

## **The Sufficiency of Christ and Community**

**Colossians 4:7-18**

Pastor Bryan Clark

One of the things I like to do in my down time is I like to build things. I like to build out of wood, I like to build out of steel and for several years I've taken up the hobby of welding but you're still kind of limited in what you can build, so somebody talked me into pushing that, really, to the next level which is blacksmithing. So I built myself a forge and for the last couple of years I've been trying to learn how to be a blacksmith and it's actually quite enjoyable. But one of the concerns I had is you get that bed of coals to about 1,700 – 1,800 degrees and I thought: *You know, I really don't want to hang around in my shop for an hour while that cools, but I really don't want to leave while it's hot in case something would fall into it.* So that was one concern I had and was really amazed to realize that as long as you leave that bed of coals together, it can sit for two or three hours and all you have to do is walk back to it and flip the air on and suddenly you have a tremendous amount of heat. But if you spread those coals out, it's less than five minutes and you can touch them with your hand. And every time I do that, I think: *What a great picture of what the Bible teaches us about the community of faith.*

It is when we come together that we really experience the fire of Jesus and we thrive as believers. But when we start to become isolated – when we start to become independent – it isn't long until that fire goes out and we really start to struggle in our walk with God. As a matter of fact, professional counselors and psychologists would tell us that those people that seem to struggle the most are often those people who are living lives without significant relationships and it causes all kinds of problems and struggles in our lives. God has made us to be relational beings. But it does raise a question. We've been working our way through the Book of Colossians – and we complete that this evening – and the theme has been the sufficiency of Christ – that Jesus is enough. He's big enough, He is adequate, He's sufficient for our every need, He's sufficient for our every longing.

If that's true, it seems to me that might actually do more to promote this idea of this kind of independent, individual Christian faith rather than a value of community of faith. But is that true? That's the question we want to wrestle with today. What does the sufficiency of Christ look like as it relates to our relationships with other believers? If you have a Bible, turn with me to Colossians chapter 4. We'll pick it up in verse 7 and through the end of the book. It is worth noting in verse 18 that Paul identifies that he writes this final section with his own hand. What he means by that is it would be very common to use some sort of a scribe to write the book where Paul's talking and the scribe is writing it down. But at the end of the book – and I think he's talking about starting in verse 7 not verse 18 – this salutation, this final part of the book, he takes the pen in hand and he's going to write it himself. It makes it a very personal conclusion to the note.

One of the things that's really interesting that we wrestle with is in a book where there is such an economy of language – and what we mean by that is there was nowhere in this book where Paul got wordy; there's nowhere we he really went off on a tangent. The language was very precise. We would say an economy of language. And yet you get to the end of the book and from verse 7 all the way through verse 18 there's this lengthy discussion about, “By the way, so and so says hi and so and so is coming to visit” and all these people – it seems very much out of place with the rest of the book unless Paul is trying to connect the idea of the sufficiency of Christ as it plays out in his own life as a missionary of the Gospel and back to these churches. This would be the type of section of

the book that in your quiet time you might read through quickly and say, “Well, that really doesn’t apply to me,” and you move on to the next thing. But we have to wrestle with the fact that in a book with such economy of language there’s a lengthy discussion about the people on Paul’s team, and what do we do with that and what’s the relevance of that to our lives.

I don’t think it’s really necessary to go into some big biographical detail about every person mentioned. I don’t think that’s really the point – as a matter of fact, I think if we do that we’re going to lose the point – but rather we need to just go through the text, I’ll make some comments along the way, and then kind of bring it to an application at the end. By the way, for those of you who are young couples and still having children, you get some great names here if you’re still struggling for names for your children.

Verse 7:

**As to all my affairs, Tychicus, our beloved brother and faithful servant and fellow bondservant in the Lord, will bring you information.** (\*NASB, Colossians 4:7)

The first one we learn about is Tychicus. We’ve met him in the Book of Acts. We know he’s from the city of Ephesus. Paul was there for a lengthy stay. That’s probably when he came to faith in Jesus and has been part of Paul’s traveling team. He shows up in various places in the Book of Acts. Now most of these people we’re going to talk about were part of Paul’s traveling team. And I don’t know what comes to your mind when I say that, but I think it’s important to understand what we mean by that. Turn back to 2 Corinthians chapter 11 just a few pages over; we’re going to pick it up halfway through verse 23 where Paul is reminding them what it’s been like for him as a missionary of the Gospel. And as we read through this we need to remind ourselves when these people were traveling partners with Paul this is what they experienced. He says:

**...in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches. Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern?** (2 Cor. 11:23-29)

That’s Paul’s overview of what it’s been like to be a missionary of the Gospel and it would be fair to think that those people who were with him as part of his ministry team endured most of these things with him. Even though it’s not recorded, it’s fair to think when Paul was beaten, they were beaten; when Paul was thrown in prison, they were thrown in prison; when Paul was hungry, they were hungry; when Paul was shipwrecked, they were shipwrecked. So if in your mind you imagine Paul as kind of a celebrity – like kind of the campaign trail – and you have this entourage that goes with him and it’s all kind of glamorous to study at the feet of Paul, you’ve misunderstood. This would have been a very, very difficult journey to go with the apostle Paul, through his sufferings, through his beatings, through his imprisonments – and they probably right with him – so when you think about these people, they’ve been with Paul through some very significant stuff.

He says of Tychicus, “[He’s my] **beloved brother** [we’d say my Christian friend] **and faithful servant** [probably talking about serving Paul and others] **and fellow bond-servant** [probably better bond-slave] **in the Lord...**” – that Tychicus has been a faithful friend and a faithful ministry partner.

**For I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts;** (Col. 4:8)

If we were to try and put one word on each of these people, for Tychicus I’d probably put the word “faithful”. He’s just been a faithful ministry partner and friend through very difficult times. Verse 9:

**and with him Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of your number. They will inform you about the whole situation here.**

Onesimus was a runaway slave. The church in Colossae met in the home of Philemon. Philemon had a slave by the name of Onesimus and somewhere along the way Onesimus ran away and there’s really a whole New Testament book written about that story called the Book of Philemon. And next week and the following week we’re going to go through that book and get the rest of the story. But in the first century world, for a slave to go AWOL was serious business. You’d have to conclude there was some pretty serious stuff going on and he finally just took off. Somehow he runs into the apostle Paul, Paul leads him to Christ and he’s been radically changed. And as a result of that Paul is sending him back. And again, we’ll talk about that more next week and the week following.

But you would have to imagine that when these people in Colossae heard that Onesimus was coming back, there probably was an audible groan because life was probably better with him gone. You just have to imagine, he made life so miserable for everybody that he finally just took off. But there is the reminder in this that that’s what the church is about. It’s about the fact that people change through the power of Jesus and Paul’s sending him back saying, “He’s not the same guy. He’s now found Jesus and he’s coming back.”

One of the things we always have to be about as the church of Jesus Christ is recognizing people change. It’s very discouraging when people bring up stuff that happened ten years ago. “Well, you know that person did such-and-such ten years ago.” Fine. People change through the power of Jesus, and that’s the story of Onesimus. I might use the word “changed”. “Faithful” for Tychicus, “changed” for Onesimus.

Verse 10:

**Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings;**

Aristarchus was actually a fellow prisoner. This isn’t spiritual language; he’s talking about this guy that’s in prison with him. We know that he was with Paul in Ephesus – remember that turned into a big riot there – we know that he was with Paul when he journeyed to Jerusalem. We know that he was with Paul when he journeyed from Jerusalem to Rome – and you remember that involved a shipwreck and all of that – Aristarchus would have been a part of all of that. And there seems to be a sense in which he was so tightly connected with Paul that when Paul was thrown in prison, he was thrown in prison. So now from a Roman prison Paul says, “He’s sitting here with me.” He’s been his ministry partner, his fellow prisoner. We might put the word “loyal” next to him.

**and also Barnabas's cousin Mark (about whom you received instructions; if he comes to you, welcome him);** (v. 10)

You remember from our study in the Book of Acts that John Mark was the cousin of Barnabas and in chapter 12 had all these hopes and dreams of being part of the missionary team, and they were commissioned, and they were going to change the world, and out they went. It had to have been one of the greatest moments for John Mark as he had his hopes and dreams of what God could do. But in chapter 13, John Mark bailed. We don't really know what happened, but it must have been fairly serious and he went back home. And he obviously left them in a very difficult situation. Chapter 15, Paul and Barnabas are ready to head out on the second missionary journey and they get into quite a dispute over whether or not John Mark's coming again. John Mark says, "Hey, I've changed. I want to come," and Barnabas says, "I think that's a good idea," and Paul says, "I think that's a bad idea," and they get into enough conflict that they actually part and go their separate ways. And Barnabas would take John Mark and Paul would take Silas and they'd go two different directions.

From the comments that are made here, you'd have to conclude that word spreads that John Mark had broken up the team. John Mark was a trouble maker. John Mark blew it. Because what he's saying here is, "I wrote you instructions that if he comes to you, I want you to welcome him." What's implied in that is there must be this story going around about John Mark and these people really don't want to receive him. They're mad at him because he broke up the team. He blew it. But Paul's saying, "You know, he's coming and I want you to receive him."

In 2 Timothy which was Paul's very last book in the New Testament – which I think is a very emotional book – at the very end of that book he says, "Send John Mark to me, for he is useful to me." In the final days before the apostle Paul died in prison, one of the people he wanted at his side was John Mark. I would put the word "restored". John Mark had his hopes and dreams and whatever happened, he clearly blew it. But the apostle Paul came alongside him and said, "Hey, I want you to give this guy another chance. And I'm sending him to you and I want you to welcome him. He's part of the team."

Verse 11:

**and also Jesus who is called Justus; [which is basically all we know about him] these are the only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are from the circumcision, and they have proved to be an encouragement to me.**

Paul starts by identifying five of his Jewish brothers – the only five that have stayed with him. Those that were faithful, those that were changed, those that were restored, those that were loyal, but it came down to five brothers. If you've read the Book of Romans, you know Paul had a passion for his own people, but by in large his own people didn't respond to his ministry and here he is with just five. But these five were an encouragement to him. That Greek word actually means they were a relief from the pain. I think we tend to think of Paul as kind of like a ministry machine. But he's sitting in prison and there's a lot of pain. Physical pain and emotional pain, but these were part of his ministry team. These were people that came alongside him and helped him do what he did, including pen the book that we've been studying for the last several months.

One of the things I've found in my own life is that as a leader, people are always going to misunderstand. They're always going to misrepresent. If you're in a leadership role you understand that. But as long as you have an inner core of people that know you, that love you, that care about

you and they will stand with you, you can endure a lot of stuff. It's when it starts to break down at the core that suddenly life becomes unbearable, and that's what Paul's saying. His journey was very hard, but he did have a core of people that loved him and stood by him and were even imprisoned with him. They relieved his pain along the way.

Verse 12:

**Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bonds slave of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God.**

We know Epaphras. We met him in chapter 1 verse 7. He was the one who lived in Colossae, went to Ephesus when Paul was teaching there, heard the Gospel, trusted Christ as Savior, went back to Colossae, and probably was the spiritual father of many of these believers in Colossae. He's the one who took the Gospel back to them. You really have the reflection of a pastor's heart in this verse. He's **a bonds slave of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly.** We saw that word "labor" in chapter 1 verse 29. It means to agonize. It's where we get our English word "to agonize." It was used to describe a runner that was coming to the end of the race, and leaning forward to break the tape and giving it every ounce of strength that he had in order to break the tape. He was agonizing. And what Paul says about Epaphras is he loved these people and he was agonizing over them in his prayers that they **may stand perfect and fully assured in the will of God.** In other words, that they would understand, that they would believe, and they would live the truth that we have been talking about. Epaphras so wanted this for his spiritual children that he agonized on his knees for these people that they would get it, that they would understand it.

You know, it's a great picture of anybody in a ministry role, in a service role, a pastoral role, an elder role, a life-group leader role. It's to understand it isn't just putting in our time; it isn't just getting a paycheck; it isn't just going through another week. I mean, Epaphras dearly loved these people and he agonized on his knees that these people would get it – that they would understand it, that they would believe it, that their lives would be changed.

Those of you that are life group leaders, do you really understand the heart of Epaphras? This isn't just a group that you host in your home and you kind of go through a Bible study. He agonized over these people that these people would understand, that these people would learn, that these people would grow, that they would get it and their lives would be changed. You can hear his heart for these people. He loves them.

Verse 13, he says:

**For I testify for him that he has a deep concern** [that Greek word means to the point of pain] **for you and for those who are in Laodicea and Hierapolis.** [Two cities that were near by Colossae there.]

Verse 14:

**Luke, the beloved physician, sends you his greetings,**

We know that Luke was a physician – this is the verse that tells us that. We know that Luke was a Greek. We know that he traveled with the apostle Paul much of the time in order to be in essence

his own personal physician, most of the time probably just keeping the apostle healthy enough to fulfill his mission. It is interesting, though, that eventually this same Dr. Luke would go on and pen more of the New Testament than any other New Testament writer including the apostle Paul. Not much is said about him here, but he would have a significant role in the New Testament church.

**and also Demas.** (vs. 14b)

We really aren't told much about Demas. We do know from Paul's later letters that Demas finally bailed on the faith, he decided to go back to the world, and this was one member of the team that didn't stick.

Verse 15:

**Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea and also Nympha and the church that is in her house. When this letter is read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and you, for your part read my letter that is coming from Laodicea. Say to Archippus, "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it."**

It's believed Archippus was the son of Philemon and also the local pastor in Colossae. You get a little sense here that the false teachers were coming in, were having their way, that Paul wants them to encourage him to step it up and to take his stand, and to stand for truth, and to fulfill his calling there in that local body.

Verse 18:

**I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand Remember my imprisonment. Grace be with you.**

When he says, "**Remember my imprisonment**" he's not saying, "Feel sorry for me." He's saying that the cost of the proclamation of the Gospel may include suffering. He's reminding them that, "If you yourself find yourself in a prison cell, don't be surprised by that because that is part of the cost of getting the job done."

Isn't it interesting that Paul who has been so precise in his doctrine about the sufficiency of Christ takes up so much time in this letter talking about this person and that person, and this person and that person who made up his ministry team – many of them who'd probably been with him for years. There is a tendency to think the great apostle Paul was kind of this Lone Ranger on a white horse riding from church to church. But that isn't true at all. As a matter of fact, the New Testament knows nothing of that concept. The apostle Paul was the main voice. Consequently he's the one that gets the most press. But he was always surrounded by a team, and it was a ministry team that came together that caused him to accomplish what he accomplished.

The sufficiency of Christ, properly understood, does not cause us to be independent and individualized, but just the opposite. It's rather counterintuitive – to use Alan's fine term from last week. It was so good I thought: *I'm going to use that!* It's counterintuitive to understand the sufficiency of Christ and understanding that He is enough, He is adequate, He is sufficient, but He has also taken His Spirit and put it in His body that when we come together we are His body on

earth. The sufficiency of Christ in many ways is expressed in the coming together of his body, and we have been set free by His sufficiency to serve one another, to love one another, to be the body of Christ.

The alternative to the sufficiency of Christ is self-sufficiency. Self-sufficiency makes us independent. It makes us individualized. It causes us to become lone rangers – I’ll do it myself. The reality is when we understand that my significance, my meaning, my purpose is found in Jesus, then I am able to set my ego on the shelf and come together to love and to serve, and to accomplish what God has called us to do together. When I am dominated by self-sufficiency, it’s really hard to come together. It’s really hard to experience true spiritual community.

When we’re talking about spiritual community, we’re not talking about somebody that’s around a lot of people. I know lots of people that know lots of people, they’re the life of the party, they’re always around people. But they have no real spiritual community. There’s no depth, there’s no one that really speaks into their lives; there’s no one that really knows them; there’s nobody that really holds them accountable and speaks the truth to them. We’re not talking about having lots of relationships. We’re talking about significant relationships that are like that fire – that coal fire – that’s where the fire burns it’s hottest. That’s the way God intended it. That’s His Spirit within us all coming together. We’re always more *together* than anyone is *apart*.

There are a couple of things to think about as they relate to our church and church culture. One of the things I want to talk about is just the leadership culture and the application of the sufficiency of Christ to a leadership culture in a church. One of the big problems, I think, in a lot of churches is they tend to be kind of personality driven. The personality in a larger church may be a little bit celebrity-like, the personality in a smaller church is just the personality that kind of drives the machinery and makes all the decisions. But at the end of the day, it all revolves around that one person.

That is very inconsistent with the view of the sufficiency of Christ, and in my opinion, it is a big problem in the church in America today. Rather than being counter-culture, we are sub-culture. We just take the performance based celebrity culture and we just Christianize it, and it pretty much looks the same. You have these huge ministries driven by famous personalities. One of the things that strikes me is all these people that name their ministries after themselves. When you watch them on TV, it’s “Bryan Clark Ministries”. They name the thing after themselves and you’re thinking: *Well to start with, that’s really uncomfortable.*

When we were planning to build this auditorium, several of us flew to Chicago and we took a tour of a number of different auditoriums just trying to figure out what we liked and didn’t like. One of the churches we visited – when we pulled in we pulled in on Johnny Coleman Lane. We parked in the Johnny Coleman parking lot. We entered into the Johnny Coleman Auditorium, and later we got the Johnny Coleman history tour where they had a packaged tour, and you sit in a room and they go through a slide show telling you the story of Johnny Coleman who was the founding and current pastor of the church. One of the things that amused us is when we were getting ready to leave there was a big glass bulletin board and under that there was a letter that Johnny had written to the congregation about all the fabulous things that Johnny had done. And the letter was signed, “To His glory alone, Johnny Coleman.” And we thought: *I don’t think so.*

That just isn’t consistent with the view of the sufficiency of Christ. The sufficiency of Christ says that Jesus is the head of the church and the rest of us are just members of the body. The reality is

I'm a little bit like the apostle Paul in the fact that just by virtue of my role I'm probably going to be the most obvious and recognizable name. I'm probably going to be the most recognizable face, and people would have the tendency to say, "He's the guy." I'm not the guy.

This past week I sat down for breakfast with someone and the first thing he said is, "Can I see your watch?" I said, "Well sure, why do you want to see my watch?" "Well, somebody around town said that you wear a Rolex and drive a Lexus." And the answer is, "No and no." But I understand where that image comes from. I don't blame the person for saying that. Every time you turn on the preaching channels, that is what it is. And that's a huge problem in our country. I really don't have any trouble understanding that. But I am saying it's really inconsistent with the view of the sufficiency of Christ.

Anybody on our staff would laugh at the concept that I am the guy. The second time Jeff and I were in India we were at the Campus Crusade headquarters in Bangalore, India and there was a professor there with Campus Crusade's seminary here in the United States – he was over there doing the teaching and was also staying on the compound. So every morning he would come down, we'd all have breakfast together, and then we'd go our separate ways. And he was familiar with Lincoln Berean and its reputation and asked a whole bunch of questions. And every morning he'd say the same thing. "Now tell me again – what's your role?" And finally the third day he said, "You know, I just have to tell you. You're not really what I expected." I obviously had not impressed him at all!

But I understood what he was saying, and I'm not a personality. I'm not a charismatic person; I'm probably the least charismatic person on our staff. And it's not what he was expecting, but that's part of the problem. I'm just an ordinary guy. I have some things I do well and I try to work really hard at those things, but I'm just a member of the team. If you were to get to know me on a private level, probably the word that would come out would be "ordinary." I don't glow in the dark. I'm just ordinary. I have ordinary hobbies; I have an ordinary life. I think the two things that would happen is – number one – you would realize this guy isn't really very impressive at all. He's just ordinary. And I'm okay with that. I agree. But I think the other side of it would be that you would – I hope – recognize that the person you see on stage is the same person that's in the office and at home and every other place in my life. I'm just me as a member of the team.

Now once in a while these rumors go around town that say basically if it isn't my way then it's the highway. And every time I track one of those down, it comes from someone who didn't get their way so they got mad and left. But I do believe if you were to ask our staff, if you were to ask our board, or any of our pastors if that's the way it works here they would say, "No." I realize I can stand up here and say anything I want and you can say, "That may be true and it may not." I invite you to ask anybody you want. We have worked really, really hard to develop a team based culture where we work together as a team – as a ministry team. God has brought some of the most highly gifted, capable leaders – men and women – to be part of our team.

One of the things that excites me most about where we are as a church right now is our ministry team – an amazing group of people with tremendous capacity. I have a few things that I do well but there's a whole lot of people all around me that do a lot of things way better than I could ever do them. And we're in this together. I'm the mouthpiece. I'm going to be the most visible. But please don't ever get under the impression that I'm the guy. I don't want to be the guy. Jesus is the guy. He's the head of the church. It has to be that way. We function together as a team. The sufficiency of Christ, if it's properly understood, doesn't mean that a church is driven by a personality or a celebrity. It means that we all come together as members of the team and seek to accomplish what

God has called us to, and part of your job is to hold us accountable for that. Like I said, you're free to ask anybody you want how it works behind the scenes. There's nothing to hide. We try our best to operate as I've described it.

But let's take it from the culture of the leadership all the way down into those leaders that aren't paid staff but they're leaders in a variety of ministries and all the way down to everything that we do. Our desire is to operate in authentic Christian community which means that we surround ourselves with others, we live authentic lives, and together we seek to accomplish the mission with Jesus ultimately getting the glory. If you find your sufficiency in Jesus you can do that; if you don't, you can't. It's going to be about your ego; it's going to be about your performance; it's going to be about something other than what it should be about. The sufficiency of Christ properly understood brings us together. It doesn't turn us into lone rangers and celebrities.

The best way for us as a church to accomplish true community is through what we call LifeGroups. We're a large church and it's very easy for people to walk through the doors and turn around and walk out the door and come back next week. I've got to tell you – if that's what you're doing you're never really going to get it. We need each other. We need each other to come together and to grow together, and to hold one another accountable and encourage one another. That's part of how the body works and the best mechanism for us is what we call Life Groups. So if you're currently not connected into a LifeGroup, I would strongly encourage you to consider that – to get connected with a group where you experience that fire and really experience true Christian community as a mechanism to continue your growth to becoming like Jesus.

There's also, I'm sure, some of you here this evening and you've been in a LifeGroup for a long time, and you like it because it's convenient, because it's comfortable, and because somebody else leads it. But there's a whole bunch of people coming that need groups. We need people that are settled in these groups to listen to the voice of God and choose to step out into something that's going to be less comfortable and less convenient as God calls you to step out and lead a group. You say, "Well, that's really time consuming and it's really inconvenient..." And then you hear Paul say, "**Remember my imprisonment**". You remember what the Gospel taught these people in the first century, last week what it cost our brothers in India, and maybe we need to stop and rethink: *Is it really too*

*big a sacrifice to move beyond the comfortable and the convenience and make it possible for some others to experience the community of the Christian faith that we might continue to grow together?*

The sufficiency of Christ's greatest enemy is legalism. We've learned that. Legalism will squeeze the life out of our Christian faith and turn it into a dead religion. Beware. The sufficiency of Christ, if truly understood, will make you a better husband and a better wife, a better father and a better child, a better employer and a better employee, a better leader and a better manager. It will make you a better witness for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And more than anything else, it brings us together that the fire of Jesus would burn, that we might become all that God has called us to be and that we might accomplish all that God has called us to do.

*Our Father, we're thankful tonight that Jesus truly is sufficient to meet our every need, to satisfy our every longing, Lord, that we would find our significance and meaning in life in our relationship with Jesus. Therefore, we can take our performance based ego and put it on a shelf and be set free to come together to serve side by side with one another – nobody pushing for the spotlight, nobody trying to be the guy, but Lord, just serving together to give You*

*glory. Lord, help us to understand – to truly understand – the sufficiency of Christ is to bring us together, to live independent of Christian community is self-sufficiency. Lord, to make that possible, some of these people here tonight are going to have to step up and step out of what's been comfortable and convenient. So Lord, my prayer is that they would just have ears to hear, that those whom you would call would hear the call and be willing to step up and be a part of touching the lives of others as we continue to seek to be faithful to what You've called us to do. Lord, this we pray in Jesus' name, Amen.*

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February 16-17, 2008

## Study Questions

*Complete in Christ: A Study in the Book of Colossians*

### **The Sufficiency of Christ and Community**

**Colossians 4:7-18**

Pastor Bryan Clark

#### **Opening Discussion**

1. What are the dynamics that create the celebrity culture in which we live?
2. Are those dynamics consistent or inconsistent with our core beliefs as Christians?
3. What's the difference between knowing and being around a lot of people and living in community with other believers?
4. Do you think the average Christian pursues community with others or avoids community with others? Why is that?
5. Does the sufficiency of Christ mean we should pursue community or that we don't really need community with others?

#### **Bible Study**

1. Read Colossians 4:7-18. Do a quick review of what you know about each person listed.
2. Why do you think Paul takes up 11 verses listing these people at the end of his very brief letter? What do we learn from this?
3. The book of Acts (see 20:4-6 for example) as well as Paul's letters (this text) consistently reminds us, that even though Paul may have been a household name among believers, Paul was part of a ministry team and not a one man show. Could Paul have done what he did without his teammates? How does this line up with what we believe about the sufficiency of Christ?
4. Define Christian community. Can you truly believe in the sufficiency of Christ and not value Christian community? Why or why not?
5. Is there a theological problem with churches that are built around a "personality?" Can a church truly embrace the doctrine of the sufficiency of Christ and not be a team-based ministry?

## **Application**

1. It's one thing to list people you know and hang out with. It's another thing to truly live in Christian community. How are you doing in this area?
2. What could your group do to grow in true community with one another?
3. One ongoing need at LBC is for more small group leaders so we can assimilate new people into LifeGroups as well. If we truly believe in both the sufficiency of Christ and the importance of Christian community, why is there a shortage of leaders? Is it possible some potential LifeGroup leaders have settled more into what is comfortable than living with a sense of calling?