



eLesson 012

Text: Colossians 4:2-4

Subject: Witnessing

Colossians - Part 10

You and non-believers. Paul and Timothy wrote about one more relationship in their letter ... the one between the believer and the non-believer. They wrote about witnessing. Most Christians know that they should witness. They are committed to witnessing ... if someone else does it. One reason for this is that few Christians know how to communicate the Gospel sensitively, responsively, and effectively. It is difficult to do what we do not know how to do. Jesus said, "*The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.*" Luke 10:2. I pray that this lesson helps you go out into His harvest ... better equipped to share the good news about Him.

Do you want to be a more effective witness? Then start by devoting yourself to prayer, Colossians 4:2. The starting point of witnessing is not just prayer ... it is devotion to prayer. Prayer is a non-negotiable, foundational ingredient in helping people come to faith in Jesus. A good rule is ... talk to God about people before you talk to people about God. Be steadfast in that prayer. Give it your all. Paul wrote, "*Pray without ceasing.*" 1 Thessalonians 5:17. Jesus taught that we should be as persistent as the man who, at midnight, relentlessly asked his neighbor for bread, Luke 11:5-8. Jesus continued and said, "*Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it shall be opened.*" Luke 11: 9-10. Are you that devoted in asking God to bring people to Jesus ... to seeking His action through you? Are you relentlessly pounding on the door of heaven? Do you think I am putting too much emphasis on persistence? I am not! Jesus told His disciples another parable ... one about a persistent widow and an uncooperative judge. He used this illustration "*o show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart*" Luke 18:1. The judge did not want to give the widow the legal protection that she sought. However, she was very persistent. She kept coming to him ... and coming to him ... and coming to him. Her persistence produced results. Finally, the judge said, "*Because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, lest by continually coming she wear me out.*" Luke 18:5. That is how Jesus wants you to pray. Be persistent. Are you praying that way? As part of your witnessing ... be devoted to persistent prayer. Begin today. It is the starting point of being an effective witness.

Stay alert! "*Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving,*" Colossians 4:2. Keep alert ... pay attention when you pray. Keep your focus. Think about what you are saying. Meaningful repetition can be good. It can be an expression of persistence. However, mindless, meaningless repetition is of no value. Jesus said, "*Do not use meaningless repetition, as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words.*" Matthew 6:7. Use your heart

and your mind when you pray. Keep alert. And when you pray, be thankful. It is good to thank God. However, that is not the point of Colossians 4:2. Paul wrote, "*With thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*" Philippians 4:6. That is the same point as in Colossians 4:2 ... pray with an attitude of thankfulness. Ask God with a thankful heart. Be thankful before you have His answers. With your mind, pay attention. With your heart, be thankful.

A personal plea. Paul and Timothy made a personal appeal to the Colossian believers to be "*praying at the same time for us as well,*" Colossians 4:3. Paul and Timothy prayed for them ... did not cease to pray for them, 1:3-12. However, here near the end of their letter, they asked the Colossian believers to pray for them. They asked them to pray for two specific things ... for open doors for the Gospel ... and for clarity in declaring it. Opportunities for the Gospel are gifts from God. Open doors are His answers to our prayers. We knock ... He opens. We seek ... He gives the opportunities. We ask ... He answers. That is how it works. What happens if you do not knock ... if you do not seek ... if you do not ask? The answer is in James 4:2, "*You do not have because you do not ask.*" Many Christians are getting all the open doors that they are asking for ... none. God opened doors for Paul, 1 Corinthians 16:9, 2 Corinthians 2:12-13. He will open doors for us to share the Gospel. I prayed for an open door to witness to a non-believing salesman who sat next to me as I drove along a moonlit interstate highway. He interrupted my silent prayer by asking, "When you look at that moon ... doesn't it make you wonder where we came from?" I prayed for an open door to share the Gospel with another man ... a man I had not seen in several days. While I was driving one afternoon, I prayed for an opportunity to serve him ... to earn the right to be heard. I did not realize that, at that moment, he was driving the car in front of me. As I ended my prayer, his car broke down and slid off the road. He needed a ride to his house ... God opened another door. I could tell you of many, many doors that God has opened because I prayed and because others prayed for me. I do remember some open doors that came without my praying ... undoubtedly, at those times, my friends were praying for me. Devote yourself to asking for open doors. Be persistent about this. Keep on asking. Ask your prayer partners to pray that God will give you open doors. Pray for the same for them. Make this a prayer priority in your Bible study and church. Be devoted to it. Moreover, pay attention ... doors will start opening.

Pray for clarity, Colossians 4:4. They wanted to proclaim the mystery of Christ, Colossians 4:3. That mystery is Christ in us, the hope of glory, 1:25-27. Non-believers do not know the Gospel. They do not understand it. Paul asked the Colossians to pray that he would make the Gospel clear ... that is, manifest, understandable, and fully visible. Non-believers cannot accept what they do not understand. To them the Gospel is an unknown mystery. God has given us the privilege of telling them about this mystery ... telling them about Jesus. We must be able to make it clear. I have asked many Christians to explain the Gospel in a short, simple, clear way. The vast majority could not. I also asked them to write a prayer that someone could say to receive Jesus as their Savior. The vast majority could not. Unfortunately, many believers cannot adequately explain the Gospel ... cannot offer a sample prayer ... and do not know how to make the invitation. What about you ... can you? You should know the Gospel so thoroughly that you can concentrate on making it clear rather than on getting it right. Learn the Gospel ... and pray for clarity. Do not clutter, confuse, or complicate the message. Offer the Gospel accurately, simply, and with clarity. It is the way you "*ought to speak.*" 4:4. It is the right way to share the Gospel. How can you begin to learn how to witness this way? The answer is easy ... pray and ask your friends to pray for you. That is what Paul did. That is what we should do.

An omission. I left something out of my explanation of these verses. I skipped one phrase in verse 3. Did you notice the one? In mentioning the Gospel, Paul wrote, "*for which I have also been imprisoned.*" He just slipped that phrase in ... and moved on.

How do you think Paul reacted to being imprisoned? He prayed for opportunities ... and he was taken away from the crowds and put in a jail cell. He asked others to pray for open doors for him ... and he was locked behind closed doors. Paul prayed for opportunities (for freedom) to witness ... and he was placed in chains, Acts 28:20, Ephesians 6:20, 2 Timothy 1:16. How do you think that Paul looked at these events in his life? He may have been chained to soldiers ... apparently a normal practice of the Roman guards. If that happened, how would Paul have looked at such circumstances? To Paul ... who was chained to whom? It is all a matter of perspective. How did Paul look at his chains and imprisonment? I believe that he saw them as answers to prayer ... as open doors rather than locked doors. A cell full of prisoners would have been a cell full of opportunities ... a captive audience. If Paul was chained to guards, can you imagine the attitude of the Roman soldiers assigned to guard him? I can imagine one guard saying, "I don't want to be chained to him again ... all he talks about is that Jesus." Another guard might have said, "I'll guard him ... I have some questions about Jesus". Days or weeks later one of those guards might have been again chained to Paul again. However, by that time he might have been a new believer ... being discipled by the great Apostle Paul, his spiritual father. Paul went through the open doors in those locked prisons ... doors into the hearts of lost men. He knew that his humanly inconvenient circumstances were God's good open doors. Remember Paul's own words, *"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."* Romans 8:28.

How do you react to your daily experiences? Do you devotedly pray that God will open doors? Is that unexpected visitor an inconvenience or an answer to prayer? I remember getting on an overcrowded airplane in Warsaw after a mission trip. I was tired and wanted to sleep. However, the plane was full ... I would not get two seats to stretch out on. As I worked my way toward the back of the plane, I wondered what opportunity would be crowded into the seat next to me. He was an Orthodox Jew returning to New York. We talked about the Messiah from runway to runway. How do you look at your daily circumstances? How do you look at being transferred to that new school or job? Do you see that God is sending you into a new harvest field? What about those new neighbors who moved into what was your Christian friend's house? Do you hope that they too are believers ... or do you hope that they are opportunities? What about all the unexpected appointments in your life? If you have been devotedly praying, the answer is simple ... God scheduled them. Pray for open doors for the Gospel. God answers prayer. Ask your friends to pray for open doors for you. God answers prayer. Then pay attention ... watch out for opening doors! God's open doors and your clear presentation of the Gospel will combine to make a powerful and effective witness. Do you see no open doors? Then get up and rattle a few doorknobs ... maybe God unlocked a few doors for you.

Additional help in witnessing. The next eLesson is also on witnessing ... this and that lesson can really help you be a more effective witness. Additionally, you could benefit from the free www.MyDisciplemaker.org Level 2 Course ... *Disciplemaking 2 - Being His Witness*. It contains more comprehensive training in witnessing effectively and sensitively.

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Study Questions Answers at end of lesson.

1. How does Luke 10:2 apply to you if you live, work, or go to school with non-believers?
2. Describe how you should pray for the lost?
3. What attitude should you have in prayer before you have been answered?
4. Should you ask others to pray for your witnessing?
5. Why do many Christians have no open doors for witnessing?
6. What quality should describe your Gospel presentation?
7. How should we look at the unexpected changes in our life circumstances?



Personal Reflection No answers provided for these questions.

1. In the past 7 days, how much time have you devoted to praying for the lost?
2. Are you devoted to praying for the lost ... will you be?
3. How persistent should you be in prayer?
4. What open doors for the Gospel have you seen?

5. What open doors for the Gospel have you missed?

6. Who are your witnessing prayer-partners? If you need more, what is your plan and timing to get them?

7. Can you make the Gospel clear? If not, what are you going to do about it?

8. Name six lost people you need to pray for persistently.



Answers to Study Questions

1. How does Luke 10:2 apply to you if you live, work, or go to school with non-believers? **You are a worker sent into that harvest field.**
2. Describe how you should pray for the lost? **Devotedly ... without ceasing ... persistently.**
3. What attitude should you have in prayer before you have been answered? **Thankfulness.**
4. Should you ask others to pray for your witnessing? **Yes.**
5. Why do many Christians have no open doors for witnessing? **They have not asked for any.**
6. What quality should describe your Gospel presentation? **Clarity.**
7. How should we look at the unexpected changes in our life circumstances? **As opening doors.**



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