

Can I Get a Witness?

“For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard”
(Acts 22:15).

What is a witness? A witness shares what he has seen, heard, felt or experienced. A witness usually gives a testimony of something that is evidence in a case. A witness is someone who observes a certain event and tells about it. *Webster’s Dictionary* relates that “to bear witness,” means to “declare, on the strength of personal observation, that something is true.”

Robert E. Coleman in *The Great Commission Lifestyle* defines witnessing as “to bear testimony to what is known to be true.”

A Christian witness tells what he knows about Jesus.

“Christians are to witness, (1) what they have seen of Jesus Christ, (2) what they have heard concerning Jesus Christ and (3) what they have experienced. They are to tell how their lives were changed.” (Page 207, *Evangelism and Church Growth*, Elmer L. Towns, General Editor)
Henry Poitras in his *Fishers of Men Series* writes, “A witness tells what they have seen and heard (Acts 4:20, 22:15). Your story of personal experience is captivating, inoffensive, indisputable, and most of all ‘salt’ that will settle in and create thirst. Remember we are witnesses not judges.”

Through our testimony, we can persuade men to accept truth.

“For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20).

“We cannot stop telling about the wonderful things we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20 *NLT*).

Where should we witness?

- Here
- There
- Everywhere (Acts 1:8)

Times certainly have changed. The Early Church could not stop telling the wonderful news, but the modern church has difficulty getting started. We need to echo the words of four lepers in 2 Kings 7:9 *NIV*, “We’re not doing right. This is a day of good news and we are keeping it to ourselves.”

The Psalmist said, “Has the Lord redeemed you? Then speak out! Tell others he has saved you...” (Psalms 107:2 *NLT*).

It is time to speak out!

"Go to the exiles, to the sons of your people, and speak to them and tell them, whether they listen or not..." (Ezekiel 3:11 *NASU*).

Research shows that most people come to Christ through the witness of a Christian that is a personal friend or relative. It is a shame that only ten percent of Christians actually witness. Bill Bright says the only failure in witnessing is the failure to witness.

Walking Advertisements

Are you a walking advertisement for the Lord Jesus?

While walking down the street Jesus noticed a blind man. He spit in the dirt, made a clay paste and rubbed it on the man's eyes. He instructed him to go and wash at the Pool of Siloam. The man obeyed and was healed. The town immediately took notice. They started discussing among themselves and speculated over what had taken place. Some were convinced it was not the blind man. The Pharisees argued that Jesus was not from God since he performed the healing on the Sabbath. Others wondered how it was possible for a bad man to perform a good miracle. The Jews did not believe the man was blind to start with. They went to the man's parents and asked them. They said, "He's a grown man. Ask him!"

They called the man back again and told him to give God the glory because Jesus was a fraud. He told them, "I know nothing about this one way or the other. But I do know this: I was blind...I now see."

They had no argument when faced with a living testimony of God's power.

A farmer underwent an eye surgery that corrected his blindness. He made his way from the Christian hospital into the interior. A few days elapsed when the missionary doctor noticed the formerly blind man returning holding the front end of a long rope. Behind him, in single file, with each holding on to the rope came several blind people. The farmer had told them about his operation. They all knew that the farmer had been blind, but now could see. He told them of the doctor who had restored him to health and they all wanted to meet the doctor to be treated by him.

The cured man could not explain anything about anatomy or the technique employed in the operation. He could only tell others that he had been blind but now could see. That was all they needed to hear. They came to the doctor.

Jason lives in the small village of Crooked Tree in Belize. He is a former drug addict and ex-convict. He should have been sent to prison again for breaking into the pastor's home. The pastor refused to press charges. This made a deep impression on this young man's life. Jason started attending church and was soon filled with the Holy Spirit. He eventually married the

pastor's daughter and now lives next door to the church. Early morning finds Jason praying and seeking God in the church. He has pledged to visit every home in the village by offering them tracts to read. He tells the people, "I cannot explain everything to you, but if you will read these tracts, and come to my church then my pastor can explain more." What Jason can explain, he does. His changed life is a powerful message. The village is starting to talk about Jason, the preacher. He wants everybody to find what he has found. Way to go, Jason! God doesn't have to have a theologian, just an available witness.

"Everyone wanted to see what had happened. They came up to Jesus, and saw the madman sitting there wearing decent clothes and making sense, no longer a walking madhouse of a man...As Jesus was getting into the boat, the demon-delivered man begged to go along. Jesus said, "Go home to your own people. Tell them your story—what the Master did, how he had mercy on you." The man went back and began to preach in the Ten Towns area about what Jesus had done for him. He was the talk of the town." (The Message)

As Christian witnesses we do not have to be trained in theology, or understand all the details of the Bible, or be a perfect example of flawless Christian living. The basic requirement of being a witness is having a life-changing experience. We can all tell others what Jesus has done in our lives. We may understand little about the Bible but we do know that the Lord has changed our lives.

Phil Callaway in *Who Put My Life on Fast Forward* confesses that one of the greatest stresses in his life is "witnessing." He writes, "When I told others about my faith, I was as clumsy as a carpenter with ten thumbs...A few years ago I made a surprising discovery: When I simply tell others what I have seen or what God has done, they listen...I used to count conversions; now I count conversations. I don't have all the right answers, but I know and care about the questions."

Callaway further explains that when Jesus walked on the earth He had time for two things that really mattered. Both of these last forever:

- God's Word
- People

We do not have to have all the answers. The Bible has the answer to every problem and question. We need only be willing to tell our story of what the Lord has done for us. Your testimony can be a powerful tool when incorporated with God's Word. We need to be available and willing to talk to people we come in contact with.

Let Your Candle Shine

"Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven "Matthew 5:14-16).

Watchman Nee in *Witnessing* asks, "How long will the light of a candle last?"

The light goes out when the candle burns out. But if we were to light another candle with the first one, the light would double in intensity. The light of the first candle does not diminish because it lights the second one. The light of each candle lasts until it burns out. When the first candle goes out, the second one keeps burning. If we keep lighting candles the light will never go out. The church is like a candle. It has continued throughout the centuries and the light burns brightly today (or does it?).

Whitefield was an evangelist who died on his last evangelistic trip to America. The last time anyone saw him alive, he was preaching with a flickering candle in his hand to a crowd of people. At the Whitefield Memorial Church there is a stone portico engraved, "The love of Christ constrains me to lift up my voice like a trumpet." (*Time is Running Out*)

**"Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men"
(2 Corinthians 5:11).**

When anything good comes our way, we usually tell it. The early Christians were told not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus. They responded, "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." (Acts 4:20) The *NIV* translation reads, "For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20).

The early church believed in the "every believer ministry," and everyone went everywhere telling the good news about his changed life. The gospel spread through ordinary men reaching ordinary men. They were not big-time evangelists, just witnesses. They simply told what they had seen and heard, explaining what they had encountered. They gave an answer concerning the hope they had within.

"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15).

In the general sense "witnessing" is telling the good things that the Lord has done for you. Even the way we live is a witness to others.

"We can't preach the good news and be the bad news. We are to love, accept and forgive, as we have been loved, accepted and forgiven by God." (*Rivers of Revival* by Neil T. Anderson and Elmer L. Towns)

"Witnessing" is an effective means of evangelism, because you are explaining what God has done in your life. No one can argue with a transformed life or other miracles experienced.

Leonard Ravenhill said, "A man with an experience is never at the mercy of a man with an argument." People cannot talk you out of your experience. You know it happened!

“And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it . . . What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it” (Acts 4:14, 16).

In a more specific sense “witnessing” is telling others what salvation/eternal life means to you. It includes three parts.

1. **Before you were a Christian:** What you were like before receiving eternal life.
2. **How you became a Christian:** How you received salvation/eternal life. This would explain how you came to obey Acts 2:38.
3. **Since you became a Christian:** What salvation/eternal life means to you. Here you would also declare the peace you experience now and your hope for the future.

It would be good to write out your testimony. Douglas Shaw in *Sharing Jesus* also suggests that you consider the following:

1. A brief description of your religious upbringing.
2. Aspects of your pre-Christian live that would be of human interest – your struggles, lifestyle, etc.
3. How you saw God working in your life before you became a Christian.
4. Factors that led to you coming to the Lord and to the truth of His Word.
5. How you actually came to God – where, when, how, etc.

In your testimony always emphasize the positive by telling the great things that the Lord has done. Be careful not to give credit to the devil in the first part of your testimony. Begin by telling what your life was like before you met Jesus Christ. It is not necessary to go into a lot of detail. Keep your entire testimony to 3-5 minutes. Be brief and to the point. Use language that a non-Christian would easily understand.

Be careful not to talk in a “preachy” way. You are not preaching. You are giving your testimony. Speak in a natural tone and avoid gestures that will take away from your presentation.

Most people are willing to listen to your journey of faith. Do not be pushy about sharing your faith. However, do not hide it either. Faith can be shared in casual ways. Always express how the church and the Lord have blessed your life. Avoid any negative comments about the church and other Christians. Do not criticize the church the person you are witnessing to attends.

It is important to teach people how to tell their story in their area of influence. It is estimated that every person has about twelve major contacts in society. This includes close friends, relatives, co-laborers, and neighbors. These can be witnessed to first, and they already have a good idea of your transformed life. However, do not stop there. Tell your story to anyone who is open to hear it.

Discipleship Journal offers suggestions in “Witnessing at Work” (Issue 193). They include:

- Pray.
- Speak openly about church activities, Bible studies, and your faith.
- Bring a Christian perspective to conversations.
- Allow others to see a glimpse of your life before Christ.
- See others through Jesus’ eyes.
- Don’t be surprised by rejection (1 Samuel 8:7).

WITNESSING GUIDELINES

To help you in witnessing, note the following (adapted from www.carm.org.)

Do...

1. Pray.
2. Read your Bible.
3. Keep things simple.
4. Share your testimony with them.
5. Know what you believe.
6. Speak the truth in love. Let the love of Jesus shine through your life
7. Have a genuine concern for others.
8. Memorize appropriate scriptures.
9. Listen attentively.
10. Ask questions to find out where the person is spiritually and/or to get to know the person better.
11. Encourage the person to study the Bible on his own.
12. Do not merely quote scriptures but show them in the Bible.
13. Use scripture in its context.

Do not...

1. Attack the person or make fun of his experiences or lack of them.
2. Move from one subject to another. Be organized in your presentation.
3. Argue.
4. Lose patience.
5. Get sidetracked defending your denomination or side issues.
6. Speak too fast or unclearly.
7. Come on too strong. Know when to stop.
8. Attack the person’s church.
9. Act as if you are spiritually superior.
10. Expect too much of the person. Give him time to make a decision. Many are witnessed to several times before actually coming to the Lord.

J. Oswald Sanders adds:

- 11. Avoid trying to approach more than one person at a time. Your prospect may not be willing to open his heart and explain his difficulties in the presence of others.
- 12. Do not let your ultimate objective be too apparent.
- 13. Do not monopolize the conversation. Allow the other person to do some talking too.
- 14. If witnessing alongside another Christian do not interrupt when he is talking to the prospect.
- 15. Do not deal with people of the opposite sex.
- 16. Do not provide too much information (scriptures and illustrations). This can cause the inquirer to be overloaded and/or bored.

Have faith that God will convert others through your testimony.

“Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony”
(John 4:39 NIV)

IT’S TIME TO THINK

Write out your testimony of coming to the Lord. This can be used to witness to others.

(A large portion of this lesson is taken from *Acts: God’s Training Manual for Today’s Church – Level T* by James G. Poitras.)

Study Questions

1. What is a witness? _____

2. What are Christians to witness? _____

3. According to Bill Bright what is the only failure in witnessing? _____

4. What is the basic requirement or prerequisite to being a witness? _____

5. What did Jesus tell the demon-delivered man who wanted to travel with Him? _____

6. How did the gospel spread in the early church? _____

7. How is witnessing an effective means of evangelism? _____

8. What are the three parts included in a personal salvation testimony? _____

9. What did Leonard Ravenhill say about a man with an experience? _____

10. How many minutes should your testimony take? _____

11. How many major contacts in society does each person have? _____

12. How can one be effective with witnessing at work? _____

13. List five things you can do to help you with your witnessing.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____

14. What are five things that you should not do?

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____

15. Why is it important to approach one contact at a time? _____

Additional Notes
