



Community Group Discussion Guide

Speaking to God and to Others
November 12, 2023 | Colossians 4:2-6

MOTIVATE

Starter Question:

- ⇒ *How would you describe your prayer life in one word?*
- ⇒ *How would you like your prayer life to be different?*

DISCUSS

In Colossians 4:2-6, Paul began to wrap up his letter to the Colossians with some important directives for the church. He focused on two areas: the believer's private life of prayer and the believer's public life of speech and loving others, specifically outsiders.

Colossians 4:2-4 Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. ³ At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— ⁴ that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.

With an emphasis on the word “continue,” Paul encouraged the Colossian believers to have a lifestyle of prayer. Paul's use of the word “steadfastly” indicates they needed to be firm amid challenges and temptations.

- ⇒ *The word steadfastly in the Greek means “to persist in adherence to a thing; to be intently engaged in, to attend to constantly.” What picture of prayer do you get when you think of these phrases?*
- ⇒ *Can you think of examples in the Bible of people who devoted themselves to prayer? What characterized their prayer lives?*
- ⇒ *How can you be steadfast in prayer?*

It is not easy to maintain a lifestyle of prayer. There are numerous distractions in life - forces which pull our attention in many different directions. From this aspect, it is even harder to focus on prayer than it was in the past. Social media has made inroads into households and has used up people's free time. Smart phones are often the last thing people look at before they sleep, and the first thing people look at when they wake up (Reviews.org). It is no wonder, that in a world like this, it is increasingly difficult to find the time and focus to calm down, put aside distractions, and spend time meditating on God's character and communicating with Him.

- ⇒ *How might the age of instant gratification hinder our prayer lives?*
- ⇒ *How do our poor attention spans and the overstimulation of our surroundings affect our prayer lives?*
- ⇒ *How can we fight against boredom in our prayer lives?*

A characteristic of prayer Paul mentioned is “being watchful.” The term implies mental alertness. The Colossians' prayers were to be in tune with the times. This meant they were to know the circumstances of life, particularly those which affected the spread of the gospel.

- ⇒ *Why is informed prayer likely to be more purposeful, personal, and powerful?*
- ⇒ *How much of your prayer life is taken up with the concerns Paul says to pray about here?*

Paul added the statement “with thanksgiving.” To ensure a proper perspective, Paul urged the Colossians to offer their prayers in an attitude of thanks. This kind of prayer clearly sees the obstacles and difficulties but recognizes that God can work despite them. The circumstances need not affect thankfulness.

- ⇒ *How could Paul speak of thanksgiving from a prison cell?*
- ⇒ *Why should thanksgiving be part of our prayers?*
- ⇒ *What other ingredients are essential in prayer?*
- ⇒ *How can Jesus still be our perfect example in prayer?*

Spending time thanking God will affect our outlook and perspective. The opposite of thanksgiving is complaining. As we count our blessings, it will transform our attitudes, making us more optimistic and joyful.

From his prison cell in Rome, Paul requested that the Colossians also pray for an open door for the gospel. He always sought to turn every situation into an opportunity to communicate the mystery of Christ’s love and sacrifice. Paul needed God’s wisdom to do so. Paul’s concern was that he and those with him might have opportunities to share about the redemption of Christ in a worthy manner. There was no selfish motive behind this prayer. Paul’s consuming interest was for the advancement of the gospel, not for his own blessing.

- ⇒ *What is the mystery of Christ? How would you explain it to somebody who is not yet a believer?*
- ⇒ *What door of opportunity to share the gospel do you pray God will open for you?*

Paul was persecuted for his work in spreading the gospel. In the Western world, some people may think that persecution is a thing of the past. Today over 360 million Christians live in nations with high levels of persecution or discrimination. That’s one in seven Christians worldwide. We should make it a habit to pray for Christians and missionaries all over the world. (Christianity Today: ‘The 50 Countries Where It’s Hardest to Follow Jesus in 2023’)

Colossians 4:5 Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time.

Paul first spoke about how believers are to have a private life of continuous prayer. Here he spoke about how believers are to live publicly toward others.

- ⇒ *Who is Paul referencing as “outsiders?”*
- ⇒ *How do you treat those you consider to be outsiders?*

To “walk in wisdom toward outsiders” is to show practical Christian wisdom in dealing with secular society. Wisdom enables us to combine boldness with tact and to employ the proper approach in specific situations with individuals. The “ones outside” need examples of God’s wisdom. Divine wisdom results in a positive witness.

Believers should live in a way that will attract, impress, and convict non-Christians. Our conduct should give the lost community a favorable impression of the gospel. Paul knew only too well the importance of giving the world no reason to criticize or gossip about the behavior of Christians.

- ⇒ *How do we walk in wisdom toward others?*
- ⇒ *How do we ensure that those outside the faith feel welcome in our Community Group?*

Immediately following his statement about the wisdom needed in encounters with non-Christians, Paul spoke about the use of time.

⇒ *Is there anything in your life which you feel wastes your time or distracts you from using your time well?*

The word “time” in verse 5 is translated from kairos, not chronos, both of which are Greek words that refer to time. The word kairos often includes the idea of an opportunity or a suitable time for an action to take place. When we “seize the day,” we are taking advantage of the kairos given to us. It could be said chronos is about minutes; kairos is about moments. Paul encouraged Christians to make the best use of those moments when we encounter others for Christ. God has put us onto this earth for a reason. Every day is an opportunity to fulfill the missions God has for us that day.

⇒ *Can you describe a time when you made the most of an opportunity to share Christ? What was the result?*

Colossians 4:6 Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

For the sharing of the message of Christ to be effective, the wise walk must be accompanied by gracious and flavorful talk. One commentary writer phrases Paul’s words this way: Let your speech be always with the graciousness appropriate to Christians--those who live in a state of grace.

⇒ *Why should living in “a state of grace” affect our speech?*

⇒ *How do our words affect our witness?*

The second characteristic of the believer’s speech is likened to the seasoning that salt brings. Salt was used for two purposes in the ancient world. It was used as a preservative to keep food from spoiling. Salted food provided sustenance, sustaining life, and keeping away any form of corruption. This means that the believer’s speech is to be wholesome and inoffensive. Salt was also used as an additive to give flavor to food. The believer’s speech is to be interesting, tactful, appealing, and life giving. The ultimate way our words can bring life is when we use them to tell people the good news of Jesus and teach His words.

⇒ *What would it look like for our conversations with others to be always full of grace?*

⇒ *What characteristics does gracious speech “seasoned with salt” have?*

⇒ *Salt seasons and salt preserves. How does it affect you to know that the words you say can give life and can bring the beauty of the gospel to another?*

The remainder of verse 6 tells why we should cultivate this kind of speech: so that you may know how you ought to answer each person. Conversation must be appropriate for each person we speak to. Sound answers offered with a positive spirit overcome many obstacles to the gospel. Paul’s text emphasized the method of answering more than the content. It calls for Christian graciousness and sensitivity to the person and situation.

⇒ *Can you describe a time when God gave you the gracious words needed to share His love with a non-believer?*

⇒ *How does our speech relate to this Henderson Hills value: Life-Giving Hope: We reflect the gospel of Jesus Christ with delight by building relationships and environments infused with grace and joy?*

TRANSFORM

1. Personal application: Spend some time evaluating your own prayer life.

- ⇒ *How much time do you spend praying on a daily basis? How much time would you like to spend praying?*
- ⇒ *What are some things you can do to enhance your prayer life? (For example: Set aside a regular time to pray. During that time, put aside all distractions. Turn off your phone or put it in another room.)*
- ⇒ *How do you need to change your use of time and your speech to walk in wisdom toward outsiders?*

2. Pray: Use Paul's words in Colossians 4:2-6 to express your desire for God to show you how you can pray passionately, walk in wisdom, and speak with graciousness. Ask God to embolden our persecuted brothers and sisters around the world. Ask Him to open the door of opportunity for you to share the gospel with a specific person.

STUDY: Resources used, compiled from, and quoted:

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- Melick, R. R. (1991). Philippians, Colossians, Philemon (Vol. 32, pp. 320–325). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.
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- Gotquestions.org
- Reviews.org
- *Holman New Testament Commentary, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians*, page 345-346.