



eLesson 013

Text: Colossians 4:5-6

Subject: More on Witnessing

Colossians - Part 11

Action and words. Paul and Timothy continued to write about the relationship between a believer and a non-believer. The previous lesson was about what you should say to God before talking with a non-believer. This lesson is about how you should act toward, and talk to, a non-believer after you have talked to God. Your witness is based on prayer ... demonstrated by good works ... and communicated by words. Jesus said, *"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."* Matthew 5:16. Your witness is a combination of works and words ... your life and your lips ... your walk and your talk. Witnessing is show and tell time. A good witness lives it and gives it. Unfortunately, there are some verbally active witnesses whose lives are filled with sin. They are hypocrites. The cure for such hypocrisy is not silence ... it is repentance. Hypocrites need to bring their walk up to their talk. Other Christians lead lives filled with good works. Their consistent, good lives are seen by all around them. However, some of them are silent about the Gospel. People see their good works ... but can only glorify them. These Christians are stealing God's praise. They are not hypocrites ... they are thieves. The cure for their silence is not more silence. They need to bring their talk up to their walk. What about you? Is your light shining? Do people see your good works and hear your good words about Jesus? Are they glorifying your Father because of the light that shines in and through you?

Walk in wisdom. *"Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders,"* Colossians 4:5. Use your head. Think about what you are doing in your contacts with non-believers. Think about what you are saying. Live your daily life with wisdom ... with intelligence, discretion, and discernment. Your life with lost people should be a walk in God's wisdom. What is this wisdom? The answer is in James 3:17, *"But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy."* That is how you should walk and talk with non-believers. Unfortunately, some Christians act as if to be bold witnesses they must be rude, harsh, and obnoxious. That is not true. You can be bold and sensitive at the same time. It is true that the message of the Gospel will offend some. However, that does not give the messenger permission to offend and antagonize. A good witness acts wisely toward non-believers. Paul wrote, *"Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you; so that you may behave properly toward outsiders"* 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12. A good witness, one who is walking in wisdom, has a good reputation with those outside the church. That is one of the qualifications for recognizing the elders that God gives to the Church, 1 Timothy 3:1-7. Use your head ... think before you act or talk. *"Do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be babes, but in your thinking be mature."* 1 Corinthians 14:20. Jesus sent His disciples out with these words, *"I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; therefore be shrewd as serpents, and*

innocent as doves." Matthew 10:16. Jesus was shrewd in His conversations with non-believers, as seen in Luke 20:20-39. He was also innocent. He never sinned, 1 Peter 2:21-24. Do you want to be an effective witness? Then be shrewd and innocent. Walk in wisdom as a snake and a dove. Be careful in what you say and in what you do. That is what you must do to make, *"the most of the opportunity,"* Colossians 4:5. Pray for opportunities to witness. Pray ... and God will open doors for the Gospel. When God opens a door, walk through it. Do not just stand there looking at an open door. Walk through it before it closes. Seize the opportunity. *Carpe diem* ... seize the day. Walk through God's open doors.

"Let your speech always be with grace." To witness effectively you must speak graciously, Colossians 4:6. Your words need to be filled with charm, kindness, warmth, and gentleness. God has given us instruction about our words in the book of Proverbs. *"The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer,"* Proverbs 15:28. *"The tongue of the righteous is as choice silver,"* 10:20. *"A gentle answer turns away wrath,"* 15:1. *"A soothing tongue is a tree of life,"* 15:4. *"A man has joy in an apt answer, and how delightful is a timely word!"* 15:23. *"The wise in heart will be called discerning, and sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness,"* 16:21. *"The heart of the wise teaches his mouth, and adds persuasiveness to his lips. Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones,"* 16:23-24. *"He kisses the lips who gives a right answer,"* 24:26. *"Like apples of gold in settings of silver is a word spoken in right circumstances,"* 25:11. Your words should be gracious ... but they should also be *"seasoned, as it were, with salt,"* Colossians 4:6. Be gracious ... but do not use graciousness as an excuse not to give the words of the Gospel. Salt adds a distinctive flavor to food. It is added ... and it is noticed. Add some spiritual flavor to your conversations. It will be noticed. Move conversations from the trivial to the important ... from the general to the specific ... from the impersonal to the personal ... from the secular to the spiritual ... from the temporal to the eternal. Gracious and seasoned words produce interesting results.

Respond to them. *"Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person,"* Colossians 4:6. Think about the logical sequence in this verse. If you do step 1 ... then step 2 happens ... and then you can do step 3. Re-read the verse looking for that progression. Can you see it? Can you see all three steps? Or are you missing step 2? Step 1 is ... let your words be gracious and well seasoned. Step 3 ... then you will know how to respond to each individual. What is step 2? Step 2 is this ... the other person says or does something. You cannot respond to someone who does nothing or says nothing. Why does step 2 happen? It happens because you do step 1. You speak with graciousness and seasoning ... then they respond. Consequentially, their reaction makes it possible for you to give an answer to them. If non-believers are not asking you questions, it might be because you are not speaking with grace and salt. Speak correctly ... they will react ... then you will have an open door to respond.

Speak with grace and salt. Then non-believers will do something ... or say something ... or ask something. They will react. That makes it possible for you to *"know how you should respond to each person,"* 4:6. Without each person's reaction, you cannot give an individualized response. Speak correctly ... and then listen. Seek to be understanding before you seek to be understood. *"A fool does not delight in understanding, but only in revealing his own mind."* Proverbs 18:2. A foolish witness is all mouth and no ears. Do not be foolish. In addition, do not give an answer before you hear and understand the question. *"He who gives an answer before he hears, it is folly and shame to him,"* Proverbs 18:13. Have quick ears and a slow mouth. *"But let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak,"* James 1:19. You have two ears and one mouth ... use them proportionately. Moreover, remember that you are responding to an individual ... *"to each person."* Colossians 4:6. That non-believer is a unique creation of God ... one for whom Christ died. Non-believers have many different

questions and needs. Most do not understand the Gospel ... and are probably rejecting some caricature of its message. They may use some Bible words ... but have their own definitions of them. Ask them what they mean. Talk to them. Be gracious. Add some salt. They will ask good questions if they think you are listening. Answer only after you are sure that you understand them. Then tell them the good news about Jesus.

A simple plan for witnessing is in Colossians 4:2-6 (the subject of this and the previous lesson). Paul and Timothy gave instructions ... practical ways for every Christian to witness. Follow their simple teaching and you will become a more effective witness.

Be devoted to prayer.
Be alert and thankful as you pray.
Pray for each other (witnessing partners).
Pray that God will open doors.
Pray that you will make the Gospel clear.
Walk in wisdom ... think.
Walk through God's open doors ... seize the opportunity.
Speak graciously ... include the salt of the Gospel.
Listen and respond individually to each non-believer.

How are you doing on each of these points? Which are you best at doing? Which are you weakest at doing? Put their plan into action. Decide today that you want to be a more effective witness. Begin applying what you have learned. You will be on your way to becoming a better witness.

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Study Questions Answers at end of lesson.

1. How does Matthew 5:16 apply to witnessing?
2. The KJV translates Colossians 4:4 as "*Walk in wisdom toward them that are without* (non-believers)." What part of your body do you use to walk in wisdom? Hint: It is not your feet.
3. According to James 3:17, what is this wisdom from above?

4. We are instructed by Colossians 4:5 to make the most of our witnessing opportunities ... what does that mean?
5. What does it mean that our speech should *"always be filled with grace"*?
6. In witnessing, what does *"seasoned with salt"* mean?
7. What is the unwritten step in Colossians 4:6?
8. Should you give general answers or individualized answers to non-believers?
9. Which should come first ... being understood ... or being understanding?
10. What does it mean to have quick ears and a slow mouth?

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Personal Reflection

No answers provided for these questions.

1. Which is weaker ... your walk or your talk? What are you going to do about it?

2. In what ways can you improve your walk in wisdom toward outsiders?
3. Is your speech more gracious or more caustic? How can you improve?
4. How can you add more spiritual salt to your speech?
5. Are non-believers asking questions of you? If not, why not? How can you get them to ask more questions about God, life, and the Bible?
6. How can you become a better listener?
7. Do you ask enough questions when you are witnessing?
8. What questions would be good to ask?
9. In the witnessing plan at the end of the teaching part of this lesson, which steps do you need the most work on?
10. Do you need the additional training in becoming an effective witness offered in Level 2 of www.MyDisciplemaker.org? When will you start?

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Answers to Study Questions

1. How does Matthew 5:16 apply to witnessing? *It takes both the words of the Gospel and our good works to effectively witness. Our walk and talk should communicate the Gospel message.*
2. The KJV translates Colossians 4:4 as “*Walk in wisdom toward them that are without* (non-believers).” What part of your body do you use to walk in wisdom? Hint: It is not your feet. *Your brain.*
3. According to James 3:17, what is this wisdom from above? *It is pure, non-argumentative, reasonable, merciful, consistently proven by good works, confidently consistent, and without hypocrisy.*
4. We are instructed by Colossians 4:5 to make the most of our witnessing opportunities ... what does that mean? *We need to be alert so that we see God’s open doors ... we need to have pre-prayed for them ... we need to be prepared in works and words ... and then we need to walk seize every God-given opportunity.*
5. What does it mean that our speech should “*always be filled with grace*”? *The words of our witness should be filled with charm, kindness, warmth, and gentleness.*
6. In witnessing, what does “*seasoned with salt*” mean? *Spiritually interesting ... flavored to make one thirsty for more ... spiced with the Gospel.*
7. What is the unwritten step in Colossians 4:6? *The middle step ... the person asks or says something.*
8. Should you give general answers or individualized answers to non-believers? *Individualized.*
9. Which should come first ... being understood ... or being understanding? *Being understanding.*
10. What does it mean to have quick ears and a slow mouth? *We should listen more than we speak ... listen before we speak ... prioritize listening over speaking ... frequently ask, What do you mean?*

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