

“Posture”

GO: You Have What It Takes- Part 4

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**Introduction:**

“Evangelism Linebacker”

Funny... funny...funny... But- you don't have to position yourself like the Evangelism Linebacker to get your point across. In fact- how we conduct ourselves—our posture—with those that don't yet know Jesus plays a huge role in how open our contacts are to hearing what God has done in our lives.

We've been saying that you must walk with Jesus closely. When you do, your heart is full with Jesus' love and hope...and when your heart is full with Jesus' love and hope- you are more likely to flow onto other people.

*Week 1: Your most effective tool for evangelism is to be madly in love with Jesus.*

*Week 2: Words about Jesus will flow from our lips when worship of Jesus fills our hearts.*

Walking closely with Jesus in worship is the foundation we want for effective witness. That was our first two weeks in this series. Then, last week, we began to add some tools in your GO Toolbox. We said that:

*Week 3: Praying with fellow Christ-followers for those that do not yet know Jesus is a key to releasing God's power for mission.*

We want to build a culture at ClearView where we ask one another who we are trying to reach. We encourage each other in mission and we pray together for opportunities and for God's power to be release through us.

Today I want to add another tool to your GO Tool box. I want to talk together about how we can set an environment...an atmosphere for mission by how we pray, by how we act, and by how we speak. Today is going to be very practical and I hope it equips us to posture ourselves in such a way that people WANT to hear about Jesus from us!

**Colossians 4:2-6**

*2 Devote yourselves to prayer with an alert mind and a thankful heart. 3 Pray for us, too, that God will give us many opportunities to speak about his mysterious plan concerning Christ. That is why I am here in chains. 4 Pray that I will proclaim this message as clearly as I should.*

*5 Live wisely among those who are not believers, and make the most of every opportunity. 6 Let your conversation be gracious and attractive so that you will have the right response for everyone.*

I love this passage because it is short and sweet. It is brief but powerful. It talks about two spiritual disciplines that Christians have the most guilt about: prayer and witnessing (things we know we should do...but struggle to maintain). But, in the midst of discussing prayer and witness- the writer, Paul, gives us some helpful—DOABLE FOR EVERY PERSON-TYPE hints as to how we can pray and witness effectively. Be encouraged here—the cookies are on a shelf where all of us can reach them. These are steps we can all take to impact our world. Do these things and you will be fulfilled, God will be honored, and people’s lives will be changed!

**Big Idea:**

*God asks me to advance the Gospel through my prayers, my life, and my words.*

**How should I pray?**

**1. Pray PERSISTENTLY**

*2 Devote yourselves to prayer*

“Devote yourselves to prayer” (v. 2). Paul is talking about unrelenting persistence. Persistent prayer is difficult. Paul compares it to wrestling. Listen to what he says about a loyal servant of God named Epaphras later in this chapter (Col. 4:12-NIV): *Ephaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.*

We see persistence in prayer from the early church:

*“They all met together and were constantly united in prayer” (Acts 1:14).*

*“All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord’s Supper<sup>a</sup>), and to prayer” (Acts 2:42).*

Persistent prayer must characterize our lives- at home, at work, here at church... individually...together... **Who are you praying for...in a devoted way... in a persistent way?**

David Garland writes, *“If Christians prayed with the same zeal that some people manifest to keep themselves physically fit for a longer and healthier life, they might see different results in the life and witness of their church” (p. 283).*

S. D. Gordon wrote, *“The greatest thing anyone can do for God and man is pray. It is not the only thing, but it is the chief things. The great people of earth are the people who pray. I do not mean those who talk about prayer; nor those who say they believe in prayer; nor yet those who can explain about prayer; but I mean those people who take time to pray” (Quiet Talks on Prayer).*

An old hymns says,  
*And Satan trembles when he sees  
The weakest saint upon his knees.*

## **2. Pray ALERTLY** *with an alert mind*

Paul instructs his readers to pray with an alert mind because being alert and focused and intentional in prayer is a great tool for dealing with temptation in our lives. Prayer is a weapon against temptation. The reason this is so important is that publicly falling into sin destroys our ability to effectively witness.

Jesus made this connection (between praying with alertness and temptation) in his encounter with Peter before He was crucified.

*“<sup>40</sup>Then he (JESUS) returned to the disciples and found them asleep. He said to Peter, “Couldn’t you watch with me even one hour? <sup>41</sup> **Keep watch and pray, so that you will not give in to temptation. For the spirit is willing, but the body is weak!**” (Matt. 26:40-41).*

We have to be vigilant in the face of temptation to sin. We want to live the kind of lives that are worthy of the grace that has been extended to us. We want to learn to love Jesus so much that we adopt His standards for how to live, as communicated in the Bible. We don’t obey out of compulsion... we obey out of free will because we love the One Who saved us and because we want to shine His light to those around us. None of us are perfect- but we want to live righteously so as to draw others to Christ by our goodness.

You have an enemy that wants you to fall into sin so that you will be discouraged...be weighted down...be distracted from Jesus...and be ineffective in witness.

*“Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. ” (1 Peter 5:8).*

How many times have you heard the excuse *“I don’t want to have anything to do with the church because there are so many hypocrites in it”*? Well- let’s not be hypocrites. Let’s follow God’s Word...let’s not give anyone an excuse to not follow God. Let’s face temptation head on and deal with our enemy the devil. The best way to deal with temptation is through praying...*with an alert mind.*

### **3. Pray with THANKGIVING**

*and a thankful heart...*

Being thankful reminds us of the incredible blessings God had given us. When we focus on these blessings- both present and eternal- life's problems come into perspective. Not only does this give us hope for today and eternity- a thankful heart leads us to want to share these blessings with others. We are so excited about what we have that we want to share it with others.

See Psalm 100

<sup>1</sup> *Shout with joy to the LORD, all the earth!*

<sup>2</sup> *Worship the LORD with gladness.*

*Come before him, singing with joy.*

<sup>3</sup> *Acknowledge that the LORD is God!*

*He made us, and we are his.*

*We are his people, the sheep of his pasture.*

<sup>4</sup> *Enter his gates with thanksgiving;*

*go into his courts with praise.*

*Give thanks to him and praise his name.*

<sup>5</sup> *For the LORD is good.*

*His unfailing love continues forever,*

*and his faithfulness continues to each generation.*

You can't read that Psalm...practice what it says... and then keep everything thing to yourself. When you are full of thanksgiving...your joy is going to bubble out onto others.

Everyone wants to be around someone who can find the good in any situation. Everyone wants to be around someone that is positive despite circumstances. Everyone wants to be around someone that is thankful...thanksgiving colors life in hues that everyone notices and wants to be a part of.

See 2 Cor. 9:15: *Thank God for this gift<sup>a</sup> too wonderful for words!*

Thanksgiving will open doors for witness.

### **4. Pray for OPPORTUNITIES**

*3 Pray for us, too, that God will give us many opportunities to speak about his mysterious plan concerning Christ. That is why I am here in chains.*

**Do you ever get up in the morning, swing your feet over the side of the bed, and just say something like, "Good morning, Jesus. Would you please give me an opportunity today to share about You with someone else."?**

Have you ever asked someone else to pray for YOU that you would have opportunities to share God's love and grace that day?

Paul did! Think about this. When Paul wrote Colossians- he was in prison. His life was in danger. If we were in prison like Paul, we would probably ask people to pray for our freedom. But Paul requested that the Colossians pray for open doors (opportunities) to share the gospel. And God opened doors while he was in prison. **See, when you pray this prayer... Be prepared for God to answer in unexpected ways.**

Paul says in Phil. 1:12-14: <sup>12</sup>*And I want you to know, my dear brothers and sisters,<sup>[c]</sup> that everything that has happened to me here has helped to spread the Good News.* <sup>13</sup>*For everyone here, including the whole palace guard,<sup>[d]</sup> knows that I am in chains because of Christ.* <sup>14</sup>*And because of my imprisonment, most of the believers<sup>[e]</sup> here have gained confidence and boldly speak God's message<sup>[f]</sup> without fear.*

As Paul sat in prison, he wasn't bemoaning his circumstances. Instead, he prayed...and he asked others to pray for opportunities to advance the Gospel within the context of his current circumstances. Just like the believers in Acts 4 that we looked at last week: even with his life on the line- Paul wasn't asking for personal safety or security- he asked for open doors for mission. God answered! He says, *it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ.* Paul shared Jesus with his captors. With his guards.

Also, while Paul was in prison, he was able to write Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon and encourage these readers to be on mission as well.

**We should pray that God would give us and others opportunities to share the gospel with others.**

Try it every day this week! Then, look and see what God does.

## **5. Pray for CLARITY**

*4 Pray that I will proclaim this message as clearly as I should.*

We want to pray for clarity so we will be able to speak clearly and intelligently and be ready to have the right response for everyone that asks questions or poses resistance to a faith conversation.

See- when we have clarity- we are more prone to be confident in sharing others with Jesus. Clarity leads to boldness.

Perhaps we are not ready to clearly share the Gospel- simply because we have not prayed about being ready to clearly share the Gospel!

Remember- we serve the God who made mouths! He can give us the right words in with the right timing- no matter what situation we find ourselves in or how nervous we are or how equipped we feel...

Exodus 4:10-13

*<sup>10</sup> But Moses pleaded with the LORD, "O Lord, I'm not very good with words. I never have been, and I'm not now, even though you have spoken to me. I get tongue-tied, and my words get tangled."*

*<sup>11</sup> Then the LORD asked Moses, "Who makes a person's mouth? Who decides whether people speak or do not speak, hear or do not hear, see or do not see? Is it not I, the LORD?" <sup>12</sup> Now go! I will be with you as you speak, and I will instruct you in what to say."*

*<sup>13</sup> But Moses again pleaded, "Lord, please! Send anyone else."*

## **How should I live?**

### **1. Live WISELY**

*5 Live wisely among those who are not believers,*

"Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders" (v. 5). "Outsiders" are unsaved people. These are people that Jesus loves...but who do not yet know Him.

Here's a truth: Sometimes we forget that those around us are watching us. They are watching how we live. They are watching how we make decisions. They are watching our marriage. They are watching our parenting. They are watching our actions and words... Here's a challenging verse:

"Be careful to live properly among your unbelieving neighbors. Then even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honorable behavior, and they will give honor to God when he judges the world." (1 Peter 2:12). The Greek word translated "see" refers to a careful watching, over a period of time.

We are to live in such a way that people can see our good deeds and actually give glory to God because they have been around us! When you know Jesus- we have light. We must let that shine by good deeds...by living wisely!

Matthew 5:16 says: *<sup>16</sup> In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.*

What does "living wisely" look like?

- Integrity- do what we say...follow-through...
- Following community values- neat property...
- Wise financial practices...*I'd love to walk away from my house...*
- How you speak about others when they are not around..
- Do you grumble and complain?
- Do you participate in conversations where God's values are demeaned?
- Are you combative or are you a peacemaker?

- Do you notice when others are hurting and take the time to help?

Remember that people are watching you. Don't give people an excuse to reject the gospel. When we pray, God will give us open doors. Let's not shut them by our behavior.

## **2. Live with a sense of URGENCY**

*and make the most of every opportunity.*

"Make the most of every opportunity" (v. 5). The KJV says, "redeeming the time." In other words, "buy up the time." It's like taking advantage of a great bargain.

(Illustration: coupon lady.)

We must capitalize on every chance and use every moment to the full. The time and opportunities are not unlimited.

This is such an interesting prayer... because the fact that Paul says to pray for opportunities- it assumes that there will be. And, then when we pray this... we have to believe that God will give them. And, when they come, we've got to be ready...got to be willing to make the most of them.

## **How should I speak?**

### **1. Speak GRACIOUSLY**

*6 Let your conversation be gracious and attractive ..*

To be "gracious" basically means to be pleasant. Before we can make disciples, we need to make friends and build rapport. Remember that we are to be witnesses, not judges or prosecuting attorneys! Concerning Jesus, Luke 4:22 says, "*Everyone spoke well of him and was amazed by the gracious words that came from his lips.*" Ephesians 4:15 talks about "speaking the truth in love."

On the other hand, we can go to the opposite extreme by trying to be so gracious that we never share the gospel with others. Some Christians have become so hypersensitive about offending non-Christians that they never present them with God's truth clearly and directly. Many people never darken the door of a church because they have never been invited in. We are not showing compassion or love if we choose to keep meekly silent and never share the truth about Christ with those who need desperately to hear it.

### **2. Speak INTELLIGENTLY**

*so that you will have the right response for everyone.*

We need to have their answers ready for those who challenge or are curious about their faith.

Common questions:

- How can a loving God allow evil and suffering to exist?
- Don't miracles contradict science?
- If evolution explains life, why is God needed?
- How could a loving God torture people in hell?
- Isn't it offensive to claim that Jesus is the only way to heaven?
- How can you be sure that you can trust the Bible?

It's sad when people who have been Christians for years cannot give anything more than a pat answer to these kinds of questions. Howard Hendricks once said, *"In the midst of a generation screaming for answers, Christians are stuttering."*

*"<sup>15</sup>...you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. **And if someone asks about your Christian hope, always be ready to explain it.** <sup>16</sup> But do this in a gentle and respectful way.<sup>[a]</sup> Keep your conscience clear. Then if people speak against you, they will be ashamed when they see what a good life you live because you belong to Christ. "* (1 Peter 3:15-16).

Paul Little, in his book *How to Give Away Your Faith*, defines witnessing as *"that deep-seated conviction that the greatest favor I can do for others is to introduce them to Jesus Christ."*

Resources:

Tim Keller's *The Reason For God: Belief In An Age Of Skepticism*

Mark Driscoll's *Doctrine: What Christians Should Believe*