

Outline Four



WELCOME

Who would you most like to meet and why?



WORSHIP

Friendship

Requires preparation: arrange a venue, time and date for the meal. Delegate the tasks so that everyone makes a contribution and shares what they have with others.

'Do not forget to do good and to share with others for with such sacrifices God is pleased.' Hebrews 13:16

Think of people known to the group who are in need of friendship at this point in their lives – and offer this as your worship. Don't only invite those who are easy company, but choose two or three individuals for whom this will be a significant blessing. Invite them to a 'meal' you will eat together. This could be dessert and coffee on a group night, a Saturday brunch, a barbeque or whatever suits your setting best.

Remember that Jesus is among you and your offer of hospitality, generosity, acceptance and kindness to others is a picture of him.



WORD

Colossians 4:10-12

'My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.) Jesus, who is called Justus, also sends greetings. These are the only Jews among my co-workers for the kingdom of God, and they have proved a comfort to me. Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.'

Ask one of the group to read the passage, have a time of quiet to let it settle and then ask them to read it again.

Background to the passage

Oh no, it's one of those lists of names and at least some of them are going to be impossible to pronounce! Let's just skip this bit. It was obviously only directly relevant to the people of that time in Paul's circle of friends. But wait a moment. Perhaps there are some things we can learn here. It shows us very clearly that Paul was in a team. He had 'co-workers for the kingdom of God'. What we also see is that these workers were a diverse band, some Jews and some Gentiles. We also see that they are in different locations and travel between regions. They are also in touch with each other's needs, hence Epaphras 'wrestling in prayer for them'.

We catch a glimpse here of how relational and interconnected the early church was. They didn't think of themselves as 'lone rangers'. For many of us today it can feel a bit as if we are on our own as a Christian in the work place, our family or our local

community. Just like Paul, we need to have co-workers who will cheer us on, comfort us and wrestle in prayer for us so that we can stand firm.

Questions

What is Paul talking about when he calls people his 'co-workers for the kingdom of God'? He could have called them friends, but there seems to be another dimension here.

Who would you identify as having been your co-workers for the kingdom in the past? What role did they play for you?

Pray in the Word

Are there ways that members of the group can work as co-workers? Talk about the support you can give each other, picking up on some of the issues raised by the passage.

What are the areas that you need to 'wrestle in prayer' over for each other? Be honest and share the things that you are finding particularly challenging as you consider the kingdom of God in your life. How can you pray for each other in a meaningful way?

Take some time to pray together over what has come up. If it feels appropriate stand and join hands together as a sign of your partnership in the Kingdom and pray a blessing over the group.



WITNESS

3. Embrace - there is a time where we want to encourage people and embrace faith for themselves, and begin their own spiritual journey. So, if someone has spent a year with us in an encounter space and then shown some interest in engaging. We might be able to say would you like to come to an Alpha or a similar enquirers event which is an ideal way to see people embrace faith. So, in your group appoint a scribe and describe your project in these three ideas, how will we encounter people how will they engage and embrace. You might find Laurence Singlehurst's book *Sowing Reaping Keeping*, available from www.celluk.org.uk, a helpful resource as you discuss this.

