

one one

Real Women

Exploring together what a
Christian woman thinks and does

14 sessions in Colossians

Sarah Bradley

For Georgia

and with thanks to Ruth, Megan, Esme and all the others who helped trial this book

One2One Real Women

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Introduction A real woman

Long hair, short hair, make up, bare face, skirt or trousers...

Married, single, kids, no kids, stay-at-home mum or high-flying business woman...

What makes a real woman?

Many people would have us believe that the perfect figure, a gorgeous man and a go-getter attitude that says: "I'm here, I'm confident and I can do anything", is what makes a real woman. Is that really true?

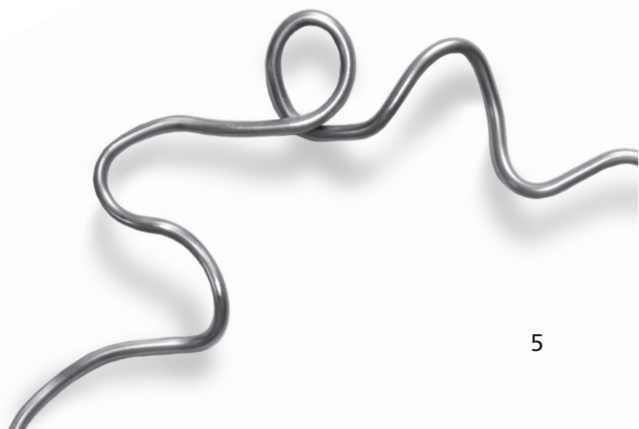
There's so much more, and there's so much that's better.

A real woman is one who knows who she is in Jesus. She's someone who looks in the mirror and even on a low day or a bad-hair day or a spotty day, says, sometimes through tears, sometimes through smiles: "I'm a forgiven child of God and I'm going to live for him".

Over the next few weeks, this booklet will take you through the Bible book of Colossians, and help you to see how awesome Jesus is, how important it is to be rooted in him and how that affects the way we live and the relationships we have with the people around us.

Whatever type of women you are now, or grow to be in the future, if you get this right and your roots are in the right place, you'll be living as the person you were created to be.

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Rooted in Christ Jesus

Paul followed Jesus. He shared the good news of Jesus in many different places, and it wasn't always easy. He was imprisoned, beaten, and shipwrecked, and yet he kept on going.

He believed that passing on the truth about Jesus had to happen no matter what!

Total turnaround

But Paul wasn't always like that. At one time he hated Jesus and all his followers. He didn't just talk about them behind their backs, he wanted to imprison and execute them.

One day, while Paul was on a journey to get rid of some Christians, Jesus appeared to him, and it transformed his life (you can read about it in Acts 9 v 1-19).

Instead of wanting people to hate Jesus, now Paul wanted them to love and follow Jesus. Some people hated his message, some tried to get rid of him—but some became Christians, churches were started and the good news spread.

Paul and the Colossians

Colossae was a little town in western Turkey. The church had been started by Epaphras, who was a faithful worker with Paul (Colossians 1 v 7). Paul couldn't visit the Colossian church because he was in prison, so he wrote to them to encourage them.

How brilliant it must have been for the Colossian Christians to know that even though Paul couldn't be with them, he was thinking of them and praying for them.

They were loving Jesus and they were growing—but there was a danger that some extra things were creeping in, things that suggested they needed *more* than just Jesus to really follow him.

Paul wants to make it clear that Jesus is enough. Paul wants to remind them how amazing Jesus is, so they know that loving and serving him is all they need.

It's this letter, called Colossians, which you're going to be getting into over the next few weeks.

How this booklet works

In here you'll find 14 sessions, each looking at a bit of Colossians.

Seven sessions (the odd-numbered ones) are JOINT, for you to do with an older Christian woman—just the two of you (or you and a friend and her). The other seven (the even-numbered ones) are SOLO, for you to do on your own in your own time.

So it'll take you seven weeks to do the whole booklet if you meet up weekly, 14 if you meet up every two weeks. When you get together, it'll probably take you 45 minutes to do the session. On your own, the sessions should take around half an hour at the most.

Lots of people find it helpful to write down answers to some, or all, of the questions—it helps you focus on the question, and remember what you found in the Bible. So there are spaces left to scribble something down. But if the thought of having to write stuff down makes you want to close this book, then don't feel you have to!

You may well have been given this booklet by an older woman at your church who leads your youth group, or by your mum; they'll be hoping you can both learn together more about how to be a real woman. Maybe you've found this booklet yourself... if you have, you'll get most out of it if you do it with an older woman who's been a Christian for at least a few years. So try to find one at a church or Christian youth group near you.

It doesn't matter whether you're already a follower of Jesus, or someone who wants to find out about him and what he says. And because this is a booklet for women, it doesn't pull punches or tiptoe round the issues women sometimes find difficult. That's not how real women deal with things.

The Bible quotes in this booklet are from the NIV 2011 (New International Version). If you have, or can get your hands on, that translation, then do—but the sessions will work with Bible versions like the ESV, the NASB, and the NIV (and probably lots of others!) too.

If you're an older woman wanting to use this booklet with a teenager, you'll find a helpful online guide at www.thegoodbook.co.uk/realwomenguide, which is well worth looking at before you start.

Today's Bible section: **Colossians chapter 1, verses 1-8**

A GETTING STARTED

- ① When was the last time you said thank you?

How many times a day do you think you say thank you?

When was the last time you said thank you to God? What for?

B DEAR CHRISTIANS

Read Colossians 1 v 1-2

Have you noticed that letters in the Bible start a bit like emails?
At the top you have who it's from, and then who it's to...

- ② How does Paul, the writer of the letter describe himself?



Jargon Buster

Apostles = the men God chose to write the New Testament and to set up his church.

- ③ Why do you think that's important?

- ④ What does Paul think of the church in Colossae?

It's a positive opening to the letter. Paul describes them as holy people, (set apart by God and for God). These faithful brothers and sisters are receiving a letter of great encouragement from Paul.

Paul hadn't been to Colossae or met these *Gentile* Christians but he had a whole lot to be thankful to God for. The Colossians weren't Jews, so they hadn't been brought up knowing the Old Testament's truths and promises. They were outsiders who had come to know Jesus, which was always God's plan.



Jargon Buster

Gentile = not a Jew. There was often rivalry between them. Many Jews didn't think that Gentiles could know God. Paul knew that was wrong.

Paul clearly wasn't a major fan of punctuation, so his sentences can be long and complicated... However, it's well worth diving in and seeing what he has to say.

C BEING THANKFUL

Read Colossians 1 v 3-4

5 What is Paul always doing?

6 Why?

Paul thanks God for their faith and love. **Read verses 5-7.**

7 Where do faith and love spring from?



Jargon Buster

Hope = this isn't an "I hope it rains" or "I hope I pass my exams", ie: a desire with no certainty. In the Bible, hope is a *certain* hope. So, this "hope stored up ... in heaven" is a certain promise that they will be in heaven one day.

Paul thanks God that the Colossians know about the certainty of heaven, and the truth of the gospel.



Jargon Buster

Gospel = “good news”. The true message of the gospel is the good news of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection, which brings forgiveness for sinners and gives us the certain hope of heaven.

- 8 Where had the gospel been bearing fruit (verse 6)?
 - a)

 - b)

- 9 How does the gospel bear fruit and grow in the world?

- 10 When did the gospel begin bearing fruit?

- 11 How does all this show that the gospel the Colossians know is the gospel that saves (v 6)?

- 12 What had the Colossians truly understood in verse 6?



Jargon Buster Grace = showing kindness to someone who doesn't deserve it.

We don't find grace easy. Have you ever been in town, and someone has come up to you and said they have a voucher for a free haircut or makeover? What's your instant response? Mine is: "What's the catch? Nothing's free, so what will I have to do in return?"

We're not used to getting something for nothing. But that's exactly what God's grace is. It's us getting the amazing gift of forgiveness that we don't deserve—and we don't have to do anything, except believe it!

D STOP AND THINK!

Have you truly understood God's grace, or do you feel you have to do things to please God and make him love you more?

13 Can you put into your own words what Paul can give thanks for?

What a list! Paul is writing this letter from prison in Rome, so there aren't any home comforts. But Paul still finds so much to be thankful to God for.

Think back to the question at the beginning of the study: "What was the last thing you thanked God for?" How does your answer compare to Paul's thankfulness for the Colossians?

E PASSING ON THE GOOD NEWS

Read Colossians 1 v 7-8

14 Who had taught the Colossians?

Paul had taught Epaphras about Jesus, and then he had passed on the good news to the Colossians.

15 What did Paul and Epaphras have in common (v 1 and v 7)?

16 How did Paul and Epaphras feel about the Colossians?

Epaphras had become a Christian, and passed on the good news to the people. Through his faithful teaching, they had “truly understood God’s grace”.

PRAYER TIME

- ◆ Who is/was your “Epaphras”—the one who shared the good news of Jesus with you? (There might be more than one person.)
- ◆ How did they do it?

Thank God for them, and for his grace in helping you to believe.

- ◆ Who can you be an “Epaphras” to?
- ◆ What could you pray for them? How could you pass on the good news?

Pray that you would be faithful in how you share the good news with them.

MEMORY VERSE

“We always THANK GOD, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all God’s people.”

Colossians 1 v 3-4