

BE WISE

**“Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity.”
(Colossians 4:5)**

Paul had a passion to preach to those who were lost:

- To the Corinthians he wrote: **“Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.”** (1 Corinthians 9:19-23)
- To the Romans he wrote: **“I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God of everyone who believes.”** (Rom. 1:16) **“I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, my conscience confirms it through the Holy Spirit—I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race.”** (Romans 9:1-3)
- To the Colossians he wrote: **“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.”** (Col. 4:2-6)
- The apostles suffered because they preached: **“Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! You have begun to reign—and that without us! How I wish that you really had begun to reign so that we also might reign with you! For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like those condemned to die in the arena. We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to human beings. We are fools for Christ, but you are so wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are honored, we are dishonored! To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless. We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; when we are slandered, we answer kindly. We have become the scum of the earth, the garbage of the world—right up to this moment.”** (1 Cor. 4:8-13)

COMPASSION FOR THE LOST

- It is sad to see someone lose his health, his family, his home, and his money. But the saddest thing of all is to see someone lose his soul!
- The world’s greatest separation will take place at Judgment: **“Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”** (Matt. 25:46)
- When God was about to destroy Sodom two angels spoke to Lot: **“Do you have anyone else here—sons-in-law, sons or daughters, or anyone else in the city who belongs to you? Get them out of here, because we are going to destroy this place. The outcry to the Lord**

against its people is so great that he has sent us to destroy it.” So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who were pledged to marry his daughters. He said, “Hurry and get out of this place, because the Lord is about to destroy the city!” But his sons-in-law thought he was joking. (Genesis 19:12-14) Sadly, Lot’s sons in law perished in the destruction of Sodom!

- Jesus said: **“I am come in my Father’s name, and you do not accept me; but if someone else comes in his own name, you accept him. How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God.”** (John 5:43-44)
- Jesus loved Jerusalem, but Jerusalem rejected him. Jesus said: **“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’”** (Luke 13:34-35)
- **“As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, “If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God’s coming to you.”** (Luke 19:41-44)
- The Greek word used to describe the weeping of Jesus is “klaio”. It is found 40 times in the Bible and means to “weep loudly,” or to “wail”. By contrast, when Jesus wept silently with the sisters of Lazarus. The word used here is “dakkruo” which means to shed tears and weep silently (John 11:35). It is almost inconceivable that the Creator of the universe would wail loudly in public because the people he loved in Jerusalem rejected the salvation he offered
- Even though everyone you witness to will not be saved, you still need to keep trying. **“Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity.”**

A LESSON FROM JESUS

Jesus is the world’s greatest teacher and the master of one syllable words. Obviously we can learn from him! Conversion begins in the mind! We are not to be “conformed” by the world but “transformed” by the renewing of our mind. Each individual has the ability to control his or her own mind. If we want to, we can **“Set our minds on things above, not on earthly things.”** (Col. 3:2) Rather than tell people what to think, Jesus took advantage of what they were already thinking about. Using this technique he was able to make spiritual applications of their earthly thoughts.

- For example, when Jesus spoke to the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well he spoke to her about water. Since she was already thinking about water He said: **“Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”** (John 4:13-14)
- When Jesus fed the 5,000 with 5 loaves and 2 fish the people were so impressed that they wanted to force him to be their king (John 6:15). Later in Capernaum Jesus said: **“Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.”** (John 6:26-27) He continued: **“I am the living bread that**

come down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” (John 6:51)

- Pouring out water became a sacred tradition at the Feast of Tabernacles. Isaiah predicted: **“For I will pour water upon a thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring and my blessing on your descendants.” (Is. 44:3)**. On each day of the feast the priest drew an urn of water from the Pool of Siloam, marched through the Water Gate to pour the water on the altar while the people recited Isaiah 12:3: **“With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.”** The last day of the Feast was special and the priest marched around the altar 7 times before pouring out the water. So - **“On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.” By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.” (John 7:37-39)**
- Matthew chapter 13 is filled with parables. **“Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable.” (Matt. 13:34)** Note that Jesus sat down by the lake to teach these parables (Matt. 13:1). It was wise of Jesus at this time to compare fish nets to judgment. **“Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matt. 13:47-50)**
- When the disciples of Jesus called his attention to the temple Jesus warned them that soon not one stone would be left upon another that would not be cast down (Matt. 24:2) Jesus used what they were already thinking about to teach them, not just about the destruction of the temple, but also his second coming and the end of the world (See Matthew 24:1-25:46).
- Etc.
- **“Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity.”**

SEASONED WITH SALT

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

Hardly anyone fixes an excellent meal the first time they try. With practice, however, most can learn to make a meal that is delicious and tasty. Seasoning is important in this regard. Isaac as you know, sent out his son Esau to prepare a “tasty” meal for him (Gen. 27:4).

The same principle applies to our ability to witness. Paul’s testimony is found three times in the book of Acts (Acts 9:1-19; 22:3-21; 26:1-31). Paul probably gave this same testimony hundreds of times in the course of his ministry. Each time he gave his testimony he learned how to give it better. Paul was not a novice, he was an “expert builder” (I Cor. 3:10). We can all learn by experience!

Harold Lass was an elder of a church in San Jose, California. Harold had only a limited education but he had a great desire to win people to Christ. He wrote out his testimony on a piece of

paper and put it in his back pocket. Several times a day he would take out that paper, read his testimony, and try to improve it. He became a great soul winner who learned how to season his testimony with salt so he could know how to answer everyone!

We learn by repetition! The first time we tried to walk we fell, but now we can walk in our sleep. The first time we tried to talk we made mistakes, but now we can talk in our sleep. You can present your testimony in a way that will make it interesting if you practice.

The purpose of our practice is not “excellency of speech” but skill with the word of God. The word of God is the only weapon with which we can defeat the devil (Eph. 6:17). When Jesus was being tempted by the devil in the wilderness, he defeated the devil by quoting Scriptures and saying “It is written” Remember! **“It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”** (See Matthew 4:4; 4:7, and 4:10)

The Latin word for sword is “gladius” and those who fought with swords were known as “gladiators”. As we seek to evangelize the world we are gladiators for Jesus. To be successful we need to study the word of God and practice using it. Those who are unskilled in the word of God are babes and God wants us to grow to maturity. **“So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. (Eph. 4:11-16)**

“But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.” (1 Peter 3:15-16)

LEAN NOT ON YOUR OWN UNDERSTANDING

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will direct your paths.” (Prov. 3:5-6)

As we have said, people are not converted by excellency of speech, but by the word of God. Even though Paul was a wise master builder he did not rely upon his own wisdom, but rather upon the power of God. He wrote to the Corinthians: **“And so it was with me, brothers and sisters. When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God’s power.”** (1 Cor. 2:1-5)

Paul taught both to season your testimony with salt and also trust in the power of God! Paul did both and so can we! Note Paul's dependency on prayer in this passage in Colossians: **“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.”** (Col. 4:2-6)

Note:

- **“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.”**
- **“And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains.”**
- **“Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.”**
- Consider also Paul's emphasis on prayer in these other verses:
 - **“We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. When we pray for you because we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love you have for all the saints.”** (Col. 1:3-4)
 - **“For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light.”** (Col. 1:9-12)
 - **“Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.”** (Col. 4:12)
 - **“I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness—the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord's people. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.”** (Col. 1:25-29)
 - Yes! Christ was working powerfully in Paul, and Christ in you is also the hope of glory!
 - Yes! Prayer is essential to our spiritual victory!
 - **“Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity.”**

PRAY FOR WISDOM

“If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That person

should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.” (James 1:5-8)

- If you do not believe God will help you, your prayers will not be answered. **“That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord.”**
- When God does help us we need to be thankful to Him and give Him glory!
- Wicked King Herod died because he did not give God the glory (Acts 12:19-23). Please do not make that mistake!
- David wrote: **“All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.” (Ps. 139:16)**
- Paul wrote: **“God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles” (Gal. 1:15-16)** Surely God’s hand was upon Paul from the day he was born!
- Paul wrote: **“In Damascus the governor under King Aretas had the city of the Damascenes guarded in order to arrest me. But I was lowered in a basket from a window in the wall and slipped through his hands.” (2 Cor. 11:32-33).** Surely the wisdom of God was involved!
- Not long after this Paul escaped death in Jerusalem by means of wisdom from God. Paul wrote: **“When I returned to Jerusalem and was praying at the temple, I fell into a trance and saw the Lord speaking to me. ‘Quick!’ he said. ‘Leave Jerusalem immediately, because the people here will not accept your testimony about me.’” (Acts 22:17-18)**
- Later in Jerusalem more than 40 Jews took a vow not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul (Acts 22:12-14). The fact that Paul was informed of this plot by his nephew was not an accident. It was God giving him wisdom!
- When Paul was en route to Rome by ship they were beset by a terrible storm and did not see the sun or stars for many days and gave up all hope of being saved (Acts 27:20). That’s when Paul’s prayers for wisdom were answered and he announced: **“Last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me and said, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar; and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you.’ So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me. Nevertheless, we must run aground on some island.” (Acts 27:23-26)**
- John Gutenberg was a devout man who wanted everyone to have a copy of the Bible. God gave him the wisdom to invent the moveable type printing press that made the Bible available to millions.
- Samuel F. B. Morse was a devout Christian whose father was a preacher. God gave him the wisdom to invent the telegraph and the first message that was sent long distance was “What God hath wrought.” This is a verse from the Bible (Numbers 23:23) The first \$25 he made from his invention he gave to a Sunday School.
- Wilson Greatbach was also a devout Christian who received 325 patents. His most famous invention was the pace-maker that has saved literally millions of lives. He spoke at the Ozark Christian College in Joplin, Missouri and gave God the glory for this amazing invention. He was working in a small laboratory behind his house and said that when he needed something he prayed. In answer to his prayers God provided a battery for his pacemaker from a Swiss Watch Co. He said that the human body is wet and moist and will soon destroy anything mechanical. God answered his prayers with a unique material discovered by NASA for use by astronauts.
- In his book *Men of Science, Men of God*, Dr. Henry Morris presents 101 biographies and Christian testimonies of scientists who believed the Bible and its account of God’s creation.

These godly men were the founding fathers of the scientific method and modern scientific disciplines.

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