

QUESTIONS FOR YOUR GROUP

1. What is your usual response when you run across a list of names like this in the Bible?
2. Many of these people are mentioned in Acts and Paul's letters. Read through the list a couple of times and see if there are any names you recognize. What do you recall about them?
3. Onesimus was a runaway slave, who bumped into one of Paul's companions in Rome and whom Paul later led to Christ. You can read more about him in the book of Philemon.
 - a. What do you make of the fact that Paul was able to refer to an unfaithful slave as a faithful brother in Christ almost immediately after he had come to Christ?
 - b. If the gospel immediately transformed Onesimus from an unfaithful slave to a faithful brother, what were some of the instantaneous changes that take place in our lives when we believe the gospel?
4. As you read through this list, Paul spends a little more time talking about some people than others.
 - a. From your brief survey of the names in this list what are some of the qualities that Paul deeply admires (especially take note of Tychichus in vv. 7-8 and Epaphras in vv. 12-13)?
 - b. How does the gospel produce these qualities in our lives?
 - c. What happens when we try to produce these qualities on our own?
 - d. If Paul were to include your name in the list, what would you like him to say about you, and why?
5. In verses 12-13 Paul describes Epaphras as someone who prayed hard and worked hard.
 - a. How do these two qualities work together?
 - b. What do you think it means to wrestle in prayer?
 - c. If Epaphras wrestled in prayer, how would you describe your own prayer life?
 - d. If Epaphras prayed "that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured," how would you describe the content of your prayer life?
 - e. What do think it means to stand firm "in all the will of God?"



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UNsung HEROES | COLOSSIANS 4:7-18



The Bible is famous for its long lists of names that are all but impossible to pronounce. One of the list in the Old Testament goes on for nine chapters.

In the New Testament, the names usually come toward the end of one of Paul's letters and we are tempted to leave the theatre while the credits role so we can be the first in line at the concession stand or beat the rest of the crowd out of the parking lot.

There is far more to these lists than meets the eye. These names remind us that the gospel is rooted in history. It is about real people, in real places, with real problems. While these people may have never run into each other in the course of normal life, all of their lives have been interrupted by the gospel and the gospel has inextricably bound them together. Their stories like our stories are shaped and rearranged by their personal encounter with Jesus.

In this particular list there is a formerly "unfaithful slave" who is now called a "faithful brother," a young man who Paul once refused to allow accompany him on a mission trip, whom he now rigorously defends. Two gospel writers show up in the list. Paul also gives a shout out to the founding pastor of the church in Colossae and commends him for praying hard and working hard. What a powerful combination.

While these names, in and of themselves, are not the gospel, they are the results of the gospel.