**Preliminary Questions on Colossians 4:6**

I first typed in all these questions before studying the verse in depth. Then I went back and tried to find the answers in the context, parallel passages, reference tools, and commentaries (cf. p. 27 step 1.b.1).

**Verses Questions**

Context What did the author record just prior to this passage?

Paul has been talking about prayer in relation to unbelievers (vv. 2-4) and then conduct towards them (v. 5). Now he turns to the most obvious type of conduct—our speech.

Purpose Why is this passage in the Bible?

This shows us how our speech to non-Christians can be effective (the subject).

Background What historical context helps us understand this passage?

The Colossians were confronted with a serious cult in their midst to which they needed to respond.

6a Does this conversation refer to speech in general or in particular circumstances? The context shows that it is speech directed towards non-believers, but I don’t think the apostle dichotomized between evangelistic and non-evangelistic speech. All we say will either hurt or help the cause of Christ. The use of oJ lo/goß means speech in general (BAGD 477c).

6b What does “full of grace” mean? (gracious, or in such a way that the listener receives God’s grace; cf. Eph. 4:29b “that [the word] may give grace to those who hear”)

Is this referring to the content (what we say) or the manner (how we say it) or both? (Probably mostly manner, but not excluding content as well since one can say a mean thing in a nice way!)

6c What does “seasoned with salt” mean? The same phrase doesn’t appear elsewhere in the New Testament, but hjrtume÷noß (“seasoned”) was used by Christ to mean “to become salty” (Luke 14:34) and those in hell being “salted with fire” (Mark 9:49).

Does “seasoned” imply much speech or little? The word “salt” (a‚lati) was used in both Greek and Jewish (rabbinic) contexts to indicate the appropriateness of speech, so it carries the idea of *wisely* choosing one’s words carefully; cf. O’Brien, 243.

Is “seasoned with salt” in apposition to “with grace” so they refer to the same characteristic? Both are in the genitive, but they appear to describe two characteristics since the second uses the salt metaphor.

6d Is “knowing how to answer” here a guarantee or promise? Will we always know what to say? I don’t think this guarantees that our content will always be right, but our manner will when we follow Paul’s guidelines.

6e Is the “how to answer” relating to evangelistic contexts as in 1 Peter 3:15? Yes, for to Paul every context is an evangelistic context and this fits the context of proclaiming the gospel (vv. 2-4) to outsiders (v. 5).

Does this communicate the idea of result? Yes, “to know” (ei˙de÷nai) is likely an infinitive of purpose.

6f Is “everyone” general or particular (“each one”)? It is particular, for it literally says “to each one.” In other words, our conversation should be “appropriate as regards the time; it must also be appropriate as regards the person” (O’Brien, 243).

Note: Peter O’Brien’s commentary (Word Biblical Commentary) was the most helpful in understanding the text, including alternate translations.

**Translations of Colossians 4:6**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Greek | oJ lo/goß uJmw◊n pa¿ntote e˙n ca¿riti, | a‚lati hjrtume÷noß | ei˙de÷nai pw◊ß dei√ uJma◊ß e˚ni« e˚ka¿stwˆ aÓpokri÷nesqai. |
| Literal  Trans. | the word of you always with grace | with salt seasoned | to know how it is necessary [for] you to one to each to answer |
| NIV | Let your conversation be always  full of grace, | seasoned with salt, | so that you may know how  to answer everyone. |
| NLT | Let your conversation be gracious | and effective | so that you will have the right answer for everyone. |
| NASB | Let your speech always be  with grace, | seasoned, *as it were*, with salt | so that you may know how  you should respond to each person. |
| KJV | Let your speech *be* alway  with grace, | seasoned with salt, | that ye may know how ye ought  to answer each one. |
| NKJV | Let your speech always be  with grace, | seasoned with salt, | that you may know how you ought  to answer every man. |
| GNB | Your speech should always be  pleasant | and interesting, | and you should know how to give the right answer to everyone. |
| RSV | Let your speech always be  gracious, | seasoned with salt, | so that you may know how you ought to answer every one. |
| Ampl. | Let your speech at all times be gracious (pleasant and winsome) | seasoned [as it were] with salt, | [so that you may never be at a loss] to know how you ought to answer any one [who puts a question to you]. |
| TEB | When you talk, you should always be kind | and wise. | Then you will be able to answer everyone in the way you should. |
| Phillips | Speak pleasantly to them [non-Christians], | but never sentimentally, | and learn how to give the proper answer to every questioner. |
| TLB | Let your conversation be gracious | as well as sensible, | for then you will have the right answer for everyone. |
| Beck | Always talk pleasantly, | season your talk with salt | so that you will know how you should answer everyone. |
| Wms. | Always let your conversation  be seasoned with salt, | that is, with winsomeness, | so that you may know how to make a fitting answer to everyone. |
| Wuest | Your word, let it always be with graciousness, | with salt thoroughly seasoned, | to the end that you know how it is necessary in the nature of the case to answer everyone. |

**Assignment #4 Exegetical Outline**

**Colossians 4:6**

**Exegetical Outline**

EI: The reason the Colossians should speak to non-Christians graciously and discerningly was because this was always the right response to unbelievers.

I. The manner in which the Colossians should speak to non-Christians was graciously and discerningly (6a-b).

A. The manner in which the Colossians should speak to non-Christians was graciously (6a).

B. The manner in which the Colossians should speak to non-Christians was discerningly (6b).

II. The reason the Colossians should speak to non-Christians graciously and discerningly was because this was always the right response to unbelievers (6c). [Note this is basically the EI.]

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

or… (emphasizes sharing the gospel in MPIII)

I. The manner in which the Colossians should speak to non-Christians was graciously (6a).

II. The manner in which the Colossians should speak to non-Christians was discerningly (6b).

III. The reason the Colossians should speak to non-Christians graciously and discerningly was because this was always the right way to share the gospel [“mystery of Christ,” v. 3] with them (6c).

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Or… (brings 6c into the subject of only two MPs)

EI The way the Colossians could know how to properly speak to non-Christians was to do so graciously and wisely.

I. One way the Colossians could know how to properly speak to non-Christians was to speak graciously (6a).

II. Another way the Colossians could know how to properly speak to non-Christians was to speak wisely (6b).

**Assignment #5 Homiletical Outline (Incomplete)**

**Colossians 4:6**

**Homiletical Exposition** (cyclical inductive form)

Note: The third exegetical outline above formed the basis for the homiletical outline below and the one-page complete homiletical outline on page 5.

Subject: How can you speak to non-Christians properly? (Two guidelines)

I. Speak to unbelievers with graciousness.

II. Speak to unbelievers with wisdom.

Main Idea: How can you speak to non-Christians properly? Speak with graciousness and wisdom!

**Tentative Subject/Complement Statements**

The way to win non-Christians is through gracious and discerning speech.

The best way to respond to unbelievers is with gracious, discerning speech

**Possible Illustrations**

Used in the Sermon

Illegal parking of neighbors

Four letter words of GBC Easter script

Michael Shen graciousness towards SBC property sellers

Friend who put salt caps on so they would pour

Bob Kratchet in *A Christmas Carol*

Gandhi’s rejection of Christianity (added the morning of the sermon and originally not in the script)

Unused (inappropriate or lack of time)

*Not enough time:*

Dedman Medical Clinic: When I lived in Dallas I’d never go to Dedman Medical Clinic (named after Robert E. Dedman, the owner).

Thursday Potluck Supper. Prayer and medication to follow.

[Bkgrd] Proper speech to non-believers is emphasized in one NT book for a church in crisis. Some in the church were led away by false teachers into legalism, contacting demonic beings, and other heresies similar to our new age teaching today. How do you talk to people like this?

*Probably people wouldn’t get it or might be offended:*

The rosebud on the altar this morning is to announce the birth of David Alan Belzer, the sin of Rev. & Mrs. Belzer.

For those of you who have children and don’t know it, we have a nursery downstairs.

The bean supper will be held Tuesday evening in the church hall. Music will follow.

**Assignment #5 Homiletical Outline (Complete)**

**Salty Speech**

**Colossians 4:6 (Cyclical Inductive Form)**

*Purpose: The listeners will speak to unbelievers graciously and wisely.*

**Introduction**

1. He asked me why I was a Christian—but I dumped everything I knew on him—including my political views, church music preference, and view of baptism [get attention, arouse curiosity].

2. I struggle speaking to non-Christian family members [my own problems to identify with listeners].

3. How are *you* doing in the tongue department [raise need]? Haven’t you said the wrong thing at the wrong time—especially when relating to unbelievers?

4. Today I'll share *how you speak to non-Christians properly* [subject].

5. In Colossians 4 I’ll focus my attention on verse 6 but let’s first see the context [repeat text].

6. To reach our goal in verse 6c, 6a-b give *two ways* to speak to non-Christians properly [preview].

(The first way to talk to unbelievers is at the beginning of Colossians 4:6 where it says we should always…)

**I. Speak to non-Christians *graciously* (v. 6a).**

**[Unbelievers need to hear helpful words from us.]**

A. "With grace" simply means to speak "pleasantly" or "graciously."

B. Gracious speech *excludes* hurtful speech forbidden in Colossians 3:8-9 (ILL: foul script).

C. Gracious speech *includes* all kinds of helpful speech.

1. Encouragement is one form of helpful speech (ILL: praise nurses).

2. ILL: My reporting of my illegal parking neighbor shows I haven’t always been gracious.

D. Your speech should “always” be gracious.

1. "Always" includes when you're ridiculed for your faith in Christ.

2. "Always" includes when a non-believer treats you unfairly.

a. ILL: Bob Krachet always spoke graciously despite Scrooge’s poor treatment of him.

b. ILL: Michael Shen spoke of the owners of 12 Shelford Road graciously.

(Not only are we to speak *graciously* to those outside the faith, but we should always…)

**II. Speak to non-Christians *with wisdom* (v. 6b).**

**[Unbelievers need us to choose our words carefully.]**

A. Salt in the first century had two main purposes: to flavor and to preserve.

1. As salt brought out the flavor in meat, wise speech makes others thirst for the gospel.

2. As salt also preserved meat from rotting, so wise speech gives no offense towards the gospel.

B. When you speak to a non-Christian, wisely avoid two extremes to best “season” your speech.

1. Avoid speaking *too much* of the things of God.

a. ILL: My friend who made salt gush out the saltshaker is like overzealous, unwise believers.

b. ILL: An imaginary conversation shows how to talk to attract interest in the gospel.

2. Avoid speaking *too little* of the things of God (ILL: Christians frozen at the mouth).

**Conclusion**

1. So how can you speak to non-Christians properly? Speak with graciousness and wisdom [MI]!  
The best way to respond to unbelievers is with gracious and wise speech [MI restated].

2. Which non-believers do you know whom you haven't spoken to in a gracious and discerning way? What will you do about it and when [application]?

3. How have you been speaking to Christians [broadens application to include more listeners]?

4. Gandhi almost became a Christian except for a bad example [ILL: exhortation by warning].

\* This 15-minute sermon has 11 illustrations (ILL above) to keep it interesting and concrete—not theoretical.

Singapore Bible College Combined Chapel, Lanka Bible College & CGS Dr. Rick Griffith

13 February 1997, 4 & 9 Sep 2019 Single Message

NIV 15 Minutes

**Salty Speech**

**Outline Manuscript for Colossians 4:6 (Cyclical Inductive Form)**

**Topic:** Speech

**Subject:** How can we speak to non-Christians properly?

**Complement:** Speak with graciousness and wisdom!

**Purpose:** The listeners will repent of any hurtful things they have said to unbelievers (and believers) and commit themselves to gracious, wise speech.

**Introduction**

1. He asked me why I was a Christian—but I dumped everything I knew on him—including my political views, church music preference, and view of baptism [get attention, arouse curiosity].

2. I regularly speak to non-Christian family members [my own struggles to identify with listeners].

a. One thing I’ve noticed over the years is that they never ask about my life, church, opinions, etc.

b. This could be due to their hardness to the gospel. After all, the cross is an offense and many Gentiles consider the cross foolish (1 Cor. 2:22-25).

c. However, it also might be due to the *manner* in which I have shared about Christ in the past. I’m learning that I need to speak in such a way that they want to hear more.

3. How are *you* doing in the tongue department? [raise need] Haven’t you said the wrong thing at the wrong time when relating to unbelievers?

4. Today we’ll see how you can make sure you’re speaking to non-Christians properly [subject].

5. Paul’s letter to the Colossians fought a serious heresy with Jewish, Greek, and ascetic elements. I’ll focus on one verse in Colossians 4 but first let’s see the context how Paul told them to combat this false teaching that was plaguing the church.

a. Paul begins a new section by requesting prayer for his own evangelistic ministry in verses 2-4.

b. Verse 5 continues with this idea of relating to unbelievers in our behaviour [read].

c. We’ll focus on verse 6 today about the importance of our speech to unbelievers [read].

d. Wouldn’t you like to do what the end of verse 6 says: “so that you may know how to answer everyone”? This is not a guarantee that you will have the exact *content* to speak, but it is a promise that you will speak in the right *manner*.

6. To reach our goal in verse 6c, 6a-b give *two ways* to speak to non-Christians properly [preview].

(The first way to talk to unbelievers is at the beginning of Colossians 4:6 where it says we should always…)

**I. Speak to non-Christians *graciously* (v. 6a).**

**[Unbelievers need to hear helpful, kind words from us.]**

A. "With grace" simply means to speak "pleasantly" or "graciously." But what’s gracious speech?

B. Gracious speech *excludes* the kinds of hurtful speech forbidden in Colossians 3:8-9 [read].

1. I was once asked by some people in a church to proofread a script for an evangelistic drama. I was horrified to see several four-letter words for the person who played a foul-mouthed non-Christian. (These are words not worth repeating!)

2. I knew these swear words were included to add “realism” to the play but I was shocked to see that the scriptwriter thought using such words would better relate to non-believers.

C. Gracious speech *includes* all kinds of helpful speech.

1. Encouragement is one type of helpful speech. I tried this while my son John was in hospital. As different nurses and cleaning people came into the room, I tried to give a word of encouragement to each. What a shock on their faces when I complimented them for a job well done!

2. I can’t say I’ve always been gracious though. Next to our home is a “no parking zone” on the corner. When cars park there it is dangerous for my kids to play outside since parked cars block the view of oncoming cars (especially cars which don’t stop at the stop sign).

Another car was soon parked there, so I called the Traffic Police. I didn’t give them my name, but they showed up at our gate to find out if I called. They asked, “Is this your neighbor’s car on the other side of the semi-D?” I said, “I’m not sure, but if it is please don’t tell them that I called!”

So the police went to their gate and a few minutes later they moved their car into their carport. (I kept out of sight!) But I thought, “These police are really more gracious than me—the Christian!”

The next time I saw my neighbor washing his car in the carport I waved and smiled. He gave me a scowl in return. Now I wish I had been like this verse says: full of grace. Maybe next time I’ll contact the neighbor and remind him that the police may come!

D. In fact, it says our speech should “always” be gracious.

1. "Always" includes when you're ridiculed for your faith in Christ.

2. "Always" includes when a non-believer treats you unfairly or inconveniences you.

a. Remember Bob Kratchet in *A Christmas Carol?* Scrooge paid him poorly and mistreated him, but Kratchet refused to say an unkind word. In the end, Scrooge changed.

b. It’s being like Rev. Shen in negotiating with those controlling the property we need. Even regarding the man who won’t accept $100,000 for a short drain, Rev. Shen continues to speak graciously. Christians and non-Christians can’t help but respect that.

(But graciousness is only the first qualification for proper speech noted here. We also should always…)

**II. Speak to non-Christians *with wisdom* (v. 6b).**

**[Unbelievers need us to choose our words carefully—anticipate their response!]**

(What does this mean: “to speak seasoned with salt”?)

A. Salt seasoning in the first century had basically two purposes: flavoring and preserving.

1. Salt brought out the flavor in meat. Wise speech makes others thirst for the gospel.

2. Salt also preserved meat from rotting. Wise speech gives no offense towards the gospel—it doesn’t let it be seen as corrupted.

B. So when you speak to a non-Christian, avoid these two extremes to best “season” your speech.

1. Avoid speaking too much about God—like salt gushing out of the shaker.

a. I had a friend known for practical jokes—like just barely screwing the lid on the salt shaker. The next person to use it would pour a huge amount of salt on his food!

b. Sometimes we’re like this in evangelism. We just pour out all kinds of spiritual stuff so that poor unbeliever gets sick through sodium chloride overdose!

c. How much better to flavor the conversation with enough salt so he wants more!

He says, “So what do you do?”

“Oh,” you respond, “I teach about a book.”

“Really?” he says, “Only one book?”

“Well, it is the most read, most memorized, most translated, most printed book.”

“No kidding? What’s the book?” he says.

d. “Seasoning with salt” is to wisely bring a person to desire more rather than feel dumped on.

2. Another extreme to avoid is to speak too little about God (like salt still in the shaker).

a. It’s been said that many believers are like an arctic river—all frozen at the mouth!

b. Speaking wisely is also *speaking*, but uses the right word for the right person at the right time.

**Conclusion**

1. So how can you *know* how to speak to non-Christians? With graciousness and wisdom! [MI] The best way to respond to unbelievers is with gracious and wise speech [main idea restated].

2. Which non-believers do you know whom you haven't spoken to in a gracious and wise way? What will you do about it and when? [application] Maybe you need to do as I did—I went to my neighbor over Chinese New Year and told him how great it was to have him as a neighbor.

3. Perhaps a non-Christian didn’t come to your mind as I’ve shared today. But does a Christian? Have your words to your roommate, classmate, or someone in your family or church been both gracious and wise? Take some time now to evaluate this and deal with it before the Lord.

4. [Exhortation to show how significant words can be to non-Christians]

Many years ago, a foreign student from India studied in a university in England. Having grown up as a Hindu, he felt that this was his chance to get to know more about Christianity, which had interested him very much. He was searching for the one, true, supernatural religion…

Shortly after his graduation, the man was delighted to work in East Africa—and especially thrilled when he learned that during this seven-month assignment he would live with a family who were members of an evangelical church. Here was his chance to see real Christianity first-hand…

But what he found was a family who continually complained about their sacrifices for the Lord. And at the end of these seven months he concluded that Christianity was really no different than any other major religion of the world. The speech of these Christians had “proven it.”

The man’s name? Mahatma Gandhi. [Adapted from Paul Lee Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations*, #3235]

5. Let’s pray: “Father, thank you for reminding us from your Word how important our speech is before unbelievers. Help us to watch what we say. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

**Assignment #5 Outline (Version #1)**

**Salty Speech**

**Colossians 4:6 (Cyclical Inductive Form)**

**Introduction**

1. It’s neutral (but achieves both good and evil), extremely small (but very powerful), and used universally (but never wears out). [get attention, arouse curiosity] It's the tongue.

2. An aged saint once said: "Many of us are like a pair of old shoes—all worn out except the tongue!" Haven’t you found this to be true for *you?* [raise need] Haven’t you said the wrong thing at the wrong time—especially when relating to unbelievers (examples)?

3. Today let’s see two ways to speak non-Christians correctly [intro to MPI]. The first of these two ways to talk to unbelievers is found in the beginning of Colossians 4:6 where it says we should always…

**I. Speak to non-Christians *graciously* (v. 6a).**

**[Unbelievers need to hear helpful words from us—attract your listeners!]**

A. "With grace" simply means to speak "pleasantly" or "graciously."

B. Gracious speech *excludes* the kinds of hurtful speech forbidden in Colossians 3:8-9.

C. Gracious speech *includes* all kinds of helpful speech.

1. Encouragement is one form of helpful speech.

2. Cheerfulness is another form of helpful speech.

D. Your speech should “always” be gracious.

1. "Always" includes when you're ridiculed for your faith in Christ.

2. "Always" includes when a non-believer treats you unfairly.

(Not only are we to speak *graciously* to those outside the faith, but we should always…)

**II. Speak to non-Christians *with discernment* (v. 6b).**

**[Unbelievers need us to choose our words carefully—anticipate their response!]**

A. Salt seasoning in the first century had basically two purposes: flavoring and preserving.

1. Just as salt seasoning was used to bring out the flavor in meat, so discerning speech enhances the attractiveness of the gospel.

2. Just as salt seasoning was used to preserve meat from becoming rotten, so discerning speech gives no offense towards the gospel.

B. When you speak to a non-Christian, avoid two extremes to best “season” your speech.

1. One extreme to avoid is speaking too much of the things of God (like salt gushing out of the shaker).

2. Another extreme to avoid is speaking too little of the things of God (like salt still in the shaker).

(I’ve said *how* to talk with unbelievers—in a gracious and discerning way. But *why* should we speak this way? [introduce subject])

**III. Gracious, discerning speech is always a right response to unbelievers (v. 6c; Main Idea).**

**[Non-Christians will always be benefited when we speak with pleasantness and wisdom!]**

A. "Respond" in the Greek is really just the simple word for "answer," so it has a wide variety of applications (not just a "1 Peter 3:15" type of situation).

B. Our speech can either open or close doors to share the gospel.

1. Improper speech closes doors to share the gospel (examples).

2. Proper speech opens doors to meet the unique needs of non-Christians (examples).

**Conclusion**

1. Today we’ve seen that the best way to respond to unbelievers is with gracious, discerning speech [main idea restated].

2. Which non-believers do you know whom you haven't spoken to in a gracious and discerning way? What will you do about it and when? [application]

3. Poem: “A careless word may kindle strife…” [exhortation]