



# Community Group Discussion Guide:

Final Greetings

November 19, 2023 | Colossians 4:7-18

## MOTIVATE

*Starter Question:*

- ⇒ *Have you ever been a part of a team? If so, talk about your experience with the team.*
- ⇒ *Do you think the church is like a team? Explain your answer.*

## DISCUSSION

Paul had an eclectic group of friends listed in Colossians 4:7-18. These included a doctor (Luke), a pastor (Epaphras), a fugitive slave (Onesimus), and a woman (Nympha). They were also from different cultural backgrounds: Jewish (Aristarchus, Mark, Justus) and Gentile (Epaphras, Luke, Demas). Some of the names listed in the passage occur with information not contained elsewhere in Scripture.

- ⇒ *How important have Christian friendships been in your life?*

Paul's bond with these individuals wasn't simply one of getting on well together, but of a deep abiding friendship forged in the context of being on mission and in ministry together. Since Paul had never visited Colossae, the people he mentioned helped to establish and strengthen a firsthand relationship with the Colossians believers.

- ⇒ *What is it about being involved in a ministry or mission opportunity that seems to cause strong bonds of friendship between people that might not have been that close before?*
- ⇒ *How might you become more involved in such ministry-grounded friendships? What might be the result in your own walk with God if you did?*

In John MacArthur's Colossians commentary this section of Colossians is called a "verbal group photograph." Paul mentioned many members of his team and included greetings from them. These were the people who served in the background, the "unsung heroes" of the early church. At first look, this passage may seem insignificant. However, these verses give a vital look behind the scenes of Paul's ministry. Paul couldn't and didn't carry out an effective ministry on his own. Nor has God designed the church to function with a single leader alone.

- ⇒ *Who would you describe as "unsung heroes" of our church? Explain your answer.*
- ⇒ *Why is it important for us to take time to learn about each of these individuals Paul wrote about?*

**Colossians 4:7-9** Tychicus will tell you all about my activities. He is a beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. 8 I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are and that he may encourage your hearts, 9 and with him Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will tell you of everything that has taken place here.

The first-person Paul mentioned is Tychicus. He is mentioned five other times in the New Testament. Tychicus functioned as a special messenger for Paul and carried this letter for him. Tychicus had firsthand knowledge of Paul's circumstances and could give the recipients of the letter more information about the apostle.

Paul described Tychicus with three attributes: a beloved brother, a faithful minister, and a fellow servant. Tychicus traveled to churches at Colossae and Ephesus with news of Paul. This suggests that Tychicus had a special relationship with the churches of Asia. The wording in verses 7-8 is almost identical with that of Ephesians 6:21-22. Tychicus became prominent at the end of Paul's ministry. Paul

entrusted Tychicus with considerable responsibility, including the collection of donations for the Jerusalem church. Since Tychicus' home was in Asia, he was well-suited to carry the letters and greetings to these Asian churches.

- ⇒ ***What can we learn from Tychicus' example?***
- ⇒ ***When you think of our own church community at HHBC, whose life and ministry have you benefitted from?***

Onesimus accompanied Tychicus. Onesimus was the runaway slave for whom Paul wrote his letter to Philemon. Paul made two significant statements about Onesimus. First, Paul said Onesimus was a "faithful and beloved brother," the same terms used of the others in the group. Second, Paul said Onesimus was "one of you."

Onesimus came from Colossae. We can reconstruct some of his story from the letter addressed to his master, Philemon, which was probably sent at the same time. Tychicus came with Onesimus, perhaps to give him moral support and to be there in case further explanations were necessary to convince the Colossians that Onesimus could also be called a faithful and beloved brother. The church needed to be assured that Onesimus was, in a deeper sense, not merely a Colossian but also a Christian.

- ⇒ ***What do you think Onesimus may have said about Paul to the Colossians church?***

**Colossians 4:10-14** Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, and Mark the cousin of Barnabas (concerning whom you have received instructions—if he comes to you, welcome him), 11 and Jesus who is called Justus. These are the only men of the circumcision among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me. 12 Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God. 13 For I bear him witness that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and in Hierapolis. 14 Luke the beloved physician greets you, as does Demas.

Paul continued his closing by sending greetings from five men who were with him in Rome. They obviously had a close relationship with both Paul and the church at Colossae. In some cases, the connection with Paul was clear, but the biblical record is silent on the connection with the church.

- ⇒ ***What could these brothers in Christ do for Paul while he was in prison?***

Aristarchus was a native of Thessalonica, a Jewish believer, and a traveling companion of Paul. He remained with Paul on the journey to Rome. In verse 10, Paul called Aristarchus a "fellow prisoner," presumably because he was in prison for the same reasons as Paul. It seems Aristarchus could have left at any time but chose to stay with Paul and share in his sufferings for the sake of encouraging and supporting the apostle. This speaks highly of Aristarchus' character and commitment to the cause of Christ.

- ⇒ ***Why is it vital we have intimate friendships with other believers during times of great trial?***
- ⇒ ***In what ways can you be more active in your support and care for others within our church?***

John Mark is a well-known person of the New Testament even though there are few verses about him in Scripture. Like many people in the first century, he had two names. John was his Jewish name; Mark was his Roman name. He was the cousin of Barnabas and grew up in Jerusalem. Mark had a significant place in the early advance of Christian missions. He accompanied Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey. For some unknown reason, Mark returned home after the group entered Asia which became the occasion for division between Paul and Barnabas (See Acts 15:36-41).

Most likely, Barnabas, who had discipled Paul in his early Christian years, discipled Mark from that point. In the last of Paul's epistles, written from a Roman prison, Paul requested Mark's presence. Any differences between these two saints were long passed.

⇒ ***What insights can you gain from seeing that Mark was once again ministering with Paul?***

Jesus (Justus) occurs only here in the New Testament. His two names were Jesus, which means Joshua, a Jewish name, and Justus, a Latin name. Along with Aristarchus and Mark, he was one of the few fellow workers with Paul who were Jewish.

⇒ ***Why is it noteworthy that Paul had Jewish Christians working alongside of him to minister to the Gentiles?***

It was Epaphras who originally preached the gospel in Colossae and brought the news to Paul that there was a church in the city (Colossians 1:7–8). Epaphras was from Colossae and had presumably become a servant of Christ Jesus in Ephesus under Paul's ministry. At some point, Epaphras became a prisoner like Paul. Paul commended Epaphras for his hard work and intense prayer on behalf of the Colossian believers. Epaphras prayed the Colossians might stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God.

⇒ ***Why is it vital that our leaders pray for us?***

⇒ ***How would you have them pray for you?***

Luke had a significant role in the early church. Although Paul mentioned Luke only three times in the epistles, he did more than any other person to enhance history's understanding of Paul. Little is known of Luke's background. The best records suggest he was a native of Antioch, Syria, a Gentile, a physician, a writer, and a devoted Christian. Three times in the book of Acts the subjects change from "they" to "we." Most likely this is evidence that Luke journeyed with Paul during those times. Paul called Luke the "beloved physician," and Paul may have needed physical help as he grew older. It is only in this Colossians passage that we learn of Luke's profession.

Demas is mentioned only three times in Scripture. Although he accompanied Paul to Rome, later Demas "loved the world" and returned to Thessalonica (2 Timothy 4:10), which may have been his home. Paul's statement about Demas apparently meant that the pressures of Paul's situation and the lure of an easier life caused him to forsake the Lord.

⇒ ***At difficult times in your life, how have other Christians been a comfort and support to you?***

⇒ ***What kind of reputation do you have? Could people refer to you as "faithful minister," "beloved brother or sister," or "servant of Jesus?"***

**Colossians 4:15-18** Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea and to Nympha and the church in her house. 16 And when this letter has been read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you also read the letter from Laodicea. 17 And say to Archippus, "See that you fulfill the ministry that you have received in the Lord." 18 I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

Paul sent greetings to the final group of persons. The readers of the letter were instructed to greet them for Paul. Among other things, this reveals the closeness of the Christian communities in the area and the ease of communication from one to another.

Laodicea was a neighboring city to Colossae. The church in Laodicea dated from approximately the same time as the one at Colossae, and most likely someone other than Paul founded it. Paul took the time to write a letter to the church, presumably at the same time he wrote Colossians. Hierapolis was the site of an early church where Epaphras worked. Nothing else is known of this church.

Since verse 15 contains the only mention of Nympha, little is known about her. She lived in Laodicea and the church met in her home. House-churches are often mentioned in the New Testament letters and the meeting places are often identified by a woman's name. On occasion a whole congregation in one city might be small enough to meet in the home of one of its members. It was not until about the middle of the third century that early Christianity owned property for purposes of worship (O. Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship*. Tr A. S. Todd and J. B. Torrance).

⇒ *Have you ever been part of a house-church? If so, describe your experience.*

Archippus appears in Scripture here and in Philemon 1:2. Paul urged him to complete the work God gave him to do. No one knows what was involved. Perhaps Archippus received a call to service, and Paul took the occasion to encourage him.

⇒ *Does the challenge given to Archippus speak to your own life in a specific way? If so, how?*

The Colossians letter ends with a personal touch. Paul signed the greeting in his hand. This means that someone else penned the epistle, which happened commonly in the first century and with Paul's letters. The authenticity, however, came from Paul's signature.

⇒ *Why would Paul mention that he wrote this greeting with his own hand?*

Two final reminders were given that encapsulate the entire message of Paul's letter. The first was "remember my chains." The chains outwardly signified the value of the gospel for Paul. Were it not for his commitment to the gospel, Paul would not be under arrest, nor would he have faced the hardships he did. Secondly, Paul reminded the Colossians of God's grace. Paul ended where he began (Colossians 1:2): Grace be with you.

⇒ *Why was it important to Paul that the Colossian believers remember his circumstances?*

⇒ *What important lessons can you take from Paul's extensive greetings?*

## TRANSFORM

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**1. Make personal application:** Paul's entire Colossians letter argues for the principle of grace: that God supplies His salvation freely, that He requires nothing but a trust in the work of His Son, and that grace sustains the Christian's life.

⇒ *How has the Colossians letter helped you?*

⇒ *How has the Colossians series challenged you to put Jesus "above all" in your life?*

⇒ *What difference has God's grace made in your life?*

**2. Pray:** Pray for God's help to grasp the purpose of the local church and to be encouraged to speak of Jesus more in your everyday life. Praise God that we are all involved with gospel ministry together as a church and as a Community Group.

## STUDY: Resources used, compiled from, and quoted:

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- [Gotquestions.org](https://www.gotquestions.org)