

Spiritual Disciplines for New Life

Bible Background • COLOSSIANS 4:2-17

Printed Text • COLOSSIANS 4:2-6 | Devotional Reading • 1 CORINTHIANS 9:19-27

Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: **RECOGNIZE** the importance of spiritual disciplines in maintaining a Christian life; **REFLECT** on people in our lives who mentor us in faith; and **ACCEPT** the role of mentor for new Christians we may encounter.

In Focus

Felicia had been a believer most of her adult life. For the first few years of her Christian walk, she made a point to pray every day and to live and speak in a manner that reflected Christ. However, after taking on more responsibility at work, Felicia began to waver in her faith. Instead of maintaining her prayer life, she would often procrastinate and sometimes forget to pray altogether. Her attitude and actions began to change as well. Felicia would get angry quickly when things did not go her way. She became short with people if they disagreed with her. She was often bitter because she began to focus on what she considered broken dreams. The worst of all was that Felicia began to feel that God had abandoned her. One morning, she felt so depressed that she called her former Sunday School teacher to talk. After relaying to him how she had been feeling, he asked her how often she prayed. In that moment, Felicia realized that it was almost never. Her teacher reiterated that she must pray and be mindful of how she spoke and lived to continue to grow in the Lord.

Practicing spiritual discipline is vital to our walk with Christ. Apostle Paul emphasizes that it is a lesson we should never forget.

Keep in Mind

“And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.”
(Colossians 4:17, KJV)

Focal Verses

KJV **Colossians 4:2** Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;

3 Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds:

4 That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

5 Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.

6 Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

The People, Places, and Times

Colossae. Colossae (also spelled “Colosse”) was a prosperous city located in the southwestern section of the Lycus River Valley in Phrygia. It was known for producing wool that had been dyed the color of colossinus, a shade of purple from the cyclamen flower. Intermarriage between Jews and Gentiles was not uncommon. Although the Jewish community was large and the Christians were thriving like their brothers and sisters in nearby Laodicea, many of the Greeks still practiced their ancient, pagan religions.

Background

Prior to writing to the Colossians, it is believed Paul had not ever visited Colossae based on Colossians 2:1 (“I want you to know how hard I am contending for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally,” NIV). Paul wrote his epistle to the Colossians while he was still imprisoned in Rome (A.D. 61). Christian leaders in Colossae included Archippus, Philemon, and Epaphras, who founded the Colossian church. They sought Paul’s help in dealing with the heresy in the city. The Gnostics did not believe in the Incarnation, the act of Christ taking on human flesh, thus they denied His humanity. In addition, they also preached against the supremacy of Christ and His role in creation (Padfield, “The Church at Colosse in Asia Minor”). They were proponents of human

logic and philosophy (Colossians 2:8). Paul sought to counter this by explaining redemption, clarifying Christ’s identity, launching a polemic against the Gnostic philosophy, and describing ways to put our beliefs about the death and resurrection of Christ into practice.

At-A-Glance

1. Continue in Prayer (Colossians 4:2–4)
2. Speak with Grace (vv. 5–6)

In Depth

1. Continue in Prayer (Colossians 4:2–4)

Today’s lesson text begins in the middle of Paul explaining how Christians should practice their faith. In chapter 3, he exhorts believers to make sure their lives reflect Christ and to not focus on earthly things, but instead on things of God because they have a new life in Christ (vv. 1–3). He encourages them to put aside the various sins of their old selves (vv. 5–9) and embrace holiness as defined in verses 12 through 14. Perhaps to ensure that no believer be led astray by Gnostic heresy, Paul wrote: “Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in

your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (3:16–17, NIV). He wanted the Colossians to learn with the Scriptures, not any outside philosophy, and to understand that in whatever they do, Jesus Christ should play an integral part. He then gives instructions for every facet of Christian society: wives, husbands, children, servants, and masters (3:18–4:1).

In verse 2 of today’s text, Paul, as a mentor of faith for the Colossians, gives further instruction. Matthew Henry posited that this verse continues the duties of the Christian master but that the instruction here is practical for all believers to follow (*Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible*, online version). Paul writes that the believers should “continue in prayer” (v. 2), giving the sense that prayer should be pursued with urgency, disciplined vigilance, and a thankful heart because prayer is essential to the Christian life. He also encourages the believers to pray for him, the ministers, and leaders in the church with the same diligence so that there would be opportunity for them to preach the Gospel message. This especially involves the mystery of Christ, which is that “through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 3:6, NIV). Paul was imprisoned for this very same message. He asked them to pray that he have the ability to proclaim the message clearly. This was a request Paul had made often while he was imprisoned (Ephesians 6:19). We see here that even the mentors in the faith need the prayers of their charges to help strengthen them in their mission.

2. Speak with Grace (vv. 5–6)

Another discipline Paul encourages the believers to practice is monitoring how they

live and speak. He writes, “Live wisely among those who are not believers, and make the most of every opportunity” (Colossians 4:5, NLT). Christians should take advantage of every opportunity to display lives influenced by their faith (Ephesians 5:15–17). In fact, Paul writes that their “speech” (conversation, discourse) should be “with grace, seasoned with salt” (from Colossians 4:6, KJV). The way Christians speak and, the content of their conversations should suit their positions in Christ. Any kind of foolish talk, obscenities, or insults should not be a part of the Christian conversation (Ephesians 5:4). Paul uses salt, a preservative that prevents spoilage, as a metaphor for grace. “Grace is the salt which seasons our discourse, makes it savoury, and keeps it from corrupting” (*Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible*, online version). Christians must be careful not to allow their words to be corrupted. In light of the hostile environment the Gnostics likely created with their opposition to the Christian faith, the believers needed to be able to address any issue before them. If they were diligent in prayer and monitored their discourses, they would be ready to answer anyone appropriately.

Search the Scriptures

1. How should a Christian pray (Colossians 4:2)?
2. Why should Christians pray for their mentors (v. 3)?
3. Describe the speech of a Christian (v. 6).

Discuss the Meaning

What are some concrete ways Christians can maintain diligence in their prayer lives? If we have not already done so, how can we begin to monitor the content of our speech? How can we help new Christians learn to be disciplined in their prayer and speech?

Liberating Lesson

In an age when most have a lot going on in our lives, sometimes we might find ourselves putting our spiritual disciplines on the back burner. However, if we are not diligent, we could compromise our Christian walk. Instead, we should pray and then look to those who encouraged us in the faith to examine how they manage to live for Christ. Once we become disciplined, we can then help new believers learn.

Application for Activation

Start a Spiritual Disciplines journal. In one section, you should keep an account of your prayers. In another section, analyze the conversations you have each day, being prayerful about what you should change or maintain so that eventually, you become consistent with your speech. As you become stronger in the disciplines of prayer and conversation, share your process with others so they can begin journaling, too.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

Sources:

"The Aegean Region." *Travel Guide to Turkey*. <http://www.guide-martine.com/aegean12.asp>(accessed November 4, 2011).

"Bible Words – Phonetic Pronunciation." Better Days Are Coming.com. <http://betterdaysarecoming.com/bible/pronunciation.html#e/> (accessed November 4, 2011).

Browning, W. R. F. "Colossae." *A Dictionary of the Bible*. 1997. Encyclopedia.com. <http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Colossae.aspx> (accessed November 4, 2011).

"Colossae." *Catholic Encyclopedia*. <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04131a.htm> (accessed November 4, 2011).

"Colossae." Holy Land Photos.org. <http://holylandphotos.org/browse.asp?s=1,3,7,23,62> (accessed November 4, 2011).

"Colossians." *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1988.

Henry, Matthew. "Colossians." *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible, Vol. VI – Acts to Revelation*. Christian Classics Ethereal Library.org. <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/henry/mhc6.Col.html> (accessed November 4, 2011).

Martin, Ralph P. *Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon. Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Instruction*. Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1991.

New Testament Greek Lexicon. Bible Study Tools.com. <http://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/> (accessed November 4, 2011).

Padfield, David. "The Church at Colosse in Asia Minor." *The Church of Christ in Zion, Illinois*. Padfield.com. <http://www.padfield.com/2005/colosse.html> (accessed November 4, 2011).

Patzia, Arthur G. *Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon. New International Biblical Commentary: Vol. 10*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1990.

Strong, James. *Free Bible Study Tools - Strong's Concordance with Greek and Hebrew*. Tim Greenwood Ministries. <http://www.tgm.org/bible.htm> (accessed November 4, 2011).

Vine, W. E. *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1996.

Say It Correctly

Colossae. kuh-**LOS**-ee(').
Colossians. kuh-**LOSH**-uhnz,
-**LAH**-shuhnz, also -shee-uhnz.
Epaphras. **EP**-uh-fras, **EP**-uh-fruhs.

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

Following Jesus
(Matthew 20:29–34)

TUESDAY

Devoted to Prayer
(Acts 1:6–14)

WEDNESDAY

Living in Harmony
(Romans 15:1–6)

THURSDAY

Living to Please God
(1 Thessalonians 4:1–12)

FRIDAY

Guarding Your Words
(Ecclesiastes 5:1–6)

SATURDAY

Supporting Others in the Faith
(Colossians 4:7–17)

SUNDAY

Devotion and Conduct
(Colossians 4:2–6)

Notes
