

## WHEN WE PRAY | COLOSSIANS 1:1-14



Without using any artificial measure, how deeply satisfied are you with your prayer life? I am not talking about the number of times you pray each day or how long you pray. Jesus warns us not to think we are heard for our many words. I guess I am referring to the deep sense of personal connection that draws you into prayer in the first place. Has prayer become routine for you? Non-routine? Something you do because you feel a sense of obligation or is it as natural as taking your next breath?

The Apostle Paul by all accounts was an overachiever. An off the charts type “A.” You don’t accomplish the kind of things Paul accomplished, both before coming to Christ, and even more spectacularly after coming to Christ, by assuming the lotus position and contemplating the mysteries of the universe. But it is hard to miss the fact that Paul had a vibrant prayer life. Each of his letters not only convinces us that he constantly prayed for the churches he had established, but that he prayed with deep passion and expected God to answer his prayers. He not only tells us that he prayed, he also tells us why he prayed and what he prayed for. His prayers are far different from our own. While we pray over the minutiae of the day, Paul prayed for the deep, lasting and ongoing impact of the gospel.

While Paul never met the believers in Colossae, he prayed for them. And we can learn a lot about how we ought to pray by listening in on his prayer for the Colossians.

## PAUL AND THE COLOSSIAN BELIEVERS (vv. 1-2)

READ VERSES 1-2: Paul usually says more in his greetings than we often say in an entire letter.

1. What stands out about Paul's greeting to the Colossians?
2. How does Paul see himself?
3. How does he see the believers in Colossae?
4. Why are the words "grace" and "peace" significant in light of what Christ has done for us?

## WHY PAUL PRAYS FOR THE COLOSSIANS (vv. 3-8)

READ VERSES 3-8: In short Paul prays for the Colossians because he is pleased to hear that the gospel is taking root and having a dramatic impact in their lives.

1. What is surprising about the way that Paul describes the gospel in verse 6?
2. What do you think it means for the gospel to "bear fruit" and "grow"?
3. What are some of the signs that the gospel is "bearing fruit and growing" among the believers at Colossae?
4. Paul often uses the words "faith, hope and love" to describe the impact of the gospel in a community of believers.
  - a. How would you describe each of these qualities?
  - b. Why do you think Paul looked to these qualities as a reliable indicator that the gospel was "growing and bearing fruit"?

## WHAT PAUL PRAYS FOR THE COLOSSIANS (vv. 9-14)

READ VERSES 9-14: Paul's primary prayer for the Colossians is that the gospel would continue to grow and bear fruit in their lives.

1. As you read through Paul's prayer, what is noticeably different about the things Paul prays for and the things we usually pray for?

2. How might our lives be different if our prayers were more consistently like Paul's?
3. According to Paul, what is the overall goal of the Christian life?
4. When we are not living to please the Lord in every way, who are we usually trying to please?
5. What are the consequences of living to please ourselves or others?
6. Paul describes four things in particular that are pleasing to the Lord.
  - a. What do you think Paul means by "bearing fruit in every good work"?
  - b. How do we grow in our "knowledge of God"?
  - c. To what end does Paul pray that we would be "strengthened with all power according to [God's] glorious might"? Why is this both surprising and significant?
  - d. Why does Paul tell us we should be joyful and thankful?

## MAKING IT PERSONAL

1. What is the most significant truth you have learned from your study of Colossians 1:1-14?
2. What are some critical steps you can take in the coming week to more fully embrace and live out the reality of this truth?
3. Take the time to pray for yourselves and other members of your group using Paul's prayer for the Colossians as a model.

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Unless otherwise noted questions in this study are based The New International Version of the Holy Bible (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011).