

Paul's Ministry

24 I am glad when I suffer for you in my body, for I am participating in the sufferings of Christ that continue for his body, the church. 25 God has given me the responsibility of serving his church by proclaiming his entire message to you. 26 This message was kept secret for centuries and generations past, but now it has been revealed to God's people. 27 For God wanted them to know that the riches and glory of Christ are for you Gentiles, too. And this is the secret: Christ lives in you. This gives you assurance of sharing his glory.

28 So we tell others about Christ, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all the wisdom God has given us. We want to present them to God, perfect in their relationship to Christ. 29 That's why I work and struggle so hard, depending on Christ's mighty power that works within me. 2:1 I want you to know how much I have agonized for you and for the church at Laodicea, and for many other believers who have never met me personally. 2 I want them to be encouraged and knit together by strong ties of love. I want them to have complete confidence that they understand God's mysterious plan, which is Christ himself. 3 In him lie hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

4 I am telling you this so no one will deceive you with well-crafted arguments. 5 For though I am far away from you, my heart is with you. And I rejoice that you are living as you should and that your faith in Christ is strong. Colossians 1:24-2:5 (NLT)

Note: This passage has a lot of themes & directions it could go in terms of group discussion. This might be a good passage to break up and discuss over two weeks instead of one.

Discussion/Topic Starters (Ice Breakers)

- What goal has been compelling enough to make you willing to suffer to reach it?
- Discuss a time when you suffered, the outcome, and how you personally grew through it.
- What real-life mystery would you most like to know the true answer to (ex. JFK, UFOs, Bermuda Triangle, What women want, why are men so clueless,...)?

Observation (what does the text say?)

- What things in the text strike you or jump out at you? Why?
- What does this passage say about the role and responsibility of Christ?
What does this passage say about the role and responsibility of all believers?
- How does Paul define God's commission or "calling" for himself (1:24-29)? What does Paul do to achieve that goal (1:28-29)?
- Paul refers to a "secret" twice in v.1:26-27. Where and how has it been revealed?
- What do you learn about the passion and heart of the apostle Paul towards those who were young in their faith (v.1:28-2:1)?
- What do you learn about Jesus as the foundation for life from this passage (v. 2:2-5, as well as 2:6 and beyond)?

Interpretation (what does it mean?)

- What feelings does the idea of "Christ lives in you" (v.1:27) arouse? (Consider the description of Christ you in Colossians 1:15-20.)
What are the implications of this revealed mystery or secret?
- What does it mean to be presented "perfect in their relationship to Christ" (v.1:28b)?
- What were some deceitful and well-crafted arguments (v.2:4) that were in the NT time-period? Today?
What might some people like to remove from the gospel message or add to the gospel message that makes it false?

Application (what does it mean to me/us?)

- Paul states that God gave him the responsibility of serving the church by... (v.1:25).
How/where do you feel God leading you to serve in the church (both Riverside Church as well as the broader Church)?
- How have you experienced "Christ living in you" and "sharing in His glory" (v.1:27)? How could you experience it more?
- How can we guard against and discern "deceitful and well-crafted arguments" (v.2:4)?
- Paul describes specific marks of Christian maturity (v.2:2-5). Which of these marks do you see developing in yourself? Which would you like to develop more?

Recommended Follow-up:

- **Pray:** Read 2:2; pray that the qualities Paul longed to see in the lives of the Colossians will also be apparent in you, your home group, and in Riverside.
- **Respond:** Pray about your role in Riverside (v.1:29) and the broader church. Share with someone what that role might be and commit to fully pursuing serving in that way.

Review the marks of Christian maturity in this passage (v.2:2-5). Thank God for the progress you see in your life and pray for continued growth.
- **Read:** Next week's sermon (1/31/2010) will focus on Colossians 2:6-23. Take time prior to next Sunday to read & study the passage, pray through the passage, meditate on the passage, etc.

* As discussed in Riverside's HGLT (Home Group Leader Training), these guides are to be starting points for home group leaders to develop their own guides and approaches to leading group discussions. This is a resource tool, not a rigid "go through this guide word-for-word." **There are intentionally too many questions for a single home group time.** These guides rely heavily upon James Reapsome's &/or N.T. Wright's study guides on Colossians & Philemon (ISBN 9780830830145 & 9780830821921), as well as Ryan Roeder's 2005 discussion guides on Colossians & Philemon.