

The Book of Colossians, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 6: Rooted and Built Up in Christ

Colossians 2:6-10

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

This short passage is the hinge of the letter, turning from the exaltation of Christ to a direct warning against the false teaching. Doctrinally, it makes two great affirmations and one great warning. It affirms that Christ is sufficient, in Him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and that believers are complete in Him, you have been filled in Him. And it warns against being taken captive by philosophy, empty deceit, human tradition, and the elemental spirits of the world, anything not according to Christ. The teacher's doctrinal task is to lift up the deity and sufficiency of Christ once more (this is the strongest statement of His deity in the letter, even stronger than chapter 1) and to equip students with Paul's test for all teaching: is it according to Christ? Human tradition, however venerable, is not the standard; Christ is.

The formational aim is captured in the images of verse 7: rooted, built up, established, abounding in thanksgiving. Paul wants believers who are deep, stable, and grateful, not shallow, anxious, and forever searching. The lesson should press students to examine the depth of their roots and the consistency of the practices that sink those roots deep, while resting in the assurance that they are already complete in Christ and need not chase after some missing piece.

Aim, then, at depth and confidence. Send students home convinced that Christ is fully God and fully sufficient, that they are complete in Him, and resolved to sink their roots deeper into the only soil that will hold them when the storm comes.

Question 1

Student Question:

Paul writes, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him (v. 6). What does it mean that the Colossians received Christ as Lord, and why does Paul insist that the way we walk with Christ should match the way we first received Him?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Paul's exhortation rests on how the Colossians began: you received Christ Jesus the Lord. Three things are packed into that phrase. They received (the Christian life starts with receiving, not achieving). They received Christ Jesus (a person, not merely a teaching). And they received Him as Lord (not only as Savior to rescue them, but as Master to rule them).

Help students feel the weight of receiving Christ as Lord. The earliest Christian confession was simply Jesus is Lord. To receive Him as Lord is to surrender to His rule, which is exactly how the

New Testament describes coming to Christ: hearing the gospel, believing Jesus is Lord and Christ, repenting, confessing Him, and being baptized into Him (Acts 2:36–38; Romans 10:9–10). That is what it meant to receive Him.

Now stress Paul's logic: so walk in Him. The way we continue must match the way we began. We did not receive Christ by surrender and then continue by self-rule; we did not begin in dependence on Him and then graduate to dependence on human techniques. The whole journey is walking in the same Lord we received.

This protects against a subtle and common drift: treating Jesus as the entrance to the Christian life but looking elsewhere (to experiences, rules, traditions, or self-effort) for the substance of it. Paul says the substance is the same as the entrance. It is Christ all the way down.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Receiving Christ as Lord, not merely as a teaching or a ticket out of trouble
- The earliest confession (Jesus is Lord) and the gospel response of hearing, believing, repenting, confessing, and being baptized into Him (Acts 2:36–38; Romans 10:9–10)
- Continuity between how we begin and how we continue: so walk in Him
- The drift of treating Jesus as the entrance but looking elsewhere for growth

Discussion Prompts

- What is involved in receiving Christ as Lord and not only as Savior?
- Why must the way we continue match the way we began?
- Where do believers tend to look for growth somewhere other than Christ?

Question 2

Student Question:

Paul assumes that how we begin with Christ should shape how we continue. Does your daily walk actually match the Lord you received, or is there a gap between the Jesus you confessed and the Jesus you are following day to day? Where is that gap widest right now?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self question presses on the gap between the Lord we confessed and the Lord we are actually following. Receiving Christ as Lord is a definite commitment; living under His lordship day to day is the test of whether the confession was real.

Help students locate the gap honestly. There is usually some area where we say Jesus is Lord but functionally keep the controls: a financial decision, a relationship, a habit, an ambition, a private resentment. The gap is not cause for despair but for repentance and re-surrender.

Encourage specificity. Where is the gap widest right now? Name it, bring it under His lordship, and take one concrete step of obedience this week. The aim is not perfection but honest alignment, closing the distance between the Christ we received and the Christ we follow.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The test of lordship in daily living, not only in confession
- Identifying the specific area where we still keep the controls
- Re-surrender and repentance as the response to the gap
- One concrete step of obedience to close the distance

Discussion Prompts

- Where is there a gap between the Jesus you confessed and the Jesus you follow?
- What area of life have you not yet truly placed under His lordship?
- What is one step toward closing that gap this week?

Question 3

Student Question:

Paul uses three images in verse 7: rooted (like a tree), built up (like a building), and established in the faith. What does each picture add to our understanding of healthy Christian growth, and why do both deep roots and a solid structure matter?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Verse 7 gives three rich images of a healthy Christian life. Rooted is agricultural and looks to the past and the source: like a tree, the believer draws life from being sunk deep into Christ. Built up is architectural and ongoing: like a building rising course by course, the believer is steadily constructed on the foundation. Established in the faith speaks of firmness and stability, being made solid and immovable.

Draw out what each adds. Roots speak of hidden, unseen depth and of nourishment; a tree is only as strong as its roots are deep. Building speaks of intentional, progressive growth; houses do not rise by accident. Establishment speaks of stability that can withstand pressure. Together they picture a faith that is deeply nourished, steadily growing, and firmly settled.

Note the phrase just as you were taught. This growth is shaped by sound teaching, the apostolic gospel they received, not by novelty. And it overflows in thanksgiving, which Paul adds almost as a fourth mark: a deeply rooted, growing, settled believer is a grateful believer.

Apply it: both depth and structure matter. Some believers have emotional roots but no doctrinal structure and are easily toppled; others have doctrinal structure but shallow roots and dry up under trial. Paul wants both, roots and building, depth and stability, all in Christ.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Rooted: hidden depth and nourishment drawn from Christ
- Built up: intentional, progressive growth on the foundation
- Established in the faith: firmness and stability under pressure
- Growth shaped by sound teaching (just as you were taught) and overflowing in thanksgiving

Discussion Prompts

- What does each of the three images (root, building, foundation) add to the picture of growth?
- Why do both deep roots and a solid structure matter?
- How is thanksgiving connected to being well rooted and established?

Question 4

Student Question:

A tree with shallow roots looks fine until the dry season comes. Be honest about where your own roots are shallow. What practice (in the word, in prayer, in worship, in fellowship) has thinned out in your life, and how might its absence leave you vulnerable when hard times come?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self question turns the root image inward. A tree with shallow roots can look healthy in a wet season and then collapse in a drought. Many believers are spiritually shallow without realizing it, because their lives have not yet been tested.

Help students identify which root-sinking practice has thinned out: regular intake of Scripture, honest prayer, faithful gathering with the church, the Lord's Supper, confession, service. The disciplines are not the point in themselves; they are the means by which roots reach down into Christ and draw life.

Then connect the dots to vulnerability. The time to deepen roots is before the storm, not during it. A believer who has let prayer and the word thin out may feel fine now but will have little to draw on when crisis comes. Encourage one concrete recommitment this week, modest and sustainable, that begins to send roots deeper again.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Shallow roots hidden by easy seasons
- The spiritual disciplines as the means by which roots reach into Christ
- Deepening roots before the storm rather than during it
- A concrete, sustainable recommitment to one root-sinking practice

Discussion Prompts

- Which practice that sinks your roots deep has thinned out lately?
- Why is the time to deepen roots before the storm rather than during it?
- What is one modest step to send your roots deeper this season?

Question 5

Student Question:

Paul warns, see to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition and the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ (v. 8). What is the single test Paul gives for evaluating any teaching, and why is human tradition, however old or respected, never a safe substitute for the standard of Christ?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Verse 8 is Paul's central warning: see to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. The vivid word is captive, like a prisoner of war led off in chains. False teaching does not merely mislead; it enslaves.

Help students see what Paul is and is not condemning. He is not condemning careful thinking; Scripture commends wisdom. He is condemning empty deceit dressed up as wisdom, teaching rooted in mere human tradition and the basic principles of the world rather than in Christ. The problem is not that it is intellectual; the problem is its source and standard.

Highlight Paul's single test, repeated at the end of the verse: not according to Christ. That is the measuring line for every idea. Is it according to Christ, consistent with who He is and what He revealed, or does it draw its authority from human tradition and worldly assumptions? This is a crucial principle: human tradition, however ancient or widely respected, is never the standard. The standard is Christ and His revealed word.

Press this gently but clearly. Many religious errors are matters of long-standing human tradition treated as if they carried God's authority. The faithful believer learns to ask of everything, including cherished customs, is this according to Christ and His New Testament, or merely according to the traditions of men? (Compare Matthew 15:6-9.)

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- False teaching as captivity, not merely mistake
- The problem being the source and standard (human tradition, worldly principles), not intellect itself
- Paul's single test: is it according to Christ?
- Human tradition, however old or respected, never the standard (Matthew 15:6-9)

Discussion Prompts

- What is Paul's one test for evaluating any teaching?
- Why is human tradition, even ancient tradition, never a safe substitute for Christ?
- How can we tell the difference between godly wisdom and empty deceit dressed up as wisdom?

Question 6

Student Question:

Paul says false ideas can take us captive. What philosophy, tradition, or way of thinking from the surrounding culture has quietly taken some captive ground in your own mind, shaping you more than Christ does? How would you even notice it?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self question makes the warning personal. We tend to imagine false ideas as obviously foreign, but the most capturing ones slip in quietly from the surrounding culture and feel simply like common sense. The question asks students to consider what cultural philosophy has taken captive ground in their own minds.

Help them name candidates without turning it into a partisan exercise: the assumption that personal happiness is the highest good, that the self is the final authority, that worth is measured by success or appearance, that truth is whatever I feel, that comfort is owed to us. These are philosophies of the age, often absorbed without notice, that quietly compete with Christ.

Then address the hard part: how would we even notice? We notice by holding our reflexes up against Christ and His word. Where my instinctive reactions clash with the mind of Christ, some worldly philosophy has likely captured ground. Encourage students to identify one such area and to consciously bring it back under the standard of Christ this week.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Cultural philosophies absorbed as mere common sense
- Common modern assumptions that compete with Christ (self as authority, happiness as highest good, worth as success)
- Detecting captured ground by measuring our reflexes against Christ and His word
- Consciously bringing one area back under the standard of Christ

Discussion Prompts

- What cultural assumption shapes you more than you would like to admit?
- How can we even notice when a worldly philosophy has captured ground in us?
- What is one area you need to bring back under the standard of Christ?

Question 7

Student Question:

Paul tells the Colossians, you have been filled in Him (v. 10). What does it mean that believers are already filled, already complete, in Christ, and how does that truth confront both the false teachers' offer of something more and our own nagging sense that we are missing something?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Paul makes a stunning statement in verse 10: you have been filled in Him. The same fullness that dwells in Christ (v. 9) is the fullness believers share by being in Him. Christians are not spiritually half-empty, waiting for some missing ingredient. In Christ they are filled, complete, lacking nothing essential.

This directly answers the false teachers. Their whole pitch was that Christ is not quite enough, that the Colossians needed something more, deeper knowledge, stricter rules, the help of spiritual powers. Paul cuts the ground out from under it: you are already filled in Him. There is no missing piece to be supplied by a teacher, a technique, or an experience.

It also answers a quieter voice inside us, the nagging sense of not enough that drives so much religious striving and worldly chasing. Help students see that completeness in Christ is a settled fact, not a feeling to be achieved. We do not work toward fullness; we work from it, living out of a completeness already given.

Be careful to distinguish positional completeness from sinless perfection. Being complete in Christ does not mean we have stopped growing or no longer struggle with sin. It means we already possess in Him everything needed for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3); growth is the unfolding of what we already have, not the acquisition of what we lack.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Believers already filled and complete in Christ, lacking nothing essential
- A direct answer to the false teachers' offer of something more
- An answer to the inner sense of not enough that drives striving
- Completeness in Christ as a settled fact, distinct from sinless perfection; we grow from fullness, not toward it

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean that you have already been filled in Christ?
- How does this truth answer both the false teachers and our own sense of lack?
- What is the difference between working toward fullness and working from it?

Question 8**Student Question:**

Many believers live with a low hum of not enough, always feeling they are missing some piece that would finally make them whole. If you really believed you were already complete in Christ, lacking nothing essential, what striving or searching could you finally lay down?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self question takes completeness in Christ into the realm of feeling and motivation. Many believers live with a persistent low hum of inadequacy, a sense that some missing piece would finally make them whole, and they chase it in achievement, approval, acquisition, or even restless spiritual seeking.

Invite honesty about the particular shape of that hunger. For one it is the next accomplishment, for another the approval of a parent or peer, for another a relationship, for another a constant search for a deeper spiritual experience. Each is an attempt to fill a void that, Paul says, is already filled in Christ.

Then ask the freeing question: if you really believed you were already complete in Christ, what striving could you lay down? The point is not passivity but rest, ceasing the exhausting hunt for a wholeness we already possess. Encourage students to name one specific striving they could release this week as an act of faith in their completeness in Christ.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The low hum of not enough that drives much striving
- The particular shape our hunger takes (achievement, approval, relationship, experience)
- Rest, not passivity, as the fruit of believing we are complete in Christ
- Laying down one specific striving as an act of faith

Discussion Prompts

- Where does your sense of not enough most often drive you?
- If you truly believed you were complete in Christ, what could you stop chasing?
- What is one striving you could lay down this week?

Question 9

Student Question:

Paul grounds everything in this: in Christ the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and He is the head of all rule and authority (vv. 9–10). What is Paul claiming about who Jesus is, and how does the truth that all of God dwells in Christ, and that Christ is over every power, make Him completely sufficient for everything we face?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the doctrinal summit of the lesson, and it is the strongest statement of Christ's deity in the whole letter. In Him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily (v. 9). Teach each word. Whole, the entire fullness, nothing held back. Fullness of deity, not merely divine qualities but the very nature of God Himself. Dwells, permanently, not a temporary visitation. Bodily, in His incarnate humanity; the fullness of God dwells in the man Jesus.

This verse leaves no room for the false teaching, or for any teaching that makes Jesus less than fully God. He is not a partial revelation of God, not an emanation, not a high creature. The complete fullness of deity dwells in Him. This builds on 1:15–20 and states it even more directly. It is also the answer, once again, to the Arian and Jehovah's Witness denial of Christ's deity: Scripture could hardly say it more plainly than this.

Then note verse 10: He is the head of all rule and authority. Christ is supreme over every power that exists, every earthly and spiritual authority, every force the Colossians were tempted to fear or appease. The powers are not His rivals; He is their head. There is no being or force in the universe outside His authority.

Bring the two truths together to establish Christ's complete sufficiency. Because all of God dwells in Him, He is enough; there is nothing of God to be found outside Him. Because He is over every power, there is nothing to fear that He does not already rule, and no power we need to court alongside Him. The deity of Christ and the supremacy of Christ together mean that the believer who has Christ has everything and need fear nothing.

Help students feel the practical comfort. Whatever powers seem to loom over their lives, illness, evil, death, the spiritual forces behind a hostile world, all of them have Christ as their head. The One in whom all the fullness of God dwells is over them all, and He is for us.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The whole fullness of deity dwelling bodily in Christ (the strongest deity statement in the letter)
- A decisive answer to any teaching that makes Jesus less than fully God (including Arian and Jehovah's Witness views)
- Christ as head of all rule and authority, supreme over every earthly and spiritual power
- The deity and supremacy of Christ together establishing His complete sufficiency
- Practical comfort: every power we fear has Christ as its head

Discussion Prompts

- What does each word in the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily teach about Jesus?
- How does this verse answer those who deny the full deity of Christ?
- How does Christ being head over every power give comfort in the face of what we fear?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back across these verses. Paul calls us to keep walking in the Christ we received, to sink deep roots, to refuse every counterfeit, and to rest in our completeness in Him. Name one specific way you sense Jesus forming you through this passage. What is the single truth from Colossians 2:6–10 that you most need to carry into this coming week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This capstone gathers the passage: keep walking in the Christ you received, sink deep roots, refuse every counterfeit, and rest in your completeness in Him. The student's task is to name one specific way Christ is forming them through it.

Walk back through the movement as a prompt. Some students most need to close the gap between the Lord they confessed and the Lord they follow. Some need to deepen thinning roots. Some need to recognize and reject a captivating cultural idea. Some need to rest in being complete in Christ and stop chasing. Let each name the one that meets them.

Close by reminding students that formation, not information, is the goal. Paul wrote so that believers would actually stand firm when the storm came. Invite each to carry one truth into the week and let it sink their roots a little deeper into the all-sufficient Christ.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Walking in Christ, deep roots, rejecting counterfeits, and completeness in Him as the lesson's arc
- Formation, not mere information, as the goal
- Carrying one concrete truth into the week
- Standing firm because our roots are in the sufficient Christ

Discussion Prompts

- Which truth from this passage most needs to take root in you this week?
- What would help your roots go deeper into Christ before the next storm?
- How can this group help you stand firm in the days ahead?