

**“Saul Increased All the More in Strength”**

*Sermon Notes*

➤ **This Advent let’s not forget that Jesus is building his church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it**

*\*Saul’s first steps in the church of Christ teach us that ...*

1. Community is essential (vv.19b, 26a)
2. Controversy is inevitable (vv.20-24, 26b, 29)
3. Advocacy is critical (vv.25, 27-28, 30)
4. Vitality is biblical (v.31)

**Next Week: 1 Timothy 1:15-17 - “The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation”:**

*Christmas Eve 2023*

## Community Group Study Guide

For the Week of December 17th-23rd

### Getting Started

1. It's evangelism temperature check-in time. Looking back over the last 30 days, how are things going with your 'List of 5'? If you had to give yourself a number from 1 to 10 (1 being ice cold, 10 being blazing hot<sup>1</sup>) what number would you say you're at today? Why?

### Digging Deeper

2. Looking ahead to the next 30 days, what practical steps will you take toward those on your 'List of 5' so that you raise your temperature at least one degree? Recalling the B.L.E.S.S. practices, make a few concrete plans right now (perhaps even put them in your calendar if you have it on you - don't worry...we'll wait).

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<sup>1</sup> Remember the B.L.E.S.S. practices? **B** (Be in Prayer) **L** (Listen to lost people) **E** (Eat & Drink with them) **S** (Serve or be served by them), **S** (Story -share your story and Christ's). If you're having difficulty giving your outreach efforts an objective number, imagine that each letter is 'worth' 2 points. So, if you did nothing more than pray for your 'List of 5' on a regular basis over the last month (which is *huge* by the way!) then you're already at a 2. If you engaged in more of the B.L.E.S.S. practices over the last month, your number goes even higher. Try it!

## Open Your Bible To Colossians 4:2-4...

3. Why is prayer so mission-critical as it relates to evangelism? What is Paul's specific request in Colossians 4:2-4? How about in Romans 10:1 or Ephesians 6:18-20? How closely do prayers like these approximate your own as you pray for those in your life who are far from Christ?
  
4. What makes praying for the folks on your 'List of 5' such a challenge? There are a number of obstacles (both within us and without). How many can you name?<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, given what Paul prays for in the Scriptures listed #3 (above), why is praying in these cases such an encouragement?
  
5. In Colossians 4:5, God's Word commands us to: "Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time." Without a doubt, one of the best uses of our time is serving (i.e. taking advantage of opportunities for compassion and mercy ministry). What sorts of gifts, talents, and abilities do you have that you could use to serve those on your 'List of 5'? At the same time, what sorts of practical needs or limitations do you have that might open the door to ask one of these people to serve you? Why is our 'List of 5' serving us just as important (possibly more so in some cases) as us serving them?

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<sup>2</sup> If you get stuck, here are some to take into consideration: 2 Corinthians 4:3-4; Ephesians 2:1-3; 6:12; 1 John 5:19.

6. Read carefully through 1 Peter 3:13-17. Have you ever had anyone “ask...you for a reason for the hope that is in you” (v.15)? If so, what were the circumstances? Please share with the group. Why do you think this tends to happen so seldom in our lives? Have you ever had the experience of 2 Timothy 3:12? If so, what happened? Should this discourage or encourage us? How does Jesus answer that question in Matthew 5:11-12?
  
7. When was the last time you had the opportunity to clearly explain the message of the gospel to a person that you’re confident didn’t know the Lord (Acts 8:35; Colossians 4:6)? Please share a story, if you have one. How about a time you had an opportunity but you let it pass you by? Or maybe a situation where the Lord opened a door, but your witness to Christ suffered from a lack of clarity (Colossians 4:4), or gentleness (1 Peter 3:15), or boldness (Ephesians 6:18-20) on your part? What do you plan to do differently in the days ahead?
  
8. Close your time as a group by praying for *all* the people on your ‘List of 5’ by name, especially focusing on ways the Lord can help you to take practical steps toward them with the B.L.E.S.S. practices over the next 30 days.