

Prayerfully Growing Together in Groups

Colossians 4:2

Pastor/Elder Phil Layton, GCBC, 4/11/2021

COMMUNION AT END

He is risen! Let's take the word of our risen King and turn to Colossians 4.

REVIEW THEMES IN CHAP 3 – today in chap 4 our theme will be prayer.

As we go through this book verse-by-verse, it addresses our needs and this is an area I've sensed my weakness and need and pray we'll grow together.

- I'm convicted by my prayer life, want to grow, PTL prayer partners
- SHARE STORY→ big impact of a little old lady who prayed for me
- Faithful men are more well known but prayers of faithful women in my years here have included Jean Werum, Diane Ross, Marge Bell, many others who have gone to heaven – torch needs to be picked up
- Prayers of my own mom, and many spiritual mothers (I think of Jan Bentley, Bonnie Bachich, Nancy Ross, Nancy Lovejoy, Donna Hall, praying ladies on Thursdays; Shirley, Marian, Becky, Rachel, etc.)
- PTL for those you see upfront, but real secret to this church and the ministry here and for me personally has been secret prayer behind the scenes, individuals, couples, small groups praying for GCBC

Col. 4:2 *Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.*

The next section is open doors, evangelism, today we park in prayer in v. 2.

PRAY

- **Begin with thanksgiving**
 - o Last weekend,
- **Things we're watchful of**
 - o Unity, humility, accountability,
 - o GraceLife, Pastor Coates
- **God's help to continue steadfastly**
 - o Personal prayer, family prayer, prayer for and with believers
 - o Pray for our church to grow in care, connection, community

OPENING ILLUSTRATION – my time in DRC, prayer, spiritual warfare

Takeaway – importance of being with believers, praying together

Last month Pastor Corey preached from 1 Peter a message “loving care, connection, and community.” I want to keep those 3 C's before us today as we look at this call to pray together, how prayer builds community and we need to pray for more connections in the body and grow in care by prayer.

Jesus didn't teach to pray ‘give *me* this day *my* daily bread and forgive *me*.’

We're to pray with and for *us* – 4:2 is plural verb, not just you; *groups*, too.

Title: **prayerfully growing together in groups** (connection, community, care)

Outline: 1. **Pray continually** – ‘*continue steadfastly in prayer...*’

2. **Pray watchfully** – ‘*being watchful in it with thanksgiving*’

Look back at ch 1 because this isn't the first time Paul's used the word *pray*.

Paul rarely says “I pray” in his letters, usually it’s “we pray.” **1:3** *We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when **we pray** for you ...*

⁹ *And so, from the day we heard, **we have not ceased to pray** for you ...*
That covers both points: pray continually and watchfully with thanksgiving

2:2: *that their hearts may be encouraged, being **knit together in love** ...*

Like a baby is knit together in the womb, the body of Christ is knit together in prayer, connected to Christ, His body. **2:19** warns against not ‘*holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.*’

We want to grow in small groups—we need homes willing to host to do that. There are many groups already we hope grow closer — prayer is a key part. Some churches call them ‘**growth groups,**’ we like the title ‘**life groups,**’ the goal is life-on-life, being in other’s lives, growing **applying truth in real life.** Church is essential – we need to gather as the church – but it’s also essential to our life and growth to **gather during the week,** whether with 2 or a group.

1st Pray continually.

Col 4:2 starts with plural verb to the church: ‘*continue steadfastly in prayer*’ – that’s to continue regularly, we’re to devote to that, not just on Sundays. If you think of prayer as a workout, a workout partner at a set time can help! If you think of soldiers, they need P.T., and doing it with other soldiers is key.

That Greek verb was used for groups of servants, soldiers, **someone on call.**

Acts 10:7 says Cornelius ‘*called...a devout soldier from among those who **attended him...***’ (same word as **Col 4:1**, devoutly continually ready on call).

Mark 3:9 uses this word for a boat Jesus had **continually ready**, on standby.

Romans 13:6 uses same verb: ‘*you also pay taxes, for the authorities are... **attending to this very thing...***’ (timely this week, April 15th!). We’re to be continually devoted to praying like the IRS is devoted to us paying taxes!

Rom 12:12 commands the church to be ‘*...persevering...**devoted to pray***’

Turn to the book of Acts. It helps to see this verb used for praying groups.

READ AND COMMENT ON 1:14, 2:42, 46, 6:4 -> 4:31 & CONTEXT

Erin Coates shared that Psalm this week as fencing put up at GL Canada. We need to pray more with believers and for believers around the world!

The book of Acts is a story of how God acts through the act of united prayer

Acts 8 – believers pray together for Spirit to come on the Samaritans

Acts 12 – home prayer meeting for Peter’s release from prison he visits

Acts 13 – church at Antioch prays with fasting for Saul & Barnabas mission

Acts 14 – elders are appointed in every church by prayer and fasting

Acts 16 – Paul & Silas pray and praise together in jail and bring house down

Acts 20 – Paul prays with the elders of the church in Ephesus

Acts 21 - Paul prays with the church before he leaves for Jerusalem, etc.

From there Paul is arrested and imprisoned and writes book of Colossians.

Paul tells the church in **Col 4:2** to continue that together – pray continually

That's #1 – pray continually – now

#2. pray watchfully (repeat)

Look at **Col 4:2** again: *Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it...*

NAS *'Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert...'* (NKJV 'vigilant').

It's not just alert in the sense of awake, it's aware of danger, a high alert.

ILLUSTRATION – sleeping in car as driver started off road – wide awake!

I knew a gal in college driving her friends—they prayed, she closed her eyes!

Col 4:2 says be alert, watch—pray with eyes open. Like Nehemiah rebuilding the wall amid enemies *'We made our prayer... and set a watch!'* (**Neh 4:9**).

That's not a solo mission – Col 4 is for the church, watch out for the team.

Same verb in **1 Cor 16:14** *'be watchful, stand firm...act like men, be strong'*

This is also used of soldiers in battle putting on armor (1 Thess 5). The old song Stand up for Jesus says 'put on the gospel armor, each piece put on with prayer, where duty calls or danger, be never [lacking] there.' Eph 6 also goes through the armor of soldiers, then this for the band of brothers: *'pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.'*¹

1 Pet 5:7 says cast all cares on him *'because he cares for you. ⁸ Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹ Resist him, firm in your faith [plural]...*

Years ago we had a mountain lion sighting on our property on a Sunday AM

—how watchful would you be if you knew there was a lion prowling around by the playground kids or on the hill or in the trees or hiding behind cars?

The Bible tells us there actually is a lion prowling around seeking to devour.

PTL for our safety team, their walkie talkies, how watchful they are here.

You're all on the spiritual safety team. You're all enlisted for security duty and watching out for other children of God. Jesus used this word 'watch' for someone watching to make sure the thief doesn't come in his home.² Prayer isn't a social media chat, it's a radio channel in the trenches, call for backup

Piper writes prayer is 'A Wartime Walkie-Talkie, Not a Domestic Intercom. Prayer is the walkie-talkie on the battlefield of the world. It calls on God for courage (**Ephesians 6:19**). It calls in for troop deployment and target location (**Acts 13:1, 2, 3**). It calls in for protection and air cover (**Matthew 6:13; Luke 21:36**). It calls in for firepower to blast open a way for the Word (**Colossians 4:3**). It calls in for the miracle of healing for the wounded soldiers (James 5:16). It calls in for supplies for the forces (**Matthew 6:11; Philippians 4:6**). And it calls in for needed reinforcements (**Matthew 9:38**). This is the place of prayer—on the battlefield of the world. It is a wartime walkie-talkie for spiritual warfare, not a domestic intercom to increase the comforts of the saints. And one of the reasons it malfunctions in the hands of so many Christian soldiers is that they have gone AWOL.'³

Pray as a watchman for others and yourselves. **Lk 21:34**: *watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down...[Jesus mentions sin] and cares of this life... ³⁶ But **stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength...***

Jesus urged the **small group of Peter, James, and John** to pray together in Gethsemane: He said *'Pray that you may not enter into temptation'* (22:40)

Even Jesus needed this, people to stay with and watch and pray with Him. Much more us! Jesus told the 3 men closest to Him in Mt 26:38 "...*remain here, and watch with me.*" [but they fell asleep] *And he said to Peter, "So, could you not watch with me one hour?"* ⁴¹ **Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."**

PTL He never slumbers or sleeps and intercedes for us

Opportunities to pray with others as a church:

- **Monday men's call** (Sean D)
- **Thursday ladies prayer group** at church (Becky)
- **Missions (Tim)** – younger families willing to host, he would love to involve
- **Most small groups** have a dedicated prayer time (want to grow in this more)
- Younger families to invite or possibly host monthly missions prayer group

Anytime you're with a fellow believer is a prayer opportunity!

YAG study faith is a community project. Paul Tripp defines this community as 'Christ-centered, grace-driven, intrusive [but] redemptive' relationships.

HANDOUT – Q # 3. Part of our church covenant for members is "To watch over other believers in brotherly love, through prayer..." – how can prayer help in watching over others in brotherly love and being accountable?

#5. How can praying together help build connection, community, and care?

#6. Do you have one or more people outside your home you regularly pray with and for? Is there anyone you have done **James 5:16** with this year (look it up)? If not, pray for and pursue that command of God.

#7. How can you build prayer more into your times with family or God's people this week?

FLIP HANDOUT OVER – PRACTICAL HELPS FOR PRAYER

Praying for your church – ideas

Days of week, letter that starts each day could be a prompt to pray for types of people, for example:

- M - Monday – **M**en of church
- T – Tuesday – **T**eens and children
- W – Wednesday – **W**omen of church
- Th – Thursday – **Th**anks for ministries and pray for any **Th**reats to unity
- F – Friday – **F**ellowship among the body

Specific people: - Use church photo directory to pray for a certain number of people or a page a day
- Consider reaching out to individuals to let them know you prayed for them or to ask for requests

Spiritual requests (examples from *Compelling Community* by Mark Dever and Jamie Dunlop) – **homework, put this in Bible and pray it this week.**

Last bullet point: Pray that we would see hospitality as an important part of our service to the body [pray for fellowship meals this month, and sign up!]

Praying with a fellow church member – ideas

- In times of fellowship before you depart, ask how you can pray for them
- Pray for them in person then and there where appropriate
- Make prayer a bigger part of groups or gatherings that you already do
- If you can't connect in person, call and pray with them over the phone

Growing in G.R.A.C.E. (Col 4:6, 1:6, 1 Peter 3:18 “grow in grace...”) – ideas for a believer you interact with regularly:

- G** - God's Word and Prayer, stir one another
- R** – Relationships (family, friends)
- A** – Accountability (any area you or other person need?)
- C** – Church, serving,
- E** – Evangelism, 1 or 2 people you want to share more with

Take this home as helps to pray together continually and watchfully with thanksgiving. Col 4:2 ends 'with thanksgiving...' no better note to end on.

- Thankful for last week, 2 men in their 20's who asked to pray for me
- Thankful several we hadn't seen for months are now back with us
- Thankful last week was most people on a Sunday since 2018 Easter
- Thankful with dozens moved since 2017, attendance is actually up
- Thankful most of all for the gospel of Jesus Christ and His family

As we come to communion, the top of your note sheet is a great way to pray

- A** – Adoration of God (His attributes, who He is)
- C** – Confession of sin
- T** – Thanksgiving
- S** – Supplication (requests)

In communion we adore Christ and proclaim His death until He comes

In communion we confess our sin, the cup reminds of blood for forgiveness

Thanksgiving is what Jesus did at the first communion (1 Cor 11:24)

This is a time for supplication, asking God for grace through His means

LET'S PRAY – INSTEAD OF ME PRAYING LET'S PRAY SILENTLY, PUTTING INTO PRACTICE THIS TEXT, PREPARING HEARTS FOR COMMUNION. LET'S ALL PRAY SILENTLY, THEN WE'LL SING

¹ v. 18 NIV.

² Mathew 24:43.

³ John Piper, *The Pleasures of God: Meditations on God's delight in Being God* (Multnomah Publishers), 343-72)