
Surprise the World! Chapter 1: Living “Questionable” Lives

Scripture

² Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. ³ And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. ⁴ Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. ⁵ Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. ⁶ Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone. —Colossians 4:2-6, NIV

¹⁵ But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶ keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. —1 Peter 3:15-16, NIV

Chapter Summary

Paul speaks of the church being given the gift of an evangelist (Ephesians 4:11), not the gift of evangelism. But he also affirms that believers are to be evangelistic. In other words, some will be Spirit-gifted evangelists, but not every Christian is an evangelist. We see this in Colossians 4:2-6.

Type of Minister	Priorities	Type of Spoken Ministry
Gifted Evangelists (Col. 4:3-4)	Clarity in the Gospel; Alertness for Opportunities	Bold Proclamation
Evangelistic Believers (Col. 4:2, 5-6)	Prayer, Watchfulness, Wise Socializing	Gracious Answers

“In other words, the biblical model is for leaders to (1) identify, equip and mobilize gifted evangelists (who then take a leadership responsibility for the church’s evangelism) and (2) inspire all believers to *live questionable lives*. If all believers are leading the kinds of lives that evoke questions from their friends, then opportunities for sharing faith abound, and chances for the gifted evangelists to boldly proclaim are increased.” —Page 5

Gifted evangelists who tell the rest of us that we need to be gifted evangelists has the opposite effect when people cannot match up to their confidence and articulate words.

This twofold approach took over the Roman Empire. The Emperor Julian (AD 331-363) wrote this due to his concern that Christians were making significant inroads:

“We must pay special attention to this point, and by this means effect a cure. For when it came about that the poor were neglected and overlooked by the [pagan] priests, then I think the impious Galileans [his word for Christians] observed this fact and devoted themselves to philanthropy. And they have gained ascendancy in the worst of their deeds through the credit they win for such practices. For just as those who entice children with a cake, and by throwing it to them two or three times induce them to follow them, and then, when they are far away from their friends cast them on board a ship and sell them as slaves...by the same method, I say, the Galileans also begin with their so-called love-feast, or hospitality, or service of tables—for they have many ways of carrying it out and hence call it by many names—and the result is that they have led very many into atheism [his word for Christianity].” —Pages 8-9

Julian then attempted to create his own system to compete with Christians, but couldn’t get pagan priests or Roman officials to care, and it failed.

When Christians combine the message of gifted evangelists with the questionable lives many are living, the message is much more effective. This is what Paul spoke of in Titus 2:10—the way Christians live is meant to “make the teaching about God our Savior attractive.”

Questions

Use whichever questions you like. Some are taken from the book; other questions can be found starting on page 109.

1. Read Colossians 4:2-6 aloud. Now look at the small chart section “Priorities.” Which of those five things do you find yourself already doing? Which do you hope this study challenges and equips you to do?
2. In 1 Peter 3, Peter challenges Christians to always be prepared to give an answer for their hope. Answers assume questions. What types of questions would you feel comfortable answering if a non-Christian asked you?
3. What do you think about the twofold approach that Michael Frost proposes here?
4. Who are the gifted evangelists you know? What, outside of the gifting of the Holy Spirit, makes them skilled at sharing the message of Jesus?
5. Reflect on the rhythms of your life. Which of them are motivated primarily by your faith?
6. Of the rhythms you listed, which would non-Christians in your life find to be surprising, questionable, or intriguing?
7. There are some Christians who agree with the idea of living a questionable life but who don’t get asked questions. Why do you think this is?
8. In the chapter, Frost lists two things that won’t be questionable—giving large sums of money and living a comfortable, suburban lifestyle. What other ways of living, outside of sinful habits, aren't questionable?

Prayer

Pray that your group or class would, together, begin to brainstorm how you might live questionable lives. What might God be inviting you all to do together over the next 8 weeks and beyond?

Challenge

Have a conversation with someone you know who is a gifted evangelist. How did they discover this gifting, and what encouragement would they give to you as you grow in your evangelism?

