



**Looking Inwards** (15 mins)  
*Caring For Each Other*

*Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an **opportunity to share**, not something you have to do, however, 'it's the sharing that enables the caring!') for:*

- Thanksgiving?
- Prayer?
- Encouragement?
- Support in any way?



**Looking Outwards** (15 mins)  
*Concern For Others*

*Is there anything concerning someone in your: family; circle of friends; neighbours; or church, which you would like to share (please be careful not to pass on anything that is **confidential** or which you think the person/people concerned would not wish to be shared) for:*

- Thanksgiving?
- Prayer?
- Encouragement?
- Support in any way?

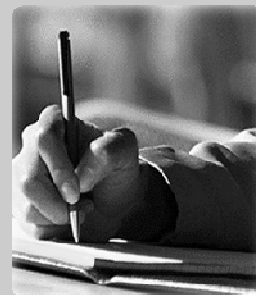


**HG79: Living In Christ (6/6)**  
**Christ In Community**

**Colossians 4:2 - 18**

**Home Group Study Notes**

25<sup>th</sup> November 2012 - Revd Paul A. Carr



PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN  
ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION  
**BEFORE THE MEETING!**

*Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group with you, along with any previous notes and other resources which might be helpful.*



**Welcome** (10 mins)  
*Ice Breaker*

Christmas will soon be upon us, with presents changing hands between family and friends. If money was no object: what would be your 'ideal' Christmas present?



**Looking Upwards** (10 mins)  
*Worship*

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs of Praise; listen to a Worship CD, as well as using Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers ...





## Looking Upwards (40 mins) Bible Study

Read through the text for this study, and any references given below, alongside those in the sermon notes, then answer the following questions - you may find it helpful to read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss some, or all, of your answers with your Home Group.

1: It is difficult, at times, to know how, and what, to pray. Examine some of Paul's prayers and draw up a list of the main things he prays for: 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12; Philemon 6; Philippians 1:9-10; Ephesians 3:16-19.

2: Describe to each other the qualities of the really good evangelists you know. What do you admire about them? How do they challenge you? What turns you off? Is it true that all Christians are called to be evangelists?

3: In vs5-7 Paul reminds us of the importance of being able to respond to people and their questions when we share the gospel. We are not all good at thinking on our feet, is there any way we can prepare ourselves for these conversations? Discuss any practical ideas you may have with each other.

**Luke**, vs14, of course is the author of the gospel and the book of Acts and a faithful companion and friend of Paul who spent time in prison with him on more than one occasion. **Demas** is a sadder story. A few short years later Paul wrote to Timothy (2 Timothy 4:10): "*Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me.*" Demas ends up abandoning Paul and the work of the gospel because he loved this world more.

It's heart warming to read of these faithful and loving friends who trusted one another and forgave one another and supported one another in proclaiming the gospel. Never underestimate God's power to take ordinary people and make them effective disciples for Him. And, by His grace, that includes unlikely candidates like you and me.

**General Synod:** Some of you may feel as though the CofE has 'shot themselves in the foot' over the decision of General Synod this week. The Bishop of Chelmsford called it 'hugely disappointing.' And suggests that we will be a laughing stock to the nation! I think that's a bit of an over exaggeration! However, whatever our views on Women Bishops, there's no doubt that there is a lot of pain and sadness on both sides of the argument.

But there's no doubt that we value women's ministry here in Emmanuel and we will continue do all we can to develop the ministry of male and female alike. We are to be a **Transforming Presence: Serving With Accountability.**

### 4) vs17-18: **The Future:** Finishing Well

There is no prize for starting a marathon. Anyone can start a marathon. But the aim isn't to start but to finish it (Read Hebrews 12:1-3 for some inspiration for running this race). It's not how you start out as a Christian, but how you finish. It looks as though Archippus, vs17, had been given some special work to do and had somehow began to pull back. Paul is saying, in effect, 'Archippus, you're a fellow worker; you've been entrusted with this task. Don't give up now. Not when you've come so far and done so much.' We are to be a **Transforming Presence: Re-imagining Ministry.** We all need more of God's grace for the clear task to which we have been called. There's no doubt that tired bodies need new strength, and weary spirits need to be refilled.

Remember Paul's words in Philippians 3:13b-14: "... *I press towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus.*" There's no doubt that tired bodies need new strength, and weary spirits need to be refilled. We are to be a **Transforming Presence: Re-imagining Ministry.** We need more of God's grace for the task to which we have been called.

**Make sure to pick up a letter from Paul, on behalf of the DCC, to all church members outlining some exciting plans for 2013 as we seek to re-imagine our future together.**

Emmanuel Text for 2013

"Wait on the Lord; be of good courage,  
and He shall strengthen your heart ..." (KJV)

Psalms 27:14

*Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so. Little ones to Him belong, they are weak but He is strong. Yes, Jesus loves me. Yes, Jesus loves me. Yes, Jesus loves me. The Bible tells me so.*

When I studied at Oak Hill Theological College, Martin Davie, my doctrine lecturer, began his course by suggesting that Christian doctrine can be summed up in the above song! He went onto say that the entire doctrine course is going to be an exploration of this statement. Sharing your faith really is, as simple as that: *Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so.*

### 3) vs7-16: **Sharing Ministry: Working as Partners for the Gospel**

Some people tend to think of the apostle Paul as a 'Lone Ranger' kind of figure who bends the rules and finds it impossible to work alongside anyone else. But actually, in Paul's letters and the book of Acts, there are over a hundred different Christians named as working with him in proclaiming the gospel. He was a team player. Paul involved a network of faithful messengers who worked together for the gospel's sake.

Now you may see these last few verses, as a boring epilogue to a challenging book, but it's much more than that. Paul lists his friends and fellow-workers and one thing we notice is that they all seem to be very different from each other and yet they all seem to be able to and honour one another and work together, for the sake of the gospel.

The interesting thing is that they all respected Paul's ministry and were willing to work alongside him, in whichever way they could, to ensure the gospel was proclaimed. I'm sure if they didn't support Paul's ministry they wouldn't have been willing to do the things he asked them to do. I just want to mention a few of them.

**Tychicus**, vs7-9, we don't know much about him but, if we trace references to him, we find that he was regularly on the move, here and there, for Paul. He was, vs7: *'a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord.'* He was a key messenger, for Paul writes, vs8: *'I am sending him for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts.'*

Tychicus' travelling companion was **Onesimus**. If you read Philemon, you'll learn all about Onesimus. He was a slave who had run away from **Philemon** and ran into Paul and was converted. He is a brilliant little cameo of one of those 'God incidences' we have in our lives. He had recently become a Christian and is described as, vs9: *'our faithful and dear brother'* rather than a faithful minister.

There was also **Aristarchus** vs10: *'My fellow prisoner'*. Why was he a fellow prisoner? Maybe he had been imprisoned with Paul for his faith. But did you know a prisoner of some standing like Paul was allowed two slaves. And it's possible, therefore, that Aristarchus and possibly **Epaphras** (who we thought about in ch1) volunteered to be Paul's slaves. Why? So they could be with their brother in prison. It puts a hugely different perspective on what it means to 'share one another's burdens' doesn't it?

Then there is **Mark** the cousin of **Barnabas** (vs10). Mark failed at his first attempt at missionary service, managing to cause a major rift between Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:13 and 15:36-40). But that situation was resolved and Mark is back with Paul again. We are also introduced to **Justus**, vs11. And, whilst it may seem his name was mentioned in passing, his inclusion is significant. Perhaps, like many others, he sought to be inconspicuous in his service - just one of a multitude of God's unsung heroes.

4: Both Paul's (!?) spoke about the importance of collaborative every member ministry. However, it isn't always easy to work alongside other people! What would you say was vitally important in people working together 'effectively' for the gospels sake? Conversely, how do we know when it is time to move on from an area of service in the church? List five possible tell-tale signs.

5: Think of some of the people who have been particularly encouraging to you through your life and share with your group the impact they have had (Why not consider sending them a Christmas card with a few words of thanks and appreciation for their ministry?).

6: Our Home Group series on 'Living In Christ' from Colossians has been an interesting one: encouraging and challenging in equal measure, but one that reminds us that our hope is found *In Christ Alone*. What, for you, has been the most memorable aspect of this series of studies? What has encouraged you the most? What will you 'carry' with you into your future Christian life?



Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?



## HG79: Living In Christ (6/6) *Christ In Community*

**Colossians 4:2 - 18**

### Home Group Sermon Notes

25<sup>th</sup> November 2012 - Revd Paul A. Carr

#### Introduction

Well, here we are, at last! The final sermon in our series on Colossians. In our passage it's as if Paul is writing, almost breathlessly: 'Time is short; now let me tell you some things which are vitally important for your spiritual health.' He has changed from theological precision to pastoral passion. The sentences are shorter. The mood is urgent. In fact, it could be a letter written with Advent in mind! These verses remind me of Romans 13:11-12. It's very interesting that some of Paul's themes connect amazingly well with some of the discussions around 'Transforming Presence' which came out of DCC Away Day in October: Prayer; Evangelism; Sharing Ministry; and looking to the Future.

#### 1) vs2-4: **Prayer:** Speaking to God about People

And one of the first things we are looking to do is to spend time thinking seriously about prayer and, here, Paul recognises the importance of prayer in living as a Christian Community. We are to be a *Transforming Presence: Inhabiting the World Distinctively*.

*Devote yourselves to prayer (vs2):* The word 'devote' is used ten times in the NT and it describes a continuing action: 'Go on with what you have committed yourself to do.' A related OT word means to 'give up utterly to God's use or purpose.' Putting these two ideas together suggests that prayer ought to be our permanent obsession. The 17<sup>th</sup>C monk Brother Lawrence used to 'practise the presence of God' wherever he was. He worked in the kitchen washing the dishes and became known as the patron saint of pots and pans! There is no doubt that we need to involve ourselves in special times of prayer, but we can also learn to live our daily lives prayerfully.

I know some people find prayer difficult and, whilst that may have something to do with having different personalities, there is no doubt that a failure to engage in prayer, both individually and corporately, doesn't do us any good. When was the last time you got down on your knees in prayer? Was it in the last few days? The past week? Even longer? Someone once said: "*Seven days without prayer makes one weak!*"

*Pray for us (vs3-4):* Prayer letters are a familiar sight in my postbag - especially at Christmas. I'm offered plenty of information on which to base my prayers for missionaries, organisations etc. What should we expect Paul to major on in this prayer letter remembering that he is in prison? 'Pray that I'll get out of these wretched chains; that my guards will be nice to me; that the food will improve?' No, none of those things. Paul's chief concern was that the door should be open to the message of the Gospel, vs4: *Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.* A focus for our own prayers, perhaps?

Prayer is an amazing 'weapon', which the Christian has at his/her disposal. It can cover any situation, anywhere in the world, in a split second. Even if we have never met the people we are praying for, or have first hand understanding of a potentially difficult environment, we are still able to pray and to ask for God's hand to move 'according to His will.' This is a great encouragement, isn't it, in our limited circumstances? We may feel hemmed in by health problems, social circumstances, the needs of our children, the dependence of elderly relatives, housing problems ... but the fact is that prayer is not limited by our circumstances and each of us can be involved in prayer no matter whoever, whenever and wherever we are. What a privilege!

#### 2) vs5-6: **Evangelism:** Speaking to People about God

Paul speaks of ways in which we can speak to people about God as we seek to be a *Transforming Presence: Evangelising Effectively*.

*Be wise in the way you act (vs5):* Paul is suggesting that 'those who are not yet Christians' are looking at us, so we need to act particularly wisely. We are to be living examples of the family of God, though, often, we can be the worst kind of examples, can't we? The world, in general, already thinks we're a pretty odd lot; let's not feed their misconceptions.

Actually, things haven't changed that much over the years. The ancient world called Christians 'atheists' because they didn't have gods as other people did (the concept of the 'one true God' was beyond their understanding). They were accused of cannibalism (they met behind closed doors and ate bodies and drank blood, didn't they?). Outsiders often look at us with amazement because they have no idea why we behave as we do. The temptation is to hide what we believe or to compromise our Christian lifestyle to fit in with what is generally acceptable to the outside world.

*Make the most of every opportunity (vs5):* Christmas gives each of us a wonderful opportunity to talk to people about the real reason Jesus came to earth. And so be bold! Invite your family and friends and work colleagues to one of our Christmas services. You can bring them with you without embarrassment - we're going to have a great time.

*Know how to answer everyone (vs6):* Peter famously wrote, 1 Peter 3:15-16: "*Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.*" Paul makes the same plea here. To know what we believe, and why, is of great importance both for our own assurance as well as for the benefit of those who ask about our faith. It may seem a daunting task to prepare ourselves to answer any question that outsiders may throw at us - if not impossible. However, almost all the basic questions that arise are about hypocrisy, science, suffering, the Bible, Jesus and a few more beside.

If we can grasp these basics we will be further equipped to mount a defence of why or what we believe. Of course, if you don't know the answers, or if you are out of our depth, then just admit that you don't know the answer, but that you will try to find it. A humble attitude is worth a hundred words.

It has been said that the person with an experience is rarely at the mercy of a person with an argument. Peter called upon his readers to defend the hope they had not to explain the doctrines of the apostolic fathers. People can't deny your experiences though they may choose to disagree with your beliefs. They may disagree with you and not fully understand what God has done in your life, but they can't deny your experience and so, in seeking to share your faith with others just tell them what has happened to you.