GOALS
As students experience this session in Colossians, they will...
▪ Explore the lives of the first readers of Colossians.
▪ Discover life after Jesus and compare it to life before Jesus.
▪ Examine the warnings in Colossians designed to protect life after Jesus, and determine how they apply today.

MATERIALS: Group
▪ a whiteboard and markers
▪ a pack of colored pencils
▪ a Jenga game (see the “Open” segment)

Optional Materials:
▪ 1 sheet of card stock for each student (see “Putting Into Practice”)
▪ scissors
▪ markers

MATERIALS: Each Student
▪ student journal pages for Session 2
▪ student Scripture sheets for Colossians
▪ a notebook for keeping Scripture sheets and journal pages
▪ a Bible (or Bible app) and pen

Prayer
After your students have gathered, thank God for the good traits you see in your group, much as Paul prayed for the Colossians in 1:3–5.

Review
To stay connected to the big themes in Colossians (and bring any first-timers up to speed), ask a few review questions.

What type of Bible book is Colossians?
- a letter

Who wrote Colossians?
- Paul and Timothy (mostly Paul)

What were three of Paul’s duties or concerns for his readers?
- Refer to the “Digging Deeper” list from Session 1

Bonus: How much time had Paul spent visiting Colossae?
- None; apparently he’d never visited (2:1).

OPEN
Option 1: Jenga
Open with one of the following variations on the game Jenga®. If you’re not familiar with the game, Google “Jenga” and find a description and online demo. In short, it’s a game in which you build a tower out of wooden blocks, and then make the tower taller by removing blocks from the bottom and placing them at the top of the stack. The game is over when someone’s move tips the stack. You can incorporate this with one of the following options:
1. Have the game available and play a round;
2. Video a round ahead of time and show the clip; capture the “tower fall” in slow motion;
3. Show an image of the game and describe the principle.

Option 2: Morphing
Brainstorm—Have the group come up with examples of things that morph:
1. cicadas
2. caterpillars
3. maggots
4. tadpoles
Optional—Show a video or pictures of one of the examples above “morphing”. There are lots of time lapsed videos on websites like YouTube.

DIGGING IN
Transition into the study by saying something like this:

Jenga opener:
At some point in the round, the Jenga® stack reaches a tipping point when it can no longer be a stack and turns into a pile of blocks. As we get into today’s study, remember the feeling you had when you watched the stack tip.

Referring to the morph brainstorm opener (and using a tadpole as a morph example):
At some point in the morph, the tadpole reaches a tipping point when it becomes more like a frog than a tadpole. Try to picture what that looks like, and keep it in mind as we get into today’s study.

Share that:
In Session 1 we discovered a lot about the book of Colossians just by looking at the writer. Now we’ll look for info about the recipients—the first readers of Colossians.

Invite your students to read Colossians 1 and 2 using their Scripture sheets (granted, it’s a big chunk of Scripture, but tell them it’s worth it). As they read, ask them to do the following:
▪ use a unique color or symbol to mark every mention of the receivers of the letter. Remind them to include words like “we” and “our” when they refer to the Colossians.
▪ notice any words and phrases that keep showing up as they read. They should jot these in the margins.

After a few minutes, ask the group to look at what they marked in Colossians 1:1–8 and tell you about the spiritual condition of the Colossians. List their observations on the board as follows.

The Colossians’ Spiritual Condition
• holy and faithful brothers in Christ (v. 2)
• news of their faith in Christ has gotten around (v. 4)
• so has their love for all the saints (v. 4)
• have hope stored up for them in heaven (v. 5)
• the Gospel has come to them (v. 5, 6)
• learned of the Gospel from Epaphras (v. 7)
• have love in the Spirit that’s worth telling about (v. 8)

Use the following questions to help your students imagine the Colossians’ story.

What do you think: Was this a church? A family gathering?

How does it appear they got started?

After they’ve observed that Epaphras introduced them to the Gospel (1:7), share that this likely happened in A.D. 50; Paul’s letter was written around A.D. 60. Then discuss a few questions.

What do you think happened to this group during those ten years?

Apparently they were growing spiritually. Do you think it would have been easier or harder for a Christian community to grow then—30 years after Jesus was here—compared to now?
Picture this group meeting in some neighborhood of Colossae. How do you think the group grew to the point of warranting a letter from Paul? What would it have been like to hang out at one of their meetings?

**What conclusions can you make about their spiritual atmosphere?**
*Elicit the observation that while the Colossians seem spiritually sound at this point, there was a time before they embraced Jesus when things weren’t so good.*

### DIGGING DEEPER

When the group has a handle on the Colossians’ spiritual background, ask them to do the following:

- Look at their marked references to the Colossians in 1:21–23 and 2:10–15, and find descriptions of the Colossians before and after they believed the Gospel.
- Share what they find as you record it on the board in two lists: “Before” and “After.”
- Write the info in the space provided on their journal pages.
- Consider one of these options for listing the information:
  1. A piece of brown cardboard (before) and a piece of white poster board (after).
  2. Opposite sides of a ball.
  3. A page with the image of a caterpillar (before) and a page with the image of a butterfly (after).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before</th>
<th>After</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-alienated from God (1:21)</td>
<td>-are reconciled¹ (to God) by Christ’s physical body through death (1:22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-enemies in their minds because of their evil behavior (1:21)</td>
<td>-are presented holy in His sight, without blemish, free from accusation (1:22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-had a sinful nature (2:11)</td>
<td>-have been given fullness in Christ (2:10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-dead in their sins (2:13)</td>
<td>-God made them alive with Christ—forgave all their sins (2:13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-dead in the uncircumcision of their sinful nature (2:13)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once most of this is on the board, discuss how the facts about the Colossians in the “Before” column compare with how Paul described them in Colossians 1:5–8. (This info may still be on the board; if it isn’t, refer them to their Scripture sheets.) Then discuss how the “Before” info compares with the facts in the “After” column. Be sure to elicit the dramatic change that took place in the Colossians’ lives.

Remind the students of the tipping point in the opening exercise (either the Jenga® game or the morph brainstorm—the moment when everything changed. Then ask:

**How would you describe the tipping point of the Colossians? How did they get from before to after?**

- Looking at the “After” column, God did it!
- They accepted what God did and responded to it.

### TAKING IT INWARD

Share in your own words:

The “during” moment which moved the Colossians (and us) from “before” to “after” is an incredible moment! It’s cosmic yet personal. It involves the infinitely powerful work of God—yet it depends on the “yes” of a person!

Explain that in this next exercise they’ll be exploring this moment—the tipping point—when they went from before to after. **NOTE:** We’re using the word “moment” to represent the point in time when a nonbeliever becomes a believer, but in reality, this actually may be a period of time or series of events. As they read the passages in the chart on their journal page, they should look for what the passages have in common, as well as anything that describes what takes them from before to after. Ask students to do this exercise in a place where they can be alone with God, taking their journal pages, Bibles and pens. The exercise is printed here for the leader’s reference.

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¹In Paul’s day, the word “reconciled” was used to describe what happened when two warring parties resolved their differences and came together.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scripture</th>
<th>Your notes</th>
<th>How is the during moment activated?</th>
<th>How is it described?</th>
<th>What physical, tangible thing did God use to bring it about?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Romans 3:22–26</td>
<td>-Faith/belief in Christ.</td>
<td>-We have redemption (i.e., our sins are paid for).</td>
<td>-We are justified freely by His grace.</td>
<td>-Jesus blood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ephesians 1:7–8</td>
<td>-We who were far away were brought near.</td>
<td>-We have the forgiveness of sins.</td>
<td>-His (Jesus’) blood.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ephesians 2:13</td>
<td>-Our consciences are clean.</td>
<td>-We can now serve the living God.</td>
<td>-The blood of Christ.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hebrews 9:13-14</td>
<td></td>
<td>-Our consciences are clean.</td>
<td>-We can now serve the living God.</td>
<td>-The blood of Christ.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After a few minutes, call the group back together. Ask any volunteers to share about their lives before or after Christ, or about their during moments. Share that there was a reason why Paul wanted his readers to concentrate on this big change in their lives.

**DIGGING DEEPER**

Have students reread Colossians 2, looking for any warnings (or instructions that sound like warnings). Have them mark these in a distinct way, like with the shape of a stop sign or yield sign.

Then ask them to share what they found as you record the main points on the board. Consider drawing the outline of a yield sign or stop sign and writing the warnings inside the sign.

**Warnings**
- Don’t be deceived by fine-sounding arguments. (2:4)
- Don’t be taken captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ. (2:8)
- Don’t let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, New Moon celebration or Sabbath day. (2:16)
- Don’t let anyone who delights in false humility and angel-worship disqualify you for the prize. (2:18)
- Don’t submit to the rules of this world that are based on human traditions; these are destined to perish with use; they have an appearance of wisdom with their self-imposed worship, false humility and harsh treatment of the body. (2:20–23)

After listing the warnings (it’s okay if your list isn’t as detailed as the list above), discuss the following questions:

**What’s the purpose of a warning?**
To keep us from danger—to protect us.

**What common themes do you see in all these warnings?**
A few things that get more than one mention in these few verses:
1. “human” commands/philosophies
2. “false humility”
3. the danger of letting others deceive or mislead you about what’s important
What’s at stake if these warnings aren’t heeded?

Human commands and philosophies have no value. If we don’t watch it, they become more important to us than what Christ did for us on the cross. When we add to what Jesus did for us, we water down its importance. Remember, His blood has the power to morph us from “before” to “after”! But Colossians 2:20–23 says that these additional things have no power to restrain sensual indulgence. They may look good, but they’re worthless.

Read each warning below and discuss whether or not it’s needed today. Brainstorm some ways these threats can creep into the church. For example, what are some hollow and deceptive philosophies that Christians have bought into? We’ve included possible responses in italics below each warning.

**Don’t be deceived by fine-sounding arguments.**

The key here is the link between “deceived” and “fine-sounding.” Some arguments sound reasonable because they contain an element of truth (though twisted). Many try to undermine the Christian faith with arguments about Creation, miracles, the accuracy of the Bible, and so on.

**Watch out for hollow and deceptive philosophies that depend on human tradition.**

Many popular spiritual movements, particularly New Age philosophies, contain humanistic tenets: all things revolve around you; truth is what you make it; if something feels right, then it is right.

**Watch out for being judged by your external behavior.**

All of us seem to have a bit of Pharisee in us; we tend to reduce a relationship with God to a set of external dos and don’ts. It’s easy to hide behind those rules, clicking through the disciplines without experiencing intimacy with Jesus.

**Watch out for “spiritual” rules that are destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings.**

So much of what the church does is driven by man-made ideas or preferences: service times, worship order, service length, music styles, and so on. Much of what we do in student ministry is also driven by man-made expectations. We tend to measure success by human “commands and teachings.” These measurements can be helpful, but they can be substitutes for real encounters with Jesus (and “perish with use”).

So, what do these warnings have to do with your relationship with Jesus?

You may need to prompt the discussion with these additional questions:

- Has your gratitude to Jesus changed you and empowered your relationship with Him? Or, is your relationship not much more than “playing church”?
- Are there any ways in which Christian activities have overshadowed your daily walk with Jesus?
- Does Christ define who you are, or are you looking to other people to define your Christian life?

**PUTTING INTO PRACTICE**

Invite students to write in the stop sign on their journal pages a warning from Colossians 2 that speaks to them personally. Ask a few volunteers to share the warnings they chose and why.

**Option:** You may want to print these stop signs onto card stock and then cut them out. Students can hang their signs in a spot that gets daily attention (like a rearview mirror, a door, or above their bed). Check out the additional options we have available on the INNERgized Web Help page.

Before closing with prayer, give your students time to record two Colossians Takeaway, one concerning the process of *before, during, and after* and the other about the warnings you explored.