



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V25 N35 August 27, 2023

MAKING GOD KNOWN

“Missional Community”

Colossians 4:2-6

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Biblical Community

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

“All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”

Acts 2:44-47



How are Christians to pray and to act?

Good witnesses *walk* and *talk* the truth of the gospel. It takes both. Have you ever heard another Christian claim that how Christians live is more important than what they say, claiming that people can identify Christians by their walk? “I let my life do the talking” is their motto. How Christ followers live is certainly important. God wants them to be holy; he actually tells them 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. He wants them to be insulated but not isolated from those who don’t believe. Paul puts it this way: “Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity” (Col 4:5), which simply means be tactful yet bold in your witness to those outside the faith.

The Father also wants his children to “love one another. In fact, Jesus gave his disciples a *new commandment* in the Upper Room Discourse to that effect (Jn 13:17). “‘A new command I give you,’” he said. “‘Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another’” (Jn 13:34-35). And it’s not just love for brothers and sisters in God’s family that matters. Jesus expects his disciples to obey the *second* greatest commandment. When asked to identify the greatest commandment in the law, he replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’” (Mt 22:37b-39a). Love knows no boundaries.

But in spite of the fact that it might be *possible* for people to identify Christians from the way they live in general, and more specifically, from the way they love others; they *may not*.

Without a word of explanation, people may see them as merely *religious*, or worse, *religious fanatics*. And even if they do correctly identify those who are Christ followers from their lifestyle, that does not mean they will either understand the gospel or necessarily want to be Christians themselves. Christ followers simply cannot assume that people will understand *why* they live the way they do, let alone understand the gospel and be persuaded to believe it if they are not “prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks [them] to give the reason for the hope that [they] have” (1Pe 3:15). They must speak up and tell people why, and according to the apostle, the language they use ought to be “seasoned with salt” (4:6). “In our idiom, salty language is something replete with profanities, but obviously that is not Paul’s meaning. ‘Seasoned with salt’ was used to refer to witty, amusing, clever, humorous speech” (David E. Garland, *The NIV Application Commentary: Colossians, Philemon*, 274). Such “saltiness” will prevent believers from being ignored as irrelevant bores.

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 not met people like that whose walk did not measure up to their talk? Perhaps unknown to the Christian community, they are living in disobedience, or their lives are in disarray. Perhaps they are simply unpleasant people to be around—that is, overbearing, arrogant, or argumentative. In any case, their personal lack of integrity with respect to the gospel undermines their witness, and maybe they don’t even know it. Christians who “talk the walk” but don’t “walk the talk” will sooner or later be seen as *hypocrites*. To be an effective witness Christians must *talk* and *walk* the truth. It takes both.

Read 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.

Read in another translation

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)

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Highlight “Devote yourselves to prayer” in v. 2.
- Circle “watchful” in v. 2.
- Circle “door” in v. 3.
- Box “so that” indicating *purpose* in v. 3.
- Bracket “mystery of Christ” in v. 3.
- Underline “Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders” in v. 5.
- Circle “outsiders” in v. 5.
- Double underline “make the most of every opportunity” in v. 5.
- Highlight v. 6.
- Circle “grace” in v. 6.
- Circle “salt” in v. 6.
- Box “so that” indicating *purpose* in v. 6.

What one word would you use to describe the **TONE** of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the **THEME** of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, “This text is about _____.”



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. What's the difference between praying and *devoting* yourself to prayer?
 2. List three things you could do to be *more devoted* to prayer.
 3. Put what "being *watchful*" in prayer means in your own words.
 4. What does "being *thankful*" in prayer imply?
 5. Summarize Paul's two-fold prayer request (vv. 3-4).
 6. You can't comply with Paul's prayer request . . . or can you? Explain.
 7. Do you act wisely toward outsiders . . . what do you think and why?
 8. "Make the most of every opportunity." What does Paul mean by that?
 9. Put what "full of grace" and "seasoned with salt" mean in your own words.
 10. **Discussion.** Talk about whether *knowing how to answer everyone* means *having the right answer* for everyone?
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Commentary On The Text

One author does a particularly good job of putting Colossians 4:2-6 in its broader context. He writes: "With this paragraph, Paul concludes his series of general exhortations about the way the Lordship of Christ is to be lived out in daily life (3:5-4:6). It also brings to a close the letter body. This central section of Colossians is driven by imperatives that spell out how the believers in Colossae are to manifest the Lordship of Christ, the Head of Creation and the church (2:6-7). In the earlier part of this letter body (2:8-23), the focus is on the need to assert Christ's exclusive role in salvation and Christian living with respect to the rival claims being put forward by the false teachers. In the second part of this letter body, however, explicit concern with the false teachers fades and is replaced with exhortations relation to the Christian life in general (3:1-4:1). Almost all of this material has been inward looking, focusing on relationships within the Christian community. *Colossians 4:2-6, however, looks outward, with a focus on Paul's evangelistic work and the community's relationships with non-Christians* . . . The movement of the paragraph is easy to follow: a general encouragement to pray (v. 2) > a request to pray for Paul's evangelistic ministry (vv. 4, 4) > exhortations regarding the Colossians' evangelistic ministry (vv. 5, 6)" (Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, PNTC, 318, italics added).

"Easier said than done" is what occurred to me as I read Paul's instructions to the Colossians. Perhaps it's what occurred to you, too. The paragraph is short—only three sentences in Greek. The NIV makes it five sentences by turning some of the subordinate clauses into independent clauses to make the whole thing read more smoothly. It's not only short but for the most part it's easy to understand—pray diligently (cf. 1Th 5:17), act wisely, speak graciously. 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.

Paul told the Colossians, "Devote yourselves to prayer . . . praying at the same time for us as well" (NASB). His point is not that Christians should pray *intensely* or *earnestly* but that they should pray *habitually with perseverance*. "'Prayer' (*proseuchē*) is a general word, encompassing every kind of praying (Mark 11:17; Acts 1:14; 2:42; 16:13). But it often implicitly refers more specifically to petitionary prayer, that is, to requests made to God in prayer (Matt. 21:22; Acts 12:5 Rom. 1:10; 15:30; Phil. 4:6; Col. 4:12;

Phlm. 22; Jas. 5:17). It might have this sense here, since Paul moves so easily from a general exhortation to pray (v. 2) to a specific request to pray for him (v. 3)" (Moo, 320). "Being watchful and thankful" refer on the one hand, to being spiritually and mentally alert rather than spiritually and mentally dull or indifferent, in anticipation of Christ's return, and on the other hand, to expressing gratitude to God in prayer for "every good and perfect gift from above" (Jas 1:17).

And how exactly did he want them to pray for him while he was imprisoned in Rome? He wanted them to pray that he would have more opportunities, *figuratively* speaking, an "open door," to proclaim the "mystery of Christ" (v. 3). The "mystery of Christ" refers to the message of salvation for Jews and Gentiles alike through Jesus Christ, involving the union of both in one body, the body of Christ (1:27; 2:2-3; cf. Eph 3:6). And he wanted them to pray that he might "proclaim it clearly" (v. 4).

And Paul told them, "Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders making the most of the opportunity" (NASB). Why did he mention "outsiders" and "opportunity" in the same breath? He linked the two because he had snapping up every chance one gets to share the gospel in mind. "The verb in the statement 'make the most of every opportunity' is a market term that meant 'to buy out,' 'purchase completely' (*exagorazomenoi*)" (Curtis Vaughan, "Colossians," in *The Bible Expositor's Commentary*, 11:222). Put differently, when you see an opportunity to share the gospel *on sale*, buy it!

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 turned on to the good news about Jesus and not turned off by it. Paul's instructions may not be easy to follow, but by keeping them in mind we can train ourselves to follow them.

Word Studies/Notes

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)” (Peter T. O’Brien, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 44, *Colossians, Philemon*, 237). “It implies unrelenting persistence” (David E. Garland, *The NIV Application Commentary: Colossians, Philemon*, 271).

v. 2 *watchful* Lit., “keeping alert in it with thanksgiving” (NET; cf. NASB, ESV). “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). “What the ‘watching’ believers are to do in these texts is not watch for Christ’s return, but watch their own life in light of the return of Christ. Believers need constantly to be ‘awake’ to the nature of the time they live in—the ‘last days’ of eschatological ‘fulfillment without consummation’—and to orient their lives accordingly” (Moo, 320). 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 (O’Brien, 238).

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 graying, and it provides a safeguard for informed praying” (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 *pray* “Almost all the versions translate v. 3 as a command: And pray for us, too (exceptions are KJV, NKJV, NASB). This translation is undoubtedly warranted, since the participle Paul uses—*proseuchomenoi*—takes on imperatival force from the fact that it modifies the imperative ‘be devoted to prayer’ in v. 2” (Moo, 321).

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” (Vaughan, 221).

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; cf., Col 1:27). However, given the Christological emphasis in Colossians, one author suggests the phrase has a distinct sense here. “We should understand ‘the mystery of Christ’ not as ‘the mystery that Christ proclaims’ (taking *Christou* as a subjective genitive) or even ‘the mystery about Christ’ (objective genitive; see NLT) but ‘the mystery which is Christ’ (an epexegetic genitive). God is therefore here once again defined in Christological terms; God opens the door for the mystery of Christ to be proclaimed” (Moo, 323).

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” (cf. O’Brien, 241). The word translated “opportunity” is a word that denotes “a point of time” (cf. “Walk in wisdom toward those *who are* outside, redeeming the time,” NKJV); hence, “an opportunity.”

v. 6 *grace* The Greek word can have a non-theological sense, e.g., “gracious,” “charming,” or “winsome.” “Here Paul is indicating that not only the content but also the manner of speaking are important when it comes to the influence the believer exerts on outsiders. Similarly at 1 Peter 3:15, 16 Christians are to defend their faith ‘with gentleness and respect’” (242).

v. 6 *salt* Salt was used as a preservative as well as a seasoning. 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). It also creates thirst.



APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Spread the good news by praying diligently, especially for those who minister the gospel, and by making the most of every opportunity you have to share the mystery of Christ.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?
2. What does this passage teach me about myself?
3. What does this passage lead me to do?



FAMILY TALK

What comes to mind when you hear the word “community”? My mind immediately jumps to my 911 people. You know, the people you call in a crisis. Recently, I needed help putting together a last-minute graduation party for my daughter, who swore she didn’t want a party but then changed her mind. During the few hours we were at graduation, my home group friends made a whole event. There were streamers and balloons everywhere, a delicious BBQ dinner ready to be served and gifts overflowing. Oh, and they straightened up my tiny, cluttered house. That’s love. I also think of community as the people who stand by my side. One of my home group friends stands with me in parenting. She and I gather monthly for dinner with six other moms from all walks of life. We do our best to encourage one another with words seasoned with salt and prayerfully try to steer our conversations toward the work of Jesus. As a community, our home group cares for widows, orphans and the elderly. We support and serve one another and by extension the community and beyond. When we humbly offer ourselves to part of a community, we serve the Lord and proclaim His name to our neighbors and nations. Others see the unique and special relationship we have together and want to be part. This is missional living! Are your kids experiencing community? Is your family putting forth the effort to be committed to community? Don’t let this invaluable spiritual discipline slip through your fingers. Email groups@wearecentral.org for more information on how to get connected in community at Central Bible Church.

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Colossians 4:2-6

1. To what should you devote yourself?
2. What should you pray for?
3. What should your conversation be full of?

What Do You Think?

Why should our conversations be “seasoned with salt”?

What Do You Do?

Make a batch of cookies with salt and another without. Can you tell the difference? How does salt enhance the flavor of the sweet cookie?

CORE COMPETENCY: Biblical Community

Be united as a community to share the good news of Jesus.

MEMORY VERSE: Zephaniah 3:17

“The Lord our God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- ☐ I completed my Bible Study
- ☐ I memorized this week’s verse
- ☐ I brought my Bible to church
- ☐ I brought a friend



CHILD’S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

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.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)

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

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.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)

I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)

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

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)

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

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)

I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)

I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)

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

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.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

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.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)

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

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

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

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)

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

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)

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

Grace (Colossians 3:13)

I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)

I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)

I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)

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

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.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)

I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)

I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)

I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him 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.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)

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

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Stephanie Thomas (B.B.A University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James and they have four children: Elijah, Levi, Ella and Simon. Stephanie has attended Central Bible Church for more than 20 years, has been on staff since 2014, and now serves as Children's Minister.

The Scrolls Bible Study is a spiritual growth resource of Central Bible Church, Fort Worth, Texas.

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BIBLE CHURCH**

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