

Subject: The Living Church: Colossians 4:7-18

Resources: [[TEACHING LINK](#)] AND [DISCIPLESHIP RESOURCES LINK]

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we concluded our journey through the book of Colossians, we recapped the powerful truths explored together this past Sunday. Paul's closing words to the Colossian church may seem like simple greetings, but they contain great insights and exhortations regarding being a functioning, unified body of Christ.

Summary: The sermon explored the diverse individuals who comprised Paul's ministry team and what their lives reveal about authentic Christian service. Through examining ten different believers—each with unique gifts, backgrounds, and roles—we discovered that the church is built on the backs of faithful servants who count the cost and use their God-given abilities to advance the Gospel. This passage challenges us to ask ourselves: Are we being the church? Are we using our gifts to invite people into and build up the body of Christ? Will future generations look back and see our faithfulness as part of the foundation of their faith?

Takeaways:

1. The body of Christ requires diversity in unity. Paul's team included Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free men, educated physicians and common laborers. Yet they were supernaturally united in Christ, with all social, economic, and cultural barriers demolished. God uses people with different gifts—encouragers, communicators, administrators, intercessors, and servants—all working together for His kingdom.
2. Faithfulness in the small things matters eternally. Most of the people Paul mentions are relatively unknown to us, yet their character qualities shine through: loving, trustworthy, humble, steadfast under pressure, and willing to do whatever was needed unto the Lord. You don't need to be famous or have a prominent platform to make an eternal impact; you need to be faithful with what God has given you.
3. Following Christ requires counting the cost and going all-in. Onesimus risked his life to make things right. Epaphras prayed fervently and unceasingly. Aristarchus stood firm even when seized by an angry mob. In contrast, Demas counted the cost as too high and returned to worldly ways. The question before each of us is simple but profound: Have we truly surrendered everything to follow Jesus, or are we holding something back?

This week I encourage you to prayerfully consider where God is calling you to serve. It's not complicated, but it can be hard to get out of our own comfort zone. It requires setting aside our desires and priorities that we may serve God and one another through the supernatural leadership of the Holy Spirit. If you're not sure where to start, pray and get plugged into an area of need in our church family.

Let us take heed to Paul's words and purpose to dig deeper in our faith, reject the lies of the enemy, put on our new identity in Christ daily, and use the gifts God has given us to make disciples to the ends of the earth.

In Christ's Service,

Pastor Jim

The Living Church

Colossians 4:7-18

I. Review: The Path Traveled

1. As we come to the end of this wonderful and practical book, we would do ourselves a great disservice to dismiss the life-transforming lessons that can be learned from Paul's closing words. *With that in mind, I would like to offer a few reminders along with some tone setting for our passage today.*
 - A. We have been given much detail about the daily functioning of a young, vibrant church. *A church that is commended for its faith while under attack from both the outside world and forces that have made their way inside of the church. We have witnessed Paul's emphasis on the preeminence of the person of Jesus in (1) salvation, (2) sanctification, and (3) combating the false philosophies and religions of the world.*
 - B. What's more, we have taken the cross-culture trip applying the lessons of that day in our day. *In passage after passage, we have come to know Christ more deeply along with who we are in Him, what both the Christian and non-Christian look like, how to live in biblical victory over our ungodly desires, Satan's schemes, and the world.*
 - C. Keep in mind that everything was hard in that day...food, money, travel, Roman rule, legalism, medical care, competing religious systems, their own hearts, family drama, and this list goes on. *Likewise, despite all the advances in technology, manufacturing, transportation, and communication, we too can find daily living difficult at times. Yet, there is One, Jesus, that is unchanging. And so Paul's message is just as gripping and transforming today as it was in that day.*

II. Introduction: Christ is the Foundation and His Truth Transforms and Endures

1. This letter is from real people to real people with real gifts and strengths and equally real problems and challenges. *There are 10 of them mentioned as senders in this letter...10 people, each with something God-given, to contribute to the building of the kingdom of God. 10 people that lived in that long since passed moment.*
2. Yet, the movement they helped build endures still. *It is a movement built on the back of people like Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Caleb, David, Peter, Paul, and most of those written in the closing of this letter along with many others. As He does for each of us, God gave them spiritual gifts, talents, insights, wisdom, and strength. As with us, He gave them all they needed to testify of Jesus, edify His church, and make disciples.*
3. Paul's words here are transforming and yet, if we are honest, hard. *When we examine the people in this letter, we are examining ourselves, the church of Jesus Christ. This means we are confronted with the question of if we (you and I) are being the church. Will our backs be those future generations see as part of the foundation of their faith? Am I...are you...a functioning part of the body of Christ? Are we using the gifts and talents He gives us in inviting people into and building the body of Christ?*

III. Colossians 4:7-15: The Diversity & Unity of a Functioning Church

While a courageous and effective minister of the Gospel, Paul needed a team to complete the mission God had for him. *While this is just a partial list of all those that were an active part of Paul's decades-long ministry, from them we will see a good variety of gifts the Lord employed/employs, along with important elements of their character, and a picture of biblical unity within the church's great diversity.*

1. In verses 7-9, Paul speaks of Tychicus (tye-he-kus) and Onesimus (onay-se-mos). From this passage, along with others where we read of these men, there are several things we can distill, including:

A. Tychicus. We first met Tychius on Paul's 3rd missionary journey in **Acts 20:4**. We read of him in **Ephesians 6, Titus 3, 2 Timothy 4:12, and perhaps 2 Corinthians 8:22**. Despite all the references, like most of the others in our passage today, we know little about him. Thus, the character things we do know are amplified in offering us great insight about how a Christ-follower is to live out our lives. From here in **Colossians** and the other passages, these are a number of the things we can glean...Tychicus was:

- i. Loving, faithful to God, trustworthy, humble, servant, and bold. It seems that he was a "journeyman" that could-and-would do whatever was needed and do so unto the Lord;
- ii. What's more, Tychicus, both well-spoken and an active listener, was a capable communicator. In that day, the letter carrier was the letter teacher so we see that he was one of the first expositors of Scripture. As a powerful, capable communicator of God's word and heart, he was also both encourager and inspirer. *Note: It is certainly possible, perhaps even likely, that Tychicus was also the bearer of the letter to the Ephesians, possibly one to Laodicea (v16), and Philemon¹ (fi-lee-mon).*

B. Next up we have Onesimus, whom we read about in Philemon. Outside of Paul himself, we know more about Onesimus and Luke than anyone else listed in Paul's entourage here, including:

- i. His name means "useful" and he certainly was;

¹ Douglas Moo; F.F. Bruce, The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1984), 176.

- ii. As a runaway slave, Onesimus had broken the law. He had been forgiven by God, accepted and trusted by Paul, but still had a price on his head. At this point, he still needed to do business with man – his owner – as we read in Philemon. In this, we see that he counted the cost of following Christ and was humbly willing to lay down his life to do what was right in the Lord’s eyes;
- iii. While it seems clear from Paul’s words regarding Onesimus being “one of them”, that they knew each other. It is also clear that he was like them in another regard...like them, he was formerly broken and now restored in relationship with Jesus...he and they were saved!;
- iv. In what is nothing short of an earthquake, Paul calls Onesimus a “brother”. Ascribing him this position was revolutionary...a declaration of war against the cultural norms of that day. Slave Onesimus had been radically saved with all national, cultural, racial, economic, and social barriers lying waste as he was supernaturally joined to the body of Christ. In this very real sense, God was using Onesimus as a picture of Godly unity.

Slide 12

- 2. In verses 10-12, in what is another picture of Godly unity, Paul presents three Jewish Christ-followers.
 - A. First up is Aristarchus (arees-tar-cous). He was from Thessalonica in the Roman province Macedonia between the Aegean and Adriatic sea’s. This is about 300 miles from Colossae. From his being in a Roman prison with Paul, having travelled for and with Paul (still with him in **Acts 27:2**) and been seized by the Macedonians (**Acts 19:29**), we know he was steadfast and reliable under pressure. He stood for what was right and true even in the face of great adversity.
 - B. Next, we have Barnabas’ cousin John Mark. Mark had accompanied Paul and Barnabas on Paul’s first missionary

journey. It's not clear why Mark left the group, but he did. Some years later Barnabas' desire to again bring Mark along with he and Paul (who wanted nothing to do with Mark) ended up creating a well-documented divide between Paul and Barnabas. Here in Colossians we see that a young Mark has matured into a faithful and trusted believer whom, as we read in **2 Timothy 4:11**, Paul found to be "helpful" in the ministry. A few important things that Mark represents to us here include:

- i. Mark had been forgiven and restored to ministry. This took humility and obedience on both men's part.
- ii. It is interesting to note that Barnabas did not give up on Mark. He demonstrated great discernment in continuing to disciple his young cousin...and Paul was one of the great beneficiaries of Barnabas' faithfulness. Perhaps Barnabas' faithfulness to Mark inspired Paul to take on discipling a very young Timothy;
- iii. While clearly influenced by Peter, the authorship of the Gospel of Mark is attributed to Mark. That Mark had the gifts of serving along with administration (e.g., writer) would have certainly been a great help to Paul. Indeed, I think many people entering into ministry are shocked to find the administrative time, effort, and talent needed to be successful in the church.

C. Justus is the 3rd Christian of Jewish heritage mentioned, but there are no other Biblical references helping paint a picture of who, beside faithful, a servant, and a comforter, this man was.

Slide 14

3. In verses 13-15, several Gentile Christians are noted, including Epaphras, Luke, Demas, and Nympha(s).

A. Having counted the cost, Epaphras was all-in for Christ as well as a fervent-in-prayer interceder for others. He had a pastors heart that we see in his unceasing concern and Godly

zealousness for the welfare of others...notably for the church's in Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis.

- B. The “beloved” **healer** Luke was mentioned next. We learn little about him from this mention, but since he is the author of both the books of Luke and Acts, we know of his faithfulness, compassion, mercy, humility, and trustworthiness, along with his administrative and teaching gifts. I think also worth mentioning is that Luke, like Paul, was highly educated further reflecting the diversity and supernatural unity found in the body of Christ.
- C. In what is a sorrowful story, Demas too had counted the cost. But as we read in **2 Timothy 4:10**, he counted the cost as too high and instead returned to his worldly ways.
- D. Finally, we have Nymphas or Nympha, who was either a man or a woman that we might call Mr. or Mrs. Hospitality.

Slide 16

IV. Colossians 4:16-18: Embracing God's Call

1. From his writings, we know much about the Apostle Paul. For the sake of brevity, I will list a few notable things:
 - A. All-or-nothing person that became a willing instrument of God;
 - B. Tenacious and enduring in the face of adversity;
 - C. Spirit-led and God honoring;
 - D. Bold;
 - E. Knew God's peace, joy, contentment, and hope;
 - F. Prayerful, sincere, passionate, and uncompromising;
 - G. Dedicated and hard worker;
 - H. A man with a pastor's heart of compassion and grace;
 - I. Teacher, apologist, encourager, and exhorter;
 - J. He was also a man that dealt with pride and fear; and
 - K. Finally, we can note that he had great Godly vision and was a master communicator submitted to and used by God.

2. For the churches in that region as well as to Archippus (are-he-pose, who is thought to be Philemon's son), take heed to all that Paul is teaching.

Slide 18

A. **Take heed to the superiority of Christ and His Gospel.**

Read, learn, obey, and grow in the word of God and in relationship with your Messiah. He came and died for you. You have received Him, now purpose to dig deeper while not letting the lies of the enemy and their own desires derail them from their life-giving, life-sustaining faith;

Slide 20

B. **Take heed, the wolves are not only outside the church, but are bringing false religions, philosophies, and doctrines into the church.**

You, the church, are under attack from the chains of legalism, satanic promises and works, and rituals unanchored from an authentic faith, along with self-focus, sensuality, and other pride-inducing/pride-feeding empty man-philosophies.

Slide 22

C. **Take heed to reject the old man and put on the new-in-Christ man each and all day;**

Slide 24

D. **Take heed...know, share, serve, and otherwise use the word and gifts of God to live-out the meaning and purposes of God;** and

Slide 26

E. **Take heed...that we, His church, function in the supernatural unity of the Spirit of God** in serving Christ AND one another as we purpose to fulfill God's plan of making disciples to the ends of the world.

Slide 28

F. **Take heed, following Christ is NOT complicated, but it is hard.** Setting aside our desires, our priorities, and our ways in serving God and one-another requires the supernatural leadership, wisdom, and power of the Holy Spirit...for any other leadership, wisdom, or power is NOT sufficient.

- i. Not sure where to start? Pray and get plugged in to the most emergent need area.

Slide 30

V. Closing: Four Inspirational Thoughts

1. I pray that you are inspired in knowing that Jesus is for you.
2. I pray that you are inspired to take next steps in following and serving Christ. For those that have never confessed Jesus as your Messiah, I invite you to do so now...[Prayer]
3. I pray you are inspired to learn about and exercise the use of the gifts He has given you to bring Him glory in His shared purposes for us in edifying the body and doing your part in making disciples.
4. I pray you are inspired to live your life increasingly wholly unto the living God.

[Closing Prayer]

Colossians 4:7-18

The Living Church

I. Review: The Path Traveled

- Life may be hard, but Jesus is bigger than any and all of our life challenges.

II. Introduction: Christ is the Foundation and His Truth Transforms and Endures

- The letter is from real people to real people; people with gifts and strengths along with problems and challenges

III. Colossians 4:7-15: The Diversity & Unity of a Functioning Church

- Consider listing the gifts and character traits presented to “paint” a picture of a vibrant church.

Additional Scripture References: Acts 20:4; Eph 6; Tit 3; 2 Ti 4:12; 2 Co 8:22; Acs 27:2; Acts 19:29; 2 Tim 4:11, 10

IV. Colossians 4:16-18: Embracing God’s Call

- List the 6 “Take heed’s” in this section

V. Closing: Four Inspirational Thoughts

I pray that you are inspired:

knowing that Jesus is _____;

to take next steps in _____ and _____ Christ;

to learn about and exercise the use of _____; and

to live your life increasingly wholly unto the _____.

5-Day Devotional Colossians 4:7-18 The Living Church

Day 1: The Foundation That Endures

Reading: Col 1:15-20

Devotional: The preeminence of Christ is not merely a theological concept—it is the bedrock upon which our faith stands. Just as the early Colossian church faced external pressures and internal challenges, we too navigate a world filled with competing philosophies and cultural demands. Yet Christ remains unchanging. His supremacy over creation, His reconciling work on the cross, and His authority over all things provide the stable foundation we desperately need.

Today, consider what philosophies or worldly wisdom you've allowed to compete with Christ's lordship in your life. The same Jesus who sustained Paul's team through persecution and hardship is sufficient for every challenge you face. Will you anchor yourself afresh to His unchanging truth?

Day 2: Counting The Cost of Discipleship **Reading: Lk 14:25-33, Phil 1:8-16**

Devotional: Onesimus the runaway slave exemplifies radical obedience. Having encountered Christ through Paul, he faced a monumental decision: return to his master and face potential death, or remain hidden. He chose obedience. His story confronts us with uncomfortable questions about our own commitment. Have we truly counted the cost of following Jesus? Authentic discipleship requires more than intellectual agreement—it demands the surrender of our rights, comfort, and safety. Yet in this surrender, we discover true freedom. Like Onesimus, we may need to make things right with others, address past wrongs, or step into uncomfortable situations.

What is God asking you to surrender today? Remember, the same grace that saved you empowers you to obey.

Day 3: Unity in Diversity

Reading: Col 3:11-17, Eph 4:1-6

Devotional: Paul's ministry team was revolutionary—Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free, educated and common laborers working together. This wasn't mere tolerance; it was supernatural unity forged by the Holy Spirit. The early church shattered every social barrier of their day because Christ had broken down the dividing wall. Today's church desperately needs this same unity. We must resist the temptation to gather only with those who look, think, or vote like us. True biblical community embraces diversity while maintaining doctrinal unity.

Examine your relationships: Are you intentionally building bridges across cultural, economic, or generational divides? The watching world will know we are His disciples by our love for one another—especially when that love transcends human categories.

Day 4: Using Your Gifts for Kingdom Purpose

Reading: 1 Cor 12:4-27, Rom 12:3-8

Devotional: Tychicus, Luke, Epaphras, Nympha—each possessed unique gifts essential to kingdom work. Some taught, others served, some administered, while others opened their homes. None were spectators; all were participants. God has equipped you with specific gifts, talents, and resources for building His church. The question isn't whether you have something to contribute—you do. The question is whether you'll steward what He's given you. Perhaps you're a behind-the-scenes servant like Tychicus, or a skilled professional like Luke. Maybe you offer hospitality or fervent prayer. Don't despise your contribution or wait for a "greater" calling. The body of Christ needs you functioning in your unique role.

What gift has God given you? How will you use it this week to edify others and advance the Gospel?

Day 5: Taking Heed: Perseverance in Faith Reading: Col 2:6-10, Heb 10:19-25

Devotional: "Take heed" echoes throughout Paul's closing words—a solemn warning and loving exhortation. The Colossian church faced threats from legalism, false philosophies, and worldly compromise. We face the same. Taking heed means remaining vigilant, anchored in God's Word, and actively resisting anything that diminishes Christ's supremacy. It requires daily putting off the old self and putting on the new. It demands we not merely hear God's Word but obey it. Perseverance isn't passive; it's an active, Spirit-empowered commitment to continue following Jesus when circumstances are hard and the cost is high. Like Demas, we can fall away if we love the world more than Christ. But like Mark, we can be restored and become useful again.

Where do you need to "take heed" today? What area of compromise needs addressing? God's grace is sufficient for both your standing and your persevering.

Small Group Study Guide

Colossians 4:7-18

The Living Church

Opening Prayer: Begin your group time by thanking God for the community of believers He has placed you among and asking the Holy Spirit to guide your discussion and application.

Opening Question: Share one person (past or present) who has significantly impacted your faith journey. What specific qualities made them influential in your life?

Sermon Recap:

Take a few minutes for everyone to share their takeaways from the sermon.

Discussion Questions: Did the Holy Spirit prompt any questions with you? Start with those.

1. Paul emphasizes that despite all the challenges faced by the Colossian church, "there is One, Jesus, that is unchanging." How does this truth comfort or challenge you in your current circumstances?
2. The sermon asks: "Will our backs be those future generations see as part of the foundation of their faith?" What does it mean to be part of the foundation for future believers? Does this thought inspire or intimidate you?
3. Paul's team included people from vastly different backgrounds—slaves, doctors, educated scholars, and ordinary workers. What does this teach us about God's design for the church?
4. Looking at Tychicus's character traits (loving, faithful, trustworthy, humble, servant, bold), which one do you most aspire to grow in? Why?
5. Onesimus went from runaway slave to "brother" and valuable minister. What barriers (social, economic, racial, cultural) do we still struggle to overcome in viewing others as true brothers and sisters in Christ?
6. John Mark failed Paul early on but was later restored and became "helpful in the ministry." Have you experienced restoration after failure in your faith journey? How did that shape you?
7. Demas "counted the cost as too high and instead returned to his worldly ways" (2 Timothy 4:10). What are the "costs" of following Christ that you find most challenging? What helps you persevere?

8. Epaphras was described as "fervent-in-prayer" and having an "unceasing concern" for others. How would you honestly assess your prayer life for other believers? What might need to change?
9. The sermon mentions nine different people, each with unique gifts contributing to God's kingdom. What spiritual gifts, talents, or insights has God given you? Are you actively using them in service to the body of Christ?
10. Nymphas (or Nympha) opened their home for church gatherings. What practical ways can you exercise hospitality in building up the body of Christ?
11. Paul repeatedly says "take heed" — to false teaching, to our old nature, to using God's gifts, etc. What specific area do you most need to "take heed" in right now?
12. The sermon states: "It is NOT complicated, but it is hard." Do you agree? What makes following Christ hard even when the instructions are clear?

Key Takeaways:

1. Christ is preeminent and unchanging in salvation, sanctification, and combating false teaching
2. The body of Christ requires diversity and unity working together with different gifts
3. Character matters: faithfulness, humility, servanthood, boldness, and perseverance are essential
4. Counting the cost is real: following Christ requires supernatural power from the Holy Spirit
5. We each have a role to play: using our gifts to edify the church and make disciples
6. Restoration is possible: failure doesn't disqualify us from future usefulness in God's kingdom

Practical Applications: Query the group for applications first...you may explore one or more of those.

1. **Identify My Gifts:** Take a spiritual gifts assessment or spend time in prayer asking God to reveal how He's gifted you to serve His church.

2. **Serve Actively:** Contact a ministry leader and volunteer in an area of need, even if it's outside your comfort zone.
3. **Pray Fervently:** Like Epaphras, commit to praying daily for specific people in your church or small group by name.
4. **Practice Hospitality:** Invite someone (or a family) from church into your home for a meal or coffee this week.
5. **Study Deeply:** Read through the entire book of Colossians this week, noting how Christ's preeminence should impact your daily life.
6. **Encourage Intentionally:** Reach out to someone who may be struggling or discouraged and offer specific encouragement about how you see God working in them.
7. **Examine My Heart:** Honestly assess if there are areas where you're "counting the cost as too high" like Demas. Confess these to God and ask for renewed commitment.
8. **Pursue Reconciliation-** If there's a "Paul and Mark" situation in your life—a broken relationship that needs restoration—take the first step toward reconciliation.

Personal Reflection Questions:

- Am I being "the church" or just attending church?
- What would those closest to me say are my most evident spiritual gifts?
- Where am I allowing cultural, social, or personal barriers to prevent true unity with other believers?
- What "false philosophies" or worldly thinking have I allowed to creep into my faith?

Closing Prayer Points:

- Each person to discover and use their spiritual gifts
- Unity within your church despite diversity
- Boldness to count the cost and follow Christ wholeheartedly
- Those who may be struggling or considering turning back from faith
- Future generations who will build on the foundation you're laying today

Discussion Questions

Colossians 4:7-18

The Living Church

1. Paul mentions nine individuals in this passage, each contributing uniquely to God's kingdom. Which person's character traits or gifts most resonate with you, and how might God be calling you to develop similar qualities in your own life?
2. Tychicus is described as loving, faithful, trustworthy, humble, and bold—a 'journeyman' willing to do whatever was needed. In what areas of church life or ministry might God be asking you to adopt this same flexible, servant-hearted attitude?
3. Onesimus went from being a runaway slave to being called a 'brother' by Paul, representing radical unity in Christ that shattered cultural barriers. What modern-day barriers—economic, racial, social, or otherwise—does the Gospel call us to break down in our own communities?
4. John Mark was once rejected by Paul but later restored and found to be 'helpful in ministry.' Have you experienced either side of this story—being given a second chance or needing to extend forgiveness and restoration to someone who disappointed you?
5. The sermon emphasizes that these early Christians lived in a time when 'everything was hard,' yet their faith endured and built a foundation for future generations. What specific hardships in your life today might God be using to build spiritual endurance and legacy?
6. Demas ultimately abandoned Paul because he 'counted the cost as too high' and returned to worldly ways. What specific worldly temptations or comforts most threaten to pull you away from wholehearted devotion to Christ?
7. Paul warns the church to 'take heed' against wolves bringing false doctrines, legalism, and empty philosophies into the church. What false teachings or cultural philosophies do you see most influencing the modern church, and how can we guard against them?
8. The passage highlights the diversity of gifts in the body of Christ—from administration to teaching to hospitality to healing. Are you actively using the specific gifts God has given you to edify the church and make disciples, or are they lying dormant?

9. Paul repeatedly emphasizes the preeminence of Christ in salvation, sanctification, and combating false philosophies. In what areas of your life have you subtly allowed something or someone other than Jesus to take preeminence?

10. The sermon concludes by stating that following Christ is 'NOT complicated, but it is hard' and requires supernatural power from the Holy Spirit. Where in your spiritual life are you trying to operate in your own strength rather than depending on the Holy Spirit's leadership and power?

Dinner Conversation Starters

Colossians 4:7-18

The Living Church

1. Everyone Has a Part to Play

- In the sermon we heard that every person Paul mentioned had a part to play in God's work, even if they weren't famous.
- What do you think your "part" might be in God's work right now (at school, work, neighborhood, church)?
- How could our family better support each other in using our gifts?

2. Facing the Past Like Onesimus

- Onesimus went back to face his past and make things right, even though it was risky.
- Is there anyone any of us might need to apologize to, forgive, or make something right with?
- What usually stops us from doing that?

3. Conflict and Restoration

- Paul and Barnabas had a major conflict over Mark, but later Paul calls Mark "helpful."
- Have you ever seen a broken relationship get restored?
- How can our family handle conflict in a way that still honors Christ and leaves room for restoration?

4. Unity in Our Differences

- The sermon talked about the church as a diverse but unified body: different backgrounds, jobs, personalities, and strengths.
- In what ways are we different from each other in this family?
- How could those differences actually make us stronger instead of causing friction?

5. Take Heed Together as a Family

- Paul tells the believers to "take heed" — to pay serious attention to living out their faith, even though it's hard.
- What is one area where following Jesus feels hard for you right now?
- What is one small, practical step our family could take this week to "take heed" together (prayer, serving, reading Scripture, helping someone, etc.)?

Family Conversation Guide for Children & Early Teens

Colossians 4:7-18

The Living Church

AGES 5-7: SIMPLIFYING THE MESSAGE APPLICATION POINTS

1. **Being a Helper Like Tychicus**: Tychicus helped Paul by doing whatever was needed. Young kids can serve in simple but meaningful ways. Look for one way each day to help someone at home or school without being asked (put toys away, help a friend, share crayons, hold a door).

Discussion Questions:

- Who did you help today? What did you do?
 - How do you think Jesus feels when you help others?
 - Is it harder to help when nobody notices or thanks you? Why?
2. **Saying I'm Sorry Like Onesimus**: Onesimus went back to make things right. Kids can practice saying sorry and fixing small wrongs. When you hurt someone (with words, grabbing toys, not sharing), practice three steps:
 - A. Say, "I'm sorry for..."
 - B. Ask, "Will you forgive me?"
 - C. Do something kind

Discussion Questions:

- When was a time you had to say, "I'm sorry"? How did it feel?
 - Is there anyone you think you should apologize to this week?
 - How can our family help each other be brave enough to say sorry?
3. **Using Our Gifts Together as a Family**: The sermon showed many different people using different gifts. Even little kids have gifts. As a family, name one gift you see in each person (kindness, drawing, helping, making people laugh, courage). Find one way this week to use those gifts for Jesus.

Discussion Questions:

- What do you think you're good at that God can use?
- How can you use that gift at school or with friends (sharing toys, playing with someone lonely, helping the teacher)?
- How can we work together as a family "team" to show Jesus' love?

AGES 8-12: BUILDING UNDERSTANDING APPLICATION POINTS

1. **Choosing Friends and Influences Wisely**: Paul surrounded himself with people who helped him follow Jesus. Kids at this age start forming deeper friendships and social groups. Talk about your main friend group. Choose at least one friend who encourages you to do the right thing and one situation where you need to be a "good influence" instead of following the crowd.

Discussion Questions:

- Which friends make it easier for you to follow Jesus? How?
- Have you ever been tempted to join in when your group was doing something wrong (making fun of someone, cheating, excluding others)? What happened?
- How could you be like Tychicus, Mark, or Luke and be a helper and encourager in your friend group?
- Are there YouTubers, influencers, or shows that push you closer to Jesus? Any that pull you away?
- Is there anything online you think you should stop watching or following?

2. **Making Things Right When You Mess Up:** Onesimus and Mark both had “bad moments” but chose to change and do what was right. Identify one relationship where something is “off” (a friend you ignored, a sibling you hurt, a classmate you laughed at). Make a plan to:

- A. Admit what you did,
- B. Ask forgiveness,
- C. Change your behavior.

Discussion Questions:

- Is there a friend, sibling, or classmate you feel awkward around because of something that happened?
- What would it look like to “go back” like Onesimus and make it right?
- Why is it scary to admit we were wrong? What helps you be brave?
- Have you ever said something online (text, group chat, game chat) that you later regretted?
- How could you “make it right” even if it was only online?

3. **Taking Heed With What You Watch and Post:** Paul told the church to “take heed”—pay serious attention to how they live and what they listen to. Before watching, posting, or sharing something, use three questions:

- A. Does this honor Jesus?
- B. Does this hurt someone?
- C. Would I be okay if my parents and Jesus read/watched this with me?

Discussion Questions:

- What kinds of things do you see online or in games that you know don’t fit with following Jesus?
- Have you ever felt like you should turn something off or not join a chat? What did you do?
- How could we, as a family, help each other “take heed” with screens (rules, check-ins, shared spaces)?

AGES 11-15: DEEPENING THE CONNECTION APPLICATION POINTS

1. **Building the Right Team Around You:** Paul’s ministry depended on a diverse, committed team. Teens are building their own “teams” — friends, group chats, online communities. List your closest 5–7 friends (including online ones). Mark which ones:
 - A. Push you closer to Christ
 - B. Pull you away from Christ
 - C. Are watching you to see what following Jesus looks like

Make one change this month: spend more time with someone who helps your faith, or set a boundary with someone who consistently pulls you down.

Discussion Questions:

- If someone looked at your closest friends and your online “follows,” what would they think matters most to you?
- Who in your world is like a Tychicus (faithful), a Luke (wise/steady), a Demas (drifting)?
- Are you more often influenced, or are you the one doing the influencing?

2. **Handling Conflict and Broken Trust:** Paul and Barnabas had a big disagreement over Mark, but Mark was later restored and useful. Think of one relationship where there has been drama: friend group, texts taken wrong, rumors, or cold shoulders. Decide whether you should:
 - A. Seek peace and talk it out,
 - B. Give space but stay respectful, or
 - C. Set a clear boundary and forgive from a distance.

Discussion Questions:

- When there’s drama in your group chat or at school, do you usually jump in, stay silent, or try to calm it down?
- Can you think of a friendship that got repaired after a big problem? What helped?
- How can you make room for someone to “come back” and change, like Paul did with Mark?
- How should a Christian respond when they’re left out of a group chat or unfollowed?
- When conflict happens over text or social media, is it better to handle it online or face-to-face? Why?

3. **Take Heed of Your Online Life:** Paul warns the church to take their faith seriously in a world full of false ideas and temptations. Much of that now happens on phones and laptops. Do a personal “digital checkup”:
 - A. Your top 3 apps/sites
 - B. 3 most common types of content you consume
 - C. 3 most common things you post or send

Ask: “If Jesus scrolled through my phone, would anything need to change?” Choose one concrete step: unfollow, delete, move an app, add an accountability partner, or set a time limit.

Discussion Questions:

- Where do you feel the strongest pull away from Christ—friends, social media, gaming, certain websites?
- What’s one boundary you could set that would actually protect your heart (not just “a rule my parents make”)?
- How can we, as a family, model and support healthy digital habits without constant fighting over screens?

4. **Using Your Gifts Publicly and Privately:** Many in Paul’s list were “behind the scenes” workers. Teens often wonder if what they do really matters. Identify at least one “public” way and one “quiet” way to use your gifts this week:

- A. Public: serve at church, encourage someone at school, share something about your faith online.
- B. Quiet: pray for a friend daily, send a private encouragement message, do something kind at home without credit.

Discussion Questions:

- What do you think your main God-given strengths are (creativity, leadership, compassion, tech skills, humor, etc.)?
- How could you use those strengths in your friend group or online spaces to build others up instead of just seeking likes or approval?
- Which do you find harder: serving publicly (where people see) or serving privately (where they don’t)? Why?

Tips for Parents

- Be patient and listen: Give your child time to think and respond.
- Relate to everyday life: Use real-life examples and stories familiar to your child to make abstract concepts more tangible.
- Encourage questions: Let your son or daughter know it’s okay to ask questions, even if things don’t make sense right away.
- Share personal insights: Tell a personal story about a time you experienced these themes, adapting as needed for age appropriateness.

Family Conversation Guide for Gen Z

Colossians 4:7-18

The Living Church

1. Using Your Gifts in Groups or Teams

Biblical Application: “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord.” (1 Corinthians 12:4–5) God has given you specific gifts (creativity, leadership, tech skills, empathy, humor, communication) to build others up, not just to build your brand or social status.

Scenario: You’re in a group project at school or serving on a church/youth team. Most people are either checked out or just care about grades/looking good. You realize you’re good at organizing, explaining, or encouraging. Instead of coasting, you step up: you organize the work, check in on the quiet teammate, or use your communication skills to include someone who usually gets ignored.

Discussion Question: In your main group setting (school group, club, team, or youth group), what specific gift or strength has God given you—and how could you intentionally use it to serve and include others this week?

2. Facing Your Past and Making Things Right

Biblical Application: “If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.” (Romans 12:18) Even if it’s awkward or risky, following Jesus means doing what you can to make things right with people you’ve hurt or wronged.

Scenario: You used to be part of a friend group where you joined in on gossip, shared screenshots, or ghosted someone. Now you’re convicted. You can’t undo everything, but you decide to DM the person you hurt and say, “I’m sorry for how I treated you. It wasn’t right, and I’m trying to follow Jesus better now.”

Discussion Question: Is there anyone—from a past friend group, relationship, or online interaction—you sense God might be asking you to apologize to or make things right with? What’s your biggest fear about doing that?

3. Sticking With Jesus When Others Drift

Biblical Application: “Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica.” (2 Timothy 4:10a) Some people will walk away from faith because they love the world more. You can’t control them, but you can choose to stay faithful even when your circle changes.

Scenario: Your close friend from youth group starts partying, hooking up, and posting about how “religion is toxic.” They unfollow Christian accounts and laugh at your convictions. You feel pressure to either join in or stay silent about your faith. Instead, you quietly keep walking with Jesus—still kind, still open to them, but not compromising what you know is right.

Discussion Question: When friends drift from Jesus or mock your faith, what do you usually feel most: anger, sadness, fear of missing out, or pressure to fit in? How might God be inviting you to respond differently?

4. Handling Conflict and Cancel Culture

Biblical Application: “Bear with each other and forgive one another... Forgive as the Lord forgave you.” (Colossians 3:13) Instead of canceling people forever over conflict, Christ calls you to pursue forgiveness and, when wise, restoration—like Paul eventually did with Mark.

Scenario: Someone in your friend group said something hurtful about you in a group chat. Your immediate instinct is: block, unfollow, subtweet, or “hard cancel.” Instead, after cooling down, you ask to talk privately: you explain how it hurt, listen to their side, and—if they’re willing—you choose forgiveness and agree on healthier boundaries.

Discussion Question: In your world (IRL and online), is it more common to cancel, clap back, or reconcile when someone messes up? What would it look like for you to be a “Mark story” person—someone who believes people can change and be restored?