritual circumcision (v11), which this was pointing towards, has been achieved by Christ. The old symbol is now obsolete and *unnecessary*. There's nothing extra we need to do as Christians to be part of God's forgiven people - Jesus has done it all, there's no grounds to condemn us (v14-15). Don't let anyone tell you you're not a proper Christian unless you tithe, for example.

Not only was this teaching unnecessary, but setting rules for ourselves is also *ineffective* in restraining sin (v23). Rules don't change our hearts - they're like sticking plasters onto a cancer, or papering over cracks. Even if we do manage to keep our rules (which is unlikely), sin just finds another way of expressing itself. Saying grace before each meal, for example, doesn't in itself produce an attitude of gratitude towards God.



Finally, this teaching was *dangerously misleading*. It resulted in pointing people away from Christ, which is where true growth in maturity is found (v19), and back to the self-centred (v18) and legalistic (v21) principles of the world which Christ has saved Christians from (v20). You'll often find this today in ministries that teach or imply the importance of 'Spirit-filled' experiences, but neglect substantial teaching of the Bible about God's will in Jesus.

# STUDY 5: 3:1-17

## Questions:

**1) Last time we saw Paul show why the false teachers' rules and experiences were the wrong method of producing maturity. What then might we expect him to be explaining here?**

**2) How is Paul motivating the Colossians to live rightly? Are there lots of different motivations, or are they all facets of one bigger point? (Think particularly about v1-4, 6-7, 9-10)**

The phrase "Your life is hidden with Christ in God" could have a couple of different meanings (at least). It could mean either:

1) 'Your old sinful life is now hidden - God doesn't see you as sinful anymore, but righteous because of Christ'

OR

2) 'Your new life can be found in Christ - you'll discover everything you need to know about living the Christian life by understanding Jesus better'

Use **#PRINCIPLE - Using the context** again with 1:24-2:5 (esp. 1:26, 2:3) to work out which Paul means here.

**3) How do these applications flow out of the theology that he's previously explained in the letter?**

*Let's spend a bit of time now thinking about the specific commands:*

**4) Paul gives two lists of 5 things which the Christian needs to 'put to death' in v5 and v8. How do these lists differ? What different areas of sin do they cover?**

**5) What things do we tend to think make a Christian mature?**

**6) What does the mature Christian life actually look like in practice?**

**7) Why do you think Paul is particularly concerned about the Colossians' *thanksgiving* (v15, 16, 17)?** (Note: thanksgiving is actually quite a big theme in the letter – see where else you can spot it)

**8) Try to sum up the main point of this passage in a sentence.**

# Application

**1) What would be the wrong way of nurturing those qualities of a mature Christian in v12-17, given what we've seen in Colossians? How about the right way?**

**2) Meditate for a few minutes on v12-17. To what extent does your life look like that?**



## **#METHOD - Chewing on application over time**

Application is something that often benefits from being done over a long period of time as much as an intense period of thinking. Try mulling over questions like these at various points throughout the week. The more times you think about them, the more likely you are to take these truths to heart and see different areas of your life that they affect.



## Summary

So far Paul has established why rules and experience-seeking were the wrong ways to pursue Christian maturity. He's already told us back in 1:24-2:5 how maturity was to be found - through understanding God's plan in Jesus better. But why does that lead to maturity?

Well consider, says Paul, the position you're now in. You've died to your old life of sin and futile attempts at rule-keeping and been raised with Christ to a new life - the wonderful nature of which is seen in that it will continue into glorious eternity with Christ (v4).

The more we think about and come to understand that reality - just how good our new life is - the more we'll want to distance ourselves from the way we used to live (v2). Hence, the more we understand of God's plan in Jesus, the more that knowledge will transform our new self to be more and more like Christ (v10).

Accordingly, that will lead to us wanting and actively seeking to make progress in 'putting to death' our old sinful ways - both our own 'private' sins of wrong thoughts and attitudes (v5) as well as our 'corporate' sins towards others (v8).

That's the negative implication of becoming a mature Christian. The positive implication, though, might not be quite what we'd expect. After all, don't we sometimes tend to think that the mature Christian is the person who's at church every week (morning and evening), goes to every mid-week Christian meeting they know about, spends all their time reading heavy theology books (probably something by the puritans) and knows their church history from Athanasius to Zwingli?

Well actually, that's not necessarily the case, says Paul. In fact, ironically, the idea that the mature Christian is someone who does lots of religious stuff is more like the heresy that Paul has just condemned!

In reality, the essence of real Christian maturity is a Christ-like *character*, holy, full of thanksgiving, and loving - especially towards brothers and sisters in the church.

So here's something worth thinking about: Is that your definition of maturity? To what extent are you seeking to grow in those areas?

# STUDY 6: 3:18-4:18

## Questions

*Note: 3:18-4:6 really fits more naturally with 3:1-17 than 4:7-18. However, taking all of 3:1-4:5 at once would make an impractically long study!*

**1) Using #METHOD - Repeated Words with 3:18-4:1, what is the common reason behind each of these commands?**

**To what extent is that similar and to what extent different to the motivation Paul gave 3:1-17?**

**In what different ways does this common reason actually work as a motivation (positively and negatively)?**

**2) Why do you think Paul encourages prayer for the particular things that he does in 4:2-4?**

**3) What do you think Paul means in v5 by 'making the best use of the time'? How do the contexts of a) 4:2-6 and b) the rest of the letter help with this question?**



## #PRINCIPLE - Final Greetings

NT epistles often end with what can seem like a tiresome and irrelevant list of names. It's often not easy to work out quite what we can learn and apply from these, but as the Holy Spirit saw fit to preserve them for us in our Bibles, we should at least attempt to understand why we have them.

**4) Given the nature of the false teaching in Colosse, why do you think v11 would have been an encouragement to the Colossians?**

**5) How does 4:12 reassure us of our conclusion about Paul's aim in writing from ch1?**

**6) What overall impressions does Paul give of his ministry team? Why?**

## Application:

**1) To what extent does the Lordship of Jesus impact the decisions you make each day? Think again about how Jesus is described in 1:15-23, and the implications it has on your daily attitudes.**

**2) What makes you tempted to slack off from work? What do you need to remind yourself to think at those points?**



**3) How do v2-4 (in the light of the rest of the letter) help shape the priorities of our prayers?**

**4) What will it look like in practice to 'make best use of the time' with your non-Christian friends? Think about how you could do that with a couple of individuals.**

# Summary

Having shown how an understanding of Jesus impacts personal holiness and how the church ought to function, the last few instructions Paul gives to the Colossians in 3:18-4:6 cover first the common relationships of life (family, employee-employer) and then how they ought to relate to those outside the church.

Previously we saw Paul show how an understanding of Jesus' work in salvation, which put to death our old life and gave us a new life with Him, was the motivation for living the mature Christian life now. Here Paul draws on another aspect of Jesus to motivate our right living - His Lordship.

It's worth spending some time thinking about the reality that Jesus is Lord - that he has the right to say how we should act (v18), that He is wonderfully good Lord who we should want to please in the things we do (v20), that He is a fearsome and just Lord who will one day judge the world and reward those who have made it their aim to please Him (v22-25).

Next, in 4:2-6, Paul gives instructions about prayer and how to relate to those outside the church - though the two are very much linked. Paul shows that the natural impact that understanding what he's said about Jesus will have, on both our prayers and our interactions with non-Christians, will be to focus them towards the clear and faithful proclamation of the gospel.

Finally, Paul ends his letter by reinforcing many of the big ideas he's wanted to get across to the Colossians through the letter - you don't have to follow Jewish rules to be a proper Christian (v11), the mature Christian life looks like brotherly love and faithfulness to the gospel (v7, 9), and that maturity will come from growing in understanding of the will of God (v12).

# REVIEW STUDY

## Pulling things together:

**1) What do you think are the key verses in Colossians, in terms of the big message of the letter?**

**2) Look back over your summary sentences for each of the passages you've studied. See if you can sharpen them, and then write them out in pencil below, so that you can see the flow of Paul's argument through the book. If it looks like the argument doesn't flow very well, you might have to go back to one or two of the passages and think again about whether your sentence captures the main point.**

1:1-12

1:13-23

1:24-2:5

2:6-23

3:1-4:5

4:6-18

**3) Try to summarise the message of Colossians in one sentence:**

## **Application:**

**1) Think about how 3:1-17 follows on from the previous passage. Paul has just told them that rules are useless, but he seems to be giving them rules here! So what's the difference? (Compare these rules with 2:16-23)**

**Given the differences you've come up with, can you deduce anything about what is it that makes a rule bad?**

**2) What rules do we make for ourselves, thinking they will produce godliness?**

**3) What do you think is the difference between rules and discipline? Are there areas where helpful disciplines in your life are in danger of becoming rules?**

**4) Where are we in danger of imposing our own rules on other Christians, or giving the impression that practices we find helpful are rules that mature Christians should keep?**

**5) Paul clearly thinks that the mature Christian life should be marked out by thanksgiving. Think through the different things we have to give thanks for in this letter. Are they the things that you tend to give thanks for? How do you think Paul would encourage us to grow in thanksgiving?**

**6) How are you going to grow in your understanding of God's will (his plan for all time in Christ) this year? Try to think practically and plan specifically.**

**7) How central is Jesus to the way you think each about life each day? Do you think of Him in the way the Colossians presents Him?**

**8) Spend some time looking back through the application questions at the end of each study (you could do this over the course of a few days). What are the biggest ways that Colossians has challenged you?**

Enjoyed this booklet? More study guides can be found at [www.miningthebible.co.uk](http://www.miningthebible.co.uk).