

Why We Witness

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"I think a man's religion is so personal we shouldn't discuss it."

"I don't like people who are dogmatic and fanatical about religion. They try to force their views on everybody they meet."

"Well, I have my own religion, and I'm happy with it."

Perhaps you have heard comments like these from someone you know. Or even made them yourself before you became a believer.

During approximately fifty years of sharing Christ and training others to do the same, I have found no biblical rationale to justify fearing those responses as a reason for not witnessing.

In fact, the need for people to hear the Good News of God's love and forgiveness is a matter of life and death. The writer of Ecclesiastes observes:

Death is the destiny of every man; the living should take this to heart (Ecclesiastes 7:2).

Man's self-will is characterized by an attitude of active rebellion or passive indifference. Because of sin, he is by nature degenerate and corrupt, destitute of God's love, undeserving of His forgiveness, and so destined to death - eternal separation from God. But Christ does not want anyone to perish, but wants everyone to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).

He placed such a high value on the human soul that He personally gladly exchanged the perfection of heaven for a life of poverty, suffering, shame, and death to seek and to save what was lost (Luke 19:10).

From His earliest youth and throughout His life, Jesus clearly understood His mission and purpose. His concern for the lost was so deep that at times the flood of compassionate tears rolled down His face. Jesus, the manliest of men, wept. Similarly, Paul pleaded night and day with everyone who would listen to be reconciled to God.

Since then, people of every century and many walks of life have had a heart of compassion for those who are living apart from God. Great spiritual leaders such as John Wesley, D. L. Moody, and Billy Graham dedicated their lives to reaching people with the message of hope.

When one young missionary who had been sent home because of illness was asked why he was so eager to get back to his people, he said, "Because I cannot sleep for thinking about them."

Our Lord has commissioned each of us to share the Good News and "seek the lost." He said, "Go and make disciples of all nations"; and "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation" (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15). It is our greatest calling, then, to share the love and forgiveness He has given us with those who have never received Him as their Savior and Lord.

From my personal experiences and studies of God's Word, five key concepts have been made clear to me - concepts that impact the lives of every Christian.

Christ has given a clear command to every Christian.

Jesus Christ's last command to the Christian community was to make disciples. This command, which the church calls the Great Commission, was not intended merely for the eleven remaining disciples, or just for the apostles, or for those in present times who may have the gift of evangelism. This command is the responsibility of every man and woman who professes faith in Christ as Lord.

Men and women are lost without Jesus Christ.

Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father, except through me" (John 14:6). God's Word also reminds us, "There is salvation in no one else! Under all heaven there is no other name for men to call upon to save them" (Acts 4:12, TLB).

Men and women are truly lost without Jesus Christ. He is the only way to bridge the gap between man and God. Without Him, people cannot know God and have no hope of eternal life.

Rather than being "not interested," the people of the world are truly hungry for the gospel.

One of the greatest misconceptions held by Christians today is that men and women do not want to know God. But wherever I go around the world, I find ample proof that just the opposite is true. The Holy Spirit has created a hunger for God in the hearts of millions.

I have discovered that at least 25 to 50 percent of nonbelievers are ready to receive Christ in most parts of the world if properly approached, one on one, by a trained Spirit-empowered witness. And I believe that among that number may be some of your own family members, a neighbor or a co-worker, or a person you do not yet know to whom God may lead you. They are ready to hear a clear and simple presentation of the Good News of God's love and forgiveness.

Jesus said, "The fields are ripe unto harvest." Can we afford to be selfish with the gospel when such overwhelming evidence shows that so many people are hungry for

God? By sharing our faith in Christ with others, we can help change our world for our Lord.

We Christians have in our possession the greatest gift available to mankind: God's gift of eternal life, which we received with Jesus Christ at our spiritual birth (John 3:16).

Christ is risen! We serve a living Savior! He not only lives within us in all His resurrection power, but He also has assured us of eternal life. He died on the cross in our place for our sin, then rose from the dead. We have direct fellowship with God through Jesus Christ. And this fellowship, this peace, this gift of eternal life, is available to all who receive Him.

The love of Jesus Christ for us, and our love for Him, compels us to share Him with others.

Jesus said, "The one who obeys me is the one who loves me..." (John 14:21, TLB). In other words, He measures our love for Him by the extent and genuineness of our obedience to Him. As we obey, He promises He will reveal Himself to us.

Because he loves me, my Father will love him; and I will too, and I will reveal myself to him (John 14:21, TLB). What are we to obey? When it comes to witnessing, we have the specific commandment from Jesus Christ to go into all the world with the Good News.

Helping to fulfill the Great Commission is both a duty and a privilege. We witness because we love Christ. We witness because He loves us. We witness because we want to honor and obey Him. We witness because He gives us a special love for others.

God wants you to witness because of the benefits He offers to those who receive Christ:

- They become children of God.
- Their bodies become temples of God.
- All of their sins are forgiven.
- They begin to experience the peace and love of God.
- They receive God's direction and purpose for their lives.
- They experience the power of God to change their lives.
- They have assurance of eternal life.
- God also wants you to witness because of the benefits you will receive.
- Witnessing will stimulate your spiritual growth, lead you to pray and study God's Word, and encourage you to depend on Christ. You will experience the tremendous privilege and honor of representing Jesus to the world (2 Corinthians 5:20).

The Holy Spirit came to provide the power for you to do so (Acts 1:8). Wouldn't you like to share with someone else the most valuable thing you have?

All over the world, I have asked two questions of Christians, young and old, rich and poor, new Christians and people who have been believers for more than half a century.

I have asked these questions also of some of the most famous Christians in the world. The answers are always the same, no matter who I ask.

What is the most important experience of your life?

"Knowing Christ as my Savior."

What is the most important thing you can do for another person?

"Help him or her to know Christ."

If you are a Christian, you undoubtedly would give the same answers to these questions. Yet if you are like the majority of Christians today, you have never introduced anyone to Christ. But you would like to do so, and you know in your heart that this is what God called you to do.

What is a Witness?

1. Describe what a witness testifies to in a courtroom. How is that like sharing your faith in Christ?
2. What are you admonished to do in Psalm 107:2? Why is this hard for you?
3. How have you followed this admonishment today? This week? This month? If not, what has kept you from witnessing?

The Motivation for Witnessing

1. What did Jesus command you to do in Mark 16:15 and Matthew 28:19-20?
2. Read Acts 20:24-27, 31-32. How important would you say Paul's ministry of witnessing was to him and why?
3. Read II Corinthians 5:14-15. What caused Paul to witness? What attitude should we have about what Jesus has done for us and how should that change our lives?
4. What does Jesus Christ say about the one who is ashamed of Him? (Luke 9:26) How should this affect your witness?
5. If you are faithful to follow Jesus, what did He promise to do? (Matthew 4:19) How has he helped you do this?

The Message

1. We are called ambassador's in II Corinthians 5:18-20. (An ambassador is one who is appointed to represent his country in a foreign land.) Reflect on the duties of an ambassador. How do these relate to the Christian life and to witnessing about your faith in Christ?
2. Why did Jesus say He came into this world? (Luke 19:10, Mark 10:45)

3. As a representative of Christ, what would be your message to those who do not know Him personally? Write your answer in words you could use with a non-Christian.
4. How does Paul express the message in I Corinthians 15:3-4?

Life Application

1. Take several moments to reflect on what your relationship with Jesus Christ means to you. Complete this statement, "Because Christ rose from the dead and lives in me, I ..."
2. Based on your obedience to Christ's command to share your faith with others, what conclusion do you think He would draw about your love for Him?
3. Why do you believe it is important that you, personally, be a witness for Christ?
4. Can you think of at least two people with whom God led you to share Christ during the past week? How did you respond?

Adapted from *The 10 Basic Steps Toward Christian Maturity*, by Bill Bright, co-founder of Campus Crusade for Christ. © Cru. All rights reserved.