



Sermon Study - Conversation Guide

June 2, 2024

“How to Be Devoted to Prayer”

Colossians 4:2-9

This guide is a discipleship tool for personal reflection, family conversations, for home groups, and for Table Talk on Sundays @10:40 am and 12:15 pm on the Lowell Patio

Coastal Community Church
mycoastal.org

NOTES: How to Be Devoted to Prayer (Col. 4:2-9) Pastor Andy Rock

What Paul does in this last section of his letter to the church in Colossae is beautiful. He shows us the heart of following Jesus in an unexpected way. What does it look like to love others the way Jesus loves us? To show compassion and kindness and courage for the sake of others? Love is an action that benefits you and costs me. How do we do this in our marriages, with our parents, at work, and with our friends?

4:2 Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.

Being watchful is the idea that your head is up, and your eyes are open. You're paying attention to the people around you and you're praying. This entire letter's theme invites us to talk to Jesus about everything, all the time. Being thankful is having the courage to accept what's happening around you, choosing to invite God into it, believing with a thankful heart that God will make something good out of it, even if the good is us becoming better humans, despite our miserable situation.

Devoting ourselves to prayer means praying about what we see, listening to what Jesus would have us do, accepting the situation we face with a grateful heart, confident that He is present and working. It means going into the world with eyes open, with care and concern for others.

4:3 And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains.

In the ancient world, people weren't held in prison for long. Paul would spend two years awaiting trial, an eternity back then. In his cell, which you can still go see, there's an open trough which carried out the raw sewage from the prison. When the rain came, it backed up in Paul's cell.

What do you think Paul would pray for in that situation? Not to be released but that God would open a door for the message of Jesus to the people guarding him, the people in the other cells, and the officials who came to grill Paul on his "crimes." Paul asks for the church to pray with him that he might have the chance to tell these people about the mystery of our Messiah. Paul could quit. Give up. Die. Instead, he chose to stand and be watchful, and thankful, confident in Jesus, asking others to pray something with him that no one in prison ever asks.

4:4 Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.

In other words, "Pray I may proclaim the Gospel clearly, not tainted with my resentment or cynicism. Pray that I show the love of Jesus with

mercy, not out of manipulation or self-preservation.” Do you want to pray a dangerous kind of prayer? If so, pray this with me...

“Jesus, would You help me to stand up, eyes on You, that I might proclaim Your goodness and kindness to others through my words and actions, no matter how hard or unfair or beautiful my situation is, so that all they see in me, is You.”

4:5 *Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity.*

You don't have to let everyone in. Have good boundaries. When you encounter vampires and haters, honor their choices by inviting them to keep on walking, with kindness, of course. Make the most of every opportunity. Take every chance you get, with wisdom, to love others well.

4:6 *Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.*

Be kind to others and gracious, generously giving what they don't deserve, with love, patience, encouragement, and the resources God gives you. Tell the truth, seasoned with salt. Don't sugar coat it. How?

4:7 *Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. 8 I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts.*

Tychicus is reading this letter out loud as Paul describes him as a dear *brother*. He's never met Jesus, never had the experiences of the apostles. Yet Paul calls him a minister, a fellow servant in the Lord. This is the highest honor Paul ever gives himself. In these words, seasoned with grace and salt, he changed Tychicus' life in front of a church the man would stay at for months. This is what it looks like to be devoted in prayer for others, being gracious and telling the truth. There's even more.

4:9 *He is coming with Onesimus, our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you. They will tell you everything that is happening here.*

Onesimus took out a loan from Philemon, and then became his 'slave' to pay it back. Both were Christians, but Onesimus ran away. Paul wrote to Philemon, asking him to forgive the debt. Now Onesimus is there as Tychicus reads the part where Paul describes the former runaway slave as faithful and a dear brother. This is grace and love. You are never too lost for God to find, never too broken for God to heal, and never too far gone for God to redeem. His love knows no bounds.

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDELINES: Tips for great conversation

- We aren't here to teach/fix each other, but to share our experiences.
- Show respect by listening to one another, asking clarifying questions.
- If you're quick to share, allow space and time for others to speak up.
- If you're slow to speak, your experience is valuable so please share.

INTRO

Invite everyone to introduce themselves and then read the Bible verses.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What part of the message and Scripture was most encouraging, and which part is most challenging?
2. What did You notice about God, and what did you notice about yourself as well as other people?

GOSPEL EXCHANGE (REDEMPTIVE WORK)

Jesus asks us to give Him our burdens (Matthew 11:28-29), whatever they may be (a lie we have believed about God or ourselves, our hurt or negative emotions, or even our concerns for loved ones), so He can carry them for us, giving us His peace (His completeness) in exchange.

What do you want to exchange with Jesus today?

What is the burden? "Lord Jesus, I give you my..."

What's His gift? "Lord Jesus, I receive your..."

ACTION QUESTIONS

1. What is one step of obedience you can take this week, based on what you've discovered today? (*NOTE – Consider prayerfully asking God to answer this question for you, taking 30-45 seconds to listen in silence, writing what you heard. If nothing comes clear, keep praying this week.*)
2. During the coming week, who can you share what you learned today? (*NOTE – Consider repeating the same step with this question as the previous question.*)