

**CALGARY BIBLE STUDY  
2014**

I Corinthians 15:58: ***“Therefore, my dear brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the Lord’s work, knowing that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.”***

Colossians 4:5-6: ***“Act wisely towards outsiders, making the most of the time. Your speech should always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you should answer each person.”***

Focal points: (1) Our speech should preserve the good name of God and be consistent with His character. (2) Most people need to know that we care about them before they will listen to us.

Expectations: Each team member is asked to do each day’s Bible study in the morning, starting on Sunday as Day One. Then there will be a team Bible study at night where that day’s study will be discussed. Assuming the principle of “You get out of something what you put into it,” it is our prayer that you will pour your heart into God’s Word each morning as we look at the focus verses for this week and that the team studies will be rich as the various team members discuss what they learned and how they applied the passages to their lives.

**DAY ONE  
Preparing to Serve**

**Introduction**

We will be focusing this week on the two passages above, applying them to what we will be doing this week and setting our minds on God’s way of doing His work. This can be one of the most rewarding weeks of our lives and our desire is that we see Him at work in and through us. He can do immeasurably more than we can ever ask or imagine if we will just be obedient and follow His leadership with His character.

Looking to God for leadership is like the sheep looking at their shepherd and following his commands. John 10:3-4 says, *“The doorkeeper opens it for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought all his own outside, he goes ahead of them. The sheep follow him because they recognize his voice.”* We can know beyond all doubt that as long as we are trusting God and making Him known to others, He will direct us and we will hear Him if we are in fellowship with Him. You will have a busy week of serving others alongside your team members, so it will be crucial for you to spend time with God every morning, allowing Him to fill you with His wisdom, His grace, and His strength to empower you to serve Him. If you neglect this critical activity, you will be vulnerable to serving in your own power and having thoughts and attitudes of

the flesh. Serving God on a day-to-day basis, whether at home or abroad, in a way that brings eternal rewards can only be done in His strength.

Why are you here? What made you want to come on a mission trip to Calgary?

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Try to put yourself in the shoes of the leadership team of Southwinds. Why do you think they invited you here?

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What do you hope to accomplish this week?

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From our first focus verse, I Corinthians 15:58, what do you think is meant by being “steadfast and immovable”?

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Write below Psalm 51:10.

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According to this verse, what comes before a steadfast spirit?

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Why do you think that’s the case?

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Take some time asking God to reveal to you any uncleanness in your heart. We can’t be effective in our service to God if we have an unclean heart, so it’s critical that we ask God to search our hearts and reveal any uncleanness there and confess those sins, repent and

thank God for His cleansing us by the blood of Jesus Christ. This will prepare us to be used by Him in a mighty way this week. This, of course, is not a one-time activity; it is something that we all must do continually. It is the step that precedes our asking God to direct our steps in the way He wants us to go.

After you have asked God to cleanse your heart, ask Him to direct your steps as you serve Him today, giving you passion for Him and for the people He has given you the privilege of serving. Also pray now and meditate throughout the day on asking God to make you steadfast and immovable as you serve Him.

**DAY TWO**  
**Excelling in God's Work**

Read again the focus verse, I Corinthians 15:58. Today we'll focus on another phrase, "*always excelling in the Lord's work.*" Consider what that means in light of what you hope to accomplish this week and describe what that looks like to you.

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Colossians 3:23-24 says, "*Whatever you do, do it enthusiastically, as something done for the Lord and not for men, knowing that you will receive the reward of an inheritance from the Lord—you serve the Lord Christ.*" Rewrite this passage in your own words.

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Consider what things you do enthusiastically, whether hobbies, sports, etc. What drives you to do these things enthusiastically?

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Matthew 22:37-39 says, "*He said to them, 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and most important commandment. The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself.*" We see that loving God with all of our being is the most important commandment. What is the second?

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Read Luke 10:27-37.

At the end of verse 37, Jesus said, "*Go and do the same.*" The people you will be serving this week will most likely not be in the situation of the man in this parable; however, most of them are spiritually very much like the man in the parable. In fact, without Jesus, we are all like this man. And many of the people you will serve have many neighbors who cannot lead them to Jesus because they don't know Him for themselves. The people of Southwinds Church will not have the contact with each person this week that you will have, so it is important that you see each person you come in contact with as a person loved by God and in need of salvation, in need of someone to care for them by showing them God's love. The ability to do this comes from a deep, abiding love for God. Notice the words that preceded this parable: "*Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your*

*strength, and with all your mind.*” When we are consumed with our love for Him, then the inconveniences and hardships of life can’t consume us.

Pray that God will give you more love for Him that will overflow onto each person you are around today. Also pray that God will help you excel in everything you do as you serve others and meditate on this request today. Allow God’s grace to saturate your heart and mind so that you will be able to extend it to others you work with today.

**DAY THREE**  
**Labor Not in Vain**

Today we will focus on this phrase from I Corinthians 15:58: *"knowing that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."*

According to Exodus 20:7, the third commandment says, *"Thou shall not take the name of The Lord your God in vain."* When we think of this commandment, we normally think about using God's name in a derogatory way and we well understand that that's wrong. However, if you think about what "in vain" means, it also brings to mind the thought of something that's done that's worthless. As God's children, we carry His name with us everywhere we go so we should make sure that He is glorified in every interaction we have with others so that our representation of Him has not been in vain.

The seriousness of our work being in vain is found in I Corinthians 3:9-15, which describes the judgment of the works of Christians. Verses 13-15 say the following: *"each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire."* Write out this passage in your own words.

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How sad it would be to get to this judgment and have our works go up in smoke because they were done with wrong motives or they were worthless acts that held no eternal value.

Two examples of Jesus' judgment on inappropriate or ineffective work are found in Matthew 21. Read verses 12 and 13. Jesus is quoted as saying, *"My house shall be called a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves."* Try to put yourself in the shoes of one of the merchants who was selling animals to be sacrificed. Maybe he was doing this because it had been done traditionally and no one questioned whether or not it was the right thing to do. Maybe he didn't have an evil motivation, just a wrong motivation drawn from ignorance. He may have worked very hard and all the while thinking he was doing a good thing. Jesus' indignation, though, was that the merchants were misusing God's house. Have you ever misused God's house by attending for the wrong reason? (Take a few moments to really think about your answer.) Have you ever sat in a worship service and thought about your plans for the week or a problem you were going through? List below some things you have thought about during a "worship service."

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Can it be possible that when we do these things that we are as guilty as the merchants and money changers in the above passage? Our presence in worship is actually in vain, it's useless, if our purpose is not in line with God's purpose. Our sole purpose of attending corporate worship should be to join other Christians in prayer and worship and glorifying God—really worshipping Him—and this can also be carried over to the fact that anything we do should be in line with that same purpose. Jesus' treatment of the merchants and money changers shows us the seriousness of inappropriate and mis-focused energy and work.

When we do the tasks that God calls us to do, our responsibility is to simply do our part with right motives and with His strength, then trust God to do His part. We are just responsible for what He asks us to do. Read John 4:34-36. What does verse 34 tell us was Jesus' goal? \_\_\_\_\_.

Verses 35b-36 record these words of Jesus: "*Listen to what I'm telling you: Open your eyes and look at the fields, for they\_\_\_\_\_.* The reaper is already receiving pay and gathering fruit for eternal life, so the sower and reaper can rejoice together." More than likely, you will do a lot of sowing this week and others will do the reaping later on. If the sowing were not done, there would be no reaping.

Calgary is a field that is ready for harvest. Over 96% of the people are a religion of "None." As Henry Blackaby has said, "Canadians are not opposed to the gospel; they have just never heard it." You have an opportunity to be the first Bible these people have read. Think about that. What a privilege! To be able to share the love of Christ with people who do not know Him or even know about Him is an awesome opportunity. This week remind yourself often that what you are doing is sowing seeds of Christ.

Be assured that after you leave, the foundation that you have built this week will continue to be built upon in the follow-up that will be done. Be sure to make a list of names of people you talk with along with notes about them (including the subdivision they live in) so that follow-up can be made. We understand that in prior years after the mission teams have left Calgary, people who were served by them have asked the leadership of Southwinds in their follow-up with them questions like, "There was something different about the people who were here; what was that difference?" If you serve them with a heart set on God and a zeal for manifesting His character, they will see a difference in you, as well. It is truly only the work we do "in the Lord" that makes an eternal difference in the lives of those we serve.

Pray that God will help you serve Him today in a way that will not be in vain—that you will produce eternal fruit from a sincere heart filled with passion for Him and for the people He has given you the privilege of serving.

**DAY FOUR**  
**Speaking Graciously**

Read Colossians 4:2-6. Rewrite verse 2 in your own words.

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What prayer request did Paul make in verse 3?

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The principle found in verses 2 and 3, devoting oneself to prayer, forms the foundation for the instruction Paul gives in verses 5 and 6. It is through prayer that we receive wisdom toward outsiders and we are given the ability to speak graciously to them. Verse 5 says, *“Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the time.”* You are here for only one week, so it would be good if you could quote this verse often to yourself during this week.

James 1:5 says, *“Now if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives to all generously and without criticizing, and it will be given to him.”* You may not know this culture and how to interact with the people who live here, but God does. Trust Him to give you the wisdom to act wisely toward them. Remember that love is a universal language, so your loving them will catch their attention and they will be drawn to what you do and say. Just remember that the love you’re exhibiting comes from the love of Christ flowing in and through you; it’s not your own.

The first part of verse 4 of our focus passage for today, Colossians 4, says, *“Your speech should always be gracious...”* How would you define the word “gracious”?

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Think about the grace that God has shown you, remembering that grace is when He gives us what we don’t deserve. Through Jesus Christ, He has given us eternal life even though we are sinners; He has forgiven us for sins that we should have to pay for; and the list could go on and on. Because of the grace God has shown us, the least we can do in return is bestow grace on those around us. But how many times do we, instead, give people what we think they deserve?

John MacArthur says the following: *“To speak with grace means to say what is spiritual, wholesome, fitting, kind, sensitive, purposeful, complementary, gentle, truthful, loving and thoughtful. Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:29, ‘Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need for the moment,*



*that it may give grace to those who hear.”* (The New Testament Commentary) Spend a few moments evaluating how your speech lines up with this instruction.

In summary, our passage for today gives us the keys to a fruitful, rewarding mission trip, which are as follows:

1. Devoting ourselves to prayer, especially asking God for (1) wisdom in knowing how to act toward the people we're serving and (2) an open door to share the gospel
2. Having a heart full of thanksgiving for the privilege of being used by God
3. Making the most of every opportunity to serve others and share Christ with them
4. Being so filled with God's Holy Spirit that His love graciously pours out of our mouths as we interact with others.

Spend time in prayer asking God to help you speak graciously as you interact with others today. Then meditate on what it means to speak graciously throughout the day.

**DAY FIVE**  
**Seasoned with Salt**

Today we will look once again at Colossians 4:6, which says, *“Your speech should always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you should answer each person.”* The emphasis today, though, will be on the phrase *“seasoned with salt.”*

List all the ways salt is used.

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There are many uses for salt, but we will discuss only a few. First, salt is used as a preservative. In what ways have you seen salt used for this purpose?

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Our speech should preserve the good name of God and be consistent with His character. This relates to our discussion of taking God’s name in vain as we saw on Day Three. An illustration has been given of someone asking God what His plan was to spread His gospel to the world and He responded, “I’m trusting My people to share Me with people around the world.” The person then asked Him, “What if your people don’t share You? What is Plan B?” God’s response was, “There is no Plan B.” We, as God’s children, have the responsibility to preserve His gospel by sharing Him with others as the gracious, loving God that He is, and we can only do that effectively if we are gracious and loving. Every time a Christian does something that is not consistent with God’s character, he or she destroys God’s name to those observing. I have a good friend who is not a Christian and she has shared with me many times how people who call themselves Christians have acted in non-Christian ways, so she’s not convinced that God really makes a difference in people’s lives. It’s so sad that we don’t consistently preserve God’s name the way that He deserves and the way people deserve to see.

Salt is also used to heal. List some ways that you have used salt for healing purposes.

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Our speech should be like a salve put on a wound to protect and heal it. Our flesh many times defaults to negative attitudes that can tear down or destroy, but if we are living in the power of

the Holy Spirit, our speech will bring healing to the hearts of those around us. Look up Proverbs 16:24 and write it in your own words.

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Salt is used to add flavor. What are some foods that you don't like to eat without salt?

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There's nothing boring about God, so we should not be boring either. Food without salt can taste bland and a bland Christian does not attract non-Christians to God. We Christians have every good reason to celebrate life and enjoy it to the fullest. After all, Jesus said, "*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.*" How would you describe your life in relation to this verse? Do you consider yourself living the abundant life?

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We should live in a way that exhibits the abundant, full and exciting life that is ours.

How can you apply this principle of seasoning your speech with salt to your interactions with others?

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To be effective, learned principles must be applied to our everyday life. Ask God to give you wisdom and strength today to ensure that your speech is seasoned with salt and therefore used to glorify Him. Meditate today on what speech that is seasoned with salt sounds like, asking God continually to make your speech that way.

**DAY SIX**  
**Taking It Home**

Take a few moments to think back over your work in Calgary this week. What are some principles God has taught you?

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How have you seen God at work on this trip?

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Read once again our focus passages for the week.

I Corinthians 15:58: ***“Therefore, my dear brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the Lord’s work, knowing that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.”***

Colossians 4:5-6: ***“Act wisely towards outsiders, making the most of the time. Your speech should always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you should answer each person.”***

What did we learn is the prerequisite for being steadfast? \_\_\_\_\_

According to I Corinthians 3:13-15, what will happen to the works we do that are worthless or those done with the wrong motivation or in the wrong way? \_\_\_\_\_

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This should motivate us to make sure our labor in the Lord is not in vain.

This week we emphasized making the most of the short time you were here. However, we really should be aware of the importance of making the most of every single day, being sure we do what God wants us to do and take advantage of every opportunity to serve and share Him. Are there any changes you can make to help you do this? If so, what are they?

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Another principle we discussed this week was making sure that our speech is gracious and seasoned with salt. What have you learned about this that you will take home with you?

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This week hopefully your mind has been set on being “on mission” for God. When you arrive back home, our prayer is that you will continue that awareness because as Christians, we are always “on mission” for God. Our mission field is wherever we are. There are always people around us with whom we can share Christ. You can begin by serving them. Most people need to know you care about them before they will listen to you. If you don’t have relationships with non-Christians, then intentionally develop some relationships for the purpose of sharing Christ. Be careful that you’re not influenced by them; maintain your closest friendships with other Christians, but do not neglect those around you who need Christ.

We all know Nike’s slogan, “Just do it!” This week we have looked at what God wants us to do and how He wants us to do it. These principles can be as effective at home as on a designated mission trip. Now, “Just do it,” but be sure to do it in God’s strength and in His way, trusting Him to guide you in every step. In this, you will surely be blessed.

Pray the verses that we’ve studied this week back to God in the following way:

“Lord, help me to be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in Your work, knowing that my labor in You is not in vain. And help me to act wisely toward outsiders, always making the most of my time. Help my speech to be gracious and seasoned with salt so that I may know how to answer each person.” Now pick out the part of this prayer that is the most difficult for you and meditate on that throughout today.

Thank you so much for being with us on mission with God to impact people of Calgary. Please continue to pray for those who remain here as they do needed follow-up and serve these wonderful people. We pray that this has been a life-changing week for you.