

Colossians 4:2-18

Week 9 - Conversations With God, Outsiders, And Insiders

Learning Objectives

- Find examples of grace-filled, salt-seasoned conversations in your life to model future conversations.
- Explore ways you and your community can better spread the gospel.

Pray for your time together as a group.

? What was the best conversation you had this week?

Read Out Loud: Colossians 4:2-6 (NIV)

² Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. ³ 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. ⁴ Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. ⁵ Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. ⁶ Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

Read Out Loud: Paul starts his letter to the church at Colossae by praying for them and showing them the power of prayer. He comes full circle at the close of his letter and encourages the church to pray.

? What does it look like to be watchful in prayer?

Possible Answers: Being watchful could mean looking for the Holy Spirit in your prayer life or being aware of things you should be praying for in your life and for others.

? In your own prayer life, are you better at being watchful or thankful? How can you grow in the area you are weaker?

Possible Answers: Make a list of things to be thankful for or things to pray for in your life and the world. Pray through your small group's prayer requests each day. Stopping to pray for things as they come up.

? Optional: How does Paul ask the church to pray for him? What does it say about Paul that these are his prayer requests given that he is in prison and suffering?

Possible Answers: He asks them to pray that the gospel be spread to more people and that he clearly explains the mystery of Jesus. Paul's number one concern is helping more people know Christ, rather than his comfort or freedom.

? In vs. 5 Paul instructs the Colossians to be wise in their interactions with outsiders. How have we seen this command echoed throughout the whole book of Colossians, and how do Paul's instructions help further the gospel?

Possible Answers: Throughout the book of Colossians Paul talks about preserving the Gospel in the face of false teaching and outsiders who distract from the basic truths of the Gospel. It's significant that Paul tells them to continue interacting with others rather than just cut themselves off from outsiders – which would have been easier, but would have gone against their ultimate purpose to spread the Gospel. Paul wants them to hold onto the Gospel and be steadfast as they interact with others.

? How can we be wise and “make the most of every opportunity” as we interact with people who are not believers?

Possible Answers: We shouldn't shut ourselves off from the world, but we also shouldn't be drawn away from our faith as we interact with others. Taking this balance into account requires wisdom. There is not always a clear black and white answer to what we should and shouldn't do, but applying discretion with wisdom will enable us to spread God's glory to everyone we interact with.

? What does it mean to fill a conversation with grace? How can we practice this in our own lives?

Possible Answers: Listen to people to understand what they are saying, not to respond. Meet people where they are in each conversation. Try to apply gospel truth to each conversation, even if someone is not a Christian.

? References to salt in the Bible often mean preserving truth or adding intelligence and instruction to a situation (see Mark 9:50 and Matthew 5:13-16). So, what does Paul mean when he tells the Colossians to season their grace-filled conversations with salt?

Possible Answers: It can also mean avoiding corruption in a situation. Seasoning a conversation with salt could mean gently correcting someone or adding a new perspective to something they are feeling. It could also mean adding logic to a conversation. Paul is highlighting the balance that we must maintain between truth and grace.

? How does Paul's instruction provide insight into the balance between grace and truth in conversations?

Possible Answers: Answers will vary. Paul's instruction is to have this balance so you can answer everyone, including an inquirer or a scoffer (Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers, Bible Gateway).

? Optional: When having tough conversations, do you tend toward grace or truth? How can you better balance the two?

Possible Answers: Answers will vary.

? When was a time you had a conversation with someone that was filled with grace but also truth and instruction? Can you think of a time a conversation you had with someone would have benefited from either more grace or “salt”?

Possible Answers: Answers will vary.

Read Out Loud: Colossians 4:7-18 (NIV)

⁷Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. ⁸I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts. ⁹He is coming with Onesimus, our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you. They will tell you everything that is happening here.

¹⁰My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.) ¹¹Jesus, who is called Justus, also sends greetings. These are the only Jews among my co-workers for the kingdom of God, and they have proved a comfort to me. ¹²Epaphras, 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. ¹³I vouch for him that he is working hard for you and for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis. ¹⁴Our dear friend Luke, the doctor, and Demas send greetings. ¹⁵Give my greetings to the brothers and sisters at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house.

¹⁶After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea.

¹⁷Tell Archippus: “See to it that you complete the ministry you have received in the Lord.”

¹⁸I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

? Paul mentions ten different people and two churches in vs. 7-17. What does that say about Paul and his ministry?

Possible Answers: Paul is a very relational guy who uses these relationships to spread the gospel. He cares deeply about people and their relationships with God. Ministry is primarily relationship based.

? How would mentioning these specific people help Paul relate to the Colossians?

Possible Answers: Paul has not met the Colossians and is reaffirming his connection with them through his relationship with the people in the letters. Also, ministry meant people left their small communities to spread the gospel, and probably were not in close contact with each other or the people they left behind. It is a nice way for everyone to get an update on people they know.

? Looking at the community Paul had around him, what are ways we can encourage each other and spread the gospel through our relationships?

Possible Answers: Have conversations filled with grace and seasoned with salt. Support each other as we spread the gospel in other parts of our lives, such as work, family, friends and school.

Questions For Discussion And Accountability

? Is there a tough conversation you need to have this week that can benefit from being full of grace yet seasoned with salt?

? What's one way you can encourage someone in your community this week?