

Colossians Chapter 4

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[0 : 00] If you'd like to turn to that in your Bibles. I left a Bible on the back seat with Colossians 3. Turn to it. Don't tell me you've closed it.

Well done. Good. You know it is. So Colossians 3, we're going to start at verse 12. And we're going to read through until verse 6 of chapter 4.

So Colossians and chapter 3, beginning at verse 12, reading through to chapter 4 and verse 6. And it's particularly verses 2 to 6 of chapter 4 where we will be thinking this evening as we're getting very close to the end of our study in Colossians.

So here is God's word, verse 12. Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.

Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

[1 : 14] Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to the God.

And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Wives, submit to your husbands as is fitting in the Lord.

Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.

Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything, and do it not only when their eye is on you to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord.

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

[2 : 32] Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there's no favoritism. Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a master in heaven.

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 towards 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.

And we know the Lord has something to say to each one of us from his word this evening, and we trust that he'll help us. Now, as you can see, the table is laid for us to share in the Lord's table or communion this evening.

And, again, that's something that we do once a month. It's something that we do as believers, as Christians, because we believe that Jesus died for our sins, and because this table reminds us of his death for us.

[3 : 51] Now, the Bible is very clear on this point, that if we are a Christian, and we are walking with God, and we know that we put our faith and trust in Jesus, then it's good for us to do this.

The bread is only bread. The wine is only wine. There's nothing that happens to them. There's no blessing in that sense by just taking them. We come with faith. But the Bible makes it clear that if we aren't right with God, and we aren't walking with him, that we shouldn't take the communion.

And we get that because this is what the Apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 11. A person ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. So if we come without that faith in Jesus, his body and blood as our Savior, and we come without recognizing our right relationship with one another in the church, then we bring in judgment upon ourselves.

So those of you who are Christians and you're walking with the Lord, come and take and eat. But if you know in your heart that you're not walking with the Lord, that you're not a Christian who truly put your faith in him, please stay for the time afterwards, but please don't take of the bread and the wine.

[5 : 08] It's between you and God. But it may be that for you this evening, it's a time has come for you to say, I really want to put my faith in Jesus. I really want to follow him.

I really want to know him. Then it may well be at the end of our time together that you want to say, Lord Jesus, I want to put my faith in you. And taking this bread and wine is me inwardly saying, Lord Jesus, take me and save me and cleanse me from my sin.

We need to come with thoughts. And we'll do that a bit later on, but just to forewarn you of that. Well, we're going to sing again together. We're in Colossians and chapter 4.

And as we've been going through, particularly these last several weeks, in the end of chapter 3 and into the beginning of chapter 4, we've seen how Paul has been giving very personalized instruction, hasn't he, to differing roles that we each occupy in our lives, in our marriage, wives and husbands, in our family life, children, parents, fathers, and in the workplace as well.

And for some of us, perhaps only one or two of these are specifically relevant. For some of us, all three are pertinent. Yet, hopefully all of us, even if we can say, well, I'm not married and I don't have children and my parents are no longer alive and I'm no longer working, I'm retired, I hope that we've seen, of course, that all of these things are principles that we apply to life.

[6 : 45] Principles that we can take hold of and on board for our own individual lifestyles and our individual relationships with others. And so, as I said, before we're getting to the end nearly of this letter, God willing, see how we get on, we may well finish the letter next week.

But we're getting to that place where, really, Paul, before he brings his final greetings and sends blessings from friends and talks about all these people he knows, we get to this part, verses 2 to 6, chapter 4.

In one sense, it's his epilogue. It's, in one sense, him wrapping up all that he's been teaching before, bringing everything into a head. And particularly pertinent, I believe, that he is speaking now, just as he's spoken about those roles within the marriage and the family and the workplace, he's now speaking to all Christians, every believer, about their life in the world.

How we live, particularly, as he uses the phrase, amongst outsiders, how we live 24-7 when we're not here together with God's people. Well, including, of course, when we're here with God's people too.

And daily Christian life. Something that speaks to every one of us. Something that is pertinent to every one of us. And we can break it up into three simple parts.

[8 : 12] And we find here in these verses that, first of all, he speaks about the Christian's prayer, speaks about the Christian's practice, and then he speaks about the Christian's profession.

I just put profession in because it's a P. But really, it means, it means how we speak, how we live. It's not profession in job. It's profession in your, what you profess by the way that you live.

And so, we're going to look at these together briefly. First of all, devote yourselves to prayer. Now, often, when you watch maybe athletics, perhaps if you were watching the Olympics a couple of years ago, or even just recently, Mo Farah winning the world record, I think, didn't he, for a particular race.

After the race, a TV interviewer will get them alongside and say, wow, that's fantastic. You've done really great. What's the secret of your success? How is it you keep breaking records?

How is it you keep winning? And of course, the athlete might say something like this, well, it's my training that I train every day from five in the morning for six hours a day.

[9 : 20] They might say, it's my great coach who's helped me. Or it may be something similar to that. They'll talk about the secret of their success. Or perhaps, when somebody turns 100, they get a little write-up in the paper, don't they, in the journal or the gazette or something else.

And they'll have a little interview and they'll say, what's the secret of living to 100 years old? And the dear old person will say maybe, well, drinking a strong cup of tea every morning or having a healthy diet or whatever it may be.

And so, everybody seems to have their secret for success. Now, if you were to ask the Apostle Paul, what was the secret of his success in living the Christian life?

I don't mean how he managed to plant churches and all those things, but what was the secret of his success in living for Christ? He would say, look, it's not a secret. It's quite simple. In fact, it's so simple that actually if I tell you the answer, you'll say, oh, is that all?

It's prayer. It's as simple as that. It's praying. He calls the believers here to devote themselves, to commit themselves, be wholehearted in prayer. And the reason he does that is because it's what he says to everybody.

[10 : 33] You turn to any of his letters and you'll find again and again he'll say something similar. Back in Ephesians chapter 6, pray in the Spirit on all occasions. 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, verse 17, pray continually.

That's one of the shortest verses in the Bible. Just two words, pray continually. It's what he asks people to do for him. He does it even here, doesn't he?

Pray for me, he says. Pray for us. Elsewhere, he asks the Ephesians again, pray also for me, chapter 6. 1 Thessalonian, brothers, pray for us.

He knew the importance of prayer, that God's people were praying for him. But he knew the importance of prayer because in his own life he was a man of prayer, a man devoted to prayer.

I think it was Martin Luther, the great reformer, who said that when he prays, he gets up at 5 in the morning and prays for 2 hours before he starts work.

[11 : 32] He says, if I'm really busy and I just haven't got time for anything else, I'll get up at 3 o'clock in the morning and pray for 4 hours. The secret of success is prayer, relationship with God, talking with God.

That's why, of course, again, in the letters that Paul writes, he often talks about his prayer life. He writes the Ephesians and tells them that he prays for them. I've not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.

Philippians 1 and verse 4, I always pray with joy, he says. Here in Colossians, we've already seen in chapter 1 and verse 3, we always thank God, the Father, our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you.

And in verse 9 as well. For this reason, since the day we've heard about you, we've not stopped praying for you. He was a Paul, a man of prayer, and he's not, as it were, avoiding talking about his own prayer life.

I wonder when was the last time we spoke openly to somebody about our prayer life. We might feel, perhaps, that we can't because it would seem to be that we were being a bit proud or super spiritual or arrogant.

[12 : 47] This isn't why Paul is telling them that his life was a life which was run by prayer. He's not boasting about himself. He's not saying, I'm telling you about how I pray for you so you can think, well, Paul, you're such a great Christian.

We can never be like you. No, he's telling them because he wants to encourage them. He wants to stress that his utter reliance is upon God and that his utter reliance is upon the prayer that he brings to God and he wants his readers to do just the same.

To pray, devote yourself, give yourself to prayer. This is the thing above all else that makes the difference between living the Christian life as God intended or not.

And I want to speak to you, dear friends, as I speak to my own heart. Are we praying as we should be praying? Are we praying enough? Are we praying in such a way that we can say the secret to my Christian life is because I pray and I look to the Lord and I depend upon him?

There's that little bumper sticker, isn't it, or poster you've probably seen. Seven days without prayer makes one week.

[13 : 56] W-E-A-K. Makes one week. And it's true, isn't it? We all know it's true. The trouble is that we find prayer hard. It's not because we don't believe in prayer.

It's not because we don't count prayer vital and important and special. It's because we find it tough to pray, don't we? We find it hard to pray. And I think that that reason Paul gives us two little tips.

Devote yourselves to prayer. Being thankful and watchful, they're connected, or watchful and thankful, they're connected with prayer. They're two little practical tips to help us in our prayer lives. And when he says being watchful, I'm going to apply that to mean watch yourself.

Watch yourself. Keep yourself in check. Prayer demands self-control and discipline. And we just don't like it. But it's what we need.

You know, we know that it's important and therefore we need to set aside a time for it. And I would encourage you if you are not doing that to really make the effort to watch yourself and to set to yourself a time every day when you can pray.

[15 : 08] A specific time every day when you can pray. It may be first thing in the morning. It may be when you're just having a shower. Instead of singing in the shower, driving all the birds away from the house, pray.

It may be as you go to work, you maybe walk to work five, ten minutes. Well, spend that time in prayer. Or if you drive to work and you've got to commute, spend that time in prayer.

Don't put on the radio. Don't listen to your iPod. Pray. The Lord gives us time. It's no good us saying we're too busy. The Lord gives us time. It may be that in the morning that's just not possible.

Well, what about lunchtime? When you're eating your lunch, find a quiet corner, somewhere to sit. Go and find a bench in the park. Spend time in prayer. If we discipline ourselves, if we watch and pray, then we'll find that we can make time for prayer.

And we'll find that we must take time for prayer. But then the other thing that's hard about prayer is not only the discipline of setting time aside for it, but also the discipline of prayer is hard because we struggle with prayer because we think of prayer as really sort of presenting a list to God.

[16 : 23] What can I pray for? That's often what people say, isn't it? Well, I like to, I want to pray, but I don't know what to pray for. And yet Paul says here, devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.

See, I believe if we start off our prayers with thanksgiving, we'll find a whole host of things and people to pray for and situations will come to mind.

In other words, once we start thanking God perhaps for our family, for our home, for our relatives, for our wife, for our husband, immediately there's people to be praying for. I thank you for so and so.

I pray for them as they go for this interview tomorrow. I pray for them because they're unwell. When we give thanks for our church, our church family as well, the same thing can happen.

We say, thank you Lord for putting me in a church and with friends who support me and help me. I thank you for that. And then we begin to pray, oh I know so and so is in hospital. I know so and so isn't well. I know so and so is struggling.

[17 : 24] And we thank God for the peace that we enjoy. Thank you Lord that in our country we haven't got war but we've got peace and I've got freedom to worship you. Then we remember the persecuted church and our brothers and sisters in Christ who don't have that peace.

We think of war-torn areas and so it goes on. The more we give thanks for the more we'll find to pray for. Watch and pray.

Watch and pray. Watch and be thankful. Let me encourage you. Let me urge you, dear friends. I'm not watching to lay upon you a burden. I'm not wishing for you to think, oh I'm a terrible, terrible Christian because I just don't spend enough time in prayer.

None of us do. But why I'm urging you and encouraging you is do something about it. It's not enough for us to feel sorry for ourselves or bad that we don't pray.

Let's do something. Let's set time aside. It's so vital. It's a secret. It's this open secret of the success of living the Christian life. But again, Paul goes on and says, please will you pray for us too?

[18 : 29] And he gives a little bit of detail about prayer. Verse 3, pray for us too that God may open a door for our message so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ which are in chains.

That's lovely, isn't it? Paul is in prison so he can't go out. He can't go out and preach in the churches around about as he would love to do as he did do or visit the churches or preach on the street corners as he did in Athens and other places.

He's stuck in the prison but he doesn't believe that there he can't be useful. He doesn't believe that there, that's it. And he doesn't pray, does he? I'm in prison. Please pray for me that I'll have a more comfortable bed because the mice have eaten all the straw at my mattress.

He prays for that God's people, that the Lord would help him to proclaim the message that the guards he's chained to would be open to hear him speak to them.

And he says, pray that I should proclaim it clearly as I should. And so as we pray and we give thanks and we need to of course in our prayer lives pray for those gospel outreaches that are going on that we're aware of.

[19 : 37] We support missionaries in the church here in various parts of the world. Pray for them. If you don't know anything about the Brixies, find out. If you don't know anything about the Griffins, find out.

They're people who are wanting and longing for and needing and relying upon us to pray. But also we can pray as well about the other activities, the gospel activities in the church.

The moms and toddlers and the 610 and the youth club and the many other things that go on and the food bank. They all need prayer. The reason that we do those things as a church is not primarily because we think that we should be a benefit to the community.

We do those things primarily because we want to take the gospel to as many people as we can and reach people with the gospel because we know that giving them food is great but if we don't give them the gospel then they'll eat and they'll die and they'll go to hell.

If we give them the gospel and the food they'll eat and they'll put their faith in Christ by His grace and they will die but they will go to be with the Lord which is better by far. Pray for the work of mission.

[20 : 42] We're often reminded of the things that go on. The United Beach mission that goes on. The children's camps that go on. All of these people rely upon prayer. Paul says pray for us.

We're to pray for them too. So that's the first thing. That's the secret. That's the key thing. Let me say that if you forget everything else or fall asleep with everything else that I say remember that.

Pray. It's the key. It's the key. It's the key. It's the key. And it's the one thing that devil will want us to not do. It's one thing our flesh will not want us to do as well because there'll always be something else on telly to watch.

There'll always be one more job around the house to do. There'll always be somebody to phone or to visit. No. Prayer is the greatest and most important work. One of the Puritans said something like this.

You can do much more than pray but you can't do anything more than you have prayed. I think he said something like that. Anyway, I think I misquoted him slightly.

[21 : 40] But anyway, he meant basically prayer is important. So, the next thing is here. We have practice. Christian practice. Verse 5.

See, prayer is a preparation for practice. prayer is a preparation for us to practice what we pray for.

You see, if we will fail in our prayer life if we don't follow up our prayer life by practice and we shall fail in our practice unless we first pray.

They're interdependent upon one another. So, Paul says, be wise in the way you act towards outsiders. I don't know if you've ever tried to diet.

I'm not going to ask people to put their hands up if they have. But you know that when you try and diet you have to place yourself under a list of do's and don'ts for your eating habits.

[22 : 48] So, under your list of no cream cakes. Okay? Lots and lots of vegetables. Okay? Do's and don'ts. If you sign up to a diet club, one of these diet clubs, they'll give you a list of forbidden foods and a list of acceptable foods to eat.

You're under do's and don'ts. And sometimes people think that Christian practice is a bit like that. If you want to live the Christian life then you have to draw up a really good and helpful list of do's and don'ts.

Things that are forbidden for the Christian and things that are accepted. But that's not what Paul teaches. It's not what the Bible teaches. It's not the way to live the Christian life.

Because that is not relationship with God. That is regulation and rule and law and we are not under law in that way. So rather, Paul gives two governing principles about applying practical Christian life to the world.

Two principles. And the first one is this. Be wise in the way you act towards outsiders. Be wise in the way you act. Who are the outsiders?

[24 : 00] Well, those who are outside the kingdom of God. Those who are outside of Christ. Those who are outside the wonderful salvation of God's grace and love. People always want to be part of a group, don't they?

Especially when you're young. But even as you get older you want to be part of a group, part of a gang or part of a tribe to belong. But once people get inside a gang or a group or a tribe then they can be very indifferent, in fact very disdainful of those on the outside.

They can want to keep their club as it were special, to keep the outsiders out. The church has been guilty of this in the past. But it's something that the church mustn't be guilty of.

In fact, in one sense the church must operate with the desire to do all that it can to bring the outsiders in. To serve the outsiders, to reach the outsiders, to love the outsiders, not to keep them out.

And how are we to do that? We're to do it by living wisely before those on the outside. Wisely. Well, how do we do that?

[25 : 10] How do we know what wisdom is? How do we know what's wise? How do we know what it is? Well, it's quite simple I think because I think it's simply asking ourselves one question.

A question that applies to all our relationships and applies to all of the circumstances we find ourselves in when we are meeting with, talking with, spending time with people who are not Christians.

And the question is this. Do my words, my actions, and my reactions make the gospel desirable and attractive to those I meet with?

Or the opposite? Do my words, my actions, my life, my reactions make the gospel attractive? There's one of the verses we sang in that hymn from May the Mind of Christ my Savior.

The very last verse goes like this. May his beauty rest upon me as I seek the lost to win and may they forget the channel seeing only him.

[26 : 11] The beauty of Christ. Does this action and this word reflect the beauty of Christ? Titus in chapter 2 as Titus gives instruction to, sorry, Paul gives instructions through Titus to slaves and the way they should behave.

Listen to what he says. Titus 2 verses 9 and 10. Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything to try to please them, not to talk back to them, not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted so that in every way they will make attractive the teaching about our Savior and our God.

Do you see that? But that applies to all of us, doesn't it? It's not just for servants, not just for those who are in work, but in every relationship to make the teaching about God our Savior attractive.

Isn't it true to say, sadly, that the reason that many, many people are turned away from Christianity is because of the ungodly lives of those who profess to be Christians?

Isn't that why the world turns off when you talk about Christianity? He says, well, I've seen these so-called Christians, I've seen them on the Sunday, holier-than-thou with their Bibles going to church, and I've seen them on the Monday gossiping and slandering and fiddling their taxes and doing all these things.

[27 : 32] It means much more, though, than avoiding hypocrisy if we are to be wise in the way we act toward outsiders, but we are purposefully living in such a way as to win them for Christ, to do all that we can and to make the gospel attractive.

Peter, as he writes to Christian wives who have non-Christian husbands, he says to them, wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives.

That's what we are to be, all of us, Christian wives, Christian husbands, Christian fathers, children, those that we know who are not believers in every way we are to seek by our lives to win them over.

That's a simple question. When I answer back to somebody, respond to somebody, is my life showing the attractiveness of Christ?

That's the first simple principle. The second principle here is make the most of every opportunity to be effective witnesses. We must be looking for opportunities. Evangelism is not restricted to missions.

[28 : 52] It's not restricted to the work of UBM, wonderful that the work is, or restricted to people like Roger Carswell and so on. Every one of us has a mission field. Every one of us, God has placed amongst the people we work with and live with and the family that we have so that we might have opportunity to speak to them of Christ.

In the shop, in the school, on the bus, as we walk along the road, we're to be on the lookout for a chance to share Christ. Now one of the things that I don't do often enough, and I have done in the past, and I must try to do it again, I often pray, Lord give me an opportunity today or this week to speak to somebody about you.

Invariably, when I've prayed that prayer, the Lord has surprised me with a wonderful opportunity to do just that. Let me encourage you to do that. So simply pray, Lord, this week, you may be petrified and scared of the possibility of doing it, as I always am, but ask him, please give me an opportunity just to speak for you a simple word here or there about what it means to follow you and to love you, that I might make the gospel attractive.

Make most of every opportunity. We have opportunity and opportunity, and yes, again, dear friends, we say, oh, I miss that opportunity. Well, if we did, don't beat yourself up about it. Just ask the Lord for another one and the words to say and he'll help you.

I'm sure of that. Then this last section we come to then, we look to the Christian's prayer and the Christian practice and then we come to the Christian's profession.

[30 : 28] As I said, not a job, but our speech, our conversation. Verse 6, again, it's clear that what Paul is talking about is about our conversation and our talking with people who are non-Christians, people on the outside of the church, outside of Christ.

You see, as I've said already, we are to live by our actions, but we're to speak as well. In one sense, we are to bring a holistic message of Christ, a holistic message, a witness.

So it's word and life. It's not just word and it's not just life. It's both. And again, as Christians, we can get that imbalanced.

And well-meaning Christians can say, right, as long as I preach the gospel and proclaim it and make it absolutely dead clear, well, it doesn't matter how I do it.

It doesn't matter if I do it aggressively or if I do it, you know, almost arrogantly. No, that does matter because the way that you portray Christ matters. It's word and action.

[31 : 33] And of course, other Christians can say, oh, well, I never speak about Jesus. I let my life just speak. Well, that's a cop-out, dear friends, ultimately. It's because we're afraid not to speak about him and to own him.

That's a cop-out. Two together, a wholesome person. Christ has saved you body and speech. And there's three vital ingredients here than that Paul, it's getting a bit odd in here, Paul has to say about our profession.

And those three things there in verse 6. First of all, he says, let your conversation be always full of grace. Now, I found that very challenging when I read it, that he doesn't simply say, let your conversation be gracious.

That would be, that would be quite normal, wouldn't it? Let it be gracious. Let it be kind. Let it be loving. But he says, he says, always full of grace.

There's no, never, it's like, whenever we speak and meet with somebody and under whatever circumstances we speak to them, we're to speak to them with grace in every syllable of our words.

[32 : 46] grace. Wow. How can we gossip if our language is to be always full of grace?

How can we pull somebody down or criticize somebody or be negative about somebody if our words are to be always full of grace? And every one of us, without being rude, can put our hands up and say, I have not always spoken with words full of grace.

It means that when we're in a road rage incident, our words are always full of grace. When somebody's queue jumped at the post office, our words are always full of grace.

When we have thoughtless neighbors, our words are always full of grace. Oh. Oh. How we need the Lord's help, don't we?

No wonder James says, he who can control his tongue has mastered everything. That's what we need. Lord, help us. Help us at our conversation.

[33 : 53] How much can be undone by one word, can't it? We can witness and share and live and speak before somebody, but we just have to say one word and immediately we've given them the excuse not to believe anything else that we've said.

How we need the Lord's help in these things. But then he's used this phrase seasoned with salt. That was a very common expression in Paul's day. It's not so common now. In fact, I don't think I've ever heard anybody really apart from Christians using that phrase.

What does it mean? Well, think about it. Why do we season food with salt? Well, we season food with salt because we want to give it flavor. Usually, we put a lot of salt on if it's a bit bland or tasteless.

So salt gives flavor. So what Paul is saying here and the phrase and this expression that they used of seasoning your words with salt means avoiding being bland and monotone and dull in the way you present the gospel to somebody.

We've got an exciting and a gripping message, the most important, wonderful, glorious truth in the whole world. Surely, we can convey it with a sense of flavor and taste, with a bit of wit, even with humor.

[35 : 10] We can flavor our language with salt. When I share the gospel with somebody, does my face look like I'm telling them that they have got some internal illness?

Or am I telling them the wonderful news of the Savior who died for them and loves them? There is to be salt in the way we speak. Yes, it's serious. Of course, the gospel is serious.

Of course, when we speak to people of Christ, it's serious. Oh, but it's seriously joyful. It's seriously exciting. There's one final thing, isn't there?

As we do this, as we speak with grace and with salt, it's something else. We are to know how to answer everyone so that you may know how to answer everyone.

Well, it must mean certainly that we should have an understanding of the faith. We should understand what we believe. We should know our Bibles and we should know what it is that we understand about sin and hell and heaven and death and the cross.

[36 : 19] But it doesn't mean, pardon me, that we have an answer for every single question that people bring. That may be sometimes, again, while we're afraid to speak to people, if I witness them and share with them, what about if they ask me about this?

and I won't know how to answer them. But we don't know all the answers. We don't have all the answers. We shouldn't pretend to have all the answers. But it does mean we should know how to answer them.

Don't it say? It doesn't say, so you may know all the answers that the questions are asked, but how to answer. And that takes wisdom, and it takes also some salt as well and grace.

Some questions we do not know the answers to, and we might be very foolish in trying to answer those questions. I've known Christians do that in the past. They've been presented with a very personal question about something, and they've given a trite answer, and it's been utterly, utterly dangerous and harmful, because they've just treated that person's hurt in a way where they've tried to answer it, but it's not only been incorrect, it's just been trite, and they've seen that, they've known that, and that's hurt more than just saying, I really don't know.

People want honesty, they want reality, they don't want some improvisation or some answer from a lecture book, as it were. People might ask us questions about those that they've loved, who've now died, whether they're in heaven or not.

[37 : 50] They might ask questions about their own suffering, why has God allowed this to happen to me, and so on, to give a trite answer, well, God knows, or, well, I'm sure you'll all be alright in the end, or just put your faith in Jesus, these things are not helpful.

Yes, ultimately our answer is to seek to point them to Jesus, the only one who can give them peace in the struggles and the questions that they have. But if somebody was to ask us perhaps about a deceased parent, we can answer, honestly, I just don't know if they're in heaven or not.

that's up to God. But what I do know is that you can be there in heaven because he loved you and died for you. And that's not being trite and that's not avoiding the question, but it is ultimately pointing back to their need.

And their peace is only to be found in Christ. Yes, the world around us is searching for reality. And it's our joy, dear friends, it's our duty and it's our responsibility and privilege to live before them that they also may find Christ to be their reality and the one who answers all their needs.

So how can we live the Christian life before the world around about us? Firstly, primarily trusting to the Lord and looking to him in prayer every moment of the day.

[39 : 15] How can we live for him in practice? Well, with wisdom, wisdom, making the most of the opportunities he gives to us. And how can we speak for him with words of grace and salt and asking that the Lord would help us to answer the questions our world is crying out for answers for.

Let's pray together. we thank you again, our wonderful God and Savior for ever saving us and bringing us to yourself.

And we know, Lord, that you used people to do that. You used other Christians, perhaps our parents, perhaps grandparents, friends or neighbors or work colleagues or even our own children.

You used them to be that witness to us. we thank you, oh Lord, that you gave them the grace to speak to us. You gave them the help that they needed to be wise in their dealings with us when we were far from you.

and we thank you, oh Lord, that just as you used them to bring us in from the cold, so Lord, we know that you can and will use us in that same manner.

[40 : 35] Lord, we do pray for those of our families who are not saved. We do pray for those who, though they are loved so dearly by us, are outsiders, outside of your grace and your love and your salvation.

Oh Lord, we pray. Please help us to live and walk before them, that we may not put a stumbling block before them, but Lord, our lives may honour you and they may see, oh Lord, imperfect though we are, failing though we are, faulty though we are, that your grace is at work in our lives.

And we ask again, oh Lord, that you would help us when we struggle with prayer, help us when we struggle to practice and to live out what we believe. And help us, Lord, when we are tongue-tied and afraid to speak, please Lord, use us, work in us and through us.

We ask that in the coming days many may live and know you and that Lord we might be those who follow you day by day and Lord whose lives radiate the beauty of Christ.

For we ask these things in your name now. Amen. Amen.