

The critical error addressed by Paul in this epistle is the false teaching later called *gnosticism* from the Greek word for knowledge. At this time it had recently sprung up among Jewish converts but it later branched into many variations and even produced counterfeit gospels. One principle held by the Gnostics was the inherent evil of the material world. This led to the denial of Christ's humanity and a legalistic adoption of strict diets and self denial known as asceticism. A second principle was enlightenment through mysterious knowledge granted to select followers. We can see Gnosticism refuted in 1 John and addressed in the letter to Thyatira as the “deep things of Satan.” Paul’s answer to gnosticism is simply Christ: Jesus Christ, both God and man, the sum of all knowledge, the head of the church, and the center of all worship.

1. For each of these paired roles, identify what Scripture directs the person to do:

Wife – Husband

Child – Parent

Slave – Master

2. In Col. 4:3, Paul prays for a door to be opened. Does he mean the same kind of door as in Acts 16:26, when he was also in prison?
3. What would characterize a conversation that is “full of grace” and “seasoned with salt”?
4. Below are tidbits on information on those mentioned in Chapter 4. What does these tell us about the organization of the church and relationships between its members in the first century?

**Tychicus** is the faithful messenger who bears this letter. He first appears in Acts 20 and assumes the role of messenger not only here in Colossians, but also Eph. 6:21, 2 Tim 4:12, and Titus 3:12.

**Onesimus** the “useful” is a former slave whose reconciliation with his master is the subject of the letter to Philemon.

**Aristarchus** appears as Paul’s traveling companion in Acts 19, 20, and 27. He is dragged before the frenzied mob in Acts 19:29 and here shares Paul’s imprisonment.

**Mark** is John Mark, the writer of the second gospel. In Acts 15 he separated with Paul after a disagreement but happily appears to be reconciled to him by the time of this letter.

**Barnabas**, Mark’s cousin and the “son of encouragement” is Paul’s constant companion in gospel work throughout the first part of Acts.

**Jesus** is the Greek rendering of Joshua so would not have been an uncommon name among Jews. This Jesus may have taken the name **Justus** to distinguish himself from Christ, out of reverence.

**Epaphras**, hailed here as spiritual warrior, also appears at the end of Philemon.

**Luke**, the author of Luke and Acts, is identified only in this epistle as a physician. He writes of himself traveling with Paul in portions of Acts. Luke alone remains with Paul as Paul approaches the end of his earthly journey (2 Tim. 4:11).

**Demas**, unlike Luke, later abandons Paul out of love for the world (2 Tim. 4:10).

**Nympha** is the hostess of a “house church,” probably a common arrangement in Paul’s day.