

# Preeminent. Christ's Place in Your Walk

## WEEK 16 Wisdom in the World



*“Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time” (Col. 4:5).*

Mahatma Gandhi, the leader who helped secure India’s independence from the British in the twentieth century, was once asked why he would not convert to Christianity, even though he professed admiration for Jesus. His answer was, “I like your Christ, I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ.”

It is easy to ignore Gandhi’s words because he had a deficient view of Christ — often, it seems, he saw Jesus only as a nonviolent social reformer. It is also easy to say non-Christians should not judge Jesus’ claims about Himself based on His followers’ deeds — though this observation is not without merit. Yet like it or not, unbelievers often base their views of Christianity on the behavior of Jesus’ professed followers. (At the very least, they use our hypocrisy to justify their rebellion against the Creator.)

Paul and the other apostles would have us hear what non-Christians like Gandhi are saying when they note how we fall short of the character of Christ. The problem is not really that we fail to meet Jesus’ standards, although we must strive to do what He says. None of us will ever perfectly follow Him, and the world should not, on its own, expect as much (1 John 1:8–9). The problem is that often we do not admit our own failures to follow Jesus or do not confess that we often preach the gospel in a manner that invites the world to expect an instant transformation of sinners into flawless saints.

### COLOSSIANS 4:2-6 CORAM DEO

One commentator has said that things would be drastically different on the mission field at home and abroad if believers felt the same urgency to reach others with the gospel as they do to secure their own welfare. The wealth and standard of living that most of us enjoy are not evil in themselves, but it can be tempting to spend all our time seeking to improve our lot while ignoring the destiny of the lost people all around us.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/wisdom-world/> From *Ligonier Ministries, the teaching fellowship of R.C. Sproul. All rights reserved. Website: www.ligonier.org*

That is why Paul in today's passage calls us to "walk in wisdom toward outsiders" (Col. 4:5). The basic gospel message is easy to learn, but it takes wisdom to present it in a way that will not unnecessarily create obstacles to its truth in the hearts and minds of unbelievers. Warning people of the judgment due their sin with honesty, love, and humility can be difficult. We can fall into the trap either of being so concerned about sounding judgmental that we never talk about sin or of being so self-righteous that we forget the grace shown to us and treat people as if they are so unclean that Jesus could never forgive them and welcome them into His kingdom.

It takes wisdom to live and to preach the gospel effectively, and to make the best use of our time (v. 5). Often we lose a sense of gospel urgency, believing that people have endless opportunities to believe in Christ. But Jesus could return at any time, so we must make opportunities everyday to share the gospel.



## OPEN IT

1. What is your favorite salty snack?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Describe a time when you prayed earnestly for something and your prayer was answered.

## READ IT | Colossians 4:2-6



## EXPLORE IT

3. In verse 2, what three characteristics does Paul say should be evident in a Christian's prayer life?
4. Besides our requests, what other thing does Paul remind Christians to pray about?
5. How should a Christian behave among unbelievers?
6. What does it mean to let our speech be “seasoned with salt”?

## GET IT

**Devote yourselves to prayer.** This does not mean that all you do is pray all day long, but it does mean that one's devotion to prayer affects everything in one's life. Think of a husband devoted to his wife or vice versa. The idea is that one dedicates himself or herself to the other. Devotion implies a strong attachment, allegiance, ardour or affection for someone or something, in this case prayer and the act of praying. To devote oneself involves allocation of one's time and resources. There is a giving of oneself. One who is devoted is ardent, caring, committed, concerned, constant, dedicated, loyal, staunch, steadfast and true. One who is devoted is not disloyal, inconstant, indifferent or uncommitted. These are some of the ideas involved in the picture of one who is devoted to prayer.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> [http://preceptaustin.org/colossians\\_chap\\_4\\_word\\_study.htm#4:2](http://preceptaustin.org/colossians_chap_4_word_study.htm#4:2)

7. How does your prayer life compare with these descriptions?

Would you say you are devoted to prayer?

If not, then to what are you devoting your life...to things temporal or things eternal?

What needs to change so that you might joyfully fulfill the command to continually devote yourself to the privilege of prayer?

8. Why is the attribute of thanksgiving so important to one's prayer life? How can an ungrateful heart hinder one's prayer life?

**Opportunities for Presentation.** Paul wrote in verse 3, “Praying at the same time for us as well, that God may 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.” He was imprisoned for one reason—preaching Jesus Christ. Now he wants the believers to pray for him that while he is in prison, God will open up special opportunities for him to present the truth of Christ. Wherever Paul is he has one consuming passion—to make Jesus Christ known. He is not praying that God will get him out of there, although that would not be an invalid prayer. However, he wants them to pray with him that God will give him the opportunities while he is there to make Jesus Christ known. Paul’s attitude is amazing. He does not view his life as being wasted in prison. He is not thinking of all the cities which yet need to be reached for Christ. He sees himself as placed in prison by God, so now he asks them to pray that God will give him an open door of opportunity right where he is.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Gil Rugh Sermon <http://www.biblebb.com/files/LIVINGTHELIFE.HTM>

9. Although Paul is in prison, all he can think and pray about is for the Gospel to go out effectively. How does that help motivate you to pray more and be more content?
  
10. What things can God do to "open doors for the word" in the lives of unbelievers?
  
11. What do "open doors" look like when it comes to sharing the gospel?
  
12. What unique "open doors" has God placed before you in your current circumstances?
  
13. Francis of Assisi once said, "Preach the Gospel at all times, and when necessary, use words." Discuss the implications of this quote in light of Paul's words in Colossians 4:2-6. Where does the quote hit the mark, and how can a misuse of this quote send us the wrong message?

**Make it Clear** (gr. φανερώω). *Phaneroo* means to render apparent, to make manifest or visible, to make known what has been hidden or unknown, whether by words, or deeds, or in any other way. To make known by teaching. To expose to view. To be plainly recognized or thoroughly understood. Paul's desire was that he preach plainly and in such a clear manner that the gospel would be readily understood by all who had ears to hear.<sup>4</sup>

14. Why is it so important that the gospel is shared with clarity?

How do Christians make the gospel unclear to the unbelievers around them?

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<sup>4</sup> [http://preceptaustin.org/colossians\\_chap\\_4\\_word\\_study.htm#4:3](http://preceptaustin.org/colossians_chap_4_word_study.htm#4:3)

15. What does a clear presentation of the gospel look like? What doctrinal truths must be included in our sharing of the gospel with others?

He says that we are to walk wisely. Sometimes Christians just barge and crash their way through life. But we are to be walking wisely toward outsiders. As unbelievers observe our walk before them, the way we walk should provide opportunities and open doors for us to present the Gospel. Walking before them properly will make them open to our testimony and to our words. We must live wisely toward outsiders.

**Proper Life Style.** Believers are to be diligent, working properly to meet the needs they have so they will be a good testimony before outsiders. We must be careful of our lifestyle and conduct because unbelievers are watching. People in the world can do things that believers cannot do because the testimony of believers is at stake. We do not want to give unbelievers any excuse to turn off the Gospel of Jesus Christ because of offenses in our lives. They may be offended by the Gospel, but we do not want our lives to be an offense. Therefore, Paul says believers are to work hard with their own hands so no one can criticize them for being lazy. Walking wisely before unbelievers includes a broad area, not just spiritual matters but basic, practical matters as well. This includes how we conduct our business affairs and the way we go about our jobs. We must be sensitive as to how we conduct ourselves as believers so unbelievers have nothing to accuse us of.

**Orderly Finances.** We must also be very careful in our financial dealings. If I incur debts I cannot pay, how will that affect my testimony for Christ? Believers must be honest, upright and transparent. We must be careful to conduct ourselves above reproach in these critical areas. If believers do not walk wisely in these practical areas, they are undermining any opportunities to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ effectively with unbelievers. An improper lifestyle or poor conduct becomes a barrier to unbelievers accepting the message of the Gospel from us. We want to remove anything which will provide an opportunity for unbelievers to reject our testimony of Christ.<sup>5</sup>

16. Have you considered that the way you live and make the most of what Christ has for you is how you are investing in Christ, in your church, and in your Christian life?

17. What does it mean to "walk in wisdom toward outsiders" (v. 5)? Do you make the best use of your time with those who do not know Jesus? How can you grow in this area?

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<sup>5</sup> Gil Rugh Sermon <http://www.biblebb.com/files/LIVINGTHELIFE.HTM>

**Salt.** This is a life-essential flavoring and preserving agent. Our words and deeds need to make sense and be of benefit to others. This verse is a call for us to be relevant and involved. A Christian or Church should never cover away from the beckoning of Christ to be filled with Him so His love and character can flow from us to others. The analogy of "salt" in the Bible leads to the idea that the Christian's role in the world is to be an influencer of the world! We are not to be influenced by it, hide from it, ignore it, or alienate it! We have to find a way to influence it (Job 6:6; Matt. 5: 13-16; 24:14; Luke 16:9; Rom. 10:18; Col. 1:6,23; 2:20-23) without being insipid as in distasteful, or influenced negatively by its sin and corruption (Matt. 6:19-24,32; Luke 12:13-21; I John 2:15-17)!<sup>6</sup>

18. What does it mean to be gracious in speech (v. 6)? Do you consider your words generally to be "seasoned with salt"? How do you need to grow in this area?

19. Paul calls all believers to live with eternity in view. In order to do this we must make the "best use of our time." What things can you do to use your time more effectively for Christ and His Kingdom?

What actions need to take place this week so you can free up time and energy to pray and share Christ with others?

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<sup>6</sup> R. J. Krejcir Ph.D. *Into Thy Word Ministries* [www.intothyword.org](http://www.intothyword.org)  
<http://www.intothyword.org/apps/articles/default.asp?articleid=54231&columnid=3803>