

Disciplined for Life

Col 4:1-17

SS Lesson for 02/24/2013

Devotional Scripture: Col 2:6-12

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Introduction

Overview and Approach to Lesson

The lesson teaches us how we should follow godly **Disciplines for Life**. The **study's aim** is to learn about God's orders of how to daily live superior to any other approach to life. The **study's application** is to apply God's principles that we have learned in our daily spiritual and physical lives.

Key Verse: Col 4:5

5 Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time.

Commentary on Col 4:5 from Barnes Notes Commentary

[*Walk in wisdom*] That is, conduct uprightly and honestly. Deal with them on the strictest principles of integrity, so that they may not have occasion to reproach the religion which you profess.

[*Toward them that are without*] Without the pale of the church, or who are not professing Christians. They were surrounded by pagans, as Christians now are by men of the world. The injunction is one that requires us to act with prudence and propriety toward them; and there is perhaps not a more important direction in the New Testament than this. Among the reasons for this are the following:

- (1) People of the world judge of religion, not from the profession, but from the life of its friends.
- (2) They judge of religion, not from preaching, or from books, or from the conduct of its Founder and his apostles, but from what they see in the daily walk and conversation of the members of the church.
- (3) They understand the nature of religion so well as to know when its friends are or are not consistent with their profession.
- (4) They set a much higher value on honesty and integrity than they do on the doctrines and duties of religion; and if the professed friends of religion are destitute of the principles of truth and honesty, they think they have nothing of any value. They may be very devout on the Sabbath; very regular at prayer-meetings; very strict in the observance of rites and ceremonies-but all these are of little worth in the estimation of the world, unless attended with an upright life.
- (5) No professing Christian can possibly do good to others who does not live an upright life. If you have cheated a man out of never so small a sum, it is vain that you talk to him about the salvation of his soul; if you have failed to pay him a debt when it was due, or to finish a piece of work when you promised it, or to tell him the exact truth in conversation, it is vain for you to endeavor to induce him to be a Christian. He will feel, if he does not say—and he might very properly say—that he wants no religion which will not make a man honest.
- (6) No person will attempt to do much good to others whose own life is not upright. He will be sensible of the inconsistency, and will feel that he cannot do it with any sense of propriety; and the honor of religion, therefore, and the salvation of our fellow-men, demand that in all our intercourse with others, we should lead lives of the strictest integrity.

[*Redeeming the time*] The word rendered here as "redeeming," means "to purchase; to buy up" from the possession or power of anyone; and then to redeem, to set free—as from service or bondage. Here it means, to rescue or recover our time from waste; to improve it for great and important purposes.

Commentary on Col 4:5 from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

The Christian is encouraged to present himself as someone who is responsible and knows how to live a righteous life. The testimony of the Christian should be that of a person who knows what he believes and acts accordingly. After all, we represent Jesus Christ. Our lives should reflect who He is in all that we do, for a person is judged by his lifestyle; a thief is someone who steals, and a righteous person is someone who lives righteously. "Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit" (Matt. 7:16-17). It is easy to live as a Christian when you are around Christians; but when we are out in the business of everyday life, the

challenge may be very great. When you are at work and the conversation becomes questionable, do you join in as one of the crowd, or do you make your values known? I have heard people say, "I did not know he was a Christian." A Christian needs to be an influence among people; otherwise, how will others ever know what a Christian really is? "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16). When we redeem our time, we are making use of something valuable. Time is a commodity that once lost can never be regained. So redeeming the time must be a priority, making every moment count. An employer wants those whom he hires to put forth their best effort and not spend a large portion of their time talking to coworkers and doing other unproductive things. We must keep in mind that this kind of behavior is for those outside the Christian community, for those who have never made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ. One of the best ways of witnessing is by example rather than by debate. We should never do anything that would cast doubt on our character as Christians. Jesus' testimony was just like that—holy and without sin. Listen to His challenge to those who questioned His credentials: "Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?" (John 8:46). If you were living in a place where Christians were being persecuted for their faith, would there be enough evidence to convict you? Being a Christian is not part-time work. It is to include a continual display of our life values and also to show who we are. Sometimes this means standing alone and being different from others. A missionary must bear witness in a different culture to a people who may never have heard of Christ or of being born again. The missionary shows the love of Christ first by his actions. And we, in effect, are missionaries to our society, friends, and even family. People need to see a consistent witness in our walk for Christ, a witness that would cause them to want the same life-changing experience. When we think about it, who was it that influenced us to become Christians? Was it a friend or a Sunday school teacher? We saw something in that person's life that made him stand out. He had something we did not have, and we knew it was something we could no longer live without.

Approach to the Major Outlines in Lesson

The concept of the major outlines came from NIV Standard Lesson Commentary and was determined by reviewing the Scriptural Text.

Verse	Phrase	Major Outline
5	Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth	Disciplines to Practice
12	Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on	Honor Fellow Workers

Lesson Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

In Paul's time, letters conventionally ended with a series of short, incidental instructions and a series of greetings from friends. Paul's letters normally end this way as well. But Paul also typically uses the closing section of his letters to reinforce themes that he stresses in the letter's main body. That is the case in Colossians. Paul's closing, which is our text today, is at first glance a typical list of short instructions and greetings. But Paul also reinforces his message throughout this section, providing a guide to a genuinely growing spiritual life. To grow, the Colossians cannot add anything to faith in Jesus, but they can diligently pursue habits that will strengthen and deepen their faith. Colossians is one of Paul's prison letters, written while he was in custody awaiting trial in Rome in about ad 63 (Acts 28:16-31). Remembering that setting helps us grasp the earnestness of his instructions: he writes as one who has lost his freedom because he is faithful to Christ.

From Sermon Notes of John MacArthur

Colossians chapter 4 verses 2 through 6. Now remember that the book of Colossians is a defense of the sufficiency of Christ. False teachers had come into the city of Colossae and were trying to deny that Christ was sufficient, they were trying to deny that all you needed was Jesus Christ and they were saying - No, you need Christ plus a certain human philosophy. You need Christ plus the Mosaic Law. You need Christ plus certain mystical relationships to angelic beings. You need Christ plus a certain life of self-denial. And so they were really denying the sufficiency of Christ. And in rebuttal to that the great climax of the book comes in two passages; one was alluded to earlier, it's in the first chapter where he discusses the sufficiency of Christ who is the image of the invisible God and by Him were all things made and He has all power and so forth and so on, and in the second great climactic statement is in chapter 2 verse 10 which says; "And you are complete in Him." So the argument of the book then is that in spite of the errorists teaching Christ is indeed sufficient. Christ is all we need.

And he establishes that in the first two chapters. Now having established that Christ is sufficient he begins then in chapter 3 to show what it means to have that sufficiency in Christ. If Christ is sufficient to redeem me, if He has given me new life, if He has given to me eternal life or resurrection life what does that mean to me? Well, such a new life, says Paul, demands a new lifestyle. And so chapter 3 and chapter 4 discuss the new lifestyle of the new man in Christ. And we've been looking at it ever since we began the third chapter. The first four verses define the new life. And from verses 5 through chapter 4 verse 6 we see the new lifestyle that should accompany the new life.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Disciplines to Practice (4:1-6)

- 1 Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.
- 2 Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving;
- 3 meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains,
- 4 that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.
- 5 Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time.
- 6 Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

Practice Justice (1)

Justice that comes from righteous wisdom (Ps 37:30)

- 30 The mouth of the righteous man utters wisdom, and his tongue speaks what is just.

Justice that comes from the plans of the righteous (Prov 12:5)

- 5 The plans of the righteous are just, but the advice of the wicked is deceitful.

Justice that comes from doing right (Prov 21:3)

- 3 To do what is right and just is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice.

The Just are honest and cannot be shaken (Ps 15:2-5)

- 2 He whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from his heart 3 and has no slander on his tongue, who does his neighbor no wrong and casts no slur on his fellowman, 4 who despises a vile man but honors those who fear the Lord, who keeps his oath even when it hurts, 5 who

lends his money without usury and does not accept a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things will never be shaken.

God judges the Just and is pleased if they have integrity (1 Chron 29:17)

17 I know, my God, that you test the heart and are pleased with integrity. All these things have I given willingly and with honest intent. And now I have seen with joy how willingly your people who are here have given to you.

Integrity guides the Just (Prov 11:3)

3 The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity.

God says that the Just must be trustworthy (Luke 16:11-12)

11 So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? 12 And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own?

Practice Persistent Prayer (2-4)

Persistence by praying morning, noon and night (Ps 55:16-17)

16 But I call to God, and the LORD saves me. 17 Evening, morning and noon I cry out in distress, and he hears my voice.

Persistence as taught by Jesus (Luke 18:1)

18:1 Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.

Persistence yet not being anxious (Phil 4:6)

6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

Persistence in earnest petition (James 5:16)

16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

Three elements of a productive prayer (Personal Commentary)

There are three verbs in this verse that describe how prayer can be productive. First, there is the verb **effective**. To be effective is to be operative, be at work, put forth power (Matt 14:2), to effect (1 Cor 12:11), to display one's activity, to show oneself operative (2 Thess 2:7). The key word in this definition is to be operative which means to be in effect; having force, operating or functioning efficient. The second verb is **righteous**. To be righteous is to be holy, just, right, upright, righteous, virtuous, keeping the commands of God. It is to be innocent, faultless or guiltless. It is a person whose way of thinking, feeling, and acting is wholly conformed to the will of God. It is to be approved or acceptable to God (Rom 5:19). The last and third of the verbs is **avails or accomplishes**. It means to be able, having might or strength, to be whole or to have power. This power is the ability to prevail against spiritual enemies, (i.e. to exert, wield power using the gospel - Acts 19:20). This power source and ability comes only from God. Therefore, prayer that is always at work (used) and is according to the Will of God will call upon and use the power and ability of God to prevail in this evil and degenerate time (Eph 6:10-18).

Persistence to pray in secret so that total honesty and openness can be expressed and examined (Matt 6:6)

6 But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Persistence to wait on God's answer in patient expectation (Ps 5:3)

3 In the morning, O LORD, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation.

Practice Hospitality (5)

Be hospitable by sharing (Rom 12:13)

13 Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

Be hospitable by entertaining strangers (Heb 13:2)

2 Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.

Be hospitable by not forgetting to do good to others (Heb 13:16)

16 And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

Be hospitable by feeding the hungry, clothing the naked and looking after the sick (Matt 25:35-40)

35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' 37 "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38 When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? 39 When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' 40 "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'

Be hospitable by helping others (Acts 11:29)

29 The disciples, each according to his ability, decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea.

Be hospitable by using the gifts God has given us (Rom 12:5-8)

5 so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. 6 We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. 7 If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; 8 if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

Practice Godly Speech (6)

Godly speech is when wisdom is spoken (Ps 37:30)

30 The mouth of the righteous man utters wisdom, and his tongue speaks what is just.

Godly speech is when knowledge is spoken (Prov 15:2)

2 The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouth of the fool gushes folly.

Godly speech brings healing (Prov 15:4)

4 The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life, but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit.

Godly speech is when God provides instruction through it (Isa 50:4)

4 The Sovereign Lord has given me an instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being taught.

Godly speech is when integrity is shown through it (Titus 2:7-8)

7 In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.

Honor Fellow Workers (4:7-17)

7 Tychicus, a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me. 8 I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that he may know your circumstances and comfort your hearts, 9 with Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will make known to you all things which are happening here.

10 Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, with Mark the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him),

11 and Jesus who is called Justus. These are my only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are of the circumcision; they have proved to be a comfort to me.

12 Epaphras, who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

13 For I bear him witness that he has a great zeal for you, and those who are in Laodicea, and those in Hierapolis.

14 Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you.

15 Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea, and Nymphas and the church that is in his house.

16 Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.

17 And say to Archippus, "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it."

Honor those who inform (7-9)

Honor those messengers who bring good news (Rom 10:14-15, 17)

14 How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? 15 And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" 16 But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our message?" 17 Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.

Honor those who inform through the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8)

8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Honor those who inform through teaching (2 Tim 2:2)

2 And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.

Honor those who inform by giving them honor they are due (Rom 13:7)

7 Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.

Honor those whose work is preaching (1 Tim 5:17)

17 The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.

Honor hard workers (10-14)

Honor workers who almost die for the work of God (Phil 2:29-30)

29 Welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor men like him, 30 because he almost died for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up for the help you could not give me.

Honor workers who supply what is lacking in others (1 Cor 16:17-18)

17 I was glad when Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus arrived, because they have supplied what was lacking from you. 18 For they refreshed my spirit and yours also. Such men deserve recognition.

Honor workers who direct the affairs of the Church (1 Tim 5:17)

17 The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.

Honor workers who are faithful in doing what has been assigned (Matt 24:45-47)

45 "Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? 46 It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. 47 I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. NIV

Honor workers who devote themselves to the service of the saints (1 Cor 16:15-16)

15 You know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints. I urge you, brothers, 16 to submit to such as these and to everyone who joins in the work, and labors at it.

Honor other ministries (15-17)

Honor other ministries by giving to them generously (2 Cor 8:1-4)

And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. 2 Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. 3 For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, 4 they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints.

Honor other ministries by serving them (2 Cor 9:1-2)

There is no need for me to write to you about this service to the saints. 2 For I know your eagerness to help, and I have been boasting about it to the Macedonians, telling them that since last year you in Achaia were ready to give; and your enthusiasm has stirred most of them to action.

Honor other ministries by supplying their needs (2 Cor 9:12-13)

12 This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. 13 Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else.

Honor other ministries by doing good deeds for them (Gal 6:10)

10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

Conclusions and Other Thoughts

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

1. Treating a servant or an employee with respect helps him see that his work is important (Col. 4:1)
2. When we express gratitude as we pray, it enables us to accept all God's answers (vs. 2)
3. One way to pray for someone's salvation is to ask that the Holy Spirit make the gospel real to that person (vs. 3)
4. We should pray that pastors remain undistracted in their work (vs. 4)
5. Living for Christ means being aware that we are His personal examples (vs. 5)
6. When we witness, we must not be sidetracked by non-gospel issues (vs. 6)

Concluding Thoughts from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

God wants us to share the good news with others. This responsibility and privilege has been given to Christians. Angels have not been assigned to reach the world for Christ. The sovereign plan of God is that those who have been born again be assigned to give the gospel to others and to live the Christian life in harmony with the message they give. This is indeed a solemn and sacred responsibility for those in the family of God. Imagine it-God has ordained that those in His family should be His instruments to win others to Himself. God desires to use us! Emory Griffin has given us a good word concerning our responsibilities as ambassadors for Christ: "As ambassadors for Christ we need to have an ethical standard which guides our appeal regardless of how people respond. I believe there is such a standard, simply stated, it is this: any persuasive effort which restricts another's freedom to choose for or against Jesus Christ is wrong" (The Mind Changers, Tyndale).

In Col. 4:1-4 the apostle was led by the Spirit to remind his dear friends in Colosse of their need of prayer to their Master in heaven. We Christians pray a lot, and that is a good thing. However, we sometimes forget what a wonderful privilege that is. The position we assume when we pray may vary, but we are told to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17). When possible, it is good to kneel in prayer. The psalmist said, "O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker" (Ps. 95:6). Notice too that prayer is worship, and the basic meaning of both the Hebrew and the Greek word for "worship" is "to bow down" or "to fall prostrate." Both kneeling and prostration signify giving honor to God. We have many things to bring before the Lord. One needs to be that God will open opportunities to share the good news of the gospel. Sometimes we need to make opportunities and be alert to take advantage of them. Even Paul the apostle needed an open door and clarity of speech to share Christ. Never give up in your prayer life. The Prophet Habakkuk was terribly distraught that God was using wicked people to punish Judah. He decided to stand by and see what God would do (Hab. 2:1). He wanted an answer, and he wanted it right then. But God told him to wait for the answer, for "it [would] surely come, it [would] not tarry" (vs. 3).

Like the Colossian believers, we too need to always seek to be sure our conduct is not a detraction from the gospel. And like them, we also need to always make the most of every open door of opportunity. We certainly need the wisdom of God when we give the message of God's grace. There are times when Satan motivates the unsaved to use some tactic to sidetrack the person from the real issue. Sometimes they will raise questions that have nothing to do with the gospel. "Where did Cain get his wife?" is a common question. "Why did Christ choose Judas Iscariot as one of His disciples?" is another. It is better to not even try to answer such questions. Gently and with a spirit of grace, bring the lost person back to the real issue, which is what he must do to be sure of heaven. When dealing with those outside of Christ, we must seek the wisdom and guidance of God as we tell them the good news.