

Let me ask you a question: Do you like to talk? Most people do...yes, some more than others...but, if you get around someone that you know or are comfortable with and you open up...what do you like talking about? In other words, if someone got to know you and were around you for a while...what would they likely hear you talking about?

You see, what we talk about reveals what motivates us and what we like. In other words, our talk really reveals who we are. Let me tell you what concerns me about our talk as believers...we don't seem to talk to many people about Jesus. In fact, according to a LifeWay study from April of last year, only 45% of people who attend church at least once a month have shared with someone how to become a Christian in the past six months. **The title of today's message is just that: TALK.** One word...talk... Today we're going to see what we as believers are to talk about.

For weeks now, we've been studying this wonderful letter to the church at Colossae because a man named Epaphras has been concerned that false teachers were going to come in and trick the people into believing lies. So, this letter was written by Apostle Paul to encourage the Colossian Christians to continue to believe the truth of the Gospel, that Jesus Christ is preeminent in all things and to not be deceived by empty philosophy. Look at the screens...we saw this in Chapter 2...

Colossians 2:6-10

⁶Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, ⁷rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. ⁸See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits^[a] of the world, and not according to Christ. ⁹For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, ¹⁰and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.

Listen Church Family, in every generation there is always going to be an attack on the truth. In every era and every epoch of time, Satan is going to do all he can to seek to change the truth, alter the truth, water down the truth, adjust the truth, or modify the truth in such a way to bring doubt, confusion and uncertainty. His goal is to strip the truth of its power by modifying it. But, a MODIFIED TRUTH is not the whole truth, nothing but the truth, so help us God. Think of it this way...if you alter the course of a boat leaving a harbor by only 1 degree, but the time it travels just 100 miles it will be hopelessly off course. And that's always Satan's plan.

And so you see, this entire letter to the Colossian church has been polemic...that's a fancy word for a "warning" to not stray from the truth of Jesus to anything else, or ELSE, you will be in danger of losing the truth in the midst of compromise or concession. And thus, it makes total sense that as we come to the end of this letter of warning that Paul will beg the believers to be ready and prepared to give unbelievers the truth.

Colossians 4:2-6

²Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. ³At 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— ⁴that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak. ⁵Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. ⁶Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

I read a story years ago that I continue to find so appropriate to describe what has happened to many Christians and many churches in America. **The story goes this way:** On a dangerous seacoast where shipwrecks often occur, there was once a crude, little life-saving station. The building was just a hut, and there was only one boat, and yet the few devoted members were diligent, dedicated and totally committed to keeping a watch over the sea in front of them. They went out day and night, tirelessly searching for the lost. Many lives were saved by this wonderful little life-saving station, so it grew and became famous over time.

In fact, some of those who were saved wanted to become associated with the station and give of their own time and their own money and so, they joined the work. As time went along, new boats were bought and new life-saving crews were trained, and the little life-saving station continued to grow and cover more and more of the coastline. Unfortunately, over time, many of the members of the life-saving station thought they should no longer have to go out and do the hard work of rescuing people, and thus, fewer and fewer chose to go brave the winds and waves to save souls.

About this time, a large ship was wrecked off that coastline, and the few that went out rescued load after load of cold, wet, half-drowned people. It was all the few could do to get all the shipwrecked into the station. Those they rescued were not the type of people that some in the life-saving station were used to seeing. Many of the rescued were dirty and sick, and some of them had different colored skin and strange sounding accents.

Well, this didn't go over well. Many of the members of the life-saving station didn't want to "mess up" their station, so the Property Committee came up with the idea of building a shower-house just outside the station, where the rescued could be cleaned up before coming inside. Yet, this was more than some of the members could bear. So, there became a split in the life-saving station's membership. Most of the members wanted to stop the life-saving activities because it was apparent to them that doing so brought an "unpleasant element" into the station; and thus, was a hindrance to what had become comfortable for them. Yet, for the other members, (albeit the minority), they insisted upon continuing the "life-saving" activities, after all...that's what the station was established to do in the first place...its primary purpose was to save lives.

But the minority were finally voted down and they were told if they wanted to continue to save the lives of "various" kinds of people who were shipwrecked, they would need to begin their own life-saving station... And well...that's exactly what they did.

Yet, as the years went by, wouldn't you know it...even the NEW station eventually experienced the same changes that had occurred in the old station. They, too, ceased to have the desire to save people from the waters. Well, many decades have passed and tragically, if you visit this coastline today, you will no longer find any "life-saving stations." They've all been boarded up or torn down. Yes, **shipwrecks continue to be frequent in the waters just off this coastline, but most of the people drown now, and sadly, no one seems to care.**

Church family, let's be frank this morning...what was just described in that story has happened to many of the once-Bible teaching, Bible-believing churches in America. Supposed rescue stations for lost souls are no longer seeking to rescue souls...but instead, they're only offering social causes and a watered down "gospel" that tickles the ears but doesn't have the saving power to rescue souls.

Look again at verse 5 in our text...and catch the phrase "outsiders" and remember from last week,

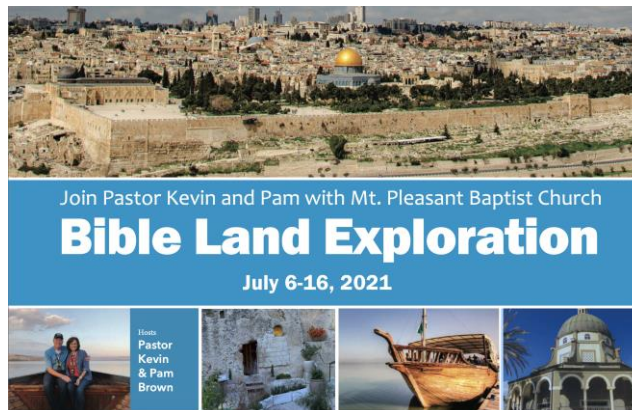
what that word means... “lost, unbelievers, those outside the kingdom of Christ.” See it...

Colossians 4:5-6

⁵Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. ⁶Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

Our speech is to be seasoned with salt. This means we are to be different from the world and be willing to give the OUTSIDERS Jesus. We are to open our mouths and use our speech to talk about Jesus. We are to actually CARE about the outsiders! And Church, where have you heard this kind of talk before? Being salt...being light to a dark world? Jesus, right?

You are turning to a section of Scripture called: The Sermon on the Mount. That is the message that Jesus preached from a mountain side on the northern end of Capernaum and is the most amazing sermon ever preached.



The truth of what Jesus taught in that sermon has the power to change the eternal destinies of human souls... Watch this...

Matthew 5:13-16

¹³“You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. ¹⁴“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that^[b] they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

May I ask you a question? Are you salty? Are you being light? Can the world tell you are a Christian by the way you living and TALKING? Remember, back in Colossians 4, Paul was praying for open doors to do what? Share the Gospel! Church, I believe the heart of God breaks today because we’re not getting the job done. It has been said, **evangelism is the “sob” of God as He weeps for the lost.** And why did Jesus come?

Luke 19:10

¹⁰For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

Remember our story... That little “life-saving” station stopped braving the winds and the waves, they refused to risk their own comfort and security to care enough to save the perishing. And I’m afraid for many Christians today...we’ve become so complacent that we seldom think about the lost, because we’re so fixated on ourselves...our own needs...wants...pleasures...

Yet, Jesus said:

Acts 1:8

⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Jesus said:

Matthew 28:19-20

¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in^[b] the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Listen, the Lord Jesus expects us to be His ambassadors.

2 Corinthians 5:20

²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

Got back to Colossians 4...see our text again...

Colossians 4:5-6

⁵ Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. ⁶ Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

We are to be salty...we are to give OUTSIDERS the truth of Jesus. But, you see, here's the real issue...if you and I speak the truth, the absolute truths that Jesus taught...that there are certain things that are right and certain things that are wrong in our “anything goes, permissive culture,” well, you and I are going to be unpopular. Accept it and be resolved to it! And don't let this fact be the excuse to stop giving a reason for our hope! We've got to TALK about Jesus!

I want to show you how the Apostle Peter addressed Christians who were enduring tremendous persecution and great suffering for following Jesus... Remember, this is first century stuff...they were living in an age that if you were found out to be a Christian, you could be arrested, sent to Rome and executed. And yet, the instruction is the same for all of us for all generations and all time...we're to share the Gospel. And here's how we're to do it...

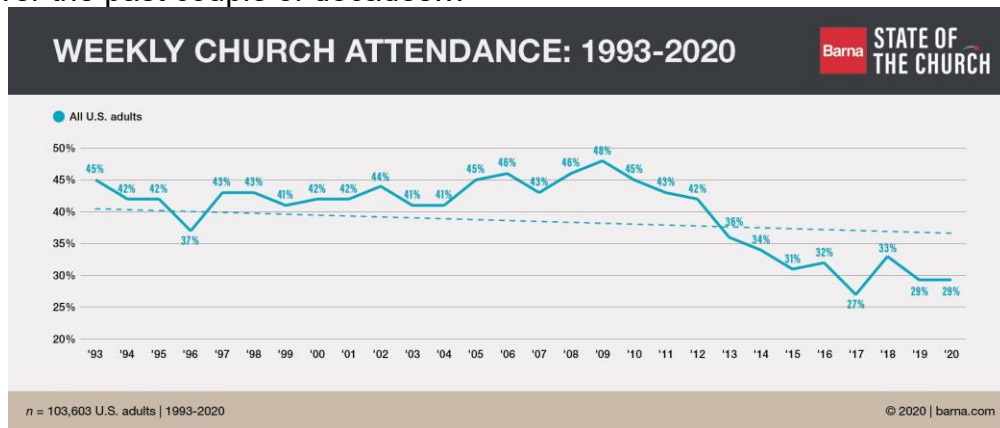
1 Peter 3:13-17

¹³ Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? ¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, ¹⁵ but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶ having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. ¹⁷ For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

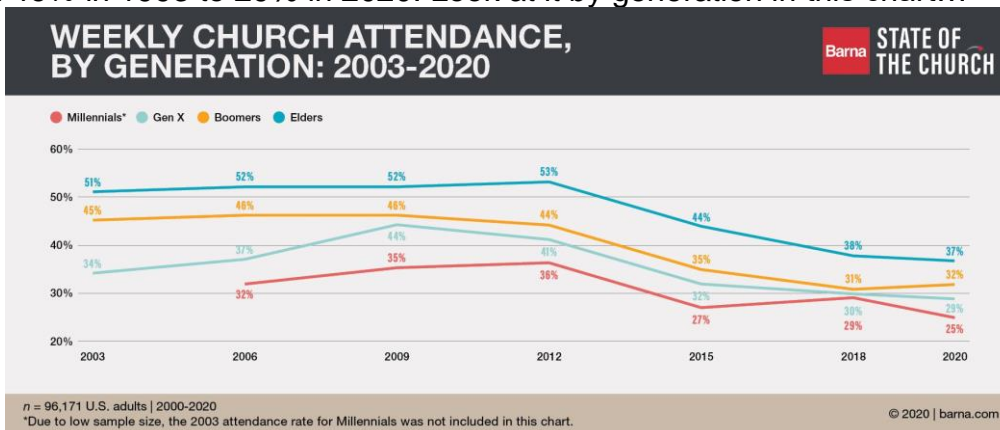
Folks, I want to tell you...I really don't believe we have much of an issue with suffering for righteousness sake in our country...I don't believe most Christians are ever slandered by folks and I'll tell you why...because most of us never open our mouths about Jesus. Remember our stat from LifeWay: only 45% of people who attend church at least once a month have shared Jesus with someone in the past six months. Listen...there's an even more astounding stat, (according to Barna Research)... Are you ready? Only 1.5% of Christians have ever led a single person to Christ...

And Church, you know what...I used to think it's because we're afraid...but, I've really grown to believe (through the years) that it's just like the folks on the coastline...we just don't really care anymore.

Does that sound harsh to say that we don't really care? Well, I don't know what else to say. When only 1.5% of Christians ever lead someone to Christ...that's got to be a big part of it. Because if we really believed that people who don't have Jesus in their lives will go to Hell...then, we'd be scared to death for them and do anything we could to rescue them...just like we would if we could get them out of a burning house. And here's the thing...this has been going on for decades and this is changing the trajectory of Christianity in America. Look at what has happened to Weekly Church Attendance over the past couple of decades...



It's gone from 45% in 1993 to 29% in 2020. Look at it by generation in this chart...



From the Millennials, (red line), all the way to the Baby Boomers (orange line) and top (blue) line, the Elders (WWII) generation, church attendance is dropping.

Listen, Christianity in America... "in the West," is much, much different than in was in the first century, when Christians were being fed to the lions. And it's much different here in the States than it is in Ethiopia or China or Saudi Arabia. In fact, our brothers and sisters in the East are blown away by our apathy and lack of fervor for Jesus in the States.

When I was in Ethiopia in 2011, I met this man...



His name is Kadir. He lives in a community called Bedene. It's out in the "boonies," as we might say. It's 99% Muslim. Yet, a small church had been established in Bedene, and yet it was constantly being destroyed. Finally, Kadir said, "Let's build the church on my property and I'll protect it. People have to hear about Jesus." They did. And Kadir has paid a high price for his commitment to the church. He has been threatened, beaten and almost killed. They have burned his corn field over and over again. See this picture:

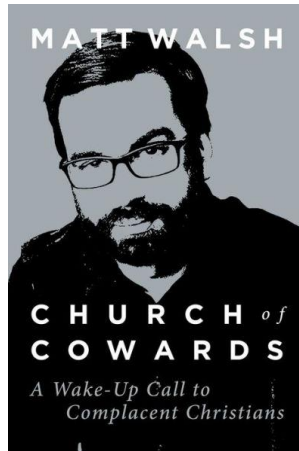


If you look way in the back, behind the huts, you'll see the yellowish-brown, corn... That's their livelihood folks and yet, they keep burning it down. But, Kadir continues to shares the Gospel with the Muslim villagers every day. He believes the only hope for his friends and neighbors is Jesus Christ. He believes that Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead and if they don't trust in Him, they will die and go to Hell...so, he's willing to risk it... He's willing to risk his life because He believes in Jesus that much!

He said to me, "You can be a Christian in the United States and nobody will hurt you? Here, you can be killed. Why don't you shout Jesus from the housetops!" I thought... "He's right...we won't be killed for talking about Jesus here in the States...but, we don't. They do in Bedene...they are amazingly bold and could be killed for it..." But, they are willing to do it!

Oh, why are we so afraid? So afraid of telling an OUTSIDER about Jesus... I'll tell you why...because if we do, that will mean that "outsider" will have to acknowledge they are a sinner and repent. Jesus said, "Repent for the Kingdom is at hand." That would require potential suffering... Jesus said, "Take up your cross and follow me." No...we don't want a cross...we want a pillow and a cell phone, thank you. We're like the people in the life-saving station...we've gotten comfortable and we don't want to mess it up. And church, that's Satan's strategy for America. He doesn't want us to hate Jesus, he just wants us to not really believe that there is a Hell and people are going there if they aren't saved.

A man named Matt Walsh has just written this book...



“Church of Cowards, A Wake-Up Call to Complacent Christians.” It’s a fascinating book. He says this about Christians in America today:

“We have been engaged in a decades-long campaign to widen the narrow road, even as we insist on decorating the road with religious paraphernalia. We have been walking along this broad path, and the Devil has gone in front of us, smoothing out every bump, clearing away the weeds, providing refreshments, and cheerfully encouraging us as we continue to stroll headfirst into annihilation. This is the problem with American society: It is the widest gate the world has ever known. We are free to spread our arms and live exactly as we wish. But true freedom is not found in living exactly as we wish, but in living as God wishes...

The true danger we face is not cataclysmic and violent persecution, but the slow drifting from Truth. This is what has become of Christendom in the West. It caught a nice, warm wave and rode it into the darkness. Christians here are not falling away dramatically or suddenly. We are not disavowing God with hatred in our hearts. We are not even diving all the way into the depths of our sin... We are not running away from God with determination. We are not running at all. Instead we have built a nice, comfortable raft of self-deception, and upon it we are floating gently, gently, gently into Hell.”

See our passage again...

Colossians 4:5-6

⁵Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. ⁶Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

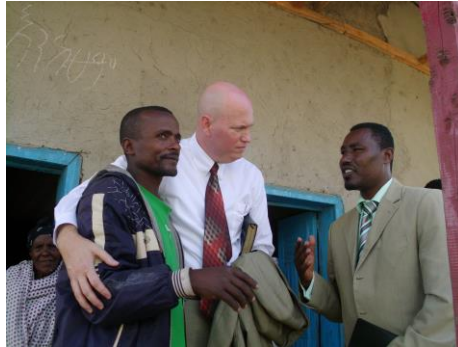
DO YOU HAVE A BURDEN FOR ANYONE today? Someone that you’re not sure “knows the Lord?” If they said to you, “I want to be saved,” could you lead them to the Lord? Could you share your testimony with them and then pray with them? **I want you to see the screens as we close...** The Apostle Paul was writing to the church at Thessalonica, and I want you to see what he said to these people.

1 Thessalonians 2:1-8

¹For you yourselves know, brothers,^[a] that our coming to you was not in vain.²But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict.³For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive,⁴ but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts.⁵For we never came with words of flattery,^[b] as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness.⁶Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from

others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ. ⁷ But we were gentle^[c] among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. ⁸ So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.

Who is very dear to you that doesn't know Jesus? Are you willing to give of yourself to them...to open your mouth even though it may cost you! Would you be willing to lose a little sleep because you choose to agonize in prayer for them...no I'm not asking you to sleep in front of the church like Kadir...



For some of you, you might need to write a letter? Call them? Take them to lunch? Will we care? Will we get into the rescue boats and go to them? Jesus said: YOU are the light of the world. YOU...that means YOU...are the salt of the earth...

Church, I don't know what the rest of America will do? I don't know what the church in America will look like in another 25 years...but, I know what the Lord has told me and you to do based on His Word!! He's told us to leave the safety of the harbor and get out into the winds and waves and bring people to Him. Jesus doesn't use angels to bring people to Himself. He doesn't use robots or drones. He uses people. That's you and that's me. He's depending on us and you know what...so are the people He's placed in our lives who are drowning right in front of us. Let's go get them!
