



## PRE-MEETING DEVOTIONS

Devotion One: Introductions, Greetings, Thanksgivings and Prayer

**Scripture:** Colossians 1:1-8

**Focus:** Participants will read Paul’s greeting and consider both the importance of faith in how they introduce themselves and the value of praying for those we care for.

**Preparation:** Paper and writing utensils will be needed for each participant.

Gather the students and provide a time for each participant to greet one another.

*Reader can share the following:* Introductions are important. Whether it’s face-to-face or written an introduction can set the tone. As with many of Paul’s Epistles, his introduction to Colossians begins with a greeting along with the opportunity to express thanksgiving and prayer. This example of an introduction is an appropriate way for us to start our time together.

Paul begins by giving a traditional greeting to the people at Colossae. He continues his introduction by acknowledging and giving thanks for their faithfulness. He also shares a prayer with petitions he knows are applicable for them.

Select someone to read the following introductory verses from Colossians 1:1-8.

*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father.*

*We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints,<sup>because</sup> of the hope laid up for you in heaven.*

*Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant.*

*He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf and has made known to us your love in the Spirit.*



In the large group or in smaller groups of two or three share your responses to one or both of the following. Allow 5-7 minutes for discussion.

- Share a memorable introduction you or someone you know has experienced.
- Share an awkward introduction you or someone you know has experienced.

Bring the group back together and provide students the opportunity to share some of their responses.

*Reader can share the following:* Introductions can tell you about who a person is and what they think is important about themselves. Paul's greeting to the Colossians reminds us that our most important thing we can share about ourselves with others is our faith in Jesus Christ. Christ is the creator of all things and became a creature Himself, entering His own creation. Our introductions should point people back to the God who came to save us. This is not always easy, but we do it because we have heard and understood the grace of God in truth.

And as we greet and care for one another, we can lift each other up in prayer. We make sure to thank God for the people and gifts He has given us and pray in supplication for those who are in need.

Read this introduction again, this time asking the reader to change the greeting to fit your group:

*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at (add your youth group name and location here): Grace to you and peace from God our Father.*

*We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven.*

*Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, just as you learned it from (add the names of your youth Readers, pastor(s), and/or others) our beloved fellow servant(s).*

*He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf and has made known to us your love in the Spirit.*



In the large group or in the smaller groups previously assigned provide paper and writing materials. Provide time for students to list things your group, church or community are thankful for. List people they know who may need God's intercession. Use this time to have groups write prayers of thanksgiving and intercession based on what they have listed.

Close by bringing groups back together. Ask a representative from each group to share their prayer with the larger group.

## Devotion Two: A New Identity

**Scripture:** Colossians 3:1-11

**Focus:** Participants understand Christians through their baptism lose their own identity and become one with Jesus and realize God the Father has made sinners perfect through the death of His Son.

**Preparation:** This session starts in small groups. Groups should be no larger than four to five persons to allow discussion.

In small groups, the Reader will be selected as the person whose middle name begins with the earliest letter in the alphabet (tiebreaker can be adding the first name and then the last name).

Share with the group, if you know it, the origin of your middle name (parent's, relative's, a favorite of your parents, etc.).

Next share how you feel about the name considering these questions:

- Do you use it regularly, do you use the initial only?
- Do you use it instead of your first name?
- Do you like it?
- Do you hide it as much as possible?
- Why to you use it or not use it?

*Reader can share the following:* If you were baptized as an infant it very probably your first and middle name was shared by the pastor as he poured the water on your head three times and added to your name the words, "I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Baptism brings us into the God's family.



Read Colossians 3:1-3.

- Share with the group what these words mean to you as a baptized Child of God?
- What is our true identity as a baptized Child of God?
- Who do others see when they see you?

Read Colossians 3:5-10. Paul provides a list of sins which affect us in our daily lives. Which of these things listed to consider are the biggest challenge for young people today?

*Reader can share the following:* This section of Scripture allows no leeway for sinful living. Each of us knows we regularly sin. Based on the list Paul provides give participants a few minutes to think about an area they personally find to be challenging. The words of Confession we use in worship remind us, “Most merciful God, we confess we are by nature sinful and unclean. We have sinned against You in thought, word and deed, but what we have done and by what we have left undone.”

We hear these words in 1 John 2:1-2, “My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sines of the whole world.” Christ reconciles all things to himself through His death and resurrection.

Get back into your small groups. Share with your group how this text helps to explain the connection between our sin, God’s mercy and our identity in Christ as His baptized and beloved child of God?

*Reader can share the following:* Praise God even though we remain sinners we have been made perfect through Christ’s death and resurrection. How does this make you feel?

Close with this prayer taken from the order of Holy Baptism (LSB 268-271)

*Almighty and most merciful God and Father, we thank and praise You that you graciously preserve and enlarge Your family and granted us the new birth in Holy Baptism and made us members of Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ and heirs of Your heavenly kingdom. We humbly implore You that as Your children, You would keep us in our baptismal grace, that according to Your good pleasure we may faithfully grow to lead a godly life to the praise and honor of Your holy name and finally, with all Your saints, obtain the promised inheritance in heaven: through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.*



## Devotion Three: The Rest of Your Story

**Scripture:** Colossians 1:24-28

**Focus:** Participants will hear Paul tell how God directed his story of faith and they will consider how their story is a part of God's story, directed by Him as well.

*Reader can share the following:* Whether it's a classic fairy tale or a Disney movie, most of these stories follow a certain pattern. There is often a "once upon a time" beginning. This usually is followed by a surprise or change with a "happily ever after" conclusion.

Break into small groups of 3-5 persons for discussion. Choose your Reader by selecting the person who has most recently watched a movie.

Allow five minutes for groups to discuss the following:

- Share in your group which childhood fairy tale or Disney movie character is your favorite and why.
- Share the characteristic(s) of your favorite character you think you may have or would like to have.
- Share one thing you feel satisfied with in your "story" and how it is helping you move towards a "happily ever after" ending.

Read Colossians 1:24-28

*Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh, I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.*

*Reader can share the following:* Paul is sharing his ministry story. He recognized that it was God at work In All Things, gave him faith and set him in a new direction. Paul is a great example of how Christ transforms the lives of all His people into His image. Paul talks about how he gladly endured suffering as he has boldly shared the message of Christ's death and resurrection. He sees his calling as to proclaim how Christ works in us.



Work for ten minutes as a group, using these words of Paul and others you may be familiar with to put together in story format what Paul says about his life of faith using these suggestions:

- You may want your story to begin with the phrase “once upon a time” and end with “happily ever after”.
- Include a description of the “mystery” Paul has found that has been an important help his story.

*Reader can share the following:* Through the power of the Holy Spirit at work in us through our baptism, our faith in Christ grows as we study His Word. We can hear God’s story in the Bible and how God is In All Things. God brings us into His family so that God can make us a part of His story. Just like Paul, God gave us faith and directs or story of sharing the Good News of Jesus. The “happily ever after” for our lives as Christians will be our eternal life in heaven. Christ promises to return to restore all things.

- Share how you think your story can be like Paul’s and what help you might need in the story of your life of faith.

Close with the opportunity for participants to share prayer requests and conclude with the group sharing this prayer together:

*Almighty God, whom to know is everlasting life, grant us perfectly to know Your Son, Jesus Christ, to be the way, the truth and the life, that following his steps we may steadfastly walk in the way that leads to eternal life; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen*

*(LSB, Prayers, Intercessions, and Thanksgivings 202)*

## Devotion Four: Creating Your Checklist

**Scripture:** Colossians 3:12-17

**Focus:** Participants

**Preparation:** You will need: Newsprint, Markers, Index Cards, Pens

*Reader can share the following:* A checklist can be an important tool to assist in completing a task. Have the group share situations where they have relied on a checklist and write these on the newsprint.

Using another sheet of newsprint have the group create a “packing list” of items individuals will want to bring for the Gathering.



Read Colossians 3:12-17

*Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 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.*

*Reader can share the following:* Paul has created a list of attributes for us to “put on” daily in our lives as “God’s chosen ones”. We don’t do these on our own. On our own we would focus on ourselves, hold grudges, be short tempered and egotistical. Instead, God gives us His Holy Spirit and empowers us to reflect God’s characteristics to others. In All Things, God is at work using us to care for our neighbors and His world.

Distribute an index card and pen to each participant.

Allow five minutes for participants to create a list on their index card to include the following:

- List what part(s) of your life connect to the list of attributes as God’s chosen ones.
- List the attribute(s) you feel are most important for your group to at the Gathering.
- List one of the attributes you would like to improve.

Bring the group together and add to the “packing list” you created earlier the attributes participants think are important. This can even be a great place for you to look at your group covenant. You can have a conversation about how God can work through us to care for each other and for those we will interact with in our city.

Conclude with a time of prayer and thanksgiving. Participants may be given a time for quiet prayer especially focusing on an attribute they would like to improve.

Bring the group together and read together verses 15-17 as a closing benediction.



## In All Things – Colossians Responsive Reading

Use this responsive reading to reflect on selected verses from Colossians. Select eight members of your group to serve as readers. Following the responsive reading allow time for participants to share in a time of prayer.

Reader 1: The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

People: In all things, set our minds on things above, not on earthly things.

Reader 2: For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.

People: In all things remind us in whatever we do, whether in word or deed, to do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Reader 3: He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

People: As God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, in all things clothe us with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

Reader 4: He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

People: In all things remind us over all these virtues to put on love, which binds them together in perfect unity.

Reader 5: For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

People: In all things let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts, since as members of one body we are called to peace.

Reader 6: Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior.



People: In all things help us remember we are reconciled by Christ's physical body through death.

Reader 7: He is the head over every power and authority.

People: In all things let the message of Christ dwell among us richly as we teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in our hearts.

Reader 8: Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. He forgave us all our sins, he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross.

People: Remind us of the grace and forgiveness which is ours through Christ's death and resurrection. Help us bear with each other, forgive one another, and give thanks to you in all things.