

WHATEVER YOU DO

A SIX WEEK STUDY FOR ATHLETES ON
THE LETTER TO THE COLOSSIANS

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A READING OF THE LETTER TO THE COLOSSIANS

COLOSSIANS 1-4

There are 27 books in the New Testament. Twenty of them are letters written to the early church or early church leaders. When these churches received these letters, they would read them out loud, straight through. There were no chapters or verses. They were just letters read to the community.

When was the last time you read a whole book of the Bible in one sitting? When was the last time you did that with a group of friends? Chances are you have never done it (or it's been a while). Let's take 10 minutes and read the letter to the Colossians together. Read it like they would have in the 1st century in Colossae, when they first received it. (You could also listen to it through the Bible in the Ao1Life App or at Biblegateway.com)

Read Colossians straight through without stopping to discuss.

What are a few themes that stuck out after you read/listened to the whole letter?

Are there any verses that hit you as you read it? Write the verse below and share it with the group.

Share with the group anything you learned about God through reading/listening to Colossians or any questions that came up.

APPLICATION FOR THE ATHLETE

A READING OF THE LETTER
TO THE COLLOSSIANS

Throughout the letter we are challenged to live differently because of who Jesus is and what he has done for us. We will be looking more deeply at those things in the future weeks. For today, we want to focus on what we have in our minds, which will influence our actions.

The name of this Colossians study is “Whatever You Do” taken from Colossians 3:17. Look up this verse and write it below.

How could memorizing Colossians 3:17 influence the way you practice and interact with your teammates?

This week, memorize Colossians 3:17. Try not to do this alone. Be committed as a group to help each other figure out what it looks like to live out Colossians 3:17 in community.

How can you help each other memorize and be reminded of this verse?



THANKSGIVING AND PRAYER

COLOSSIANS 1:3-14

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS STUDY

- Colossians is a letter written to the church in Colossae that challenges us to live differently because of who Jesus is and what he has done for us.
- One of the key verses of this letter is Colossians 3:17, which says “And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” We challenged you to memorize this verse and think how living this verse out will impact your life & sport.

Chapter 1 starts with a prayer. Read that prayer in 1:3-14

You will notice verses 3-8 center on thanksgiving. List off all the ways Paul is thankful for the Colossian church? (Hint: Every verse has something)

In verses 9-14, Paul praying for specific things for the church. List the things he is praying for:

As you read the whole letter and focus on these verses, you will notice the gospel is woven throughout the whole letter. Have a group discussion and come to a conclusion on what the gospel is. Write your answer below:

How are thanksgiving and the gospel connected?

In what ways has the gospel changed us, according to these verses in chapter 1?

APPLICATION FOR THE ATHLETE

In Colossians 1:7-8, Paul mentions a man named Epaphras (E•paf•rus) who faithfully ministered to them. Do you have an Epaphras in your life? On your team? What do you think makes them faithful?

Share a story of someone who has inspired you spiritually.

Brainstorm some ways you (and this group) could be a spiritual inspiration to your team within the athletic department.

List out the names of your teammates who you would like to know the gospel at a deeper level or maybe understand it for the first time.

Take some time to pray together for the individuals on that list. The leader can pray or if others feel comfortable, you can have anyone (or everyone) pray.

Finish by asking God to make himself known to those you have prayed for. Ask him to give you two opportunities this week to have gospel conversations, and the courage to step into those opportunities.

JESUS' PREEMINENCE



COLOSSIANS 1:15-23

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS STUDY

- Prayer is an important part of this letter. We were challenged to be a group that prays for others.
- We are called to be faithful to minister to those on our team and in the athletic department. You could be the Epaphras to your team or athletic department.
- We are praying for opportunities to share who Jesus is with those around us.

Share a time when you have been the focus of everyone's attention. How did it feel and what were the circumstances?

Read Colossians 1:15-23

Read those verses again, but replace all the "he's and "him's with "Jesus"

How did putting Jesus' name in the verses change them for you?

Make a list of what these verses tell us about Jesus:

Focus on verse 18 and the phrase "In everything he might be preeminent" (from the ESV version)

What does preeminent mean to you? How would you explain it to someone from the context of these verses?

If we looked at the original Greek definition of this word, preeminent, we would see it means "to be first, hold the first place." This verse is the center of the whole study and center of how we think about God. Why do you think it's so important to know this about Jesus?

APPLICATION FOR THE ATHLETE

Do you think Jesus is preeminent in today's sports culture? Why or why not?

What are some examples of people who think they are preeminent in today's sports culture? How do they show that?

Actions reveal our beliefs. What are some ways your athletic department treats athletes like they "hold the first place"? Is this right, wrong, or doesn't matter?

If you are a Christian, you are called to live differently with Jesus being first place in all that you do. What needs to change for this to happen in your sport?

What would it look like for you to put Jesus first in your athletic department?

How could you (and this group) help make that change?

*For more thoughts on these verses and Jesus' preeminence, check out the "Ao1Life Digital Chapel • Week 2" which is a 15 minute talk on these verses. That can be found through the Ao1Life App under the "Digital Chapel" tab and scrolling to the bottom for week 2.



WALK IN HIM

COLOSSIANS 2:6-15

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS STUDY

- Preeminent means “to be first, hold the first place.” This idea is the center of the whole study and how we think about God.
- God desires us to put Jesus as preeminent in our lives.
- There was a challenge for you (or this group) to show Jesus as first in your athletic department.

Read Colossians 2:6-15

List the things Christ/God has done according to these verses.

What one or two things are most meaningful to you, and why?

Verse 6 can be broken up into two important and significant phases:

1. As you received Christ Jesus the Lord
2. So walk in him

Why are these phrases important? How are they significant to our faith? How are they related?

What do you think Paul means by “receive”?

What does it mean to “walk in him”?

How is Christ’s preeminence showing up in verses 6-15? Why is this important?

APPLICATION FOR THE ATHLETE

Can you think of any empty deceits or false philosophies that have infiltrated the sports culture or your sport?

Example of a major deceitful and false philosophy in our sports culture: Prosperity Gospel - if I trust in God and have enough faith, he will reward me with earthly blessings like health, wealth and success.

How have you seen this philosophy in sports? How about in your own life?

Discuss why this is a deceit of the gospel?

v9-10 say, "For in him [Jesus] the fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you [athlete] have been filled in him [Jesus], who is the head of all rule and authority." How could these verses change your perspective on lifting, watching film, practicing and competing?

v12-14 talks about the freedom that Jesus has given us. How could this freedom be transferred over to your sport?

What are the things in your sport and life that keep you from experiencing the joy and freedom of walking with Jesus?

What are one or two practical ways you can align your life with the verses we read today?

Finish this study by reading these verses again and thanking God for the list of things (from the 1st question) that Jesus has done for you.

*Further resources on prosperity gospel: Article: GAME WINNING KICKS, JESUS SHOUT OUTS, AND THE PROSPERITY GOSPEL by Brian Smith <https://bit.ly/36Mk5QD>

Video: John Piper ~ Prosperity Gospel (2:48) - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G-V_91c5ojU

**There is talk about baptism in these verses. Discuss what the purpose of baptism is and why you have or have not been baptized.

Further resources: (Search: Blackhawk Church - "What is Baptism? Booklet") <https://bit.ly/2RRZZjO>





PUT IT TO DEATH

COLOSSIANS 3:1-11

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS STUDY

- Colossians 2:6 says “as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him.” It’s important for us to know that it is only because of receiving Jesus as our Lord that we can walk in him and his ways. As we received him by grace, we can only walk in him by grace.
- There are empty and deceitful philosophies out there and one that is prominent in the sports world is the prosperity gospel.
- God calls us to live & compete differently with a freedom and passion that comes only from knowing Jesus.

Read Colossians 3:1-11

Make a list of what we learn about Christ from verses 1-4. How does this list relate to Christ being preeminent? (Preeminent means “to be first, hold the first place”)

What do these verses say about us, if we are following Jesus?

In verses 5-11 we are called to “put to death” things that are of the “old self.” What are those things he tells us to put to death? Why do you think Paul uses such extreme language?

Do any of these stick out to you as especially important to eliminate in your life?

Verse 11 is an important verse for us to recognize. Why do you think it is important to read and understand? What does this tell us about God?

APPLICATION FOR THE ATHLETE

Look at your list again in verses 5-11. Have a discussion with your group why some of these (or all of them) are prevalent in your sport culture. Pick 3-5 and give examples.

Now pick 3-5 of those that you want to intentionally be conscious of this week and moving forward. Discuss as a group what it would look like to put to death those 3-5 things. How do you think that could effect your team? How do you think your non-Christian teammates could react?

The language of putting to death indicates that Christians have to take severe measures to conquer sin. It's not something that is just going to fade away on its own when you put your faith and trust in Jesus. It is an active thing we must do. Do you think this will be hard or easy to put to death? Why? What is some encouragement you could give to one another as you pursue these changes in your life? (look at verses 1-4 & 7 for a hint of encouragement)

What do you think it looks like to "set your mind on things that are above" in the context of your sport? What does the opposite of this look like in your sport?

How can you set your mind on things that are above this week? How can you help each other with this?

We need each other to help us do this, but we also need to recognize that we already have a helper in the Holy Spirit. What is the Holy Spirit's role? (hint: you can't do any of this without him) What is your role in this? How are they connected? (*see Colossians 1:29 for help answering this question.*)

* This may seem like an overwhelming task, because it is! Be reminded that the gospel is a process and we are on a journey towards holiness. This will not happen overnight, but as we depend on the Holy Spirit, we will continue to grow in the likeness of Jesus. It is by grace we are saved. It is by grace we grow. Go hard to "put to death" while remembering it is God who will do it in your life.





WHATEVER YOU DO

COLOSSIANS 3:12-17

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS STUDY

- Christians are called to “put to death the things of the old self.” This is a hard thing to do and it takes work.
- Christians are also called to “set our minds on things above, not on earthly things.” We began to process what this looks like as an athlete who wants to win.
- We need each other (a community) if we are going to put to death the old and set our minds on things above.

Read Colossians 3:12-17 together.

What are the things we are to “put on” as a Christian?

What "thing(s)" resonate the most with you? Why?

Let's take one thing for each of the first three verses to give you an idea of how to press deeper into the passage. Feel free to go further with the other things if time allows:

Verse 12 - Humility - How do you define humility? Why do you think it is important to put it on? How does Jesus show humility? (see Philippians 2:3-11)

Verse 13 - Forgiving each other - Why is forgiveness important? Is there anyone in your life that you need to forgive or ask for forgiveness from? How has Jesus shown us forgiveness? How is Jesus' forgiveness different than the world's forgiveness? (see Ephesians 4:32, 1 John 1:9 and Psalm 103:12)

Verse 14 - Love - How does love bind everything together? Why is it important? How does Jesus show love? How is Jesus' love different than a fan base? (see John 3:16, 1 John 3:16, and Matt 22:34-39)

Verse 17 talks about everything you do... word and deed. Why do you think God challenges what we do AND what we say in this verse? How and why do you think they are connected?

APPLICATION FOR THE ATHLETE

How do you imitate Christ's compassionate heart on your team? In your athletic department?

What is one way you can show love today to your coach, teammate(s), or administration, even though they might not deserve it?

What prideful attitude might you need to swallow in order for there to be peace? How could this show Christ's preeminence in your life?

In the first study, you were challenged to memorize Colossians 3:17. Have you? If not, why not? How can this group help you do that?

If you have, how has having that verse with you all of the time helped you? Challenged you? Share a story of how God has reminded you of this verse at specific times.

As we wrap up this study, share with the group one thing God taught you from the study of Colossians?

Let's end the way we started the study, by praying for our teammates. Let's give thanks to God for each of them by name, then ask him to make himself known to them, your team, and the whole athletic department.