

Christ Central Witnessing

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[0 : 00] If you would open up your Bibles to Colossians chapter 4, it's on page 1170 of your pew Bible.

And you need to know something that the Apostle Paul has been writing Colossians and up to this point he's been writing primarily to Christians and how to relate to other Christians.

And here in 4.2, 2 through 6, he does a pivot and he starts talking about, writing about how we are to relate with non-Christians.

Hear God's Word. Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. At 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'm in prison, that I may make it clear which is how I ought, even must, speak.

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

[1 : 17] May God bless the reading and now the preaching of His Word. If you've lived long enough, you've begun to accumulate missed opportunities.

Missed opportunities in love, the one that got away. Missed opportunities in career. Maybe I should have taken that job with so-and-so.

Missed opportunities of enrichment. One of my regrets is I was a jock in high school and I thought everybody in theater were a bunch of nerds and I so regret it. I wish I was in theater in high school.

Missed opportunities. Have you noticed that with missed opportunities, oftentimes they're accompanied by regret? Regret. There is a regularly missed opportunity unique to Christians.

Missed witnessing opportunities. When you hear witness, you may think court of law. A witness takes the stand. A bailiff says something to the extent of, put your hand on the Bible.

[2 : 31] Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, nothing but the truth, so help me God. And the witness says, I do. I do. A witness when it comes to the Christian faith is someone who is telling the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth about Jesus and what he has done in your life.

We bear witness. But many Christians, you're going to have to give me an amen on this one. But many Christians would rather have a root canal than bear witness to Christ to people they know.

Do I have an amen? Why don't we witness? Why are we missing witnessing opportunities? Not everyone, but many of us.

God is giving us witnessing opportunities. There's a number of reasons why we don't witness. But I think it boils down to one thing.

We witness to Christ little because we treasure Christ little. And so the solution to witnessing more is to treasure Christ more.

[3 : 43] Jesus himself said, out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. Did you know you talk about what you treasure? It's an overflow.

You talk about what you treasure. And when Christ is the controlling center of your life, when he is the treasured center of your life, you're going to want to talk about him.

You must talk about him. Brothers and sisters, here's what I want to convince you of.

Let's not just ask God for opportunities to witness. Let's take them. Let's ask God for opportunities to witness, and let's take them.

So three points to the sermon. To help you take the opportunities that God will surely give us, three points. Treasure. Pray. Show and tell.

[4 : 49] Let's take the witnessing opportunities God gives us this summer because we get to talk about treasure. First point.

The treasure of our witness. How do we overcome the reasons why we don't witness? Here are some reasons. We're distracted by the world. We're distracted by the temporary trinkets of the

world.

How do you overcome that? Or, I think with many of us in the room, we're afraid. We're afraid what people will think about us, Jesus freak, or we're afraid of what it will do to a relationship.

We think that if I share, talk about Jesus to this person, it will forever change our relationship. And so you're unwilling to talk about the greatest treasure ever out of fear of what someone will think and how that will affect your relationship.

Sometimes we don't share the gospel because we don't know what to say. One of the things in our membership interviews that the elders have started doing is asking this question, what is the gospel? And one of the things that we have found is a lack of clarity in what the gospel is and how people can communicate it.

[6 : 05] And so I just want you to know up front that we've made this book available, What is the Gospel? by Greg Gilbert. We've got ten copies outside either of the doors. Grab one per family.

This will bring clarity in how to communicate the gospel. He does that in four words. God, man, Christ, response. Very helpful.

But again, I think that's more symptomatic of why we don't witness. The cause, I believe, is that we treasure Jesus little.

So we overcome these things by treasuring Jesus more. And out of the abundance of your heart, your mouth will speak. You'll actually say the name Jesus to people.

Amen. So how do you do that? The best thing for our evangelism, brothers and sisters, is to treasure Jesus above all else.

[7 : 09] We get to talk about treasure. So let me just remind you of this treasure to stir your hearts and maybe stir your want to tell someone about this Jesus.

Remember his person. Do you remember this from chapter 1, verse 15? That this Jesus, he is the image of the invisible God.

If you flip to Colossians 2, verse 9, you read this, for in him, Jesus, the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily. In this person of Jesus, he's totally God and totally man, one person.

Treasure. That's whom we proclaim. That's whom we get to talk about. If you look at Colossians 1, verse 15, even closer, you see this.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. Verse 17, and he's before all things and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the church, the body of the church.

[8 : 16] He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead. Firstborn. Firstborn of creation. Firstborn from the dead. And that firstborn language is talking about kingship. Psalm 89, 27.

He's the king of all creation and he's the king of the new creation. Firstborn from the dead. That's who we get to talk about. He reigns over all things.

Because of who Jesus is, totally God, totally man, king of creation, king of the new creation, he reigns over all. You know what that means? He is the controlling center of all things.

That's the reality of it. And we get to tell people about that. But it's just not his person that is just of incomparable worth.

It's what he does. It's his work. The person and work of Jesus Christ. Our treasure. You know, in 3, 4, we are told, when Christ, who is your life, appears, he's going to appear.

[9 : 27] He's going to come back. He's going to return. And when he comes back and returns, he's going to judge everyone. Matthew 25 talks about it as the separation from the sheep, from the goats, Christians from non-Christians.

Matthew 13 uses a parable to talk about it as a harvest that separates the wheat from the weeds. But he's also reigning right now.

Look at 3, 1. If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above. Where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. He is seated at the right hand of God, reigning on high.

And do you know what he's doing? One of the things he's doing, he's expanding his new creation kingdom across the world. Right now. Today. All around the globe.

He's gathering for himself a people from every tribe, tongue, and nation who will worship him and live for him and follow him. Boast in him.

[10 : 25] But the work, the work, the central work of Jesus that we get to talk about as the greatest of all treasures is his death and resurrection.

Totally God, totally man, died on a Roman cross in the place of sinners and then was raised from the dead. Do you know what that accomplished? Salvation.

Salvation. Listen to how the Apostle Paul talks about it in Colossians 2, 13 and 14. And you, speaking to Christian saints, you who were dead in your trespasses in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands.

This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. His death and resurrection resulted in the forgiveness of our sin which gives us new life, new creations.

It's the new creation kingdom. This is treasure.

[11:42] And this is whom we proclaim. The person and work of Jesus Christ. For a long time, it was a mystery. The Old Testament pointed to it that there's this king coming in Isaiah 53.

He would die in the place of sinners and he'd be raised, but nobody knew who it was. And then Jesus showed up. And the apostle Paul says, he's the one. Him we proclaim.

He's the Christ. Mystery made known. There's this little parable. It's one of my favorite parables in Matthew 13, 13, 44. Jesus tells this parable of a guy who is out in a field digging.

Dig, dig, dig, dig, dig, dig. And his shovel hits something. Ding, ding, ding, ding, ding. Pulls it out. It's treasure. Buried treasure. And so what Jesus says is what this guy did.

He covered it back up and then in his joy, he sells all that he has and obtains the field and makes the treasure his own. It's a concealed treasure that's made known.

[12:46] Do you know who that is? Jesus is the treasure. We get to speak of treasure, gang. Think of witnessing, not as root canal, and it's treasure talking.

Brothers and sisters, when we pray for opportunities for God to open doors to proclaim Christ, we're asking for opportunities to speak about treasure.

Now that brings me to this passage in particular where Paul pivots. He takes a turn.

He's been talking to Christians about relating to other Christians and now he starts talking to these Christians in Colossae. Remember, Paul's in Rome. He's in prison. He's shackled to a Roman Praetorian guard 1,300 miles away from Colossae.

And he says to them, continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. The prayers of our witness. What we pray.

[14:01] Prayer, if you're wondering, is simply just talking to God. And there's a variety of prayers you can pray. You can pray prayers of thanksgiving. You can pray prayers of lament. You can pray prayers of confession. You can pray prayers of supplication where you make a petition on behalf of other people.

There's all sorts of different kinds of prayers. And what prayer does is it expresses our ongoing dependency on our Christ. He's the vine. We're the branches.

Apart from him, we can do nothing. It aligns us with the will of God. And so Paul is saying, hey, church, pray. And when he calls us to pray, he does two things.

He tells us how to pray, and then he tells us what to pray. So let's look at the how. In verse 2, continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.

Continue steadfastly is just a way of talking about praying without ceasing. Maybe you know that from 1 Thessalonians 5:17. It's persevering prayer. It's devoted prayer.

[15:07] Do you know why we're to be without ceasing, continually steadfast in our prayer? It's because we're in constant need of Jesus. He's the vine where the branch is.

Apart from him, we can do nothing. He's the controlling center of our life. You can even say he's the enlivening center of our lives. But did you notice the word watchful?

Continue steadfastly in prayer. Don't stop. Keep trusting in Jesus. Being watchful in it, in prayer. What is this watchfulness? Well, it means to be alert.

It's like DEFCON 4. Be aware. And that word watchful is used a variety of different places in the New Testament.

Jesus talks about his disciples in Gethsemane. He says, hey, watch and pray lest you fall into temptation. In Ephesians chapter 6, the apostle Paul is writing to the Ephesians about spiritual warfare.

[16:11] And he tells them to be alert in verse 18, making supplication for all the saints. In 1 Peter 5:18, Peter says, be sober-minded.

Be alert. Pay attention. Watch out for lion attack because the devil prowls around like a lion seeking someone to devour. There is spiritual warfare all around us and we are praying watchfully.

Even from Colossians chapter 2, we saw that there is this false teaching infecting the Colossian church and we are to be watchful of false teaching because it is demonic.

It takes our attention off of Christ. But I think, given the context of this, there is more to this watchfulness. I mean, Paul is just about to tell them to pray for him that God would open doors to share the gospel with people in Rome.

And then he says in verse 5, walk in wisdom toward outsiders. There seems to be a watchfulness of whom you are living around. It is part of this being on alert, being aware of, even praying for.

[17 : 25] It is this next word that, you know how foodies talk about pairings of things like this beverage and this food?

I am really interested in this pairing between watchfulness and prayer and being thankful in prayer. Isn't that interesting? What kind of pairing is that?

All throughout Colossians, you see the word thanksgiving show up. It's 1, 10, 2, 6, 3, 15, 16, and 17 and here in chapter 4. And usually, it's a cluster.

This thanksgiving is clustered around what Christ has done for us. This gratitude given voice over being delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of the beloved son. We are to be thankful always in what God in Christ has done for us. Which makes for an interesting pairing with watchfulness.

[18 : 33] Do you know what it does? It creates tension in us. Because when we're aware of the non-Christians in our midst and we're aware that they are in darkness, that they're under God's wrath because of their sin, they're trying to make sense of this world apart from God's word, it grieves us and then we are thinking we're so, God, thank you for saving me from that.

It creates tension in us. It's good tension. It's burden for the non-Christians in our midst.

this first aspect of praying of continually steadfast. We are constantly trusting in Jesus.

We're watchful for a number of things but particularly towards non-Christians in our life and we're also thankful for what God has done in our life and it results in us wanting the same for those people around us who are presently living in darkness.

But it's not just that. just not the how we pray. By the way, are you praying? Are you praying watchfully?

[19 : 55] Are you praying regularly giving thanks to God for what he's done in your life? But now we move to the what. In verses 3 and 4 Paul makes this two-fold request.

It's not really a request. It's more of an urging. He says this, in light of their praying he says, hey at the same time, well you're praying for all of that around you guys 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. He's saying open it, pray for us 1300 miles away that God would open a door for us. the open door language is we see it showing up in 1 and 2 Corinthians Acts 14 and what that is talking about is God sovereignly and clearly orchestrating events to give non-Christians an opportunity to hear about Jesus Christ.

That's an open door. When you're like, oh boy, thank you Lord for this. I was in festival the other day. I was just in a bike crash, so I was moving slow.

I was picking Sprecher root beer out. This lady comes up to me and says, oh, you look like you're in pain. And then she went into talking about how she wants to dance with her daughter at her daughter's wedding.

[21 : 23] And she was like just sad because she probably wouldn't because she's had all these surgeries. And I said, ma'am, do you know I'm a pastor? She goes, oh, that's nice. And I'm like, do you know what I tell people in my church when they're having body problems?

That Jesus is alive. That he's been raised from the dead. And he promises resurrection bodies to all who believe. In the aisle of festival.

Open door. It's clear. It's apparent. And it's an open door for the gospel. The word.

The mystery of Christ. It's actually the mystery about Christ. It's actually the mystery made known in Christ. Him we proclaim. Paul's saying, hey, would you pray for us?

I'm holding my hand up because he's probably chained to a Roman praetorian. would you pray for us that God would open up doors to the gospel? Of everything Paul could have asked for.

[22 : 37] Of anything he could have urged the Colossians to pray for. He prays that God would pray that he asked them to pray for God to open doors.

It is extraordinary. Do you know what that means? It shows something of Paul's priorities, right? And it points to what Paul treasures. He treasures Jesus and he wants other people to treasure Jesus too, even praetorian guards.

So the first urging, the first of this two-fold request is pray that God would open doors for us, that we would proclaim Christ even in prison. second, he says that I may make it clear which is how I ought to speak.

That's in verse 4, that I may make it clear. That he can make clear to those he gets to share the gospel with.

God opens the door and that he walks through it and he's saying, would you pray that God would give me clarity of speech with those non-Christians I get to talk to the gospel? Share the gospel with.

[23 : 52] If the apostle Paul needed God's help in being clear to preach the gospel, what does that mean for us? We need it too.

Paul wanted to be simple and clear in communicating the person and work of Jesus Christ to anyone that God opened the door to share the gospel with.

God again, I want to recommend to you that book by Greg Gilbert. It makes the gospel really clear. God, man, Christ, response.

God is the creator. Man sins against him. God in his love for these sinners sends his son, Jesus Christ, to die in their place. And the way to respond is by repentance and faith.

simple and clear. There's an interesting word here that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.

[24 : 57] And that word ought, it's actually in the original language, it's a little bit more muscular. It's a little bit more forceful. It's more like must. Which is how I must speak.

clearly proclaiming Christ when given an opportunity. I must. Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel, says Paul.

Well, what does this mean for us? What does all this mean for us? Well, we need to be praying, right? Steadfast, watchful, thankfully.

And we too should be asking God to open doors. Not for the apostle Paul, he's dead, he's in the presence of Jesus, he doesn't need that now. But we have mission partners.

We're mission partners, Kenosha Christian Academy. We can pray that God would open doors for the staff at Kenosha Christian Academy to give doors, open doors into families in our community.

[26 : 07] And that God would also give the staff of KCA clarity and courage in proclaiming Christ. Alliance, Crisis Pregnancy Center, we're partners, mission partners with them.

They preach Christ to people who are in crisis. We pray for open doors, that they would proclaim Christ clearly, courageously. the Titmans with their weekends to remember.

Paul Bondi in Kenya, reaching Indians Ministries International, Sajay Lukos. I have a Zoom call set up for this Thursday morning.

It's a Zoom call with Sajay and a number of their leaders from a state in India called Uttar Pradesh. And we're going to learn about what God is doing in Uttar Pradesh.

It's a northern state. And we get to pray that God would open doors for our brothers and sisters there to preach the gospel. Make it clear. Be courageous.

[27 : 11] But even more so, it's for us. We pray these things for us, that God would open doors to the gospel for us, Christ the King Church, corporately and individually, that we can share the treasure of Christ.

Christ, of who he is and what he's done. Think about it this way. I don't think this is irreverent. Imagine Jesus seated at the right hand of God in glory, looking at our church. Ask me. Ask me. I'll open doors for you. Ask me. I'm sovereign over all. All things are under my feet. You ask me, I will open doors for you. Make me known. Ask me. Ask me.

Do you know why? He wants people to worship him more than any of us in the room. He wants to be treasured.

[28 : 16] He wants people living in darkness to treasure him. He wants to use us to that end. Ask me. Ask me.

Brothers and sisters, let's not miss the opportunities this summer. Let's be asking for them and taking them. One more point.

Show and tell. Now, we see this in verse five and six. The show and tell of our treasure. Showing and telling of our treasure. You may be like, oh, how does that happen?

We're praying for open doors. Then what? Show and tell. Walk and talk. It's right there in five and six. When I was in second grade, I went to Roaring Brook Elementary School in Avon, Connecticut, and my second grade teacher was a woman named Mrs. Ball.

I was in love with her. She had this thing. I was in love with a lot of my teachers. Well, she did this thing called show and tell.

[29 : 26] And so my classmates brought in things and showed and tell. I brought in our family dog, a German shepherd named Jody. I love the dog. And I could just talk about her.

This is my dog. Talk, talk, talk, talk, talk. Show and tell. It wasn't hard. Because I love my dog. Jesus is greater than a dog.

We get to show and tell the treasure of Jesus. How do you do that? Well, the show is verse five. Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time.

Of course, that word walk is the Hebrew way of talking about living your life. Walking in a manner worthy of the Lord, 110. And just as we received Christ Jesus as Lord, so walk in him to six.

We are to live our lives with Jesus as the controlling center of our lives. To please him, which brings us to wisdom. Walk wisely. Look at 2.3.

[30 : 30] Chapter 2, verse 3 of Colossians. In whom, Jesus, are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. 1 Corinthians 1.30. Paul says that Christ Jesus is our wisdom.

In the Old Testament, wisdom was the art of godly living. It was you fear the Lord and you live your life in light of who God is.

Applied to this, it's Jesus Christ is the controlling, treasured center of your life. Right? And we are to live with Christ as the controlling center of our life around outsiders, non-Christians, those who are still living in the domain of darkness.

We don't live one way when we're gathered together and another way when we're apart. We're always living for Jesus.

And that requires a change of clothes. It's love. Remember back in 3.5, we are to put to death what is earthly in you, sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness.

[31 : 45] It's all sexual sin. And then verse 8 and 9, but now you must put them all away, anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another.

You've put on the new self, which is being renewed in the knowledge after the image of its creator, who is Jesus. These are the grave clothes of the old self, and we don't wear them anymore.

We don't wear them in relationship with non-Christians. We don't engage in sexual immorality, period. We don't engage in sexual immorality with non-Christians.

We don't speak, carry ourselves hatefully anymore. Inga, rest, math, malice, math, slander.

We don't do that anymore. That's not how we interact with non-Christians. Because we've got grave clothes, those are off.

[32 : 45] It's not who we are, but we're going to put Christ wear on. 312, how are we to walk in the midst of non-Christians? Put on then as God's chosen ones, holy, saints, and beloved, compassionate hearts, meekness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another, putting on love, the love.

What Paul is getting at here, walk in wisdom toward outsiders, in the midst of outsiders, is he assumes that we're in close proximity to non-Christians.

It is this intersection between kingdoms. kings. You are a saint of the kingdom of God, transferred into the kingdom of the beloved son, and you are regularly crossing paths with people living in the domain of darkness.

And we are to be wearing Christ-like clothing. That's making the best use of the time. That's redeeming the time.

Think about it this way. If you're within eyeshot of a non-Christian, the way you live in your life, that non-Christian will likely think two things about you, if they know you're a Christian.

[34 : 15] He's not perfect, but he's also different. not perfect, but different. And you know what God is doing when that happens?

He's opening a door. He's using your grace transformed life to open a door. That's what he's doing. People wonder why you don't look at porn anymore. Because of something he has done. Why I don't cuss anymore? Why I don't lie anymore?

Why I don't misrepresent myself? It's something he has done. It's making the best use of the time. It's doing what we would normally do anyway. Just live for Jesus. peace. And when he gives you those open doors, do you know what you do?

[35 : 22] You tell. Show and tell. The show is a life transformed by the grace of God in Christ Jesus. And the tell is Christ Jesus.

Verse 6, let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt so that you may know how you ought to answer each person. You know, you put salt on stuff to give it flavor, right? And so in our conversation with other people, we're putting a little Jesus salt on things. We're talking about Jesus. You know what?

Brothers and sisters, drop his name. Drop his name in a conversation. put a stake in the ground, drop his name, that you're a follower of Jesus.

Make it known. Season your speech with grace and the greatest demonstration of God's grace is Jesus. God's riches at Christ's expense.

[36 : 27] You can do it, especially when he's your greatest treasure. You've heard of something that's savory before.

Think of your speech as savory, Jesus-y, Christ-y speech.

Someone asks you, hey, why don't you be a jerk like everybody else to this fellow coworker? Like, I don't do that anymore because I'm a follower of Jesus. Done. Done. God will do with it as he pleases.

Name drop Jesus, brothers and sisters. Name drop him. Make your speech savory. So that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

That ought is the same word that we saw in verse 4. It's a must. It's like this. Someone sees your life, it's changing, and they're like, why are you like that?

[37 : 32] And you're like, well, that's how I was raised. It's not true. Give credit to where credit's due.

That it's the grace of Jesus Christ changing you. Give credit to where credit's due. That's the must. I can't let you think that this life is something that I've done.

it's something that he's doing. Give credit to where credit's due. Name drop them.

And did you notice this is word and deed? Check it out. 317. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God the Father through him, even in your relationships with non-Christians.

do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Name drop them. Show and tell. Okay, gang.

[38 : 42] I think we've missed enough witnessing opportunities. What do you think? Let's change course. Let's treasure Jesus above all else.

Let's pray for open doors so that we can speak of our treasure and let's show and tell our treasure. With life transformed, being transformed by the grace of Jesus, we just give credit to where credit's due. This summer, let's take the witnessing opportunity God gives us.

And wouldn't it be wonderful? And wouldn't it be wonderful? Wouldn't it be just a great cause of thanksgiving and rejoicing that come September and October, Lord willing, if he should tarry, there are more people in the sanctuary.

That in June, they were in the domain of darkness, and come September, they've been transferred into the kingdom of the beloved son, because God opened doors for us, and we took them.

[40 : 03] Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory because of your steadfast love and faithfulness. Brothers and sisters, we get to join in what Jesus is doing in our city.

Let's pray together. Father, would you pour out your spirit upon us, Christ the King Church, and not just a little bit, a lot, full pouring out of your spirit upon us, that you would embolden us, that we would preach Christ clearly and courageously.

Father, would you open doors for the gospel in our lives, both individually and corporately, and would you add to our number through conversion? Would you bring about more worshipers for those people that we so long to worship you?

Father, we look to you for this. We confess our distractions, we confess our fears, we confess our lack of being able to articulate the gospel in helpful ways.

God, but above all, we confess, we treasure Jesus little. Would you stir our hearts, and would you cause us to see him for who he is and what he's done, and that, God, you would burden us, and that we would speak of treasure, Jesus' treasure, all summer long.

[41 : 51] It's your name we pray. Amen.