

SHARE

"A WAY WITH WORDS" COLOSSIANS 4:2-6

This Week's Core Competency

Giving Away My Faith – I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes. Ephesians 6:19-20 *Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.*

A good witness walks and talks their faith. It takes *both*. Have you ever heard another Christian say, "How you live is more important than what you say? People can tell that I am a Christian by the way I live." How we live is certainly important. God wants us to be holy; he actually tells us to "be holy" six times in the New Testament (1Co 1:2; Eph 1:4; Heb 12:14; 1Pe 1:15, 16; Rev 12:14). No doubt the Father wants his children to set themselves apart from those who don't know him by shunning wickedness and embracing righteousness. But in spite of the fact that it may be possible for people to conclude that we are Christians from the way we live, they may not. And even if they do, that doesn't mean that they will either understand or be attracted to what we believe. We simply must not assume that people will understand why we live the way we do. We must speak up and tell them why.

A blameless life lays the foundation for a gracious witness.

– N. T. Wright

On the other hand, you may know Christians who share their faith with everyone they meet—anytime, anywhere. They talk boldly, unhesitatingly, and fearlessly to others about Jesus. You may even envy their spontaneity and ability to witness so effortlessly, which is understandable. But have you met people like this whose walk did not measure up to all the talk? Maybe they were living in disobedience, or their lives were in disarray. Maybe they were simply unpleasant people to be around—argumentative and arrogant. In any case, their lack of integrity with respect to their faith undermined their witness. The person who talks but doesn't walk will sooner or later be called a hypocrite. To be an effective witness we must talk and walk our faith. *It takes both.*

I enjoyed breakfast with a few men not long ago. Almost immediately, one of them—*who does both*—engaged our server in a personal conversation.

"Where are you from?" he asked.

"Oklahoma," she replied.

One question led to another. "What brought you to Texas?"

"My son," she answered. I could tell she was happy even anxious to talk about her son and his family.

And then, out of the Blue without making any further preparation for a discussion about spiritual things, he asked, "Are you a Christian?"

My first thought was, "I didn't see that coming."

Our server quickly replied, "Absolutely. My parents pounded one thing into all of our heads as kids. You need to believe in Jesus."

Food for thought . . .

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God’s word to put yourself in touch with him.

Colossians 4:2-6

2 Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. 3 And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. 4 Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. 5 Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. 6 Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

Cf., other translations

2 Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; 3 praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; 4 that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak. 5 Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. 6 Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person. (NASB)

2 Be devoted to prayer, keeping alert in it with thanksgiving. 3 At the same time pray for us too, that God may open a door for the message so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. 4 Pray that I may make it known as I should. 5 Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunities. 6 Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you should answer everyone. (the NET Bible)

1 Peter 3:15-16

15 But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, 16 keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Highlight "Devote yourselves to prayer" in v. 2
- * Circle "watchful" in v. 2.
- * Box "so that" indicating *purpose* in v. 3
- * Circle "door" in v. 3.
- * Circle "mystery" in v. 3.
- * Highlight "Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders" in v. 5.
- * Circle "outsiders" in v. 5.
- * Circle "opportunity" in v. 5.
- * Highlight "Let your conversation be always full of grace" in v. 6.
- * Circle "grace" in v. 6
- * Circle "salt" in v. 6.
- * Box "so that" indicating *purpose* in v. 6.

day 2

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. What's the difference between praying and devoting yourself to prayer?
2. What has being "watchful and thankful" got to do with prayer?
3. "Pray for us, *too*" implies Paul wants his readers to pray for themselves, *also*. What do you think he has in mind?
4. Explain the meaning of the *metaphor* "door."
5. To what does "the mystery of Christ" refer?
6. Paul tells his readers, "Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders." Wise in regard to *what* and *why*?
7. Put what "full of grace" means in your own words.
8. Put what "seasoned with salt" means in your own words.
9. **Discussion:** Do you think knowing *how* to answer everyone means having the *right* answer for everyone?

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of its message to clarify your understanding of the passage.

The short paragraph found in Colossians 4:2-6 contains a number of concluding exhortations similar to the ones found in 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22, Galatians 5:26-6:6, and Philippians 4:8-9. It is made up of three sentences in Greek: verses 2-4, which encourage prayer, thanksgiving, and intercession, and verses 5-6 which give directions as to how believers are to treat unbelievers. Verses 2 and 5 each contain a command: "devote yourselves to prayer" (v. 2) and "be wise in the way you act toward outsiders" (v. 5). Because each sentence is quite long, the NIV turns it into five sentences to make the whole thing read smoother.

"Easier said than done" is what occurs to me as I read these instructions. Maybe it's what occurs to you, too. What Paul says is for the most part easy to understand—pray diligently, act wisely, speak graciously. But like I said, "Easier said than done!"

While these three things don't appear to be directly related, the context suggests that Paul had evangelism on his mind when he wrote them. He told the Colossians, "Devote yourselves to prayer . . . praying at the same time for us as well" (NASB). And what exactly did he want them to pray for? He wanted them to pray for opportunities to proclaim the "mystery of Christ." He told them, "Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity" (NASB). And why did he mention "outsiders" and "opportunity" in the same breath? He linked the two because he had snapping up every chance you get to share the gospel on his mind. Finally, he told them, "Let your

speech always be gracious, seasoned as it were with salt" (NASB). In the words of one commentator, "Their words must not be dull or insipid but should be interesting and judiciously chosen" (Peter T. O'Brien, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 44, *Colossians, Philemon*, 242). And why did he want their conversations with people who weren't Christians to always be congenial and interesting? He wanted unbelievers to be tuned in to the good news about Jesus and not turned off by it.

About Paul's final purpose statement, "so that you may know how to answer everyone," one commentator writes: "Because believers live in a hostile context, they need to have their answers ready for those who challenge or are curious about their faith (see 1 Peter 3:15-16). To do this they need to be well-grounded in their faith (Col. 1:9-10; 4:12)" (David E. Garland, *The NIV Application Commentary: Colossians and Philemon*, 274). While true, believers do need to be well-grounded in their faith; they do not need to be trained apologists to proclaim the mystery of Christ. They just need to know what they believe and why they believe it. They don't need to be able to prove the existence of God or debunk the theory of evolution.

Paul's instructions may not be easy to follow, but by keeping them in mind we can train ourselves to follow them.

The Message of the Passage

Spread the word—pray diligently especially for those who minister the gospel and make the most of every opportunity you have to do the same.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you through his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on the first two "living questions" below to apply what you have learned this week.

• **Journal your answers to the following *living* questions:**

–How is God making himself known to you?

–How does God want to change you?

–How is God calling you to change your world?

notes **N** STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 2 **Devote** "The [Greek] verb, which means to 'adhere to,' or 'persist in,' came to be used of a boat that always stands ready for someone (Mark 3:9), or an activity that one was devoted to or busily engaged in. It was in this latter sense that it came to be employed to denote continuance in prayer (Acts 1:14; Rom 12:12; Col 4:2; cf. Acts 2:42, 46) and the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:4). Here the injunction suggests determination in prayer, with the resolve not to give up (Luke 11:5-13) or grow weary Luke 18:1-8)" (O'Brien, 237).

v. 2 **watchful** Lit., "keeping alert in it with thanksgiving" (the NET Bible; cf. NASB). Some infer that the apostle is "encouraging his readers to be on the alert in expectation of the Lord's coming. Accordingly the prayer they are to persist in is for the coming of God's kingdom" (238). Others infer from the context that it involves some aspect of ministry. "The Colossians were to pray with mental alertness. Presumably, this meant that they were to know the circumstances of life, particularly those which affected the spread of the gospel. Informed prayer is likely to be more purposeful, personal, and powerful" (Richard R. Melick, Jr., *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, NAC, 321, 22). One links praying, watching, and giving thanks. "The connection here with thanksgiving (see on 1:3-8, 12b, etc.) may suggest the threefold rhythm: intercession, 'watching' for answers to prayer, and thanksgiving when answers appear" (N. T. Wright, *The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians and to Philemon*, TNTC, 151-52).

v. 2 **thankful** "The literal expression is 'being watchful in thankfulness,' rather than the NIV translation 'being watchful and thankful.' Thankfulness is the environment for good praying, and it provides a safeguard for informed praying . . . This kind of prayer sees clearly the obstacles and difficulties but recognizes that God is able to work" (Melick, 322). "'Being thankful' refers to the spirit in which prayers should be offered. 'Maintain your zest for prayer by thanksgiving' (Moff.)" (Curtis Vaughan, "Colossians," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 11:221).

v. 3 **door** A figure of speech Paul used elsewhere to refer to an "opportunity" to preach the gospel (see 1Co 16:9; 2Co 2:12). "This [vv. 3, 4] is Paul's request for prayer for himself while he was imprisoned in Rome. His concern was that he and his associates might have opportunities for witnessing ('that God may open a door for our message') and that Paul might make clear ('proclaim') the great secret ('mystery'; cf. Col 1:26; 2:2 with Eph 1:9; 3:1) of redemption in Christ in a worthy manner" (221). Or perhaps more specifically, a "'door' that allows the word of God (the phrase literally means 'a door for the word') into the hearts, minds and lives of individuals and communities (cf. Acts 14:27; 1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Cor. 2:12)" (Wright, 152).

v. 4 **the mystery** Paul defines the "mystery of Christ" in another prison epistle. "For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus" (Eph 3:1-6 italics added).

v. 4 **proclaim** "The verb translated 'proclaim it clearly' literally means 'reveal' or 'make manifest', and belongs closely with 'mystery'. Paul must not simply explain everything with clarity. He must announce, and so 'reveal', the mystery of Christ. He is under obligation to do so in such a way as to bring true knowledge and understanding to his hearers (see on 1:24-2:5)" (152-53).

v. 5 **Be wise** "Paul's words imply that believers are to be cautious and tactful so as to avoid needlessly antagonizing or alienating their pagan neighbors" (O'Brien, 222).

v. 6 **opportunity** The verb translated "make the most" is a term used in the marketplace that meant "to buy up" or "to buy out." A shopper who spotted something on sale would "buy up" the remaining inventory. The term refers to "a buying that exhausts the possibilities available"; hence, "snapping up every opportunity that comes" (241).

v. 6 **grace** The Greek word can have a nontheological sense, e.g., "gracious," "charming," or "winsome."

v. 6 **salt** The point of the metaphor may be that be Christians' conversation should be "wholesome" or possibly "winsome." "Those who are the salt of the earth (Matt 5:13; Mark 9:49, 50; Luke 14:34) might be expected to have some savor about their language. This could be taken to mean 'witty' since salt had this significance in pagan usage (apparently derived from the pungent power of salt) or 'winsome,' so that the Colossians' speaking was to exercise a wholesome influence in conversation which might otherwise become debased or crude" (243). Some have noted that salt creates thirst.

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

On a tour in the stockyards, 6-year-old Nathan asked the farmer why he would burn his cow on the side. The farmer explained that it was called "branding". Farmers use a hot iron to brand an image on the cow. They do this to show that the cow belongs to them. If a cow wanders onto another farmer's land, it is easily recognized and returned to its owner. Everyone knows who the animal belongs to because of its mark. As believers, we are marked as well. When we trust Christ, the Holy Spirit comes to live inside us and marks us with His seal (2 Corinthians 1:22). This seal is not a visible mark but can be clearly seen in the way we live our lives. Our text this week gives us several markers that should be obvious in our lives. We should be devoted to prayer and thankful. We should be wise in the way we act towards outsiders and let our conversation be full of grace. When we are living in His Spirit we are ready to give an answer to everyone who asks us for the hope we have. There is no denying that we belong to the Father. He has branded us. May we live so that others do not doubt who our "owner" is and may our kids learn to follow Him by watching us. I'm praying for you this week as you persevere in your parenting journey.

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Col 4:2-6

1. What are we to devote ourselves to?
2. Why does Paul ask for prayer?
3. What does Paul say our conversation should be like?

What Do You Think

1. On a scale of 1 to 10, how devoted do you think you are to prayer?
2. What do you think it means for your conversation to be full of grace, seasoned with salt?

What R U Going To Do

You will have an opportunity this week to respond to someone in grace instead of anger or indifference. Be prepared to share how you responded with your small group next Sunday.

MEMORY TIME

Core Comp

Giving Away my Faith - I tell others about Jesus to help with God's work

Memory Verse

1 Peter 3:15 - But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope that you have.

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized CC ____ and Verse _____. Family completed **Say** _____ **Think** _____ **Do** _____

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn 1 token by completing the PantegoKids Bible study and another token by reciting the memory verse.
Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.