Peacemakers // Home Bible Reading and Study
Week Five: August 2-8 // Colossians 4 & Philemon

This is our last week of study of Paul's letter to the Colossians. This week, we'll also be reading through his letter to Philemon, a member of the Colossian church, as Paul attempts to play the peacemaker for Philemon and Onesimus.

Let's begin in **Colossians 4:**

> **2 Devote yourselves to prayer with an alert mind and a thankful heart. 3 Pray for us, too, that God will give us many opportunities to speak about his mysterious plan concerning Christ. That is why I am here in chains. 4 Pray that I will proclaim this message as clearly as I should.**
> **5 Live wisely among those who are not believers, and make the most of every opportunity. 6 Let your conversation be gracious and attractive so that you will have the right response for everyone.**

Paul writes about **PRAYING FOR OPPORTUNITY** and **SEIZING OPPORTUNITY**, and it provides us with a chance to examine our own history with opportunities to share. If you're like me, you have regrets…UNseized opportunities. It isn't hard for me to pray for doors to open; it's just hard for me to always walk through them when they are.

On the television show "The Office," Ryan "the Temp" keeps a list of excuses in his phone so that he can go to when needed. Sometimes I think that Satan does the same thing, excuses written close to our minds…easy to call up to keep us from following through on the same opportunities we have prayed for. Can you be honest with yourself about your go-to excuses? Think through those that come to mind. Are they keeping me from "making the most" of my opportunity?

Verse 5 encourages us to LIVE WISELY among those that are aren't yet followers of Christ. Paul then turns toward our mouths… our conversations. So what does it look like to for you to speak wisely? Are there parts of you that God wants to amplify? Are there words that, in order for them to be 'gracious and attractive,' need to be filtered? Ask God to show you those and record them here as places to grow:

TO AMPLIFY	TO FILTER
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Peacemakers // Home Bible Reading and Study
Week Five: August 2-8 // Colossians 4 & Philemon

Now read through Paul's letter to Philemon. It's just 25 verses, but it's a masterclass in peacemaking:

> 1 This letter is from Paul, a prisoner for preaching the Good News about Christ Jesus, and from our brother Timothy.
> I am writing to Philemon, our beloved co-worker, 2 and to our sister Apphia, and to our fellow soldier Archippus, and to the church that meets in your house.
> 3 May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.
> 4 I always thank my God when I pray for you, Philemon, 5 because I keep hearing about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all of God's people. 6 And I am praying that you will put into action the generosity that comes from your faith as you understand and experience all the good things we have in Christ. 7 Your love has given me much joy and comfort, my brother, for your kindness has often refreshed the hearts of God's people.
> 8 That is why I am boldly asking a favor of you. I could demand it in the name of Christ because it is the right thing for you to do. 9 But because of our love, I prefer simply to ask you. Consider this as a request from me—Paul, an old man and now also a prisoner for the sake of Christ Jesus.
> 10 I appeal to you to show kindness to my child, Onesimus. I became his father in the faith while here in prison. 11 Onesimus hasn't been of much use to you in the past, but now he is very useful to both of us. 12 I am sending him back to you, and with him comes my own heart.
> 13 I wanted to keep him here with me while I am in these chains for preaching the Good News, and he would have helped me on your behalf. 14 But I didn't want to do anything without your consent. I wanted you to help because you were willing, not because you were forced. 15 It seems you lost Onesimus for a little while so that you could have him back forever. 16 He is no longer like a slave to you. He is more than a slave, for he is a beloved brother, especially to me. Now he will mean much more to you, both as a man and as a brother in the Lord.
> 17 So if you consider me your partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. 18 If he has wronged you in any way or owes you anything, charge it to me. 19 I, PAUL, WRITE THIS WITH MY OWN HAND: I WILL REPAY IT. AND I WON'T MENTION THAT YOU OWE ME YOUR VERY SOUL!
> 20 Yes, my brother, please do me this favor for the Lord's sake. Give me this encouragement in Christ.
> 21 I am confident as I write this letter that you will do what I ask and even more! 22 One more thing—please prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping that God will answer your prayers and let me return to you soon.
> 23 Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends you his greetings.
> 24 So do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my co-workers.
> 25 May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

Watch this week's lesson if you missed the backstory on this relationship...it's a doozy.

But what I want us to focus on this week in our reflection is verse 6: "I am praying that you will put into action the generosity that comes from your faith as you understand and experience all the good things we have in Christ."

Peacemakers // Home Bible Reading and Study
Week Five: August 2-8 // Colossians 4 & Philemon

Paul reminds Philemon and us today that we will be MOVED to take advantage of our opportunities when we EXPERIENCE Christ and UNDERSTAND what we have in Him… all the good things.

We are more generous when we feel like we have more. We are stingier when we feel like we have little to give. Paul is telling us…you have SO MUCH! There's no use to be stingy with our forgiveness and love.

So as simple as it sounds and as impossible as it is to do… let's count our blessings. Write down on these lines what comes to mind when you think about your blessings:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

May God's willingness to bless us even we were not deserving MOVE us into the opportunities to share that HE provides. May walk wide-eyed into our world, ready to make peace where we are shown.

This week's prayer:
God give us many opportunities to speak about your mysterious plan concerning Christ. Give us opportunities to make peace. Make our words full of grace and beauty so that we will look like You as we point others to You. This is our prayer as **peacemakers**. Amen.

Matnip<><