

# ENCOURAGE

## A How To Guide

Encouragement—it is a command, it is a gift, it is a joy, and it is something we can all learn to do better. In this series we will look at some great encouragers in the NT and get some powerful “how to” ideas, because we all need to pour courage into one another.

These questions are designed to extend the impact of the weekend message. Use them to go deeper in your personal study time, with your family and/or with a group.

**1 Read Colossians 4:12.** *“He is always wrestling in prayer for you...”* Paul’s words about Epaphras affirms the priority of prayer. Epaphras came to Paul with disconcerting words of a strange new teaching in Colossae. He then stayed in Rome with Paul while Tychicus and Onesimus delivered Paul’s letter to confront this challenge. How then could Epaphras encourage the followers of Jesus at Colossae? He kneeled in prayer from Rome! Rick said, *“He was always praying, not because there was nothing else he could do, but because there was nothing better he could do.”* Share some ways you point others in the direction of Jesus by interceding for them “from a distance.” What are the obstacles that prevent us from developing a consistent prayer life today?

**2 TO ENCOURAGE THROUGH PRAYER . . . BE PERSISTENT.** Read Colossians 4:2. Epaphras was practicing what Paul preached. “He is always . . . in prayer for you.” (Col.4:12). As Rick noted, *“Anybody can pray once, but encouragers pray often.”* Encouragers make their requests to God as much about other’s needs as they do about their own needs. It can be discouraging at times, because people don’t respond to Jesus by our time tables. And, God doesn’t change people outside of their own free will. On the other hand, He **never** gives up on them either. How can we imitate the posture of Jesus who intercedes for us **every time** we call on God? Describe a change in your routine that will help you be more persistent in prayer for others.

**3 TO ENCOURAGE THROUGH PRAYER . . . FOCUS ON SPIRITUAL HEALTH.** Apart from being vague, we can pray like Epaphras, who asked for spiritual maturity and for God to work His will out in the lives of those at Colossae (see again Col. 4:12). **Read Colossians 1:9-11.** Name some of the “spiritual blessings” Paul mentions in His prayer for the Colossians. Name some “material blessings” that this world may offer that Paul doesn’t mention. Discuss ways that we can train our minds to pray for the “spiritual blessings” that will help deepen another person’s relationship with Jesus.

**4 TO ENCOURAGE THROUGH PRAYER . . . REALLY CARE.** The scripture says Epaphras was “always wrestling in prayer for you.” The original word for wrestle is akin to our word “agony.” Rick said, *“Prayer is hard work. It is serious ministry, and it is strenuous ministry.”* It described Epaphras’ deep feeling for his brothers and sisters. He was a prayer warrior. He did not want them to be led astray. Name some ways that you can develop a deeper love for others that would demand this kind of prayer.

**5 Rick concluded, “WE CAN STAND ANYTHING WHEN COVERED IN PRAYER.”** Pray from a distance: Name a few people who might need to “feel your prayers.” Intercede for them in prayer that they may grow in the direction of Jesus.

