

Community Group Discussion Guide

Pleasing to Him
August 27, 2023 | Colossians 1:9-14

MOTIVATE

Starter Question:

- ⇒ *Who is someone for whom you have prayed as an intercessor for a long time? What and why do you continue to pray for this individual?*

DISCUSS

In Colossians 1:9-14, Paul continued to tell the Colossians the content of his and Timothy's prayers for them. In these verses, the focus shifts from thanksgiving for the Colossians to intercession on their behalf.

- ⇒ *How does Paul's words in verses 3-14 demonstrate the importance he placed on prayer?*
- ⇒ *What can we learn from Paul's habit of praying constantly for others, particularly new believers?*
- ⇒ *Why do we need our spiritual leaders to intercede on our behalf?*

Colossians 1:9-12a And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10 so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;11 being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; 12 giving thanks to the Father,

Paul continued this thanksgiving portion of his letter by telling the Colossians how he and Timothy specifically prayed for them. The initial success of the gospel in Colossae did not decrease Paul's prayer efforts on their behalf. Instead, it led Paul to even more intense prayer. He asked God to help these new believers reach their full potential in Christ.

- ⇒ *Have you ever prayed before in this manner? If so, explain the circumstance.*

When Paul began verse 9 with "*and so,*" he was looking back to the good report given to him by Epaphras, mentioned in verses 7-8. Paul did not praise the Colossians simply because they learned the truth from Epaphras. The apostle also praised their faith because it led to concrete results and made a difference in the way they lived their lives and treated others. Paul prayed for these believers who were doing so well and asked God to help them continue maturing in their faith.

- ⇒ *Why should we pray for continued, long-term spiritual growth?*

As Paul was aware of developments in the Colossian church, he prayed specifically for God to give them a "*knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.*" We cannot know God's will through our own efforts. He must reveal this to us. Wisdom refers to the comprehension of truth, while understanding refers to the application of truth. Being controlled by God's will means believers grasp the principles of Scripture and put them into practice.

- ⇒ *How does the knowledge God gives to us lead to deeper faith and greater virtue?*
- ⇒ *What wisdom and understanding are you seeking from God today? How may we pray for you in this matter?*

Paul asked God to fill the Colossians with the knowledge, wisdom, and understanding of His will so they could walk in a manner worthy of Him. Worthy refers to conduct that is expected and appropriate for God's followers. For Paul, understanding God's will involves recognizing how Christ is the fulfillment of God's redemptive purposes, how God's salvation is open to all people, and how God intends for Christians to live in whatever situation they find themselves. Paul listed four traits of the spirit-filled life that are pleasing to God:

1. Bearing fruit in every good work for God: Good works are not a means to achieve salvation, but a natural result of it. Good works in the life of the believer pleases God because good works are God's plan for the believer (Ephesians 2:8–10).

- ⇒ *Why are good works a natural response to knowing and understanding the will of God?*

2. Increasing in the full knowledge of God: Paul recognized that what believers need most is to grow in a God-given knowledge that will govern our faith and decisions. The more we know of God's character, His ways, and His expectations, the more we are able to bring our lives into conformity with what pleases Him.

- ⇒ *Why is knowledge of God essential for living a life pleasing to God?*
- ⇒ *What are you doing to attain this knowledge?*
- ⇒ *Why is our study of God's Word vital to our spiritual understanding?*

This knowledge was extremely important in the Colossians' situation. Paul didn't pray knowledge for them just for the sake of knowledge. He knew if they sufficiently grasped that God's plan for redemption revolves entirely around Christ alone, they would not be confused by the message of false teachers.

- ⇒ *How can a thorough knowledge of God's will and His truth shield us from false teaching?*
- ⇒ *How should this knowledge affect the way we live our daily lives?*

3. Being strengthened with the power of God: Paul asked God to give the Colossians not only spiritual discernment of His will but also the divine power to do it. Knowledge alone does not enable obedience. It takes God's "glorious might" to help us patiently and joyfully endure the challenges of following Him. Those who persist do not abandon faith for something that seems less demanding. Instead, we continue to trust in God no matter the circumstances. We know what God wants us to do and understand that we need His strength to live according to His will.

- ⇒ *Why is it vital we ask God to strengthen us to do His will?*
- ⇒ *How would you define patience and endurance as it pertains to the Christian life?*
- ⇒ *How does Paul's prayer confirm this Henderson Hills value? Desperate Dependence: We rely on the Holy Spirit to empower our lives and the church as we humbly abide in Jesus, recognizing that we can do nothing apart from Him.*

4. Giving thanks to God: In verses 13-14, Paul specified three reasons for joyfully expressing gratitude for what God the Father has done in Christ.

- ⇒ *Why is thankfulness pleasing to God?*
- ⇒ *How does daily thankfulness shape our lives?*
- ⇒ *Could thankfulness be considered a spiritual discipline? Explain your answer.*

Colossians 1:12b-14: Who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. 13 He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

God is to be thanked because He:

1. Qualified believers for an inheritance: The phrase “share of the inheritance” used in verse 12 was originally identified with the land apportioned to each of the tribes of Jacob after the conquest of Canaan. Gentile believers like the Colossians had no natural right to this inheritance, but through Christ were made full legal heirs who share in the blessings of salvation with all the saints. The word saint means “to be set apart,” “holy ones,” or “sanctified.” The word was applied to Israel in the Old Testament, and Paul intentionally included Gentile Christians in this category.

- ⇒ *How did God qualify us for salvation? Do we in any way qualify ourselves?*
- ⇒ *What are some of the blessings of salvation you enjoy today?*

2. Rescued believers from darkness: Paul affirmed that God delivered the Colossians from the harsh rule of evil as well as ethical and theological darkness.

- ⇒ *Why must we each understand that we need deliverance from a wasted, captive life of sin?*

3. Brought believers into the Son’s kingdom: God transferred us from the realm of darkness to the kingdom of the Son He loves. His kingdom is filled with light. In it, we have redemption and forgiveness of sin.

- **Redemption**: To redeem someone means “to buy them back and set them free.” Jesus’ death was the price paid to buy us back and set us free from both the penalty and the power of sin.
- **Forgiveness of sin**: To forgive means “to send away, to cancel.” Through the death of Jesus, God canceled the debt of our sin. It was a debt we could never repay; but since Jesus paid the debt for us, God has forgiven the debt.

- ⇒ *How does our redemption and forgiveness set us free to live a life worthy of the Lord?*

TRANSFORM

1. Make personal application: Paul’s prayer for the Colossians and for us today is that God will fill us with the knowledge of His will and that this knowledge will change our daily existence. Our heart’s desire should be to live lives worthy of the Lord. Consider your own life in light of what Paul described:

- ⇒ *Are you bearing fruit for God?*
- ⇒ *Are you increasing in your knowledge of God?*
- ⇒ *Are you asking God to strengthen you so you can patiently and joyfully endure?*
- ⇒ *Are you thanking God for your salvation and your inheritance?*

An important part of our Community Group is that we pray for each other. Such mutual concern assures us that we are cared for and supported. We don't have to wait until there is a problem to pray for each other. Pray today that each member of your group will grow in spiritual knowledge and mature in their faith. Ask God to empower your group to live lives worthy of the sacrifice of His Son.

⇒ *How can we pray for you as you seek to please God?*

2. Pray: Thank God for the gift of salvation, for delivering us from sin and darkness to His kingdom of light. Praise Jesus for sacrificially paying the debt for our sin.

STUDY: Resources used, compiled from, and quoted:

- *Holman New Testament Commentary, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians*, pages 280-292.
- *The NIV Application Commentary, Colossians and Philemon*, pages 64-80.
- *Shepherd's Notes, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, pages 42-45.