

## The Vast and Wide Chasm Between Wants and Needs / Colossians 4:2-6

*Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*

I got letter in the mail on this very month 13 years ago from a native Floridian and Vero-Beachian: “Dear Right and Esteemed Rev. West: We celebrate your young families’ move to the Sunshine State. Included with this letter are one day passes to Disney’s Magic Kingdom for your expecting wife, son, and you. We hope you like Disney as much as we do. Because if you do, we highly encourage you to purchase season passes for you family. It will save you a lot of money in the summer time.” // Church, I want to tell you this morning that 13 years later on this very day I possess something now that I didn’t have then: the privilege of hindsight. And oh how I wish I could pen with ink and quill a response developed from it. If I could, it would go something like this: “Dear fellow beneficiary of Ponce De Leon’s discovery: Included with this letter are the one passes to Disney’s Magic Kingdom you sent to me. I kindly request that you return these for a full refund and send us the proceeds. I will assure you that the Right and Esteemed West will use them for a down payment on an air conditioning unit manufactured after 1472; a pallet of plywood, armadillo and gator traps to prevent my front lawn from looking like a wildlife refuge, and a tube of aloe for my third degree burns that I got from my metal seatbelt after I ate my Swamp Cabbage and Apalachicola Oysters at Marsh Landing in Fellsmere.

We tend to concentrate on our wants in life instead of our needs. And because we do, we have little to no comprehension of what our needs truly are. A want is a desire to possess something, or do something, or wish for something. But a need is necessary and essential for survival. And friends, faith is a lot like life. If we concentrate on our wants in life, we will equally do it in faith. And consequently, like life, we have little to no comprehension of what our faith needs really are. I want you to take your Bibles and turn with me to Colossians 4:2-6. It’s the “so what” passage of Colossians. And in this “so what” passage, Paul prescribes for us what our greatest spiritual needs for survival really are. My hope and prayer today is that after our time in the Word of God you will be see the vast and wide chasm between wants and needs.

*<sup>2</sup> Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. <sup>5</sup> Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. <sup>6</sup> Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.*

### Four Needs:

#### 1. How to Pray for Yourself

- **Kid Who Wanted A Drum Set For Christmas:** (1) Mom and Dad: “I want a drum set for Christmas” (2) Well go to your room and ask Jesus; (3) After three years of going in his room and asking Jesus on Christmas eve, the boy had enough; (4) The fourth Christmas, he went to the church grave yard, took a statue of Mary, and kept it in his room; (5) Then he prayed: “Lord Jesus, I’m holding your mother hostage. Please give me a drum set tomorrow if you ever want to see her again.”
- **Transition:** Prayer works similar to life. In life, we spent so much time focusing on what we want, that we don’t comprehend what we actually need. So also with prayer.
- **Difference Between Want and Need In Prayers for Yourself:** (1) Want – I pray for my prosperity, my health, and all the things important to me. (2) Need – I pray for God to show me dangers I’m unaware of.
- **Textual Ideas:** (1) Jesus told his disciples to keep watch and pray; lest you fall into temptation; (2) The disciple’s are asleep; (3) Next thing you know, Peter denies Jesus and the other disciples flee in the darkness of night; (4) The same exact language is used here: (a) what to do “devote yourselves to prayer” (commit yourselves); (b) how to do it: “being watchful” (on guard) and “thankful”

- **Implication:** We live in a dangerous world and we are unaware of dangers we are often in. That's why Peter denied and James and John fled in the darkness.

## 2. How to Pray for Others

- **The Well Worn Carpet:** (1) My grandmother lived on the Mill Hill all her life where she sowed with her hands; (2) She lived in the same house on that mill hill for 30 years; (3) Her bed room had the same carpet for most of those years; (4) At the foot of her bed were two well worn spots on the carpet; (5) I found out later that they were knee imprints from the time she spent sowing spiritually for her family in prayer.
- **Transition:** "Men may spurn our appeals, reject our message, oppose our arguments, despise our persons, but they are helpless against our prayers." — J. Sidlow Baxter.
- **Difference Between Want and Need in Prayers for Others:** (1) Want – (a) *people you love* – I pray you will show them this or this; (b) *people who are unlovely* – I pray you close this door on their head (2) Need – Open doors you want them to walk through; close the ones you don't.
- **Textual Ideas:** (1) Our doors are seen by people on the street; (2) Not so in the ancient world; particularly in a city like Colossae; (3) They were hidden; usually by a wall and a walkway; (4) In order to go in, someone had to come from the inside to the outside to get you and guide you.
- **Implication:** (1) Praying for others centers on asking God to do something only he can do: open doors; (2) And it applies to all people in your life; whether friends, family or enemy. (3) Thus, we can pray for God to close a door in people's lives, but not without praying for him to open another one.

## 3. How to Act around Outsiders

- **The Golden Rule for My Children When They Go To Someone Else's House:** (1) If the parents cook dinner, you put some of everything on your plate; (2) And not only put some of everything on your plate, you try it; (3) It might have 15 legs and crawl off the plate, but you are going to try it.
- **Transition:** We are being watched. Our actions that we take every day as believers in Christ will impact those outside the faith.
- **Difference Between Want and Need in Actions Towards Outsiders:** (1) Want – What I say about my character matters most; (2) Need – What outsiders say about your character matters also.
- **Textual Ideas:** (1) God has a fondness for the nations; (2) Because he has, he has used God's people to show them that the God of the Bible is real; (3) The spies testified to Rahab and she believed; (4) Elisha testified to Naaman and he said that the God of Israel is the one true God; (5) Daniel interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream and he later believed when God humbled him; (6) Paul preached the Gospel to a Gentile doctor named Luke and Luke believed and then wrote a story about it
- **Implication:** In all of those cases, God's people made the most of every opportunity and earned the respect of outsiders.

## 4. How to Talk to Everyone

- **Number One Ranked Explanation of an Accident According to Metropolitan Insurance Company:** (1) Came from Jim; 33 in Salt Lake City; (2) In response to the question, "what caused the accident?" (3) Response – "I pulled away from the side of the road, glanced at my mother in law and headed over the embankment."
- **Transition:** "always" is one of the most dangerous words in the English language because it allows for no exceptions and no wiggle room. But that's the implication here.
- **Difference Between Want and Need in Talking to Everyone:** (1) I want my words to be measured and graceful most of the time; (2) I need my words to be measured and graceful all of the time; for *always* allows for no exceptions.
- **Textual Ideas:** (1) No refrigeration existed in the ancient world, so people used salt to preserve their food; (2) But preservation wasn't the only use of salt; (3) Like today, they used salt to provide flavor.
- **Implication:** The message of Jesus, preserved in our hearts, is always to provide the flavor of the Gospel to world. There is no wiggle room.