



GREATER THAN • COMMUNITY GROUP STUDY • COLOSSIANS 4

Greater Than Ourselves

A guided conversation from the August 30, 2026 sermon by David McLeod

SUMMARY

David McLeod closed our Colossians series from an uncomfortable place: Paul wrote this letter in chains, in a Roman prison where no food arrived unless someone carried it in and nobody assumed a prisoner's life had value.

From there, Paul does three things. He looks UP — asking not for release but that God would open a door for the message. He looks OUT — treating a prison as an opportunity, the way three men cutting the same stones can be breaking rocks, making a living, or building a sanctuary. And he looks AROUND — closing the letter with a long list of names, because he never intended to do this alone.

One of those names is Aristarchus, who appears five times in the New Testament and never speaks a recorded word. He is simply present, every time, in the hardest moments. David called it the ministry of staying: his presence is a present.

PRAYER

OPENING PRAYER

Father, we have spent a lot of energy asking you to change our circumstances. Before we ask again tonight, teach us to ask what you might do inside them. Give us eyes for the people you have already put around us, and the honesty to let them close. Amen.

START

ICE BREAKER

Tell us about a season you badly wanted out of. What were you praying for at the time — and looking back, what were you not praying for?

SCRIPTURE

KEY SCRIPTURES

COLOSSIANS 4:2-3 (ESV)

Colossians 4:2-3 (ESV) Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison—

COLOSSIANS 4:5 (ESV)

Colossians 4:5 (ESV) *Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time.*

COLOSSIANS 4:6 (ESV)

Colossians 4:6 (ESV) *Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.*

COLOSSIANS 4:10 (ESV)

Colossians 4:10 (ESV) *Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, and Mark the cousin of Barnabas (concerning whom you have received instructions—if he comes to you, welcome him),*

DISCUSS

DISCUSSION

01 THE PRAYER HE DIDN'T PRAY

Read Colossians 4:2-3 aloud. Paul asks for an open door for the message, not an open cell door. What would it sound like to pray that way about the situation you most want out of? What makes that prayer hard to mean?

02 NOT A MISTAKE

David said that if God is sovereign, He is not making a mistake with the place He has put you. Where is that hardest for you to believe right now — and what would change if you believed it on Monday morning?

03 SAME ROCKS, DIFFERENT LIVES

Three men cut identical stones and gave three different answers. Which of the three sounds most like how you describe your own work? What would have to change for the third answer to be honest rather than aspirational?

04 PRIVILEGE AND SUFFERING TOGETHER

David said 'your circumstances are a privilege' and then immediately 'there will be some suffering.' Why does he put those two sentences next to each other? What goes wrong when a church says only one of them?

05 SEASONED WITH SALT

Paul asks for speech that is gracious and salted — with flavour, not just correctness. Be honest: is your speech about faith more often correct, or more often appetising? What is one conversation where you would rather season than win?

06 THE NAMES YOU SKIP

Paul ends the most demanding letter he ever wrote by naming friends. Who is on your list? Is it long enough, and when did you last tell one of them so?

07 THE MINISTRY OF STAYING

Aristarchus never says a word and is there five times. Who has stayed like that for you? Who is going through something right now where your presence — with no advice — would be the whole gift?

APPLY THIS WEEK

Pick one. Do it before you meet again.

- 1 Pray the other prayer** Once this week, pray about your hardest circumstance without asking God to change it. Ask Him to use you inside it. Keep praying the other prayer too — just not only.
- 2 Be somebody's Aristarchus** Choose one person having a hard month. Show up. Bring no advice and no fix. Put a second visit in your calendar for six weeks out, when everyone else has stopped coming.
- 3 Give one real answer** Tell one person the true answer to 'how are you' — not the summary you have been giving for months. This is the harder one, and it is the one Paul models.

Come back next week ready to say what happened, not what you intended.

REMEMBER REMEMBER

- ▶ Paul prayed to be useful where he was, not to be moved somewhere else.
- ▶ God is not making a mistake with the place He has put you.
- ▶ Three men, the same stones, three different lives — what changes is what you believe you are building.
- ▶ Aristarchus never said a word and was there every time. His presence is a present.

His presence is a present.

PRAYER CLOSING PRAYER

Lord Jesus, you did not ask to be spared the cross and you did not go to it alone. Make us people who stay — with you, and with each other. Where we are stuck, use us. Where we are proud, open us. Amen.

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