



**Bible Study – February 21, 2024**

**Be Wise and Be Harmless**

**Series: A Study About Sharing Your Faith**

**Lesson 8: Be Wise and Be Harmless**

**Colossians 4:2-4, Acts 17:32-34 | Matthew 10:16-18 (ESV)**

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## Introduction

Last week, we spoke about being watchful or alert when witnessing. This lesson will teach you three essential things about being watchful as you obey Jesus' command. The Lord knows what you will encounter each time you share your faith story with unbelievers, people with religious differences, cult followers, persecutors, and such as these. This is why you should yield to the guidance of the Holy Spirit each time you witness. Do not be controversial or judgmental when approaching spiritually different or spiritless people. Let's learn why.

## Live Wisely Among Unbelievers

**Colossians 4:5-6**

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

Apostle Paul encouraged the believers in Colossae to live their lives wisely, especially among unbelievers of the faith. These people were considered outsiders because of their stance against the Christian Faith. Were they atheists, marauders, opposing religions, or persecutors because of the Name of Jesus Christ? We do not know because the Scriptures are silent about who these outsiders are. But whoever these people were, the believers were to live their lives wisely around them. Also, this GODLY wisdom was to be noticed by these outsiders, and they were to make the best use of their time. In other words, do not allow unbelievers to waste precious time criticizing the faith.

Another word of encouragement Paul gave to these believers was to be ready to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. Their speech should always be gracious, pleasing, and seasoned with salt, pure, and penetrating. This would allow them to know how to answer those questioning the reason for their hope (*See 1 Peter 3:15*). Even today, unbelievers challenge our hope in the resurrection and our eternal life in the kingdom of GOD. We must know how to give a gentle answer that will turn away their wrath. Otherwise, harsh speech will stir their anger (*See Proverbs 15:1*).



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**Q. Suppose you got confronted for sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ in a forbidden place and were taken before a judge. What would be your answer about sharing your faith?** \_\_\_\_\_

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### **Expect Different Reactions About the Gospel**

**Acts 17:32-34**

*Now, when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, "We will hear you again about this." So Paul went out from their midst. But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.*

This journey, recorded in Acts 17, was a part of Paul's second mission. The Jewish people and troublemakers in Thessalonica rejected him even though he did win some. They attacked his friends whom he stayed with. It was so dangerous that he and Silas had to flee from there at night to Berea. When they arrived at that city, they were welcomed and eager to listen to Paul share the Scriptures about Christ, his suffering, and his resurrection from the dead. Again, he did win a significant number of believers. However, when the Jews and troublemakers heard about it, they came to Berea and agitated the people there against him. Once more, Paul was sent to Athens, a seacoast city far from those troubled cities.

While in Athens, Paul waited for Silas and Timothy to join him there. Since he had some time to wait, he began observing the many idols they worshipped in Athens. The Scriptures say that Paul's spirit was provoked as he looked at the numerous idols around the city. In the meantime, he began reasoning with the Jews, God-fearing Gentiles, and in the marketplace there. When the word got out that Paul was in their town, some called him an idle babbler. Others labeled him a proclaimer of strange deities. However, he would eventually be taken to the Areopagus Council to speak before them. As you know, Paul talked to the crowd about the altar—TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. He delivered a convincing speech about the LORD GOD and concluded with Christ and His resurrection from the dead.

At this point, Paul received a mixed reaction from different groups in the crowd about the resurrection from the dead. Some mocked or booed him. Why? Because it was nonsense for them



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to think that a dead man could be raised from the dead to live forever. Others, with cautious curiosity, wanted to know more about the resurrection that Paul presented to them. From then on, Paul left them with a few believers to follow him. Men and women followed him. It was noted that one of the council members was converted along with a woman named Damaris. Though no church was established in Athens, Paul did preach the gospel there. When sharing your story, expect different or mixed reactions from those listening. Expect some to resist when you tell them that Christ died, was buried, and raised from the dead according to the Scriptures. Be aware of those who mocked you, but do not let it intimidate or provoke you to anger (*See James 1:19*).

**Q. Since we have been sharing our stories, passing out tracks, and praying with others, have you experienced any mixed reactions?** \_\_\_\_\_

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### **Expect the Possibility of Persecution**

**Matthew 10:16-18**

*"Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles."*

Do not be afraid when you hear the word "persecution." Do not shut down because of this word. Do not leave the battlefield to turn back when winning souls into the kingdom of GOD because of this word. When the disciples were listening to the words of Jesus, they were not encouraging words. Their task to witness would be challenging. When we understand the Lord's comparison of the disciples being like sheep (gentle and easily led) and the world like wolves (ferocious and vicious), we know why they needed wisdom to avoid danger and innocence for not opposing their enemies. Innocent means being pure in their behavior.

They were warned about being arrested and taken to court so a judge could make a ruling about them. In their case, it would be their fellow Jewish leaders punishing them (*See Acts 5:40*). Jesus told them that even the government would get involved in their punishment because of Him. However, these things would happen so they could bear witness before the Jews, Gentiles, governors, and kings. The arrest of Stephen was further proof that Jesus' disciples would be



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accused, arrested, put on trial, and persecuted for their testimony ([See Acts 6:11-7:53](#)). As His disciples today, we should be determined with the help of the Holy Spirit to proclaim the gospel often without fear of opposition.

**Q. List some reasons why GOD desires that all people be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.** \_\_\_\_\_

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#### **Endnotes**

1. Drs. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament* (Colorado Springs: Chariot Victor Publishing, 1983) 42, 404, and 684.
2. Unless otherwise stated, all Scripture is taken from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®*, ESV®, Copyright © 2001, 2007, 2011, 2016 by Crossway Books and Bibles, A Publishing Ministry of Good News Publishers Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved.