

We started the book of Colossians 19 weeks ago, and we said in week 1 that Colossians was written to address syncretism. So in the end, the Roman Empire, which is still to this day in history something like the world has never seen. They ruled the known world for 1,500 years. Keep in mind how proud we are as a country and how limited the amount of time that we have ruled this part of the world. Rome rules pretty much England to India for 1,500 years in relative peace. What I mean by relative peace is as long as you didn't rebel against Rome, only 40,000 of you would be crucified. If you did, then it could get nasty. They stabilized the world. They bring law and order and roads, and this shrinks the world. Because the world has shrank significantly particularly in the urban centers. You are much more apt to see different religions rubbing against each other. You were more apt to see different lifestyles rub against each other, different diets rubbing against one another. You had a legitimate kind of melting pot of ideas.

And at the church in Colossae, you had syncretism. You had the church there syncing themselves with the culture around them so that there was nothing distinct about what they believe and how they practice life compared to how the rest of the city would practice or live. And so Paul is going to try to dismantle syncretism and gets into the supremacy of Christ over all things in the first two chapters. And then he's going to turn it in Chapter 3 and say, "If indeed you have been born again, if you trust in this Jesus Christ. . ." So we get into those several weeks where we did grace-driven effort, where we talk about the difference between biblical faith and religion or outside-in spirituality that says, "I will do these things, and because I do these things, God will be pleased with me." And we turn that on it's head because Paul does and says, "No, it's by the grace of Christ alone that we are then motivated, transformed to change. We don't change to earn the approval of God. The approval of God transforms how we live." If you don't get that, you don't get Christianity. Our righteousness before God, purchased by Christ, is not an act of our own. Christ is the fulfillment of the law. Obeying the law is not what gets us right standing before God. We get Jesus. Jesus is the fullness of the law, so we have right standing before God.

We made that turn and then Paul gets into how that looks. So he goes, "Someone with a new spirit, someone with a new heart, this is how they're going to see and do marriage." Are they going to be imperfect? Absolutely. Are they going to grow in it? Absolutely. This is how they're going to raise children. Are they going to be perfect at it? No they're not. Are they going to be sanctified over a period of time in it? Absolutely they are. He begins to get into the behavior of believers, but he doesn't do that until he addresses what transforms the believer. It's not the will; it's the grace and mercy of Christ. The book of Romans would say this is the kindness of God that leads to repentance. That's just a sketch of how we started. I told you I wanted to do the book because I thought we had a lot in common.

I've said here often that I don't think most of you are saved. I always get a little bit of hate mail on that. Let me show you, let me back that up statistically, you pagans. By the way, I'm pulling these numbers, just for you who know statistics and the Mark Twain quote. These statistics are pulled from USA Today and The Wall Street Journal articles that were in both of those papers in the last month. Of the Christians surveyed, 65% rarely or never pray with others. 38% almost never pray by themselves. Follow me here, 38% of the people that say I have a relationship with Jesus Christ, don't talk to Him. If that's true, then I got relationship with all kind of people. Like Obama and me, we're tight! Me and Brad Pitt, that's my boy! Once again you've got this kind of imaginary religion that exists among us that is simply not the biblical version of it, not the historic version of it, not the orthodox version of it. You can be a Christian without knowing Jesus Christ? That's an absurd notion that is actually quite popular. 65% of the Christians surveyed rarely or never attend any type of

worship gathering. 67% don't read the Bible. 50% are unsure of whether or not Jesus is the only path to God. 68% did not mention faith, religion, spirituality or Jesus Christ when asked what was really important in life. Are you starting to get the picture here? Let me give you two more. 50% do not attend church at least weekly. So bare bones minimum is Sunday morning attendance. Now we're talking, what I'm talking, it's that on steroids. At least you attend church as some sort of weird perverse cultural mom and daddy raised me this way dysfunction.

This group is going, "I love Jesus. I don't pray, I don't read anything about Him and I never go to church but I'm a Christian." All right. Why? "Because I'm a Texan. I guess, I don't know." Only 40% of Evangelicals polled, says it's their responsibility to share the gospel with neighbors, coworkers and friends. You can e-mail all you want and get frustrated with me all you want every time I question whether or not you truly know and love Jesus Christ, but the statistics say we're on to something. We're kind of getting a pulse here when it comes to churchgoers and those who claim to be Christian. In all, I don't know if this is bad thing. I'll tell you why. With the death of Christendom, with the death of kind of culturally acceptable Christianity, what you have then is a remnant that's serious about the Lord and you don't have people who are going to church to better their business or going to church so they can look like upstanding, upright citizens. Although I think there's some of that, it's not as necessary as it was 40 years ago. For those of you who can go that far back 40-60, years ago, it was, "You've got to be a church-going man if you're going to do business." That's not the case anymore.

Paul is saying that, as believers in Christ, as this book progresses, as Colossians progresses, when Christ enters your heart, when the Holy Spirit enters your soul, it transforms, it changes and it reworks. You have new priorities. He begins to really define what the believer in Christ should look like, should walk like and should act like versus this is what the outsider should live like, walk like and act like. So you've got this pendulum that releases with syncretism and it starts to flow over that way. Paul is going to slow down the swing because if we get all the way over here, we're into what we would call sectarianism, and that's a complete withdrawal from culture. That's the idea that we can't be around sinners and we can't be around bad people because it's going to get on us, it's going to get on our children and we're all going to end up doing meth and killing someone. It is that idea. You can giggle all you want, but I literally saw a VHS tape about secular music when I was in 8th and 9th grade that said if I listened to Journey and Steve Perry, we were going to end up on drugs and maybe murder one of our parents. It was called Hell's Bells. I'm not making it up. Google it and have fun. It would be a great Friday night with your friends. In the end, watch for that. This is sectarianism. This is, "If you engage, if you're around, if you get near people who do not believe like you believe and do not walk like you walk, then their wickedness will rub off on you and you will become wicked like they are wicked." It's sectarianism. You've seen this where you build a fortress around yourself and you don't really let anyone in. You make your churches very, very pretty. Everybody has to pretend they're okay. Everyone comes in and we're all doing great and everybody's doing awesome. We all say amen at the right points. We all rally around the same kind of causes. This is kind of a sectarianism view of things, where we don't want to have much of anything to do with those who don't believe like we believe.

Now the only problem with that would be the Bible. You're going to watch Paul here slow down that pendulum swing and stop it from going over to the sectarianism side of belief. Look at verse 5 of chapter 4, "Walk in wisdom towards outsiders." Who are the outsider? Those who are outside the faith. Walk in wisdom towards those who are outside of our faith. The Bible assumes and knows that you and I are going to come in contact with and do life around those who do not believe, do not confess, and do not love Jesus like we do. In fact, Jesus himself prays in the high-priestly prayer in John 17, "I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one." Even in Jesus' last prayer for us as his disciples, He says, "Protect them from the evil one as they're in the world." Then what does He do? Lo, I send you out as sheep among wolves. He doesn't say, get that fence up and good luck out there. He goes, "You go, you tell, you proclaim, you go make known that the day of reconciliation is here. This is what you see happening in the New Testament. He's going to say, "Look at this, walk in wisdom towards outsiders, making the best use of time." This literally

means to buy up all the opportunities. He's saying since you and I are going to engage those who do not believe like we believe, do not walk like we walk and do not love the God that we love, let us buy up all the opportunity, let us make the most of our time with them, let's be intentional and purposeful about how we do life around the outsiders.

He's going to give three ways that we do that and that's what I want to cover. So let's look at them. Colossians 4:5, "Walk in wisdom toward outsiders." At times, there are things that are very clearly seen in the Scriptures. "Don't do this, do this." All the commands of God in the Bible are about leading us into how God designed the world to work and how God designed the world to function. But then there are gray areas. There are areas where we're just not sure, where we don't know what to do. The Bible doesn't say, "Don't go left here. Don't go right here." It's just kind of gray. The text says though that you and I are to walk in wisdom towards outsiders.

So let me give you really nine questions I think you should ask if you the Bible is not clear. I'm pulling all nine of these questions from Driscoll's book Radical Reformation. Here are nine questions he says we should ask in regards to our activities, whether that be our finances, whether that be our hobbies, whether that what we do on Friday night. Okay, here they are:

1. Is it beneficial to me personally and the gospel generally? You and I are gospel people. If we're believers in Christ, we see through the lenses of God's grace and mercy given to us in Jesus Christ. So we see the world through those lenses. Is what you're doing, how you're walking beneficial to you individually in regards to the gospel, and is it beneficial to the gospel in general.
2. Do I, by my decisions, make God look glorious and beautiful or do I in turn slander and belittle His name?
3. Will I lose self-control and be mastered by what I participate in? This is a great question. I got into a lot of trouble about three years ago here when I was preaching a sermon on missional living and one of the things I said caused me to get canceled on several external speaking engagements. I still made them pay me. In the end, I said that if you work at a place where, because of how it's divided and how it's broken up, you don't get to talk about life, you don't get to talk about marriage, you don't get to talk about kids, but everybody after work goes to happy hour, then go to happy hour. Grab something to drink, enjoy life, talk marriage, talk children and talk life. There is one caveat though. If you going to happy hour ends up with you waking up three weeks later with a new tattoo, you probably shouldn't go. I'll give one for my single friends. Watching a romantic comedy on your couch, snuggling, I just don't know if that's wise. I don't know that that ever ends in prayer. Even guys that I've discipled have come in and said it just got a little handsy. And I've gone, "Tell me about that." And I don't mean, tell me about that. I mean how did that happen? Here's almost always how it happened. So innocent. "Well, my roommates all had plans so they were out. We thought, we'll cook a little dinner we'll do a devotional." It starts out real innocent, real godly. Then in the end, they cook a little dinner and then, "Oh, it's 10:30 we've cleaned the dishes, what are we going to do? I know. Let's lay on top of each other and watch a Jennifer Aniston movie." Let me be straight, I don't know the man yet who's passed that test. Now maybe you're out there, but I just don't know the man who hasn't who in that moment hasn't gone, "Ah, such a great movie and play with your hair." It just kind of progresses through the evening. "Oh I can't believe it went handsy." You're a moron! You absolutely can believe it went handsy, and if we could be straight, you knew it would happen. You absolutely knew it would happen. The text goes, "Walk in wisdom." Can you do it and not be led into what the Bible would call sinful? If you can't, then don't do. Are you allowed biblically to snuggle up on the couch and watch a Jennifer Aniston movie? I don't know about the Jennifer Aniston part, but I do know that there would be nothing in the Scriptures that would say that you can't cuddle up on the couch. The problem is that is progressive in its movement. If you can't, then you should avoid it. That's how we walk in wisdom. It's not about, "Is it right or wrong." It's about "Can I handle it?" Can you do it? Did you cook dinner and actually end the night in a

devotional before the Lord and then encourage one another in the relationship with the Lord? If the answer is yes, then you can do it. If the answer is no, then you can't. That's how you walk in wisdom.

4. Will I be doing this in front of someone who I know will fall into sin because of this? The Scriptures say all things are permissible, but not all things are beneficial. Let me say it to you this way, you are your brother's keeper. Scripture commands us who are strong to carry the burdens of the weak, which means there are times it's just best you don't exercise the freedom you have in regards to the type of movies you might be able to watch or what you're able to drink. If you're able to sit down and have a beer, I would never tell you that's sinful or wicked because the Scriptures would not call that sinful and wicked. What you must be aware of is that there are those who are immature in their faith who would watch your maturity in faith and use your maturity of faith as a trump card for their disobedience and sin. You might be free to but at the end of the day it might not always be the smartest thing. Christian maturity is laying down your freedom for the good of your weaker brother, weaker sister. Okay, it's a great question to ask.
5. Is it a violation of the law? Is it illegal? Wisdom would say if it's illegal, don't do it. It's amazing that I felt the need to actually include that in this one. It happens all the time especially around the little "breaking of the law." Like speeding. Listen to people complain about speeding or speeding tickets. It's awesome. "I got a ticket. The guy was such a jerk." "Really? What were you going?" "I was going like 55. What was the speed limit?" "I don't know, it was like 30." "You were speeding. He should of shot you. That was a school zone." "I can't believe that cop. He was such a jerk." "He was doing his job. But you know what? You're right, he is a jerk. Let's call downtown. You should hire a lawyer. That's what you should do, hire a lawyer. Even though there are cameras everywhere now, good luck with that." In regards to wisdom, is it illegal? No one has a thriving ministry outside of prison who's in prison.
6. If I fail to do this, will I lose opportunity to share the gospel?
7. Am I doing this to help other people or am I being selfish?
8. Can I do this in a way that glorifies God?
9. Am I following the example of Jesus to help sinners reconcile to God? Here's one of the things that's interesting that I have found. People who kind of like the scene, people who like to go to the bars, like to go to the clubs, they like to also point out the fact that in the Scriptures Jesus was called a drunkard by the religious people. They'll say, "Well Jesus was at the party. Jesus was in those kinds of environments." And so I always want to quickly acknowledge absolutely He was and then go right on to point to the fact that every time He did, people got saved or He rebuked everyone in the room. And then I wonder which one you did. It's a legitimate question. Because I'll give you that Jesus was at Zacchaeus' house, the wee little man. But I also want to point out to you that he repented of his sins and joined the kingdom of God at that party. Then there are other instances were he ends up rebuking the entire room, rebuking those who are walking in sin. I have to wonder, what are you doing? Which one are you doing? If I had to guess, this goes back to the questions we've already asked. Your plan is much more of a selfish act and not one of a concern for sinners or those who are not reconciled are God and being agents of reconciliation.

But that's not the only thing he says. We're not only to walk in wisdom but let's look in this. "Walk in wisdom towards outsiders making the best use of our time. Let your speech always be gracious and seasoned with salt." If the first one is walk in wisdom, I guess the second one is watch your mouth. Here's what I mean by watch your mouth. I'm not really talking about language, although I don't think you should cuss like a sailor. I'll clarify even that, like a Navy sailor. If you own a sailboat, I don't know that you talk like that. But my dad was in the Navy, and I know how they talk. They don't even use "the's" and "of's," it's just a stream of obscenities and somehow it makes sense. I don't know if you just own a

sailboat that you do that. In the end this isn't that kind of talk. Here's what he's saying, "Let your talk be gracious." Your mouth reveals something about your heart. Here's my question. Does your mouth reveal that you walk in anger and contempt? Are you constantly pointing out what's wrong with everything, completely unaware of what's wrong with you? Do your friends turn over on a consistent basis? Or do you even have friends? I'm not asking if you know people. Because you knowing people and you having friends are two different universes. Do you have a contemptuous heart? Are you rude? Are you short? Do the people you hang with out over a period of time no longer want to hang out with you so you go replace them with a new group that only over time no longer wants to hang out with you? So there's two things. Either you're hanging around a lot of dysfunctional people or maybe you're the one who is dysfunctional. I think your mouth reveals what goes on in your heart. If you're an angry person, it's going to come out of your mouth. If you're a contemptuous person, it's going to come out of your mouth. If you're a bitter person, it's going to come out of your mouth. So Paul here is going, "Is there evidence of God's grace in your life that you understand the grace and mercy of God? Are you able to extend forgiveness as you've been forgiven? Are you able to extend mercy as you've been extended mercy? Do you have the ability to be gracious as you've been treated graciously by God?" So watch your mouth means, "Let your mouth be gracious."

And then he puts this next line on there ". . .seasoned with salt. . ." The best way I know to teach this is to talk about how guys talk about their wives. This is a scale so don't ask you husband, "Which one are you?" Because it's a scale. They could be anywhere on the sliding deal. I've met guys whose wives are exhausting to them. If you ask them, how are things at home? They're heaving breathing and panting going, "Huh? What?" They're just exhausted. About them, the Bible would say, "It's better that they live on the roof, it's better that they die in the desert because they live in the house with the woman who beats them down." When they're asked about their wife, they go, "She's unstable, bro. Do you have medicine? I'll put it in some cheese and feed it to her. She likes the cheese. Or you can grind that up and put it in some wine. Even better." There are guys who talk about their wives like that. There's no conference for that and there have been no books written on that. Nobody goes, "That's what I want, 30 years of hell and looking forward to death. I'll take that anytime I can get it." Then there are guys who go, "If it wasn't for her, if it wasn't for her support, if it wasn't for her presence, if it wasn't for her gracious and generous criticism, there is no way I would be the man I am today." There's your spectrum. You've got worse case scenario and a best-case scenario. The truth is people vary from day to day. Anyone who says differently probably isn't being completely honest with themselves. That's scale. Words that are seasoned with salt are on the end of things where you would say, "Isn't she glorious? Isn't she beautiful? How encouraging she is. How instrumental she is. She's wings, not a ball and chain." Now that is speech that is seasoned with salt. Paul is saying here let your talk, specifically about the Lord, let your talk be seasoned with salt. As you serve the dish of the gospel of Jesus Christ, may your mouth testify of his goodness and glory and grace. The best thing you could do in regards to your relationship is to speak beautifully of the God who has saved you.

Let's get practical on how that works. Let me give you just a couple of quick things. I think you've got to stop reading the Bible like it's the newspaper. And every morning hone in and look for a simple truth that you can mediate on, think on, dwell on and chew on all day long so that you can watch God's activity in your life and grow in and rejoicing that God is faithful. So maybe that's Psalm 1 and you come across "The Lord watches over the way of the righteous." As you walk in that day, you become more and more aware that God is seeing you in that moment, loving you in that moment and encouraging you in that moment. And that's your little nugget for the day. You take that, you think on that and you dwell on that to where you become grateful for God's providence and care in your life. Now what comes out of your mouth in regards to the kingdom of God, in regards to the church of Jesus Christ, in regards to your relationships with one another is seasoned with salt. So Paul's saying here, "The quickest way to exalt God with your mouth is to love Him with your heart." Otherwise you're just pretending. It comes off canned. I would never tell you to pretend. In fact, I'm always been a little thrown off when there are really horrific things and people are like, "Isn't it great?" No, it's not! It's really horrible. I want you to praise God that He'll sustain us and grow us and walk with us in this, but I don't know if I'm throwing a party

over this one. I'm not asking you to fake and pretend that all is okay when it's not okay. I'm not asking you to fake and pretend if you've got real questions and real doubts. What I'm saying is that the quickest way to exalt Him is to actually know Him and love Him starts in a little time in the morning. We do this with our crew, with our friends.

So the night before I had surgery, we had all of our crew over and our family over to the house and we sang, we worshiped, we did communion, we laughed, we prayed and just kind of trusted my life and the life of my family into God's hands. In the end we want to gather often. There's about a dozen of us that eat at a restaurant we can't afford. We save up our money, we go out, we drink wine we can't afford, eat food we can't pronounce and we laugh and enjoy one another for hours. We talk marriage, we talk children, we talk life and we tell stories. We always go home filled with gratitude that we have good friends, that God's been very gracious and that we're able to do such a thing as that. Those are patterns that we want to build into our lives.

As much as Lauren will let me, I want to build times where I get to just get away and just be with the Lord. God has charged me as an elder of the church and as the lead pastor/teaching pastor to also do direction for us. I need to hear the Lord and be able to come to our elders and go, "This is what I believe the Lord is asking of us as a body. Here are things that I think we should emphasize. Here are directions I think we should go." One of the habits I want to get into is getting out of here with my Bible and my journal and just full days of praying, fasting and just asking God to speak to me in His Word. I want to spend days asking God to impress me with the power of His Holy Spirit, asking for visions for us that I can then come back and give to our elders and have them pray, have them seek God, have them come to a decision and then role that down to our staff. This is something I have to do. "Oh, well I'm not a pastor, Matt." Well you have paid time off just like I have paid time off. You have vacation just like I have vacation. It's not a question about what we can do and what we can't do. It's a question of what you do with what you have. The surest way to exalt and have your words about God seasoned with salt is to know Him deeply and to love Him with your whole heart. How do you do that? You get near Him as often as you can, you get near Him.

There's one more piece on here and I'll end with this. Look at verse 5 again. "Walk in wisdom towards outsiders. Making the best use of time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt. . ." Now look at this because it's big. ". . .so that you may know how you ought to answer each person." The problem at the end of the day with sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ in some sort of grid system is that not everybody's the same. It has been my experience that there are four types of people that I've run into over and over again. This is not exhaustive, but in any way these are just types I've come across over and over again.

There the first type is church people. These are people who go to church but don't really have a relationship with Jesus Christ. What I want to do over and over again in the Scriptures is point out to them the scary texts. I want them to see in Matthew 7 where Jesus says, "Depart from me you cursed for I do not you." And they go, "Whoa, whoa, whoa. Wasn't I in church every Sunday? Did I not prophesy in Your name? Did I not cast out demons in Your name? Didn't I do all sorts of things in Your name?" "Yeah you did, but I don't know you." I want to show that verse to people who go to church but don't have a relationship with Jesus Christ because it's terrifying. It's a terrifying verse that few people want to touch. We just like to skip that one and move on to happy Matthew 8. But in the end, Hebrews 6 is another one of those texts that really call you out for faking Christianity and thinking that your church attendance might somehow save you. I want to point out the "if" statements. The Bible is going to say there are objective evidences to having a new heart. We begin to be sanctified and become more and more like Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. Where that has not taken place, you have room to worry. It is also Hebrews that says if you have not entered into His rest, you should be worried. Can you look back on your life and go, "Here are areas that I've grown. Here are areas that I've matured"? Now, no one is going to go, "I'm nailing that now. No longer is that an issue in my life. No longer is sin in general an issue in my life." We are being sanctified and when that process is done, we'll go home. That occurs at the return of Christ or when God kills

you. Until one of those two things happen, we are being sanctified. Billy Graham right now is being sanctified. Even the godliest person you know is at this moment being sanctified. If they have any real understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ, they are going, "When am I going to grow up? When am I going to mature? When am I going to be completely Yours? When am I going to be wholly Yours?" Those are the kind of conversations I want to have with someone who is a church folk.

The second type I've come across is the angry atheist. Now, knowing that this is going to create dialogue for me later in the next couple of weeks, let me say this. I do not believe that you arrive at atheism through an intellectual study of the matter. No kid is born an atheist. They might not understand their environment, they might be confused about how certain things work, but kids want to believe that there is a God. They want to trust that there is something bigger and more powerful not only than just them but also their parents. Angry atheists, if you get to the heart of the issue, are frustrated how God has chosen to govern His creation. In the end, the atheist doesn't have any of the evidence that he's demanding of the Christian. "If He exists, show me." Okay, if He doesn't exist prove that to me. "Well, I can't. Science says this." Science is not the enemy of faith. Gravity didn't disprove God; it just showed us how God designed the universe to work. You've got to understand that. There are so many people who try to pit these two ideas against each other and it's silly because they're not enemies. They're not against one another. As science discovers, they simply discover how God designed the universe to work. They are not at odds. So for all of the evidence we are demanded to produce, the atheist has no evidence himself. All he has is mysteries and unexplained phenomena that he believes science might one day uncover. Maybe it will. Maybe science will answer the question, "Here's how God operates in this area that up until now we have not been sure of how that has occurred or how that has happened." Maybe one day that will. In regards to the atheist, I simply want to know what happened that makes you not trust that God is good at how He governs. I always want to kind of get to the bottom of that.

The third type is the "on the fence guy," the agnostic, the "I am spiritual not necessarily religious" guy. Well Romans 1 says the Gentile would do the law without knowing the law. That means we will live a certain way and believe a certain way intrinsically without anybody having to teach us that. If I've got a guy that I meet who would say, "I believe in something. I just don't know what is," I just want to start asking questions that take certain belief sets off the table. "Do you believe in love? Do you believe in beauty? Do you believe in meaning and death? Or do you believe that the ultimate goal of man is to melt away into nothingness and kind of fall into this sea of nothingness and be a part of the nothingness?" "No, I believe in beauty and love and meaning and purpose." Okay then we can take Buddhism off the table then. Do you believe that you must live perfectly or you're going to come back over and over and over again? If you really jacked up you're coming back as a roach and if you nail it you're coming back as a cow. But in the end you're going to come back over and over and over and over and over again until you nail it perfectly." I've never had anyone say yes to that. If they've ever do say yes, I'm wondering who they've seen that's even close. I also have the question, "Where are all these new people coming from?" That's a legitimate question? If we're all just reincarnating, well the world population has boomed over the last 100 years. Where are these new souls coming from? They're just churning them out? Is Shiva churning them out? In the end, most of the time they're like, "No I don't believe that." Well we've got Hinduism off the table. You can simply begin to ask questions about what people believe and what they embrace and it's been my experience that through those kind of guided questions, you can always get back to the gospel of Jesus Christ and an understanding that God created a perfect beautiful world. Sin has fractured that world and through the prophets, through the Old Testament, through the Torah, through the law, through all of it, there's this prophecy of One who's coming and is going to fix it. Jesus comes, He lives, He dies on the cross and He reconciles all things to himself. That's kind of the conversation I want to have with the agnostic.

The fourth type is the good neighbor. You know people like this. They're not agnostic, they're not atheist, they're just good people. They're not really church people. They're good people. They love their spouses well. They don't cheat on

their taxes. They're generous. They'll see you mowing your lawn, wave hello and maybe bring you some ice tea. They're just good people. I've always found that you can use two very American ideas to get into a dialogue about the gospel. One is justice. Man, we love justice. Think about how many shows on television right now have to do with solving crime. Let's just take CSI. At any given moment you can watch a CSI. Even if you don't have a television, you can watch it. If I said, "You can't handle the truth," everyone in here knows what I'm talking about. We love justice. We love that whole idea of law. It's a really easy thing to just go, "Here are the Ten Commandments. Score yourself. How do you do it?" I mean even the best person you know is going to miss 8 out of 10. Then if you'll roll them to the New Testament and show them Jesus says, "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment. . . You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart." In the end if you use this idea of justice, you fail.

You can also use the idea of debt. Here's what I mean by that. The bank is not cool with you once you stop borrowing. The bank is only cool with you when you pay back your debt. So for a lot of us, because we want a little crazy at college, we can look at where we are now and go, "I'm not that anymore. I'm this now so me and God are cool because this is who I am." The problem is you've got a lot of infractions and a lot of sins that you've been walking in. So who pays that debt? Well the good news of the gospel is that Jesus pays that debt. That's why we sing about the cross. That's why we rejoice in Him, because He paid the bill. "Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe. Sin had washed a crimson stain. He washed it white as snow."

In the end I kind of always want to talk about one of those two ideas. Now let me say that I think we don't share our faith because we feel like we don't know enough. So like even what I just did is probably discouraging to some cause they're just like, "Chandler, I don't know that stuff. I'm terrified they're going to ask me a question that I don't know how to answer. I don't really know what to say. I don't know what to do with an angry atheist. They're just angry. They pelt me with questions. I don't know where Noah's Ark is. The Discovery Channel did say it was in Iraq. I don't know! I don't know what to do!" Here's what I would just say. Paul says to the Corinthians, "When I came to you, I did not come with wise and persuasive words but a demonstration of the Spirit's power." He professed Jesus Christ and Him crucified for sins. The Holy Spirit working through that drew men to Himself. So here's what you need to do: lose confidence in you and gain confidence in Him. Although I do believe apologetics has its place, although giving an answer to anyone's question is important, in the end I've never been in an argument about carbon dating, won the argument and had a guy give his life to Christ. I've never seen that happened. It's always Jesus that draws men to God. All you have to do is have the courage to enter in to the conversation. You can do that a billion different ways. I don't think you pray for seven years for way in. Spiritual people have this way of not bringing up spiritual conversations. Nonspiritual people don't tend to go, "Hey, can you sometime tell me about Jesus?" Please don't buy into the stuff you got when you're a 7th grader. Nobody goes, "Hey, I know you didn't have a beer with dinner, can you tell me how I can change my life for the better? I noticed that you don't see rated-R movies unless they're about killing Jesus. Can you explain to me how I might have a better life and a better walk with the Lord?" Don't buy into that mentality. You're going to have to open your mouth and speak.

Now let me give you this boost of confidence as we lay your confidence down and just pick up the fact that the gospel works. In Acts 17 Paul is preaching to the Greeks, a very tough crowd. He says, "The times and places of your habitation were predetermined by God so that men might seek Him and find Him, though He is not far from any of you." Some of you hate your job, but in the end, your job, your neighborhood, your hobby, those people that you meet on your kid's soccer team, baseball team, football team, whatever team, the Scriptures are saying that God has uniquely placed you in that place so that people might seek Him and find Him because He's not far off. You know why He's not far off? Because you're there. You're the minister of reconciliation. So walk in wisdom towards outsiders. Buying up all the opportunities

you can. How do you do that? By walking in wisdom. By letting your mouth be gracious and seasoned with salt and by knowing by who they are as people and not projects. By genuinely caring, being concerned and praying for them.

You know the old Christian saying that says, "Preach the gospel to everyone, when necessary use words." That is a ridiculous, ridiculous pulled out of context quote. It always requires words. Go ahead and do Habitat for Humanity. No one's going to go, "I need Jesus Christ because you're roofing a house." You're going to have to open your mouth and share the gospel. The Bible says He's placed you in a position to do so, around people who will listen to your voice at this time, in this place. Do you have to answer all the questions? No. And here's a great thing to say when you get asked something you don't know, "I don't know." You'd be surprised how crazy that is. "Well, what did you do about this?" "I don't do anything with that. I didn't even know that was an issue, but I can look. Do you want to come with me to church on Sunday?" Then go get your answers. You will not wonder what you need to study anymore if you are actively sharing the gospel with those around you. You'll know what you need to dig into. You'll know what you need to ask questions of. You'll grow yourself intellectually in your faith if you're sharing the gospel. May we be this kind of place. May we be a place that prays? May we share the gospel with everyone, everywhere. "Are you telling us to make converts?" No I'm telling you the Bible tells you to make disciples. You make disciples by opening your mouth and telling them that God has made a way to reconcile all men to Himself. So may God grant us the courage and may He grant us the words. I've always been a big fan of, "Hey I need to talk to you about Jesus. When do you want to do that?"

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