

## Cross Examination

I have spent a fair amount of time in depositions regarding medical issues. Occasionally physicians are asked to give depositions regarding injuries from car accidents or as experts giving opinions in other cases. Depositions are tedious. The attorney examining every word, every phrase and trying to find alternative interpretations.

But the real show starts when you get Cross Examined **PHOTO 1**. That is when everything starts to get amped up. As they say, that is when the gloves come off and hopefully truth is revealed.

A lot of people get upset with the process of cross examination. Wondering why they just can't be believed as true and why everyone is so skeptical of what they are saying.

I always saw it as necessary. Never really took it too personally. If I was going to state a truth it had to stand up to skeptics and scrutiny.

We live in a world of skeptics and doubters. Not too surprising because truth is now relative. We have been forced to all come from the Show Me State.

We are closing our series today toward the end of the Book of Colossians. Paul has been warning them about false teachers....He has told them that their love for Jesus and each other in the church is strong evidence of His presence in their lives.

He then told them that the same love poured out at home is a witness to their family and others. How they treat their spouse, children and house servants was evidence of their transformation.

But now Paul will tell them....to get ready for the cross examination. Get ready for the real skeptics....you must not only pour out God's love on each other and on your family....but you also are to pour out God's love on unbelievers...pagans..the strongest skeptics.

We close out the book of Colossians today as we study the last C of Bible Interpretation.

He have learned over the last 16 weeks how to study the Content...to see he lists, comparisons, metaphors, the verb tenses....Then we learned about context...the context we bring to the text and the context of that text to the original audience. Third we learned about the Connection. Learning how to decide if the truth we have found is a timeless truth or one that stays with the original audience. Now we get to the most **critical step....Conduct**. Where we ask the question of God.....God, I understand your truth now what do you want to do?

Notice that the question is very specific. God based on that truth, what do you want to do in my life? Remember, we are not the one changing...we are surrendering and being changed. Many never apply the Timeless Truths to their lives effectively because they ask the wrong question.

A common mistake that many believers make is that they get to this point in the Word and then they ask themselves this question, "How do I want to apply this truth to my life? What change do I want to make?" But here is the problem. If you focus on how you want to apply change in your life....you will never change. Because you and I will choose the change that we want to do....and it is almost always a compromise.

The question we should be asking is, "Holy Spirit how do you want to apply this, what changes do you want to make in my life? What do I need to surrender to give you room to change me?"

The answer to every truth that we learn from Scripture is the same. We acknowledge God's truth as true and we surrender to it. We don't debate it....we don't change it...we don't give our opinion of it...and we don't change anything because of it.

We are taught to go into Fix It mode when we learn that something is wrong. We want to control the process of change. We come up with ways of fixing ourselves.

But we can't apply God's truth as a remedy in our self help self improvement process.

When faced with God's Timeless Truth....we agree and surrender. Like the old hymn....Trust and Obey for there is no other way.

We come to the Timeless Truth in Scripture....we do all the work to reveal it....for only one purpose....To know and understand God...so that He can change us. We have to agree with God that this is Truth and we have to allow the Holy Spirit to update our app. We surrender and give permission....the rest is the WORK of the Holy Spirit.

Recently, someone asked me Why I go to church.....Why not just watch church online...or why not just have a personal relationship with Jesus on your own? This is a common question that comes from our arrogance. I can relate to Jesus better on my own...without other believers. They don't anything to teach me. They don't add to my spiritual walk with God. They are just messed up people....more messed up than me...who are holding me back.

So I spent several weeks really thinking about why I attend church....I know the sermons would be shorter if I stayed home and watched online....but seriously....Why am I here?

Let me share with you the main reason I come to church....I am saved by Jesus...eternally reborn...but I am seriously messed up. I still have a sin nature that I cannot control. I still have pride that I cannot kill. I still have self worship where I try to rise above God at times...Part of my heart is still very wicked...That is the timeless truth of God's Word that I cannot deny. I am saved....but seriously flawed...on this side of eternity.

I attend church because I desperately need to change almost everything about my life and a timeless truth of God's Word says that change must happen in and through a community of believers. I need two things to change....The Holy Spirit and others who are filled with Him who can help me to see truth and encourage me to keep surrendering to it.

Yes we are a collective group of very messed up people. We all have a sin nature....that requires other believers...and a community of love....to change.

I come to church because I desperately need help. I need the Holy Spirit to change me....and He is in you. I come here every week because I need to experience God's love through you. His love changes me and you have it.

I come to church and study the Scriptures so that I can know and understand God...for one purpose....so that He can change my life.

We pan for the gold of the Timeless Truth because we have already committed to change. We have decided in our hearts....Anything....Anywhere.... Anytime God. Please understand this....There are no decision trees when it comes to God's truth. You and I don't read the Bible and then make a decision based on what it says....We make a decision to obey and then read the Bible.

I finally got so frustrated with the sin in my life...with the struggle of sin....that I stopped trying.... to stop sinning....I finally admitted to God, myself and others....that I was powerless to change myself.

It is a timeless truth of Scripture that really set me free. I had to stop trying to stop sinning. Because I was powerless to do so. I can't create a new me...I am not God.

I got to a place in my walk with Christ where I just surrendered...not just to Him being my Savior but Him being my Lord...I got on my knees that day and said God I will do anything, I will go anywhere...anytime you want me to....Just please don't leave me...with me in charge. And I have prayed that prayer every day since.

If you are not already committed to fully allowing the Holy Spirit...to show you the truth...Show you where to apply it...and show you how to apply it. Then don't study the Scriptures.

If you are still trying to decide if you agree with God or if you read the Scriptures without fully surrendering to the Lordship and Authority of the Holy Spirit then the truth will not be revealed to you. God does not reveal his God to those who don't seek it and aren't ready to apply it.

So with that mindset, let's make sure that we understand the difference between interpretation and application.

**Interpretation involves the first three "C's".** Content, Context, and Connection...The purpose is to discover the singular truth revealed....Most of the time interpretation leads us to a singular truth...For example, knowing who you are in Christ sets you free....

Every believer who has ever lived....experienced that truth. Kind David, Solomon, Peter, Paul, Mary, you, me....all of us and every one to follow will know that Who we are in Christ Sets us Free. That is the clear interpretation. God's timeless truth given to all of us.

But Application involves multiple actions. So when we understand that Knowing Who We are In Christ sets us free....we then turn to the Holy Spirit and look for the multiple applications of that truth. When we revealed that truth a few weeks ago, that singular truth was followed by multiple applications.

Some were prompted by the Holy Spirit to change the way we respond to the expectations of others.....others were directed to change the way they respond to the influence of advertisers.....some were prompted to rethink their view of beauty... Some to change the clothes they wear.... some to guard and change the way we respond to new spiritual teachings and gurus.

One truth....Knowing who we are in Christ sets us free...But the Holy Spirit usually directs us to multiple applications..

Interpretation involves getting into the Word...Application involves the Word getting into us.

Interpretation asks What is the truth that God inserted into the Scriptures? Application asks How does God want to insert that truth into my life?

In our ending passage today, Paul begins to move our focus away from our church family....our home family....and begins to prepare us for the cross examination that is going to come from the human family.

Our passage today is Colossians 4:2–6 (ESV) if you want to start heading that way. Let me set the stage for where Paul is taking us.

Paul is teaching us that our new identity in Christ set us free...Free to love those in our church family (we studied that two weeks ago)....Free to love those in our families (we studied that last week)..... and now...Paul turns his focus to those who do not believe.

Paul is teaching new believers in Christ how to interact with those who don't yet believe We forget sometimes how ridiculous what we say sounds like to those who haven't experience it We are having a Close Encounter of the God Kind. Think about what you are asking people to believe

"I talked to God this morning" You know....God Burning bush, split the sea, created the world, died on the cross, resurrected...that God Yes..he spoke to me. Turns out He is very interested in the details of my life. You see I am one of His adopted children. He guides me...teaches me... and changes me. He takes time out of His duties and communicates directly to me.

And you wonder why people want proof? Why they are skeptical? Do you remember when you first heard about it? I didn't believe it...until it happened to me. I can't fully explain all of it...but I have experienced it.

That is why we are called witnesses People always have to weigh and examine what witnesses say They have to decide for themselves about the truth You should expect intense scrutiny when you make astounding claims.

In court, every witness expects to get cross examined....

Jesus made astounding claims "I am God" "I created all thing" "I am above all things" "I hold all things together" "I am God" "I left my home and throne in Heaven" "I am going to die on the cross for you." Going to pay the price of sin for you I overcame death. I resurrected. I am going to save you from yourself. Death has no hold on me, I came out of the grave Going to heaven but I will be back to judge everyone Believe in me You will be forgiven and you will live with me forever Don't believe in me You will be held accountable for your sins you will live separated from me forever In Hell

Why did they believe Him? When they cross examined Him He was authentic He did things only God could do.The winds and seas obeyed Him He brought people and himself back to life He healed people of horrible diseases

His response to cross examination?

John 10:25 (ESV) 25 Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me,

John 14:11 (ESV) 11 Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.

If you don't believe what I say....believe because of the miraculous. Jesus essentially said the miracles that I bring to life speak of who I am. And now he tells us to do the same.

Jesus told us to be His Witnesses. He didn't tell us to be scholars, to have all the answers, or try to defend what people find offensive about His truth. Jesus said, if you don't believe what I say then believe because of the miracles that you see. We are to do the same.

If you don't believe what I tell you about what Jesus has done...then believe because of the miracle that IS my life. Just look at how He change me....it is a miracle! You want proof? This is who I was...this is what happened when I met Jesus....and this is who I am now....It is a miracle of God that I am who I am.

This is our witness...our testimony...Go ahead test me on this...

Our world is skeptical It is hard to believe anything anyone tells you.

So many times people pretend to be something that they are not. We have learned to doubt everything and everyone. It seems for the most part no one is who they say they are. It seems that not product is as advertised.

Churches have done their fair share of false advertising Pastor preaching on immorality because it turns out they are so intertwined in it Churches using God's name to manipulate people into giving them money People using their position in the church to acquire wealth....or worse I don't blame people for looking at Christ followers with a cautious eye Collectively we have not done a great job of representing our Savior Often using lofty words but living seedy lives People are watching us to see if we are authentic.

If you really talk to God.....really talk to Him....you should be very different from those who don't They are weighing the evidence of our lives. Watching what we say...what we do How we talk about others Evaluating if our actions measure up to our promises They are looking for evidence of Jesus in us It is their chance to evaluate what we have claimed. We invite them to cross examine us.

But for many of us we have failed our own exam. We have deceived ourselves when it comes to our faith

Many aren't even honest with themselves where they stand with Jesus. Everyone know they are faking but them...Yet others can tell. They have questions that will expose those who are faking.... They watch what you are doing and look for inconsistency People love to expose a fake We are all turned off by things or people that are not authentic

One of the most damaging things that happens to us during the cross examination of our lives...is when we are challenged to explain the actions and sins of others who made the same claims about Jesus and then were found to be liars.

I am crushed when Pastors are found to be deceptive...when their secret lives of sin...are exposed in the light....I is crushing because they hurt to body of Christ. Their moral failures...or their lies from the pulpit...hurt all of us....They turn seekers away from the very thing that they need. It is so frustrating.

If you are not going to follow Jesus If you are going to ignore Him, His word and His truth If the desire of your heart is to do what you want to do And not to love, serve and obey Jesus If you are not committed to DOING what He says Then please just quit saying that you are a follower of Jesus. Because you are not following Him And you are killing the rest of us.

It frustrated Paul too. He told the Colossians how to live under the scrutiny of outsiders He knew they would soon be Cross Examined He knew it was his job to make sure that they were ready Like us...they were witnesses for Jesus Paul is prepping them and us Because the world desperately needs to see Jesus And we are to show Him to the world By living lives that stand up to the most intense CROSS examination

Colossians 4:2–6 (ESV) 2 Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. 3 At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— 4 that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak. 5 Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. 6 Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

In this passage Paul tells us 3 things we must do... To prepare for our cross examination.

First, we must be positioned

Colossians 4:2–6 (ESV) 2 Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. 3 At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ,

We are to be positioned...surrendered and obedient in prayer. Note that we are to be watchful...with Thanksgiving. What are we to be watchful for? An opportunity....with our hearts full of thanksgiving and ready to tell the truth....God opens a door of opportunity to share the miracle that is our lives as a testimony to others. It starts out on our knees...with grateful hearts....eyes opened for the things of God Steadfast...persisting....consistent.... Being watchful in prayer and ready to step through the door God opens...and reveal the mystery of Christ.

We are watchful...on alert....knowing we are soon called to action....expecting to see God move Thankful for what God has done and what He is about to do. Is that how you pray? Are you expecting God to use you to reach others? Are you prepared to be His witness? To undergo their Cross Examination? Are you concerned about the momentum and advancement of the Gospel in those that you encounter?

We position ourselves to effectively speak by walking in wisdom around outsiders. If we are not walking in Wisdom. If we are not respecting others and living lives reflective of Jesus No one cares what you have to say

Have you ever had someone who is not walking it try to talk it? I am not saying you have to be perfect....but people are watching your heart. We all have areas where we need to grow and change Our growth as a Christ follower never stops We are all under construction But outsiders can look at our lives....see our hearts...and know if we desire God or not

Also notice that Paul says they will come to you for answers....why do they pick you? Because God opened the Door, you were walking in Wisdom and they noticed it. So we get ready for our Cross Examination by being Positioned. Paul's second instruction in this passage

Second, we must be purposed.

Colossians 4:3-4 (ESV) 3 At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— 4 that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.

We are to be expectant. Eyes opened..watchful for what God is doing . We are have a sense of urgency...making the best use of our time. We must be intentional about talking to others about Jesus. (your speech...we are expected to talk)

God's Part= Open the Door We are to speak when the Door is opened Our Part= Our lives bring credibility to our words God's message is a mystery that must be revealed.

Being Purposed Means we are in the Moment Fully engaged...right now. One of the amazing things about Jesus is that He always lived in the moment Fully engaged. Fully present...Fully aware.

But it is hard staying in the moment So many distractions. For many of us it is the Ghost of My Life Past that keeps me from today. I am so guilt ridden about what I have done.

So ashamed of where I have been and what has defined me So overwhelmed with feelings of unworthiness That I can't live in the moment because all of my moments are spent thinking about my past. Rather than being present in what God is doing today... Rather than responding to the door God has opened today I am too busy trying to cover up, explain away, or hide my guilt and shame about my past. I can't be purposeful for God right now...I am too focused on the past.

Others are haunted by the Ghost of My Life Yet to Come It is not my past that keeps me from enjoying the moment It is my fear of the future. I can't be focused on what God is doing in my life at this moment Because my moments are full of worries, anxieties, and thoughts about how to control the future I can't live in the moment.

All of us struggle staying "In the moment" Satan has us right where he wants us. ANYWHERE but in the moment. Either so guilt ridden over our past or so fearful of our future that we can't focus No chance of seeing much less participating in what God is doing in the moment.

So Paul reminds those at Colossae and us that we are to be present in the moment. Not only positioned....but purposed. Understanding the potential of each moment Recognizing God's initiatives Constantly in contact with God

Aware of God in each moment. Can you imagine that? Fully engaged in what God is doing right now. Each conversation, every new person, each discussion, each interruption Not missing anything God is doing.

How do we live in the moment? We pray earnestly...anticipating that God is going to do something....that He is doing something. We are watchful in our prayers with Thanksgiving. We are constantly asking God what He is doing during those encounters in our day. Looking for and not wanting to miss our divine encounters. Recognizing that each person we contact each day is arranged by you. Constantly in prayer....asking your Master how you can serve Him....in THIS moment. Applying the truth of His Word to our past and future.

We don't dwell on our past because it is forgiven and there is no condemnation for those in Christ We don't worry about our future because it is safely in the hands of our God and He promises that He knows the plans He has for us and they are good. We live in the moment because Jesus did and we are His followers. So we get ready for our Cross Examination by being Positioned and being Purposed. Paul's Third Instruction

### Third, We must be prepared

Colossians 4:5–6 (ESV) 5 Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. 6 Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

Each of us who follow Jesus have a story. We have an experience with Jesus to share with others. Christianity is not about a new morality. It is not about a new way to live. It is not about a new philosophy. Christianity is about a relationship with Jesus. An encounter with God that changes who we are.

It is not about a new set of rules to follow Not about finding stronger willpower to be a better person Not about being more focused on a commitment to follow some new rules. It is about a relationship...of encountering and falling in love with Jesus

Our lives are transformed because we encountered Jesus. We are not experts on a new way of thinking. Christ followers have witnessed something in their lives that they can't stop talking about. They are excited to go public and share their story with you. Paul tells all of us that we must be prepared.

We must Walk in Wisdom. That means we don't just know the truth. We have actually applied what Jesus tells us to do. That our lives are NOT just full of knowledge about Jesus. But our lives reflect Jesus. Our lives become authentic. Able to stand up to cross examination.

Walking in wisdom means we don't just talk it...we walk it. Not just some of the time. Not just when we are trying to be spiritual. Not just on Sunday at church. People see something in us that is not of us. When we walk in the presence of Christ. When we walk in His wisdom. People see a sense of peace in us. They see Jesus and He draws them to Him.

We prepare by Walking in Wisdom. We also prepare by the way we talk to others. Our words to others should be gracious. Grace comes from a grateful heart. Grace is founded in humility. Grace is unmerited favor. Speaking well of others. Rather than judging them. Assuming the best motives of others. Putting their needs first. Walking in their shoes a bit.

Our speech should be full of grace. Did you notice that Paul says ALWAYS? It means your speech should be full of grace even when you think people are not watching. It doesn't mean that when the topic turns to Jesus you suddenly turn grace filled and spiritual. Have you met those people? Screaming at their kids and then telling you the patience and peace they feel from Jesus? Our speech should always be grace filled...to everyone...always.

In addition to being speaking grace filled. Our speech should be seasoned with salt. We are to include salt in our discussions. What does that mean?

Not that Paul said our words should always be gracious but salt is a the seasoning not the main ingredient. Not so much grace that everything is tolerated. Not so much truth that everything is judged. That means the truth of God should be present but not overpowering.

People should leave discussions with you thinking.... That was a perfect dish of grace....with just enough truth to know it is there.

Did you notice how personal this message is?

**Colossians 4:6–7 (ESV) 6 Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.**

Yes this message must not only be declared...it must be tailored to each person's circumstances. It is a very personal message...seasoned just for them. In the Gospel of John he repeatedly describes Jesus as "Full of Grace and Truth" Grace perfectly balanced....perfectly seasoned with salt. If we are followers of Jesus our words should be like His Full of Grace and Truth.

Do you see it....EACH person. This message is hugely personal. Each person will have different questions....different concerns....different circumstances. There is something about you and them that God wants to link. God could have put them in the path of Billy Graham....Andy Stanley...or Rick Warren but he chose you.

But too often Christians overpower their message with Salt Those who encounter them can't experience grace Because we overpower them with truth We leave no room for God's grace and they feel judged and angry. It looks, tastes, and feels like this... How do we know how much salt? Don't some people need a stronger dose of truth and others a stronger sense of grace?

We are to take our experiences, walk in wisdom, speak in grace, and season it with truth And uniquely personalize it for the person God has placed in our path. We are to declare the mystery of Christ It has to be explained I has to be revealed. God uses each of us. Our experiences....our personalities.....our weaknesses.... To reveal the truth and declare the mystery of Christ.

Almost every person who has come to know Jesus will tell you that God arranged three things God uses these three things to orchestrate life change. The Mess, The Message and the Messenger. Something in your life, the mess, forces you to seek answers. God's perfect message is revealed to you and you are receptive Then God combines those two things with a perfect messenger.

Someone who is walking in wisdom....speech full of grace and seasoned with truth...and who is prepared to answer their questions. God arranges those who are examining the cross....trying to find answers in Jesus.....to notice your life....and begin to cross examine you. Paul is telling us to be ready for our cross examination....Positioned.....Purposed....and Prepared.

When you claim something. Something extraordinary People have a right to examine your claims for themselves. To see if what you say measures up. To see if your life and speech aligns with what you say you believe To probe...to consider...to ask... To evaluate...to weigh the evidence that is your life for themselves You have made an unbelievable claim People would be crazy not to validate it.

We need to prepare each day for our cross examination We have witnessed an unbelievable supernatural experience with the Living God Almost all of us who have surrendered to Jesus Did so because we met someone who was authentic Not perfect...not sinless...not complete yet But doing their best to represent with all their heart the One they profess to follow.

Paul tells us to get ready for the inquiries about our lives, our faith, and our experiences. We need to be positioned, purposed, and prepared. So let me give you some homework

#### Homework

First, Get your testimony ready...2-3 minutes

1 Peter 3:15 (ESV) 15 but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,

May have to write it out and then shrink it down Where was I before I met Jesus....Here is how I encountered Him.....This is what has happened to me since. Remember you are a witness to your story. Not an expert in theology. It is your story that people want to hear. You are going to get "Cross" Examined...and you need to be ready.

Once you get your story ready...find a Christian friend and practice it on them. Offer to do the same for them. When you are done...read your testimony to God in prayer.. be open to what He reveals Then when the door IS opened...you will be ready to declare the mystery of Christ in your life.

Second, Pick one day this week and choose to live in the moment.

For just one day....don't fret over the past...don't worry about the future.. Pray and ask God to help you stay in the moment with Him. During that day ask God constantly if He has something for you to do, to notice, to share "in each moment" Spend the day with Jesus as your tour guide....don't miss anything that He wants to point out to you. At the end of the day...review those moments with God.

Third, Spend a different day this week focused on your speech.

Ask God to help you think about every conversation that you have that you are full of grace but seasoned with just enough truth. That every person who you interact with is enriched, encouraged, and inspired by your words to them.

That you don't back away from speaking the truth about Jesus when the opportunity arises.

Commit to being ready to answer each person God puts in your path. At the end of that day... review each conversation with God. Pray for the people He put in your path.

Finally, Pick someone who does not know Jesus Take one day and during each free moment pray for them.

Pray that God will open a door. Pray that their heart will soften Pray that the circumstances of their life and the message of Jesus will collide Pray that God will put you in their path. So when the door is opened...you are the one they see.

Pray with a watchful eye and with an expectant and thankful heart. Let God know that you are available- positioned, purposed and prepared to be His witness. And thank Him in advance for the opportunity and welcome their cross examination of your life.

Almost every week I speak to people who desperately want someone they love to come to know Jesus They want them to experience the love, joy and peace that they have experienced. Their lives have been radically transformed and they want everyone to know it. God tells us in this passage what we are to do. Be Positioned...Be Purposed....and Be Prepared.

Then when God opens a door and creates a moment Be ready to answer those who are seeking.

There is no reason to fear the cross examination of Skeptics. We should expect it...and embrace it. We need to remember that it is a **CROSS EXAMINATION**....they are examining the claims of Jesus not you. They are examining the miracle of Jesus that is you...not just you. We are not sent to others to prove....we are sent to present. This is Jesus. This is what He has done in my life. This is what He promises to do for you....That is the good news...that is the Gospel....If they reject what you say, they are not rejecting you....they are rejecting Him....and that is the point.

We must share our testimony without wavering so that Christ is lifted up for them to see. Then God leaves them to make a decision. After a cross examination....people come to believe one way or the other....but cross examinations don't determine truth....they just reveal the truth that was there all along. Let's Pray.