

Life Principles Center
Course: Sharing Your Faith
T3_CD_L1: Our Testimony (MC125)

Introduction:

Few things make me sadder than hearing a believer in Jesus Christ say something like, “Oh, I don’t have much of a testimony. It isn’t really that exciting.” My friend, that is simply not possible. How could the story of Jesus Christ rescuing you from the darkness of sin not be exciting? It is a miraculous gift of grace every time the Lord enters into a man or woman to save them from sin. That means that every single believer has a story to share. The question is, “Are you sharing it?”

In this course, entitled “Sharing Your Faith,” we’ll learn how the Spirit of God works in our lives to give us each a personal testimony of faith. It is my prayer that when you finish this course, you will know:

- What keeps you from sharing your faith with others;
- How and when to share your faith; and
- How to make sure your children know and are influenced by your relationship with Jesus Christ

I know you’re eager to find answers to these questions, so let’s begin.

Lesson 1, Section 1

Objectives: At the end of this section of Lesson 1, you should be able to:

- A. Explain the “treasure” Paul describes in 2 Timothy 1:13-14.
- B. Understand the true definition of the word “testimony.”

Scripture

Read 2 Timothy 1:13-14

Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to *you*.

Lesson 1

How do you view the Christian life? Is it something that we *do* or something that we *are*? This is a very important question when thinking

about the issue of our testimony. You see, our testimony is much more than the simple explanation of what God has done in our lives.

What we generally think of as our “testimony”—the spoken explanation—is actually only a small part of the matter. In fact, our testimony is composed of no less than three separate, yet fundamentally important areas: our character, our conduct, and our conversation. In this lesson, we will be examining these three areas by seeing how they were demonstrated in the life of one of the church’s first ministers, Philip. Before going any further in this lesson, stop and read Acts 8:4-39 in its entirety, focusing on the person of Philip.

Q1: True or False? Our testimony is the explanation of how we came to know Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior.

The first part of our testimony, as seen in a study of Philip, is our character. Our character essentially represents *what we are*. In Acts 6:5, Philip is named as one of the church’s first servants. There was an urgent need for men to help the apostles engage in ministry, and specific personal qualities were mentioned as desirable in these ministers.

First of all, we see that Philip was a man of good reputation. The word that is used in Acts 6:3 for “reputation” is the same Greek word from which we get our word “testimony” or “witness.” So, the apostles were seeking men of good testimony, and found such a servant in Philip.

Second, Acts 6:3 also shows that personal responsibility is vital in an effective witness for Christ. Remember, the church needed men who could assume positions of leadership. The work of the church can only be trusted to those who have shown a marked responsibility in pursuing the will of God.

Third, we see that Philip was certainly committed to the Great Commission (Matthew 28: 19-20). This is clear in the fact that Philip began his ministry by serving tables (Acts 6:1-5), and shortly thereafter, we see that his ministry had stretched into other regions, where he had gone to preach the Gospel (Acts 8:5). And, as we also see in the eighth chapter of Acts, God certainly blessed his missionary work, as many people came to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Fourth, it is clear that Philip was an obedient man. Obedience to God is absolutely essential to any successful witness to Christ. Philip showed his obedience by doing whatever was asked of him—he served tables, he began a preaching crusade, and he even went to specific people

to whom God called him. If we fail to be obedient to God's call, we will never be effective witnesses, because we say with our lives that God is not very important. If we desire to help others comes to Christ, we must show them our respect for the Lord by obeying His commands.

Fifth, we see that diligence is essential for a powerful testimony. Remember, God called Philip to talk to a man who was riding in a moving chariot! Scripture is clear that Philip had to make an effort to catch the man as he drove by. Acts 8:30 shows that he actually had to run up alongside the chariot, and this put him in a position to engage the traveler. Without diligence, Philip could have simply said, "Lord, I can't talk to that man. He's driving by; I probably couldn't catch up with him anyway."

Now, why is all of this important to our testimony? It is because our character is *what we are*. Our character is that unseen part of us that speaks louder than we realize. So, if someone were to ask you, "Have you ever given your testimony?" the answer is, without a doubt, *yes you have*. Even if we do not give a testimony with words, our very character expresses something about the Lord every day. So, the question for us as believers is, "What is our testimony saying?"

Therefore, we can see that our testimony is not something that we write out and deliver orally. That may be an outer expression of it, but our testimony begins with the innermost character within us. If there is something in our character that goes against the Truth we know, then the result will surely be a clouded testimony to Jesus Christ.

J1: Carefully read 2 Timothy 1:13-14. As you reflect on the fullness of your testimony in Jesus, how does Paul's description of it as "a treasure" change your perspective of how you make daily decisions and of your daily interactions with others?

Lesson 1, Section 2

Objectives: At the end of this section of Lesson 1, you should be able to:

- A. Study scriptural accounts of testimonials, and explore their applications in your own life.
- B. Understand the true definition of the word "testimony."

The second part of our testimony, as we can see in the life of Philip, is our conduct. Now, we said that our character is *what we are*, so our conduct is *what we do*. When we look at Philip, it is obvious

that he is a man who had his life under control. He was not perfect in his ways, but he was a man, as the Word describes, of good report.

We read previously that Philip was a man of strong character, and I want you to understand that it was his *conduct* that revealed his character to those around him. Primarily, we see this in his radical obedience to the call of God. Philip did everything that God called him to, from serving tables to preaching in far off lands.

If God calls us to do something, but our conduct conflicts with that work of God, then we are going to have a cloudy testimony. Remember, when we talk of our Christian testimonies, we know that our actions speak louder than our words. Now, our actions do not make us believers. Reading the Bible, going to church, and engaging in ministry are all important, but none of these works can make us any more or less saved. However, **our conduct will be a shining expression of our walk with Christ.** If there is some action in your life that is contrary to the Word of God, then you are guilty of misrepresenting the truth of the Word, and it will damage your testimony to others.

The third aspect of our testimony, as seen in Philip, is our conversation. Obviously, this refers to *what we say*. Most people believe that this is where their testimony begins, but actually, our conversation is always an addition to our character and our conduct. Every word we say will be measured against the testimony of our lives, and if there is any inconsistency, our testimony may be disregarded altogether.

Philip's testimony in Acts 8:25-39 reveals two things that we must be aware of in our verbal communication of the Gospel:

1. **We must emphasize the Word, not ourselves.** When you share Christ with others, how do you begin? Do you say something like, "Let me tell you what God has done in *my life*?" This is very common, but it can be a problem. So often, our testimonies are weakened by the fact that we begin the encounter by talking about ourselves; sometimes, when we do this, we can never move the conversation beyond ourselves.

Philip did not approach the Ethiopian in this way. Instead, Philip began with the Word of God, opening up the Scriptures and revealing the power of God through His written Word. We must always remember that we are not testifying to our own accomplishments, but to the work of God. This can only happen when our presentation is rooted in Scripture.

2. **We must focus on Jesus Christ as the key subject.** It is impossible to give an accurate presentation of the Word of God without mentioning Jesus. He is not just a character in the Bible; He is your very

life! And yet, so often we are somewhat timid to voice the name of Jesus. Why?

The name of Jesus draws a dividing line in conversation. It is much easier to have a conversation about “God,” because people are not as threatened by the idea of God in general. You see, they can imagine just about anything when we say the word “God.” However, when we refer to Jesus by name, we are calling upon them to make a decision: *is Jesus who He claimed to be or not?* If the answer is “yes,” then that clearly has a powerful effect on their lives. If our testimony does not include this key element, then we are failing to present the very heart of the Gospel.

Philip demonstrated these two points of conversation in that he began the discussion with Scripture, and he worked to show how the Scriptures pointed to Jesus. He knew that without Christ, there was no saving message at all. We simply must remember what Philip teaches us: **we are leading people to Jesus, not to church.**

My friend, whether or not you ever open your mouth about Jesus, you have a testimony. Other people are watching you, and everything you do or say tells them something about Jesus Christ. I pray that you take this wonderful burden seriously as we spend these lessons examining our testimonies, and I hope that you begin to recall your own personal faith story as we move into the next lesson of this course, *Two Essentials of Sharing Your Faith*.

Q2: True or False? A person’s true testimony is evidenced by more than words, but also by their character and behavior.

J2: When you read Acts 8:4-39, what new facts did you learn that were not previously apparent? While studying the teachings of this lesson about how to begin sharing verbally about your faith, what challenged or inspired you?

Q3: Re-read Acts 8:30-35. Based on what you read which ONE of the following statements is false?

- A. Philip began sharing the Gospel after an invitation from the eunuch.*
- B. Philip began sharing the Gospel based on where the eunuch was in his spiritual journey.*

C. *Philip began sharing the Gospel as soon as he approached the eunuch's chariot.*

Prayer

Father, we love You and praise You for so working in our hearts. That You would come to live on the inside of us is absolutely beyond our comprehension. That You would call us Your followers, Your sons, and Your daughters as weak and as frail as we are and as often as we fail. But You said, "These are My sons and daughters," we're Your children, You love us unconditionally, and You sent the Holy Spirit to enable us to live out all these things that You require of us.

And so I pray today in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, His precious, wonderful name, the key to everything in life, the very heart and core of every single believer, in His name we pray that we will examine our testimony to be sure nothing is clouded, that all three fit together—our character, our conduct, and our conversation. Shouting to the world in a three-fold testimony that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, man's only hope and man's only source of true, genuine peace and life eternal. For we ask it in His name and for His sake, Amen.

Homework

Scripture Memory:

The Scripture memory assignment for this course is given below. Be sure to commit this passage to memory before moving on to the next lesson. Then, practice reciting it over and over throughout this course.

Colossians 4:6

Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.

Spend some time reflecting on three areas of your life: what you are, what you say, and what you do. How do your conduct and words reveal what you are? Are there areas that God is highlighting, leading you to make some specific changes? Pray and ask Him to reveal any inconsistencies, and the roots of those inconsistencies. Roots might be rebelliousness, wrong belief about who God is, or a judgement you made long ago. Ask Him to help you identify what's keeping your testimony from being blameless, and then ask the Lord for His cleansing hand to

help you make any necessary changes to your attitude, belief, and actions.

Life Principles Center

Course: Sharing Your Faith

T3_CD_L2: Two Essentials for Sharing Your Faith (PR049)

Introduction: Second Timothy 2:15 says, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth." For that reason, we encourage you to complete each assignment before progressing to the next lesson. This lesson is structured with two separate sections to help you maximize your study time.

Lesson 2, Section 1

Objectives: At the end of this section of Lesson 2, you should be able to:

- A. Understand Paul's reference to "weakness" and "trembling" in 1 Corinthians 2:3-4.
- B. Evaluate the motives of your heart in sharing the Gospel.

Scripture

Read 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.

Lesson 2

One of the most dangerous things about attending church regularly or hearing sermons on radio and television is that we can become insensitive to the truth. When we hear the Word presented frequently, it is possible that our hearts can become so used to the truth that it begins to have less and less of an impact upon our lives. One area that often becomes downplayed in this way is the Bible's call to evangelism. Most likely, we can all agree that it is important, but what impact has this call had on your life *personally*?

When was the last time you personally shared the Gospel with someone? A week? A month? A year? Never? What reason could you give the Lord for not taking time to share your faith?

My friend, it is simply impossible to be an obedient servant of Jesus Christ and yet refuse to tell others about Him. Yet, so many of us fall into this trap regularly. Many people do not share the Gospel because of fear of rejection, others because they do not think that they have a powerful testimony, and still others because they do not know the best way to tell someone else about the Lord. If this describes you, then I want you to pay careful attention to this lesson, as we explore two absolute essentials for effective, fruitful witnessing.

In the previous lesson of this course, we saw that our testimony is made up of three parts: our *character*, our *conduct*, and our *conversation*. Now, I would like to share two keys from 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 that will magnify your conversation about the Gospel to God-sized proportions.

First, to effectively communicate the saving message of Christ, we must have the right spirit. The apostle Paul admits that he “did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom,” and that he approached the Corinthians in “weakness and in fear and in much trembling” (1 Cor. 2:1, 3). Paul knew that the Corinthians would not be won over by his own convincing speech or clever arguments. Instead, he went to them in the right spirit, a spirit of true humility.

J1: Carefully read 1 Corinthians 2:1-5. Why do you think it matters whether or not we come to unbelievers “in weakness and in fear and in much trembling” with the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

Over and over again throughout Scripture, humility is shown to be absolutely necessary for faithful service to God. (Micah 6:8, Isaiah 66:2, Philippians 2:1-5) One of the biggest hindrances to effective witnessing is our sinful pride. You see, when we put the emphasis on ourselves—our intelligence, our charm, our personality—then we have made ourselves the focus of the message. And, my friend, that is idolatry.

Pride works against our testimony in two ways. First, it puffs up our egos so that we think we can win people to the Lord under our own strength. Paul struggled with this in his own ministry as he constantly directed the attention away from himself and toward the work of Christ. (1 Cor. 1:17; 2:1-5)

Q1: Compare 1 Corinthians 1:17 with 1 Corinthians 2:1-5. True or False? These Scripture references support the truth that we do not have to be eloquent speakers or have outgoing personalities to share Jesus Christ with others.

The second way pride works against us is that it causes fear of rejection. Because we do not want to be rejected by others, we often remain silent when we know in our hearts that we should speak out for Christ. What we must remember, though, is that our acceptance isn't found in men, but in God. What may feel like rejection to our prideful egos is actually a rejection to the Gospel of Christ, not to ourselves.

This fear of rejection is much different from the "fear and trembling" described in 1 Corinthians 2:3. In this passage, Paul is referring to his own humble sense of inadequacy. He knew without a doubt that his human strength could not bring the Corinthians to Christ. However, rather than focusing on his own weakness, Paul shines the light on the true power in his life: the Holy Spirit.

The apostle explains this further in a subsequent letter to the Corinthians. In 2 Corinthians 3:5-6, Paul reveals, "Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." So, while Paul admits his own inadequacy for the job, he also stresses the abundant power of the Spirit to accomplish God's purposes through him.

Whether you try to witness to others under your own strength or fear sharing the Gospel with others because of possible rejection, you are operating within the confines of sinful pride. And, my friend, it is impossible to effectively present the saving message of Jesus Christ if your attention is focused on yourself.

J2: Spend some time evaluating your motives for sharing the Gospel. Do you share it with people out of your love for them, or out of your desire to convince them that you're right? And if you haven't shared Jesus Christ's saving message in a while (or ever), is it because you're afraid of rejection or that your life's testimony isn't strong enough? As you reflect on your answers to these questions in your journal, ask God to do the work in your heart that needs to be done.

Lesson 2, Section 2

Objectives: At the end of this section of Lesson 2, you should be able to:

- A. Understand and apply effective motives and methods for sharing the Gospel with all audiences of humanity.

The second key to effective witnessing is to have the right message. Paul was an outstanding philosopher. He studied under the greatest minds of that age. And yet, when he preached to the Corinthians, he delivered a simple message: “For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2).

You see, it does not matter whether you are talking to a philosophy professor, a scientist, or a young child; the message of the Gospel is the same for everyone. You may argue, “But what if they bring up *this point* or *that point*?” Well, they may in fact bring up issues that you cannot answer. However, those side issues should never distract you from the central message of the Gospel. When people try to steer the conversation away, you must bring them back to Jesus.

There is only one saving message for all people: Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died an atoning death at Calvary and therefore paid every person’s sin debt in full. Three days later, His heavenly Father delivered Him from the grave, and that victory is available to everyone who receives Jesus as Lord of his life. That’s it. That is the message. You don’t ever have to be ashamed of it, or compromise it, or apologize for it. You just have to share it.

I have witnessed to presidents, and I have witnessed to paupers, and in both cases, I always preached the same message. Do you know why? It is because every man is in the same condition. We are all sinners and desperately need the salvation available through Christ Jesus.

Q2: True or False? Case scenario: When I feel led to share the message of Jesus Christ with an atheistic friend, I can honestly confess my lack of knowledge of intellectual things and focus on what Jesus did because of my friend’s need for salvation, which is common to all mankind.

With these things in mind, I want you to seriously examine your own testimony and identify the things in your life that might prevent you from sharing your faith. Are you scared of rejection? Do you feel unprepared? Does some action or habit in your life contradict the truth you know? Begin to prayerfully clear your heart of these obstacles as we move into the next lesson of this course, “How to Treat the Unbeliever.”

Prayer

Father God, we humble ourselves before You, acknowledging our pride, confessing it, and repenting of it. And we ask that the spirit of humility so permeate our lives that the power of the Holy Spirit will be released through us in ways we have never even dreamed of.

And Lord, we ask that in the right spirit of humility, we would share the right message with those people around us who so desperately need Your saving presence in their lives. We love You and we praise You, and we look forward to the fruit You are ready to produce in our lives to tell the world about Your Son, Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray, Amen.

Homework

Scripture Memory

Be sure to review your Scripture memory assignment for this course!

Colossians 4:6

Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.

In this lesson, your journal questions have prompted you to examine what may be at the root of your failure to share Christ with others. No matter where we are in our relationship with Jesus, all of us struggle from time to time with this issue. As you've discerned the source of your struggle, spend some time in prayer—asking God to help you discern if accountability may help. If you find that it will, pray for God's leading on a fellow brother or sister in Christ who can help you stay accountable to the Lord's instructions about sharing Him with others. You might also find the Institute Prayer Community and/or the "My Goals" feature of the Institute to be helpful in your desire to grow in this area of your faith walk. When God reveals to you a means of accountability, write it down on paper. Be specific, naming a person's name if you need to, and re-read it often.

Life Principles Center

Course: Sharing Your Faith

T3_CD_L3: How To Treat the Unbeliever Part 1 (AN129)

Introduction: Second Timothy 2:15 says, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth." For that reason, we encourage you to complete each assignment before progressing to the next lesson. This lesson is structured with two separate sections to help you maximize your study time.

Lesson 3, Section 1

Objectives: At the end of this section of Lesson 3, you should be able to:

- A. Memorize Colossians 4:6.
- B. Evaluate this passage's impact on your lifestyle.

Scripture

Read Colossians 4:5-6

Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.

Lesson 3

By now, I'm sure that you are fully aware of the awesome message that we have as believers. We have a message that will change a person's eternal destiny, his family relationships, life outlook, and every other area of his life. But, if this is true, then why are these people not rushing to church and begging us to share what we have learned?

Unbelievers are generally not "turned off" by the message and guidelines of Scripture, but rather by the behavior they witness in those they know to be believers. We have seen earlier that, even if we never open our mouths for Christ, we have a powerful testimony in our very character and conduct. Simply put, the world is watching us, and we therefore have a responsibility to influence unbelievers for good.

In writing to the Colossians, the apostle Paul addressed this issue to instruct that church on how to treat unbelievers. (Colossians 4:5-6) As witnesses of Christ Jesus, we too must pay attention to this vital message.

J1: Memorize Colossians 4:6. Now, examine some of the cross-references to this Scripture: Ephesians 4:29, Mark 9:50, and 1 Peter 3:15. In what manner are you to speak to unbelievers? With what attitude are you to speak? What comparisons are made between your actions/speech and salt? Ask God to speak to your heart about specific ways to apply this Scripture and record here what He says.

An important first step is to understand the *position* of the unbeliever. Scripture often calls those who have not received the saving message of Jesus “outsiders.” (Mark 4:11, 1 Corinthians 5:12, 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12, 1 Timothy 3:7) This means that they are outside of the church, outside of the saving knowledge of Christ. This certainly does not mean that they are beyond the reach of God’s grace, but that they have not moved from a position of “without” to one of “within” God’s saving grace.

In thinking about our influence, there are three questions that come to mind. **First, what is the goal of our influence?** We essentially have four goals in influencing unbelievers:

- To lead them to receive Jesus Christ as their personal Savior
- To lead them into baptism by a local church body
- To lead them into the study of God’s Word
- To equip them to share their new faith with others

An important point here is that this is the job of every single believer, not just pastors or professional ministers. We are all called and gifted by God to do the work of ministry, and none of us are exempt from that responsibility.

J2: Think about the environments in which you live and work. What people has God placed in your life to influence? Ask Him to reveal to you places and people that He has allowed in your life so that your witness might influence unbelievers for good. Record the names and situations here in your journal, and pray over each one.

The second question is, **what should we do to influence them?** We have already seen that our three most dynamic areas of influence are our personal character, conduct, and conversation. It is important to note that in Colossians 4:5-6, Paul reiterates this message,

advising us on our conduct and speech. Clearly, we cannot escape the responsibility of these critical areas.

J3: Spend time carefully reading the following passages. Then, in your journal, respond to the Scriptures by identifying the specific instruction of each passage and the results of following the Word in these areas.

Matthew 5:16

Philippians 2:14-15

1 Corinthians 10:32-33

1 Thessalonians 4:11-12

1 Peter 2:12

Lesson 3, Section 2

Objectives: At the end of this section of Lesson 3, you should be able to:

- A. Identify personal practices that may hinder your effective witness.
- B. Understand and apply the expressions of godly wisdom in your interactions with unbelievers.

We have a responsibility to unbelievers to be beyond reproach. This does not mean that we must be perfectly sinless, because we all fail at times. However, we must strive toward Christlikeness in every area of our lives. Often, an unbeliever may point to a specific attitude or sinful act in the life of a believer and say, “Well, look at that! I don’t even claim to be a Christian, and I’d never do anything like that!” My friend, if we are to be effective witnesses for Jesus Christ, then we must rid our lives of any such obstacle.

J4: Spend some time in prayer, focusing on listening to the Holy Spirit’s leading in your heart. What areas of your life could be categorized as “obstacles” according to the description in the last paragraph?

The third question in considering our conduct is, what should this conduct look like? In Colossians 4:5, Paul reveals that a key element to our good conduct is the ability to walk wisely. That is, to operate from a position of wisdom, by which we can see our lives and actions from God’s point of view and respond to them properly.

“Well, that’s all well and good,” you may argue, “but how do we go about getting this wisdom?” That’s a fine question. Let me share five specific points about how we gain holy wisdom.

1. **Learn the principles of Scripture.** There is no such thing as a wise man or woman who is ignorant of the truth of God's Word. God wants to impart His wisdom upon us; all we must do is ask for that blessing.
2. **Obey those principles.** If we accept the Word as true, then we must put those truths into practice in our lives.
3. **Evaluate the results of your obedience to those principles.** This is crucial, yet is often overlooked. Essentially, we must continually examine what we did and what the result was. As we do this, we can begin to anticipate the work of God, because we have disciplined ourselves to say, "This is what I did, and this is how God responded."
4. **Observe the disobedience of unbelievers.** We must look at the lives of those who do not know Christ, to become familiar with their desperate, yet often hidden, need for Him.
5. **Observe the consequences of the disobedience of unbelievers.** Just as we grow by examining the fruits of obedience, we can also gain great insight by seeing the results of bitter disobedience. (Proverbs 21:12)

Q1: True or False? One way to walk wisely is to reflect on your level of obedience to God's truth as described in His Word.

Now that we know how to gain godly wisdom, how can we apply that wisdom to our relationships with unbelievers? After all, if God's Word does not produce a marked change in our conduct, then we've not embraced the fullness of its impact on our lives. Consequently, we must choose to let God's wisdom express itself in our lives. Following these guidelines will help:

1. **Reach out to unbelievers in the spirit of servanthood.** It is simply amazing what happens when we give ourselves to the service of another, to be of help to them. What a wonderful picture of Christ this may be to someone in need.
2. **Accept unbelievers just the way they are.** Remember, we must never give the impression that someone must "clean themselves up" *before* coming to the Lord. Rather, upon committing our lives to Him, He begins to change our lives from the inside out.

3. **Remember where the unbeliever is—outside the body of Christ.** In order to accept them, we must remember that they are lost, separated from God, and without the indwelling Holy Spirit.
4. **Avoid the appearance of evil.** There are some behaviors that we may want to lay aside in order to win a person to Christ. This does not mean that we should lie or be “double minded.” Rather, this refers to certain actions that are not sinful, yet may still cause an unbeliever to stumble.
5. **Let your relationships with unbelievers be marked with kindness.** Too often, we overlook the sheer power in a single word of kindness. We must live lives that demonstrate the joy and grace we have been given in Christ.

Q2: Which of the following is an expression of godly wisdom in the interactions between a believer and an unbeliever?

- D. Refusing to befriend someone who’s engaged in an ungodly relationship.*
 - E. Speaking of the hope you have in Christ when an unbelieving friend expresses his/her feelings of hopelessness.*
 - F. Giving an unbeliever a ride to work when his/her car breaks down.*
 - G. Choosing not to laugh at certain office jokes that openly mock or hurt others.*
- B, C, and D*
- H. None of the above*
- G. All of the above*

Finally, in order to have an effective testimony of conduct, we must make the most of the time we have been given. (Colossians 4:5-6) This requires a great sensitivity to the needs of those around us. We must be sensitive to the words they say, to the signs of their body language, and to the condition of their lives. Are they hurt, sorrowful, suffering, excited, confused, joyful, etc.? Whatever their situation, try to be sensitive to their needs and respond appropriately. This enables us to foster a ministry of simply “being there,” which can work to reinforce our testimony about God’s enduring presence in our own lives.

It is often difficult to interact with unbelievers, but that difficulty should never prevent us from becoming so engaged in the lives of others that we can become a powerful force for Christ among the “outsiders.” In

the next lesson, we will continue this important study by taking a close look at the way our speech can be used for the kingdom of God.

Prayer

Father, it is often so difficult to interact with men and women who don't know You. Sometimes, we'd rather just stay safe within the walls of the church, among those who are already Your children. But, Lord, we know that You have called us to move and to reach those outside of the body, and right now we ask for Your strength, wisdom, and guidance as we seek to spread the saving message of Jesus Christ to those who do not know You. Thank You for this important responsibility, and help each of us to testify to the greatness of Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray, Amen.

Homework

Scripture Memory

Be sure to review your Scripture memory assignment for this course!

Colossians 4:6

Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.

Spend some time remembering the influential people God used in your life before you accepted Christ as your Savior. Reflect, and record their meaningful conversations, behaviors, and expressions of generosity. Thank God for them. Then, ask Him to help you be a light to someone in the same way that those people were in your life.

Transcript of Audio/Video Teaching Clip *Bringing In The Outsiders*

Scripture gives us many different understandings of how we should view unbelievers, but I think the Bible's most interesting description of unbelievers is as "outsiders." Now, this certainly does not mean that the unbeliever is beyond the reach of God's saving grace. What Scripture means by the word "outsider" is that the unbeliever is outside the kingdom of God and outside the body of Christ.

Imagine yourself sitting in your living room. You've got a hot cup of coffee in your hand and a glowing fire in the fireplace. Now, picture yourself looking out the window. Outside, a terrible storm is raging. The wind is howling and rain is just pouring down. There, just outside your window, you see a friend just standing out there in the rain, getting soaked and pushed around by the wind.

Now, if you really cared for that person, wouldn't you want to bring him inside where it was safe and warm and dry? Of course you would! That person was outside of the safety of your home, but you cared enough to bring him inside.

My friend, that is exactly how we should view our testimony to unbelievers. They are not beyond God's reach; they are just caught outside in the storm. And, just like you would bring your friend in from the rain, God wants to bring the unbeliever into the safety of His house. While the Holy Spirit is responsible for bringing our friends to faith in Him, we also have a responsibility toward them. And what's that? We must go out and bring those outsiders into our churches, our homes, and most importantly, into our hearts.

Life Principles Center

Course: Sharing Your Faith

T3_CD_L4: How To Treat the Unbeliever Part 2 (AN129)

Introduction: This lesson is divided into two sections to help you complete the entire lesson at your convenience. In order to renew your mind with God's Word and to give you an accurate view of Him, it's very important that you take time to complete each assignment before moving on to the next lesson.

Lesson 4, Section 1

Objectives: At the end of this section of Lesson 4, you should be able to:

- A. Understand the reasons for Paul's admonition in Ephesians 4:29.
- B. Evaluate the impact of your conversation.

Scripture

Read Ephesians 4:29

Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.

Lesson 4

In the previous lesson of this course, we carefully examined the impact that our conduct can have as a witness to an unbeliever. Now, let us put the emphasis on our *conversation*, to see how *what we say* can influence those who are outside of the church.

Have you ever noticed all of the passages of Scripture that give instructions or warnings about our speech? Perhaps the most powerful illustration is given in James 3:3-6, in which James comments on the sheer power of the tongue. Just like a large ship is directed by only a small rudder, he explains, so is a man's life directed by his tongue. This means that our speech has immense power in shaping the kind of witness we will have to unbelievers.

This also means that our speech has the ability to completely destroy our testimony. How does a massive forest fire start? It is with just one small spark. Our speech is just like that. One careless word is often all that is needed to begin a chain-reaction of destruction that can totally wipe out our usefulness for Christ.

Another insightful passage on our speech is Titus 2:6-8. Here, the apostle Paul explains that a servant of the Lord must guard his speech so that it is “beyond reproach.” This means that we must be careful that our mouths do not get us into trouble or damage our witness for Christ. If your language were no different than that of unbelievers, then why would they even see a need for Christ? That is why foul language, destructive criticism, and improper jokes can damage our witness so easily. Remember, unbelievers look at us to see if there really is a difference in our lives. When we do not guard our speech, it is easy for them to excuse our faith by saying, “Well, I just don’t see a difference in those Christians. They talk and act just like I do.”

*J1: Meditate on Ephesians 4:29. What does Paul say should **not** come out of our mouths as believers? Conversely, what does he say is appropriate for the speech of someone who has been redeemed by Christ?*

In Colossians 4:5-6, Paul gives two specific characteristics that should mark our speech. **First, he says that our speech should be gracious.** It is easy to see when people do not speak with grace. Are there people in your life who, whenever they open their mouths, spew out verbal poison to anyone around them? I’m sure you have met people like that before. Obviously, nobody likes to be around people like that, because they know that nothing positive, encouraging, or loving will ever come out of a poisonous mouth.

The troubling realization here is that many of these verbal vipers are Christians. My friend, this type of speech can absolutely destroy your ability to be an effective witness for the Lord. Rather than using our speech to tear people down, we are instructed to speak with grace; that is, to be friendly, kind, polite, courteous, compassionate, and thoughtful in what we say.

Ephesians 4:29 makes this point crystal clear: “Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such *a word* as is good for edification according to the need *of the moment*, so that it will give grace to those who hear.”

This passage shows that we are responsible for what we say. Whenever we open our mouths, we make a choice. Paul is saying that we must choose not to let any unwholesome, bitter, offensive language come out.

He also explains what *should* come out of our mouths: only those words that are used for the edification, or uplifting, of those around us. And, our words should meet the need of the moment, which means that we must be sensitive to those around us. When we recognize a need in someone's life, our speech and conduct should work to meet that need, "so that it will give grace to those who hear" (Ephesians 4:29).

My friend, everyone—every single person on earth—needs edification. Everyone needs to be lifted up. When we can meet that need for others, we show them the grace of God. For unbelievers, this is a powerful way to introduce them to the love of God. It may seem simple to us to offer a small word of love or encouragement, but we often forget how potent our words can be. They have the power to tear down or to build up. As witnesses for Christ, we have the responsibility of using our words for constructive, Christ-centered purposes. In a very real way, our words can make an eternal difference in someone's life. We absolutely must use them carefully.

J2: Consider the conversations you've had—both with believers and unbelievers—in the past week. Spend some time recording the topics of each conversation, and the remarks you made that were edifying as well as the remarks that weren't so encouraging. As you reflect upon your list, are the majority of your comments positive or negative? Does your presence give people cheer, or entice them to find the negative in life? Our conversation stems from the beliefs and attitudes in our hearts. Ask God to reveal and refine any inappropriate attitudes within your heart that may be leading to unwholesome speech.

Lesson 4, Section 2

Objectives: At the end of this section of Lesson 4, you should be able to:

- A. Understand the influence your speech has on others, especially unbelievers.
- B. Study Scripture and its historical context.

The second characteristic of our speech is that it should be "seasoned with salt." Now, what does salt do? It flavors, preserves, and heals. Salt does many useful things, and Paul says in Colossians 4:5-6 that our speech should be the same way.

The trick for us is to understand what it means to "season" our speech. In cooking, if you pour on too much salt, it can completely ruin

the meal. Without moderation, salt can ruin, sting, burn, and dry up our food. However, when used the right way, a “seasoning” of salt can be the final touch that brings a meal to its most delicious conclusion.

What does this mean for our speech? This means that in a spirit of graciousness and love we are to be firm when we need to be firm, strong when we need to be strong. We must tell the truth although it may hurt, even if it causes people to walk away from us. However, we must do all of this in a gracious manner, lovingly showing strength and compassion. We are not called to have salty speech, but rather to season our speech. This means that grace must always be our guide when we speak.

Q1: True or False? Our speech should express the truth in harsh honesty, no matter how hurtful, even if it embitters people toward Christ.

So, how do we treat unbelievers? By our conduct and our speech, we must faithfully represent Jesus Christ in such a way that draws them in to Him. We must strive to stand for everything that Christ stands for, so that when unbelievers see us, they may get a glimpse of God.

With this in mind, let me ask you a final question. This is something I must continually ask myself, as well. *By your conduct and speech, are you leading people to Christ, or are you driving people away from Him?* We must never forget that our conduct and speech are constantly representing something about Jesus Christ, and because of that, we are affecting their eternal life. If an unbeliever cannot look at us and thereby want to know more about Jesus, then we are actively turning that person away from the only source of eternal salvation. This is an awesome responsibility that we must never forget.

Prayer

Father, we love You and praise You. We acknowledge that within ourselves, we are so inadequate. But You’ve promised us that the Lord Jesus Christ who lives within us will make us sufficient for every single thing and so we humble ourselves before You to pray: “Oh Father, make whatever adjustments are necessary in our lives that our conduct and our conversation will be compatible, our conduct and our conversation will speak the same word, and that our conduct and our conversation will be the vessels through which You attract those who are yet to know You as their Savior.

We love You and praise You for Your grace and mercy and kindness toward us and we pray that You will use us as Your children to lead others

to discover the greatest truth we've ever known: Christ our Savior, Christ within us, Christ our life.

Homework

Scripture Memory Review

Fill in the blanks to complete this course's memory verse.

Let your _____ always be with _____, as though
 _____ with _____, so that you will _____
 how you should _____ to _____.
 _____ 4: _____

Read the story of Paul's voyage and shipwreck in Acts 27:1-44, taking special note of any instance in which he speaks and any instance in which his conduct reflects the faith he has in God. Then, supporting your answers with specific verses, answer the following questions:

1. **How does his speech exhibit the seasoning of salt?**
2. How does he express words of edification and encouragement?
3. How are his actions (or conduct) compatible with his words?
4. What choices does he make that reflect his faith, as well as his understanding of who the soldiers are as unbelievers?
5. What is the outcome of Paul's witness? How does it affect those around him?

Conclusion

Isn't it wonderful to know that you—yes, you—have a totally unique, exciting, miraculous story of salvation? People in the world can disagree with you on your opinions, but they can never disregard your personal testimony of what Christ has done in and for you. That is God's special gift just for you: a story all your own.

I pray that you not only take the time to write down and seriously consider your own story of faith, but that you would also share that story with others. The good news of your salvation is just too good to keep to yourself! And so, before you move on to the next course, I challenge you to take a bold step of faith by telling at least one person what Jesus Christ has done in your life. You never know what the Holy Spirit might do with your obedience to share the Gospel of Christ.