

The Heart for Ministry

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Date: 20 June 2021

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[0 : 00] please turn with me in your Bibles to the book of Colossians.

The book of Colossians. If you have been paying any attention to the news, the events that are going on in the States, or if you're glued in on Facebook or Twitter, there seems to be an upheaval in our culture.

So that is why I have decided to take the time to go through the book of Jonah once we're able to all meet together because I believe Jonah has some incredible lessons for us in teaching us how to interact, how to respond to our culture.

But this morning, I want to call your attention to one verse and one verse only in this small but exceptionally powerful epistle, the epistle, the letter that is written to the church at Colossae, which we call the book of Colossians.

The verse I want to call your attention to is found in Paul's concluding remarks to the church. Now, for you of us who've been with us through the book of Ephesians, Colossians serves as a sister letter.

[1 : 42] Scholars believe it was written at the same time. We believe the church of Colossae was planted by someone who heard Paul preach in Ephesus, took the gospel to Colossae, and was able to found a church.

So I'm going to read you this final section, Colossians 4, verses 15 to 18. Paul writes in his concluding remarks, he goes, Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea and to Nympha and the church in her house.

And when this letter has been read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans and see that you also read the letter from Laodicea.

Just as a side note, that is the New Testament pattern. When Paul would write a letter, and some of these letters we do not find in the inspired text of the Bible, but he was still writing letters, dealing with theology, dealing with church issues.

They weren't just supposed to take it for themselves, but they would copy it and send it to the other churches, that they would continue to be pastored, to be taught and engaging with Paul the Apostle.

[3 : 04] And this is the verse that I want to focus on, which is verse 17. And say to Archippus, see that you fulfill the ministry that you have received in the Lord.

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

And say to Archippus, see that you fulfill the ministry that you have received from in the Lord.

I want you to dwell on this verse for a little bit. Let's think about this. So for the first is, who's Archippus? Archippus. We really don't know, except that he is of the household of Philemon.

If you did not know, the book of Philemon, what they believe was brought with the letter of Colossians, Philemon would have been one of the, perhaps, elders, leaders at the church of Colossae.

[4 : 14] So there's this letter that went to him, and we have him also addressed there as well. Well, apart from that, we know very little.

Scholars do not believe that he was a pastor. We don't believe he was an elder or a missionary, a preacher, or an evangelist. But we understand that he was called a fellow soldier in Christ.

Apart from that, there seems to be nothing to indicate that he is someone special, despite what his mom might tell him.

But he's been given this task to fulfill the ministry that he received in the Lord. You know what else we know about him?

He is probably that guy when you get to heaven and you see a long line of people wanting to talk to him, and you're not quite sure who he is.

[5 : 26] Why are these people all paying attention to him? And someone will say, oh, that's Archippus. And you're going to say, gee, I wonder if he fulfilled that ministry that he had in the Lord. So here's this guy, singled out from all eternity to everybody for thousands of years.

He's going to have to deal with this question in heaven. We don't know what it is. But think of that pressure. This letter is going to be read to all the other churches in that area.

And everybody's going to be coming around. Hey, Archippus. I read that letter that Paul wrote. Well, did you?

Did you fulfill it? So he's got this built-in accountability. Can you imagine being singled out like that? Listen, I know there's sometimes people here who are afraid to death that I might single them out in a sermon.

Right? But imagine, throughout eternity, this man has been singled out. Now, what if I told you that the charge that Archippus received is the exact same charge the Lord Jesus Christ has given to every single one of you?

[6 : 54] That word ministry that we hear, read, in the Greek is diakone. And if you are a bergering Bible student or at some point you were studying the Greek language, you would associate that with the word deacon.

That's where we get the word deacon from. And you would know that word deacon means to serve. Now, deacon's kind of a funny name.

If you come from certain churches, the word deacon is an official title given to someone who serves in the church. I am the personal opinion that anyone who serves in the church is a deacon.

They are a servant of the Lord as they fulfill the ministry of the church. Why do I believe that?

Because we also know that the Bible teaches that the moment that we are saved, God gives us a spiritual gift. He gives us a special, spiritually chosen, spiritually empowered gift that we are to use for the building up of the church.

[8 : 07] Taking those two things that we understand, that means we have an understanding that we've been given something that is not for us, but it's for others.

And if it's for others, he's talking about the context in the church, that what you have been given is to specifically use to perform a ministry amongst the body of believers to glorify Jesus Christ.

Amen? I think the provincial regulations allow us to say amen. Amen? Amen, exactly, right?

Now, I don't know what his specific gift was, but he was given a gift, a task to serve in his church.

And so have you. So have you who are listening. If you are a part, this is your home. You've been given something so unique and you have been created in such an individual person that you are, that has been specially chosen for this church.

[9 : 28] You see, this is what the entire book of Ephesians and Colossians is about, is about our place in the body. And a lot of people will say, well, what about, you know, it's the church all over, anywhere I go with other Christians.

Well, actually, that's partially true, but the letters that we find in our Bibles are actually written to New Testament churches. They were actual bodies of believers who met in geographical locations. Paul is specifically speaking to the gathered body of believers in specific locations, and he names them throughout.

Just even in this ending, we're learning about three other groups of people that the letters are supposed to go out. There's people gathering. If you remember from our time in Ephesians, I harped on or pounded on or repeated the words Paul wrote in Ephesians 4.1.

Walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called. It doesn't say some of us.

[10 : 39] Only those. No, he talks about every single one in Christ. So there is a calling that we have all been called to, and he equips us.

So when it comes to the body of Christ, if you would have remembered, Colossians 4.12 talks about seven different things. To be a Christian, it says, we are to have compassionate hearts, humility, meekness, patient, kind, enduring, and forgiving, and they are all to be wrapped up in love.

What makes it kind of funny for us and kind of strange, and you might have this argument with some of your friends, is that this argument tends to only exist in the West that a Christian can be a lone ranger.

They can kind of go and do their own thing. That is actually an idea that has only come through rampant individualism that tends to exist in our culture more than any other culture.

If you went to the East, Far East churches and how they function, this isn't how they work. The idea that you can be a part of Christian outside the body of Christ is a non-existing thought.

[11 : 57] You belong somewhere. The idea that you can be a lone ranger, a John Wayne, a lone avenging hero, Christian, that self-made man.

Those ideas have not been taught to you by your Bible. Those ideas have been taught to you by your culture.

One of the things that we're going to deal with going forward when we get to the book of Jonah, and one of the issues that our culture is in such upheaval is because we are becoming such a transfixed, individualistic culture that everybody's rights are somewhat muted for that individual. That everybody has the rights to have everything they want, when they want, how they want. But we're going to deal with that next week. So, one of the things, when you consider the idea of, these ideas of compassion, humility, meek and patient and kind, those are things you cannot do on your own.

Right? You can't be patient on your own. How can I grow in patience with myself? How can I grow in humility by myself? Listen, I'm a pretty forgiving guy, and I'm very good at forgiving myself, but it doesn't really grow in that way, does it?

[13 : 25] So, even the idea of spiritual gifts, the idea of how we are to be in Christ is all about a reflection to someone else.

We cannot grow in Christ-likeness on our own. We cannot grow in humility on our own. We cannot grow in meekness, mercy, patience, kindness, or even unity on our own.

So, what does this tell us? Growing in Christ is not all about knowledge. We know it's good to have knowledge. That's why we study God's Word.

But that's not the only avenue to Christian maturity. The Bible tells us, it tells us that growing in Christ is not about ourselves.

Growing in Christ is never about what's in it for me, but how can I give what Christ has given to me to others? And that through that, we understand that growing in Christ is about everyone else.

[14 : 33] The Apostle John sums up this thought in 1 John 1.3. He says, Isn't that awesome?

That's the whole point. That was the charge they were given going back to Matthew 28.19. Teach Jesus Christ. Tell and instruct the apostles, the disciples. Go make disciples in Christ.

Baptizing and then teaching them all that you have been taught so we can have fellowship. So we can connect at the most greatest intense relationships possible.

Possible. So my concluding thought from all this, my friends, is that a relationship with God necessitates a number of secondary relationships.

Okay? A relationship with God necessitates a number of secondary relationships. relationships. So this morning, I have a proposal to you.

[15 : 59] I believe there's one or two roads that you can go down to accomplish this. Two ways to live your life. The first way you can choose is to live a life with a small heart.

That you can make a choice to live with a small heart. The second choice or the second option that you have as a Christian is to live life with a big heart.

A big heart. So, how do we do those things? Well, I'm going to start by teaching you guys how to cultivate these hearts.

And we're going to begin with how do we cultivate a small heart? A small heart. And if I can be honest with you, my preference for you, or perhaps that's the wrong way to say it, if there is a way to go, the small heart is the way.

It's easy. It's really easy to cultivate a small heart. In fact, it's really safe. It's really comforting.

[17 : 27] If you live to minimize the sorrows of life, cultivating a small heart is the way to go. If your ambition is to avoid trouble, to avoid drama, to avoid pain, the small heart is clearly the way to go, right?

You see, the formula for developing a small heart is actually remarkably easy. One, minimize entangling relationships.

Only have friends that are really healthy, that have no problems. If you do that, you will take away so much drama from your life.

You know what that'll do? They'll allow you to do whatever you want with all that time that you have. Right? Now, you don't want to have relationships with people that want to share with you or talk with you or open their hearts to you.

Those are the people that you introduce to the pastor. Right? You find them other friends. That's the kind of person you want to be if you want to develop this small heart.

[18 : 56] They're the people who say, hey, I need prayer. You say, I'll tell you what, I'm going to introduce to this person. They're a prayer warrior. They will cover all the bases for you.

So that's the first piece of advice. Minimalize the entangling dramatic relationships. The second thing is kind of, the second way to continue to develop this is do not really get involved in people's lives, period.

You know what I mean? Come to church. By all means, listen to the sermon. Sing the songs. Give. But as soon as I say amen, get out of the church. Get out as fast as you can.

Do not talk. Do not pray. Do not interact. In fact, you will know you're highly successful when you've been going to a church for six months and no one knows your name. That's the goal, right?

But you're there. You're faithful. You're faithful. Imagine a person coming over to you and actually introducing themselves and saying, hey, can I pray for you?

[20 : 01] You don't want that. You can tell people all over the place on Facebook, on emails, that you love the church, you love the music, you love the prayers, you love the preaching, but you're really not here for the people.

People are problems. How do you know if you're one of those type of people? You love the COVID church. COVID church has been the biggest blessing that's ever come.

You can just sit at home in your pajamas and watch the sermon at eight o'clock at night if you want. You don't need to relate with anybody. You don't have to deal with someone's off-key singing. You don't have to deal with people asking you annoying questions.

Sometimes you don't even have to deal. You always get your favorite seat, right? Do you not? When you guys were at home watching our video, you could sit in your favorite seat. No one was taking your seat from you. See, I'm telling you, if you do these things, you will develop a small heart. That worship stuff, you can do that on your own elsewhere. You don't need other people to do that with you, do you? And the third and final instruction I'm going to give you in developing a small heart is please, please, avoid elevated and noble ideas.

[21 : 25] Theology, doctrine, that's for pastors, that's for elders. Don't bother reading Christian biographies or any of those other Christian books. They're just going to make you feel guilty.

We're supposed to be happy, right? We're Christians, we're happy. We're supposed to have no problems. You know, just listen to 40 minutes. In fact, if you listen to a sermon, you put it on one and a half, you're done in what?

30 minutes, 28 minutes? That's enough food for the week, right? That'll get you through all of life's problems. What I can tell you is if you follow these three prescribed steps that I have outlined for you, I am telling you these things right now, you can take them to the bank, you will live life with a minimum of tribulation.

You will not have problems. If you see someone who's in need, don't worry. Show, introduce them to one of the ushers.

If there's a prayer that's needed, point them to one of the pastors. If you see someone is all alone, heaven forbid you go talk to them, go talk to one of the greeters.

[22 : 44] Point out that person to them. Avoid those who share burdens and tell you their needs. You don't need that hassle. You don't want that hassle.

Feeling badly for them, that's good enough. Small groups, who needs them? Accountability, discipleship, that's for the weak. God has you.

You're okay. I'm telling you right now, if you want to cultivate a small heart, follow the advice I have shared with you, and you and your heart will thank you forevermore.

Now, if for some other reason you are compelled to want a big heart, it's something else entirely. In fact, the Bible is filled with big hearted people that provide incredible examples for us. The first one is Paul. Just to give you a little perspective on Paul, the letter that he writes to us in Colossians is actually written in prison.

[24 : 08] One author on the subject says, as we come to this final paragraph of the book of Colossians, we need to remind ourselves of the background. Paul was under arrest in Rome, chained to one of Caesar's elite guards day and night.

His feet, which have trod the league of the entire Roman Empire, could now scarcely find room to pace. His eyes, which were always on the Gentile world, were now restricted to four walls.

But his great heart, this big heart, though caged in prison, would continue to mark the world as Paul writes some of his most powerful letters.

others. So if you feel so inclined to become a big hearted person, let me tell you how.

First, a big hearted person takes on the concerns of others. A big hearted person takes on the concerns of others.

[25 : 21] If you know the book of Colossians, you may not know this, but the very first thing Paul tells them is he gives thanks to Jesus Christ because of their faith, their love for one another, and hope they have in heaven.

Paul just doesn't write churches that he has no idea about. He knows what their needs are, and thus why he pens them these letters of encouragement. The Paul who's writing this is tired, sick, cold, in prison, starving, alone, and the only thing that's on his mind are these other churches. In fact, get this, Colossians, he never visited. A lot of them he didn't know. He only knew through people coming to visit him and telling them about all the things that God was doing and some of the challenges.

churches. We believe that the church was founded by this guy by the name of Epaphras who heard Paul preach. So he kept being this go-between between Paul because Colossae was a no city. It was a city of no renown. In fact, an earthquake would later on wipe it out and they didn't even bother rebuilding it. But Paul still pours his time and effort in writing the most incredible, I would argue, one of the most incredible letters of the New Testament of Jesus Christ to them.

[26 : 56] You see, big-hearted people knows people, names the people, and he knows them so much, and this is point number two, he knows how to exhort and encourage and build them up.

And most importantly, he knows how to pray exactly for them. You want to start caring for someone? Start praying for them.

You want to really start caring for someone? Pray with them. When someone shares you their deep needs that they have, pray alongside with them.

Exhort them, encourage them. Want to connect with someone in the church? Don't tell them why they're in that mess. Because the truth be told, people who come into this church are a mess.

I'm a mess. You're a mess. There's going to be certain areas that we have where we need people to come in and pray with us.

[28 : 02] We don't need people to condemn us, but we need people to exhort, encourage, bring truth in grace. We meet with them, we talk with them.

We don't talk about the bad choices they make, but we talk about some of the good choices they can make now. We love to bring truth and grace to others, and we only do that by knowing people. All right, so big-hearted people take on the concerns of others. They know how to exhort, encourage, build up, pray. The third thing that you can do is build up compassion, a compassionate heart.

Our world has kind of messed up that world compassion. We think compassion is an emotion or a feeling. Ah, I'll tell you, the greatest commercial of all time that has been judged, probably one of the most effectual commercials, is the dog commercial in which Sarah McLachlan is singing.

Have you guys, do you guys ever see that commercial? She's singing, do you remember me? And it's about adopting dogs. It was so powerful they had to pull it off. Because it's so sad and it breaks their heart.

[29 : 24] And Sarah, yes, dogs need help and anything that's thrown an abuse put out. But there's things called people too.

Right? Right? my point is a compassionate heart isn't empathy. A compassionate heart is action. When you hear that a need needs to be filled, you don't pray for that need to be filled.

You meet that need. If God is before you and he has given you the gifts, the ability to meet that need, do it.

That's the call of Jesus Christ. We get involved. We don't push off. You see, a big heart is a heart that sees things that are greater than their own needs.

It's a heart that never says, I am too busy. It's a heart that says, I will make time. So the way to build a big heart is to become a compassionate heart, an action heart.

[30 : 40] A fourth way to build a big heart is a forgiving heart. To build a forgiving heart. One who has a big heart has no grudges. In fact, you can ask them, hey, has anybody ever hurt you?

Yeah, I'm sure. Can you tell me the situation? Hmm. I don't know. Right? They don't have this long list that's like tattooed of all the offenses.

Why? Because they understand love covers up a multitude of sins. Amen? Wrongs have been done. It's the person who sits there in that situation and thinks the best of the other person, even when they've been hurt or legitimately sinned against.

I'm just going to think the best of that person. There's got to be some other reason why they were acting like that. You know what? I'm going to go talk to them. We're going to clear this up.

They think the best of others. They don't think there's a suspicion that when they're giving their heart to someone, you know what? They're probably using me. They're probably trying to take advantage of me. Person with a big heart, who cares?

[31 : 54] Why? And I'll tell you why. And this is the fifth reason to make a big heart. A large heart, a full heart is full of Christ. They know that I'm not just serving that person.

I'm actually serving my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen? When you take that into consideration, into the actions you do, you will find that takes away all those suspicions, right? Who here hasn't given money to something or someone, ministry, a person, and then you start worrying, oh my goodness, did they use that money right, right? Did I? I remember one time I felt I'm sitting outside a Panda Express and by no means am I saying you should go to a Panda Express, buy any, sorry, Panda Express, but we're out having lunch and there's a guy who really needs lunch.

Can I buy you lunch? Yeah, yeah, yeah. He's in there, the line, he's grabbing all the food, and then he jumps ahead of me and he looks like he says he's going to pay and he's waiting for me to pay and he says, you know, can you just give me the money after I'm done paying?

So he went through, took all the food and sold the food that I bought him. You know, and at first you're sitting there, man, I wanted to do the right thing.

[33 : 10] I wanted to bless someone, now this guy's going to use it for hopefully nothing too harmful, and that can eat at you, right? Who hasn't been there? Man, I gave money to the church, and you know what?

They left the lights on in the lobby all weekend long. But we've been there.

I don't like that thing that the youth did last week. I'm not going to give money. No, no, no. A full heart when they give from the fruit, the blessings that God has given, they're handing it over to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen? And you're going to pray even in that situation, God can use it, even though it might not have been in the way that you had planned or intended. You see, Jesus Christ is the goal of everything.

He is the goal of obedience. He is the goal of using your spiritual gifts. The fact of the matter is, we are not to live life as if it is a list of do's and don'ts.

[34 : 25] You serve the person, the king, the prince. God has done it. We do it because of what Jesus Christ has done for us.

So when you use your gifts of mercy, of encouragement, your gift of giving, you're not using these gifts to bring glory to yourself.

God has done it. Because to do so, it means it's a religious act. But when you hand it over to God, you're bringing it to him because it glorifies him.

You see, my friends, these are the things that enlarges one's heart. The reality is, every single one of us, from the biggest to the tallest, and let me tell you, after being back, I used to think Dave Regeer was the tallest Regeer.

I think you're going to lose that title in another month. Right? Kids are growing. And, listen, before I leave you this morning, I feel that I need to warn you, if you are crazy enough to pursue a big heart, it means that you will be opening yourself open to others.

[35 : 53] If you today, on this day, make a decision to enlarge in your heart, you will be enlarging your heart to pain.

You see, small hearts are safe and protected hearts. Large, big hearts are vulnerable hearts.

But they are the hearts that experience the deepest joy. They are the hearts that leave the deepest imprint on others.

If you want a small heart, my advice to you is cultivate deafness. By doing so, you will never hear discord.

But you will miss out on the glorious strains of the great symphony of life. If you want a small heart, cultivate blindness. So you will be spared from seeing the ugly.

[37 : 00] But you will miss seeing the beauty after the storm. You see, when you cultivate a small heart, you are cultivating a smooth sailing heart.

It's steady. And you get to go where you want to go. But you will never know where the Holy Spirit intended to take you.

You will never see the power and exhilaration of being brought along by the Holy Spirit in every avenue of your life. You see, seeing the Spirit do great things by bringing hope, peace, and love to what you thought was a ruined relationship.

Nor will you know the joy of working through the Spirit working through you to bring about God's will in someone else. You see, it's my experience that people say, I am not worthy.

I am ungifted. I am too stained. I am too young. I am too immature. I am undeserving. I am not like so and so. Let me tell you, the first thing a big heart begins with is a redeemed heart.

[38 : 20] Amen? It is a heart that has been made perfectly worthy by the blood of Jesus Christ. It is the heart that is only worthy because of the Christ that you serve.

A willing big heart is a heart that is not shrunk by immaturity, youth, or experience, or a seemingly ungifted heart. In fact, some of those hearts are the biggest and most useful hearts in the kingdom. People who are newly saved, newly sold out to the Lord, will sometimes do what we think are foolish things only to reap an incredible spiritual reward.

Then there's those who fear that they may not have enough for the big heart. I'm too busy. I'm too tired. I'm too stretched out.

I do not have the energy. And I'll tell you right now, the big hearted people that I know say those things all the time. They do.

[39 : 30] Why? Because they are always giving and they're always serving and they're not thinking of themselves. In fact, I guarantee you, the people who would be most convicted by this sermon are the big hearted people.

They will start moving around their schedule trying to do more. But let me tell you something else about big hearted people. A big hearted person is a spirit filled heart.

And because it is a spirit filled heart, it is a deep heart. And a deep heart has the ability to plumb the depths of the spirit like few others can.

And in this moment where I don't have the energy, I don't have the patience, they just seem to miraculously pull it out through their tears, through their pain.

Patience. Love. Understanding. Time shows up. Why? Because they're sustained by the deepest reservoir that we could ever know and that is the Holy Spirit.

[40 : 45] And yes, big hearted people sometimes look tired. Sometimes they seem like they don't have enough time. But those are the ones when they enter into the presence of our Lord and when they are asked if they fulfilled their ministry before opening their mouth, someone else will be able to chime in.

Oh yeah. They fulfilled their ministry. That's why I'm here. Because they chose to share the love of their Savior with me. And if you desire or to pursue a big heart, you will know a peace.

That path is all understanding in your heart. When it comes to caring about the health and life of this church, they take personal responsibility.

They don't leave things to the people with the official positions. They're not the ones that you call to serve. They're already there serving before they're called.

My friends, at some point, we are going to be given, we are going to be asked to give an account in the same words that Paul gave Archippus, see that you fulfill the ministry that you have received in the Lord.

[42 : 19] If you have a gift, use it. If you have a passion, you need to see it through. These are the things of the Lord. I can tell you right now, without any doubt, we are into a new season here at Squamish Baptist Church.

I think it's an exciting season. I think there's going to be new opportunities that are going to be presented to us that we have never seen before. And I believe that God is going to need to call on some of us to do things we've never seen or done before.

And I think it will be magnificent. So, my prayer for you is that you will make a decision to pursue the big heart.

God will ask you, did you rejoice with the other members of the church when they rejoiced? Did you mourn with those who mourn? Did you treat the weaker parts as indispensable? And did you treat the parts that most think less honorable with special honor?

And you give double honor to those that led and taught you. There will be a day when you are called to account for how you loved and served your church family.

[43 : 43] What will you say? Did you do it with a small heart? Or did you do it with a big heart? Pray with me. Dear Holy Heavenly Father, who fills us, grows us, mends us, God, we do pray for big, broken hearts.

Big hearts tend to get bumped and bruised as they make their way through life. Small hearts seem to make their way down the paths and quarters of life with barely seeming to touch or hurt themselves or anyone else for that matter.

Father, if there is any here who are called to cultivate a big heart, I pray that you would give them ample warning, yet ample strength, courage, that they would see this church as you see it, a body, almost as if a garden that needs to be tended to.

There are all sorts of people, strong, weak, big, and short. Some are really strong. Some are more sensitive.

But Father, if we are going to look like you, who is beaten and battered in your love for us, so will we too.

[45 : 21] We will get purple hearts. We will be rewarded. There will be a crown of victory at the end of it all. Father, we ask that you would give us a heart on tomorrow rather than a simple heart for today.

May you continue to break us, build us into the likeness of you, a big hearted God. In your most holy and precious name, Amen.

Amen.