

JESUS CHRIST, OUR ALL IN ALL

A Study of Colossians

STUDY NINE

A Brief Checklist for Believers

Colossians 4:2–6

There's a lovely interlude toward the end of the letter to the Colossians. It provides sort of a checklist, if you will, for those of us who know the Lord Jesus. These are simple but profound words that appear in these five verses. They address our life with fellow believers as well as our life among those who are on the outside—literally, the Greek says, "outside," in verse five where we're told to live wisely among those outsiders.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

PILOTS need them. Doctors need them. Teachers and parents need them. For many, checklists have become more than a self-help tip. Some professions require checklists as a policy while busy families cling to them like a lifeline in the crashing waves of day-to-day life . . . and rightfully so.

Checklists help us order our thoughts. They clarify priorities, keep us focused, and aid productivity. They teach us which road to take when life puts a dozen before us.

As we see in Colossians, the use of checklists spans time and cultures. Paul offered a quick, little checklist before closing his letter to the church of Colossae. Pastor Chuck Swindoll takes us through this brief passage, Colossians 4:2–6, to help us walk according to God's priorities.



www.insight.org | www.insightworld.org

Copyright © 2014, 2022 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide.
Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.
Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

A Brief Checklist for Believers

Colossians 4:2–6



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Begin by reading *Colossians 4:2–6*. Do so only once and in your favorite translation. Afterward, record a prayer below asking God to bless your time in His Word. Pray for the Spirit to instruct your mind and to anchor His Word in your heart.

Thank You, Father, for the joy of Christ coming into our lives. Thank You for the difference He makes. Thank You for the model of Paul, who though chained to a soldier, of all things, had such a positive outlook and could exhort us who are free to live in a way that is attractive to those on the inside and the outside. May there be a difference in our relationship with outsiders as a result of what we have heard and learned and will do. In Christ's name we pray. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

As you study *Colossians 4:2–6*, note especially what Paul wrote regarding prayer and the Colossians' relationship with those outside the church.



Observation: Little Things Mean a Lot

Observe *Colossians 4:2–6*. Jot down your findings below.



A Brief Checklist for Believers

Colossians 4:2–6

What attitude did Paul tell the Colossians to have (*Colossians 4:2*)?

What did Paul tell the Colossians to pray for (*4:3–4*)?

Passion is in Paul's pen as he writes these words. Prayer is to be active, not passive. Bold, not weak. It's to be constant, not casual. It requires alertness, not a dreamy sort of wandering through thoughts and words. In today's terms, Paul is saying to us, "When it comes to prayer, get with it! Get with it!" There's vigilance in the command. No need for a long, drawn-out series of words but short, punctuated, to the point.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

How did Paul want the Colossians to live among non-Christians (*4:5*)?



A Brief Checklist for Believers

Colossians 4:2–6

According to Paul, what characteristics should accompany the Colossians' speech (*Colossians 4:6*)?

Simple, short, unambiguous—but if just one word could describe this checklist, perhaps it would be *vigilance*. Christians live their lives spiritually awake, alive, and eager. They walk in freedom from sin and eternal death, seeing every situation as an opportunity to express Christ's love and to attract others with Christ's message.



Interpretation: Ministry Opportunities and Obstacles

During interpretation, we dig our way to clarity with the tools of Bible study to unearth the theological gems found in the words of the text.

Prayer for Insiders

Explain what Paul's command in *Colossians 4:2*, "Devote yourselves to prayer with an alert mind and a thankful heart," means. Alert to what? What would this act look like in the routine of life?



A Brief Checklist for Believers

Colossians 4:2–6

Paul did not hesitate to ask for prayer. Did you see that Paul *did not* ask for his own prison release? He aligned his life goal around the gospel of Jesus. How does Paul's prayer teach us to be specific and visionary in our own praying (*Colossians 4:3–4*)?

Devote yourself to prayer. Do it with alertness. Do it with a thankful heart. Often, prayer accompanies a thankful heart. Get away from the routine, habitual prayer which some of you have been linked to long enough. You need to learn to pray. And the best way to learn is to teach yourself. Break the habit of longstanding, familiar words, and bring in words that are fresh—that are original. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

The New American Standard Bible follows closely Paul's Greek phrasing in *4:3*, "that God will open up to us a door for the word." Likely, Paul meant the hearts of non-Christians when he said *door*. How does this instruct our prayers for non-Christians today?



A Brief Checklist for Believers

Colossians 4:2–6

Living among Outsiders

Why is it important and what does it mean to live wisely among outsiders? What did Paul refer to specifically when he said to make the most of every opportunity?

Paul wanted our speech toward outsiders to be gracious, attractive, and informed. How do these characteristics support spreading the gospel? What do we lose if we neglect these characteristics?

Paul's finger-length checklist contains truckloads of theological depth. Such depth connects us with *why* we do what we do—praying for others and sharing the gospel. That way we not only focus our minds on God's priorities but align our hearts with God's vision.



Correlation: You Are the Light of the World

In the greatest sermon ever preached, Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, He uttered remarkable words about our role as His followers in this world. Matthew 5:13–16 correlates well with our study of Colossians 4:2–6.



A Brief Checklist for Believers

Colossians 4:2–6

Take time now to read and study *Matthew 5:13–16*. What two images did Jesus use to describe His followers in this world? What do they mean, and why are these important for our identity as Christians?

How does Matthew 5:13–16 complement Colossians 4:2–6?

When you are wise . . . you size people up. You pay attention to who they are and how they think. You learn from the signals they give you. Wisdom doesn't come across as being unbecoming or rude. People are not coerced or forced or embarrassed into believing the gospel. They are charmed into righteousness. No one wants to be made to look foolish. Wisdom wears well. It's winsome. It's convincing. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Living Vigilant

Pastor Chuck created four application principles for our consideration. Reflect on them, and let them help you live by Paul's checklist.

1. *Strengthen your commitment to pray.* Be watchful, specific, visionary.
2. *Ask for greater wisdom in your Christian walk.* Cultivate tact. Use common sense. Think before you respond.



A Brief Checklist for Believers

Colossians 4:2–6

3. *Pay closer attention to outsiders.* They certainly have their eyes and ears on you. Study how to better love them and how to communicate with them more clearly.
4. *Work on becoming more winsome and charming.* Your words matter. Speak intentionally. Consider how you will be heard.

Which of the areas above do you already focus upon? Which seems to come more naturally to you?

Which area do you need to improve? In what way specifically do you need to do so?

Take a moment now to pray for at least one non-Christian you know. Ask God to open his or her heart, to give you the words to say to this person, and to create an opportunity for you to start a gospel discussion. Record below how the Spirit is leading you and how He wants you to broach that conversation.



A Brief Checklist for Believers

Colossians 4:2–6

We just studied Paul’s checklist of little things. By now, we can affirm this statement: “Sometimes when I consider what tremendous consequences come from little things . . . I am tempted to think . . . there are no little things.”¹ Paul certainly believed it. He taught it to the Colossians, and God preserved it for our instruction so we can do what matters.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for being devoted to me, for putting someone in my life to share with me the mystery of Christ, and for leading me to Yourself. I pray for wisdom. Guide my speech to be winsome for outsiders. Help me speak boldly and clearly as I ought. Keep me vigilant and expectant, knowing that Your reigning Son, Jesus our Lord, might split the skies at any moment. In His name, amen.

ENDNOTE

1. Bruce Barton, as quoted in Stephen R. Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Kindle ed. (New York: RosettaBooks, 2004), 287.

