



## STUDY TOOLS

Sunday, April 27, 2025

**Teaching Title:** Body and Head

**Key Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 12:12–27

# CEDAR VALLEY

### 5-DAY READING PLAN WITH QUESTIONS:

**Monday:** Colossians 1

**Tuesday:** Colossians 2

**Wednesday:** 1 Corinthians 12

**Thursday:** Ephesians 1:15–23

**Friday:** Ephesians 4:1–16

1. What does this passage tell you about God?
2. What does this passage tell you about people?
3. If this is God's word, what do I need to do?
4. What's your takeaway?
5. Who would you tell?

### MEMORY TOPIC:

Christ, the Head of the Church

### MEMORY VERSE:

Colossians 1:18a

Christ is also the head of the church, which is His body.

### LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION:

#### Introduction:

The modern American Church has strayed from its true purpose. It has become more about celebrity, judgment, and performance than about grace, the Gospel, and God's presence. The Church has failed to reflect Jesus to the world around us. It is meant to be something sacred and beautiful—the physical representation of Jesus on earth. The Bible offers a powerful metaphor to help us understand Jesus' relationship to the Church: a human body. The Church is not a building or a stage; it is the body of Christ—and Jesus is the head of that body. For the body of Christ to truly reflect Jesus to the world, we must know and understand who He is. When we understand who He is, we become truly alive as His body, learning to live and love like Him. A living body is always connected to its Head.

#### Questions:

Icebreaker—If you could redesign the human body, what new feature would you add and why?

1. In what ways do you think the American Church has drifted from what Jesus intended it to be?
2. Read 1 Corinthians 12:12–27 as a group. What is the significance of the body metaphor in this passage? How does it help you better understand our relationship with each other and with Christ?
3. Why is it essential for the Church to recognize Jesus as the "Head" of the Church, rather than placing that role on any human leader or institution? What does it really mean for all believers to be "one body in Christ"?
4. Read Colossians 1:15–20 as a group. What stood out to you most in this description of Jesus, and why? (See Digging Deeper)
5. What does Paul mean when he says that Jesus is the "image of the invisible God"? (Hint: see John 1:18; also refer to Notes)

6. What can happen when a church or an individual stops following Jesus as the Head? How can we stay aligned with His will both personally and as a Church?
7. Is there an area of your life where you're not fully recognizing Jesus as the Head? What would it look like to surrender that area to Him?

## Notes

Colossians 1:15—"Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation..."

- Visible in the phrase "visible image of the invisible God" comes from the Greek word 'eikon' (i-KONE)—the root of our English word "icon". This word doesn't imply a mere copy or likeness; it means the exact representation. In the Greco-Roman world, the concept of "image" carried deep significance, as it was believed that an IMAGE (EIKON) could convey the very essence or authority of the one it represented.
- So, when Paul uses this word, he isn't saying that Jesus is simply "like" God, he's declaring that Jesus IS God in human form.

## Digging Deeper

Colossians 1:15 is often translated, "*The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation*" (NIV, emphasis added). The word "firstborn" (Greek: *prototokos*) has been widely misunderstood throughout history. For example, Jehovah's Witnesses interpret "firstborn" to mean that Jesus was literally the first created being, implying that God created Him before anything else. But if Jesus is a created being, then He cannot be divine. This is central to the Jehovah's Witnesses' belief—that Jesus is not God, but rather the most exalted of all God's creations.

However, a key principle of sound biblical interpretation is to understand how "firstborn" is used throughout Scripture. Here are some examples:

- In the Old Testament, Israel is called God's "firstborn" (Ex. 4:22; Jer. 31:9). In both instances, the term is used figuratively to express supremacy or priority, not a literal birth order.
- Psalm 89:27 says, "*I will make Him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth.*" This refers to God's covenant with David. Interestingly, David was not the firstborn in his family, which shows that "firstborn" is used figuratively.

These examples demonstrate that "firstborn" in biblical usage often refers to supremacy or priority both in time and in status. This is why the New Living Translation translates Colossians 1:15 this way:

*"Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation."*

The NLT helps clarify what Paul is really communicating: Jesus is the eternal Son of God who existed before all things and reigns supreme over all creation, in both time and status.

Below is what Dr. Tim Mackie of Bible Project says about this passage:

"In his poem in Colossians 1:15–20, Paul says that Jesus' position as firstborn of creation also involves being the head of the community of believers called the Church or His body. Jesus is the Head of a new human family that is transcending what is wrong with the world—death, sin\*, and the rebellious nature of both humanity and spiritual beings. Just as Jesus has the status of firstborn of creation, being "firstborn from the dead" means He sits as head of a new family over whom death has no power. As disciples of Jesus, because we have been adopted into the family of the Son\*\*, we can use the same language as Jesus and call God our own Father, confident we are beloved children."

\*Understand the biblical definition of sin: <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/khata-sin/>

\*\*Explore the biblical theme of the Family of God: <https://bibleproject.com/podcast/series/family-of-god/>