



# SUNDAY SCHOOL JULY 27, 2025

Prayer:

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

**New Testament.....2**

**Colossians 2:6-14 ..... 2**

        Fullness in the Life of Christ..... 2

        Overview ..... 2

        Biblical Context..... 2

        Historical / Non-Biblical / Political Context ..... 2

        Historical Timeline / Biblical Timeframe..... 3

        Scholarly Metaphorical Interpretation With Modern-Day & Grant County Context ..... 3

        Summary ..... 3

**Gospel.....4**

**Luke 11:1-13 ..... 4**

        Jesus’ Teaching on Prayer..... 4

        Overview ..... 4

        Biblical Context..... 4

        Historical / Non-Biblical / Political Context ..... 5

        Historical Timeline / Biblical Timeframe..... 5

        Scholarly Metaphorical Interpretation With Modern-Day & Grant County Context ..... 5

        Summary ..... 6

**Addendum .....7**

**Elemental Spirits ..... 7**

**Metaphors ..... 8**

        What is a metaphor? ..... 8

        Why, How, and When to Read Metaphors in the Bible..... 8



## New Testament

### Colossians 2:6-14

#### FULLNESS IN THE LIFE OF CHRIST

##### *(Paul Writes to the Colossians)*

As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental principles of the world, and not according to Christ.

For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have come to fullness in him, who is the head of every ruler and authority.

In him also you were circumcised with a spiritual circumcision, by the removal of the body of the flesh in the circumcision of Christ; when you were buried with him in baptism, you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

And when you were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive together with him, when he forgave us all our trespasses, erasing the record that stood against us with its legal demands.

He set this aside, nailing it to the cross.

#### OVERVIEW

This passage from Colossians urges believers to remain deeply rooted in Christ, not swayed by deceptive philosophies or human traditions. It presents a rich theological vision of Christian identity: believers are spiritually circumcised, buried with Christ in baptism, and raised to new life through faith. The cross is portrayed as the ultimate act of liberation, erasing the weight of sin and legal condemnation.

#### BIBLICAL CONTEXT

Paul's letter to the Colossians addresses false teachings that threatened to diminish the sufficiency of Christ. Some scholars believe the Colossian church was encountering a blend of Jewish legalism, early Gnostic-like mysticism, and pagan philosophy. Paul's message emphasizes that Christ alone is the source of fullness—there's no need for supplemental traditions, mystical visions, or ascetic rules.

In this passage, Paul builds on the themes of **union with Christ, spiritual transformation, and victory over sin and law**. He uses metaphors of **rooted growth, circumcision, baptism, and legal debt** to describe how the Colossians have moved from death to life in Christ.

#### HISTORICAL / NON-BIBLICAL / POLITICAL CONTEXT

**Colossae**, a minor city in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey), was influenced by multiple religious streams: Hellenistic philosophy, Roman political structures, Jewish synagogues, and mystery cults. The Roman Empire enforced religious pluralism, but demanded allegiance to Caesar. Paul's statement that **Christ is the head over every ruler and authority** (v.10) would have been politically subversive—it subtly claims Jesus' authority over Caesar and all human power.

The reference to **circumcision and legal demands** reflects tension between Jewish law and Gentile freedom in Christ. Paul redefines circumcision spiritually, claiming that what once was a mark of the covenant (Gen. 17) has now been internalized and surpassed through the cross and resurrection.



## HISTORICAL TIMELINE / BIBLICAL TIMEFRAME

- **Written ca. 60–62 CE**, likely while Paul was imprisoned in Rome.
- Colossians is traditionally attributed to Paul (though some debate this), and it addresses a Gentile-majority congregation.
- At this time, Christianity was a small, persecuted sect within the Roman Empire.
- The Jewish Temple was still standing in Jerusalem (it would be destroyed in 70 CE), and debates over how the Torah applied to Gentile believers were ongoing.

## SCHOLARLY METAPHORICAL INTERPRETATION WITH MODERN-DAY & GRANT COUNTY CONTEXT

Paul's image of **being rooted** evokes an agricultural metaphor: faith needs depth, nourishment, and time to grow—like corn and bean fields in Grant County. Just as shallow roots make crops vulnerable to drought or storms, shallow faith can be blown about by cultural trends, pseudo-spiritual fads, or consumer ideologies.

The “**philosophy and empty deceit**” of v.8 can be interpreted metaphorically today as the pervasive messaging in media, politics, and even some religious circles that distract people from Christ's core message: *self-giving love, humility, and grace*. These competing voices may not be called “*elemental spirits*” (see *Addendum*) anymore, but they often appeal to base instincts: fear, tribalism, and judgmentalism.

The metaphor of the “**record of debt**” nailed to the cross is powerful in a modern world where many people feel burdened—by shame, past failures, or the crushing expectations of society. For those in small-town Indiana churches, this message offers comfort: *Christ didn't just forgive sin; he erased the record. No more guilt ledger. No more measuring up.*

## SUMMARY

Colossians 2:6–14 urges believers to remain deeply grounded in Christ, not distracted by worldly philosophies or religious legalism. Paul describes the Christian journey as one of inner transformation, where baptism unites the believer with Christ's death and resurrection. Legalistic demands are erased, and the believer is made spiritually whole. This passage reassures the Colossians—and readers today—that Christ is sufficient, and his sacrifice replaces the burdens of law and guilt with new life, freedom, and thanksgiving.

In a place like Grant County, where tradition runs deep and outside influences may create tension in churches, this scripture encourages discernment, depth, and joy in Christ alone—not in rules, not in systems, but in grace freely given.



## Gospel

### Luke 11:1-13

#### JESUS' TEACHING ON PRAYER

He was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples."

He said to them, "When you pray, say:

'Father, hallowed be your name.  
Your kingdom come.  
Give us each day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our sins,  
for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us.  
And do not bring us to the time of trial.' "

And he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, for a friend of mine has arrived, and I have nothing to set before him.'

"And he answers from within, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been locked, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.'

"I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything out of friendship, at least because of his persistence he will get up and give him whatever he needs.

"So, I say to you, Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you.

"For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.

"Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for a fish, will give a snake instead of a fish?

"Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion?

"If you, then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

#### OVERVIEW

This passage features three interwoven teachings on prayer:

1. **The Lord's Prayer** – a brief but potent model prayer.
2. **The Parable of the Friend at Midnight** – emphasizing persistence.
3. **Encouragement to Ask, Seek, Knock** – underscoring God's generosity and attentiveness.

Together, these reinforce a **relational, persistent, and trusting approach to prayer**, portraying God not as distant or stingy but as a loving Father who responds to our needs with grace.

#### BIBLICAL CONTEXT

Luke's version of the Lord's Prayer is **shorter and more direct** than Matthew's (Matthew 6:9–13), reflecting Luke's style of focusing on **intimacy with God and social equity**. This prayer emerges



during a larger narrative arc where Jesus is teaching about the **Kingdom of God**, and the **discipleship lifestyle** that aligns with it.

It also comes after Luke 10 (the sending of the 70 and the story of Mary and Martha), as if to say:

***Discipleship includes learning how to speak with God, not just work for God.***

This passage is unique to Luke in structure and tone. Luke especially wants readers to understand that **God is both holy and deeply available**—a radical view in a world of temple barriers and inaccessible deities.

#### HISTORICAL / NON-BIBLICAL / POLITICAL CONTEXT

- **Prayer in Judaism:** Jesus' prayer reflects traditional Jewish values—honoring God's name, expecting the coming Kingdom, and seeking daily provision. The request for "daily bread" echoes **dependence on God**, like the Israelites' reliance on manna in the wilderness.
- **Patron-Client Culture:** The midnight parable fits with the social expectations of hospitality and reciprocity in ancient Middle Eastern cultures. Not feeding a guest would bring shame. Jesus uses this to point out that even reluctant humans will respond—**how much more will God!**
- **Roman Political Climate:** In contrast to Caesar, who demanded loyalty and imposed burdens through taxation and fear, Jesus presents **a God who gives generously**, without manipulation or force. This upends imperial ideas of power.

#### HISTORICAL TIMELINE / BIBLICAL TIMEFRAME

- Jesus likely gave this teaching **around 30–33 CE**, as part of His journey to Jerusalem.
- Luke likely compiled and wrote this Gospel **around 80–90 CE**, in a time when Christians were wrestling with identity, prayer, and persecution.

#### SCHOLARLY METAPHORICAL INTERPRETATION WITH MODERN-DAY & GRANT COUNTY CONTEXT

Metaphorically, this passage reflects **layers of relationship and need:**

1. **Prayer as Relationship:** Beginning with "Father" frames God not as a distant ruler but as an **approachable parent**. This is especially poignant (evoking sadness or regret) in settings where traditional family roles are respected or where fatherhood may be absent or fractured. In Grant County, Indiana, this could speak deeply to congregations where **family values are high**, but many families face **economic strain**.
2. **Daily Bread as Local Need:** "Give us each day our daily bread" connects with **food insecurity**, still present in parts of Grant County. This line becomes not just metaphorical but tangible—prayer as the **acknowledgment of God as sustainer**, not just spiritually, but physically and communally (shared by our community).
3. **Persistence as Hope:** The midnight knocking symbolizes **unashamed, even desperate persistence**, which resonates with rural perseverance—farmers, factory workers, caregivers who often have to "ask, seek, and knock" persistently for support or justice. Jesus flips the shame of "bothering someone" into a virtue.
4. **Divine Generosity in a Cynical World:** Many people—especially those who've experienced **broken institutions or untrustworthy leaders**—struggle to believe in benevolence. Jesus addresses that with: ***If we, with all our faults, still give good things to our children, how much more will God do the same for us?***



## SUMMARY

Luke 11:1–13 combines a model prayer, a humorous parable, and strong encouragement to **pray boldly and trust deeply**. Jesus teaches the disciples to pray intimately, like beloved children, and assures them that God listens. The parable of the friend at midnight reminds us that **persistence in prayer is welcomed**, not resented. Jesus concludes with an image of God as a **generous Father**, eager to give not just provision, but the **Holy Spirit itself**.

For today—and especially in places like **Grant County, Indiana**, where the intersection of faith, family, and rural struggle shapes daily life—this passage calls believers to pray not as beggars hoping not to be ignored, but as **beloved children approaching a trustworthy parent**. It is a message of **boldness, trust, and the promise of divine presence**.



## Addendum

### Elemental Spirits

The phrase “**elemental spirits of the world**” appears in **Colossians 2:8** and **2:20**, and it’s a bit ambiguous, which is why scholars have debated its meaning. Here are the main interpretations:

#### 1. Literal Ancient Understanding: The Four Elements (Earth, Air, Fire, Water)

In the Greco-Roman world, *elemental spirits* referred to the basic elements that made up the cosmos. Many believed these elements were controlled or animated by spiritual beings. So, “elemental spirits” could mean **spiritual forces associated with the physical universe**, which some in Colossae may have worshiped or feared.

**Modern parallel:** People today may not worship fire or air, but we often fall under the sway of **materialistic worldviews**, consumerism, or “natural laws” of success and power. These could be our “elemental spirits”—systems that seem foundational but are ultimately empty of Christ.

#### 2. Jewish Religious Interpretation: Basic Teachings or Ritual Laws

In some Jewish thought, *elemental spirits* referred to the “**basic principles**” of religious life—things like dietary laws, festivals, and purity codes. Paul may be warning Gentile believers not to get entangled in the “**elementary**” **religious rules** that Christ fulfilled and surpassed.

**Modern parallel:** Legalistic religion—where following rules becomes more important than grace—can be a modern-day version of these “elemental principles.”

#### 3. Demonic or Cosmic Powers

Some scholars believe Paul is referring to **demonic or oppressive cosmic powers** that enslave humanity—linked to spiritual warfare themes found elsewhere in Paul’s letters (like Ephesians 6:12). In this view, the “elemental spirits” are **hostile powers** that stand between humanity and God until Christ defeats them on the cross.

**Modern parallel:** Think of ideologies or systems that seem to have power over people—racism, addiction, fear, consumerism, nationalism—that distort human dignity and divide communities. These “powers” may not have horns and pitchforks, but they still hold people captive.

### In Summary

Paul’s phrase likely has **multiple layers of meaning**, all pointing to this truth:

***Don’t be held captive by basic, deceptive, or oppressive systems—whether religious, philosophical, or societal. Christ is above them all.***

### Grant County, Indiana Example

Imagine a someone you know who grew up believing they had to **earn God’s love** by being perfect—never missing church, hiding doubts, always presenting as “good.” That mindset, even if well-intentioned, can become an “elemental spirit”—a belief system that binds rather than frees.

Paul says: *Let go. Christ already erased the record. Walk in him. Not in fear, not in false authority, but in fullness.*



## Metaphors

### WHAT IS A METAPHOR?

A **metaphor** is a figure of speech where one thing is said to *be* another thing—not literally, but to help us understand it more deeply.

It's like saying something *is* something else to paint a picture or show a truth in a fresh way.

It's different from a **simile**, which uses "like" or "as."

- A simile: "*Life is like a journey.*"
- A metaphor: "*Life is a journey.*"

### Biblical Examples of Metaphors

**1. "The Lord is my shepherd" – Psalm 23**

God is not literally a shepherd, but this metaphor shows His care, guidance, and protection.

**2. "I am the bread of life" – John 6:35**

Jesus is not a loaf of bread, but this metaphor tells us that He nourishes our souls, just like bread feeds our bodies.

**3. "You are the light of the world" – Matthew 5:14**

We don't literally glow, but this metaphor means we are called to shine with goodness, truth, and hope.

### Everyday Examples of Metaphors

**1. "Time is a thief."**

Time doesn't actually steal, but this metaphor means it can take things away (youth, opportunities) before we notice.

**2. "That person's heart is a stone."**

This doesn't mean that person's heart is made of rock, but that they may be emotionally cold or unfeeling.

**3. "That person is a bulldozer in a meeting."**

That person is not actually a machine, but the metaphor shows that he dominates or pushes through without concern for others.

### Why Use Metaphors in Church?

- They connect spiritual truth to everyday life.
- They make abstract ideas more concrete.
- They stay with people longer than plain definitions.

Jesus often *taught in metaphors*—the vine, the gate, the good shepherd—because they engaged people's hearts and imaginations, not just their minds.

### WHY, HOW, AND WHEN TO READ METAPHORS IN THE BIBLE

#### **WHY Read the Bible Metaphorically?**

**1. Jesus and the Prophets Did It Constantly**

Much of Jesus' teaching (e.g., parables) and the prophetic language of the Old Testament is metaphorical. They weren't giving lectures—they were painting word pictures.





## 2. **Spiritual Truths Can't Always Be Described Literally**

God's nature, heaven, the Kingdom of God—these are beyond human experience. Metaphors give us a handle on the eternal by using familiar things.

## 3. **Metaphors Invite Us to Think, Reflect, and Apply**

Instead of handing out simple answers, a metaphor slows us down and pulls us deeper into the meaning. It makes the message personal.

### HOW to Read Metaphors in the Bible

#### 1. **Ask: Is This Literal or Figurative?**

"Jesus is the Lamb of God" doesn't mean He's an actual animal. Context clues usually help make that clear. Look for signs of symbolic meaning—especially when physical reality doesn't make sense.

#### 2. **Look for the Deeper Connection**

What does a shepherd *do*? What does light *symbolize*? Good metaphors usually point to a relationship or a deeper truth.

#### 3. **Let Scripture Interpret Scripture**

Often the Bible explains its own metaphors:

- a. "*I am the vine; you are the branches... apart from me you can do nothing*" (John 15:5)

Here, Jesus unpacks the metaphor so we don't get lost.

#### 4. **Check Cultural and Historical Background**

Some metaphors are tied to ancient practices (e.g., "*gird your loins*" or "*living water*") and can be better understood with a little context.

### WHEN to Read the Bible Metaphorically

- **When the Language is Clearly Symbolic**

Prophetic books like Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Revelation are full of imagery—beasts, bowls, stars, swords from mouths. These are rarely meant to be taken literally.

- **When Jesus Uses Parables or 'I Am' Statements**

- "*I am the door*" (John 10:9) – He's not made of wood.
- "*The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed*" – parables are metaphors meant to teach spiritual principles.

- **When the Literal Reading Leads to Confusion or Contradiction**

If a literal interpretation doesn't make logical or theological sense, ask if it's a metaphor inviting you to see something deeper.

### A Closing Thought

**Metaphors are not meant to confuse us—they're meant to *invite* us.**

They ask us to sit with the Word a little longer, to open our hearts, and to see not just with our eyes, but with faith.