

FACILITATOR NOTES
First Presbyterian Church, San Antonio
Week of October 19, 2008—Colossians 4:2-6

LEADERSHIP NOTES

- Message: In our series, *The Empire Falls*, this week's title is "Open Door Policy," and it will be our last study in Colossians. We start stewardship next week "My 95", and we'll be in the Old Testament, Genesis 28.
- Weekly Timing Guide:
 - 20 min—Fellowship and gathering
 - 10 min—Worship and/or housekeeping
 - 15 min—Start It
 - 35 min—Read It
 - 25 min—Live It
 - 25 min—prayer

LEADERSHIP TIP

- It is imperative that you, as the leader of the group, be praying for each person by name in your Life Group. You might be sensitive to how you can make a quick contact with each one during the week, a personal email or phone call, just to let them know that you're thinking about them.
- Please remember that there are more questions in the Life Group Questions than a typical group can answer in the allotted time. You will need to be selective, knowing when to linger on a question because of the quality of sharing and when to skip questions all together. Again, you must be in prayer before the meeting, asking God to be breaking down the walls of resistance to authentic community and to be giving you wisdom in directing the conversation.

Question 4: While the admonishment to be watchful could refer to an eagerness for the Lord's return, it would be better if we don't forget that much of this letter is to call the Colossians to live well in light of false teachers who are teaching, "Christ plus . . . leads to salvation." Paul goes to lengths to show believers are free from such rules as, "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch" (2:21). The Colossians are complete in Christ and from that completeness flows ethical responsibilities and not the reverse. Part of the demands of the Gospel for the one who is complete in Jesus Christ is being active in the spread of the Gospel, the theme of our paragraph this week.

Questions 5 and 6: Paul is in prison, and could literally be in chains, yet he can call for thanksgiving. Such an attitude points to his confidence in the sovereignty of God. God has Paul where he needs to be (i.e., sharing the gospel with those who surround him). Paul includes thanksgiving, at least in part, because gratefulness counteracts righteousness by works. With the influence of the false teachers, this problem was a real potential for the church with the influence of the false teachers. Doing a task with thankfulness tends to keep that task in the realm of doing it from gratitude and removing it from the motivation of winning God's favor.

Questions 7 and 8: Ironic is defined in the American Heritage Dictionary as "Poignantly contrary to what was expected or intended." With Paul in jail, the natural thought would be for

an “open door” to refer to his getting out of jail. Jail is a place of separation from loved ones, a place of hardship and deprivation. An alert reader would anticipate the request of an open door to culminate in a reference to be freed from jail. Paul is asking for doors of ministry to open within the jail. His request demonstrates his full confidence in the sovereignty of God regarding his circumstances. Paul is focused on sharing the gospel wherever he finds himself, and his ability to evangelize is evidence that he is in the will of God.

Questions 9: There are at least three activities in the passage surrounding evangelism: prayer, conduct, and speech. You might want to jump ahead to questions 11 & 12 as a follow-up. Or simply ask how these three activities are interrelated. Are all three needed as a unit in evangelism?

Question 11: While we remain in need of mercy throughout our days on earth, we must have some evidence of a changed life in sharing the gospel with un-churched and formerly churched people. It should be remembered that the greatest change needs to be a genuine love for the person with whom we are sharing. All of us are hypocrites, and we are tempted to avoid or duck our God-given responsibility to share the Gospel because our lives are not all-together. We will always have to say that our calling to righteousness outstrips the way we live. Our lives will always be subject to the accusation of being hypocritical; our lives will always demonstrate that we are sinners in need of grace and mercy.

Question 12: The gospel needs to be explained for a person to understand it; no one can figure out the gospel unless it is explained to them. Sometimes we are tempted to try to avoid or duck our call to evangelism by claiming our lives are a testimony: after all, we think, we live uprightly, and our neighbors know we go to church, etc. But without the gospel being explained in a loving and winsome way, the un-church, formerly churched, and even some who go to church are incapable of figuring out the plan of salvation on their own unless we tell them.

You're on your own from here. You are in our prayers. Please don't hesitate to call if you need any help or have any questions. It is best to reach me this weekend on my cell: 324-1951.

Grace and peace to you,

William