

How Live Among Unbelieving Friends?

Colossians 4:2-6

Have you ever thought how much God wants to communicate with you?

What Does The Bible Say?

1 In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He existed in the beginning with God. 3 God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him. (John 1:1–3 NLT)

The Word was Jesus. This verse is a continuation of the word of the Lord in the Old Testament (Gen. 15:1, 4; 1 Sam. 3:1, 7, 21; Jeremiah 1:2, 4, 11).

As the “Word,” Jesus is the ultimate communication of God.

1 In the beginning the Word [the Communication] already existed. (John 1:1 NLT)

14 So the Word [the Communication] became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son. (John 1:14 NLT)

God has communicated His love to us by walking among us as Jesus.

Now that God has communicated His love for us, He wants us to share His love with others.

Colossians 4 gives us insight into how to share Christ with others.

How Can You Obey?

2 Devote yourselves to prayer with an alert mind and a thankful heart. (Colossians 4:2 NLT)

We connect with God first, before connecting with others.

Prayer demands mental alertness to the dangers of life and the needs of those around us.

We are thankful for opportunities to share what God has done for us with others.

3 Pray for us, too, that God will give us many opportunities to speak about his mysterious plan concerning Christ. That is why I am here in chains. 4 Pray that I will proclaim this message as clearly as I should. (Colossians 4:3–4 NLT)

Paul acknowledged that prayer makes all the difference in communicating the gospel.

How Can You Obey?

What Does The Bible Say?

5 Live wisely among those who are not believers, and make the most of every opportunity. (Colossians 4:5 NLT)

There must be nothing in our lives that would jeopardize our testimony.

So what does it mean to “walk wisely”?

It means that we are careful not to say or do anything that would make it difficult to share the Gospel.

Walking wisely also includes doing our work, paying our bills, and keeping our promises.

6 Let your conversation be gracious and attractive so that you will have the right response for everyone. (Colossians 4:6 NLT)

It is unfortunate when a Christian speaks rudely or coarsely.

The Christian’s walk and talk must be in harmony with each other.

When character, conduct, and conversation are all working together, it makes for a powerful witness.

Is your attitude: Follow me until you see Jesus.

Additional Notes:

If you would like to use your home to disciple others, check out our training at www.crosswaveschurch.com/host. Cross Waves has produced short videos to train you how to use your home to reach others for Christ. So please check it out.

Additional Notes:

The Deep Dive Into The Bible Segment is inspired by Michael S. Heiser, *I Dare You Not to Bore Me with the Bible*, ed. John D. Barry and Rebecca Van Noord (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press; Bible Study Magazine, 2014), 127–129.

Additional Notes:

Deep Dive Into The Bible:

17 When the seventy-two disciples returned, they joyfully reported to him, “Lord, even the demons obey us when we use your name!” 18 “Yes,” he told them, “I saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning! (Luke 10:17–18)

10 Then the devil, who had deceived them, was thrown into the fiery lake of burning sulfur, joining the beast and the false prophet. There they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. (Revelation 20:10)

14 One day Jesus cast out a demon from a man who couldn't speak, and when the demon was gone, the man began to speak. The crowds were amazed, 15 but some of them said, "No wonder he can cast out demons. He gets his power from Satan, the prince of demons." 16 Others, trying to test Jesus, demanded that he show them a miraculous sign from heaven to prove his authority.

17 He knew their thoughts, so he said, "Any kingdom divided by civil war is doomed. A family splintered by feuding will fall apart. 18 You say I am empowered by Satan. But if Satan is divided and fighting against himself, how can his kingdom survive? 19 And if I am empowered by Satan, what about your own exorcists? They cast out demons, too, so they will condemn you for what you have said. 20 But if I am casting out demons by the power of God, then the Kingdom of God has arrived

among you. 21 For when a strong man is fully armed and guards his palace, his possessions are safe—22 until someone even stronger attacks and overpowers him, strips him of his weapons, and carries off his belongings.

23 “Anyone who isn’t with me opposes me, and anyone who isn’t working with me is actually working against me. (Luke 11:14–23)

19 Look, I have given you authority over all the power of the enemy, and you can walk among snakes and scorpions and crush them. Nothing will injure you. 20 But don’t rejoice because evil spirits obey you; rejoice because your names are registered in heaven.” (Luke 10:19–20 ESV)

7 even though I have received such wonderful revelations from God. So to keep me from becoming proud, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to torment me and keep me from becoming proud. (Luke 10:19–20 ESV)

10 “ ‘While I was lying in my bed, this is what I dreamed. I saw a large tree in the middle of the earth. (Daniel 4:10 NLT)

Explore:

KEY TRUTHS:

1. A Believer’s Workplace Conduct Should Bring Honor to Christ (Colossians 3:22—4:1)
2. Prayer and Wise Living Help Us Influence Unbelievers (Colossians 4:2-6)

HOW IT FITS: Where This Lesson Fits in the Story of the

Bible: Paul likely wrote his letter to the believers at Colossae around AD 61- 62 while under house arrest in Rome. He continued teaching believers to obey all of Christ’s teachings.

Explore:

Earlier in chapter 3 (verse 17), Paul set the stage for this week's material by specifying that whatever we do, in any context, should reflect and bring glory to Jesus Christ. This week, we will see some specific, down to earth areas where this holds especially true.

A Believer's Workplace Conduct Should Bring Honor to Christ (Colossians 3:22—4:1)

Because slavery was very prevalent in the ancient world, it is no surprise that Paul advised both slaves and masters how they should operate as fellow servants of their Master—God. He advised sincere obedience, not mere compliance only when the master was around (verse 22). Indeed, he went even further, insisting that whatever kind of work they were assigned, they

should do it as something they could offer unto God (verse 23).

These principles apply to today's workplaces.

What about those with masters who took little note of the slave's good work, or who had little appreciation for a willing attitude?

Slaves were still to obey, because they were not primarily seeking freedom or earthly reward. They sought most of all to please God. And that Master held in store for them a great inheritance indeed (verse 24).

In a mostly believing household, slaves who were believers might be tempted to take advantage of things. They might think that God would in some fashion look the other way or that the master might not object as much. Paul meant to destroy any such notions. God would not show favoritism in repaying wrong, not even for believers who were enslaved (verse 25).

Then Paul addressed the believing masters, reminding them of their obligation to act rightly and fairly—after all, they too had a

Master, in Heaven (verse 4:1). And He was also Master of the slaves over which the earthly masters ruled. Again, even as these words appear so strange to us, we must understand how revolutionary they were in Paul's day. In fact, his teaching launched the ideas that would eventually take root and lead to massive efforts against slavery.

These words are useful to us today in the context of the employer-employee relationship. Modern employees in most of the Western world today have much more choice than the slaves of ancient Rome. Still, Christian employees would do well to adjust their attitudes about their work and their employers. They should acknowledge that Paul's advice is helpful for them as well. Likewise, believing employers have an even greater duty to show the rightness and fairness of their common Master.

What kind of work ethic should Christians model in the workplace? They should reflect integrity, honesty, and

dependability—in everything. This kind of service honors God more than a dozen stickers and pamphlets deployed around the cubicles and break room. Fulfilling our responsibility to do our work or tasks wholeheartedly, as unto God, gives a marvelous witness to those who do not know Christ.

Our responsibility to live and work as Jesus would does not stop when we log in to the computer, or punch the time clock, or unlock the office. After our homes, our places of work are the most important arena in which most of us will be able to demonstrate what it means to live as a believer in Christ.

Explore:

Prayer and Wise Living Help Us Influence Unbelievers

(Colossians 4:2-6)

Paul's focus was on how God's people should behave. With verse 2 he returned to something that is both a duty and a blessing for any believer—prayer. The prayer he had in mind

was deliberate and sustained, not shallow or without effort.

Thankfulness is healthy for our soul as well as our prayer life. It re- minds us of what God has done and is doing. It also keeps prayer from turning into a selfish wish list.

Paul wanted the Colossians to pray for him (verse 3). What did he want them to pray for? Speedy release? More comfortable living quarters? More kindly guards? We can be sure Paul would have been happy for any of those things, but that is not what he wanted people to pray for. He wanted prayer so that the message could go out. People needed to know the truth of Christ, and Paul wanted to be part of that process. He acknowledged the challenges of a Jewish rabbi trying to persuade imperial pagans that a man executed via the Roman criminal judicial system was the Creator and Redeemer of the universe. It was a tall order, and he needed prayer to be able to communicate clearly (verse 4). Pray, and ask others to pray, that God might open a door for you to teach clearly.

Not all believers would have Paul's opportunities to speak publicly and boldly for Christ in high circles of society. Still, all believers would be the subject of unbelievers' curiosity (verse 5). They were to live in such a way that would make unbelievers thirsty to know more about the gospel. This began with setting a good example in the way they behaved. It is important that believers' behavior matches their beliefs. Many unbelievers cite believers' hypocrisy as a hindrance to their coming to Christ. Paul addressed their actions and their words (or speech). When we claim Christ, people pay attention to what we say and do. They may not know what to expect, but they know to expect something different than what they see from those who do not follow Christ. Wise toward outsiders—that is a good recipe with which to build a consistent Christian witness.

In addition to their actions and behaviors, Paul admonished the Colossians to be careful in their speech to those around them (verse 6). They were to be gracious in their communication with

everyone, especially unbelievers, and be ready to sensibly defend and explain their beliefs (1 Peter 3:15).

In our day, communication goes beyond our speech and handwritten notes and letters. Much of our communication now comes through a keyboard or touchpad. Think of the communication that takes place on social media platforms.

Much of what we see there is anything but gracious. It is often spiteful and hurtful. People verbally attack those who disagree with them or share a different belief or opinion. Some are “cancelled” or banned from using a certain platform because their views or opinions don’t match those who control those platforms. Believers can set themselves apart from others and demonstrate the difference knowing Christ makes by being respectful and gracious, even with those we do not agree with.

Paul had already given examples in chapter 3 (verses 8-9) of what this should look like for Christ-followers. Obscene talk was

to have no place in the believer's communication. Also, they were not to lie to others. Believers are to be truthful, but to do so in love, being respectful and gracious in the way we communicate (Ephesians 4:15, 25). This kind of respectful communication flows out of godly character such as humility, gentleness, patience, bearing with one another, and a desire to maintain unity and peace (Ephesians 4:2-3).

Ephesians 4:29 tells us that corrupt or unwholesome talk has no place in our communication. This refers to more than avoiding the use of "bad words." Yes, believers should not be known for their profanity, but this verse goes further than that. We also want to avoid speech that does no one any good in general.

Constant complaining, belittling, and mocking others have no place in the mouths of believers. Instead, we are to focus on speaking in such a way as to help build up other people according to what they need (not according to what we'd like to get off our chest!).

Explore:

Making the most of time or opportunity in verse 5 uses an interesting verb. People used it to talk about buying up all of a given item. In our day, we speak of cornering the market. Paul wanted the Colossians to corner the market on ways to act wisely toward outsiders.

In verses 3 and 4, Paul described what we to- day know as intercessory prayer—prayer on be- half of or for the benefit of another. Thanksgiving prayer is another kind that Paul seemed to have in mind in this passage. Supplication, or asking for something, is yet another form of prayer. It is the kind most people think of when they talk about prayer. Confession involves acknowledging our sin before God. A healthy life of prayer, for churches and individual believers, will include elements of all kinds of prayer. It will include much gratitude and thankfulness,

even as it implores God to continue His work through us, and others, here and around the world.

Explore:

We are to do our work like we are doing it for the Lord because Jesus Christ is the Sovereign Lord of all. Encourage parents and grandparents to talk about this with family members.

Explore:

Slaves had few if any rights in ancient times and held little control over their lot in life. For all that, they were still a part of the average pagan household. It was just that their place was way down on the lowest rung. Still, it was natural that Paul addressed the slave-master relationship in the context of the Christian household. Telling slaves to obey their masters in all things (verse 22) seems even more out of place today than telling wives

to submit to their husbands. Some wonder why the apostles did not do more to protest the ills of slavery. Slavery was nearly universal in the ancient world. Some scholars estimate that over half the people in Colossae may have been slaves, including doctors, teachers, artisans, and common laborers. Even today, slavery continues—sometimes in the open, sometimes hidden, but nearly always in places and among people largely untouched by gospel truth. Paul did not insist that Christian masters release their slaves, nor did he give the slaves hints on how to revolt against an unfair system. The pagan society would have completely crushed any such political efforts. Rome did not allow social justice warriors. Instead, Paul focused on how the institution would change as the people in it began to change. As slaves and masters began to see themselves as mutual servants of the same Master, society began to change. The change was slow, uneven, and imperfect, but it was real nonetheless. Christian teaching would eventually cripple slavery.

In this passage in Colossians, Paul reminded masters that they have a Master in Heaven. He made a similar point in a similar passage to the Ephesians (Ephesians 6:9). In God's eyes master and slave were equal and responsible to the Master of all.

Biblical Meditation

Focuses on God and on what He has said, primarily as revealed in Scripture.

Seeks thoughts and attitudes from outside, from God.

Seeks to be filled.

Meditative filling equips us for active engagement as God's messengers in real life.

False Spiritual Meditation

Focuses on the self, or even on "nothing."

Seeks the treasure within us. "We have the answers we need."

Seeks to be emptied.

Meditative emptying may leave us susceptible to unhealthy spiritual forces; does little to spur us on to love and good works.

Explore:

Some at Colossae blended angelic/spirit worship in with their Christian beliefs. They looked down on those who clung only to Christ and did not join in with them in their Christless worship. They pretended to be humble servants to whom God sent special intermediaries with special revelation. In practice, putting any intermediary between Christ and the believer is the very opposite of humility. It sets aside the sufficiency of what Christ has done. Paul struggled hard against such prideful conceits.

Explore:

Christianity is about more than going to church and living a good moral life. Being a Christian is about having a vibrant

personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Every Sunday School teacher or Bible study leader should want to see each of his or her learners enter into this relationship—their eternal destiny depends on it. As you work toward this goal, keep the following in mind:

Following Christ is about more than a mere decision; it is about a lifelong relationship. Jesus called us to make disciples, not mere decision-makers. Aim for long-term faith, not momentary emotion.

Salvation is a matter of grace, not works. Our works do not save us (Ephesians 2:8-9), nor do they keep us (Galatians 3:2-6).

Good works are a product of salvation, not a prerequisite to it.

Don't confuse sanctification with salvation. Holiness follows salvation; it doesn't precede it. Don't try to impose "Christian" expectations on men and women who don't know Christ.

- Keep it simple. Being born again is not complicated. Here's a simple way to explain it:

- Acknowledge your sinfulness and your need for a Savior (Romans 3:10, 23).

- Trust in Christ's sacrifice for your sins and in His resurrection (Romans 10:9-10).

Surrender your life to God's transforming power (Romans 12:1-2).

Most of all, remember that your job is to tell the truth in a way

others can understand, answer their questions, and give them an opportunity to respond. If you do that faithfully, some will respond and join the band of Christ- followers. When they do, Heaven will rejoice!

Question 1 of 5

Jesus said in Matthew 4:17: From then on Jesus began to preach, “Repent of your sins and turn to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near.” What is the kingdom of God?

Question 2 of 5

What traits does someone have that entices you to want to talk to them?

Question 3 of 5

If God has communicated His love by walking among us as Jesus, why don't people know Him?

Question 4 of 5

How does prayer help us better share God's love with others?

Question 5 of 5

What does it mean to have the attitude, Follow me until you see Jesus?