

WITNESSING

...following Jesus in his mission



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Witnessing: Following Jesus in His Mission

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Introduction

Sitting by the side of a pool, I noticed the unusual T-Shirt worn by the man playing in the water with his kids. The shirt displayed a statement that read like a mix of philosophy and religion, and I was curious as to what it meant. Hoping that God might open a door for me to talk with the man about faith, I waded into the water. When I asked about the statement on his shirt, he was more than happy to talk. We introduced ourselves, and I asked Randy what he did when not on vacation. "I break up homes and marriages," he said. He smiled at my surprised look and said, "I'm a divorce attorney." When I told him I was a pastor (and often perform wedding ceremonies), we had a good laugh about being on "opposite sides."

As we talked, it became clear that Randy had read widely in the areas of religion and philosophy. When I asked him if his studies had brought him into a personal knowledge of God, he replied, "Can anyone really know God? Can a molecule on the foot possibly understand the whole body? How could we understand something or someone as vast as God?"

It was a good question, and it showed that Randy grasped something of the greatness and transcendence of the God who created all that exists. So, to his question: "Can anyone really know God?" I replied, "Only if he has chosen to reveal himself."

The beautiful message of the Bible is that God has chosen to reveal himself. Concerning the coming of Jesus Christ, the apostle John writes, "No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known (John 1:18)." Jesus has made God known and he has shown us what our Creator is like. Speaking to his disciple, Philip, Jesus said, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father (John 14:9)."

Not only has Jesus revealed the Father, he has also provided for us to know him in an eternal relationship of loving fellowship. Praying to the Father for his followers, Jesus said, “And this is eternal life, that they may know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent (John 17:3).”

The remarkable message of Scripture is that the Triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—invites us into an eternal relationship of loving and joyous fellowship with himself. Jesus Christ came to earth, died on a cross, and rose from the grave to make such a relationship possible. In the words of John 3:16, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

Why is it that Randy, who had read extensively in religion and philosophy, and lived in a city with hundreds of Christian churches, did not yet comprehend the simple truth of John 3:16? In his interactions with thousands of clients, had no one ever shared the simple message of the gospel? He certainly seemed open to talking about the message of the Bible. And while I did not thoroughly present the gospel that day, I hope he gained some understanding of the truth that our Creator has chosen to reveal himself and invites us to know him.

My conversation with Randy reminded me that, while many people believe God exists, far fewer understand how to know him in a personal relationship. Some, like Randy, believe that personal knowledge of God is beyond our grasp. Others think God must be appeased by good deeds in order to avoid his judgment. Some believe that religious rituals earn his favor, and spare us from his punishment. But the teaching of the Bible is that Jesus Christ has done everything necessary to bring us into an eternal relationship with God. In the words of the apostle Peter, “Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God (1 Peter 3:18).”

Who Is Called to Share the Gospel?

The message of Jesus' provision for our salvation is often called the "gospel"—a word that means "good news" or "good message." The communication of this message has not been entrusted to any special category of Christian. It is not the exclusive calling of pastors, missionaries, or evangelists. The responsibility and privilege of sharing the gospel is given to every single follower of Jesus Christ in every generation.

After his resurrection and prior to his ascension to heaven, Jesus had some parting words for his followers. He said, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8)." To whom did these words apply? Jesus' promise of the Spirit's power was initially seen when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon 120 people in an upper room in Jerusalem. In addition to the apostles, this number included women such as Mary, the mother of Jesus, and other women. All were filled with God's power when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon them on the day of Pentecost. Following this great outpouring, the apostle Peter preached the gospel to the thousands of people gathered in Jerusalem. Peter proclaimed:

Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself (Acts 2:38-39).

Did you catch that? Everyone who comes to God through faith in Jesus receives the gift of the Holy Spirit. And with the gift of the Spirit comes the power to be a witness for Jesus. (Acts 1:8)

The Book of Acts records the spread of the gospel following the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Acts chapter 8 tells us that a great persecution arose against the early Christians in Jerusalem. This resulted in their being scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, with the exception of the apostles, who remained in Jerusalem. Acts 8:4 tells us that “those who were scattered went about preaching the word.” Everyone “except the apostles (v.1)” went out proclaiming the gospel. Persecution resulted in these non-apostles going to the very areas where Jesus said his followers were to be witnesses (Acts 1:8)! The early Christian church knew no distinction between clergy and laity. All who had received the Holy Spirit had received power to be witnesses.

In *Evangelism in the Early Church*, author Michael Green notes that “Christianity was from its inception a lay movement, and so it continued for a remarkably long time.”¹ Green writes, “If there was no distinction in the early church between full-time ministers and laymen in this responsibility to spread the gospel by every means possible, there was equally no distinction between the sexes in the matter. It was axiomatic that every Christian was called to be a witness for Christ, not only by life but by lip.”²

When we realize that all followers of Jesus are to be his witnesses in our respective spheres of life, we can live with greater alertness to the opportunities around us. We will see more clearly our responsibilities to witness in our workplaces and neighborhoods “by life and lip.” The apostle Paul had such opportunities in mind when he wrote, “Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious,

1 Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1970), 173.

2 Green, 175.

seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person (Colossians 4:5-6).” Paul’s words remind us that we each have a responsibility to the “outsiders” (those who do not yet know Jesus) around us. There is a limited window of time for our witness, and we must make the best use of it. This calls for both “gracious” speech and the right knowledge for the occasion. But first we must be sure that the witness of our lives does not contradict the witness of our lips. We must “walk in wisdom” so that the way we live reflects well upon the Lord we represent.

Your Life is a Witness

I met Kim on the first day she visited our new church at the school where we met. She explained that she was not a church-goer, but had come in response to a direct mail piece we had sent to the community. While I think Kim enjoyed the service that day, the most significant thing that happened to her was meeting Debbi. Debbi recognized that Kim was new and in need of spiritual growth, and she became her friend. In the coming months, Debbi and Kim rode bikes, shared meals, and talked about the gospel. Debbi shared Scripture with Kim and tried to answer her questions about faith. Over time, Kim grew to understand the gospel and became a devoted follower of Jesus. In fact, she serves on our church staff today! As Kim reflects upon her spiritual journey, she points to the tremendous impact that Debbi's example had upon her. Debbi's life was a witness before she witnessed to Kim by her words.

Jesus taught us that our lives are to be witnesses to others when he said, "You are the light of the world." He explained, "Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your father who is in heaven (Matthew 5:16, 18)." Our lives are to be living witnesses that help to point people to God.

The apostle Paul may have had this in mind when he charged the Philippian Christians to "do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world (Philippians 2:14-15)." A grumbling, argumentative Christian is not much of a witness! The way we live before the world can

reflect positively or negatively upon the gospel. Our witness can be a stumbling block or a stepping stone for those who need to see the truth of the message of God's salvation.

Everything we Christians do before the world around us is important because we represent Jesus Christ. If we call ourselves his followers, everything we do reflects upon him. The way we perform our jobs, the way we conduct ourselves when playing sports, and the way we treat waiters and waitresses all contribute to or detracts from our witness for Christ.

Maintaining a good witness can be especially challenging with people who deliberately antagonize us because of our faith. When the apostle Paul wrote to his young disciple, Timothy, he gave him specific guidance about relating to such people: "And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will (2 Timothy 2:24-26)."

Regardless of how people treat us, we Christians are called to be "kind to everyone." We're to be patient and gentle in teaching those who oppose us. And we're to remember that they desperately need the grace of God that we have received in order to be brought from spiritual darkness to light.

Starting the Conversation

Just as Debbi's life made Kim more receptive to hearing the gospel, so the witness of our lives can often lead to a verbal witness. In fact, we should always be alert for opportunities to point people to God as the one who is responsible for any positive difference in our lives. Jesus noted that our light should so shine before others that they "may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven (Matthew 5:16)." Our good works are important, but so is our verbal witness, so that people can be pointed to our Father in heaven. Otherwise, people will simply be impressed with us.

How do we start conversations that lead to our sharing about God? This can happen naturally when a friendship already exists. Friends share with friends about the important things in their lives, so talking about how you began a relationship with God need not feel awkward. It helps if you can first become comfortable discussing your testimony—your account of coming to faith in Christ and the difference it has made in your life. For those who came to know the Lord in their teenage years or later, it might be simple to think of your testimony in three parts:

- Your life before Christ.
- How you came to know Christ.
- The difference Christ has made in your life.

Christians who come to faith as young children often feel their testimonies lack interest or excitement because there was no dramatic change in their lives. They may not even remember a time when they did not know the Lord. For them, it may be helpful to think in terms of specific ways their faith in Christ has helped them in life. For example, "I'm grateful to have had

a personal relationship with the Lord since I was a young child. I experienced his presence in a powerful way when my grandfather died when I was only nine years old. We had been really close and I felt devastated by his unexpected death. But I experienced God's comfort in a remarkable way that year. It gave me a deep assurance that God would always be with me, even in the hardest times of life." A testimony like that, while not dramatic, may actually have more impact than one that highlights radical life change.

A testimony can often serve as a bridge into a conversation about spiritual life. For example, after you have shared with someone your experience of God's work in your life, it often seems natural to ask about theirs. You might ask, "Have you ever had an experience when God made his presence unmistakably real to you?" or "Has there been a time in your life when you recognized your need for a relationship with God? What happened?" Questions about a friend's spiritual life flow more naturally when you have first shared about your own.

But what about conversations with people whom you don't know well? How do you begin a spiritual conversation with a sales clerk in a store or a person seated next to you on a plane? Kindness, thoughtfulness, and the willingness to listen sometimes lead to opportunities to share your spiritual story. Many people will share their stresses, struggles, hopes, and dreams with thoughtful listeners. When you have heard their needs or hopes, you might say, "I'd like to pray for you about that." I have always been amazed at how appreciative people are for the offer of prayer. The offer to pray for someone conveys your compassion and concern for that person, and it often provides the opportunity to ask questions about that person's relationship with God. For example, "Do you often pray?" or "Where are you in your own relationship with God?"

Two of the most effective questions I have heard for assessing a person's assurance in relationship with God are those used in *Evangelism Explosion* training.³ The first question asks:

“Have you come to the place in your spiritual life where you know for certain that if you were to die today you would go to heaven?”

The second addresses what a person is trusting in for salvation:

“Suppose that you were to die today and stand before God, and he were to say to you: ‘Why should I let you into my heaven?’ what would you say?”

Many people reply to this second question by stressing their good works or good intentions. Having heard their answer, you then have the opportunity to explain how helpful it was for you to learn that our salvation is a gift from God (Ephesians 2:8-9)—a truth at the heart of what we call “the gospel.” But first you need to be sure you have a good grasp of the message of the gospel so you can share it with others.

³ James D. Kennedy, *Evangelism Explosion*, third edition (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1983), 16.

Knowing the Message

After graduating from college, my first job was in sales with a large business products company. I began by attending their week-long sales training school in Atlanta. In preparation for the training, I was required to memorize a three-and-a-half-page sales presentation. My boss warned me that I must know it word for word or I would be sent home from the school! Though he probably exaggerated the strictness of the requirement, I did my best to know the presentation perfectly by the time I arrived in Atlanta.

During my eight years with the company, I never used the entire three-and-a-half-page sales presentation. But I did use parts of it on different occasions. And knowing what often felt like a “rote” or “canned” presentation gave me the confidence to make my first sales call. Knowing the message gave me the confidence to share it.

While we never “sell” the gospel, we are called to share it. And in order to do that, we have to know it, and this requires preparation. The apostle Peter notes that we are to “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 (1 Peter 3:15).”

The Bible does not provide us with an outline for how to explain the gospel in every situation. The Book of Acts records differing (though not contradictory) ways of presenting the message by different people to different audiences. But it is helpful to have a good grasp of the foundational biblical truths that explain the whys and hows of God’s salvation.

These four ideas provide a simple outline for explaining who God is and what he has done for us in the gospel:

- GOD'S NATURE
- OUR PROBLEM
- GOD'S SOLUTION
- OUR RESPONSE

GOD'S NATURE:

The gospel begins with God our Creator. Genesis 1:1 states: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." Revelation 4:11 reads: "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created."

As the One who created us humans in his own image (Genesis 1:27), God alone has the authority to define good and evil, right and wrong for us.

Scripture teaches us that "God is love" (1 John 4:8), and he is "compassionate and merciful" (James 5:11). But it also teaches us that he is perfectly holy and just. In the words of Revelation 4:8, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty." God's holiness necessitates his separation from evil. As Psalm 5:4 says of God, "Evil may not dwell with you." The fact that God is perfectly holy and is also a "righteous judge" (Psalm 7:11) presents a problem for us human beings.

OUR PROBLEM:

Our problem is our sin that separates us from our holy God. Ever since Adam and Eve sinned against God in the Garden of Eden, we human beings have been distanced from God by our sin. In the words of the apostle Paul, "None is righteous, no, not one (Romans 3:10)," and "All have sinned and fall short of

the glory of God (Romans 3:23).” Many people fail to grasp the seriousness of their sin because they evaluate themselves by comparison with other people. But our sin is seen differently when we see it in contrast to God’s holiness. By this standard, we all “fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).”

In the Old Testament, God gave his people laws, such as the Ten Commandments, to guide them toward lives that would honor him. But his laws could not remove human sin; rather, they highlighted our need for God’s forgiveness. The Old Testament prophets spoke of a time when God would do something remarkable for his people. The prophet Isaiah declared, “By his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities (Isaiah 53:11).” God would send someone who would not only bear the iniquities (sins) of his people, but would also provide for them to be considered righteous in his eyes. That someone was Jesus.

GOD’S SOLUTION:

Jesus Christ is the Son of God who has always existed with the Father and the Holy Spirit. In the words of the apostle John, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (John 1:1).” The “Word” refers to Jesus, who left the glory of heaven to become a human being. John went on to write: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14).” Later in the same chapter of his gospel, John writes of Jesus, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29).”

Jesus lived a sinless life, something no other human had ever done. Then, at the appropriate time, he allowed himself to be arrested, brutally beaten, and crucified. In his death on the cross, Jesus—who was both fully God and fully man—fulfilled his role as the Lamb of God. He bore the punishment predicted by the prophet Isaiah:

But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:5-6).

Jesus' death was not the end, however. His body was placed in a tomb, and on the third day he was raised, proving his deity and attesting to his authority to give eternal life. His suffering and resurrection were for us. He bore the punishment we deserved. He rose from death and offers eternal life to all who follow him. He did it all. But he calls us to respond.

OUR RESPONSE:

While Jesus has done everything necessary to secure our salvation, God calls us to receive what he has provided. We do this by faith. John wrote, "But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God (John 1:12.)"

What is faith? Biblical faith is more than mere belief that Jesus was a real person who was crucified, died, and rose again. It certainly includes that, but genuine faith is the belief that Christ's sacrifice on the cross was necessary for *your* sins to be forgiven.

This recognition of our need for forgiveness is related to what the Bible calls "repentance." Repentance is the recognition that our sin is wrong and offensive to God, and that we must turn away from it. Jesus called for repentance in his own preaching (Matthew 4:17, Luke 13:5), and he called for his disciples to preach "repentance and forgiveness of sins" as well (Luke 24:47).

Genuine faith includes belief and repentance that leads to a life of devotion to Jesus. The motivation for this devotion is gratitude—joyful appreciation for what Christ has done for us.

Recognizing our need for forgiveness—and recognizing what God has done to meet our need—leads to loving obedience as a follower of Jesus.

While much more could be said about the gospel, these four points provide one way to share the message. Perhaps they can provide a starting place for your own conversations. Having a plan in mind can help us be prepared when asked to give “a reason for the hope that is in you (1 Peter 3:15).”

When you have shared the gospel message, and a person seems genuinely ready to place his or her faith in Jesus as Lord, you can offer to lead the individual in a prayer of commitment. The prayer should express the person’s belief in the gospel and willingness to become a follower of Jesus. Using short, easily-repeated phrases, you might use words like these:

Lord, I acknowledge that I am a sinner in need of your forgiveness. I believe that Jesus died on the cross to bear the judgment for my sins. And I believe that he has been raised from the dead.
Lord, I turn from my sin and I turn to you. I place my trust completely in what Jesus has done to save me. Jesus, I receive you as my Savior and Lord.
Help me to be your devoted follower. Amen.

Never try to persuade someone to pray if that person’s understanding of the gospel or sincere desire to follow Christ seems lacking. Simply trust that God will use what you have shared to bear fruit in that person’s life over time. After all, it is only his power that can bring a person out of spiritual darkness and into his eternal light and life.

Responding to Questions and Objections

The man seated next to me on the plane was from India, and he was a devoted student of Hinduism. As a highly-trained medical doctor—an oncologist—he had had conversations with patients who had tried to persuade him to embrace Christianity. One patient had unfortunately suggested that he “quit trying to reason things out and just believe.” That left my new acquaintance with a less-than-positive view of Christianity as a faith that was not for reasonable, intelligent people. It was my privilege to try to guide him to a more clear understanding of the faith. I pointed him to the writings of the apostle Paul and his logical explanation of the gospel in places like the Book of Romans. My new friend did not embrace the gospel that day, but I hope he saw that Christianity was much more than “blind faith.”

Many people have confused ideas about the Christian faith. Sometimes their confusion has come from ill-informed Christians. Other times it has come through acquaintance with hypocritical church-goers. Others may have simply heard wrong teachings from people who used Scripture in their messages. Whatever the cause, some people have barriers in place when it comes to hearing the gospel. As witnesses for Christ, we must not allow these barriers to keep us from sharing the life-giving message of the gospel.

The fear that we will encounter questions we cannot answer or objections we cannot address should never keep us from sharing our faith. When faced with such responses, we should agree with what is true, clarify what is misunderstood, and offer to research what we don't fully understand. Most people without Christ are not looking for answers to complex theological questions. They

just need a clear understanding of the essential truths of the gospel. By explaining the biblical teaching about God’s nature, our problem, God’s solution, and our response, we are providing them with the message that is “the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes (Romans 1:16).” Questions like: “What about people who never get to hear about Jesus?” or “Why are there so many hypocrites in the church?” are often just efforts to evade a person’s need to deal with the real issue—responding to the gospel with repentance and faith. As witnesses, we will help people most by gently guiding their focus to the all-important message of the gospel, rather than becoming side-tracked onto other subjects.

Here are some possible ways to respond to common questions or objections that arise when witnessing:

QUESTION: “What about people who have never heard about Jesus—what happens to them?”

RESPONSE: “That’s a great question, and it points to one reason the church should always be involved in world missions. I think we can trust that God will do what is in perfect alignment with his justice and mercy in those cases. At the moment, I’m more interested in your response, since you have heard about Jesus’ saving work. Does what I have shared about God’s provision for our eternal salvation seem clear?”

QUESTION: “I think there are too many hypocrites in churches.”

RESPONSE: “I have to agree with you on that. It seems like Jesus himself had his most harsh words for religious hypocrites, and we can be sure he will deal with today’s hypocrites appropriately. But I sure wouldn’t want hypocritical people to keep me from receiving what Jesus died on the cross to provide for me. What about you?”

QUESTION: “I’ve heard that, in the Old Testament, God told people to kill other people—even to wipe out whole nations. Why would he do that?”

RESPONSE: “You’ve asked a great question, and a hard one! The answer has a lot to do with God’s wisdom, judgment, and mercy needed in particular historical settings. If you like, I’d be happy to research the topic and we can talk about it more. But for now, what are your thoughts about what I’ve shared about Jesus?”

QUESTION: “The Bible is a book written by men, and it has contradictions.”

RESPONSE: “You are right in that men wrote the Scripture, but I believe, and the Bible teaches, that they were guided by God to write his words. Jesus believed that too. If you can show me a contradiction in the Bible, I would be happy to research it and try to provide an explanation. It’s really important to be aware of the main message of the Bible. The central idea is about God’s provision of eternal life for us through Jesus”

Questions and objections need not deter us from sharing the message of the gospel. These concerns can often be addressed honestly and gently as we return our conversations to what people really need—the knowledge of God’s saving work for us in Jesus.

Trusting in God's Power

He was a frail, thin, grey-haired man who stood only five-feet, three inches tall. He always wore a grey felt hat, a tie, and a double-breasted navy blue suit. For years—at least thirty-four years—he walked the streets of Sydney, Australia, with a piece of chalk or a crayon, bending down to write the word, “Eternity,” on the pavement. It is estimated that Arthur Stace wrote his one-word sermon on the sidewalks and streets of Sydney over half-a-million times.

Arthur Stace was born in 1885 to parents who were both alcoholics. He became a ward of the state at age twelve, and, with little formal education, began working in coal mines at age fourteen. Drunkenness, crime, and jail time marked his teenage years and beyond. But on November 14, 1932, at the Burton Street Baptist Tabernacle, Stace heard a message by evangelist John G. Ridley. Ridley shared the gospel and urged his hearers to think about where they would spend eternity. Stressing the importance of considering one’s eternal destiny, Ridley shouted, “I wish I could shout, ‘Eternity!’ through the streets of Sydney.”⁴

As the evangelist shouted, “Eternity!” Arthur Stace began crying and sensed what he felt was a powerful call from the Lord to write the word, “Eternity,” for others to see. For years, he set out with a piece of chalk or crayon to write, “Eternity,” every one hundred yards or so as a call to others to consider their eternal destiny. Over time, Stace added words like, “Obey God,” or “God 1st,” but most frequently just wrote, “Eternity.” He later began

4 “Making Your Life Count for Eternity,” *Anglican Church League* (2 January 2014): <http://acl.asn.au>.

preaching on street corners, and even rented a house he could use to help down-and-out men who needed a safe place to sleep at night.

Today, Arthur Stace is remembered simply as the man who wrote the word, “Eternity,” in order to gently confront millions of people with the importance of considering their eternal destiny. Over the years, many people have testified that Stace’s simple ministry got them thinking about their need for God, and put them on a path to hearing and receiving the gospel. Testimonies from around the world attest to the impact of Arthur Stace’s humble efforts to reach others. The ministry of “Mr. Eternity” was like a stone thrown into a large pond, and its ripple effects went beyond Sydney and even to other nations. Arthur Stace’s simple ministry reminds us that it is God alone who brings people to himself, and he can empower even the simplest efforts to reach others with the gospel.

After Jesus’ resurrection from the dead, he reminded his followers that they were “witnesses” who would proclaim his name to all nations (Luke 24:46-48). But something was necessary first. Jesus said, “And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high (Luke 24:49).” He explained that, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8).” Jesus’ promise was fulfilled when the Holy Spirit was poured out on all those gathered in an upper room on the day of Pentecost. After this outpouring, his followers boldly preached the gospel near and far (Acts 8:4).

As was noted in chapter one, Jesus’ promise of the Holy Spirit is for all who are called to follow him (Acts 2:38-39). The power of the Spirit for witnessing is available to every believer. Knowing that God has provided us with his power to do his work is the greatest possible encouragement to be faithful as

his witnesses. While we should be prepared to explain the message of the gospel (1 Peter 3:15), our effectiveness in evangelism is not dependent upon our personalities, educations, or social standing. Even the apostle Paul, a highly-educated Jew, recognized that his effectiveness in ministry did not come from himself. He wrote:

Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:5-6).

Effectiveness in personal witnessing simply calls for our willingness to share the gospel with others, leaving the results with God. The gospel message itself is invested with God's power to save (Romans 1:16). And as God's witnesses, his power dwells within us. As we rely upon the power and control of the Holy Spirit and share his truth with others, God will use us to bear fruit that is of eternal significance. Recognizing that the power for witnessing is from God, not ourselves, can embolden us to share the gospel. God gives his people his power to do his work.

What is it that keeps many of us from sharing the message of the gospel with others? If it is a lack of conviction about the urgent need for people to hear and receive the message, we should remember that Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). We should pray for greater compassion for those who are facing eternal condemnation without the gift of Christ's salvation (John 3:18). If we fear we don't know enough to witness to others, we should learn the foundational truths of the gospel so we can always be "prepared to make a defense" of our trust in Christ (1 Peter 3:15)." If we fear rejection or are simply too timid to speak to others, we should pray for boldness and rely on the power of the Holy Spirit, who empowers us to be witnesses for

Jesus Christ (Acts 1:8). Perhaps the following prayer can help you express your dependence upon God for effectiveness in witnessing.

A Prayer to Be an Effective Witness

Father, I come to you in the name of my Lord Jesus Christ. Please fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit so I can be an effective witness for you (Acts 1:8). I pray that the fruit of the Spirit— love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control—will be evident in my life today (Galatians 5:22-23). Cause my light to shine before others so that they may see my good works and give you glory (Matthew 5:16). Lord, help me also to be prepared to verbally share the gospel. Enable me to share it with gentleness and respect for others (1 Peter 3:15). Please open doors for me to share your Word, and help me to make it clear when I speak (Colossians 4:3-4). Help me not to be ashamed of my Lord Jesus, and to remember that you have not given me a spirit of fear, but of power and love and self-control (2 Timothy 1:7-8). Empower me to speak boldly as I proclaim the mystery of the gospel (Ephesians 6:19). Lord, please also give me your compassion for the lost. Help me to see their true condition, and to be moved with love to reach out to them. Send me as a laborer into your harvest (Matthew 9:36-38). Please make me a faithful witness and use me to help others come to know you. Amen.

Gospel Presentation

Memory Verses

VERSES	GOD'S NATURE	OUR PROBLEM	GOD'S SOLUTION	OUR RESPONSE
Genesis 1:1	In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.			
Revelation 4:8	"Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"			
Psalms 7:11	God is a righteous judge, and a God who feels indignation every day.			
Romans 3:10		None is righteous, no, not one.		
Romans 3:23		...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.		
John 1:1			In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.	
Isaiah 53:6			All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.	
1 Peter 3:18			For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God.	
John 1:12				But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.
Romans 10:9				If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

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