

Walk in Wisdom Toward Outsiders Redeeming the Time

We have been in this one short verse for several weeks now. This is because this verse is so important to every believer today. We have seen that the Greek word to walk is used four times, once in each chapter.

Colossians 3:7 we walked as unbelievers

Colossians 1:10 we are to walk a new way now that we are in Christ

Colossians 2:6 we are to walk in the power of the Holy Spirit by faith

Colossians 4:5 we are to walk in wisdom toward those who are without

In each of these passages, *walk* is used in reference to our daily lives. How we live each day.

Then the concept of spiritual wisdom is used some six times in these four chapters.

Colossians 1:9 we pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

Colossians 1:28 we proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ.

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Colossians 2:3 ...in whom (Jesus Christ) are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Colossians 2:23 These (legalism) are the matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion

Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you with all wisdom

And now in Colossians 4:5 we are to walk in wisdom toward all unbelievers.

Colossians 4:5 Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity.

In this context, *keep redeeming the time* is definitely related to the unbeliever. In other words, this is a mandate that we are to witness to unbelievers, but also, we are to do this witnessing in wisdom.

This wisdom begins with the understanding that in spite of what many are proclaiming today, not everyone is going to be saved and not everyone is in the Body of Christ. To God, there are *outsiders*. Those who are not saved, not in the body of Christ. To see this, all we need to do is to note the teaching of our Savior-friend Jesus Christ. The disciples came to Jesus and asked why He spoke in parables? To which He replied in:

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Mark 4:11 And He was saying to them (Jesus to His disciples) To you has been given the mystery of the Kingdom of God, but those who are outside get everything in parables (so that they cannot understand what is being taught—it remains a mystery.)

Then in John chapter 14, in speaking of the coming of the universal indwelling of the Holy Spirit, Jesus makes it clear that *outsiders* cannot receive the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

John 14:16 I will ask the Father, and He will give you another parakletos that He may be with you forever, *that is* the Spirit of truth, whom the world (outsiders) cannot receive because it does not see Him or know Him, *but* you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.

So here in Colossians 4:5 the Holy Spirit is pulling together many theological concepts. Every believer in Jesus Christ as Savior has the responsibility to witness to unbelievers, those outside of Christ. But, this witnessing must be done in Spiritual Wisdom, that is Wisdom from the Word of God.

It is no longer ‘easy’ to witness for Jesus Christ, where in many countries it is forbidden to witness to unbelievers. So, what are the believers to do in these countries? Not witness at all? Believers are to witness but under

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the wisdom given by the Holy Spirit and in ways of wisdom. Even here in America, it is becoming more difficult to witness where you might be charged with a ‘hate’ crime. That’s right. You tell someone that those who do not believe in Jesus Christ as Savior will spend eternity in a lake of fire, and you might be charged with a hate crime.

So, what are believers to do about witnessing even here in America? We are going to look at the all-important doctrine of witnessing but with emphasis on witnessing under conditions of stress. This doctrine will be taken not only from my own study but also from R.B. Thieme Jr., Francis Schaeffer, Lewis Sperry Chafer and notes from classes at Dallas Theological Seminary.

Doctrine of Witnessing

1. Definition: Witnessing is the Body of Christ fulfilling its ministry of reconciliation to all on the outside. This may be members of your own family or acquaintances at work or strangers we encounter in life. One of the Full-Time Christian Service functions that belongs to you is the ministry of reconciliation in II Corinthians chapter 5. Witnessing involves those in Christ communicating the gospel to those on the outside, those not in Christ, unbelievers headed to eternity separated from God. On a personal basis, there is a function of mass evangelism, that belongs to the person with the gift. But witnessing belongs to every believer. Witnessing therefore is personal evangelism. Witnessing functions apart from mass evangelism, apart from church evangelism, or the preaching of the pastor teacher in a local church. This is a personal contact, personal conversation, do-it-yourself type thing.

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The threefold character of witnessing is found in

I Thessalonians 1:4 Knowing brethren, beloved by God, His choice of you (you should be aware of the fact when you start to tell others about the Lord that God has chosen you as a member of His Family and that your life has very definite meaning and purpose).

I Thessalonians 1:5, For our gospel did not come to you in word only, (that's the verbal presentation) **but also in power, even the power of the Holy Spirit.** (All effective witnessing comes by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is why when you witness to someone, you want to be sure you are in His power.) **and with full conviction** (People, you have to have full conviction of all that happens after death and the power of the gospel.) **Just as you know what kind of men we became among you for your sake** (the witnessing of the life...)

So, you have

- A. the witnessing of the life,
- B. the witnessing of the lips,

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C. the witnessing of God the Holy Spirit. All of these are mentioned in I Thessalonians 1:5.

2. You must understand the outsider. You must understand his predicament. The HOLY SPIRIT is the sovereign executive of witnessing. The outsider to whom you are witnessing, is minus a human spirit. The gospel is spiritual phenomena. Therefore, it is impossible for any unbeliever to understand any portion of the gospel by his own ability, in his own thinking, no matter how intelligent he may be. No matter how great the IQ or how limited he may be as a child. All outsiders, no matter age, race, sex have one thing in common. They cannot comprehend spiritual phenomena including the gospel. And therefore God the Holy Spirit must act as a human spirit in order for them to understand the gospel.

John 16:8-11, is a passage on this particular subject.

John 16:8 And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment;

John 16:9 concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me;

John 16:10 and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me;

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John 16:11 and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.

And He. Referring to the Holy Spirit.

when He comes. 1st advent of the universal appearance of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the day the church age began.

He will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment. This may be familiar to you. The next verse, explains what is meant by sin, righteousness and judgment. It does not mean personal sin, or the fact that you are bad, a sinner, even evil. It doesn't mean any of these things. The only sin that is an issue in the presentation of the gospel is the rejection of Jesus Christ as Savior, and therefore verse 9.

Concerning sin, because they do not believe in me. That is, they do not believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Jesus Christ went to the cross and was judged for the sins of the world. He took the place of every individual who has ever lived, so that billions of sins have already been judged, and therefore your personal sin is not the issue.

The second factor, **concerning righteousness because I go to the Father and you no longer see me.** In other words, Jesus Christ as a member of the human race is accepted at the right hand of the Father, and everyone who believes in Him is also accepted at the right hand of the Father. This is what the Holy Spirit emphasizes.

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Finally, **concerning judgment because the ruler of this world has been judged.** The ruler of this world is Satan and Satan is judged when Jesus Christ died on the cross, rose again, ascended. The judgment of Satan is mentioned in Colossians 2:14 as well as Hebrews 2:14. Satan has been judged, and therefore since he has been judged and is going to be cast into the eternal Lake of Fire, all those who reject Christ as Savior will share this same destiny.

Again, the reason for the Third member of the Godhead having to make the issue of the gospel real and clear to the unbeliever, outsider, is because of the statement in

I Corinthians 2:14, But a natural man (that is a member of the human race who has a soul but not human spirit) does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them because they are spiritually appraised (or understood.)

There is no way he can understand the gospel because all gospel information is discerned by the Holy Spirit. We are born with a soul and a body but without a human spirit. We acquire the human spirit at the point of regeneration and are then able to fellowship with God. The human spirit is the means, for understanding spiritual phenomena. But the unbeliever, the outsider, does not have a human spirit. Therefore, spiritual phenomena is foolishness to him, he can't comprehend it, and therefore he writes it off as foolish, says I Corinthians 2. Therefore, whenever the gospel is presented, it is God the Holy Spirit who takes

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what is pertinent in the presentation and makes it real in the soul of the unbeliever, so that he sees an issue, so that he understands an issue, so that he becomes aware of what the issue really is. Then he is ready to make a decision to believe in Jesus as Savior or refuse to believe.

3. Pertinent spiritual information is the issue, that is the gospel. The gospel is always the weapon of witnessing. Not salesmanship tactics, not weeping and begging, not some gimmick system, not making them feel guilty. But it is gospel that is the only weapon in witnessing.

Seven principles related to the Bible as the weapon in witnessing.

1. The gospel which is in the Bible is the power of God unto salvation. It is the gospel that saves, it is the message, the content, this is what saves, not salesmanship tactics.

Romans 1:16, For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, because it is the power of God with reference to salvation, to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile.

I Corinthians 1:18, For the word of the cross is to them perishing, foolishness, but to us who are saved it is the power of God.

2. The Bible is the only absolute source for truth. II Peter 1:12-21.

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3. The source of the gospel therefore is the Bible. Luke 16:28-31; I Corinthians 15:3-4
4. The Bible is the mind of Christ via the filling of the Holy Spirit. I Corinthians 2:16, Isaiah 40:13. So when you are witnessing, you are presenting the very thinking of the third member of the Godhead.
5. The Bible is said to be divine power. Hebrews 4:12.
6. The Bible never returns void. Isaiah 55:11.
7. The Bible endures forever. Luke 21:33; I Peter 1: 25.

Put all these things together and you have a weapon. You never sit around and argue, is the Bible the Word of God? That is ludicrous, beside the point. You don't argue whether the Bible is the Word of God, you simply use it. That's your job. Give them the gospel. It isn't your job to win souls, that's the job of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. It's your job to witness. You give the information, God the Holy Spirit does the rest.

4. The 'insider,' that is the believer priest, is the agent in witnessing. That is you, if you have believed in Jesus as your Saviour. Witnessing is the responsibility of every insider, every born again believer. Acts 1:8; Ephesians. 6:15, 20; II Timothy 4:5.

Witnessing is the responsibility of every member of the Royal Priesthood. If you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, witnessing is your responsibility.

There are two areas in which we as Believers witness,

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- (1) Witness of the life, II Corinthians 3:3; II Corinthians 6:3
- (2) Witness of the lips, II Corinthians 5:14-21; II Corinthians 6:2.

Knowledge of the truthfulness and clarity of the Gospel is necessary for effective witnessing because the believer is to witness in the wisdom of the spirit, he must make the issue clear. He must exclude adding anything to the gospel. The Gospel is simply, by grace through faith, no works of man of any kind: mental—like repentance or verbal like confession or overt like water baptism. It will do for every believer to understand principles of Christology and Soteriology. He must understand above all, redemption, reconciliation, propitiation. Having said this, let's be sure about one thing, if all you know is 'believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved forever' you are ready to witness. Some of the great blessings of the Risley's ministry in Mexico is how a new believer is so excited, they immediately go to a relative and tell them the saving gospel. But as we grow in understanding of the gospel we grow in pertinent doctrines. This is why Paul prays in Colossians chapter 10 that these believers **will be filled with knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.**

You should understand imputation and justification as well as positional sanctification, and above all, if you are going to be lucid and clear you must understand the true issue of the last judgment. So knowledge of pertinent doctrine, while not essential is very important in effective witnessing.

The Believer's ability to witness depends on 5 different concepts:

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- 1) His emphasis on the gospel, especially faith in Jesus Christ. Ephesians 2:8-9.
- 2) His correct and accurate information. He must present correct and accurate information from the Word of God. I Corinthians 1:18; Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews. 4:12.
- 3) He wants be filled and led of the Holy Spirit when he witnesses. Acts 1:8.
- 4) He must have the right mental attitude. A lot of people get frustrated with setting a number of people they must witness to each day. Others get upset, had rather do anything else, get tied up in knots, get nervous. The best expression of the attitude of witnessing is found in Romans 1:14-16.

Verse 14: I am a debtor, I am under obligation, I owe the gospel to every outsider I come in contact with.

Verse 15: I am eager to give the gospel and I am ready at any time to present it.

Verse 16: Thirdly, I am not ashamed, and as you grow in your understanding of the Word of God and increase in spiritual wisdom, you have less trouble with any human problems of subjectivity, embarrassment, shyness.

- 5) The believer should have the assurance of eternal security to be stabilized in his own witnessing. It's hard to tell someone to believe in "the Lord Jesus Christ and what He did" if you think you can loose it. Romans 8:38-39; I Peter 1:4-5.

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5. The witnessing of the believer-priest is the extension of his ambassadorship.

II Corinthians 5:18 Now all things are from God who has reconciled us to Himself through Christ and has given to each one of us the ministry of reconciliation.

You certainly should know what reconciliation is all about.

II Corinthians 5:19, namely that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself not counting their trespasses against them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

See, it's very important to understand reconciliation.

II Corinthians 5:20, therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ as though God were making an appeal through us, we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. (to give an outsider the gospel is the most wonderful thing you can give them.)

6. The concept of making the issue clear.

A. You must give the outsider pertinent salvation information. When you walk away from the unbeliever after witnessing, he must have a clear understanding of the issue of the gospel. Christ is the issue. Attitude toward Christ is the issue. So you have to

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avoid false issues. Certain things are obnoxious to all of us, but don't get your own personal likes and dislikes tangled up with the gospel. Your objective is not to straighten out any bad habit, anything that is personally objectionable to you. Your responsibility is to make the issue of the gospel clear. That means that you must avoid false issues in the area of legalism or salvation by works. Ephesians 2:8-9 very clearly presents the issue.

- B. Never put the cart before the horse. Do not try to get the unbeliever to live the Christian Way of Life or the Spirit-Filled Life before he is a born again believer. It's a variation of the 1st principle. You shouldn't expect people to live like Christians when they are unbelievers.
- C. Be sure to provide gospel information on which the unbeliever can make a decision for Christ. Remember the gospel boundaries are well defined in I Corinthians 15:3-4. The gospel means good news. It is bad news that you are a sinner, true, but bad news. It's good news that Christ did something for my sins. And you must always place the emphasis in the gospel where it belongs. Christ has done something about sin and sin is not the issue. Christ is the issue. So make sure that you make an issue out of Jesus Christ, and not out of peoples sin, bad habits, etc. Classic example is the missionary who tries to get the native to put clothes on, etc. instead of presenting the message. It's the simple gospel these people need, not changing their habits.
- D. Do not add to the gospel of grace. Grace needs no additions. Nothing is accomplished toward salvation by persuading the

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unbeliever to give up his sins, improve his personality or behavior pattern, feel sorry, join the church, be baptized, or give money.

E. Do not try to force a decision for Christ. Stay out of the way of the Holy Spirit.

F. Remember that the 1st divine institution is free will, which includes freedom and privacy for a decision. You provide gospel information, but you leave the results in the hand of the Lord. The gospel must persuade the person to believe in Christ and nothing else. Therefore, avoid gimmicks which confuse the issue, emotionalism, etc.

7. Effective witnessing depends on the ministry of God the HOLY SPIRIT: The ministry of the HOLY SPIRIT directed toward the believer in spirituality. Acts 1:8; I Corinthians 3:3. The ministry of the Holy Spirit, directed toward the unbeliever in convincing. John 16:8-11, I Cor. 2:14. It's important to remember this principle.

8. Clarity of witnessing depends on the believer understanding the judgment of human good. Human good was rejected at the cross, only sin was judged. Human good will be judged in the believer, at the Judgment Seat of Christ, and human good will be judged in the unbeliever at the Great White Throne or last judgment.

8. Summary point:

A. Pre-requisites for witnessing involve knowledge of pertinent doctrines related to the gospel. You should know doctrines related to the gospel.

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- B. Effectiveness of witnessing depends on the ministry of God the Holy Spirit.
 - C. Responsibility for witnessing belongs to every member of the Family of God.
 - D. Dynamics of witnessing depend upon the believer's mental attitude related to his spiritual growth and spiritual wisdom.
 - E. Clarity of witnessing depends on the believer's accurate understanding of the two deaths of Christ on the cross. You certainly do not need to bring these up every time you witness but you should have a clear understanding of all that happened on the cross.
 - F. Areas of witnessing include both the life and lips.
 - G. The challenge to witnessing comes from the doctrine of Unlimited Atonement.
 - H. The reward for witnessing is included in the believer's judgement at the Judgement Seat of Christ.
 - I. If you want a detailed dissertation on witnessing, the Biblical pattern for witnessing is found in I Thessalonians chapter 2.
9. The postulates of pitfalls in witnessing or warnings about witnessing.
- A. Avoid argumentation. You may win the debate, but you won't win the soul. Your responsibility is to disseminate information,

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not to argue, over the validity of the information. You present it. Leave the rest to the Spirit.

B. Do not be sidetracked by false issues. False issues include such subjects as

(1) Is the Bible the Word of God? Listen, when you are holding a .45 semi-automatic pistol, you don't start defending it's power, you just shoot it. Well do the same with the Word of God.

(2) What about the people who have never heard?

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Just give them biblical truth about the gospel. It will do its own persuasion along with the power of the Holy Spirit. You are holding something more powerful than a .45, you are holding the gospel of Jesus Christ.

C. Deal with the individual alone where possible. Witnessing in front of others creates false issues by producing embarrassment, loss of prestige, heckling.

D. Avoid getting into a rut, using the same approach in every case. Different approaches to the subject of the gospel are necessary

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for different people. Your flexibility comes from the filling and leading of the Holy Spirit and with your spiritual maturity.

- E. Avoid the false concept that you must speak to a certain number of people every day about Jesus Christ.
 - F. Avoid bragging about your experiences in witnessing.
 - G. Do not judge other believers for their apparent failure to witness. This is a matter between them and the Lord. Such judging and maligning only brings divine discipline on yourself. Whether other people are witnessing or not is not the issue.
10. The analogy to witnessing: Matthew 4:19, Follow me and I will make you fishers of men. The analogy can be carried out to those who are fishermen, they will appreciate it.

A fisherman must have a desire to fish. If you don't like to fish, you do not want to be in a boat fishing. Desire is a big thing, and that is also true of witnessing. You must have a desire to impart the gospel. You must love Jesus, and care about others there must be true spiritual motivation.

A fisherman goes equipped. He knows what kind of bait to use, reels, line poles, etc. This is important in being a fisher of men. You must be equipped with the gospel.

They always go where the fish are located, they don't fish in their bathtub, cast off the freeway. They go where the fish are located. Or you have separated yourself from outsiders, from

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unbelievers? You have no one to whom to witness. Try to find yourself an unbeliever!!!

Fishermen always use the right bait: what works and what doesn't. This is the way it is with people when witnessing. They know what presentations are going to make the issue clear and what presentations are not, so they are flexible in their ability to meet all kinds of witnessing situations.

Fishermen must be patient. Fishermen must stay out of sight, you never make an issue out of yourself when presenting the gospel. You must be patient. You merely make a presentation. When you get to the point where you get some negative signals, cut it off, change the subject, or peel off and get out of there. You have to be patient.

There's a great deal of enthusiasm about catching a fish. It is very stimulating of having the privilege of witnessing to someone and as a result of that information and the work of God the Holy Spirit seeing them believe in Jesus Christ and receive eternal life.

11. The principle of prayer in witnessing is encouraged by the Word of God.

Romans 10:1 Brethren, my hearts desire and prayer to God for them (that is for the Jews) is for their salvation.

So there is a bonafide prayer that people will hear the message and will respond.

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12. Effective witness belongs to those in spiritual maturity.

Proverbs 11:30. The fruit or production of the righteous (righteous refers to those believers who live continually in the power of the Holy Spirit—Galatians 5:5) **is a tree of life and he who is wise wins souls.**

This takes us right back to our study in

Colossians 4:5 walk in wisdom to those on the outside redeeming the time.

What is the motivation to witness to the outsiders, to unbelievers?

In the Church Age everyone who believes in Jesus Christ as Savior is made a priest, a universal priesthood, having the same fundamental declaration as an Old Testament priest:

Deuteronomy 7:6 For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.

In the Church Age being made a royal priest is one of the 34 blessings every believer receives.

1 Peter 2:5 ...you also as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy

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priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen race a Royal Priesthood so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

We have the privilege to proclaim the excellencies of Jesus Christ to the world.