

A Life That Speaks

Most of us are uncomfortable invading the privacy of people and imposing on them a religious conversation they may not want. In contrast the apostle Paul teaches us an effective non-intrusive approach that gets seekers to ask questions. He focuses on our godly character, conduct and conversation. We should not underestimate the power of a Christ-filled life. It turns out that our lives are our most powerful evangelism tool.

GROUP DISCUSSION

What are some reasons that Christians don't talk about Jesus Christ?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

What area of weakness in evangelism do you struggle with?

Paul wrote this letter from Rome, where he had just been moved to Nero's palace prison to await trial for preaching the gospel. (There he evangelized the whole praetorian guard and won converts in Caesar's household.) He writes to new churches founded by his convert Epaphras in Colosse, Laodicea and Hierapolis (in modern Turkey). Since Paul's emphasis is on lifestyle, not techniques, his ethical teachings in all of his letters become evangelism training—checklists for witness in each of our circles: work, campus, neighborhood and clubs.

Read Colossians 3:5—4:1

1. Looking through the passage, what are some bad habits (implicit and explicit) that these expagan believers must now eliminate?
2. How would seeing these lifestyle changes in the believers affect pagan outsiders?
3. Paul had told them in 1:27 that the great "mystery," the secret of the Christian life, was "Christ in you, the hope of glory!" What beautiful qualities was Christ producing in the believers he now indwelt by his Spirit (vv. 12-17)?
4. When have you seen the power of someone's witness following a dramatic change in lifestyle?
5. Notice what Paul says in 3:11 about discrimination. What new facts made such a radical reorientation of all Christian relationships both possible and necessary?

6. Why would outsiders find the Christians' collective witness (their behavior together and toward each other) even more thirst-producing and question-inducing than their individual conduct?

7. In verses 15 and 17, Paul makes an issue of thanking God in everything. How does this transform even our most menial, boring or challenging tasks?

8. The main social unit was the "household"—a man's family, house servants, farm laborers, artisans who ran businesses, even a tutor, doctor and lawyer. They were all the man's property. What surprising instructions does Paul give householders? How would their transformation affect their owner?

9. What new standard was to govern the attitudes of slaves? How does this apply to us in our workplace?

10. *Read Colossians 4:2-6.* According to Paul, how will the Christians' truly "wise" conduct and gracious conversations affect the outsiders (nonbelievers) around them?

11. Instead of imposing religious conversations on people who might be offended, what are several advantages if we can get them to ask us questions about our faith?

12. Seeing the winsome, godly conduct of Christians can turn indifferent and hostile people into seekers as effectively today as in the first century. If nonbelievers in your social circles are not asking questions about your faith, what are possible reasons? What steps toward change would you like to take?

Ask the Lord to help you live out the gospel and make fitting comments in each of your social circles so that you might win seekers to the Lord.

Now or Later

Take an hour or so to read through the following passages and pick out everything that can help improve your conduct and relationships with seekers: Colossians 3:1-4; Ephesians 4:17—6:19; 2 Corinthians 3:1-3; Galatians 6:9-10; Philippians 4:4-9; 1 Timothy 3:5-6; Titus 1-3; Romans 12:9—13:14.