

REFLECTION GUIDE

COLOSSIANS 4:2-6 | ALIVE IN THE MISSION OF GOD

KEY TERMS

Being watchful - The phrase *being watchful* (v. 2) could have two emphases. It's possible Paul is encouraging believers to be "watching" for Christ's return (see Col 3:4; *when Christ...appears*). However, this word basically means "to be awake" and is used more often in the NT to encourage Christians to be "watching" their own lives (see Matt 24:42 & 1 Thess 5:6). This sense would be more of an exhortation to "stay awake" to the realities of God in the midst of a world which has rejected him.

The mystery of Christ - A phrase used earlier in Colossians (see 1:26-27 & 2:2), which refers to God's plan of salvation for the world which was previously hidden and has now been revealed in Jesus and his life, death, and resurrection.

Own hand - As was typical in the 1st century, Paul appears to have dictated Colossians to a secretary who wrote down Paul's words. As a mark of authenticity and personal touch, Paul takes the pen himself for the final greeting: *I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you* (v. 18).

DID YOU KNOW?

The metaphor of speech being *seasoned with salt* (v. 6) was well-known in the 1st century. In Greco-Roman culture it usually carried the connotation of "winsomeness" while in rabbinic literature it usually had more to do with "wisdom."

BACKGROUND

As Paul prepares to conclude his letter, he provides some final thoughts on new life in Christ—this time focusing on prayer and the mission of the church. First he says, *Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving* (v. 2). Having begun the letter with his own prayers and thanksgiving (1:3-10), Paul now exhorts the Colossians to pray regularly and with thanksgiving as well. He also asks them to *pray for us, that God may open to us a door for the word* (v. 3). Elsewhere in the NT (see Acts 14:27 & 1 Cor 16:9), the metaphor of an open door is used for evangelistic ministry and that appears to be what Paul is asking for the Colossians to pray for here as well. Paul then challenges the church to *Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person* (vv. 5-6). Paul's closing instructions are missional as he calls the church to act in such a way as to attract unbelievers to the gospel message, seeing their lives as an opportunity to invite others into the life they've found in Christ. The letter then ends, as Paul's letters typically do, with greetings and messages to and from Paul and his friends. Although often overlooked, these sections of Paul's letters paint a powerful picture of Christian relationships in the 1st century.

GOING DEEPER

Read Matthew 28:18-20 and 2 Corinthians 5:17-21. What tasks are given in these verses? Who are the tasks given to? How do these verses challenge you?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

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LEARNING THE WORD

1. Read Colossians 4:2-6. Make 3-5 quick observations. What's the main idea?
2. Verses 2-4 talk about prayer. How many principles of prayer can you identify in these short verses?
3. In verse 3, Paul asks for prayer "that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ." What desire is behind this prayer request? Do you desire similar opportunities? Why or why not?
4. Verses 5-6 turn the focus to how all believers should seek opportunities to engage the non-believers around them with the gospel. What is the danger of Christians who engage others in ways that are *not* "gracious and seasoned with salt"?

LIVING THE WORD

5. Colossians speaks frequently about thankfulness. How does the gospel makes us a thankful and joyful people? Why is this essential to a vibrant life of prayerfulness and evangelistic mission?
6. Do you often pray for the gospel to advance in our city, for our church leaders, for your own opportunities to share Jesus with your friends and neighbors? Why or why not?
7. Consider the relational networks you are a part of (i.e. family, work, neighborhood, hobbies, kid's teams/activities, baristas/waitresses/waiters). These relational circles are places where Jesus is calling us to pray for and look for open doors to share the gospel. What might it look like for you to "redeem the time" in these circles of mission?
8. Take 10-15 minutes to pray as an individual or as a group for open doors to declare the mystery of Christ. Pray specifically for our church pastors, for your personal circles of opportunity, for specific people who are outsiders to the faith and need Jesus.