

## Life Group Discussion

November 5, 2017

Based on Colossians 1:10; Philippians 1:27-30; Ephesians 4:1

### Overview

When praying for the people of the churches under his care Paul had a laser-like focus on their spiritual growth and well-being. It's not that he didn't care about their physical needs – he could be quite tender; he simply knew that all the health, wealth, and security that could be found in this life mean nothing if hearts remain distanced from God. He knew that the happiness so often sought in earthly experience has no weight in the scale against the joy of living a life defined and bounded by the love of God for us and ours for Him. Paul's words in the passages above reflect his deepest desire for Christians – that they would experience intimacy with God and that relationship would be seen in the way they interacted with the world and each other.

Paul also knew that it is not easy to live “a life worthy” because left to ourselves we tend to start cutting corners, smudging lines, and looking for loopholes. So, he prayed for the power of heaven to intervene; his prayers are models for Christians today; as we live in the world we are to pray for one another “...that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen (us) with power through His Spirit in (our) inner being.” (Ephesians 3:16, NIV)

### Discussion

Read Colossians 1: 10 from the Amplified translation:

*...so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord [displaying admirable character, moral courage, and personal integrity], to [fully] please Him in all things, bearing fruit in every good work and steadily growing in the knowledge of God [with deeper faith, clearer insight and fervent love for His precepts]*

1. On a sheet of paper and make three columns with the following headings: admirable character, moral courage, personal integrity; under each heading, make a list of words that describe these phrases. Share and compare your words with the group.
2. Take a couple of minutes and think about what “fully” pleasing the Lord looks like to you; write it down on your paper. Once all group members have finished writing, take turns sharing what you wrote.
3. Other passages in scripture talk about “bearing fruit” in relationship to Holy Spirit-inspired transformation; what kind of fruit do you think is expected in connection with “every good work”?
4. Choose one of the following to best describe your growth in the “in the knowledge of God”:
  - a collection of information about God;
  - development of a rule book to assist you in achieving a better life;
  - a process of deepening intimacy with Him.

Share your choice with the group and why you chose it.

5. What results, or outcomes are you experiencing from your current “growth in knowledge”?

6. Look again at the scripture passages and your answers to the earlier questions; how does your prayer life inform your relationship with God and the actions of your life?
7. What is the focus of your prayers when you pray for others (family, friends, your faith community, the world)
8. How do you think it would change your experience and the experience of those for whom you pray if you gave the bulk of your time to praying as Paul did for his churches?

The Voice translation presents Colossians 1:10 as a prayer; use it as a starting point to close your time together in prayer for each other and anyone else who comes to mind:

*May their (our) lives be a credit to You, Lord; and what's more, may they (we) continue to delight You by doing every good work and growing in the true knowledge that comes from being close to You.*

*Amen.*