

Further Thought Questions

No doubt, when any of us think of the Newer Testament of the Bible, we think of the Apostle Paul. He wrote a majority of the letters which are included in the Newer Testament, and his letters to the Romans and Corinthians established church practices from the earliest centuries to today. Let's face it, Paul is famous. He is often listed as one of the people that most Christians would like to meet when they go to Heaven. Certainly Paul was used by God in a unique manner, at a unique time, and in remarkable ways to extend the Gospel to non-Jews all around the ancient world. But Paul did not do his work alone. Sure, he was THE apostle of the Gospel effort to the Gentiles, but he served with a great team of brothers and sisters in Christ who also labored for the sake of the Gospel. Their names are briefly listed in the end of some of Paul's letters, but mostly they are not remembered beyond these scant references in the text.

But Paul knew of their value and he lauded them with thanks and praise when he was able. He spoke of them as family, as fellow-laborers, and as fellow slaves to the cause of Christ. Paul knew that he was serving as only a part of what God was doing, and that many others were faithful and deserving of praise. When Paul recognized God's people and their service, He raised the name of Jesus Christ and encouraged everyone in continuing to strive after Jesus Christ all the more!

When I think of ministry here at Long Beach Alliance Church, I think of our team in the same way as Paul thought of his. God has chosen each of us. Some of us have a more public role than others. Often, those with the most public role get the loudest and highest praise.

But our team is not just one person who preaches. There are dozens of others who make up our team and who make an enormous difference in the discipling efforts of our church. Scott Trickett, Rob Zimmermann, Sherylynne Carriveau, Helen Blackwell, Tina Rand, David Mireles, Brad Lindsay, Donna Neel, Josh Kalsbeek, Scott Neel, Anthony Echeverry, Kristen Schultz, Barry Neel, Larry Hillhouse and many, many more are all quietly and faithfully serving the Lord.

Will you take some time in the next week, month, year, etc., to thank them? They are the unsung heroes of our church. And, they are certainly not alone. There are AWANA leaders, Kids & Youth leaders, Men's & Women's Ministry leaders, Marriage Builders Ministry leaders, Elders, Deacons, Deaconesses... The list goes on... Let's be a ministry which is thankful. Not just in our hearts, but with our words, with notes, with encouragement, with thanks, and with Jesus...

Thanks

Long Beach Alliance Church • November 25th, 2007 • Pastor Chris Lankford

EPAPHRAS, WHO IS ONE OF YOUR NUMBER, A BONDSLAVE OF JESUS CHRIST, SENDS YOU HIS GREETINGS, ALWAYS LABORING EARNESTLY FOR YOU IN HIS PRAYERS, THAT YOU MAY STAND PERFECT AND FULLY ASSURED IN ALL THE WILL OF GOD.

~COLOSSIANS 4:12 (NASB)

1) Live The Life For The Sake Of The Gospel

- A) Throughout the letter to the followers of Jesus Christ in Colossae, the Apostle Paul has made three main points:
 - i) **Avoid all forms of false teaching!** The power of the message can only be preserved through its purity (Colossians 1-2). Paul encourages all followers of Christ to get to know Jesus better in order to fight heresy. The message of Jesus is true and sufficient!
 - ii) **Live authentic Christian lives!** Put on the "new self" (Colossians 3). A transformed life authenticates the message of Jesus and paves the way for the communication of the Great News about Christ. Living the life means depending on Christ's sufficiency!

- iii) **Tell others about Jesus!** The purpose of a transformed life is not to simply “be good” or “sin less.” Rather, the abiding purpose for being a follower of Jesus Christ is to be a “life saver,” communicating the Great News of Jesus Christ in word & deed to “outsiders” (Colossians 4:2-6). Is Jesus truly sufficient? Then “say something” about His sufficiency to others!

2) Thanksgiving In The Trenches

- A) While the letter to the Colossians dealt with broad issues of the Colossians community, the more personal issues of Paul’s imprisonment and well-being were communicated by those with whom he was associated (Colossians 4:7-9).
- B) It is notable that Paul was not alone in his ministry. Despite his stellar credentials and superior abilities (cf. Philippians 3:4-11, Acts 26), he was surrounded by others with whom he worked. Ministry is never a lone-ranger effort!
- C) It is also notable that Paul was extremely complimentary of those with whom he served in ministry (e.g. Colossians 4:7, 9). Being complimentary of “family” doesn’t diminish the importance of Jesus Christ, it appreciates His provision!
- D) Tychicus (cf. Acts 20:4, 2nd Timothy 4:12, Titus 3:12), one of Paul’s most beloved “fellow bond-servants” (Colossians 4:7) is entrusted with both the letter to the Colossians and another letter to the Laodiceans (4:16).
- E) More interestingly, Tychicus is traveling with a run-away slave, Onesimus, who is returning to his master in Colossae (a man named Philemon) as a fellow Christian (cf. Philemon 10-16). Even those with “a past” are included as “faithful” in God’s Kingdom!

- F) This is further emphasized with the inclusion of John Mark, who had been a failed missionary earlier in his life (cf. Acts 13:13, 15:36-41), but had clearly redeemed his reputation (cf. 2nd Timothy 4:11). Failure does not disqualify a person from Christian service!

3) Concluding Thanks

- A) Paul extends greetings from three companions of Jewish birth (Aristarchus, John Mark, and Jesus/Justus, Colossians 4:10-11), and from three Gentile companions (Epaphras, Luke, and Demas, 4:12-14). The support for the Colossian church was substantial and significant. These men truly cared!
- B) It is notable that Nympha is mentioned, one of many women who served and helped in spreading the Gospel of Christ (4:15-16). God uses everyone (men, women, children) to communicate His message to the world!
- C) Finally, Archippus is encouraged “take heed” (lit. “see to it” or “make sure it is accomplished”) of his ministry (4:17), perhaps a call to a leader in Colossae to be passionate and faithful, in the same spirit of Epaphras (4:12).
- D) Paul closes the letter with a call for prayer (“remember,” 4:18) and extends “grace” to the followers of Christ in Colossae.

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καὶ Νύμφαν καὶ τὴν κατ’ οἶκον αὐτῆς ἐκκλησίαν. “And Nympha and the church that is in her house.” It cannot be determined with certainty whether the greeting to Νύμφαν, (Nympha) refers to a man (Νυμφᾶς, Nymphas, an abbreviated form of Νυμφόδωρος, Nymphrodorus; cf. Epaphras for Epaphroditus) or to a woman whose name was Νύμφα (Nympha). Since the earliest manuscripts had no accents by which the masculine and feminine forms might be distinguished, the only ancient evidence lies in the personal pronoun which follows’ “in her/his/their house”: (κατ’ οἶκον αὐτῆς/αὐτοῦ/αὐτῶν)—the manuscripts vary considerably, but on balance it appears preferable to understand the reference to a woman and render the whole phrase: “Nympha and the church that is in her house.” Summarized from *Colossians and Philemon*, by Peter T. O’Brien, pg. 256 (see also the textual note on pages 245-246 for more technical manuscript information), from *The Word Biblical Commentary Series, Volume 44*.