

Homegroup Leaders' Notes on Colossians

These notes cover Colossians in 5 sessions:

(1) 1:1-14

(2) 1:15-2:5

(3) 2:6-23

(4) 3:1-4:1

(5) 4:2-18

The notes are intended to be a helpful resource for you to use selectively alongside your own preparation.

Introduction

Paul seems to be writing from prison (4:3, 18) to the church at Colosse, most of whom he has not met (1:7; 2:1). The letter is usually thought to have been written from Rome but Ephesus and Caesarea have also been suggested.

Colosse was an agricultural town in Phrygia, in modern day Turkey, in a fertile valley, on the southern bank of the Lycus river, at the junction of 2 important roads, near Laodicea and Hierapolis, 110 miles east of Ephesus.

Paul warns against the dangers of some kind of false teaching (e.g., 2:4, 8, 18) but we don't know the exact nature of what is sometimes called "The Colossian Heresy", nor indeed how specific it was to Colosse, nor how well-defined it was. It is best not to speculate too much. If the cap fits we should wear it. It would seem there is a constant danger for all Christians that they might be distracted from Jesus to something else. We are to continue in our faith in the authentic gospel (1:23). 2:6 may well be the key verse of the letter. We all need to stick with Jesus. Paul argues that Jesus is supreme and therefore sufficient (1:15-23). Jesus perfectly meets our need and he is all we need.

Homegroup Leaders' Notes (1) Colossians 1:1-14

There is quite a bit of theological language here. It's good to look at the actual words of the passage together but also to ask what it means. Ask people to put things in their own words / try to explain the actual words of the text.

How does Paul describe the Colossian Christians in verse 2? What do those descriptions mean?

Holy = set apart (from sin), specially chosen by God for his particular purposes – KJV/AV & ESV have “saints” (v2) – according to the Bible, every believer is a saint! – similarly vv4, 12, 26, they love all the other believers, not just the canonized! faithful / believing, having faith; brothers, part of the worldwide Christian family – sharing God as our Father (v2); in Christ (united to him by faith) in Colosse.

(“Where” are the Colossian Christians (v2)?)

They are both in Christ and in Colosse. They have a double identity: in the world but belonging to Christ.

This is a typical description of normal New Testament Christians. Is it how we think of ourselves?

Our identity is primarily in Christ if we are believers. Jesus defines and shapes who we are. We need to think of ourselves in these terms, as united to Christ. Remember who you are!

What are Paul's prayers like? How would you describe / characterise them? How do they compare to our prayers?

Paul is always thankful (v3). He prays for other Christians (v3). He is well informed about these Christians though he's quite a way away from them (v4, v9). He has not stopped praying (v9), persistent. He prays for the spiritual well-being of these Christians (not just their aches and pains!).

What is Paul thankful for in the Colossian Christians? (We might emulate these things and seek to be thankful for them in others. Would our church be known for such things?)

Their faith in Christ and their love for all the saints = all Christians (v4).

What is the relationship between faith, hope and love and the gospel? (vv4-6)

Faith and love come from the hope of heaven that the gospel reveals to us.

Notice also that their love is “in the Spirit” (v8).

What do the Colossians already have in Christ? (What has God already done for them?)

(This question would cover some of the same ground as the question above)

They are already qualified to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light (v12). They have been rescued from the dominion of darkness and brought into the kingdom of the Son (v13). They have been redeemed (bought back from slavery to sin) and forgiven (v13).

What are Paul's prayers, hopes and ambitions for the Colossian Christians? What does he want for them? (Do we pray about such things? Is this what we want for ourselves and others?)

Vv9-12.

Although if we are trusting in Christ we are already saved and have much to give thanks for, there is always more of that salvation to understand and appreciate. There is always scope for growth towards conformity to Christ for the Christian.

What is the point of knowledge of God's will, spiritual wisdom and understanding in vv9-10?

That we might live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way, bearing fruit in every good work etc. Our knowledge of God is meant to have a practical impact on our lives.

What is God's strengthening, power and glorious might for in the life of a Christian, according to verses 11-12?

That we might have great endurance and patience, which sounds rather unglamorous! Struggle, persecution and suffering are not abnormal for the Christian.

Are our prayers ("always"!) characterised by thankfulness (as Paul's are according to v3)? What could we give thanks for in ourselves or others? (Can you think of Christians who show something of the qualities for which Paul is thankful here, for whom we could thank God?)

Look at 4:3, 18. What seems to have been Paul's situation when he wrote this letter?

He was "in chains", in prison.

(So) why (in what way) does that make his prayer remarkable?

Its extraordinary that while in prison Paul should be thinking of these Christians in another place, thanking God for them, praying for them and trying to help them by writing to them. We might be tempted to be very taken up with ourselves and sorry for ourselves in Paul's situation. He is a striking example to us.

It seems that Paul did not found the church at Colosse (v7) and indeed had probably never met most of them (2:1). **Do we pray for Christians we haven't met / Christians in other countries? What could encourage us to do this more?**

Hearing about the Colossians encourages Paul to pray (vv4, 9)

We could use the news as a prompt to prayer. *Operation World* by Patrick Johnstone and Jason Mandryk (Operation Mobilization / Paternoster, 2001) could give us information / prayer requests about different parts of the world. Find out about the prayer needs of missionaries your church supports etc.

Give thanks for all that God has already done in your lives and pray along the lines of Paul's prayer for yourself and others.

Homegroup Leaders' Notes (2) Colossians 1:15-2:5

Not everything in this passage is straightforward and there's probably more than enough material here for your study time. Be prepared to focus on the main things and to admit it if you don't fully understand everything in it! In your preparation, can you find some things that are true, clear and useful that you want the group to take away from the study?

V15 "He" = Jesus, the Son of v13.

What do we learn about Jesus from this passage? What do these things mean / how would you put them in your own words? How does this view compare to your own views about Jesus / views of Jesus that people commonly hold today?

How does Paul argue / show that Jesus is supreme (v18)? Why is Jesus supreme? (What makes him uniquely important?)

He is the image of the invisible God (v15), the invisible God made visible. If you want to know God, look at Jesus. Also the True / Ultimate Adam, God's perfect image-bearer, Man as he was meant to be.

Vv15 and 18. In the ancient world the "firstborn" son would be the heir who would inherit and rule his father's property. Jesus is the ruler and heir. Jesus is said to be the firstborn over creation (v15) but also the firstborn over the new creation by his resurrection (v18).

V16 – he made all things, is before all things (v17) and sustains all things.

V18 – he is the head of his body the church. He governs it and gives it life.

V19 – God's fullness dwells in him. "Fullness" may have been a buzz word of the false teachers at Colosse. If they offered "fullness" Paul insists that authentic "fullness" can only be found in Christ (also 2:9).

V20 – he reconciled all things to God. Not that all individuals are redeemed, of course, but the whole cosmos will be restored, there will be a New Creation which has begun already. The curse on creation introduced at the Fall will be fully and finally removed.

V22 – he makes his people holy in God's sight.

Christ in us is the hope of glory (v27). He is the mystery of God (2v2) in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (2v3).

What were the Colossians once like? What was their attitude to God? (v21)

Alienated from God and enemies in our minds because of their evil behaviour.

How has the Colossians' relationship with God changed? What are they like now? (v22) What has Jesus done (vv20, 22)?

Reconciled (v22) – enemies made friends, peace restored by Jesus' death on the cross (v20). Made holy in God's sight, free from blemish and accusation. We are acceptable to God in Christ. Our sins are forgiven.

What does v23 suggest Paul wants the Colossians to do? What is the condition – the "if" - for being right with God? (Why do you think Paul tells us all these things about Jesus' greatness?)

Continue in their faith... not moved from Paul's gospel. (Loyalty to Paul and loyalty to his gospel go together, hence Paul lays out some of the credentials of his ministry in this passage). It seems from the rest of chapter 2 that Paul thinks the Colossians are at risk from some kind of false teaching (2vv4, 8). Paul doesn't want them to be distracted from Jesus by anyone or anything else. 2vv6 and 7 are often thought of as the key verses of the letter. Paul wants his readers to make sure they stick with Jesus. The point of telling us that Jesus is supreme is to assure us that he's sufficient. Jesus is all we need. It would be stupid and fatal to put our trust / hope elsewhere.

1v23 – “the gospel ... that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven”
c.f. 1:6 – Paul probably means that the gospel has been announced to the whole world rather than every individual has heard it. The gospel is public truth for everyone. Perhaps Paul sees the gospel as in principle proclaimed to everyone and speaks here in an anticipatory sense as the message continues to go out.

V24 – Jesus' saving death was perfectly sufficient for his people's salvation (see e.g. 1:22; 2:14). Paul suffers as part of the body of Christ (the church) on behalf of that body (see Acts 9:4-5, to persecute Christ's people is to persecute Christ). His ministry follows the pattern of Jesus' cross-shaped ministry. See also Rm 8:17; Phil 3:10.

What does Paul tell us about his ministry? (What does he serve (vv23-24)? What is the goal of his ministry (v28)? How does he describe his purpose in 2vv2-3? Is this what Christian ministry / service means to us?)

Paul is a servant of the gospel (=the good news (about Jesus)) (v23) / the church (v24). It is a God given ministry (v25). It involves suffering (v24) and struggling (v29, 2v1). His job is to proclaim the gospel (v23), to present the word of God in its fullness (v25), to proclaim Christ (v28). The goal of his ministry is that people might be mature / perfect in Christ (v28). It requires wisdom (v28) and God's empowering (v29). Above all he wants people to know Christ (2v2).

What do we learn about Paul's message? (How would you sum it up in a word? Is this our message as a church?)

“Christ” would be the best one word summary of Paul's message (v27; 2vv2-3). V28 is emphatic, “*Him* we proclaim”.

Paul's message is the word of God (v25).

(Remember “saints” = holy ones = all Christians (v26)).

A “mystery” (1v26-27, 2v2 also 4v3) in the Bible is something that was hidden but has now been revealed, a kind of open secret. The mystery is all about Christ and especially about the inclusion of the Gentiles in God's plan (2v27; see also Eph 3:2-11 esp. v6).

Paul's message is for everyone (vv23, 28, 2v1).

It is all about how we can be reconciled to God and be made holy in His sight (vv20-22).

Though Paul was unique and we are not apostles like he was, Paul's ministry and message might be models of us, both as individuals and as a church. **What can we learn from Paul's example?**

Sum up / review: **why should we stick with (continue to believe in and proclaim) Jesus?**

Homegroup Leaders' Notes (3) Colossians 2:6-23

What does Paul want the Colossian Christians to do? (vv6-7) How do these verses describe / picture Christian growth?

“just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue” (v6), “as you were taught” (v7) suggest that the Colossians need to stick with and grow in the authentic Gospel which Paul preached to them and which they have already believed. They must not add anything to Jesus as if he were insufficient. We must reject any magic add-ons, special extras or supposed answers to our problems that aren't centred in Christ.

We must not be moved on from the gospel. Rather we must become increasingly firmly rooted in it, having a fuller understanding and deeper commitment to it. Jesus is the only foundation to build on. We grow in him (as we use our faith muscles!).

Verses 6 and 7 may well be the key verses of this letter. How would you put them in your own words?

The NIV's “live” in v6 is literally “walk” and suggests an ongoing way of life.

Verses 6 and 7 seem like a conclusion and application of all that we've seen so far in this letter. Review the reasons that Paul has already given for sticking with Jesus. (Refer back to the previous notes).

E.g. 2:3 – all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are to be found in Jesus; 1:15-18 – Jesus is supreme and therefore sufficient. His death really has achieved reconciliation with God for us (1:19-22).

What is there in Colossians to cause us to be “overflowing with thankfulness”? (v7) (What have we already seen in the letter that we can be thankful for? What was Paul thankful for in 1:3, 12?)

E.g. friendship and peace with God, 1:20-21; forgiveness of sins 1:13.

What danger(s) do the Colossian Christians face? What is Paul warning them against? (v8)

Being taken captive by false teaching.

What do you think we can tell about the false teaching the Colossians might have been in danger from? What kind of things ought they and we to avoid?

It may be these false teachers made much of circumcision (vv11, 13). They may be “Judaizers” who insisted that Gentile converts to Christianity had to effectively become Jews and keep the Mosaic law. They may stress food regulations, religious festivals etc. (v16). They may worship angels (v18; cf. Acts 7:35, Heb 1-2 for angels in a Jewish context).

I guess most of us are not tempted to become Jewish and live under the Mosaic law! **Can you think of any contemporary equivalents to some of the things Paul warns against? Are there things that might distract us from Christ? Any add-ons on offer?**

E.g. any rules based human religion (vv21-23)

What reasons / arguments / motivations / incentives does the passage give (a) to stick with Jesus and Paul's gospel about him, and (b) to reject false teaching / alternatives to Christ and the true gospel? (What have the Colossians (and we) already received

that they (and we) ought to stick with? What blessings are there in Christ that they / we should continue in?)

(a big question!)

Notice the “For” in v9. Paul is mounting an argument for sticking with Christ (vv6-7) and against the stuff of v8. Christ is fully God and the Colossian Christians already have fullness in him (v10). Anything else is a dangerous distraction.

In v11, Paul argues that the Colossians have already received a true / spiritual circumcision of the heart so they do not need a physical operation!

God has already forgiven all their sins and given them new life in Christ (v13).

Verse 17 argues that the things mentioned in v16 are shadows designed to point forward to Christ, the reality who now replaces them. Who wants shadows when you could have the real thing? (In a sense the Mosaic law is past its sell-by date).

Those who devote themselves to such things lose all connection with Christ and hence the life of God (v19)

The Colossian Christians have died with Christ to the basic principles of this world (v20).

They no longer have any hold over them.

Such regulations do not produce real holiness (v23).

It may well be that in v16 Paul is talking about the Jewish Sabbath (Saturday) which has been fulfilled in Christ. Since New Testament believers are not under the Mosaic covenant they do not have to keep Saturdays holy. Most Christians down the centuries have thought that we ought to observe Sunday as the Lord’s Day or Christian Sabbath.

The “written code” of v14 may be the Mosaic law or an (imagined) charge-sheet record of our sins. Certainly one of the purposes of the Mosaic law was to reveal and condemn sin. We are all guilty of breaking God’s law. The law especially excluded Gentiles from the people of God.

V15 suggests a Roman military triumph with the victors parading the defeated through the streets. The “powers and authorities” are probably demons see e.g. Eph 6:11-12.

Can you think of any practical ways that we (either as individuals, groups or as a church) can do the things commanded in this passage or avoid the things condemned? How could we help one another in these things? E.g. what might help us to grow in Christ as described in vv6-7?

Ultimately God gives the growth (v19) so that’s an incentive to pray about these things. Recall the example of Paul’s prayer from chapter 1.

In chapter 3 Paul expands on how we should live in the light of what Christ has done for us and seeks to persuade us to do so. He gives a positive alternative to this false teaching that cannot produce real holiness.

Give thanks for Jesus and all that God has already done for us in him. Pray that we would grow in him and not be distracted by false teaching or anything else.

Homegroup Leaders' Notes (4) Colossians 3:1-4:1

As is often the case with Paul's letters, in this second half the emphasis changes from doctrine to practical exhortations about how to live, though the two are always connected. As we shall see, doctrine drives Christian duties (notice all the words that mark this logical connection such as "since, then..., therefore..., for...").

This chapter is a positive alternative to some of the stuff in chapter 2 and shows effective ways to real holiness, in contrast to the "regulations... [which] lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence" (2:23). In the light of 2:20-23 it is perhaps a shame that the NIV editors chose to entitle chapter 3 "*Rules for Holy Living*" as if the Christian life were mainly about keeping a set of regulations.

You could go for a minimalist approach to the questions this week (though your group will probably need more guidance):

What does Paul tell the Colossian Christians to do and not do, and why? (Try hard to grasp Paul's reasoning and show why it is persuasive)

(It may be effective to go through the whole passage listing (1) what belongs to the old / earthly nature that the Colossians are to put off (2) the things they are to put on).

They are to fix their minds on things above (v1-2), putting to death what belongs to the earthly nature (v9) and putting on what is consistent with their new natures in Christ (v12).

What reasons for holy living does this chapter give?

The argument of vv1-4 depends on seeing the believer as in Christ, united to Christ by faith in the Spirit, so that what is true of him is true of us. The Colossian Christians are to live in the light of what Jesus has done for them, realising their true identity and destiny in him.

V6 – the wrath of God is coming on the things that belong to the earthly nature.

V12 – they are God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved. They are to become what they are and make sure they "dress the part".

V13 – they are to forgive as the Lord has forgiven them. They show mercy to others because they depend on God's mercy. God has forgiven us freely and fully. The initiative for the reconciliation was his, although we were the ones in the wrong.

V15 – they are to live at peace with one another since they are members of one body called to peace.

They are to do what is fitting and appropriate (v18), and what pleases the Lord (v20).

How would these things affect the way you think and live?

Another way of exploring the material would be to ask, **what do these verses tell us about (a) the past (b) the present (c) the future of the Colossian Christians? (How would you explain these things in your own words?)**

E.g. (a) Past: they have been raised with Christ (v1); they died with Christ (v3)

(b) Present: they should set their hearts and minds on things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God not on earthly things (vv1-2); their life is hidden with Christ in God (v3); Christ is their life (v4)

(c) Future: Christ will appear (at his second coming) and they will appear with him in glory (v4)

What do you think the “things above” mentioned in verses 1 and 2 might be? Can you think of examples?

Christ. Heaven. Anything that is fitting with Christ and heaven.

What are the “things above” contrasted with in verse 2?

Earthly things. Verse 5 expands on things that belong to the earthly nature.

Would you say that these “things above” are your longing, desire and focus?

In the rest of the chapter, what are the down to earth results of the heavenly mindedness Paul has encouraged in vv1 and 2?

Paul is very practical and specific. Heavenly mindedness rules out, for example, sexual immorality (v5) and anger (v8). It affects their everyday relationships (vv18-25). Paul would not think that someone could be “so heavenly minded that they are no earthly use”.

Notice that according to v17 everything we do should be governed by our relationship to Christ and permeated with thanks to God. (This obviously rules out some kinds of behaviour: you could hardly be a drug dealer or prostitute or gossip in the name of Christ).

V10 suggests that God is renewing the Colossian Christians. We have to work hard at godliness but God works in us too. See study 2 on 1:15 on Jesus as the image of God.

What have the Colossian Christians taken off and put on? (vv9-10)

What actions and attitudes are they therefore to (a) put off / put away / put to death and (b) put on? V12.

What do all the Colossian Christians have in common (v11)? What unites them? (What does this do to the things that divide them?)

Christ! He relativizes the other divisions mentioned in v11 and makes them insignificant (in terms of their standing before God). (The distinctions Paul mentions are obviously not completely destroyed as he goes on to address slaves and masters differently in 3:22-4:1).

What can we learn about the types of songs we should sing and how we should sing them from v16?

They should be permeated by the word of Christ, richly Scriptural. There should be variety (“psalms, hymn and spiritual songs”) and gratitude. Although we sing to God, our songs also have a role in our teaching and admonishing of one another.

Notice that we are to teach and admonish one another. Homegroups and coffee time after church are good forums for this.

Vv18-25 see also Eph 5:22-6:9 (and maybe 1 Pt 3 and Titus 2) for an expanded treatment of this teaching. Men and women are equal but different. Since Jesus submitted the Father we know that submission need not imply inferiority.

V20 – while they are children, children are to obey their parents. Adult children are to honour their parents (Ex 20:12) but not necessarily do everything they say!

V21 – notice that fathers have an important part to play in bringing up their children. They mustn't just leave it all to mum!

Although the situation is not exactly the same (!), we might apply Paul's teaching on masters and slaves (vv22-25) to employers and employees.

What is the main truth that both masters and slaves need to remember?

The Lordship of Jesus. "Master" in 4:1 is the same word as "Lord" in vv22, 23 and 24. Jesus is the ultimate Master both of masters and slaves. Both are accountable to him.

How might these verses affect your attitudes at work (as an employer or an employee)?

Employees are to work wholeheartedly as serving the Lord, not just doing what they can get away with (v22). Monday to Friday not just Sunday matters to Jesus.

Are there areas that Paul mentions that you think you particularly need to work on?

How are we going to do what Paul tells us to do here? Do you have any practical ideas that might help us?

Are there ways we could help one another to do the things encouraged in this chapter?

Homegroup Leaders' Notes (5) Colossians 4:2-18

Chapter 3 focused on relationships between Christians. 4vv3-6 treats our relationship with the non-Christian world. We are to speak to God about people (vv2-4) and speak to people about God (vv5-6).

What does it mean (would it look like in practice) to be devoted something / to prayer? (v2)

Would you say you are devoted to prayer? What practical steps can we take to devote ourselves to prayer?

You might compare our attitudes to prayer to the devotion some people show e.g. to their favourite football team. Paul's command to be devoted to prayer suggests it will require a deliberate conscious choice. We won't necessarily drift into praying as we should.

This may be an opportunity to encourage attendance at church prayer meetings, use of the church prayer diary etc. Prayer triplets, family prayers, prayer lists and a regular time of prayer may all help.

Why do you think Paul wants the Colossians to be watchful in prayer? What should they watch for?

Perhaps being watchful for the opportunities of v5. The Colossians also need to be on the look out for the false teaching that would distract them from Christ (see chapter 2).

Watching for answers to prayer for which they can be thankful? Or perhaps it is a more general command to be alert. Cf. Mt 26:41.

What do the Colossians (and we) have to be thankful for? See also 1:3, esp. v12; 2:7
What are Paul's prayer requests? (v3-4)

What can we learn from Epaphras' prayers? (v12)

He always prays – he perseveres. He wrestles / struggles in prayer (cf. Gen 32:22-32) – he is earnest about it and works hard at it. We shouldn't expect prayer to be easy. He prays for others. He prays for their spiritual well-being. His prayers echo some of the concerns of the letter to the Colossians, that the Christians should stand firm in Jesus and seek fullness in him etc.

Compare also Paul's own prayers in chapter 1.

How do your prayers compare to Paul's prayer requests or to Epaphras' prayers?
How would applying these verses affect our praying?

What was Paul striving for in his evangelism / preaching (vv3-4)? (Similarly 1:28)

Paul wanted to proclaim the mystery of Christ clearly. Note that our message is all about Jesus. On "the mystery of Christ" see 1:25-27.

If Paul needed the prayers of others and God's help in these areas, so do we! We should allow Paul's prayers to inform our prayers for preaching and evangelism. Pray for clear proclamation at church.

Who is to be involved in evangelism and how? (vv3-6)

The Colossians are to pray for Paul's evangelism but also to make the most of every opportunity themselves. They are to live and speak in such a way as to provoke opportunities and commend the gospel. We aren't all Evangelists but we're all to be involved in evangelism in these ways. On vv 5-6 see also 1 Peter 3:15. Paul's preaching is pro-active it is probably fair to say that the Colossians should be largely reactive,

“knowing how to answer everyone.” If no one ever asks us a question about our faith we may wonder if we are living as Paul intended.

Who do you think the “outsiders” of verse 5 are?

Those outside the church, non-Christians

What would it mean / look like to “be wise in the way in which we act towards outsiders”? Can you think of practical examples?

E.g. try to think about how non-Christians think and how we can relate to them effectively. Be careful to commend the gospel and not to bring it into disrepute. Cf. what Paul has to say in this letter about wisdom e.g. 1:9-10, 28.

How could you make the most of every opportunity?

E.g. you might like to keep a gospel tract or an invite to an evangelistic event in your handbag or briefcase in case we have a chance to use it. We are to “redeem the time” (cf. KJV, the literal meanings of the words here), snap up the bargains of opportunity while time lasts, as it were. Each moment is soon past and never comes again.

Would you know how to explain the gospel to someone if you had the opportunity?

You may find it useful to have a gospel outline like *Two Ways To Live* in mind. See <http://www.matthiasmedia.com.au/2wtl/> or order copies from The Good Book Company 0845 225 0880. It would be good to prepare by thinking about some common questions / objections to the Christian faith. See e.g. *If You Could Ask God One Question* by Paul Williams, Pub: Good Book Company (2007). We’ll be ready when opportunities come if we prepare now.

Would you be able to talk about God or Jesus in daily conversation? Do you ever mention them? Do your friends and family even know you are a Christian?

V6 – “grace” may include God’s grace and graciousness; “salt” might imply a certain piquancy about our conversation, it should compel interest and attention, not being bland. Our message and our manner matter.

How would you describe Paul’s priorities and concerns?

He is committed to making the gospel known.

What was Paul’s situation when he wrote this letter? See vv3 and 18.

He was “in chains”, in prison. Paul prays for open doors for the gospel (v3) not for the opening of his prison doors. His commitment to others and to the gospel in the midst of his suffering is a remarkable example.

Who does Paul commend in vv7-14 any why?

Tychicus for his faithfulness and service (v7). Onesimus for his faithfulness (v9). See Philemon.

Those who work for the kingdom of God with him (v11). Epaphras is a model in prayer (see above). He is a servant of Christ. He works hard (v13). Cf. 1:7-8.

Are there attitudes or actions here we can copy?

What do these verses tell us about the kind of Christian leadership / ministry we should seek, value and follow?

Vv7-9 suggest it is good for Christians to keep informed about one another. I imagine what Tychicus and Onesimus have to say would affect the Colossians prayers for Paul.

Mention of these individuals is a reminder that the gospel is not about abstract theoretical theological truths but impacts real people and real life.

Notice that Paul's gospel work involved teamwork and partnership. He is not a one man band. He needed others. He valued fellowship with other Christians (v11) and between churches (v16).

On Demas (v14) see 2 Timothy 4:10. He is a sad warning to us.

The letter to the Laodiceans (v16) was presumably lost.

Spend some time **reviewing and applying the message of the whole letter** to the Colossians. I suggest you re-read the whole letter in your preparation. It may help you to look back over the earlier notes.

Remember that 2:6-7 are perhaps the key verses. The Colossians seem to be in danger of being enticed away from Christ (perhaps by adding Jewish legalism to the gospel) and looking elsewhere for fullness. They are to stick with Jesus because he is all they need.

You could ask questions like: **What are the big ideas of the letter? What has most struck you about it? How has the letter encouraged or challenged you? What does Paul want the Colossians to do? How will Colossians change the way we think and live as individuals, a group, a church?**

Make doubly sure you give good time to prayer this week, since Paul has told us to be devoted to it! Use the passage as a guide.