

Five Steps to Effective Evangelism

Colossians 4:2-6

One of the greatest miracles a person can embrace in one's lifetime is to be born of the "water and the Spirit" (John 3:5). While learning how to walk, ride a bike, starting one's first job, getting married, and having children are life events that are



spectacular; they pail in comparison to "not having one's sins counted against oneself" and being reconciled unto God through faith in the atoning sacrifice of His Son Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:17)! As we rejoice in the Lord as adopted children of the

most-High King (Romans 8:14-17) and as we bask in "every spiritual blessing in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3), we can't help but desire to see those that we meet who are still on the "broad path of destruction" (Matthew 7:13-14) to become saved.

Even though as Christ's ambassadors we know we are always to be ready to give reasons for the hope we have in the Lord (1 Peter 3:15), and even though we know "beautiful are the feet of those who bring Good News" (Romans 10:14); only about one in four Christians share their salvation with those who have differing beliefs.¹

The main reasons why believers do not proclaim the Good News, such as fear of rejection and hostility, lack of opportunity and/or interest, or just plain too busy; pail in comparison to number one reason many Christians remain silent while living in a world that is not their home. Many believers simply do not share the truth by which we were set free (John 8:31) due to them not living the word of God and as a result they are afraid their hypocritical lifestyle will make it more difficult for the spiritually blind to see beyond their sin to get a glimpse of God's gracious gift of salvation! If you are believer who rarely tells others about Jesus or wishes to plant more seeds of righteousness in the lives of the lost then please read, reflect upon, and put into practice the following five steps to successful evangelism as outlined by Apostle Paul in Colossians 4:2-6 that will be the focus of the remainder of this sermon.

¹ Taken from the following website: [We Asked 1,600+ Christians Why They Don't Share Their Faith - Jesus Film Project](#)

Step 1: Praying to God for Transformation

The first step to being effective in evangelism is prayer.² Before the creation of this world the “ultimate communication of God”³ existed, His Son the Word (John 1:1). It is through



faith in Christ that we are born again and have an advocate who justifies us before God and enables us to communicate with our Father

who art in heaven (Matthew 6:19). The privilege to come before God’s throne of grace is not to be taken lightly but instead, we are to pray to God continuously (1 Thessalonians 5:17)⁴ with great “mental, emotional, and physical effort”⁵ and with a sense of humility and expectation that His thoughts and ways are

higher than ours (Isaiah 55:8-9)! While our communication with God is to be both “energetic and incessant” (Luke 18:1)⁶ to be effective it must be given in accordance with God’s will (1 John 5:14-25). The main reasons why prayer is crucial for evangelism is twofold. First, prayer is the central avenue in which God chooses to transform us!⁷ “Echoing the scene in the Garden of Gethsemane from the passion narrative”⁸ we learn that “vigilant prayer provides the spiritual fortitude to face down temptation” (Mark 14:38).⁹ Devotion to prayer keeps the believer communicating and inviting God who encourages and enables one to trust and obey His commands (Proverbs 3:5-6). This is necessary so that not only will one have their deeds shine and point to God (Matthew 5:16) but also one will be constantly ready for Christ’s return.¹⁰ And the second reason prayer is critical for effective evangelism is because we can only plant the seeds of righteousness, only God can make them grow (1 Corinthians 3:6-9)!

² R. C. Lucas, [Fullness & Freedom: The Message of Colossians & Philemon](#), The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980), 171.

³ R. Kent Hughes, [Colossians and Philemon: The Supremacy of Christ](#), Preaching the Word (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1989), 135.

⁴ R. Kent Hughes, [Colossians and Philemon: The Supremacy of Christ](#), Preaching the Word (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1989), 136.

⁵ Ian S McNaughton, [Opening up Colossians and Philemon](#), Opening Up Commentary (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2006), 83.

⁶ H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., [Colossians](#), The Pulpit Commentary (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 209.

⁷ I believe this quote was from Robert Foster, Celebration of Discipline.

⁸ James D. G. Dunn, [The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text](#), New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: William B. Eerdmans Publishing; Paternoster Press, 1996), 262.

⁹ David E. Garland, [Colossians and Philemon](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 271.

¹⁰ Douglas J. Moo, [The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2008), 320.

It is through informed prayer the one's evangelistic efforts tend to be more "purposeful, personal, and powerful."¹¹

Even though we often face ravenous wolves we “ought to pray and not lose heart”¹² but instead thankful that He who saved a wretch like me will save others as well!

Reflection. Have you ever been afraid to tell someone about Jesus and then when you did proclaim the Good News they got saved? When you can not think of anyone to speak to about Jesus ever stop and pray that God would show you the one who is ready to hear about the saving work of His Son? Instead using hypocrisy as an excuse to not evangelise why not just invite God to examine your heart, repent, and have your sins cleansed so that all the lost sees is God in you?

Step 2: Praying to God for a Door to be Opened

The second step to effective evangelism is to ask God to open a door for the evangelists, to give them the right words to

¹¹ Richard R. Melick, [Philippians, Colossians, Philemon](#), vol. 32, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991), 321–322.

¹² Ian S McNaughton, [Opening up Colossians and Philemon](#), Opening Up Commentary (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2006), 82.

¹³ Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene Albert Nida, [A Handbook on Paul's Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon](#), UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 99.

¹⁴ Douglas J. Moo, [The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2008), 324.

say, and the spiritual discernment to know to whom, when, and how to share His Good News! While every Christian is to “revere Christ as Lord and always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks to give the reason for the hope that you have” (1 Peter 3:15), not every believer is called to be an



evangelist (Ephesians 4:11-13)! Even though one might not be called this does not absolve one from the responsibility to

pray¹³ that God would open doors of opportunities for those who are gifted in this area to share the Good News. At the time of writing his letter to the church at Colossae Paul was chained to a guard¹⁴ and under house arrest awaiting a Roman trial.¹⁵ Even though his opportunities to evangelize might seem bleak¹⁶ Paul knew that a “prison sentence could not countermand”¹⁷ his divine orders to preach the Good News to the Gentile people. Knowing that intercessory prayer was key to evangelistic success Paul asked every member of the church to pray for him

¹⁵ Clinton E. Arnold, [Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Romans to Philemon](#), vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 398.

¹⁶ Clinton E. Arnold, [Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Romans to Philemon](#), vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 398.

¹⁷ R. C. Lucas, [Fullness & Freedom: The Message of Colossians & Philemon](#), The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980), 172.

and his colleagues such as Timothy (1:1), Epaphras (1:7; 4:12), Tychicus (4:7), Onesimus (4:9), and others he mentions in his final greeting (4:7–18).¹⁸

Specifically, Paul asked the church to pray that God might open a door so that he might proclaim the mystery of Christ (Colossians 4:3). What was kept hidden for ages and generations had now been fulfilled in Christ (1:26).¹⁹

Not only is God revealed through Christ, but it is also through His atonement on the cross that humanity is offered salvation by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8). Paul states intercessory prayer that he might have the right opportunities and that God would “soften the hearts of the listeners by His grace”²⁰ was key to reaching the lost souls for Christ. Praying for our evangelists then is to be seen not as a passive but active and crucial role to be carried out by every single believer. The gracious forgiveness, reconciliation, and adoption into God’s family that we have received then is to be shared with the world either through proclamation or through intercessory prayer!

¹⁸ Arthur G. Patzia, [Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 97.

¹⁹ Douglas J. Moo, [The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2008), 323.

²⁰ Douglas J. Moo, [The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2008), 322.

Reflection. Cultivating relationships so that one might speak the truth into the lives of others is no easy task. The fastest growing religion today is atheism. The people of this world are filled with so many differing and competing points of view that they have become hostile to any notion of the absolute truth of the Gospel message! We need to pray for our evangelists that God would give them courage, wisdom, and discernment to know where, when, and how to plant seeds of righteousness amongst those of this fallen world!

Step 3: Praying for The Right Words

The third step to effective evangelism is to pray that the words spoken might be clearly given (4)! Paul asked the church



The GOSPEL is the Good News that JESUS SAVES!

at Colossae to pray that when God opens a door that he might make effective use of it²¹ by boldly and clearly communicating²²

God’s gracious gift of salvation. Choosing the right words to tell others about

²¹ H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., [Colossians](#), The Pulpit Commentary (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 210.

²² Douglas J. Moo, [The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2008), 325.

the mystery of Christ is not an easy task. Sometimes either due to not fully understanding salvation or to the desire to sound theologically astute, believers choose to use such sophisticated words that they end up “putting the food so high that neither the sheep nor lambs can reach it!”²³ For example, can one really expect a non-believer who does not have the mind of Christ to understand when one tells them that Christ is “the eschatological manifestation of the ground of our being, the kerygma in which we find the ultimate meaning of our interpersonal relationships?”²⁴ In essence Paul who was exceptionally well learned under Gamaliel was asking the church that he might know his audience. For those saved Paul expounded on the deeper implications of the mystery of “Christ in you” because they had the Spirit of God and mind of Christ to explain his words to them. When the door was opened to speak to the unsaved, however, Paul asked the church to pray that he might clearly tell them about the Gospel in a manner that they would understand. To understand how important, it is to pray in this manner for our evangelists let me tell you a true story that comes from the life of Hudson Taylor.

“There was a mission station that was particularly blessed in the China Inland Mission, far above the others. There seemed to be no accounting for this because others were equal in devotion and in ability. Hudson Taylor was traveling and speaking in England,

²³ R. Kent Hughes, [Colossians and Philemon: The Supremacy of Christ](#), Preaching the Word (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1989), 137–138.

²⁴ R. Kent Hughes, [Colossians and Philemon: The Supremacy of Christ](#), Preaching the Word (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1989), 138.

and after a meeting a man came up and began to ask him about that particular station. Then he began to ask many personal questions. It turned out that the man had been the college roommate of the missionary at that station many years earlier, and he had committed himself to daily praying for the work there. Hudson Taylor said, “Then I knew the answer.”²⁵

“Paul acknowledged that prayer makes all the difference in communicating the gospel!”²⁶

Only the Lord knows the heart of the lost and what words to say that will have the greatest impact on their lives!

Reflection. We all know how difficult it is to tell others about Jesus. Evangelism often invites hostility due to the Good News being both an opportunity to be saved but also a declaration of current damnation! We should never stop praying that God would give the evangelists the right words to say that will be clearly understood by the fallen.

²⁵ R. Kent Hughes, [Colossians and Philemon: The Supremacy of Christ](#), Preaching the Word (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1989), 138.

²⁶ R. Kent Hughes, [Colossians and Philemon: The Supremacy of Christ](#), Preaching the Word (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1989), 138.

Step Four: Having The Right Actions

The fourth step to effective evangelism is to be “wise in the way you act towards outsiders, making the most of every opportunity” (5). Even though many are not called to be evangelists everyone is called to be ready at the “marketplace, at



work, and at civic functions”²⁷ to speak the Good News concerning the atoning sacrifice of Christ!²⁸ Being created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), having eternity placed in their hearts (Ecclesiastes 3:11) and

having seen the testimony of creation (Romans 1:20-21) it should not come as a surprise that even the lost of this world seek to discover answers about the meaning of life and what

happens after death.²⁹ Paul states that while believers are to resist influences or worldliness this does not mean we are to isolate ourselves in “private cliques” away from society.³⁰ We are not to seek friendship with those of this world by being like them³¹ but are to witness to them by letting the way we live our life authenticate our faith in our Lord!³²

Since many non-believers “justify their unbelief by testimonies of a Christian’s hypocrisy,”³³ Paul says to be effective when asked why we have hope in Christ Jesus requires the believer to be wise in their dealings with others so that one’s “lives and words” will reflect the new self (Ephesians 4:22) and our “renewed minds by God’s Spirit” (Romans 12:2; Ephesians 4:22-24)!³⁴

As believers we are not called so much to be just “good Samaritans” but to walk in the wisdom of Christ who is “God’s pattern for full and authentic human living.”³⁵ Paul implores

²⁷ Clinton E. Arnold, [Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Romans to Philemon](#), vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 398.

²⁸ R. C. Lucas, [Fullness & Freedom: The Message of Colossians & Philemon](#), The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980), 173.

²⁹ R. C. Lucas, [Fullness & Freedom: The Message of Colossians & Philemon](#), The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980), 174.

³⁰ Arthur G. Patzia, [Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 97.

³¹ Douglas J. Moo, [The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2008), 327.

³² Arthur G. Patzia, [Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 97.

³³ Robert W. Wall, [Colossians & Philemon](#), The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), Col 4:5–6.

³⁴ Douglas J. Moo, [The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2008), 327.

³⁵ N. T. Wright, [Colossians and Philemon: An Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 12, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 156.

even those who are not called to be evangelists to pay for deep sensitivity towards the lost³⁶ so that one might become aware by divine might and power how to act and speak to the lost in a manner that makes one a sign post to God's gracious gift of salvation!

Reflection. Are you wise towards those who do not believe in Christ? By this I mean are you living for Jesus so that your witness might genuinely point to the One who set you free? Do pray fervently that God might open the door for you to tell others about Christ and do you rejoice in proclaiming the Good News, even when it leads to persecution?

Step Five: Having The Right Attitude

The final step to effective evangelism is to proclaim the Good News filled with grace and seasoned with salt (6). Because those who are perishing not only see the cross as foolishness (1 Corinthians 1:18) but are even hostile to the light because it exposes their darkness (John 3:20), believers are to always be ready to defend and answer questions about their faith in a manner that is filled with grace and passion.³⁷ Speaking

graciously means understanding the interests, fears, hopes, and expectations of the fallen.³⁸ It is knowing the reasons for their worldviews³⁹ and then developing and answering their



objections to God's gracious gift of salvation with the wisdom, love, and kindness that comes from spending time

with and being molded by the Potter! One should never change the message, but one should make every effort through the guidance of the Holy Spirit to speak truth into the life of another in way that is relevant to them.⁴⁰ Our conversations with unbelievers are to be seasoned with salt which means that our proclaiming words are not fuel by "brow-beating dogmatism,"⁴¹

³⁶ Robert W. Wall, [Colossians & Philemon](#), The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), Col 4:5–6.

³⁷ David E. Garland, [Colossians and Philemon](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 274.

³⁸ R. Kent Hughes, [Colossians and Philemon: The Supremacy of Christ](#), Preaching the Word (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1989), 139.

³⁹ R. Kent Hughes, [Colossians and Philemon: The Supremacy of Christ](#), Preaching the Word (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1989), 139.

⁴⁰ Craig S. Keener, [The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament](#) (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), Col 4:6.

⁴¹ David E. Garland, [Colossians and Philemon](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 274.

but marked by “purity, wholesomeness,”⁴² pleasantness, attractiveness, charm, and winsomeness.”⁴³

We are not to speak with indifference or animosity towards the fallen but instead out of love and the desire to share in God’s wish that they not perish (2 Peter 3:9)! Paul is not saying that we defend the Gospel message by speaking with clever words but instead with wisdom from God and the demonstration of His power as seen in how He has transformed our very lives (1 Corinthians 2:4-5)!

Such “living” conversations are far from boring for we the redeemed masterpieces of God’s grace have much to say about how God saved a wretch like us and therefore can do the same for them! So, tell all who ask the reasons why you have hope in the Lord with passion, clarity, in words they understand, and in love let your light shine so that in doing so they might see your good deeds (holy living) and come to praise God the Father in heaven!

⁴² Curtis Vaughan, “Colossians,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Ephesians through Philemon*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelēin, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 222.

Conclusion

One of the greatest miracles a person can embrace in one’s lifetime is to be born of the water and the Spirit! To not have one’s sins counted against oneself and be eternally adopted into God’s family are truly unmerited blessings that go way beyond anything a human could ever ask or imagine! And yet even though the saved know they are called to be Christ’s



ambassadors, the hands, and feet of His glorious Gospel message, believers still struggle to either have the desire or the ability to effectively

evangelize those who are still on the broad path that leads to destruction. In today’s passage Paul gave us five key steps to effective evangelism. First, if we want to reach the lost souls we must be continuously going to God in prayer. Before our heavenly Father we ask that not only might He keep molding our hearts back into His image but also that he might reveal His will relating to who, where, when, and how we are to proclaim the Good News! The second step is to pray that God will open doors for those with the gift of evangelism to plant seeds of righteousness. Intercessory prayer is powerful and effective!

⁴³ Curtis Vaughan, “Colossians,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Ephesians through Philemon*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelēin, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 222.

The third step to effective evangelism is to ask God to divinely enable one to speak clearly. The “mystery of Christ in you” is not easy to convey to a world that sees the cross as mere foolishness! Fourth, Paul says we are to pray that God will enable us to be wise in the way that we act towards those that we meet. In the face of a hostile world towards Christ we are not to create private cliques of a believers only club but instead are to mingle with our neighbours, letting our light shine by imitating Christ who is God’s pattern for full and righteous living. And finally, if we want to be effective in evangelism, we are to proclaim the Good News with words filled with His grace and seasoned with salt! Tell them about Jesus with God-given words they can understand and with a heart that truly desires for them to be saved! Are you actively praying for the opportunity to tell others about Jesus?