

Being Effective as a Christian Colossians 4:2-6

Objective: Teach how to serve to advance the kingdom of God.

Reading: Matthew 28:18-20.

Memory: Colossians 4:2-6; "Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful."

Introduction:

1. What if a friend of yours was suffering, dying from terminal disease and you knew they were headed for a most horrible time, and you found out that a cure was available? What would you do? What is it was not really a friend, but just someone down the street? What would you do?
2. The situation is real. The terminal disease is sin. Folks are in fact dying and heading toward incredible suffering. You know the cure. It is coming back to God, washed from sin, set free from Satan, through a covenant relationship with Jesus Christ.
3. We know this, but many of us strangely feel inadequate to carry this cure to people. We know that

We should all work to advance the kingdom of God. (HOW?)

We feel the desire to communicate the Good News; but sometimes we feel like we don't know what to do. After all, we haven't been all professionally trained, right? In Colossians 4:2-6, Paul, the by the word of God gives Christians some very practical advice on how each one can go about spreading the good news and bringing glory to God. I encourage you to learn approaches, door openers, methods, memorize verses, acquire evangelism tools. But, there are some generic things that you can do to help spread the Good News.

The first thing, which every one can do, no matter how old or young, big or small, trained or not, is:

I. Devote Yourself To Prayer: (Colossians 4:2)

A. "...being watchful".

1. NAS translates; "**Keeping alert in it**". Are you alert in your prayer life, or are you asleep?
2. How serious are you in your prayers? Do you look for things to pray about? Are you prompt in responding with prayer whenever you see a need or a spiritual threat arise?
3. Do you pray? 20 second flicks? Only in church with someone leading? Only in personal crisis?
4. If you want to help people, wage spiritual warfare, heal the spiritually sick, Get Serious about your prayers!
5. People are easily distracted from prayer life.
 - a. The Disciples fell asleep. Mark 14:37-38, "**Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Simon," he said to Peter, "are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."**
 - b. Do you get bored with prayer, allow self to drift, sleep? Neglect prayer for days? Months? Today?
6. How attentive are you when you do pray? Are you really focused and aware?
 - a. Repetition can be like whistling a catchy tune and not being aware of it.
 - b. Like rattling off 7 "Our Fathers" while your brain is fishing in the farm pond.
 - c. "being watchful" in prayer is the opposite of repetitious prayer learned by rote. And no snoring!
 - d. Are you aware of changing needs, impending dangers. Specific needs and concerns. Hard decisions the people must make, discouragements of a divorcee, struggles of an alcoholic.
7. Jesus attached great importance to prayer, spending considerable time in prayer. So did Paul. So did Daniel, David, Elijah ... Do You?

B. "being... thankful."

1. NAS; translates; "**With an attitude of thanksgiving.**"
2. What is the status of your heart, your spirit when you pray? Do you pray only in a crisis or when you want something? Do you harbor complaints, gripes? Rebellion?
3. If you fill yourself with wonderment at all God has done, on all that we have to be thankful for, you will be more enthusiastic, more courageous more joy-filled and more hopeful.
4. Recently had two friends visit my parents; comment, "A" always has worries, problems, "B" is just happy-go-lucky". Attitude has a lot to do with it! When People have a, "I have nothing, nothing ever goes right" attitude, they often create problems for themselves. The "Look at what great things I have, look at what great things He does" attitude allows us to ride right over many of the bumps.

5. Which attitude is more attractive in a work mate? More productive when it comes to homework? More pleasant to be around? More alert and ready to take advantage of circumstances?
6. Are you approaching life as if the Lord left you high and dry, or as if He has given you something to work with and complete the task? One attitude says this is my last \$5, I better give up, I quit. Other says, I still have \$5, there is a lot I can do! The Lord has provided and will see me through!

When you pray alertly and with thanksgiving, in your prayers, remember to:

C. Ask for open doors.

God opens doors, not you.

- a. Matthew 7:7, **“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.”**
- b. John 6:65, **“no one can come to Me, unless it has been granted him from the Father.”**
- c. Pray specifically for people, that they would open up to God. Open up to Bible Truth?
- d. Pray in general way for opportunities.
2. Be watchful and alert so you know when they open. Sometimes doors are already open but we need to realize them. Be thankful and respond when you see them open.

When you see God open a door for you to minister, then, like the Apostle,

D. Ask for adequacy in speaking.

1. Not necessarily with eloquence or brilliance, but in a **“clear”** way as Paul requests in verse 4.
2. This may involve a plain, simple show of love and truth and sincerity, and integrity.
3. Not so scholarly or technical that only a lawyer can understand. But with the Holy Spirit in you.
4. Knowing how to proclaim the Word clearly may involve listening so you can understand what the person really needs at this point. Remember, Love is patient.
5. Where are they spiritually? What are their real questions, doubts, hang-ups? Are you both talking about the same thing?

Praying is something we all can and should be doing. Continually. It's a sort of private and personal thing. We can also put forth a proper effort when we are around people. This is not some highly technical thing that Paul trains them in, but what is described in Verse 5 as:

III. Be Wise In The Way You Act: (Colossians 4:5-6)

A. “Toward outsiders.”

1. In honor to Christ, we should always monitor our behavior. The emphasis here is in regard to those outside the church.
2. Sometimes, to our shame, we are more careful of behavior around those **IN** the church, because they are apt to confront us with misbehavior. Those outside don't know any better, so we can get sloppy there; Don't you do it!
3. For outsiders, watch the way you act because your **life** may be loudest sermon they hear.
 - a. Folks are often moved toward Christianity because of the changes they see in people: because they see joy, peace, integrity, honor, honesty, sincerity, purpose, confidence, trustworthiness...
 - b. Make sure your life always demonstrates these godly qualities for those who need to hear God's Word!
4. Make sure your behavior does NOT give folks occasion for stumbling.
 - a. No gripe toward Christianity as result of knowing you. (Arrogant? Hypocritical? Gossip?)
 - b. Make sure they honor God as result of your behavior. Let them see God living in YOU!
5. 1 Peter 3:15-16 illustrates the point this way; **“But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.”**

In describing wisdom in the way we act, the apostle urges that we

B. “...make the most of every opportunity.”

1. When God does open the door, are you ready to serve?
 - a. Do you postpone, find excuses, close your eyes, leave it for somebody else?
 - b. Might be an unpleasant situation that will call you outside of your comfort zones. Are you ready and willing to serve? Have you really died to self so you are ready to go where Christ would go?

- c. Paul had a door open to Caesar by being imprisoned. Not fun or comfortable. What needs, what opportunities are you closing your eyes to? (Maybe its not your eyes but your heart?)
- 2. A literal translation of the phrase is "Redeeming the time".
 - a. Market Place analogy; "Buy up." Get the good deals, do not miss them.
 - b. Take the time back from Satan, not allowing him to waste it. Take it and use it for God.
 - c. Don't pass up prime opportunity to plant a seed. Might simply be a chance to say, "Isn't God great!", or "Let's pray about that", or a chance to do a small kindness.
 - d. The concept is that time and opportunity is limited. YOUR TIME! Time to rescue others.
 - e. Use the time when the opportunity opens, to influence your children, friends, parents, etc.

Wisdom in the way we act, also involves

C. Seasoning your speech for each person.

1. Colossians 4:6, **"Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone."**
2. Talking about adjusting method, not the message. Message never changes, but kids need to hear it in a different way from adults. Those with feeble faith require different approach from those with arrogant spirit. Prophets and Christ were gentle with those who had little hope. They were much firmer with those who were arrogant and should have known better.
3. Should you be bolder or more reserved with this particular person?
 - a. Isaiah 42:3, **"A bruised reed He will not break."** How much can they handle at the moment?
 - b. Do you say "Your soul is in danger" or do you say, "You stand condemned"?
4. Seasoning with salt makes food appealing, appetizing, palatable, and not too bland or boring. Your conversations should be palatable, Not; brusque, caustic, ungracious, snappy or scornful.
5. Make each person an important individual. Do not give them a stock answer or lecture for every question. Deal with folks personally.

So What?:

People are lost in sin. They don't need to be. Christ is the answer. Christ is the cure. If you know this. You ought to be trying to share the Good News with them. You can work effectively at sharing the Good News with others. For starters, two things to keep in mind; pray, and behave wisely.

Closing Prayer:

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Reading: Colossians 4:2-6.

Memory: Colossians 4:2

“D_y_t_p_, b_w_a_t_.”

We should all work to advance the kingdom of God.

Some generic things that you can do to help spread the Good News.

I. Devote Yourself To Prayer:

A. “...*being watchful*”.

Mark 14:37-38

B. “*being... thankful.*”

C. Ask for open doors.

Matthew 7:7 John 6:65

D. Ask for adequacy in speaking.

III. Be Wise In The Way You Act: (vs. 5a)

A. “*Toward outsiders.*”

1 Peter 3:15-16

B. “...*make the most of every opportunity.*”

C. Seasoning your speech for each person.

Colossians 4:6 Isaiah 42:3

So What?:

You can work effectively at sharing the Good News with others. For starters, two things to keep in mind; pray, and behave wisely.

Action: (Specify an action or change you will make in your life as a result of this message.)

Date: (When you will check to verify that you have done it.)
