

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

NOVEMBER 9 - 13, 2020

Above All

8.30 - 11.22

BOOK OF COLOSSIANS



MONDAY

Colossians 4:2-6; Mark 12:28-31; Micah 6:6-8

This week's featured Colossians passage reminds us to live with intention, embracing a lifestyle of missional living. Per the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, life's purpose is "to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever." "How?" the skeptic challenges. You respond, "Know God and make Him known." "What?" they object. You answer, "Live out the 'Law of Christ'—love God and love others." The skeptic responds, "Closer, but still vague. How do I do this practically?" Your follow-up is: "*Act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God*" (Micah 6:8).

Colossians 4:2-6 offers some concrete guidance for intentional, missional living. Key ingredients include: "*steadfast prayer*" and "*thanksgiving*" (v. 2); "*watchfulness ... [for] doors [open] for the word*" (vv. 2-3); "*[ability to] declare ... Christ ... clearly*" (vv. 3-4); "*wisdom toward outsiders*" and "*best use of the time*" (v. 5); and "*gracious [speech] seasoned with salt*" (v. 6). In short, this passage encourages us to be ready, alert, and available to what God might do.

There are varied traps Christians fall into, however, which are unhelpful regarding living intentionally and missionally. Missional living is not ambushing another while dropping "truth bombs" onto them—arguments can be "won" while souls are lost. It also is not going out on evangelism hunts, stalking unbelievers whom you can "win for Christ" so that you can put

another notch on your witnessing belt. We are to be ready and available, but God does the work of regeneration—we are responsible for faithfulness, not for results.

Similarly, missional living is more than just preaching the gospel at all times, using words only when necessary. Of course, we must live faithfully; otherwise, little we say matters. However, “*faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*” (Romans 10:17)—we must be able and prepared always to share the “*reason for the hope that is in you*” (1 Peter 3:15) with unbelievers. The Great Commission—“*Go ... and make disciples*” (Matthew 28:19)—is no mere suggestion.

QUESTIONS

Are you as missional and intentional in your everyday life as you could be? Where do you often come up short here and what stands in your way? How can your walk with Christ be even more abundant and impactful?

PRAYERS FOR INTERNATIONAL FELLOWSHIP OF EVANGELICAL STUDENTS (PAM SCHUBERT AND EMRE UFLAZOGLU)

Pray for an end to the government’s recent crackdown on visas. Foreigners living and working in Turkey, including Pam, Emre’s wife, Feven, and many Iranian Christians, have been coming and going freely.

TUESDAY

Colossians 4:2; Luke 22:31-34; Matthew 14:22-33

Colossians 4:2 offers an interesting combination of terms: “prayer,” “watchful” and “thanksgiving.” Can effective prayer lack watchfulness? Is prayer absent thanksgiving a common problem?

After the Last Supper and hours before Jesus’ tribulation in the Garden of Gethsemane and arrest by the Jewish authorities, He warned Peter, “Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you” (Luke 22:31). Jesus was watchful in prayer, but this disciple apparently was not—Peter later denied the Lord three times per Jesus’ foretelling. Earlier still, this same Peter uttered the shortest prayer in the Bible, “Lord, save me!” (Matthew 14:30) upon sinking after initially walking on the water at Jesus’ command. Peter’s prayer here was not watchful, but fervent, and answered in its urgency.

My own prayers are less-than-watchful when self-absorbed. Selfish prayer lists wants and requests; righteous prayer seeks God’s best—for His glory, for others’ good, and finally for one’s own walk with Him. God is no genie, “cosmic Santa Claus,” nor short-order cook—never forget that He is the Creator and Lord over all the universe while eager to forgive (Psalm 85:6) and wishing to give good gifts to His children (Matthew 7:11). Righteous prayer seeks God’s will, sometimes asking for help in being more watchful and available.

I pray regularly and, sometimes, even continually. However, dutiful prayer can become mechanical and routine. Lifeless ceremony was one area prompting Jesus' criticism and rebukes of the Jewish scribes and Pharisees. When my prayer becomes an "action item" or ritual, I move toward religiosity and steer away from God's best.

Peter's aforementioned "*Lord, save me!*" prayer was not explicitly watchful nor thankful. However, it was passionate and expectant—the Apostle knew that he needed to be saved and that Jesus could do it. If only my prayers always conveyed such passion! Perhaps a good start is a fervent appeal to God: "Lord God, loving Creator, thank you for life itself, for every breath, for your good gifts, and for salvation in Christ. Help me to seek You always, to watchfully surrender to Your will. In Jesus Christ's precious name, amen!"

QUESTIONS

How might you evaluate your prayer life? During the rest of this week, why not set aside three minutes twice a day to just sit with God, watchfully, enjoying His presence?

PRAYERS FOR INTERNATIONAL FELLOWSHIP OF EVANGELICAL STUDENTS (PAM SCHUBERT AND EMRE UFLAZOGLU)

As COVID-19 has closed schools and universities, Emre has been seeking new ways to connect with students and to nurture their faith in Jesus. Pray for his creativity, stamina, and success.

WEDNESDAY

Colossians 4:3-4; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10; James 5:16-20

Paul penned Colossians while imprisoned by Rome. So, it would be understandable if he felt a bit unsteady and/or depressed. Today he appeals to the church for prayer that God would “*open ... a door for the word ... that I might make it clear.*” Paul penned about half of the New Testament, second only to the Lord Himself in being used mightily of God. He founded and developed churches throughout the Mediterranean region. Why such vulnerability and seeming bout with insecurity? Wouldn't a productive apostle like Paul be able open his own doors or break through any in his way?

Paul was a gifted healer, restoring a crippled man (Acts 14:8-10), freeing a demon-possessed slave girl (Acts 16:16-19), and raising a young man who had fallen to his death (Acts 20:9-12), among others. Yet Paul himself suffered an affliction that he beseeched God to remove three times (2 Corinthians 12:7-9)—not only could the healer not heal himself, but his appeals for related relief were declined!

Insecurity was not Paul's issue—he realized that his security was in Christ only and that his gifts and opportunities were God-given. Though a highly skilled writer and communicator, Paul asked for prayer that his gospel-oriented teaching be clear—an amazing request from someone with such giftedness and knowledge.

I admire Paul's transparency in appealing for prayerful support from brothers and sisters in the faith. These demonstrate his surrender and submission to God's leading and will. Paul truly lived his own statement from 2 Corinthians 12:10: "*For when I am weak, then I am strong.*"

The relationship between vulnerability and accountability are crucial for personal Christian growth and vibrant fellowship. Paul understood this, having addressed both within his epistles: "*Each of us will give an account of him/herself to God*" (Romans 14:12) and, paralleling the verse featured in the prior paragraph, "*If I must boast, I will boast of what pertains to my weakness*" (2 Corinthians 11:30).

Vulnerability and accountability will be the speaker's emphasis at this coming Sunday night's Men's Ministry event at Glenkirk—if you're a guy, please join us there in person or online.

QUESTIONS

How honest and transparent are you with other Christians? Have you given at least one other person permission to hold you accountable? If not, who might that individual be?

PRAYERS FOR INTERNATIONAL FELLOWSHIP OF EVANGELICAL STUDENTS (PAM SCHUBERT AND EMRE UFLAZOGLU)

The Turkish people who come to the church often carry deep wounds from past trauma. Often their pastors do, too. Pray for guidance as the church ministers to spiritual and emotional needs.

THURSDAY

Colossians 4:5; Ephesians 5:13-21; 2 Timothy 4:1-5

“Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time.”

Given our entertainment-drenched, self-absorbed culture and its contagiously bad habits, I find the second half of this verse particularly convicting. I unevenly “redeem the time” (Ephesians 5:16), sometimes overlooking God-provided opportunities. I inconsistently “honor the Sabbath, keeping it holy” (Exodus 20:8), particularly when an interesting game is televised.

The first part of this verse, however, is murkier. Does this speak to being watchful, wary about others’ (particularly unbelievers’) intentions and methods amidst dealings with them, pertaining to Jesus’ teaching to “be wise as serpents and innocent as doves” (Matthew 10:16)? Or is it a reminder that others are watching, trying to understand what underlies our “peace ... which surpasses all understanding” (Philippians 4:7) and “joy ... [enabling us to] abound in hope” (Romans 15:13)? The way we live our lives must align with our professed faith, touched upon Monday.

Or is “walk in wisdom toward outsiders” encouraging us to know the Bible, to strive to understand God and His ways so that we might be able to help others with their honest questions, concerns and struggles? Perhaps this is another way of admonishing us to “preach the Word [and] be ready in season and out of season” (2 Timothy 4:2).

“*Walking in wisdom toward outsiders*” may be each of these prior possibilities, individually, and all of them, collectively. Stepping back, however, note that this week’s featured verses address living prayerful lives that attract others to Christ. Colossians 4:5 may be mostly about impactful evangelism, a fruit of missional living. To witness effectively, we’re to be ready—bathed in prayer and available to God—and prepared—biblically literate. We’re to be close to unbelievers, asking caring, sincere questions—Jesus was “*a friend to sinners*” (Matthew 11:19) and we should be likewise. And we’re to be intentional about our faith, “*making the best use of time*” (Colossians 4:5).

I miss “divine appointments” more often than I would like to. However, I will never “pass such tests” without pondering them, praying over them, and asking God to present opportunities and to provide the needed faithfulness. Do you prepare yourself daily to share your faith?

QUESTIONS

What would God say about how you use your time? Why not ask Him?
What would non-Christians notice about your life? Would anything stand out that would speak to the presence of Jesus?

PRAYERS FOR INTERNATIONAL FELLOWSHIP OF EVANGELICAL STUDENTS (PAM SCHUBERT AND EMRE UFLAZOGLU)

Pam reports that Emre and other Turkish people who come to faith in Christ eagerly and boldly tell others about Him, despite the social risks. Pray for their safety and pray that we will be more like them!

FRIDAY

Colossians 4:6; Matthew 5:13-16; 1 Corinthians 9:18-23

I love the proclamation, “We are not called to bring people to Christ, but to bring Christ to people.” This aligns with the biblical truth that no mere human can “save another”—that work is the responsibility only of the Holy Spirit. However, we are responsible for faithfulness, which should be winsome—“pleasing and engaging.” (Merriam-Webster) Paul aptly characterizes winsomeness in today’s featured text: “speech [that is] gracious.”

Paul adds to this, however, a key phrase: “seasoned with salt.” He follows with the purpose of all of this, a call to effective missional living and kingdom-building witnessing and evangelism: “so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.” We are responsible for being ready and able to help others, to answer their questions regarding our Christian faith and assist them in life’s inevitable challenges.

A favorite lyric of mine from a worship song is, “For I am Yours and You are mine” (Hillsong United)—this beautifully captures the intimacy of right relationship with Jesus. However, Jesus, like every good gift, is meant to be shared and not selfishly clutched and kept. We are His and He is ours—and we are to share Jesus with those apart from Him, to “bring Christ to people.”

But what does “*speech ... seasoned with salt*” have to do with all of this? “There were two purposes for salt in the first century—preserving food and enhancing flavor. ... Disciples are called to be ‘preservatives’ in the world, slowing down the advancement of moral and spiritual decay. ... Disciples [are called also] to ‘enhance’ the flavor of life in this world—enriching its goodness and making God’s work stand out from the normal way of doing things.” (GotQuestions.org) I would add that salt also has medicinal, healing properties. We’re to comfort others in pain, ultimately introducing them to the Great Healer Himself.

I can tend toward “too salty” (direct and challenging) at times, foregoing winsomeness and graciousness accordingly. God is working on me here, but I have a long way to go. How about you?

QUESTIONS

Are you routinely gracious toward others, while appropriately and lovingly “seasoned with salt”? Who are some believers you are intentionally seeking to be in relationship with?

PRAYERS FOR INTERNATIONAL FELLOWSHIP OF EVANGELICAL STUDENTS (PAM SCHUBERT AND EMRE UFLAZOGLU)

Pray for the family of Emre’s wife, Feven, who leads the children’s ministry at their church. Feven’s Dutch-Turkish parents and other relatives have not yet come to faith in Christ.

Sources:

- The *Westminster Shorter Catechism* can be found at <https://thewestminsterstandard.org/westminster-shorter-catechism/>
- The *Merriam-Webster* definition is from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/winsome>
- The Hillsong United lyric is from their song, “Oceans (Where My Feet May Fail) – Spirit Lead Me” (words and music by Matt Crocker, Joel Houston and Salomon Lightelm), per <https://hillsong.com/lyrics/oceans-where-feet-may-fail/>
- The GotQuestions.org quote can be found at <https://www.gotquestions.org/salt-of-the-earth.html>

