

A PERSONAL TOUCH
7 EXAMPLES – 7 TRAITS WORTH IMITATING
Colossians 4:7-18

Maxie Dunham tells the story of Al McGuire and Butch Lee.

McGuire was basketball coach at Marquette.

Butch Lee was a prima donna player.

Coach tried to teach him about **team** basketball:

“The game is forty minutes long.

If you divide that between two teams, each gets about 20 minutes with ball.

5 play on each side. so each gets the ball about 4 minutes.

I know what you can do with the ball in 4 minutes.

I want you to show me what you can do the other 36 minutes.”

What do we do when someone else has the ball? When someone else is in the limelight?

In Col. 4 we meet people surrounding Paul who were *never* in the limelight.

Who were they? What did they do to make his ministry more effective?

Paul concludes with personal notes in which he describes some of these people.

Difficult passage to preach!

Not much deep theology.

Not many exciting events.

Easy to get bored.

But we see how important people are to Paul. (Rom. 16 & Col. 4)

He doesn't JUST write to the church in general.

He cares about these *individuals*.

He especially cares about godly character.

When we observe what he says about these people, we learn how important character is!

God cares about people!

God cares about godly character.

We're about to meet seven godly people that are WORTH IMITATING!

We'll examine seven character traits we too ought to exhibit.

These are marks of a godly leader.

They're held up to all of us, leaders or not,

because leaders model what God intends for all His children to look like.

REPORT ON HIS CONDITION 4:7-9

In short letter it would be difficult to tell everything going on in Rome.

Perhaps due to political situation it wouldn't be wise to write much.

Tychicus and Onesimus would tell them what's going on.

1. TYCHICUS 4:7-8

Tychicus accompanied Paul on his final trip to Jerusalem.

He was probably sent to assure proper handling of offering for needy in Jerusalem

(Acts 24:17; Rom. 15:25-26; 1 Cor. 16:1; 2 Cor. 8-9).

He's mentioned in other passages as Paul's coworker.

Paul sent him to take letters to the churches in Colosse, Philippi, and Ephesus, as well as a personal letter to Philemon.

Paul points out some of his notable character traits:

* **Loved**

Tychicus is BELOVED brother, probably friendly and outgoing—made a lot of friends.

* **Servant**

He's introduced as a MINISTER (deacon/servant) and FELLOW SERVANT (slave). Both imply willingness to serve others.

He didn't seek glory, nor did he want to be served.

He demonstrated the attitude of a servant.

* **Faithful** He's a FAITHFUL worker, worthy of trust. 4 demonstrations:

He was sent to oversee offering for the needy in Jerusalem. Acts 20:4

Evidence of trust. Paul sent trusted representatives to inspire confidence.

Paul trusted him to take Titus' place in Crete so he could come to Paul. Titus 3:12

Paul sent him as representative to resolve problem at Ephesus. 2 Tim. 4:12

He carries the letters and trusted as messenger to report what's going on in Rome.

* **Encouraging**

Finally, Tychicus is an encourager.

He demonstrates ABILITY TO ENCOURAGE DISCOURAGED PEOPLE.

Letters Paul wrote from jail demonstrate they're discouraged

due to their suffering and what was happening to their leaders.
Tychicus is called to come along side and encourage them.

When we're discouraged, we need the support of faithful people who will come alongside to encourage us.

2. ONESIMUS 4:9

Paul also sent Onesimus, Philemon's slave who had escaped from there.

God had supernaturally directed him to Paul in Rome.

He didn't know that's where he was going, or what would happen there.

He just wanted to escape from his master's house.

Now he had come to know Christ.

After telling him about Christ, Paul sent him back to his master's house.

* Useful

Though name means *"USEFUL,"* he was totally *useless* until now.

God had transformed his life and made him *useful*.

God is still making useful people out of the useless.

Kent Hughes: newspaper clipping in The East African Standard in Nairobi:

"All debts to be paid!"

I, Allan Harangui, . . . have dedicated services to the Lord Jesus Christ. I must put right all my wrongs. If I owe you any debt or damage personally, or any of the companies I have

been director or partner of.... Please contact me for a settlement. No amount will be disputed. God and His Son Jesus Christ be glorified.”

Like Zaccheus, God is still transforming people!

*Perhaps Paul felt that when they heard what God had done in Onesimus' life, the people in the church would be **encouraged**.* Think about it!

God had taken a runaway slave all the way to Rome where God sent Paul at government expense, to an appointment neither expected!

As a result of God's careful planning, a *useless* slave named “*useful*” had become truly *useful* to his master and to the church at Colosse. **Philem. 11**

God is doing unexpected things, even in the midst of events which as far as they could see were only a source of pain to them.

God knows what He's doing! Trust Him!!

* **Faithful** * **Loved**

Paul considers him a ***faithful*** and ***loved*** brother.

Though he wasn't faithful previously, now Paul considers him ***trustworthy***.

This ***faithful*** servant would give an accurate report of events in Rome.

PERSONAL GREETINGS 4:10-15

Paul sends greetings from other **CO-LABORERS** in Rome (10-14)

* **Fellow workers**

Two related characteristics:

WORKERS —worked hard

CO-WORKERS—they were team players; worked together for God’s glory.
Of six who send greetings, three are only Jews **COLLABORATING** with Paul
Paul seems to have felt isolated from his own people.

These didn’t compete with him, they **WORKED TOGETHER WITH HIM.**

* **Encouraging**

They were an **encouragement, a comfort,** to him.

Medicinal expression (= “*paragoric*”)—takes away pain and gives relief.

3. **Aristarchus 4:10a**

Aristarchus was a Macedonian Jew living in Thessalonica.

He was imprisoned during demonstration in Ephesus (Acts 19:29)

He too accompanied offering for needy saints in Jerusalem (20:14)

He accompanied Paul on his trip to Rome (27:2).

* **Companion in prison**

Identified as **companion in prison,** and **co-worker** (Philem. 23-24; Rom. 16:7).

* **Co-worker** * **Encouragement**

4. **Mark 4:10b**

He was Barnabas’ cousin and author of gospel bearing his name.

Traveled with Paul & Barnabas; pressure arose; Mark left (12:12, 25; 13:13).

After that, Barnabas wanted him again; Paul wasn’t willing to waste time.

The conflict was so strong Paul and Barnabas split because of him.

Why, after a few years' separation, does Paul mention him again?

Although he doesn't say more, reminds them of command to welcome him.

In Philemon he describes him as his **co-worker** (Philem. 24).

* **Useless** => **Useful**

At conclusion of ministry, Mark was **useful** to Paul (2 Tim. 4:11).

Barnabas' investment demonstrates value of shaping Mark for service.

* **Welcomed** * **Co-worker** * **Encouragement**

Mark may be an encouragement to every servant who has attempted to serve God and failed. God did not discard him. He later proved faithful and useful.

5. Jesus (**Justus**) **4:11**

* **Co-worker** * **Encouragement**

Another coworker, his nickname is common, but we don't know more than that he was included among Paul's three encouraging Jewish coworkers.

[Besides three Jewish leaders, Paul sends a greeting from . . .]

6. **Epaphras** **4:12-13**

* **Servant of Christ**

He had gone to keep Paul company during these difficult days.

Paul considered him a **beloved and faithful** minister of Christ

* **Constantly struggling on their behalf**

Though far away, he was still concerned about them.

He agonized, *struggling fiercely, working hard*, on their behalf.

* **Constantly praying for them**

His main effort was directed toward PRAYER.

It was most powerful way of fighting on their behalf at long distance.

It was most powerful way of fighting on their behalf if he were with them!!!

He invested long hours of struggle, praying for them.

His purpose was that they stand firm, perfect and completely confident, based on knowledge of whole will of God.

Prayer is only means we have of assuring the desired results.

Epaphras, like Jesus & Paul, worked intensely, agonizing in prayer for people he loved.

Oswald Sanders: "The eminence of great leaders of the Bible is attributable of the fact that they were great in their praying."

E. M. Bounds: "They were not leaders because of brilliancy of thought, because they were exhaustless in resources, because of their magnificent culture or native endowment, but because by the power of prayer, they could command the power of God."

An elderly preacher, who had been criticized as old-fashioned, died. Overhearing a remark about him, the undertaker responded, "He may have had faults; nobody's perfect; but he's the only one I ever prepared for burial that had large calluses on his knees!"

* **Desires that they stand firm**

* **Desires that they be controlled by God's will**

Like Paul, Epaphras desired that they be controlled by knowledge of God's will so as to live in a way that is worthy of God and pleasing to Him.

His **HARD WORK** in prayer demonstrated his zeal for their well being.

His attitude shows what the heart of all God's servants should be like.

We should be genuinely interested in one another.

We devote ourselves to praying continually, that others might know God's will, and stand firm, perfect and completely confident before Him.

Observing these servants, we realize they **worked hard**—not given to laziness.

They **worked together** to accomplish what God wanted.

They weren't competing for glory, but were seeking God's glory.

"There's no limit to what can be accomplished when we don't care who gets the credit."

Qualities weren't based on knowledge, not even on *knowledge* of God's Word.

Attitudes only God's Spirit produces, as He lives in us and forms His character

Specific greetings are directed to the brethren there (15)

Besides sending greetings from his colleagues, Paul asked them to greet others

He especially wanted them to greet the people at Laodicea

EXCHANGE OF LETTERS 4:16

He asks them to exchange letters so both benefit from both letters.

Two churches facing similar problems and could encourage one another.

Other letter might give them a different perspective on the problem.

EXHORTATION TO ARCHIPPUS 4:17

7. ARCHIPPUS 4:17

*** Fellow soldier**

In Philem. 2, Paul describes him as ***a fellow soldier***. They were fighting together

Involves both: **Hard work** **Co-work**

*** Discouraged**

Although we don't know details, it appears the situation was getting to him.

He was becoming discouraged.

"Never give up!"

Instead of throwing in the towel, Paul encouraged him to hang in there, to complete the work, to accomplish the ministry God called Him to.

Churchill's famous speech: "Never give up!"

God gave him the commission, not men.

Therefore, be careful to complete it so we will be found faithful.

This theme is appropriate for all God's children, especially when everything seems to be going wrong. *Know the feeling?*

God has given us all some ministry as part of His body.

We need to find out what that is, go for it,

fulfill the ministry God called us to, and not give up.

What ministry has God called YOU to? Are you discouraged?

Don't give up! Hang in there! Finish the task God called you to fulfill!

FINAL GREETING 4:18 Paul closes with his personal greeting.

He reminds them of what he's going through, so they will continue to pray

He desires that they experience in a practical way the full extent of God's grace.

REVIEW

Paul wrote the church at Colosse where he had probably never been personally.

Through personal encounters he established a relationship with these people.

When he realized Judaizers were infiltrating teaching people to try to live by the law, he wrote.

His purpose was to stop the spreading influence of this movement by clearly affirming the true basis of godly living. His main idea:

**WHEN WE ARE IN CHRIST WE HAVE EVERYTHING
WE LACK NOTHING WE NEED TO PLEASE GOD!**

Even the issues we have been looking at this morning aren't legalistic things we try to accomplish in order to please God.

These are traits God's Spirit produces in us so that His people will love one another and be more effective in building up each other.

The story of the old violin illustrates the contrast.

The apparently worthless old violin was about to be sold for a couple of dollars until an old man came to the front and began to play beautifully on its strings. —In the end it sold for three thousand!

The poet asks, “What changed it’s worth?” The answer: “*THE TOUCH OF THE MASTER’S HAND!*”

People caught in sin are about to be sacrificed on the auction block for their apparent lack of value.

“But the MASTER comes, and the foolish crowd Never can quite understand the worth of a soul, and the change that’s wrought By the TOUCH OF THE MASTER’S HAND.”

That’s what Paul is pointing to — the change that the Master’s hand has made in the lives of apparently insignificant people who will never be in the limelight — *like us!*

What can the touch of the Master’s hand do in us? Look and see! Here’s what:

SEVEN TRAITS WORTH MODELING: (Summary)

1. **Love**—Our attitude towards others ought to stimulate love
2. **Service**—Our attitude should be that of serving others; not *being* served.
3. **Faithfulness**—worthy of trust and confidence. Fulfilling our ministry faithfully
4. **Encouragement**—helping the discouraged. Stimulating them to hang in there

5. Usefulness—making a valuable contribution to the body
6. Working hard—working hard for God’s glory. Especially praying for others
7. Working together—CO-laborers—not only working hard, but working together, team work.

Not competing to see who can get credit.

Working with others in such a way that God gets all the glory!

A HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT:

Evaluate your own life. Which of these traits is present in your life? Which are missing?

Identify an area where God has some work to do.

Make a commitment to pray daily that God will transform this area of your life in order to make us the kind of people He wants US to be.

Focusing on this list of traits helps us focus on what’s important to God.

Ultimately ONLY GOD can transform us!

We can’t remake ourselves!

Trying harder won’t get us there!

Cause for constant prayer,

asking God to change us

asking God to produce these traits in us.

It’s not about adopting another legalistic set of rules!

It’s about trusting GOD to transform us—to form His character in us.