

Christian Communication

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 09 March 2025

Preacher: Paul Thompson

[0 : 0 0] Good morning. I'm going to invite you to turn to the book of Colossians chapter 4. Colossians 4. We just read last month the first couple of verses, verses 2 through 4, or 2 through 5.

We're going to read it again just in context, so I'm going to start reading in verse 2. Amen. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

Let me pray. Lord, thank you for today. Thank you again for the opportunity together to hear your word, to measure our ways and our speech against the guidelines of your word.

And Lord, we ask that our hearts would be drawn to walk in a way that you've prescribed, that we would be people known for our gracious speech.

Lord, help us as we read your word, as we look at it. Give us clarity of heart and mind. May your spirit apply it to us. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. So, the big idea of this passage really is that our communication with each other, but also outside to outsiders, should reflect the same grace and wisdom of Christ.

[2 : 0 2] It should create an open door for the spreading of the gospel. Paul finds it very important to say, walk in wisdom towards outsiders. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

Some of us like to talk about things. Some of us know people who would talk and talk and talk about a topic. Maybe it's a topic that you feel real comfortable with, right? Maybe if you had time and a willing audience, you could spend time talking about football and which team got which picks and who should have won this game or that game.

Who's on which team? Maybe you like things like politics, history, cars, theology, maybe a book series. Maybe you just want to talk about what the defensive line looks like for this team, or maybe you want to talk about particle physics.

But do you have a topic that you would enjoy spending time talking about? Maybe you have a topic that you would dread. Something that someone were to ask you to give a lecture on, you would be like, there's no way I'm ever fit to talk about that.

Not because you don't have an opinion, but because you don't feel comfortable. You don't know the topic. How do you feel about talking about spiritual things? How do you feel about talking about spiritual things with outsiders, with non-Christians?

[3 : 3 0] I think Paul is writing this passage to us because he knows that we struggle as people with our communication. We struggle with the ways we interact with each other. We struggle with our communication.

Even within the church, Paul knows that the church struggles sometimes to communicate the way it should. He reminded them in Colossians 3, 16.

He says, Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. With thankfulness in your hearts to God.

So we struggle to do the things that we should do, even within our church body. We struggle to encourage. We struggle to speak to each other in ways that are good and building up.

And Paul wrote this command in this passage because he knows that our human nature, we struggle to walk in wisdom. We're people who don't feel comfortable sometimes speaking about things that are spiritual, even though we may feel very comfortable talking about things that are not.

[4 : 38] Maybe we let our fear or anger, pride or shame, or just, we don't want to be awkward. So we won't interact with people and talk about things that we ought to.

I'm reminded just a second ago, Paul, when he wrote this passage, he asked them to pray for boldness. He asked them to pray in Ephesians.

He says, Pray for me that I would have boldness to speak, that I would speak clearly. And he's writing this because he knows that we need boldness. We need to speak the way we ought to speak.

Paul is asking the church to pray for an open door for the gospel. He asked that he would speak clearly. In Ephesians, like we said, he asks for boldness. And Paul's laying out two different sides of this same thing, this Christian communication.

He's laying out his side of the gospel work. The apostle Paul is traveling the world. He's preaching the gospel. He's encountering trial upon trial upon trial.

[5 : 41] And he's asking for boldness and the ability to continue sharing the gospel with those he's encountering. And then he lays out our side.

What should we do? We're not traveling the world on missionary journeys, most of us. How should the normal Christian interact with the gospel?

And he says, walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

And he lays out really two different categories or two different areas that are present when we interact with people, right? We have our interactions, which is the way we treat them.

Maybe it's the ways we behave when we're around each other, the things we say. And then our speech, which is the things we say and the way we say it and the content of the message we have.

[6 : 43] And so Paul's laying out both our interactions we have with people and the speech we have towards people. And he wants these Christians in Colossae to walk like those who have been changed.

He wants them to walk like those who have been united to Christ. He wants our interactions, our engagements, and our communication with non-Christians to be wise, timely, gracious, and appropriately engaging.

In essence, our interactions and our communication should reflect Christ's grace and wisdom, creating an open door for the gospel in every conversation.

And while Paul doesn't use the phrase specifically, he really wants Christians to interact with the world in Christ-like ways, to interact with them like Christ did. So this morning we're going to look at the call that we have to Christ-like interaction towards unbelievers.

How does God call us to interact with those who are not believers? And then specifically, how does God call us to communicate as Christians? And how do we apply this to our difficult, complicated lives of being online and having text messaging and all the stuff that are different than the apostle Paul had back then?

[8 : 04] Paul really wants this church to act like Christ in the ways that they interact with outsiders. He starts out, verse 5, specifically calling out the way that Christians should interact.

He says, walk in wisdom towards outsiders. Paul's calling the church to walk in wisdom. He calls the church in Ephesus to the same thing in chapter 5 of Ephesians.

He says, look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise, but as wise, making the best use of the time because the days are evil. So he's saying, when you're out and you're interacting with people, when you're interacting with non-believers, walk in wisdom.

Walk wisely. This is the same thing that Jesus told the whole apostles when he sent them out. He says, I'm sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves to be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.

Well, to be wise as serpents, to walk as wise, to walk in wisdom toward outsiders, we really need to understand what is wisdom.

[9 : 13] Because wisdom is core, it's fundamental to this concept. If we're going to walk in wisdom and be wise as serpents and innocent as doves, we need a few things.

We need primarily the fear of God. Proverbs 9, 10 says, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. And the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.

So, if we're going to walk wisely, the first thing that we need is fear of the Lord. We also need knowledge. Knowledge is different than wisdom.

We need to know what it looks like to walk wisely. We need to know what are the things that show what a wise person walking and a foolish person walking is.

And the Bible is full of those. The book of Proverbs is full. We could spend an entire sermon, multiple sermons, going through the ways that Proverbs teaches us to speak and interact. The book of Ecclesiastes.

[10 : 13] The book of James. If we need, if we want to walk wisely, we need to know what God says is good and wise behavior.

We need to ask God to give us wisdom. James 1, 5 says, if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God. He gives generously to all without reproach and it will be given to him.

So, we need to fear the Lord. We need knowledge to know what is good and right and what we should do. We need wisdom that God gives.

But then we need to apply and we need to use the knowledge revealed to us, driven by the fear of the Lord. Because knowledge is not all that's necessary.

Charles Spurgeon says, wisdom is the right use of knowledge. To know is not to be wise. There is no fool so great as a knowing fool. But to know how to use knowledge is to have wisdom.

[11 : 16] So, the point is, if we're going to learn wisdom, it's not just knowing what God says. But it's knowing and applying it and the right use of what you know.

So, if we're going to have wisdom, we need those things. If we're going to walk in wisdom towards outsiders, there are a few things we need to keep in our mind. Paul makes the case at the beginning of Colossians.

He tells the church in Colossians chapter 1 that he's praying for them. And listen to what he says. He says, So, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will and all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

So, as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord. So, do you see that connection? Paul is saying, if we're going to walk in wisdom, there are some things that we need to know.

Walking in a manner worthy of the Lord. Walking in wisdom towards outsiders. Is powered by knowledge of his will.

[12 : 28] All spiritual wisdom and understanding. So, if we're going to walk in wisdom toward outsiders, we need to know God's will.

What is God's will? Where do we find God's will? We find it in his word. We need to know what's true about God. What does the Bible reveal to us about who God is?

What is God's character? What is God like? What does God say about sin and my relationship? We need to know what God has revealed to us in his word about himself.

But also about us. What does the Bible say about me? What does the Bible say about my condition? What does the Bible say about the ways that I rebel against God and am by nature a child of wrath?

And we need to know what does God consider wise and what does God consider foolish? So, we need to know a couple of things.

[13 : 31] We need to know our theology. What's true about God? What did God reveal about himself and us? And then we need to know the Bible. We need to know not just theology, but what does God tell us about how to live our life?

What is the wisdom literature in God's word telling us about what is wise and what is foolish? Because true wisdom really transforms how we live and walk.

If we're going to have true wisdom, it changes how we live and walk. And Paul is clear that that true wisdom comes from Christ. He says in Colossians 2, 3, all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ.

So, if we're going to know how to walk wisely, if we're going to know what the Bible says about God, then we need to know our theology. We need to know that God's holy. We need to know that God's given a law and he commands his creatures to obey.

We need to know that man is made in the image of God and he's dead in his sin. He's an enemy of God. Mankind is suppressing the truth and unrighteousness in Romans chapter 1.

[14 : 42] We need to know those things because as we're talking with people, those are things that are going to come up. They need to be in our mind. If you're talking to somebody and you realize they're not a Christian and they are dead in their sin or they're suppressing the truth and unrighteousness, knowing what the Bible says about the people you're talking to enables you to have a productive conversation.

We also need to know, though, that God is gracious, that God sent Jesus to reconcile sinners back with their creator. We're familiar with this passage. For God so loved the world, he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

There's this truth that God is holy and God is righteous and man is not. God is gracious and so he sends Jesus to reconcile the sinners.

And this creates a divide that's going to be, that's been with us since the fall and we're going to see it in this passage and we're going to see it all throughout to the end of time. And that's the divide between the sons of God and the sons of man, really those who are inside and those who are outsiders.

And this delineation and this contention is all throughout scripture. One believes in it and follows God and one rejects God. One group of people say they want to follow God.

[16 : 09] One group of people rejects him. The purpose of us presenting the gospel to the people we talk to, the purpose of us talking about these theological points, is not to sound wise, but to know that God saves people who were outside and makes them Christians.

The purpose of presenting the gospel is to move people from that son of man camp to the son of God kingdom. We share the gospel.

We understand what God has declared in scripture so that we can share the gospel with people who are around us. This can sometimes lead to this sense of superiority, right?

God saved me. I'm safe. This person out there is still a sinner, but I'm fine, right? The publican and tax collector. I thank you that I'm not a sinner like this man.

We can become kind of puffed up because God has saved us. It can lead to this example. Jesus gives the story of the unforgiving servant, right?

[17 : 22] That's been forgiven all these things. And then when he finds somebody who owes him a little bit of money, he puts him in prison and has him charged and is not forgiving, not understanding the same gift he was given, not willing to share that gift to others.

So if we're going to walk in wisdom towards those who are outside, we need to understand that the people we're talking to, the outsiders, are enemies of God.

But so were we. And God's grace and God's gospel have saved us and brought us into his kingdom. And the gospel has saved us, and the gospel is what the people we're talking to need.

So the Bible gives us theology about what's true about God, what's true about man, what do I need to know about the people I'm talking to. But then the Bible also gives us what's known as our wisdom literature, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes.

And the book of Proverbs specifically we'll look at shows godly living and what wisdom looks like. What does it look like to be wise in how you speak and interact with people.

[18 : 33] And the entire book is written as short, wise sayings from a father to his son. He's instructing him to live in a world where there's foolishness and laziness and evil and seduction.

They're everywhere. And they're promoted. Proverbs speaks multiple times about our speech, the ways we talk.

Proverbs 15, 1 says, A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. Proverbs 16, 24 says, Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul, and health to the body.

Proverbs even includes instructions on how and when to answer fools. Proverbs 26, 4 and 5 says, Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest you be like him yourself.

Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes. This is an interesting passage. If you captured it or caught it when you were hearing it read, it sounds contradictory.

[19 : 45] Don't answer a fool, answer a fool. Solomon's not contradicting himself by accident. Right? To the two passages, two verses are close together. They're very similarly phrased.

It's not a mistake. Solomon is pointing out, Don't answer a fool by operating at the same level of foolishness that they have. Don't act like them.

Don't descend to their level. Don't take the bait and respond to foolishness with foolishness. But instead, answer a fool in ways that are addressing the foolishness.

In an effort to keep from being conceited. You want the person you're talking to, if they're acting like a fool, to talk, talking to them in ways that are addressing their foolishness without actually coming down to their level.

We could spend a lot of time going over Proverbs. As I studied through this, I had a list that I thought would take up way too much time to read through. But Proverbs itself is full of all these ways that God has laid out that Christians are should to live their lives in wise ways.

[20 : 52] Paul then moves on. At the end of verse 5, he says that we should walk in wisdom toward outsiders, but we should be making the best use of the time. The King James Version renders this redeeming the time.

The phrase has a concept of a clock ticking. Redeem it, use it, or lose it. Time is going. If you don't use it, your opportunity is gone.

Ephesians 5 states it similarly. It says, making the best use of the time because the days are evil. His point is that we only have limited time.

And we need to make the best use of the time that we have. This should create a sense of urgency. People around us, the outsiders that were just like us, that we were just like them, people need to hear the gospel.

And some need to hear it today because today could be their last day. But it should also create a sense of prioritization. If there's a best use of the time, as Paul says, make the best use of the time, then there's a bad use of the time.

[22 : 05] And then in between there's probably a good and a better use. And so there are ways that we could look at our time and say, this is fine, or this is good, or this is better, or this is best.

And he's saying, make the best use of the time that you have. A co-worker recently told me he got a calendar on his wall with 40,000 white blocks.

The idea is that a person living to 90 years old would have about 4,680 weeks of their life. And a person that lives to about 77 would have 4,000 individual weeks since they were born.

So every week he gets up and he crosses off one of those weeks from his chart. So in my 40,000 block week I would have 2,052 squares already filled in over halfway.

And his reason for doing this was he wanted to keep a visual in front of himself that time was going by, that he had to make the best use of the time.

[23 : 09] And every week he saw the white get smaller. just like our life. The time that we're alive it grows.

The time we have shortens. If you keep that perspective each Sunday that we gather here you mark off another week.

How do you feel about the past week and your ways you interacted with outsiders? What do you do to make the best use of this week?

What would you prioritize if you saw time slipping by week by week like saying in an hourglass? If you knew that time was running out and there would be an end date how would you live differently?

How would you redeem the time you have? Jesus is a perfect example of this isn't he? Because as we saw in Luke even at 12 years old what was his priority?

[24 : 14] What was best for him in his time? It wasn't just hanging out with his friends but at 12 years old he was in the temple talking to the teachers. He was about his father's business.

As he approached Jerusalem Jesus interacted with fools and outsiders daily. He knew the cross was coming but he still taught, still spoke the truth in love, still healed, still interacted with people in gracious ways.

Verse 5 instructs us to walk in wisdom toward outsiders, to redeem the time, to have Christ-like interactions with people. The next verse in verse 6 moves us from our interactions to Christ-like communication.

So Christ-like communication, how do we talk and speak in ways that are like Christ? And it says in verse 6, let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer each person.

Gracious speech is Christ-like. Luke tells us in Luke 4, 22, and all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth.

[25 : 31] And they said, is this not Joseph's son? So Christ in his words was gracious. That doesn't mean that he was soft and fluffy and didn't want to offend anybody.

You know very well Jesus spoke the woes in Matthew 23. He says, Matthew 23, 25, and 26, woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgent.

You blind Pharisees, first clean the inside of the cup and the plate, and the outside will be clean. We saw that Paul asked for boldness to proclaim the gospel.

His boldness offended many people. He ended up in prison, beaten, whipped, shipwrecked, all because of his boldness to proclaim the gospel. Boldness and graciousness may seem to be at odds with each other.

They may seem to be contradictory, but really we see them together in Christ. Jesus called out the fools that needed to be called out.

[26 : 39] He didn't answer their foolish opinions or foolish questions with the same foolishness. In Matthew 22, Jesus is asked this hypothetical question about a man who died and his wife was then subsequently married to each of his other six brothers.

Nobody had any children and their question was when this couple or these six seven people get to heaven, whose wife is this woman going to be? They are coming to Jesus with foolish questions.

They're making foolish assumptions. Jesus doesn't answer a fool according to their folly. He doesn't accept their incorrect worldview and doesn't put himself down in their level of foolishness.

Jesus answered them, you are wrong because you know neither the scripture nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.

Then he continued, answering the foolish Sadducees in response to their folly, as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.

[27 : 55] He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. So Jesus, even in applying that proverb of answering a fool according to his folly, and don't answer a fool according to his folly, correctly talks to these people in gracious ways, but in ways that are bold and correct, turning this conversation the right direction.

true, gracious words, words that are actually gracious speech, they always consist of speaking the truth in love and humility.

Speaking the truth in love, you may have heard people abuse this phrase, they may have used it as a way to be rude. I'm just speaking the truth in love. They're focused on the truth and not on the love.

So, when we speak graciously, we're speaking the truth because of our love for those who hear it. Gracious speech also consists of humility.

We shouldn't be thinking of ourselves higher than we ought to think. We're not those who have it all together and can just need to tell them how to get their act together. We come with humility.

[29 : 14] Peter says that when you get asked for the reason for the hope that's in you, be prepared to give it, but to give it with gentleness and respect.

Essentially, doing it humbly. He says in 1 Peter 3, 15, But in your hearts, honor Christ the Lord is holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for the reason for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and respect.

So if we're going to speak gracious words that are wise, then we need to speak the truth in love. We need to do it humbly, but most important, we need to speak from a gracious heart.

Jesus says that out of the overflow of the heart, your mouth speaks. If your speech is to be gracious, then your heart should be gracious.

This happens by going back to what we saw, going back to the theology part of what we looked at, understanding what has God done? Where was I?

[30 : 24] I was an enemy of God. I was destined for wrath. I was happily living my life in the kingdom of darkness, but God in his rich mercy, because of his great love of which he loved us, saved us by grace.

And so if I'm going to speak graciously, grace should be on my heart. We're going to have an opportunity to remind our hearts of the graciousness of God in a few minutes when we take the Lord's supper.

We're going to hold in our hands a reminder that God was gracious to us. Gracious speech is the first part of Paul's instruction of how we should talk to people.

But now he adds in verse six that our speech should be seasoned with salt. Let your speech be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

And seasoned with salt really just means that our speech should be winsome and engaging. Salt is a preservative, salt is a cleanser, salt also enhances the taste of things.

[31 : 35] And so our speech should be winsome and appropriately engaging. Plutarch, who was a first century Greek philosopher, says, the elegant use of verbs and the attractive use of nouns make contribution to speech just as salt does to a dish of food.

Solomon, in the book of Proverbs, says, a wise heart is called discerning, and sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness. Solomon says in Ecclesiastes 10-12, the words of a wise man's mouth win him favor, but the lips of a fool consume him.

If you've ever watched people give speeches on how to give speeches, how to speak in public, how to talk, they tell you maintain eye contact, vary your tone and your volume so you don't become boring, give good examples, give good stories, keep the audience engaged.

Paul's not saying go become a great orator and a great public speaker. He's saying in your communication, in the ways and times that you talk to people in your life, speak in good, clean, preserving ways, even if correcting, even if that means correcting a conversation wrong turn.

Maybe you're talking to somebody and they bring up this crazy idea. You're trying to discuss the Christian gospel of Christ's coming and dying for sinners and they just want to ask you, do you think Jesus died for my pet?

[33 : 11] speaking the truth in love, but speaking with salt takes that conversation back, brings it appropriately where it needs to be. Speech seasoned with salt understands that this may be a case of entering a fool or not.

Maybe we need to correct them graciously, maybe we need to keep our mouth quiet, but we're called to speak in good and preserving ways. Paul also calls us to speak in interesting and engaging ways.

Your listener, and I apologize, you're definitely listening to me as I say this, your listener should not be bored when you're asked to give an answer for something. Let your speech be seasoned with salt so that you may know how to answer each person.

They may not like what you have to say, and you may even encounter persecution when you tell them things that are correct, but they should have no excuse for not understanding and hearing what you're saying.

Even if you're talking to a fellow Christian, not an unbeliever, and you're encouraging them or disciplining them, speak to that believer, that brother or sister, in ways that are encouraging, that encourage growth, that encourage removal of sin and a desire to pursue God.

[34 : 37] Speak to them in persuasive ways. Essentially, when you speak, the method and the manner and the material all come together to shape and define the message that we're presenting.

The method, the manner, and the material define and shape the message. And the manner should be seasoned with salt, not salty, not overbearing, not offensive, seasoned salt.

Gracious and winsome speech is part of walking wisely, and they allow us to know how we should answer each person. Paul says, I want your speech to be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

If you want to know how to answer someone, how do you interact with someone when they bring something up to you that's more than just how's it going? How do you talk to somebody who actually starts a conversation with you, who does more than the what's up, love, what's up with you, and then moves on, right?

How do we engage with conversations that are broader than just hello? We need to be able to work backwards from what we've seen so far.

[35 : 59] If we want to learn how to respond, we need seasoned, winsome speech that's effective and engaging and accurate. We need gracious speech.

We need kind speech. We need to be thinking the best of the person we're talking to, constantly aware of the grace that was shown to us. And then we need wisdom. We need God's wisdom.

We need to ask God for wisdom and we need to read his word. So if we want to be able to answer somebody when they come to us, whether it's with a theological question or whether it's just something that's related to culture, our answer should be seasoned and winsome, gracious, and with God's wisdom.

Knowing that our speech should be gracious and seasoned with salt in all of our communications allows us to know how to answer those who talk to us.

Paul makes that in verse 6. speak graciously so that you may know how you ought to answer. Be prepared mentally with winsome, gracious speech, a gracious heart, wisdom from God.

[37 : 14] So we're called to live out this way of speaking the grace, the gospel, of interacting wisely with those around us.

And there are lots of ways that we do that today, lots of relationships that we might see. So in application, how do we apply this text specifically to our one-on-one relationships that we encounter?

What about a quick encounter? You're going into this gas station and you talk to somebody for a second, meet somebody at a party, or a witness comes to your door. You don't know this person, it's a short encounter.

this passage still applies. We're to conduct ourselves with wisdom. We're to speak graciously. Our words are supposed to be seasoned with salt.

This is really a situation though, if it's a quick encounter where we need to redeem the time. Don't dismiss these short encounters. Philip was able to lead the Ethiopian eunuch to Christ in a short encounter.

[38 : 17] Hey, what are you reading? I'm reading Isaiah. Do you understand it? No, I don't. Here's the gospel. Do you want to be baptized? Short, fast, quick encounter where the time was redeemed and the gospel was shared.

How about our online interactions? This can be something that impacts a lot of people, especially younger people, but our social media today loves salty conversations.

conversations. There are pages about gossip. There are pages about slandering somebody or making bad news spread. Our social media and the news today loves salty conversation.

And when we're interacting with written text, whether it's on a Facebook page or an email or a text message, written text makes it harder for us to understand emotion and intentions.

It's hard for us to be gracious when somebody is saying something. Maybe we don't understand what they're actually getting to. Their method of communication makes it difficult to understand their message.

[39 : 28] Certainly emojis help, but as we interact with people online, we should strive to communicate graciously in ways that are clear. We understand that if I'm speaking to somebody and they don't get my tone of voice like I could in an email or in a message on Facebook or replying to somebody, that I should clearly communicate what I'm feeling and expressing in ways that could be understood just written.

Our conversation should be focused on truth and communicated in a way that's both correct and clear. How about in the church? Our passage here says to walk in wisdom towards outsiders, but then it talks about our speech in general, not confined to just outsiders, but how do we communicate with each other?

How do we walk wisely with outsiders and how do we walk wisely with ourselves? How do we speak well? I think improving our ability to ask each other questions, to discuss spiritual things in the safety of a church family allows us to build our confidence and our ability to speak and communicate and interact wisely with outsiders.

So talk to somebody and ask them, what are you reading in scripture? How is your prayer life? What books are you reading? Have conversations that you feel comfortable doing with your brothers and sisters so that when you talk to outsiders, you're not uncomfortable.

Take, sometimes we have a combination, a perfect storm of online interactions and Christians and those things escalate. Sometimes I'm surprised how cruel and ungracious Christians can be in their comments and the ways they discuss things online.

[41 : 18] Jesus says that the world will know us, will know Christians by our love. In the church, we should be known as people speaking graciously, truthfully, honestly, seasoned with salt.

We should be speaking with a desire to see people look more and more like Christ. Psalm 133, verse 1, says, Behold how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity.

We have interactions with our family, right? Our marriage and our family. If your house is like my house, usually inside our house, our four walls, people are more comfortable yelling and fighting and screaming than they are outside those four walls.

So in your house, people feel vulnerable. People communicate ways they would never communicate outside. line. And so we need to have special care to maintain graciousness in our conversation.

Special care is parents to shape that our conversations should be gracious and seasoned with salt. My kids can attest that that phrase was spoken multiple times this week as I prepared for this sermon.

[42 : 20] Is your speech gracious and seasoned with salt? Yelling and raised voices are not signs of conversations gracious and seasoned with salt.

Maybe we've got really close relationships with people who are outside, right? People we interact with every day, co-workers, people we know well. It can be easy to talk to them about everything, the game, work, cars, sports, and difficult to talk to them about the things of God.

Maybe we feel better if they were to ask us something, but we usually just tend to fall off of one side or the other. We say something really obnoxious or we say nothing at all.

Generally, we're tempted to say nothing at all. But if we're going to walk wisely, if we're going to make the best use of our time, sometimes that means sticking out.

Sometimes it means answering the fool, and sometimes it means not answering the fool. But in the ways we interact with outsiders, we should show wisdom in how we walk.

[43 : 27] We should be careful of the time. we should speak clearly. We've got examples in scripture of people who spoke gracious, winsome speech towards outsiders.

They were empowered by the Holy Spirit and their fellowship with Christ. We have Stephen's speech in the book of Acts. Paul, when he's before a trial. Paul, when he spoke to Felix, given a defense of the gospel.

Paul talking to King Agrippa. We're going to look at this in the Lord's Supper, but Peter's sermon at Pentecost in Acts 2, where he's talking to people about what God has done.

But I want to take a real quick look with you at Acts chapter 4. This is an example of somebody using speech, winsome speech, walking wisely. The context is that Peter and John had just healed a lame beggar at the gate of the temple.

Now they're dragged into this council. In Acts 4, verse 5, says, On the next day, there were rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem, six with Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas and John and Alexander and all who were in the high priestly family.

[44 : 40] And when they had set them, which is Peter and John, in the midst, they inquired, by what power or by what name did you do this? The healing of the beggar. Then John, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, sorry, then Peter, fed with the Holy Spirit, said to them, rulers of the people and elders, if we're being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, let it be known to all of you and all the people of Israel, by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by him this man is standing before you well.

This Jesus is a stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which have become the cornerstone, and there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished, and they recognized that they had been with Jesus.

Peter, the man who had denied Jesus three times, the man who Christ prayed for, the man that Christ restored and then commanded to feed his sheep, this Peter is now standing before a council of scribes and elders.

His message is simple. Are we here? Are you asking about the man that was healed? Because if so, then that was done by Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

[46 : 13] And by the way, Jesus Christ of Nazareth is the one that you put to death. He launches into a gracious answer, well-seasoned with salt, and presents the gospel clearly.

That Jesus is the one you crucified, but God raised him up from the dead. That's the reason this once crippled man is now standing before you.

The council was astonished by these bold men, these uneducated men. What differentiated these men in their sharing of the gospel and their proclamation of the truth, they could tell that they had been with Jesus.

And that's really the core of what we're looking at this morning. Our interactions, our communication should reflect the fact that we have been with Jesus.

Do you want to grow more gracious in your speech or in your interactions? Spend time with Jesus. Spend time with other followers of Jesus.

[47 : 25] Read all the Colossians that we've read so far. Go back to chapter 3, for example, with the tipping point of the book of Colossians. The book goes from here's what's true, here's what God's done for you, you're united in him, this is what God's done, to now in chapter 3, here's what God has called those who are united to him to do.

Our passage in chapter 4 is still inside of that, here is what God calls people who are united to Jesus to do. And if we look back at chapter 3, verse 1, we get this direction.

If then you've been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

Spend time with the one that you've been raised with, and your speech and your interactions will look more and more like his. Seek the things that are above, set your mind on things that are above, lead your heart toward things that are above, and out of your heart will flow wise interactions, gracious speech, well seasoned with salt.

Let me pray. Lord, we thank you for your word, and thank you for the ability to have you show out what you would have us do.

[48 : 53] Thank you for the ways that you've not left us stumbling around trying to figure out how you want us to live, but you've sent Christ, and then you've inspired the scriptures for us to have.

Lord, thank you. Lord, we ask that you would help us be people who are wise at interactions, that our speech would be gracious and well seasoned with salt.

In Jesus' name, amen. Our closing hymn is hymn, I think it's 499, sorry, 585. And this hymn says, take my life and let it be.

Take my voice and let me sing always only for my king. Take my lips and let them be filled with messages from thee. May that be our prayer as we sing our closing hymn, 585, take my life and let it be.

Let's stand. May that be night Amen.

[50 : 44] Amen.