

Uniting Heaven and Earth: Christ in Philippians and Colossians Living with Each Other

Lesson #12 for March 21, 2026

Scriptures: **Colossians 3:18-4:6**; Ephesians 5:22-25,33; Proverbs 22:6,15; 1 Peter 2:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:17.

1. In what way are we *living with each other*? What are the issues? Who is included in the term *each other*? With whom are we to “live”? Are we to be good neighbors for eternity?

[From the *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*=T-BSG:] This ... lesson emphasizes two major themes:

1. Biblical principles concerning both family and work relations;
2. Instructions about vigilant prayer, the wise walk, and gracious speech.—
*T-BSG** 158.‡

[T-BSG:] Colossians 3:18–4:1 contains a series of household rules. Paul summarizes how wives and husbands, children and parents, and slaves and masters are supposed to behave in light of the gospel message. As we will see, Paul is not one-sided in his discussion. He has specific instructions for all these groups and expects them to fulfill their duties as a demonstration of their faithfulness to God. Thus, wives are expected to submit to their husbands “as is fitting in the Lord” (*Col. 3:18, NKJV*); children must obey their parents because “this is well pleasing to the Lord” (*Col. 3:20, NKJV*); and bondservants must obey their “masters according to the flesh,” “fearing God” (*Col. 3:22, NKJV*).—*T-BSG** 158.‡§

[T-BSG:] Interestingly, “in each category, the party typically viewed as more vulnerable is addressed first. The commands to the vulnerable party are helpfully paired with specific commands to the one having more power. Paul calls on the powerful ones to not abuse their power but to use it wisely. This allows the vulnerable to more willingly submit to those in authority.”—Douglas Mangum, ed., “The Christian Home ([Col.] 3:18–4:1),” *Lexham Context Commentary: New Testament* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020). After addressing these issues, Paul turns to specific exhortations regarding the external influence that church members, through prayer, wisdom, and seasoned speech, may exert by presenting their faith to outsiders.—*T-BSG** 158.‡¶§

The Relationship Between Wives and Husbands

2. Let us review what Paul wrote about wives and husbands in his letters to the Corinthians which were written years before the advice he gave to the Ephesians and Colossians.

1 Corinthians 7:1-7: ¹Now, to deal with the matters you wrote about.

A man does well not to marry. ²But because there is so much immorality, every man should have his own wife, and every woman should have her own husband. ³A man should fulfill his duty as a husband, and a woman should fulfill her duty as a wife, and each should satisfy the other’s needs. ⁴A wife is not the master of her own body, but her husband is; in the same way a husband is not the master of his own body, but his wife is. ⁵Do not deny yourselves to each other, unless you first agree to do so for a while in

order to spend your time in prayer; but then resume normal marital relations. In this way you will be kept from giving in to Satan's temptation because of your lack of self-control. [These cities were rife with sexual immorality.]

⁶I tell you this not as an order, but simply as a permission. ⁷Actually I would prefer that all of you were as I am; but each one has a special gift from God, one person this gift, another one that gift.—American Bible Society. (©1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation*^{®*} [GNT] (*Today's English Version*) [TEV], Second Edition (1 Corinthians 7:1-7). Philadelphia: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible-TEV*^{*} or *GNB-TEV*^{*}].[‡] [Sexual immorality was common and popular as a part of religion!][‡]

1 Corinthians 7:27-31: ²⁷**Do you have a wife? Then don't try to get rid of her. Are you unmarried? Then don't look for a wife.** ²⁸But if you do marry, you haven't committed a sin; and if an unmarried woman marries, she hasn't committed a sin. But I would rather spare you the everyday troubles that married people will have.

²⁹ What I mean, my friends, is this: **there is not much time left**, and from now on married people should live as though they were not married; ³⁰those who weep, as though they were not sad; those who laugh, as though they were not happy; those who buy, as though they did not own what they bought; ³¹those who deal in material goods, as though they were not fully occupied with them. **For this world**, as it is now, **will not last much longer.**—*Good News Bible-TEV.*^{*†} [This was written about A.D. 61.][‡]

1 Corinthians 11:3: But I want you to understand that Christ is supreme over every man, the husband is supreme over his wife, and God is supreme over Christ.—*Good News Bible-TEV.*^{*}

3. Look now at **what Paul said to the Colossians and Ephesians**. These two books were written during his house arrest in Rome at nearly the same time but were **written more than ten years after he had written Corinthians** which we just read.

Colossians 3:18-19: ¹⁸Wives, submit to your husbands, for that is what you should do as Christians.

¹⁹ Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.—*GNB-TEV.*^{*}

Ephesians 5:21-33: ²¹Submit yourselves to one another because of your reverence for Christ.

²² Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands as to the Lord. ²³For a husband has authority over his wife **just as Christ has authority over the church**; and Christ is himself the Savior of the church, his body. ²⁴And so wives must submit completely to their husbands just as the church submits itself to Christ. [Paul was over 30 and married before the "Damascus road"!]

²⁵ **Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave his life for it.** ²⁶He did this to dedicate the church to God by his word, after making it clean by washing it in water, ²⁷in order to present the church to himself in all its beauty—pure and faultless, without spot or wrinkle or any other imperfection. ²⁸Men ought to love their wives just as they love their own bodies. A man who loves his wife loves himself. (²⁹None of us ever hate our own bodies. Instead, we feed them and take care of them, just as Christ

does the church; ³⁰for we are members of his body.) ³¹As the scripture says, “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and unite with his wife, and the two will become one.” ³²There is a deep secret truth revealed in this scripture, which I understand as applying to Christ and the church. ³³But it also applies to you: every husband must love his wife as himself, and every wife must respect her husband.—*Good News Bible-TEV*.*†‡

[T-BSG:] Paul’s command for wives to submit to their husbands (*Col. 3:18*) has been a matter of much debate. The parallel passage in Ephesians 5:22 is almost synonymous: “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord” (*NKJV*). However, before making this statement, Paul first says, “**Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ**” (*Eph. 5:21, NIV*). The verb “submit” in Ephesians 5:22 does not occur in the original text in Greek but is correctly supplied, based on its occurrence in Ephesians 5:21. This provision suggests that Ephesians 5:22 is connected with Ephesians 5:21 and should be interpreted in that context. Thus, in a sense, not only are wives called to submit to their husbands, but husbands are also called to submit to their wives “out of reverence for Christ” (*Eph. 5:21, ESV*).

Paul’s command for wives to submit to their husbands must not be interpreted in the sense of women’s inferiority. Rather, “what is involved here is that in voluntarily subordinating herself to her husband the wife is to see this as done in subordination to the Lord, because **in the marriage relationship her husband reflects the Lord while she reflects the Church.**”—Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, [sic] vol. 42 (Dallas, TX: Word, Incorporated, 1990), p. 368.

Notably, in both Ephesians and Colossians, the expected attitude of husbands toward their wives is the same: “Husbands, love your wives” (*Eph. 5:25, Col. 3:19, NKJV*). While the command to wives is almost synonymous in the parallel passages—“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord” (*Eph. 5:22, NKJV*) and “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord” (*Col. 3:18, NKJV*)—the command to husbands shows a noteworthy distinction: “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her” (*Eph. 5:25, NKJV; see also Eph. 5:28*), and “Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them” (*Col. 3:19, NKJV*). **In Ephesians, husbands are expected to demonstrate a sacrificial love, just as Jesus did for the church.**

In Colossians, the command for husbands to love their wives is coupled with the additional instruction not to “be bitter toward them.” The Greek word is *pikrainō*, which is cognate [that is, from the same original word] to the word *pikros*, used to portray “a characteristic regularly attributed to a tyrannical overlordship.”—James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary [sic] (Grand Rapids, MI: Carlisle: William B. Eerdmans Publishing; Paternoster Press, 1996), p. 249. Wives are expected to submit themselves voluntarily to their husbands, as they would submit themselves to the Lord.—*T-BSG** 159.†‡§

[From the *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*=BSG:] Some men

quote, **“Wives, submit to your husbands”** (*Col. 3:18, ESV*) and stop there, but **notice the important qualifier Paul adds: “as is fitting in the Lord.”** Nowhere does the New Testament teach that women are to submit to all men; nor that wives are subservient or subjugated; nor that they are to blindly submit to their husbands’ every whim or desire. Paul’s point is that the wife’s loyalty is to the Lord first and to her husband second. The wife’s individuality must not be swallowed up by her husband, nor can he act as her conscience.—*BSG** for Sunday, March 15.^{†§}

4. Clearly, if every husband loved his wife as Christ loved the church and was willing to give Himself for her, it would be well! There should be equality between husbands and wives!

[*BSG:*] **A healthy Christian marriage is characterized by mutuality—consulting each other, thinking things through together, and making decisions as a couple. Sometimes, when making decisions that have serious implications for the whole family, it may be appropriate to include children in these discussions, but never should parents quarrel in front of them.**

After such a process, if the husband and wife are unable to come to an agreement, the biblical path to peace is for the wife to acquiesce to her husband’s judgment, provided it does not violate the Word of God. By the same token, most, if not all, husbands can recall times they were happy that they listened to their wives and took their advice. **The more the husband and wife work together as a team, the happier the marriage will be.**

How can we avoid doing what has, unfortunately, been done all through history: taking the beautiful principles expressed in these texts and turning them into something evil?—*BSG** for Sunday, March 15.[†]

Parents and Children: Was It a Good Idea for God to Call Himself a “Father”?

Colossians 3:20-21: ²⁰ Children, it is your Christian duty to obey your parents always, for that is what pleases God.

²¹ **Parents, do not irritate your children,** or they will become discouraged.—*Good News Bible-TEV.*†*

[*T-BSG:*] Paul’s instructions for children and parents are based in reciprocal responsibilities, similar to his approach with wives and husbands. The command for children to obey their parents (*Col. 3:20*) is rooted in the fifth commandment. This basis is evident in Ephesians, in which, after giving a virtually identical command (*Eph. 6:1*), Paul quotes Exodus 20:12 (see *Eph. 6:2, 3*). Children are expected to be not only obedient to their parents but also a source of joy to them (*Prov. 15:20, Prov. 23:24, etc.*).—*T-BSG** 160.^{†§}

5. ***What can you remember from your childhood about your relationship with your parents? Was your father more strict than your mother? When you did something wrong and you knew it, did you run to your mother to protect you from your father? Did your mother ever punish you? Or, did your father always do the punishing?***
6. There are many passages in Scripture talking about how parents should relate to children. See especially Proverbs 22:6,15; Proverbs 1:8-9; Matthew 19:14; Deuteronomy 6:6-7.

Proverbs 22:6,15: ⁶Teach children how they should live, and they will

remember it all their lives....

¹⁵ **Children just naturally do silly, careless things, but a good spanking will teach them how to behave.**—*Good News Bible-TEV*.^{*†}

Proverbs 1:8-9: ⁸My child, pay attention to what your father and mother tell you.

⁹Their teaching will improve your character as a handsome turban or a necklace improves your appearance.—*Good News Bible-TEV*.^{*}

[T-BSG:] In turn, parents must not provoke their children. There is debate as to what Paul meant by using the term “provoke” (*Col. 3:21*). [Then, Ellen G. White is quoted, and that is expanded below.]—*T-BSG*^{* 160}.^{‡§}

[From the writings of Ellen G. White=EGW:] **When children lose their self-control, and speak passionate words, the parents should for a time keep silent, neither reproving nor condemning. At such times silence is golden, and will do more to bring repentance than any words that can be uttered. Satan is well pleased when parents irritate their children by speaking harsh, angry words. Paul has given a caution on this point: “Fathers provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.” They may be very wrong, but you can not lead them to the right by losing patience with them.** Let your calmness help to restore them to a proper frame of mind.—Ellen G. White, *The Review and Herald*,^{*} January 24, 1907, par. 8.^{†‡} [Was it like that when you were a child?][‡]

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7. **What type of words was Ellen White writing about?**

[BSG:] Studies show, too, that when both parents go to church, a higher percentage of children remain churchgoers, as opposed to if only one parent goes. Even more surprising, consistent church attendance by the father, even more than by the mother, means a greater number of children remain in church as adults. The role of the father, then, in the spiritual formation of his children, cannot be [must not be] underestimated. How crucial that fathers take their roles seriously.—*BSG*^{*} for Monday, March 16.[‡]

[BSG:] Not all fathers, however, have been (to put it mildly) exemplary role models for their children. How can knowledge of God as our Father help bring healing where needed, especially when earthly fathers have caused great damage?—*BSG*^{*} for Monday, March 16.[‡]

[EGW:] Every member of the family should realize that a responsibility rests upon him individually to do his part in adding to the comfort, order, and regularity of the family. One should not work against another. All should unitedly engage in the good work of encouraging one another; they should exercise gentleness, forbearance, and patience; speak in low, calm tones, shunning confusion; and each doing his utmost to lighten the burdens of the mother....

Each member of the family should understand just the part he is expected to act in union with the others. All, **from the child six years old and upward**, should understand that it is required of them to **bear their share of life’s burdens**.—Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home*^{*} 179.5-180.1.^{†‡}

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[BSG:] Many loving, caring parents who raised their children in fine Christian homes often have to deal with adult children who reject the faith. What advice and comfort can you give them? What might be better not to say at all?—BSG* for Friday, March 20.‡

8. Remember that our perfect “Father” in a perfect universe “lost” one-third of His children!

[EGW:] **We must let Christ into our hearts and homes if we would walk in the light. Home should be made all that the word implies. It should be a little heaven upon earth, a place where the affections are cultivated instead of being studiously repressed. Our happiness depends upon this cultivation of love, sympathy, and true courtesy to one another.** The reason there are so many hardhearted men and women in our world is that true affection has been regarded as weakness and has been discouraged and repressed. The better part of the nature of persons of this class was perverted and dwarfed in childhood, and unless rays of divine light can melt away their coldness and hardhearted selfishness, the happiness of such is buried forever. If we would have tender hearts, such as Jesus had when He was upon the earth, and sanctified sympathy, such as the angels have for sinful mortals, we must cultivate the sympathies of childhood, which are simplicity itself. Then we shall be refined, elevated, and directed by heavenly principles. [Could we grow up to be like Jesus?]

A cultivated intellect is a great treasure; but without the softening influence of sympathy and sanctified love, it is not of the highest value. We should have words and deeds of tender consideration for others. We can manifest a thousand little attentions in friendly words and pleasant looks, which will be reflected upon us again. Thoughtless Christians manifest by their neglect of others that they are not in union with Christ. It is impossible to be in union with Christ and yet be unkind to others and forgetful of their rights. Many long intensely for friendly sympathy. God has given each of us an identity of our own, which cannot be merged in that of another; but our individual characteristics will be much less prominent if we are indeed Christ’s and His will is ours. Our lives should be consecrated to the good and happiness of others, as was our Saviour’s [*sic*-British spelling]. **We should be self-forgetful, ever looking out for opportunities, even in little things, to show gratitude for the favors we have received of others, and watching for opportunities to cheer others and lighten and relieve their sorrows and burdens by acts of tender kindness and little deeds of love. These thoughtful courtesies, that, commencing in our families, extend outside the family circle, help make up the sum of life’s happiness; and the neglect of these little things makes up the sum of life’s bitterness and sorrow.**—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*,* vol. 3, 539.1-540.0.†‡ [Have you observed this in your own experience?][‡] [<https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p119.2533&index=0>][‡]

Relationship Between Slaves and Masters

Colossians 3:22-4:1: ²²Slaves, obey your human masters [Does that included bosses?] in all things, not only when they are watching you because you want to gain their approval; but do it with a sincere heart because of your

reverence for the Lord. ²³Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as though you were working for the Lord and not for people. ²⁴Remember that the Lord will give you as a reward what he has kept for his people. For Christ is the real Master you serve. ²⁵And all wrongdoers will be repaid for the wrong things they do, because God judges everyone by the same standard. ^{4:1}Masters, be fair and just in the way you treat your slaves. Remember that you too have a Master in heaven.—*Good News Bible-TEV*.*‡

[BSG:] **People today sometimes bring up slavery as a way to relegate some of the Bible’s counsels to the past, if not to discredit Scripture entirely.** But, ironically, this takes little to no account of the historical contexts within Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church. Human beings are made in God’s image and, like all of God’s intelligent beings, are designed for freedom. Mosaic laws prohibited Israelites from being perpetual slaves (*Deut. 15:12*) and **stipulated six years as the maximum term of service to pay off financial indebtedness** (*Exod. 21:2–6, Lev. 25:39–43*). The slavery in the Bible, however repugnant to our modern sense, was not normally like the abominable practices of slavery that have been seen in the Western world [and in the Arab world], which was a scourge and horrific crime against humanity.—*BSG** for Tuesday.†‡§

[T-BSG:] Finally, Paul addresses the relationship between slaves and masters. Both slaves and masters are expected to fulfill their duties in light of their responsibilities before God. Slaves are given two commands. First, they should obey their “masters . . . fearing God” (*Col. 3:22, NKJV*). The phrase “fearing God” is commonly understood as the basis for the second command, “since you fear God.” Slaves or bondservants should keep in mind that, ultimately, their service to an earthly master is representative of their service to the Lord Jesus (*Col. 3:23, 24*).—*T-BSG** 160.†§

[T-BSG:] Contrary to what many people may think, **slavery in the first century differed considerably from the form practiced in the Western World in recent times.** Differences include the following: In New Testament times, “racial factors played no role; education was greatly encouraged (some slaves were better educated than their owners) and enhanced a slave’s value; many slaves carried out sensitive and highly responsible social functions; slaves could own property (including other slaves!); their religious and cultural traditions were the same as those of the freeborn; no laws prohibited public assembly of slaves; and (perhaps above all) the majority of urban and domestic slaves could legitimately anticipate being emancipated by the age of 30.”—S. Scott Bartchy, “Slavery: New Testament,” *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman et al., vol. 6 (New York: Doubleday, 1992), p. 66.—*T-BSG** 160.†‡§

9. Paul did not suggest that slavery was in any way legitimate. Trying to fight against slavery in the Roman Empire in Paul’s days would have negated his ability to preach the gospel.

[BSG:] In New Testament times, the church had to operate within the framework of Roman law, which provided for owning slaves: “But, unlike modern forms of slavery, Roman law afforded slaves considerable rights

and opportunities, and attempting to overturn the practice could have threatened the advancement of the gospel.”—Clinton Wahlen, “Culture, Hermeneutics, and Scripture: Discerning What Is Universal,” in Frank M. Hasel, ed., *Biblical Hermeneutics: An Adventist Approach* (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute/Review and Herald Academic, 2020), p. 166. [Paul would have been arrested if he had spoken against slavery!]

In fact, within the church, unlike more generally within the Roman Empire, the slave’s first obligation was to the Lord. And their masters were instructed to treat them fairly, “knowing that you also have a Master in heaven” (*Col. 4:1, NKJV*). Moreover, Paul instructed Philemon not to treat Onesimus any longer as his slave but as his brother (*Philem. 16*). Actually, in both the Old and New Testaments, believers are called slaves (or servants) of God (see, for example, *Ps. 34:22, Luke 17:10, 1 Pet. 2:16*).—BSG* for Tuesday.†§

10. One of Paul’s clearest examples about how to deal with slaves is found in Philemon.

Philemon [1:]16: And now he is not just a slave, but much more than a slave: he is a dear brother in Christ. How much he means to me! And how much more he will mean to you, both as a slave and as a brother in the Lord!—*Good News Bible-TEV*.*† [Onesimus traveled back “home” with Tychicus.]‡

11. **We need to remember that we are all slaves/servants of the Lord, and we should treat all others as brothers and sisters and as fellow servants/slaves of the Master.**

[BSG:] Even if we don’t like the cultural circumstances in which some Bible texts were written, we still must accept the authority of the text itself. Otherwise, we have placed ourselves and our culture above Scripture. The better option is to **look at everything the Bible says about a topic before reaching a conclusion about what the Bible is telling us about it.**

Consider how this passage could apply to your relationships at work. How might its principles be helpful to you as a boss or an employee?—BSG* for Tuesday, March 17.†‡ [Consider carefully the original **context** of the words!]

12. **It is totally wrong to try to interpret Scripture in terms of the cultural norms of our day. We must understand Scripture in the context in which it was written. Then, we can, if we understand those times correctly, apply the principles to our situation.**

13. ***Is what the Bible says about relationships between slaves and masters relevant to our relationships at work, even if we are not slaves? Or, masters of slaves?***

Prayer: For Whom? How? When? And Relationships

14. **Does it do any good for us to pray for someone with whom we can have no contact?**

Colossians 4:2-4: ²Be persistent in prayer, and keep alert as you pray, giving thanks to God. ³At the same time pray also for us, so that God will give us a good opportunity to preach his message about the secret of Christ. For that is why I am now in prison. ⁴Pray, then, that I may speak, as I should, in such a way as to make it clear.—*Good News Bible-TEV*.*

[BSG:] Some of the most important words we can say to someone who is struggling with issues of various kinds, be they family, health, money, or something else, are “**I’m praying for you.**” This is heaven’s chosen means

of connectivity and interactivity.—BSG* for Wednesday, March 18.†‡

[EGW:] **It is a part of God’s plan to grant us, in answer to the prayer of faith, that which He would not bestow did we not thus ask.**—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy** 525.2.†‡

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[BSG:] Notice the impactful descriptions of prayer Paul uses: “continue” (or persevere), “earnestly,” “being vigilant,” and “with thanksgiving”—signaling that this is a prayer of faith (*Col. 4:2, NKJV*). He tells us to pray “always” (*Eph. 6:18*) and “without ceasing” (*1 Thess. 5:17*). Most amazingly, even though “we know not what we should pray for as we ought . . . the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” (*Rom. 8:26*).—BSG* for Wednesday, March 18.‡§

15. **Those who are somewhat familiar with Paul’s writings recognize that he was constantly encouraging church members to be faithful in prayer. If we do this, we might find that opportunities are opened, as doors, to share our faith.**
16. **Sometimes when reading the very sophisticated and sometimes complicated writings of Paul, (2 Peter 3:14-15) we might think that all he said and did was eloquent in that same way. But, representing the gospel can be done in very casual ways, assuming we are true Christians.**

[EGW:] **It is not always necessary to bow upon your knees in order to pray.** Cultivate the habit of talking with the Saviour [*sic*-British spelling] when you are alone, when you are walking, and when you are busy with your daily labor. **Let the heart be continually uplifted in silent petition for help, for light, for strength, for knowledge. Let every breath be a prayer.**—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing** 510.1-511.0.†‡

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17. Paul continued in Colossians advising us to be wise in all that we do.

[BSG:] **What is the most important truth that we, as Christians, can know? Of course, it is that Jesus Christ died for our sins [See below for a different view!] and that, through faith in Him, we can have eternal life.** This is a truth that we could have never figured out on our own. Instead, it was a truth that had to be told, or revealed, to us. And it has been revealed to us—in the Word of God.—BSG* for Thursday, March 19.†‡

18. **I, Ken Hart, would strongly disagree with the first two sentences above! I would say that the most important truth we can ever know is the truth about God. (John 17:3) Focusing on our own salvation is not wrong, it is just egocentric, even selfish!**

[BSG:] There’s a great deal of truth, knowledge, and wisdom that we would never have known were it not for what God has revealed to us in His Word. But this knowledge and wisdom have not been given to us just as knowledge, just as something to know. Rather, we are to live out in our own lives this truth, this knowledge, and this wisdom.—BSG* for Thursday.‡

Colossians 4:5-6: ⁵Be wise in the way you act toward those who are not believers, making good use of every opportunity you have. ⁶Your speech should always be pleasant and interesting, and you should know how to give the

right answer to everyone.—*Good News Bible-TEV*.*

[BSG:] Unfortunately, as Christians, sometimes we are anything but Christian! And, as Paul indicated (quoting Isaiah 52:5), Israel was also a stumbling block for unbelievers: “For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you” (*Rom. 2:24*). How we act toward others, especially those not of our faith, matters a lot (see *Titus 2:5, 2 Pet. 2:2*). A Christian home, a gathering of youth for prayer rather than for mischief; simple kindnesses; and a calm, patient spirit speak volumes to those who are watching to see whether our profession is genuine or not.—*BSG** for Thursday, March 19.‡§

Isaiah 52:5: “And now in Babylonia the same thing has happened: you are captives, and nothing was paid for you. Those who rule over you boast and brag and constantly show contempt for me [YAHWEH].”—*GNB-TEV*.*‡

Romans 2:24: The scripture says, “Because of you Jews, the Gentiles speak evil of God.”—*Good News Bible-TEV*.*

Titus 2:5: To be self-controlled and pure, and to be good housewives who submit themselves to their husbands, so that no one will speak evil of the message that comes from God.—*Good News Bible-TEV*.*

2 Peter 2:2: Even so, many will follow their immoral ways; and because of what they do, others will speak evil of the Way of truth.—*Good News Bible-TEV*.*

19. Paul concluded by saying that we must always be very gracious and kind and considerate in our words. Only the Holy Spirit can give us the right words at the right time. But, of course, the Holy Spirit is always ready to do that.

[BSG:] In Colossians 4:6, Paul focuses especially on the words we speak: “Let your speech always be gracious” (*ESV*). More than simply kind or polite, the words we speak should be prompted and permeated by God’s grace through the influence of the Holy Spirit.

“Seasoned with salt.” Opposite to the world’s definition of “salty” speech, our words should be fitting and appealing to those we address.

“That you may know how you ought to answer each one” (*NKJV*). Only the Holy Spirit can give us the right words at the right time for the right purpose and prepare the minds of the hearers for the message we “must” share.—*BSG** for Thursday, March 19.‡§

[BSG:] Think about your words, your actions, and how you walk before others. What message are you sending about your faith and what it means to be a Christian?—*BSG** for Thursday, March 19.‡

[BSG:] For married couples, what principles have helped you in your relationship? What advice do you have for the unmarried, and how they should prepare for the challenges that marriage always brings?—*BSG** for Friday, March 20.‡

20. ***Do you have any valuable advice for the unmarried? And for children?***

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