

BIBLE DISCUSSION GROUP STUDY QUESTIONS

In preparation for Sunday, Dec. 5, 2010

Passage: Col. 4:2-4

Memory Passage: Col. 4:2

DAY 1 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read Col. 4:2-4.** Paul commands the Colossians (and us) to “continue steadfastly in prayer.” Take a moment to evaluate your prayer life. Would you consider your efforts at prayer to be “continuing” and “steadfast?” Why or why not. Begin this week of study by confessing any lax prayer habits to God, and asking Him to remind you to pray more faithfully this week.

(b) What are the two characteristics Paul ascribes to this steadfast prayer life? To what is Paul referring when he says our prayer life should be marked by “being watchful?” For what are we to watch? What affect does this watchfulness have on our daily life of prayer?

(c) Take a moment to scan through Colossians and write down what you have already learned about “thanksgiving.” How have you been progressing in this area of being a thankful believer? Remember that we don’t want to come to the Word and just be stirred up by what we read but never changed! Paul has directed your attention to the concept of thanksgiving several times in this letter, and you have answered questions about it, discussed it in Sunday school, and listened to it preached in sermons, all with the goal of making you more thankful! Are you being sanctified in this area? Is there progress in this area? Is there any repentance needed? If so, now would be a great time to repent and trust in Christ again (the gospel!) in this area.

(d) *Family:* As you **read aloud Psalm 136:1-3 & 138:1-5**, ask your family to raise their hand every time they hear the word “thanks.” Then go back and have everyone look at these two passages and write down answers to the “how,” “who” and “why” questions (i.e. who gives thanks, how are we/they to give thanks, why are we/they to give thanks, etc). Then Read Col. 4:2 and comment on “praying with thanksgiving.” Then return to the two Psalm passages and teach your family how to use Scripture to guide our prayers. (So what you will do is pray the passage back to God: “Dear Lord, we give thanks to you today because you are good! We see your goodness to us every day when we see your provision of food and a house and loving family relationships. We sense your steadfast, never-failing, always enduring love for us. We see it as we think of Jesus dying on the cross for our sin, we see it as we live daily for your glory . . . etc. etc. etc.).

DAY 2 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read Luke 18:1-8.** In verse 1 Jesus tells us how to interpret this parable. What is its point? Why would his hearers need to be encouraged to not loose heart (this is a context question, so make sure you look back to Luke 17:20-37)?

(b) Write out an explanation of this parable, explaining how God is both like & unlike the judge.

(c) In what ways are you tempted to loose heart? Jesus’ desire is that we “ought always to pray.” How does that help you to “not loose heart?” Think of situations in which prayer has helped you to not loose heart and write them down so you can use them as encouragement when you are tempted to loose heart, and so that you can share them as encouragement with others (like in your Sunday school class!).

(d) *Family:* **Read Luke 18:1-8.** Have your family act out this parable. Involve as many people as you can (some can play the persistent woman’s adversary, some can play court-room observers or court recorders, etc.) Be creative as you assign parts and explain their roles. Remember that acting this parable out will not only be fun, but it will cause everyone to dig deeper into the text and to better understand its meaning. After the acting out is finished, make sure everyone understands its interpretation, and help them to see how persistent prayer helps us to “not loose heart.” Give examples from your own life and ask if anyone else has examples they would like to share about being strengthened to not loose heart through prayer.

DAY 3 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read Acts 14:27, 1 Cor. 16:9, 2 Cor. 2:12 & Col. 4:3.** What phrase do all of these verses have in common? To what does it refer? Who is the one who opens the door? To what is the door opened?

(b) In Col. 4:3, what do you find interesting about Paul’s request (consider from where he is writing and how many literal “open doors” he probably sees!)? In what ways do you think God could answer this prayer?

(c) Considering Paul is asking for an open door for the gospel, not for his freedom, how does this influence the way we should think about our own circumstances when we consider the command for us to preach the gospel? Are there really any circumstances that could befall us that would be a good excuse *not* to witness the mystery of Christ to others? If so, what are they? If not (If there are none!), what is your excuse, and what would Paul think of your excuse?

(d) *Family:* Start your time of Bible study tonight by having your entire family exit your home through the front door (make sure no other doors or windows will allow entry). You will stay in the house, and as you shut & lock the door behind them, tell them that the study begins in 60 seconds, with or without them. Then leave them outside for 5 or 10 minutes (or less,

depending on their ages, of course). After a time, open the door and let them in and begin asking questions like, “Where were you? Why did you not come in for Bible study? What stopped you?” etc., all leading to the fact that they needed someone to open the door before they could do anything. Then Read Col. 4:3-4 and lead them in a discussion of what Paul means when he asks the Colossians to pray “that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ.” Make sure they understand what Paul meant, and also that they understand the need to pray that God open’s opportunities for our declaring.

DAY 4 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read Col. 4:2-4.** Paul uses the term “mystery” 3 other times in Colossians. Find these 3 other places and write down what he has to say about this mystery. When Paul prays for doors to be opened “to declare the mystery of Christ,” what does he want to proclaim?

(b) Is there any way that Christ is still a “mystery” to you? Is there an aspect of Christ that you hear about, or have seen in Scripture, but you are still “mystified” by it? If so, write it down and begin to ask God to reveal through His word a clearer understanding of this aspect of Christ. Seek the counsel of someone who is more knowledgeable or wiser in the Scriptures to help you gain understanding. This could be the beginning of a discipleship relationship with this person in which you begin to meet regularly to press in closer to Christ and to challenge each other in your walks!

(c) *Family:* Read 1 Pet. 3:13-16. Drawing everyone’s attention to the command in v. 15 to “always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness & respect.” Take a few minutes to share your testimony of hope with your family. Ask them if they have any questions about this hope. Also, tell them about a time that you were given an “open door” to give this hope, what happened as a result, and how you were affected.

DAY 5 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read 1 Pet. 3:13-16.** When you spend time “proclaiming the mystery of Christ” you will find that you sometimes, if not oftentimes, meet opposition to your message. How do these verses encourage you to be ready for that opposition (be specific! What are you to do? To not do?)?

(b) In Col. 4:4 Paul’s desire is “that I may make (the mystery of Christ) clear.” Are you “prepared” to carry out 1 Peter 3:15? Write down the words you would use. If you are not sure, take some time now to review what you have already learned in Colossians about the person & work of Christ to help you formulate an answer. I am not suggesting that there is one “pat” answer, but every answer we give concerning the “hope that lies within us” must be centered on Jesus and His cross work.

(c) How do you make sure you are proclaiming “with gentleness & respect?” In what ways might you violate this requirement? How do you maintain truth that might offend without being offensive yourself?

(d) *Family:* Write on your white board the names of several family members and friends who are unregenerate for whom you can pray that God opens doors for the word. Spend time praying as a family for God to open these doors and make their hearts receptive to the Gospel message.

DAY 6 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read Col. 4:2-4.** Write down the names of as many people as you can think of that are attached to your life. Make sure you write down all the names you can think of, both those who are close to you and those not so close. Now spend some time praying “that God may open a door for the word, (for you) to declare the mystery of Christ” to them. Now as you go through the next week and beyond, ask God to keep your eyes open for the doors He will open, and to give you the words to present “the reason for the hope that is in you.”

DATE: December 5, 2010

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Persistent Prayer