

The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles (Eerdman's Socio-rhetorical Series of Commentaries on the New Testament)

Ben Witherington III



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This volume completes Ben Witherington's contributions to the set of Eerdmans socio-rhetorical commentaries on the New Testament.

In addition to the usual features of these commentaries, Witherington offers an innovative way of looking at Colossians, Ephesians, and Philemon as interrelated documents written at different levels of moral discourse. Colossians is first-order moral discourse (the opening gambit), Ephesians is second-order moral discourse (what one says after the opening salvo to the same audience), and Philemon is third-order moral discourse (what one says to a personal friend or intimate). Witherington successfully analyzes these documents as examples of Asiatic rhetoric, explaining the differences in style from earlier Pauline documents. He further shows that Paul is deliberately engaging in the transformation of existing social institutions.

As always, Witherington's work is scholarly and engaging. With detailed "Closer Look" sections, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians* is perfect for the libraries of clergy, biblical scholars, and seminaries.

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