**Reflections 27 July - 2 August – What really matters**

**Bible study on Colossians 2.6-15,(16-19)**

**Begin with an opening prayer**

Lord, we gather to worship you,
for great is your glory
and great is the love that welcomes us.
You walk with us in our troubles
and your love lasts for ever.
So we bring you our praise and thanks.
**Amen.**

**Read the passage**

*Consider different ways to read the text. For example, hearing it in more than one version of the Bible.*

Colossians 2: 6-19

**6**So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, **7**rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

**8**See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians%202&version=NIV#fen-NIV-29503a)] of this world rather than on Christ.

**9**For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, **10**and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority. **11**In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the flesh[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians%202&version=NIV#fen-NIV-29506b)] was put off when you were circumcised by[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians%202&version=NIV#fen-NIV-29506c)] Christ, **12**having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.

**13**When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians%202&version=NIV#fen-NIV-29508d)] alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, **14**having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. **15**And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.[[e](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians%202&version=NIV#fen-NIV-29510e)]

**16**Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. **17**These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. **18**Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you. Such a person also goes into great detail about what they have seen; they are puffed up with idle notions by their unspiritual mind. **19**They have lost connection with the head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.

**Explore and respond to the text**

*Start by reading the Bible notes below. You may want to read them more than once or pause after each paragraph to reflect on what you have read.*

 **Bible notes**

Paul refers to shadows and substance (v.17), and this contrast helps us distinguish between what really matters in our faith and what is secondary. The congregation in Colossae is being pulled towards concerns about special food and special days, and Paul encourages members to keep their focus where it should be – on Christ.

To help them grasp this, he offers a string of comparisons highlighting the completeness of our life in Christ. We are like trees, rooted in him; we are like buildings whose foundation is in him (v.7). Our commitment to him is described as ‘spiritual circumcision’ (v.11), recalling God’s requirement that Abraham should be circumcised as a sign that he belonged to God in covenant relationship (Genesis 17:11). Even more profoundly, baptism is compared to sharing with Christ in dying and rising (v.12), and forgiveness is likened to God’s cancellation of records of debt (part of Jewish teaching: see Leviticus 25:28). Paul completes this series of images by presenting Jesus as the victor celebrating a triumph, a public procession celebrating the enemy’s defeat (v.15).

Alongside this description of the heart of Christian life, Paul explains further who Jesus really is, building on the hymn of 1:15-20. In him, we encounter everything God is (v.9). Paul pushes back against any idea that the fullness of God is somehow split between Father and Son. At every moment of Jesus’ life, God is fully present in him. This is why Christians can base their life on trusting, confident allegiance to Christ. Good writing in Paul’s day used the beginning and end of a passage to highlight the most important ideas in the author’s thought. This section ends by focusing on Christ as head of the whole body of Christian believers (a common image in the New Testament; see Ephesians 1:22-23). At the start of the passage (v.7), Paul highlights the appropriate response – thanksgiving.

 **Reflection**

*Spend a few moments thinking about what stands out for you from the Bible reading. This idea may help.*

Paul is clear that what really matters – for salvation, for fullness of life and for true authority – is Christ. In Colossae, many philosophies were doing the rounds, some of them decidedly deceitful. Debates raged about what to eat and drink and a plethora of festivals were on offer to cater for all identities and preferences. Fads came and went.

You may wish to explore the equivalents in contemporary culture (e.g. celebrity diets, ‘Swifties’ [Taylor Swift devotees], conspiracy theorists) before asserting the centrality of Christ and the need in a world of many options to remain ‘rooted and built up in him’ (Colossians 2:7). Notice the role of Christ’s body as a community that enables mutual flourishing (Colossians 2:19).

**Questions for reflection**

*You may wish to use these questions and the picture to help you think about or discuss issues arising from this week’s Bible passage.*

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| A group of people walking on a street  AI-generated content may be incorrect. |

**Questions**

* What helps you to focus on what’s important in life?
* Which practices help you to find stillness in a busy world?
* How can your church/community help others to see what really matters?

**Prayer**

God of all that really matters,
of all that is true and trustworthy.
We praise you for being our strength,
for calling us to follow you, for receiving our best
and for showing us what life and love mean.
We praise you for being bigger than our fears
and deeper than our worries.
We praise you for inspiring us with your living Word
to trust in Christ, to be rooted in him and
to serve him with hearts full of thankfulness.
**Amen.**

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