

Together in Prayer

2 Devote yourselves to prayer with an alert mind and a thankful heart. 3 Pray for us, too, that God will give us many opportunities to speak about his mysterious plan concerning Christ. That is why I am here in chains. 4 Pray that I will proclaim this message as clearly as I should. 5 Live wisely among those who are not believers, and make the most of every opportunity. 6 Let your conversation be gracious and attractive so that you will have the right response for everyone.

7 Tychicus will give you a full report about how I am getting along. He is a beloved brother and faithful helper who serves with me in the Lord's work. 8 I have sent him to you for this very purpose—to let you know how we are doing and to encourage you. 9 I am also sending Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, one of your own people. He and Tychicus will tell you everything that's happening here. 10 Aristarchus, who is in prison with me, sends you his greetings, and so does Mark, Barnabas's cousin. As you were instructed before, make Mark welcome if he comes your way. 11 Jesus (the one we call Justus) also sends his greetings. These are the only Jewish believers among my co-workers; they are working with me here for the Kingdom of God. And what a comfort they have been! 12 Epaphras, a member of your own fellowship and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends you his greetings. He always prays earnestly for you, asking God to make you strong and perfect, fully confident that you are following the whole will of God. 13 I can assure you that he prays hard for you and also for the believers in Laodicea and Hierapolis. 14 Luke, the beloved doctor, sends his greetings, and so does Demas. 15 Please give my greetings to our brothers and sisters at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church that meets in her house.

16 After you have read this letter, pass it on to the church at Laodicea so they can read it, too. And you should read the letter I wrote to them. 17 And say to Archippus, "Be sure to carry out the ministry the Lord gave you." 18 HERE IS MY GREETING IN MY OWN HANDWRITING PAUL Remember my chains. May God's grace be with you.

Colossians 4:2-18 (NLT)

Observation (what does the text say?) **Interpretation** (what does it mean?) **Application** (what does it mean to me/us?)

Discussion/Topic Starters (Ice Breakers)

- In high school, who were your two best friends? What was one quality about them that stands out to you?

O: What things in the text strike you or jump out at you? Why?

v.2-6

O: Based on what we've read and seen in the entire book of Colossians, what are we to be alert and thankful for (v.2)?

I: Paul is in prison, yet he does not ask for prayers about his release. Why do you think that is?

What request does he make instead (v.3-4)?

I: What is it so important for us to speak clearly about the gospel (v.4)?

A: v.5-6 gives advice on how we live and converse with non-Christians.

When have you seen a door open in response to your prayers for others?

In what ways does/should "living wisely" and "making the most of every opportunity" happen in your life?

Do specific/current situations come to mind when you read these verses? How might v.5-6 be put into practice this week?

A: This would be a good stopping place to simply respond in prayer (see below). This passage has to go from theory to reality.

v.7-18

O: Paul closes this letter with numerous personal messages and greetings. What qualities in people does Paul affirm?

O: What is the common thread which stitches all the people together?

I: Epaphras was mentioned in Col. 1:7-8 as the main person who brought the gospel to the Colossians, and in v. 12 we see his continued concern for them. What impresses you about his prayer (v.12)?

I: How does the entire closing of this letter (v.7-18) speak to individual Christians who feel they can "go it alone" and have nothing to gain or learn from other Christians and churches?

A: How would you like to see your prayer life changed (in the context of this study, and the broader themes of the book of Colossians)?

Recommended Follow-up:

- **Pray:** Pray through v.2-6. It's a great exercise to read a line of scripture and then pray in response to the content in the scripture. Prayer is a 2-way conversation between us and God, it's always good to give God the first word (through the Bible), respond ourselves, and then be quiet (give God the last word).
- **Respond:** Look at v.2-6 often this week and over the next few weeks. This is a powerful time for our church, this launch period, and it's critical that each of us are praying, living, and responding as laid out in these verses.
- **Read:** Next week's sermon (3/4/2010) will focus on the book of Philemon (see v. 4:18 in Colossians for context). 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.