

BULLEEN BAPTIST CHURCH

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"The Supremacy of Christ - Studies in Colossians"

Sunday, November 7, 2004 : Study 14 - Colossians 4 : 2 - 6

"FINAL INSTRUCTIONS : EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION (Part 2)"

Notes by Rev. Gary Lockyer

CONTEXT : Where are we in the Series?

We are in the fourth and closing section of Paul's Colossian letter : Col 4:2 - 18 Its sub-structure is :

1. "Final instructions: Effective Communication" (4 : 2 - 6)
 - ... Part 1 : "With God about People" - (4 : 2 - 4)
 - ... Part 2 : "With People about God" - (4 : 5 - 6)
2. "Final Greetings : The Fellowship of Service" - (4 : 7 - 18)

Today's Study

CONTEXT .. of this Section in Colossians : This concluding section of the letter has the theme of "service" running through it. Paul's "Final Instructions" are that the Church at Colossa should pray - for him in his ministry and for themselves in theirs. Then in his "Final Greetings" Paul sends a series of short personal messages to individuals in Colossae. What binds them together is each one's love for Christ and their commitment in serving him and his people.

COMMUNICATION WITH PEOPLE - ABOUT GOD (4 : 5 - 7)

A. ACT WISELY

"Be wise in the way you act towards outsiders." (Col 4:5a)

As Christians we are to :

1. Be in CONTACT with our society

Christians are not to form an exclusive circle or withdraw from the world (See Jn17:15-18), but are to be involved in it in order to point people to Christ. (See Mat5:13-16; 1Ptr2:9-12)

2. Be CONSISTENT with what we profess to believe and CAREFUL to do nothing that causes unnecessary offence or hinders the Gospel. (See Titus 2 : 3-10 .. notice how often Paul links a Christian's public behaviour to their witness for Christ and the reduction of barriers to the Gospel.)

The WITNESS of our lives is the first ingredient in sharing our faith with others

*Our effective involvement with people
is "Building Bridges" of opportunity*

B. LOOK FOR OPPORTUNITY

"Make the most of every opportunity" (Col 4:5b)

Wisdom is to be blended with a sense of URGENCY

"make the most of" is a translation of a term from the market place. It could be literally translated "buy up every opportunity."

"Time is money." The scriptures agree! But instead of "spending time" on self advancement or indulgence, be "greedy" to spend it on any opportunity to share our faith.

The DETERMINATION to find natural opportunities to talk about God's love is the second ingredient in sharing our faith with others.

Strategies must be found to "Cross the Bridge."

C. SPEAK ATTRACTIVELY & EFFECTIVELY

*"Let your conversation be full of grace, seasoned with salt,
so that you may know how to answer everyone." (Col 4:6)*

A. "GRACIOUS SPEECH" - not just a "front" or an act for the occasion! Our words, our way of speaking, should mirror the inner reality of God's grace that has flowed to us ... and now through us to others! This is speech that is marked by the attributes of Col 3:12 - compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

Harsh, judgemental speech repels and it does not reflect God's actions for us or his approach to us.

B. "SALTY SPEECH"

.... reads as "off colour" to us! but to the Greek world it meant :

"lively. witty, engaging, wholesome and helpful!"

C. "EFFECTIVE SPEECH"

Paul has already placed a high priority on the effective use of God's Word. If it does *"dwell in us richly"* (Col3:16) then we will be able to answer questions people ask!

Lack of preparation or knowledge, however, should not daunt us. God will honour our faithful witness. Dependency on him will help us respond helpfully to any question asked. 1Ptr 3:14f suggests that the simple testimony to Christ is effective, while in Mat10:19-20, Jesus promises that the right words will be given us when needed.

Telling others what Jesus has done for us is the third ingredient
in sharing our faith with others.

Eventually the "Bridge" must be crossed. The "silent witness of our lives" must be verbalised!

Ultimately words must be used to introduce another to Jesus.

FOR FURTHER THOUGHT

A. TWO NECESSARY INGREDIENTS FOR SHARING OUR FAITH

Our Conduct - VISIBLE Witness; Our Conversation - VERBAL Witness

Few people have ever been "argued" into the Kingdom of God, but many have responded to the claims of Jesus by matching the life of a friend with the faith they profess.

We have no choice! As a Christian we **are** a witness to our faith. The only choice we have is the quality - to be either a good or a poor witness!

B. A NEW WAY OF EVALUATING OUR CIRCUMSTANCES

Typically, we evaluate what happens around us and to us by reference to our wants and needs. Check Paul's reaction to his imprisonment :

"What has happened to me has served to advance the Gospel" (Php1:12)

How?

: The Roman Guard has heard the good news about Jesus (Php1:13)

: Other Christians, seeing Paul's faithfulness and courage in prison have become bolder in spreading the message of Jesus. (Php 1:14)

Decide this week to ask in every circumstance :

What attitude or action would honour Christ?

What opportunity do I have to speak to others about what God has done in Jesus?