

# Principles For Effective Ministries

## Colossians 4:2-18

Emmanuel Baptist Church – AM Service – October 10, 2021

### Introduction:

We have now reached the end of Paul's letter to the church in Colossae. In his letter Paul has discussed many very important issues including:

- Very dangerous false teaching that is not named in the letter but later became known as Gnosticism. Gnostics taught that salvation was based on a secret higher knowledge. They taught that Jesus is simply an emanation of God and is less than God and they denied his humanity.
- Paul clearly taught that not only is Christ God, but we are complete in him and nothing else is needed in addition to what Christ has done for our salvation. Further, our salvation in Christ is absolutely secure.
- He warned us not to be taken captive by worldly philosophy and the teaching of men which leads to legalism and mysticism.
- He showed us what our new life in Christ looks like, exhorting us to set our mind on Christ and not on the thinking of this world.
- Paul taught us about the life transformed in Christ; putting to death deceitful desires, putting off depraved dialogue and putting on godly practices and qualities.
- And last time we learned about the relationships of the transformed life in the Christian household.

Now, in light of all he has said to this point in his letter, he is going to close with some important principles for effective ministries that include:

1. Diligent Personal Prayer with Thanksgiving (4:2)
2. Dependence on Prayer Partners (4:3-4)
3. Discipline in Our Conduct and Speech (4:5-6)
4. Discipleship in Ministry (4:7-18)

There is another principle for effective ministries that Paul does not address in his closing comments; Dedication to the Word. This is because he already did so right at the very start of his letter to the Colossians. Since it has already been covered in previous messages, I am simply going to read **Colossians 1:3-7a** by way of reminder followed by a couple of brief comments.

<sup>3</sup>We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, <sup>4</sup>since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, <sup>5</sup>because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, <sup>6</sup>which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does

# Principles For Effective Ministries

## Colossians 4:2-18

Emmanuel Baptist Church – AM Service – October 10, 2021

among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth,  
<sup>7</sup> just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant.

Then in verses **1:9b-10** Paul prayed that they would be

“<sup>9b</sup> filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,  
<sup>10</sup> 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.

After studying these verses at the start of this series we concluded that we are “filled with the knowledge of [God’s] will” as we diligently study God’s Word. If we are filled with the knowledge of God’s will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, based on the diligent study of God’s Word, then it will have a controlling influence over our lives, leading to obedience. Therefore, apart from the Word of God we have no foundation for ministry.

The principles for effective ministry we will be discussing today certainly apply to those in full time ministry like Paul, or pastors and missionaries; but they also apply to all believers in our personal ministries to others in Christ Jesus.

With this as an introduction, let’s begin by reading **Colossians 4:2-6**:

<sup>2</sup> Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. <sup>3</sup> At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— <sup>4</sup> that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.

<sup>5</sup> Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. <sup>6</sup> Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

### Diligent Personal Prayer With Thanksgiving (4:2)

The first principle for effective ministry Paul is going to discuss here is Diligent Personal Prayer. In **Colossians 4:2** Paul says,

<sup>2</sup> Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.

The New American Standard Bible translates this verse:

<sup>2</sup> Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving (NASB).

# Principles For Effective Ministries

## Colossians 4:2-18

Emmanuel Baptist Church – AM Service – October 10, 2021

To “continue steadfastly” or “devote yourselves” to prayer means to persist or persevere in prayer. The idea is consistently showing strength which prevails, in spite of difficulties. Paul is exhorting us to have an earnestness and diligence in our personal prayer lives.

He goes on to say “being watchful” or “keeping alert”. The idea here is extreme attentiveness and vigilance in prayer.

Do you feel the force behind these principles of prayer Paul is giving us here? I’m sure that all of us here pray, but could we honestly describe our personal prayer lives as:

- Persistent,
- Constantly showing strength that prevails,
- Earnest,
- Diligent, and
- Extremely attentive and vigilant?

This is the kind of personal prayer lives that Paul is instructing us to strive toward.

But there is more. Paul is instructing us to be extremely attentive and vigilant in prayer “with thanksgiving” or “with an attitude of thanksgiving.”

Being thankful is a reoccurring theme in Colossians. **Colossians 1:3**,

<sup>3</sup> We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you,

**Colossians 2:6-7**

<sup>6</sup> Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, <sup>7</sup> rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

**Colossians 3:15-17**

<sup>5</sup> And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup> Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. <sup>17</sup> And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

**Colossians 4:2**

# Principles For Effective Ministries

## Colossians 4:2-18

Emmanuel Baptist Church – AM Service – October 10, 2021

<sup>2</sup> Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.

There are four chapters in Paul's epistle to the Colossians and in each and every chapter we find Paul talking about giving thanks or being thankful. Repetition in the word of God is often used to make a strong point or to strongly emphasize a truth. Clearly an attitude of thanksgiving or being thankful is a strong point being made in Paul's letter to the Colossians and by extension to us.

Have you ever noticed how difficult it is to be bitter, disappointed, angry, miserable, contrary, upset or generally hard to get along with when we cultivate an attitude of thanksgiving?

Thanksgiving is gratitude to God as an act of worship. Remember we are talking about Principles for Effective Ministry in Paul's closing statements of this letter. Thanksgiving is not something we have; it is something we do. By God's grace we can choose to be thankful, no matter what. You may be thinking, "Sure, but you just don't understand what my situation is. If you were going through what I am right now you wouldn't be thankful either."

**1 Thessalonians 5:18** says to:

"give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

As we endure the afflictions of this life, that are sure to come, we are to give thanks in all circumstances. Notice it says "this is the will of God for you." "All circumstances" covers every imaginable circumstance we have or will ever endure in our lives on this earth. And in it all we are to give thanks. Remember this is a command from God, but as we learned from the book of Colossians, obedience to it is made possible in God's power working in us (Colossians 1:29).

If we are going to have an effective ministry, persistent prayer with an attitude of thanksgiving is a very basic foundation that must be there. Be diligent to cultivate a strong, persistent personal prayer life. Remember to choose an attitude of thanksgiving. It will not only energize your walk with God but it will also energize your personal prayer life and your ministry to others.

## Dependence on Prayer Partners (4:3-4)

As foundational and important a diligent personal prayer life is, Paul also reached out to others to support him in prayer. This is the second principle of effective ministries; Dependence on Prayer Partners. **Colossians 4:3-4**,

# Principles For Effective Ministries

## Colossians 4:2-18

Emmanuel Baptist Church – AM Service – October 10, 2021

<sup>3</sup> At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— <sup>4</sup> that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.

Paul had a willingness to share personal prayer requests with others to facilitate their specific prayers in support of his ministry. As important as Paul's personal prayer life was, and it was very important, Paul recognized the importance of prayer partners; for others to be crying out to God for his ministry.

Please notice with me for a moment, things for which Paul did not request prayer for:

- That he would get out of prison
- His personal needs (food, warm blankets, etc.) would be met
- Creature comforts of any kind, or
- His personal health.

In fact, Paul did not make any requests for personal needs whatsoever. His requests are totally ministry focused in order to be an effective minister of the gospel. His only concern was that the word of God, the gospel, would be clearly and faithfully proclaimed.

In **Ephesians 6:18-20** Paul says,

<sup>18</sup> praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, <sup>19</sup> and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, <sup>20</sup> for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

Notice in Ephesians 6:18 that the language is very similar to what we just read in Colossians 4:2. Paul is exhorting his readers to be “praying at all times,” “keeping alert with all perseverance.” But here he adds “making supplication for all the saints.” Paul's whole focus was on others. His requests for prayer were never about personal needs but always “that words may be given to [him] in opening [his] mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel.”

Paul was confident that praying for him in this way would “turn out for [his] deliverance.” Paul says in **Philippians 1:18b-20**,

<sup>18b</sup> Yes, and I will rejoice, <sup>19</sup> for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, <sup>20</sup> as it is my eager

# Principles For Effective Ministries

## Colossians 4:2-18

Emmanuel Baptist Church – AM Service – October 10, 2021

expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death.

I am not saying that Paul never shared about his afflictions with his ministry friends but his focus was always on Christ and the faithful ministry of the word. However, Paul also clearly recognized the important role the prayer of others for him played in his life and ministry.

### 2 Corinthians 1:8-11

<sup>8</sup> For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. <sup>9</sup> Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. <sup>10</sup> He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again. <sup>11</sup> You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.

Paul gives God all of the credit for his deliverance from the deadly perils he faced in his service for God, but he also recognized the important part prayer played. In 2 Corinthians 1:11 Paul says, “You also must help us by prayer.” Why must they also help him by prayer? Was it so:

- God would deliver him,
- So his life would be spared?

No. Verse 10 makes it clear that Paul’s hope was set on God. Why then must his readers help him by prayer? **2 Corinthians 1:11** continues,

so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.

Paul was asking for prayer so that when he is delivered the thanks will go exactly to whom it belongs; to God. Paul wants only God, not himself or anyone else, to get the credit and to receive the thanks for his ministry and the work God is doing for and through him.

The application for us is obvious; first, faithful prayer for our pastor, Bible teachers, our missionary family and for all the saints. Are you faithfully praying for your pastor, Bible teachers, our missionary family and for our church family? We must be praying for

# Principles For Effective Ministries

## Colossians 4:2-18

Emmanuel Baptist Church – AM Service – October 10, 2021

them. Why? “So that many will give thanks on [their] behalf for the blessing granted [them] through the prayers of many.”

What should we be praying for our pastor, Bible teachers, missionaries and church family?

- that God may open to [them] a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ
- that [they] may make [the truths of the gospel] clear
- that words may be given to [them] in opening [their] mouth[s] boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel

We can also borrow from Paul’s prayer for the church at Colossae in Colossians 1:9-12 and pray the same for our pastor, Bible teachers, missionaries and church family.

Specifically:

- that [they] may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 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
- that they would be strengthened with all power, according to [God’s] glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, and
- that they would have an attitude of thanksgiving, giving thanks to the Father.

As you read through the letters of Paul in the word of God, use his prayers as a guide for your own prayer life and to learn how to pray for others.

A second application to keep in mind is, just as Paul was willing to share specific prayer requests with others to facilitate prayer support for his ministry, you should also be willing to request prayer for your ministry.

## Discipline in Our Conduct and Speech (4:5-6)

With a solid foundation on personal prayer and the support of prayer partners, the next principle for effective ministries Paul gives is the Discipline of our Conduct and Speech. That is, how we live and conduct ourselves before the fallen world. **Colossians 4:5-6**

<sup>5</sup> Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. <sup>6</sup> Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

First of all, we need to understand who are the outsiders Paul is referring to. The New Living Translation translates the term “outsiders” as “those who are not believers.” The

# Principles For Effective Ministries

## Colossians 4:2-18

Emmanuel Baptist Church – AM Service – October 10, 2021

Amplified version says, “those of the outside world (non-Christians). So, Paul is exhorting his readers to walk in wisdom before those who are outside of Christ.

Paul has already used the same word for walk twice before in Colossians. The first time was in **Colossians 1:10**:

<sup>10</sup> 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;

When we looked at this verse we said, the Greek word for “to walk” peripateó (per-ee-pat-eh'-o) means “I walk” in an ethical sense; to regulate one’s life; to conduct oneself. So, in this verse “to walk” means to regulate one’s life and to conduct oneself in a “manner worthy” of the Lord.

Then in **Colossians 2:6** Paul said,

<sup>6</sup> Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him,

So here we are to conduct ourselves in a manner that is consistent with our new life in Christ. Notice it says, “Christ Jesus the Lord.” If Christ is our Lord, then this will be clearly reflected in how we conduct ourselves before the unsaved world.

An example of what this might look like in our everyday lives is found in **Titus 3:1-2**,

<sup>1</sup> Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, <sup>2</sup> to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.

This is how we are to conduct ourselves in this world.

Why is our conduct so important in the context of an effective ministry? Theologian **Albert Barnes** suggests several insightful reasons that really come down to common sense if we incorporate the word “wisdom” into our thinking from Colossians 4:5. The first reason Barnes gives why it matters how we conduct ourselves before the unsaved world is:

1. **People of the world judge religion, not from the profession, but from the life of its friends.** What we say means little if our life does not back it up.
2. **[those outside of Christ] judge religion, not from preaching, or from books, or from the conduct of its Founder [Jesus Christ] and his apostles, but from what they see in the daily walk and [conduct] of the members of the church.** What Christians teach and preach is of little meaning or value if the members of a



# Principles For Effective Ministries

## Colossians 4:2-18

Emmanuel Baptist Church – AM Service – October 10, 2021

church family are not conducting themselves in a manner that is worthy of the gospel.

3. *[those outside of Christ] understand the nature of religion so well as to know when its friends are or are not consistent with their profession.* If you are professing Christ to those outside of Christ who are all around you, you will be under a microscope. If your life is not consistent with what you profess then your message will be weak and ineffective.
4. *[those outside of Christ] set a much higher value on honesty and integrity than they do on the doctrines and duties of religion; and if the professed friends of religion are destitute of the principles of truth and honesty, they think they have nothing of any value.* The world expects a much higher standard of honesty and integrity from one who claims to be in Christ then from anyone else, even themselves.

Now back to **Colossians 4:5**,

<sup>5</sup> Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time.

**Brian Hedges**, in his Exposition on Colossians explains,

*“The verb Paul uses exagorazō is sometimes translated “redeem” (KJV) but in this context means to “take advantage of any opportunity that comes your way.” Since the preceding command is about the believer’s conduct before outsiders, this command has specific reference to evangelism. In other words, we should seize every opportunity to share the gospel with unbelievers.”* (Christ All Sufficient: An Exposition of Colossians, Brian G Hedges, ebook section 2290)

In this passage, this is what it means to “make the best use of our time;” to take every opportunity to share the gospel with unbelievers.

Next, in the context of how we conduct ourselves toward outsiders, Paul turns his attention to our speech in **Colossians 4:6**,

<sup>6</sup> Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

Gracious speech is pleasant, benevolent and courteous. It is characterized by good taste and is merciful or compassionate. **Ephesians 4:29** says,

<sup>29</sup> Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.

# Principles For Effective Ministries

## Colossians 4:2-18

Emmanuel Baptist Church – AM Service – October 10, 2021

Then, back in Colossians 4:6, referring to our speech, Paul says, “seasoned with salt.” Salt was certainly used as a food preservative in Paul’s time, but it was also used to flavour food so it wouldn’t be too bland. In the same way our speech should not be without sufficient taste to be pleasing; that is, uninteresting and flat. So, in addition to being gracious, pleasant, benevolent and courteous, our speech should be interesting and stimulating.

Our summary verse back in Colossians 3:17 beautifully combines our conduct and our speech together and relates them to our walk with Christ. **Colossians 3:17**

<sup>17</sup> And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

If whatever we do in word or deed is done in the name of the Lord, then we are going to know how we ought to answer each person. All that we have just said, about how we conduct ourselves toward outsiders and what our speech should be like, is not a great stretch if we “do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

If we are going to be effective in ministry, our lives should be saturated with the word of God and should be characterized by diligence in personal prayer with thanksgiving, dependence on prayer partners and discipline in our conduct and speech. Finally, if our ministry is going to be far reaching and long lasting, it must include discipleship.

### Discipleship in Ministry (4:7-18)

Jesus was our greatest example for how to be a minister of the gospel. Of the vast volume of things I could say about that, I would like to focus on just one aspect of Christ’s earthly ministry for a moment. Jesus did not minister as the lone ranger. If you read chapter one of the gospel of John you will see Jesus, right at the start of his earthly ministry, calling disciples to be trained and to minister right alongside of him. He invested all three years of his earthly ministry building into the lives of these men. If you do a search of the New Testament for the phrase “his disciples”, meaning Christ’s disciples, you will find 160+ references, depending on what translation you are using, almost all of them in the four gospels.

Then as you move into the book of Acts, which begins with the ascension of Christ back to heaven, you will see his disciples stepping up to carry on his ministry. It is largely these men that God used to take the gospel to the world.

Paul followed the example Jesus set for him by also investing into the lives of others. He did not try to be a one-man band. He invested in men and women so they could not

# Principles For Effective Ministries

## Colossians 4:2-18

Emmanuel Baptist Church – AM Service – October 10, 2021

only greatly expand his outreach, but also, so they could carry on after he was gone. This principle of disciple making has been used by God to raise up men and women for Christ to continue on with the ministry of the gospel from generation to generation.

The final discipline for effective ministries Paul will give us then, is the principle of discipleship; Discipleship in Ministry. That is, Paul makes it clear in his final greetings in the letter that his ministry has not been a solo act but has included many close collaborations and partnerships in ministry. These were people in whom Paul heavily invested his life to grow his ministry far beyond what he personally would have been able to accomplish as an individual.

In **Colossians 4:7-18** Paul will specifically name 10 of those he has been discipling in his ministry of the gospel.

<sup>7</sup> **Tychicus** will tell you all about my activities. He is a beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. <sup>8</sup> I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are and that he may encourage your hearts, <sup>9</sup> 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.

<sup>10</sup> **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), <sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> **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. <sup>13</sup> For I bear him witness that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and in Hierapolis. <sup>14</sup> **Luke** the beloved physician greets you, as does **Demas**. <sup>15</sup> Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to **Nympha** and the church in her house. <sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> And say to **Archippus**, “See that you fulfill the ministry that you have received in the Lord.” <sup>18</sup> I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

Tychicus was from Asia (Acts 20:4) and likely carried Paul’s letter to the Ephesians (Ephesians 6:21, c.f. 2 Timothy 4:12) and to the Colossians. Paul describes him as a beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord.

Onesimus, as we learn from Paul’s letter to Philemon, was a runaway slave who came to Paul while he was in prison in Rome and was converted to Christ (Philemon 10).

# Principles For Effective Ministries

## Colossians 4:2-18

Emmanuel Baptist Church – AM Service – October 10, 2021

Onesimus was from Colossae and may have traveled back there with Tychicus carrying both of Paul's letters to Colossae and Philemon. Paul describes him as a "faithful and beloved brother" (Colossians 1:9).

Next Paul names Aristarchus. Acts 19:29 says Aristarchus was from Macedonia and was Paul's companion in travel. In Acts 20:4 we learn that he was specifically from Thessalonica, which was the capital of Roman Macedonia. We again see Aristarchus with Paul as he traveled to Jerusalem in Acts 27:2. In Colossians 4:10 Paul calls him "my fellow prisoner." Aristarchus was a faithful companion who shared with Paul in his suffering for the gospel.

Next is Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. We first meet Mark in Acts 12:12. When Peter was miraculously released from prison by an angel, he went directly to the house of Mary "the mother of John whose other name was Mark" (Acts 12:12), where many had come together to pray for Peter. We next see Mark in Acts 12:25 traveling to Jerusalem with Barnabas and Saul, who would later be known as Paul. Later in Acts 15:37, as Paul and Barnabas were preparing to set out again, Barnabas wanted to once again take Mark with them. Acts 15:38-40 says,

<sup>8</sup> But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. <sup>39</sup> And there arose a sharp disagreement, so that they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus, <sup>40</sup> but Paul chose Silas and departed, having been commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord.

Acts 13:13 tells us that when Paul and Barnabas came to Perga in Pamphylia, John Mark left them and returned to Jerusalem. Acts 13 does not say why Mark left them but from Acts 15 we can deduce that the hardships of travel and ministry may have been too much for him so he returned home. As a result, Paul was not willing to take a chance on him again. The disagreement between Paul and Barnabas was so intense that they went their separate ways.

It looks, for the moment, like Paul has written Mark off. This may seem a bit harsh and certainly Barnabas, the son of encouragement, did not see it Paul's way at all. However, later in Paul's ministry we see that he has had a change in heart as he instructs Timothy to "get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry" (2 Timothy 4:11). Why this about face? The Bible doesn't say; however, it may have a lot to do with faithful Barnabas's ministry of encouragement in Mark's life.

We don't always get it right. This is why we serve together as part of the body of Christ. All of us have different strengths in ministry and none of us can minister in everyone's

# Principles For Effective Ministries

## Colossians 4:2-18

Emmanuel Baptist Church – AM Service – October 10, 2021

life in every circumstance (c.f. Romans 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12:12ff). Here is a situation where Paul gave up but Barnabas came along side. The result was a young man who became “very useful to [Paul] for ministry.”

We know very little about Jesus who is called Justus other than he was a Jew and a “fellow worker for the kingdom of God” (Colossians 4:11)

Next Epaphras is named. Paul first mentioned Epaphras in (1:5-7). From Colossians 4:12 we learn that he was from Colossae. He was likely saved during a visit to Ephesus and may have started the church in Colossae when he returned home. Epaphras probably worked to establish the churches in Laodicea and in Hierapolis as well (4:13). We also see that Epaphras was a faithful man of prayer, “always struggling on [behalf of the Colossians] in his prayers” (Colossians 4:12).

The word “struggle” in verse 12 is used of athletic contests and means to contend for a prize. What was the prize Epaphras was struggling in prayer for on behalf of the Colossians? It was that they “may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God” (Colossians 4:12).

In verse 13 Paul stated that Epaphras “worked hard” for [the Colossians] and for those in Laodicea and in Hierapolis. The Greek translated “worked hard” (ponos (pon'-os)) has a characteristic of intensity. It is toiling to point of anguish and pain. Epaphras clearly was a spiritual child of Paul who emulated Paul’s intensity in ministry. Epaphras is an example of the multiplication of one’s life into another. At the point Paul wrote his letter to the believers in Colossae, he had not been there or even met them. This may be true of the churches in Laodicea and in Hierapolis as well. Yet, we see churches established through a disciple of Paul. Paul’s ministry was expanded through Epaphras and carried on after his was gone because he invested in the life and ministry in another faithful servant of the kingdom, namely Epaphras.

In verse 14 Paul next names Luke the beloved physician. Luke was the author of the Gospel that bears his name. He also wrote of the book of Acts. He was not only a doctor but also an accurate historian. He wrote of much of Paul’s travels in the book of Acts in the first person, because he spent much time with Paul. At the end of Paul’s life, as he sat in prison waiting for his execution for the gospel, Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:11a “Luke alone is with me.” What a powerful testimony. Luke stuck with Paul to the very end.

Also, in verse 14 we see the name Demas. We don’t know much about Demas. He is only mentioned three times in the New Testament. Here in Colossians 4:14 he is sending his greeting. In Philemon 24 he is described as Paul’s fellow worker.

# Principles For Effective Ministries

## Colossians 4:2-18

Emmanuel Baptist Church – AM Service – October 10, 2021

Colossians and Philemon were likely written at the same time. At some point between the writing of these letters and the last letter Paul wrote before his death, Demas deserted Paul. **2 Timothy 4:10a** says,

<sup>10a</sup> For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica.

**James 4:4** says,

<sup>4</sup> You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

For Paul to say that Demas is “in love with this present world” can lead us to only one conclusion; Demas had not only deserted Paul, Demas had deserted God. Does this mean that Demas, once called Paul’s fellow worker (Philemon 24), had lost his salvation? The apostle John answers that question in **1 John 2:19**, where he is talking about those who have walked away from Christ. John said,

<sup>19</sup> They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.

We must conclude that though Demas served faithfully for a time, he was not a true believer in Christ. Demas, like Judas, appeared to be a believer. It was not obvious that he was any different from the rest who were faithfully serving Christ. It only became apparent when the love of this present world became more attractive to Demas, as with Judas, than labouring for Christ. So, he simply walked away. In Matthew 7:20 Jesus said, “Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.” We learned from Colossians 1:21-23 that endurance is one of the fruits of true salvation. Paul’s experience with Demas, as Christ’s with Judas, is a sad reminder that not all we pour our lives into will continue in Christ. But don’t let this deter you from being diligent in discipling others.

In Colossians 4:15 Paul sends his greetings to “Nympha and the church in her house.” This is all we know from the Bible about this woman, Nympha.

And finally in verse 17 Paul names Archippus. The only other reference to Archippus is in the introduction to his letter to **Philemon**, where in **verses 1-2** he says,

<sup>1</sup> Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother,  
To Philemon our beloved fellow worker <sup>2</sup> and Apphia our sister and Archippus  
our fellow soldier, and the church in your house:

# Principles For Effective Ministries

## Colossians 4:2-18

Emmanuel Baptist Church – AM Service – October 10, 2021

It is generally thought that Apphia was Philemon's wife and Archippus was their son. Paul called Archippus "our fellow soldier." Back in Colossians 4:17 Paul exhorted Archippus, "See that you fulfill the ministry that you have received in the Lord."

Though the particular ministry referred to in Colossians 4:17 is not clear, many commentators suggest that Archippus was a pastor in the Colossian church and that perhaps Paul's exhortation, "See that you fulfill the ministry that you have received in the Lord," may have indicated he was not doing so.

In verse 16 Paul encourages the Colossians to have their letter read to the church in Laodicea and for them to read the Paul's letter to Laodicea. And in **verse 18** Paul ends his letter with,

<sup>18</sup> I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

### Conclusion:

Well, this brings us to the end of Paul's epistle to the church in Colossae. I can't think of better principles for effective ministries to walk away with:

1. Diligent Personal Prayer with Thanksgiving (4:2)
2. Dependence on Prayer Partners (4:3-4)
3. Discipline in Our Conduct and Speech (4:5-6)
4. Discipleship in Ministry (4:7-18)

And don't forget Dedication to the Word (Colossians 1:3-7a) that Paul began this letter with.

Let's endeavour, by God's grace and in his strength (Colossians 1:29) to put these principles into action in our own lives and ministries.