



September 13 — Christ Above All

Weekly Reading: Philippians 4–Colossians 4

Life Group Passage: Colossians 1:15–23

Main Point

Jesus is supreme over creation and the church, and through His cross He reconciles us to God; therefore, our lives must remain centered and grounded in Him.

Key Verse

“He is also the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything.”
Colossians 1:18

Life Group — The Flow

- 15 minutes — Conversation and relationship-building
- 5 minutes — Looking Back
- 5 minutes — Introduction, Background, and Christ Connection
- 30 minutes — Study and Apply
- 5–7 minutes — Application Exercise
- 10 minutes — Pray Through the Passage and Prayer Requests
- 5 minutes — Conclusion

If Time Is Limited...

Focus on:

- Main Point and Key Verse
- Background and Christ Connection
- Read Colossians 1:15–20
- Passage 1 questions 1 and 3
- Read Colossians 1:21–23
- Passage 2 questions 1 and 4

- Application Exercise
- Pray Through the Passage
- Final Takeaway

Looking Back — 5 Minutes

Last week, Philippians 2 reminded us that God is at work within His people and that our faithful obedience can shine for Christ in ordinary life. This week Paul takes us deeper by fixing our attention on the One who must have first place in everything.

Discuss one or more:

- Where did you notice God working in your desires or actions this week?
- Was there a situation where choosing not to complain or argue helped you respond differently?
- How did your response make Christ more visible to someone around you?

Transition to Introduction

“Last week focused on how Christ becomes visible through us. Today we ask an even more basic question: Who is the Christ we are called to display, and what place should He occupy in our lives?”

Introduction — 5 Minutes

Ask

- What is something good that can slowly become too important in a person's life?

Keep the conversation broad at first. People may mention work, family, success, hobbies, comfort, politics, relationships, or even ministry.

Follow-Up

- How can you tell when a good thing has moved from being part of your life to becoming the center of your life?

Say

Most of us would never say that anything should outrank Jesus. Yet our schedules, anxieties, ambitions, and reactions can reveal what is actually functioning at the center of our lives.

The Christians in Colossae were being pressured by teaching that threatened to reduce Jesus to one important spiritual figure among many. Paul responds not by giving them a slightly higher view of Jesus, but by showing that Jesus is above everything. He is not one piece of a well-balanced life. He is Lord over the whole of it.

Transition to Background

“To feel the force of Paul’s words, we need to understand why the Colossian church needed such a sweeping picture of Christ.”

Background

Paul wrote to believers in Colossae, a church he apparently had not personally founded. Epaphras had brought Paul news of their faith and love, but also of teaching that threatened to pull them away from the sufficiency and supremacy of Christ.

The exact form of the false teaching is difficult to reconstruct, but the letter shows that it involved human philosophy, religious regulations, spiritual powers, and practices that could make Christ seem insufficient. Paul answered by placing Jesus at the center of creation, redemption, and the church.

Colossians 1:15–20 is one of the New Testament’s clearest declarations of the greatness of Christ. Paul moves from who Jesus is, to what He has made, to what He sustains, to what He leads, and finally to what He accomplished through the cross. Verses 21–23 then make the truth personal: the supreme Christ is the One who reconciled people who were once alienated from God.

Transition to Christ Connection

“Paul does not present Christ’s supremacy as an abstract doctrine. The One who rules over all things is also the One who shed His blood to bring sinners back to God.”

Christ Connection

Jesus is not merely a teacher who points us toward God. He is the eternal Son who perfectly reveals the Father, the Creator through whom all things were made, and the One in whom all things hold together.

Yet the One above all things humbled Himself for us. Sin had alienated us from God and made us hostile in mind and action. We could not repair that separation. Christ made peace through the blood of His cross and, through His bodily death, reconciles believers to God. The gospel therefore calls for more than adding Jesus to an already crowded life. The Christ who created us, sustains us, leads His church, conquered death, and reconciled us deserves

first place in everything. We do not make Him supreme; He already is. Our response is to recognize His rightful place and remain grounded in the gospel we have received.

Transition to Study and Apply

“Paul begins by lifting our eyes above every competing loyalty and showing us the incomparable greatness of Jesus.”

Study and Apply — 30 Minutes

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says and how we can apply it in our lives this week.

Passage 1 — Colossians 1:15–20

Supreme Over Everything

Read the Passage – Have a volunteer read Colossians 1:15–20.

The Preeminence of Christ

[15] He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

[16] For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.

[17] And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

[18] And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.

[19] For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,

[20] and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. (ESV)

Commentary

Use the following commentary to prepare ahead of time. As you lead, summarize the key insights rather than reading everything word-for-word.

Verse 15 calls Jesus “the image of the invisible God.” God is unseen, yet the Son makes Him known perfectly. Jesus does not merely resemble God; He reveals God because He shares the

divine nature. To see the character of Christ is to see the character of the Father made known.

Paul also calls Him “the firstborn over all creation.” In Scripture, firstborn can speak of rank, inheritance, and supremacy. Paul immediately explains his meaning: all things were created by Him, through Him, and for Him. Christ cannot be part of creation if all creation came into existence through Him.

Verse 16 stretches Christ’s authority over everything visible and invisible. Earthly powers and unseen spiritual authorities alike owe their existence to Him. Nothing exists independently of Christ, and nothing possesses ultimate authority over Him.

Verse 17 says He is before all things and that all things hold together in Him. Jesus is not a distant Creator who wound up the universe and stepped away. Creation continues under His sustaining power. The world may feel unstable to us, but it is never outside His rule.

Verse 18 turns from creation to the new creation: Christ is the head of the body, the church. The church does not belong ultimately to a pastor, denomination, tradition, or generation. Christ gives it life and direction. Paul calls Him “the beginning” and “the firstborn from the dead,” pointing to His resurrection and supremacy over death. The purpose is explicit: He must have first place in everything.

Verses 19–20 connect Christ’s supremacy to reconciliation. All the fullness of God dwells in Him, and through Him God acts to reconcile all things to Himself. Peace comes not through human improvement but through “the blood of his cross.” The cross that appeared to be humiliation becomes the means by which the supreme Christ defeats sin and establishes peace.

Guide Discussion

You do not need to cover every question. Use those that best help your group engage with the passage.

1. **Good for Students.** What words or phrases in verses 15–20 most strongly communicate the greatness of Jesus to you?
2. **Discuss.** Why do you think Paul answers spiritual confusion by giving the church a bigger view of Christ rather than simply listing everything that was wrong with the false teaching?
3. **Deeper Dive.** What difference does it make in everyday life to believe that all things were created through Christ, for Christ, and are held together by Christ?

4. Reflective — Index Card. Where is it easiest for something other than Christ to compete for “first place” in your attention, trust, or priorities?

Teaching Insight

Say

“Christ’s supremacy is not a title we grant Him after He proves useful to us. He is already Lord over creation, the church, history, death, and our lives. Christian maturity begins by seeing Him rightly.”

Transition to Passage 2

“Paul has shown us Christ’s cosmic supremacy. Now he brings the picture close to home: this supreme Christ has acted personally to reconcile people like us.”

Passage 2 — Colossians 1:21–23

Reconciled and Grounded

Read the Passage – Have a volunteer read Colossians 1:21–23.

[21] And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds,
[22] he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him,
[23] if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister. (ESV)

Commentary

Verse 21 describes our condition apart from Christ with uncomfortable clarity. We were alienated and hostile in mind, expressed through evil actions. Sin is not merely a collection of mistakes; it ruptures fellowship with the holy God.

Verse 22 announces the gospel reversal: “But now he has reconciled you.” The initiative belongs to God. Reconciliation came through Christ’s physical body in His death. Paul emphasizes the real, bodily death of Jesus because our peace with God rests on an actual saving event, not on a spiritual idea or human effort.

Christ's purpose is to present believers holy, faultless, and blameless before God. This does not mean Christians achieve sinless perfection in the present. It points to the standing Christ gives His people and the final work He will complete in them.

Verse 23 calls believers to continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel. Paul is not saying that believers preserve themselves by sheer determination. Rather, perseverance is the fitting response and evidence of genuine faith.

The same Christ who reconciles His people is the One in whom they remain grounded. The Colossians faced ideas that could pull their confidence away from Christ. We face different versions of the same temptation whenever we look to success, morality, politics, relationships, spiritual experiences, or ourselves to provide what only Jesus can give.

Consider This — The Hub of the Wheel

Picture a wheel with a strong hub at its center. Every spoke extends from that center, and the wheel works because each part is held in proper relationship to the hub.

Now imagine trying to move the hub to the edge so it can be one spoke among many. The wheel no longer works as designed. In the same way, Jesus cannot simply be one important category alongside work, family, money, recreation, and relationships.

Christ does not merely belong somewhere in a well-balanced life. He is the center that gives every other part of life its proper place.

Guide Discussion

1. **Good for Students.** According to verses 21–23, what changed because of Christ's death?
2. **Discuss.** Why is it important to remember both who we were apart from Christ and who we are because of His reconciliation?
3. **Deeper Dive.** What are some subtle ways Christians can “shift from the hope of the gospel” without openly rejecting Jesus?
4. **Reflective — Index Card.** What would it look like this week for one area of your life to move more clearly under Christ's first-place authority?

Teaching Insight

Say

“The gospel does not simply rescue us from a bad past; it re-centers our entire life around the supreme Christ who reconciled us and now calls us to remain grounded in Him.”

Transition to Application Exercise

“Instead of trying to make Jesus one more priority on a long list, let’s identify where His rightful place at the center needs to reshape us this week.”

Application Exercise — 5–7 Minutes

Center • Surrender • Stand

Supplies: Index cards and pens

Use the card privately. The goal is not to produce an impressive plan, but to name one concrete way Christ’s supremacy should shape your week.

1. Center

What area of life has been taking more of your attention, fear, or trust than it should?

- Work or achievement
- Family or relationships
- Money or security
- Comfort or control
- Approval or reputation

2. Surrender

What would it look like to place that area under Christ’s authority instead of asking Him to orbit around your plans?

- A decision to obey
- A worry to entrust to Him
- A priority to change
- A habit to surrender

3. Stand

What gospel truth from Colossians 1:15–23 will help keep you grounded when that competing priority pulls at you again?

Say

“Jesus does not need us to make Him supreme. He already is. Our task is to order our lives around what is eternally true.”

Transition to Pray Through the Passage

“Paul has given us reasons not only to obey Christ but to adore Him. Let’s pray through what this passage reveals about who He is and what He has done.”

Pray Through the Passage — 10 Minutes

Led by the Prayer Champion

Read each verse and prayer prompt aloud. Allow a few moments between prompts for personal reflection and prayer.

If time is limited, use one or two prompts rather than all four. The goal is meaningful prayer through the passage, not completing every prompt.

Prompt 1 — Adoration (Who God Is)

Christ is eternal, sovereign, and sustaining.

Colossians 1:17 — “He is before all things, and by him all things hold together.”

Praise Jesus because He is before all things and faithfully sustains all He has made. Name an area where His sovereign care gives you confidence.

Prompt 2 — Confession (Where We Need Him)

Sin alienates us from God and distorts our loyalties.

Colossians 1:21 — “Once you were alienated and hostile in your minds as expressed in your evil actions.”

Confess where your thoughts, actions, or priorities have resisted Christ’s rightful authority.

Prompt 3 — Gratitude (What He Has Done)

Christ reconciles through His death.

Colossians 1:22 — “But now he has reconciled you by his physical body through his death.”

Thank Jesus for making peace with God possible through His own death rather than leaving you to repair the separation yourself.

Prompt 4 — Response / Obedience (How We Will Obey)

Remain grounded in the gospel.

Colossians 1:23 — “If indeed you remain grounded and steadfast in the faith and are not shifted away from the hope of the gospel.”

Ask God to keep you grounded in Christ and name one area where you will resist shifting your hope elsewhere this week.

Prayer Requests, Praises, and Follow-Up

- Ask the group for updates from the previous week's prayer requests and celebrate answered prayers.
- Invite members to share honestly at whatever level they are comfortable so the group can support one another through prayer and practical care.
- Ask whether anyone would like prayer for an area where another priority has been competing with Christ's rightful place or where they need to remain grounded in gospel hope.
- Record requests and praises, share them with the group during the week, and follow up at the next gathering.

Transition to Conclusion

"The question Colossians leaves us with is not whether Jesus is supreme. He is. The question is whether our lives increasingly reflect that reality."

Conclusion — 5 Minutes

Final Takeaway

Jesus is above all things and has reconciled us through His cross. A faithful Christian life is one that keeps returning every part of life to His rightful first place.

This Week's Challenge

Respond — *What Will I Do?*

Return to your Center • Surrender • Stand card and choose the one step you will act on first.

- Put the competing priority into words.
- Pray specifically about surrendering it to Christ.
- Take the concrete act of obedience you identified.

Reflect — *What Is God Showing Me?*

Consider:

- What does my schedule suggest has first place in my life?
- Where am I trusting something created more than the Creator?
- How does Christ's reconciliation change the way I see myself?

- What would remaining grounded in the gospel look like when I feel anxious or pressured?

Review — *How Will I Keep God's Word Before Me?*

Review Colossians 1:18 throughout the week:

“He is also the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything.”

When something else begins to feel ultimate, remind yourself: Christ already has first place in everything.

Read — *How Will I Prepare for Next Week?*

Continue with the church's Year of Prayer New Testament Reading Plan.

Next Week's Reading: 1 Thessalonians 1–5

As you read, notice how faith, love, and hope shape a church that is waiting for Christ's return.

Closing Prayer

“Lord Jesus, You are before all things, and all things were created through You and for You. Thank You for reconciling us to God through the blood of Your cross. Forgive us for giving created things the place that belongs to You alone. Re-center our desires, decisions, fears, and hopes around You. Keep us grounded and steadfast in the gospel, and let every part of our lives show that You truly have first place. Amen.”