

THE CHRISTIAN AND WITNESSING

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Why We Witness

Bill Bright

"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 do to 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 ambassadors 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?

4. Why do you suppose Jesus sent all twelve of his disciples to buy provisions when two of them could have done it?

5. Who spoke first, Jesus or the woman of Samaria? Why is this significant when considering how to witness?

6. What did Jesus do repeatedly when the woman tried to divert His attention from her sin and her need?

Responses of the Samaritan Woman

1. How effective was the approach Jesus used in witnessing to this woman of Samaria?

2. What was the result of His witness?

3. How did the people to whom she witnessed respond, and why?

Sometimes witnessing can seem like breaking a sound barrier, like when an airplane accelerates to supersonic speed. Introducing the subject of Jesus can produce much stress and nervousness.

The first sound barrier occurs when we first mention the name of Jesus Christ and the value of knowing Him. Once we turn the conversation from dating, fashions, politics, work, sports, or any other topic to spiritual things, we have broken the first barrier. It is sometimes hard to do, and it does not always come easily.

Qualifications for Witnessing

Bill Bright

Personal preparation is the key to becoming a successful witness.

The first step is to be sure that you yourself are a Christian. Commit your entire person - your intellect, your emotions, your will - to Him and receive the gift of God's love and forgiveness through the Lord Jesus Christ.

The second step is to be sure there is no unconfessed sin in your life. If some sinful attitude or action is hindering your fellowship with God, He cannot live through you, and you will not be a joyful Christian or a fruitful witness for Christ.



The third step is to be filled with the Holy Spirit. To be fruitful in your witness for Christ, you must appropriate by faith the fullness of God's Spirit. Invite the Holy Spirit to control and empower you - to enable you to live a holy, godly life by faith and to make you a fruitful witness for Him.

The fourth step is to be prepared to communicate your faith in Christ. Keeping Christ on the throne of your life as the Lord of your heart is the best preparation for communicating your faith.

Carefully study the eighth chapter of Acts. List the qualifications for witnessing. Ask the Holy Spirit to make these qualities real in your own life.

Philip's Opportunity

1. Read Acts 8:26-40. According to verses 26 and 27, why do you think God called Philip for this particular assignment?

2. To whom did Philip witness in verse 27?

3. Who told Philip to join the chariot? Does the Holy Spirit lead us in the same way today? Describe and example from your life.

4. How did Philip respond? How did he approach the man? (verse 30)

5. Was the man ready? Why? What was his response?

6. What Old Testament passage was the Ethiopian reading? (verses 28, 32, 33) To whom did they refer?

7. What was Philip's message?

Philip's Qualifications

Philip demonstrated at least eight qualities that contributed to his effectiveness for Christ. Notice these qualities:

- Knowledge of the Word of God
- Boldness
- Compassion

- Humility
 - Obedience
 - Receptivity, sensitivity to guidance
 - Tact
 - Enthusiasm
1. Reflect on each of these qualities. How are they at work in your life?

2. Which ones do you have difficulty with? List ways you can strengthen these areas.

Possible Hindrances to Our Witnessing

After each of the following hinderances, describe how it affects your witnessing:

1. **Spiritual Lethargy.** If you are not excited about something, chances are you won't tell many people about it. For many Christians, the excitement of the Christian walk has been dulled by everyday distractions, materialistic pursuits, and unconfessed sin. Like the believers in Ephesus, these men and women have left their first love.
How does it affect your witnessing?

2. **Lack of Preparation.** Personal dedication to Christ and understanding how to witness and what to say are imperative. Preparing your heart through prayer gives you the right attitude and opens yourself to the power of the Holy Spirit.
How does it affect your witnessing?

3. **Fear of Man.** We possibly will be persecuted by unbelievers, as well as believers, but the fear of man will prove to be a snare (Proverbs 29:25). Christ said of those who feared to confess His name, "They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God."
How does it affect your witnessing?

4. **Fear of Failure.** "They won't believe; they won't accept such simple truth." Certainly some will reject or neglect the gospel, but you should never believe the lie of Satan that people are not interested. Christ said, "Open your eyes and look at the fields! They are (present tense... 'now') ripe for harvest" (John 4:35). Jesus said, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord...to send out workers into his harvest field" (Matthew 9:37,38).
How does it affect your witnessing?

5. **Fear that the new Christian will not go on to grow in the Lord.** Review the parable of the sower (Matthew 13:1-23). Every seed of the Word of God will fall on one of these types of soil: path, rocky, thorny, or good. Some new Christians will become disciples. Keep up the faithful search for these disciples.

How does it affect your witnessing?

6. **Lack of practical know-how.** As a result of thousands of surveys, we have found that the vast majority of Christians today not only believe they should share their faith, but they also really want to. However, they don't receive the practical hands-on training that will ease their fears and help them witness effectively. The result is a guilt trip: They know they should, but they hesitate because they don't know how.

How does it affect your witnessing?

Life Application

1. Which hindrance is the greatest problem for you and why? What steps will you take to overcome it?
2. Have you let distractions, lethargy, materialism, or unconfessed sin rob you of your excitement in Christ? In what ways?
3. In a time of prayer, ask God to reveal any unconfessed sin in your life. After reading I John 1:9, confess any such sin, and ask for God's cleansing and forgiveness.
4. Look back through the list of qualities in Philip's life and identify the ones you would like to have God develop in your life.
5. Spend some time in prayer, asking God for those characteristics to be developed in your life and witness.

Witnessing and the Word of God

Bill Bright

When the early Christians received the power of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the news spread quickly throughout Jerusalem, and a large crowd gathered, seeking the meaning of this phenomenon. Peter, under the control and in the power of the Holy Spirit, addressed the inquisitive crowd.

Who were these people? Some had been present at the crucifixion earlier and had cried, "Crucify Him" and, "Let his blood be on us and on our children" (Matthew 27:22, 25). Possibly some in the front row were those before whom Peter had used profanity when he denied Christ (Matthew 26:73,74).

Under these fearful circumstances, Peter's resources had to be God's Word, prayer, and the Holy Spirit. The purpose of this lesson is to demonstrate the use of the Word of God in witnessing, and its results.

Peter's Witness

Read Acts 2.

1. Of all the disciples, why was Peter the least qualified to witness for Christ, and yet the most qualified, as suggested above and in Acts 2?
2. How much of Peter's sermon involves quotations from the Bible (such as from Joel, David, etc.)?
3. How much Scripture memorization do you suppose Peter had done in his early life?
4. What part does the Holy Spirit play in those who share Christ's message (John 14:26)?

5. What part does the Holy Spirit play in those who hear Christ's message (John 16:8-11)?
6. What part does prayer play (Acts 2:42-47)?
7. What did Peter say to convince them of sin (Acts 2:23, 36)?
8. List some great things Peter preached about God (verses 24, 34, 35, 38, 39).

The Crowd's Response

1. How many became Christians that day?
2. List the emotions experienced by the hearers before and after conversion.
3. Why did some listeners respond in anger first?

The Power of the Word

1. Summarize Isaiah 55:11.

3. List some ways, mentioned in the following references, in which God's Word will nourish your growth. Romans 10:17, Psalm 119:11, 165.

4. Name one thing for which God's Word is absolutely essential, according to I Peter 1:23.

Life Application

1. List specific ways in which the preceding Bible verses will help you in your witnessing.

2. Which verse do you believe you need the most?

3. Memorize that passage. How will you apply it?

Witnessing and Prayer

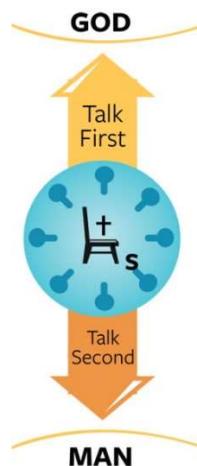
Bill Bright

Do you want your loved ones, your friends, and neighbors to come to Christ? Begin to claim them for God as you pray. Follow the example of our Lord, our High Priest, whose prayer is recorded in John 17:20: "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message."

Just as Jesus prayed that the Holy Spirit would work in the lives of His disciples, so we can pray that the Holy Spirit will convict non-believers and give them a strong desire to know God. Paul and other writers of the New Testament were frequently requesting prayer for others as well as for themselves.

Although God wants everyone to come to repentance, He chooses to wait for the prayers of a concerned believer to release the Holy Spirit in that person's heart. In our efforts to lead people to Christ, we must first talk to God about men, then talk to men about God. If we follow this divine order, we will see results.

Since it is God's will that none should perish, and since God promises to answer any prayer offered in accordance with His will (1 John 5:14-15), we can know with assurance that God will answer our prayers for the salvation of souls for whom he has impressed us to pray (Philippians 2:13).



Prayer is really the place where people are won to Christ; sharing the Good News is just gathering in the fruit.

The aim of this lesson is to demonstrate that prayer played a major part in the witness of the early church.

What the Early Christians Prayed For

1. Read Acts 4. What problems did these Christians face?
2. What do you think would have happened to Christianity if they had stopped witnessing?
3. How important is the soul-winning witness to the cause of Christ today? Give 2 specific examples.
4. How did these Christians solve their dilemma? Before magistrates? In private? In public?
5. What protected them? (Acts 4:21) For what did they pray?

The Answer to Their Prayer

1. The answer to their prayer was immediate and definite. They prayed, and God answered as He had promised. None could stand against them, and they were victorious in Christ.
How can you profit from their courage, prayer, and effective witness?
2. Successful praying is simply asking God to work according to His will and leaving the results to Him. From this statement, what part does faith play in your prayers?

3. In what ways can other people depend on your courage, prayer, and witness?
4. Someone has said, "Prayer is not an argument with God to persuade Him to move things our way, but an exercise by which we are enabled by His Spirit to move ourselves His way."

How does this statement help us understand our role in witnessing and in our willingness to share our faith?

The Christian's Opposition

1. How were the witnessing Christians of the early church persecuted? (Acts gives several examples.)
2. In your opinion, who is the author of resistance to Christian witness and why? How does knowing this help you have more courage?

God's Timing

1. Success in witnessing is simply taking the initiative to share Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and leaving the results to God.

How do you react when a person does not receive the Gospel the right way? How should you react?

2. God's will does not operate according to our timetable. Think of a situation when God's answer to your prayer did not come at the time you expected. How did He answer that prayer? Relate the timing of this incident to waiting on God for His harvest.

Life Application

1. What specific opposition have you encountered recently, and how did you deal with it? How could you have handled it better?
2. Which special friends or loved ones have been on your heart recently? Have you ever felt that a particular situation was hopeless? How can prayer change that attitude?
3. Look up verses that you can use when you feel a situation is hopeless. Put these verses on a card in your Bible so you can review them and pray over them the next time you get discouraged about witnessing. Use the index in your Bible to find appropriate verses.

What principles have you learned from this study to help you in your prayer and witness to these people?

4. List at least one prospective witnessing situation and spend a few moments praying specifically for God's leading and empowering through your life.

Continue praying without ceasing, but instead of begging and pleading with God, thank and praise Him by faith that He is going to answer your prayer in His perfect timing.

Witnessing and the Holy Spirit

Bill Bright

When you talk about Jesus, expect God to use you. The Lord Jesus promised His supernatural resources to all who join with Him in helping to fulfill the Great Commission.

You are assured of that same resurrection power and presence today through the power of the Holy Spirit. Our Lord honors the faithful witness of all who place their trust in Him.

Self-consciousness and fear of what others will say, however, will hinder our witness. Stephen was a table waiter (Acts 6:2-5), not an apostle. He was brought before the most wicked opponents of Christianity. He could have retreated because he felt inadequate to face these people, but he yielded to the Holy Spirit's control of his life. As a result, his faithfulness to Christ, even to accepting death by stoning, mightily moved the unbelievers and laid the basis for Saul's conversion.

Work of the Holy Spirit in a Believer's Life

1. Read Acts 6 & 7. What part did the Holy Spirit play in Stephen's life?
2. What spiritual indictment did Stephen pronounce upon his hearers that cut them to the heart?
3. As a Spirit-filled man, Stephen had two purposes that were his greatest concerns, as seen in his desire to witness and in his dying prayer. What were they?
4. How do these concerns show the fullness of the Holy Spirit in Stephen? (Compare Galatians 5:22-23 and II Corinthians 5:14-15)

Work of the Holy Spirit in Witnessing

1. What is the ministry of the Holy Spirit? (John 15:26, 16:13-14)
2. How is it accomplished in a person who witnesses of Christ? (Acts 1:8, 6:10) How is it being accomplished in your life?
3. What will the Holy Spirit do for the witnessing person? (Acts 4:31)
4. What will the Holy Spirit do for the person receiving the Good News? (I Corinthians 2:10-12) How does this passage compare with II Corinthians 4:3-4?
5. It is the Holy Spirit who brings us face to face with the facts regarding our condition and our need. This action is called "convicting, reproof, exposing, bringing to light." If we were to witness on our own, we would accomplish nothing. But when the Holy Spirit uses our witness, He brings a person face to face with important facts, presenting them so forcefully that these facts must be considered. What are these facts? (John 16:7-11)
6. What promise does God give us regarding His Spirit? (II Corinthians 1:21-22)

Life Application

1. Record the names of at least three persons to whom you believe God would have you speak about Christ within the week.
2. Ask the Holy Spirit to prepare these individuals, freeing their minds so they can make a logical, intelligent choice to receive Christ as Savior. Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you to these individuals at the proper time, and to speak through you in giving them the message of Christ.
3. As you witness, remember that it is the Holy Spirit who penetrates the mind of the other person, revealing spiritual truth.
4. Are you sure you are prepared? If not, review the earlier lessons in this Step.