

Further Bible Study Questions

- A) In what ways are the Gospel of Jesus Christ “caught” and “taught” in the life of the follower of Jesus Christ? It seems that an overemphasis on either of these perspectives can lead to unfortunate consequences. Hoping that people will “catch” the Gospel through your lifestyle while staying quiet in speech about the Gospel can make you a good neighbor, but it doesn’t do much for the evangelistic cause of Christ. This can lead people to reject the message of Christ because they never actually get to hear it. On the other hand, sharing about Jesus and living a life which doesn’t authentically represent Christ (an overemphasis on the ‘taught’ approach) can lead people to reject the message because of the messenger. Clearly there must be balance between these two... Which one comes more naturally for you? Do you emphasize one over the other? How can you develop a balance between these two aspects of how we deliver the Gospel of Jesus Christ?
- B) Knowing our culture, and knowing how to phrase things is great, but if we do not love one another within the church FIRST, it is all in vain. The love of Jesus Christ between believers is critical! It’s almost as if the love of Jesus Christ between His followers has an authenticating effect on the message of Jesus Christ from the Bible (cf. John 13:34-35). Often though, this essential “core quality” of church gets set aside, and followers of Christ spend a great deal of time complaining about others or complaining generally about Christ’s church. Ephesians 4:29 clears the air on this issue by calling on all of us to only speak words which “build up” (for others and about His church). What can you do, in an intentional manner, to build up another follower of Jesus Christ or build up His church in this next week? How can you respond when someone else comes to you with a word of discontent or hostility about someone else and/or the church?

Pure Potency

Long Beach Alliance Church • November 18th, 2007 • Pastor Chris Lankford

**CONDUCT YOURSELVES WITH WISDOM
TOWARD OUTSIDERS, MAKING THE
MOST OF THE OPPORTUNITY. LET YOUR
SPEECH ALWAYS BE WITH GRACE,
AS THOUGH SEASONED WITH SALT,
SO THAT YOU WILL KNOW HOW YOU
SHOULD RESPOND TO EACH PERSON.
~COLOSSIANS 4:5-6 (NASB)**

1) Authenticity & Compassion/Making The Most...

- A) Since there are those who are “outside” of a relationship with Jesus Christ (Colossians 4:5), Paul calls on the followers of Christ in the church to conduct themselves with wisdom. This has two key aspects:
- i) **An authentic Christian life.** Clearly, the followers of Christ are to “live the life” in both their private and public lives (Colossians 3:10-4:1).
 - ii) **A public voice for the Gospel.** What is the motivation to “live the life?” Clearly we are to live authentically in order to provide a compassionate voice which speaks out-loud about the Gospel of Jesus Christ (4:2-6).
- B) It cannot be emphasized enough that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is both “caught and taught!” It must be caught in how we live and taught in what we say!

2) Making The Most Of The Opportunity/Style Matters

- A) The biblical assumption is that every follower of Jesus Christ will "speak out" about what Jesus Christ has done for them. Paul assumes this when he speaks of our "speech" (4:6).
- B) In this sense, ALL of us are to be "preachers" of the Gospel of Jesus Christ! The Gospel cannot be effective in the world if we do not **SAY SOMETHING** (cf. Romans 10:13-15).
- C) For many of us, the idea of saying anything is terrifying! A recent Christian research firm (Barna Research, 2007) reported that most adult Christians do not share their faith with anyone outside of those who are already Christians.
- D) Part of the difficulty in sharing the Gospel with others is one of perception from those who are "outsiders." Because of hostile and aggressive "sales-driven" evangelism, many people are scared of Christians.
- E) The message of Jesus Christ is supposed to be given with "graciousness" (Colossians 4:6), with "gentleness and reverence" (1st Peter 3:15), without giving undue offence (1st Corinthians 10:31-33).

* Some people understand the phrase "with grace" (literally ἐν χάριτι, "in grace." The same phrase is translated "with thanksgiving" in Colossians 3:16) as referring to the grace of God. This thread of teaching believes that the "outsider" actually experiences the literal grace of God as believers share the Gospel. However, as you can see from the prepositional construction, there is an absence of the definite article before "grace." This makes the phrase difficult to interpret as being equivalent to God's grace (although not impossible, note Ephesians 2:5 with 2:8). The phrase is probably better understood in this context as "with gracious words." Even with this understanding though, the difference between "with grace" and "with gracious words" is almost inconsequential. Reading this passage in light of others which have a similar thrust (1st Corinthians 10:31-33, 1st Peter 3:15-16, Ephesians 4:29) provides a picture which indicates that the content of the message should be the grace of God (without this we have no message), but a firmer emphasis is being placed on the manner of speaking when it comes to the influence the follower of Jesus Christ exerts in outsiders. Thus, in the popular sense of the word, we are to be gracious in our verbal witness to outsiders. Summarized from *Colossians and Philemon*, by Peter T. O'Brien, pg. 241-242, from *The Word Biblical Commentary Series, Volume 44*.

- F) Just as "salt" (4:6) has a flavoring effect on food, just as it preserves food, just as it provides for a greater appetite for food, so our words should also "season" the Gospel.

- F) What is the "bottom line?" **DON'T GET IN THE WAY OF THE MESSAGE!** The message is potent enough, deliver it with graciousness and respect. Is Jesus Christ sufficient? Is His message sufficient? Prove it with gentleness and grace!

3) Making The Most Of The Opportunity/ Content Matters

- A) It would be easy, as many ministries have done, to assume that these encouragements toward "gentleness," "grace," and "respect" mean that we need to 'soften' the harshness of the Gospel or 'lighten up' talk of sin and Hell with a greater emphasis on love and Heaven...
- B) Of course, this is not at all what Scripture is saying! In fact, followers of Christ are called to be so confident and prepared with the message of Christ that we will be able to handle it with grace and gentleness (Colossians 4:6, 1st Peter 3:15-16).
- C) This requires every follower of Christ (by the way, that includes YOU), to have a solid knowledge of the content of the Gospel (cf. 1st Corinthians 2:1-5, 15:3-4) and be able to share how the Gospel has changed them (1st John 5:10-12).
- D) What is the "bottom line?" **DON'T GET IN THE WAY OF THE GOSPEL MESSAGE!** The message is potent enough, deliver it with precision, with conviction, and without distraction. Is the Gospel of Jesus Christ sufficient? Prove it with knowledge of its content, with the right word at the right moment (cf. Ephesians 4:29).