


The Supremacy of Christ

Part 8
A Call to Prayer
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TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS

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Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

Triangle Community Church aims to be a "transforming church". We exist to be used by God as He transforms ordinary people into extraordinary followers of Jesus Christ. TCC believes not only that life-change is possible—but that it is to be expected. Growth is God's will for his people. But transformation does not happen by accident. It requires intentional, intelligent action. 1 Timothy 4:7 instructs you to "discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness." Since "Talking Points, Walking Points" is intended both for individual reflection and for group discussion, questions vary in degree of vulnerability required. Generally it is best to begin group discussions with questions which involve less personal disclosure—but don't linger there. Be sure to "dive deep" too! The questions which require the greatest openness and honesty, as well as those in the section entitled "Digging Deeper in your Daily Quiet Time", are perfect for private reflection.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

- From Colossians 4:7-17, list each person named and what was notable about each.

What trends or common features do you observe in these accolades? What seems to be absent?

Imagine your small group were sending a letter to a beloved former member who'd moved far away. Craft your own "closing remarks", sending a greeting which names each person in the small group. What would you say **about** each—and why? How does your closing compare and contrast with Paul's?

Notice the diversity in Paul's co-workers in ministry. Who was Onesimus (v. 9)? Who was Luke (v. 14)? (Need a bit of help? Read Philemon—it mentions both men. What does Colossians 4:14 tell us?)

Demas was another of Paul's co-workers (also mentioned in Philemon). What accolade does **he** get in Colossians 4:14? What do you know about Demas? (Need help? Read 2 Timothy 4:10)

- On the following scale, rate your prayer life by the three criteria found in Colossians 4:2. Write a... "D" at the level of your devotion, an "A" at the level of your alertness, and a "T" at your thankfulness.



Do you know **anyone** who's pleased—even *satisfied!*—with his prayer life? **Why** do you think that is?

Read Colossians 4:3-4. Paul clearly was not yet fully satisfied with his evangelistic efforts either. Does that make you *hopeful* or *hopeless*—and why?

Have you ever tried to improve as an evangelist? If so, what did you do? Did it help?
(Suggested reading: *Out of the Saltshaker and Into the World* by Becky Pippert)

Sermon Summary

Today we conclude our series on Paul's letter to the Colossians. Paul wanted the Colossians to know the supremacy, the excellence, and the sufficiency of Christ. Paul wanted them to know who Christ is, what Christ has done for them, and who they had become in Christ. Paul wanted them to be captivated by Christ, to know how to pray for, live with, and communicate to those who don't yet know Christ. We'll camp on Colossians 4:2-6, but first, a brief word on v. 7-18. This passage was the social media of the first century.

Paul posted this on Faithbook:



The Apostle Paul is feeling thankful with **Tychicus** and **ten others**
61AD at 9:37pm



Tychicus, our dearly loved brother, faithful servant, and fellow slave in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me. I have sent him to you for this very purpose, so that you may know how we are and so that he may encourage your hearts. He is with **Onesimus**, a faithful and dearly loved brother, who is one of you. They will tell you about everything here. **Aristarchus**, my fellow prisoner, greets you, as does **Mark**, **Barnabas's** cousin... and so does Jesus who is called **Justus**... **Epaphras**, who is one of you, a slave of **Christ Jesus**, greets you... **Luke**, the dearly loved physician, and **Demas** greet you. Give my greetings to the brothers in Laodicea, and to **Nympha** and the church in her home... And tell **Archippus**, "Pay attention to the ministry you have received in the Lord, so that you can accomplish it." This greeting is in my own hand—**Paul**. Remember my imprisonment. Grace be with you.

Now, back to v. 2-6. C.S. Lewis observed that praising what we enjoy to others does not merely express our enjoyment, it adds to, enhances, and completes our enjoyment; that our delight is incomplete until it is expressed. He added that the worthier the object, the more intense is our delight in sharing it. So, one of the greatest joys in life is in sharing Jesus Christ with others. Angels in heaven rejoice when even one sinner repents (Luke 15:10); I can just imagine them saying, "did you see what God just did!" In Colossians 4:2-6, Paul outlines how we go about sharing Christ with others—how to pray, how to act, and how to speak. Paul commands us to "devote ourselves to prayer" (v. 2), "staying alert in it" and "with thanksgiving."

We are to be persistent and intently engaged in prayer (cf. Acts 1:14). We should be devoted to prayer because God commands it, it expresses dependence on God and fosters intimacy with God. Prayer changes things because it gives us access to our omnipotent, omniscient, good, and faithful God. We all give time to what we think is important. Do you see prayer as important? It will be demonstrated in the time we make for it. In college I and some friends were "devoted to" studying—we were three stacks of books with legs that ate peanut butter! It was difficult to keep it up hour after hour and day after day, but we were devoted to studying and were determined to do whatever it took to stick to it. We need a similar determination regarding prayer. Maybe you need to change things up a bit. Do you ever pray on your knees? Do you ever sing to God or pray back the Scriptures? Have you ever tried writing out your prayers? We are to "stay alert" in our prayers. The context suggests that Paul is advising us to adjust our prayers to fit the need at hand. We are to be alert and aware of what's going on and then pray accordingly. This means our prayers should be specific—not general "God please bless so and so" prayers. Pretty much anytime Paul brings up prayer, he's either going to be thankful or remind us to be thankful. In Colossians alone, giving thanks to God is mentioned five times. The first time, he is thankful to God for them. The next four times, he tells them to be thankful to God. Thanksgiving acknowledges God's sovereign control of life and His good intentions toward us, it expresses our satisfaction in God and brings Him glory. Being thankful makes it difficult to be proud, and thanksgiving brings pleasure to God and is part of our worship of him.

Sermon Summary, continued...

In v. 3-4 Paul asks the Colossians to pray for him to have opportunity to share the Gospel and for clarity in speaking it. It is amazing to me that Paul is praying for the opportunity to do the very thing that got him in prison in the first place—sharing the Gospel! (I think the “open door” I’d be praying for would be the door out of prison!) Early in my career as an engineer it was announced that a friend of mine, my work mentor who was seven years my senior, was moving into management and my door for sharing the Gospel with him appeared to be closing, so I immediately stopped by his office and said that I’d like to share some things with him about my relationship with Christ. To my surprise, he immediately asked me, “How do I become a Christian?” I shared with him the simple Gospel, he prayed, and boom, he entered the Kingdom of God. It couldn’t have been more than 10 minutes. We need to be prepared to walk through “open doors” that God sends our way. They don’t always stay open, and we need to know how to simply and clearly present the Gospel. Even the Apostle Paul asked for prayer for that. Want to know how? Just go to tcc.org and click on “Know Jesus?” at the very top of the page.

Verse 5 says, “Act wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the time.” Take advantage of opportunities to share the Gospel, but realize that we don’t have to give the “whole ball of wax” in every encounter. Paul says to use wisdom in our interactions with those who do not yet know Christ. “Acting wisely toward outsiders” certainly doesn’t mean presenting a flawless life. The more I let people see the real, flawed, authentic me, the more they see Jesus. This is an amazing and freeing truth. When appropriate, let your non-Christian friends in on some of your struggles and even allow them to minister to you. In v. 6 Paul says that our speech must be gracious, kind, good and gentle—“seasoned with salt”, to make the Gospel taste better and make our hearers thirsty for more! Gracious speech, motivated by love, is disarming and develops trust. When someone sees that you have their best interests at heart and that you are willing to be vulnerable, they normally will respond in kind and share where they’re at in their journey of life. Then, we will be able to accurately and effectively pray and respond—“that you may know how to answer each person.”

Part of knowing Christ is joining Him in “the family business”—the ministry of reconciliation! That involves being devoted to prayer, keeping alert in it, being specific, with thanksgiving, acting wisely toward those who do not yet know Christ, making the most of the time, with gracious speech seasoned with salt—speech that is filled with kindness, goodness, gentleness and truth in love.



How To Write Your Five Minute “FaithStory”

You can write an attractive, winsome, five minute story of your faith journey—your “*FaithStory*”—and learn how to share the story of your faith in a way which will see results. Preparing your *FaithStory* begins with **telling the story** of what your life was like before you received Christ. It is **not** necessary to go into extreme detail. Effective communication is usually concrete, clear, brief, and to-the-point. Your *FaithStory* will take no more than three to five minutes to tell.

Guidelines for Writing Your *FaithStory*

Don’t:

- Make statements which reflect negatively on any church, organization, or person.
- Don’t mention denominations or church names—keep the focus on Jesus.
- Don’t speak or write in a preachy manner. The purpose of a *FaithStory* is simply to tell **your** story.
- Don’t use vague terms like “joyful”, “peace”, or “changed”, or religious terms like “saved”, “sin”, or “convicted” without explaining what they mean in everyday language or giving a real example from your life.

Do:

- Ask God for wisdom. Be realistic, don’t exaggerate.
- Begin with an attention-getting sentence or incident.
- Be positive, accurate, and specific—details arouse interest.
- Use a Bible verse which directly relates to your experience, but don’t give detailed verse references (such as “1 John 5:11-13 says...”). Instead simply say, “One of Jesus’ followers said...”
- Write things as you would say them.
- End with a logical conclusion.

Now, grab pencil and paper:

- My attitudes, needs, and problems before I received Christ were...
- My life revolved around (I gained happiness and security from)... Give a simple example.
- How did this disappoint you? (How was it unfulfilling? How did you realize it?)
- When and how did you realize or become convinced that your sin caused a problem between you and a holy God?
- When and how did you first hear about Christ?
- What were your struggles with the idea of receiving Christ as Savior?
- What happened when you received Christ and how/why did your attitudes begin to change?
- What happened after you received Christ?
- How did your life change? When and how did you begin to notice change?
- How are you differently motivated now?
- Is there one verse from the Bible which powerfully relates to or illustrates your story?

Final checklist:

- Does it read like a story?
- Is it disjointed? Does it make sense?
- Can you read it aloud in three to five minutes?
- Have you exaggerated anything?
- Did you give God credit for the changes in your life?