



LC STUDY GUIDE

“Thrive” Series

The Passage: Colossians 1:3-6

Nov 28 – Dec 11

Intro: Welcome to the final study in our *Thrive* series. We return to the beginning of Colossians where Paul expresses his gratitude for the faithful church in Colossae. Colossians is written in a backdrop of pain and adversity, yet Paul opens his letter with gratitude. As we have recently celebrated Thanksgiving, what can we be thankful for, especially in light of the challenges that we have experienced this year? And now that we have spent the fall together, what can we be thankful for as a LC group?

Central Idea – We can experience gratitude and flourishing when we see the source and the hope of faith.

Colossians 1:3-6 New International Version (NIV)

³ We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, ⁴ because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all God’s people— ⁵ the faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven and about which you have already heard in the true message of the gospel ⁶ that has come to you. In the same way, the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world—just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God’s grace.

O – In these four verses, we see Paul’s style of run-on sentences (it makes more sense in the Greek, but nonetheless, his grammar teacher would have called it a run-on as well ;-). Spend some time re-reading these four verses. What is Paul saying in these affirmations? What is he affirming them for (there are three and they are said differently; two in vs. 4 and one in vs. 6)? What do these affirmations lead towards?

O – Though hardship is not mentioned in these four verses, both Paul and the people of Colossae are experiencing difficulty. Paul is imprisoned and the theological understanding of the Colossians is being attacked by competing versions of the gospel that were different than what Paul and his disciples had originally given them. How does the backdrop of pain and difficulty shape our reading of these verses?

I/A – We would do us well to see the emphasis on community life here in these verses:

Quoting N.T. Wright:

“If the key tell-tale sign of that new creation is the love that marks out the Christian community, Paul can also speak of the three main features of Christian living: faith, hope and love. As in the famous passage in 1 Corinthians 13, so here in verses 4–5 these three stand out. They are there in the individual Christian, and in the community, from beginning to end: the faith which reaches out to grasp what God offers in King Jesus; the love which binds the community together; the hope that looks eagerly forward to the time when God completes what he began in Jesus. Paul has heard that this is all there in Colossae, and verses 3–8 declare that he is repeatedly thanking the God who has done it all.¹”

What do we see in the beauty of community in Wright’s highlighting of Paul’s words here? What can we glean from this for our own lives and our LC?

A – Having gone through the *Thrive* series together, let us reflect on what we have gained throughout the fall in what we studied, in how we cared for each other, and in how we served others. What is God showing and teaching us? How can we continue to thrive as Christ-followers and as a LC?

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- a. Please note that not all these questions are to be asked in a single meeting. Take some time to prayerfully discern what will serve your LC the best. Select and reword the questions that best fit your voice and your Life Community group.
 - b. Complement these questions with “process questions” (what else? what more? what do others think?)
 - c. When you ask questions, give people ample time to think and respond. Wait. Take your time; don’t rush people but encourage participation. Avoid answering your own questions!
 - d. Application: Pace the study to conclude with difference-making application.
 - e. Secondary texts—use other texts sparingly, even if they are relevant. Such texts will push you into “teaching” rather than facilitating, causing people to feel distracted or de-powered.

¹ Wright, T. (2004). *Paul for Everyone: The Prison Letters: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon* (pp. 143–144). London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.