Colossians Series 1
The Need to Pray for the Spiritual life of the Saints
August 7, 2015

I. WELCOME, 15 mins.
Prepare a couple of simple, fun and delightful icebreakers to help your group warm up. Help your cell group members to lay aside their busyness and tiredness and prepare their hearts to come before God.

II. WORSHIP, 20 mins.
Prayerfully choose a few songs to lead the cell group members to worship God. The worship leader would encourage members to come before the throne of God to seek God’s face, and lead them into God’s presence. During this time, the cell group leader will also lead the group to pray aloud for the following prayer items:

A. MISSION ORGANIZATION: ________________, and their needs are: ________________
(Please contact the church if you don’t know the needs of the mission organization.)

B. CHURCH MINISTRY:
- 7/12- 8/30 Cracking The Communication Code: Marriage Class
- 8/19 Bi-Weekly Prayer Meeting @ 7:30pm in Fellowship Hall
- 8/21-23 Men’s Camping
- 9/13 Experiencing God: Equipping Class @ 11:30

C. New comer: ________________ Confirm new comers’ name before the meeting.
For sick members, friends or relatives: ________________ Please discuss how you may show your care to them.

III. WORD, 45 mins. Through sharing and discussing God’s word, the group applies it to their daily life.

A. Sharing the message from last Sunday’s sermon: (It would be helpful if you could listen on-line once again)
1. What is the key message from last Sunday’s sermon? How did God speak to you through the message?
2. How would you respond to the message? What action will you take after listening to the message?

B. Topic of the week: The need to pray for the spiritual life of the saints.

Verses: Colossians 1:1-14

Memorizing Verses: For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives. (Colossians 1:9, NIV)

Preface:
The church of Colossians was not established by Paul himself but by Paul’s co-worker Epaphras (1:7). This newborn church was facing the infiltration of heretics while being challenged by erroneous teachings. So Paul wrote this epistle in a Roman jail to affirm the Colossian believers and refute the teaching of false teachers -correcting their heresy.

Paul was a servant used greatly by God. His spiritual life and his ministry are an example to all of us. However, one thing that is most worthy of our attention to is that he often prayed for the spiritual maturity of the saints so that the body of Christ (the church) would be strengthened and become a vessel for God to manifest His glory.

1. Paul’s greetings and encouragement to the church’s saints (Colossians 1: 1-2; 13-14):
   This is the common format of Paul's epistles: the writer, the receiver, greeting, and blessing. Paul emphasizes our identity as "saints", that we are redeemed by our Lord Jesus and saved from the power of darkness into the kingdom of light belonging to God’s beloved Son. Our sins are cleansed in Christ Jesus (Colossians 1: 13-14), and we are chosen by God to belong to Him. Therefore, Paul encourages all the saints to be faithful in Christ, to live a life that bears witness to God’s glory, and receive the gift of God's grace and peace.

2. Paul thanked God for the saints’ life testimony of "Faith, hope and love" (Colossians 1: 3-8):
   a. Paul often prayed for the saints (Col. 1: 3): Paul's ministry was busy and laborious, but he was still concerned whether the saints were growing towards spiritual maturity in Christ. So he often prayed before God for the saints.
   b. Paul gave thanks to God for the saints’ wonderful life testimonies (Colossians 1: 4-5):
1) They had true faith: Their faith was not based on dogma and words, but "sprang from" true faith in Jesus Christ. Their faith was not affected by their environment.

2) They had true acts of love: They did not only love the believers they knew and liked, but they poured out their generosity and zeal toward all the followers of Jesus.

3) They had a living hope: Their hope was stored up in heaven, so their faith was firm. None of their love and good deeds were for themselves or to gratify others but they were for the glory and the will of the Father alone.

c. Paul thanked God for the fruit and progress of the gospel (Colossians 1: 6-8):

Paul preached the gospel to Epaphras. Epaphras’ spiritual life grew to maturity and became a faithful deacon of Christ. Epaphras then passed on this gospel to the believers in Colosse who lived out a wonderful testimony of faith, hope, and love. The saints of Colosse also preached the gospel and they saw the great impact it had on the lives of others. This was the evidence of the power of the gospel, so Paul gave joyous thanks to God.

3. Paul prayed for the spiritual maturity of the saints (Col. 1: 9-14):

   a. Paul asked God to bestow all spiritual wisdom and understanding onto the saints (Colossians 1: 9): Gnosticism began to infiltrate the newborn church in the first century. They taught that "salvation depended on wisdom and intuition rather than faith and action." So, Paul prayed with great urgency here for the saints that God would give all "spiritual" wisdom and understanding to the saints, so they would truly understand the will of God in the Spirit and live out spiritual maturity and bear a beautiful witness.

   b. The purpose of Paul’s prayers (Colossians 1:10):

      1) That the saints would be worthy of the Lord in action and character: Although we have the position of saints, we must also live out the reality of sainthood to be worthy of its title. Only such a life would bear witness and give glory to God.

      2) That the saints would please God in all things: To bear much fruit in all good works and increase in the knowledge of God by wholeheartedly knowing God’s will and being willing to obey God's will.

   c. The outcome brought forth by Paul’s prayers (Col 1: 12-14):

      By wholeheartedly knowing God’s will, God will according to His glorious sovereignty, give you the might to obey His will: to live a life testimony pleasing to God, to enable you to endure and forgive when confronted by all kinds of opposition and pressure, and to be able to share an inheritance with the saints in the kingdom of light.

Discussion questions: (please choose the topic according to the needs of the members)

1. If you are only allowed one prayer, what would you pray about?
2. What did Paul thank God for on the behalf of the saints? What do these have to do with you and me?
3. What are the emphases of Paul’s prayer for the saints?
4. What is inspiring to you in Paul's prayer for the saints?
5. Are you willing to consistently pray for the spiritual maturity of one of your group members (brother for brother, sister for sister) for three months? Are there practical ways to help us pray frequently and consistently?

Prayer:

Dear Abba Father, we thank and praise You because You accomplished this great work for us through Your Son Jesus Christ, allowing us to stand by grace in the position of sainthood enjoying all the riches and glory in You. Help us to pray often with a grateful heart for our brothers and sisters in the church so that the spiritual life of each saint in the church can grow ceaselessly towards maturity in Christ, becoming more and more like our Lord. May the entire body of the church live out Your glorious testimony so the world may see and give glory to You. We pray and give thanks in the precious name of the Lord Jesus, Amen.

IV. WORK (Pray for each other), 10 mins.

Please break into group of 2 or 3 to pray for each other’s needs.