

Witnessing

1) What is witnessing?

- A) A witness is someone who sees or has personal knowledge of something. Consider our legal system: during a trial it is customary to call a witness to the stand to testify. The testimony of an eyewitness carries great weight in court because that person actually saw (witnessed) what happened.
- B) Jesus' disciples were eyewitnesses of His life and ministry (2 Pet 1:16–18). After His ascension, they told others what Jesus taught and how Jesus lived (1 John 1:1–5). Two of His disciples, Matthew and John, wrote down personal accounts of the time they spent with Jesus. What they recorded has been carefully preserved and comes to us in the form of the Bible—God's word.
- C) You did not have the privilege of seeing Jesus and being around Him, but you do have the testimony of those who were eyewitnesses of His ministry. You believed what they wrote about Jesus, and you personally experienced His saving grace. You are now a witness to the truth of God's word (John 17:18–21; Acts 1:6–9).

2) Why should I witness?

- A) Love for God. Part of loving God is loving what He loves, and God loves to save the lost (Luke 15:1–6). Redeeming sinners is the reason God sent His Son to earth (John 3:16; Mark 10:45; Luke 19:10). You should witness to others about the saving power of the gospel because you love God.
- B) Love for others. Part of loving others is desiring their salvation. The apostle Paul had this kind of love for his fellow Jews (Romans 9:1–3; 10:1). Loving others means seeking their greatest good: salvation from God's eternal wrath. Paul modeled this kind of love in his missionary journeys through Turkey and Greece. He endured beatings, prison, cold, hunger and rejection to bring the gospel to thousands of people. You are called to show this same kind of love to others.
- C) Kingdom mission. Part of being a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven is the responsibility to fulfill its primary mission—seeking and saving the lost (Matthew 28:18–20). Jesus wants you to be reaching out to your family, friends, co-workers and others.

3) To what do I bear witness?

- A) As a Christian, you bear witness to the truth of God's word and the need for all men to be saved:
 - (1) Everyone has broken God's law and must suffer the punishment of eternal death in Hell. There is nothing you can do to save yourself.
 - (2) There is good news (gospel)! Jesus Christ, God's only Son, died in your place to pay the penalty for your sin. If you confess your sin, repent of your rebellion against God and believe in Jesus Christ as your Savior, you will be saved!

4) How do I witness?

A) There are two ways you can witness to others: verbally and non-verbally. Let's consider the non-verbal method first:

(1) Non-verbal. This method of witnessing is often the more difficult of the two. It's easy to say you are a Christian, but it's hard to actually live a consistent, holy life. The greatest witness you can have to the truth of God's transforming power is to live a transformed life in front of others. Consider what Peter said about a wife who is seeking to bring her husband to Christ (1 Peter 3:1-2). Consider also Paul's change in behavior after his conversion (Acts 9:20-21; Galatians 1:23-24).

(2) Verbal. This, of course, is the standard method of witnessing to others about the good news of Jesus Christ (John 1:35-51). It's very important to communicate the truth concerning salvation clearly to those you wish to lead to Christ (see the lesson called "Salvation"). With those core elements in mind, let's go over an example of how you might witness to someone:

(a) Recognition of need. Begin by relating your own personal recognition of spiritual need. You could say something like, "I never realized it before, but a friend showed me that I'd broken God's law. I lied, coveted what belonged to others and even lusted after others (Exodus 20; Romans 3:23). When you break a man-made law there's a penalty that must be paid. When you disobey God's law there's a penalty too—the penalty of eternal death (Romans 6:23). At first I thought that I could make up for breaking God's law by doing good things, but my friend explained that nothing I did would pay for my sin (Ephesians 2:8-9). On my own, I had no hope."

(i) Notice that you didn't accuse *them* of being a sinner; instead, you confessed your own past sinfulness. This has the effect of causing them to realize that they have also broken God's law. You also placed the correct emphasis on why salvation is necessary.

(b) Proclaim the gospel. You could continue like this, "My friend then told me the good news! God loved me so much that He sent His only Son to suffer the penalty I deserved (Romans 5:8). Jesus Christ died in my place, and then He rose from the dead and is alive today. He wants everyone to accept His offer of salvation from sin!" (Revelation 3:20).

(i) You proclaimed the gospel message and made it clear that God wants them to accept salvation just as you did.

(c) Present the choice. You could finish by saying, "My friend then explained that if I confessed and repented of my sin and put my faith in Jesus Christ, He would forgive me and give me eternal life (Acts 3:19; Romans 10:9-10, 13). And that's what I did! I gave my life to God and now I'm so excited. I want everyone to know what God did for me! (Romans 5:1; 8:1)."

(i) You have witnessed in a non-confrontational way, and depending on their reaction, you can ask them if they want to accept Christ.

5) I'm terrified of witnessing to others! What should I do?

- A) Pray. Each day, ask God to give you the courage to witness for Christ. He will give you the ability to proclaim the gospel when the right time comes.
- B) Practice. Find another believer and ask them if you can practice leading them to Christ (I know this sounds strange, but it really works!). Witnessing to them will get you comfortable with presenting your own salvation experience. Have them ask questions and even reject you in order to give you a taste of what might really happen. As they say—practice makes perfect.

6) How will people respond to my witnessing?

- A) Rejection. Witnessing is often met with rejection. Don't be discouraged—it often takes time to break through people's natural resistance to the truth.
- B) Skepticism. Friends and family members are typically skeptical of claims about religious experiences. Several questions will probably come to their minds:
 - (1) Is it genuine? Your attitudes and actions over the next few days/weeks will be extremely important in answering this question. They will be watching you closely. You will need God's grace to help you live a consistent life of obedience in front of them.
 - (2) If it's genuine, how long will it last? Sometimes the only witness that will truly impress a friend or family member is the witness that holds steady over time. Again, this is impossible without God's help.
- C) Concern. Friends and family members are often concerned about the changes that come from a conversion. Things they might wonder include:
 - (1) What will you be like now? In many cases they will be pleasantly surprised by the changes in your attitudes and actions. Be careful not to let your enthusiasm get the best of you. People cannot be pressured into repentance. They often need time and space to think about what you have told them.
 - (2) How will this affect our relationship? Your change of lifestyle will often make this an issue with your family and friends. Indeed, you may find that there are some friends you cannot keep (1 Corinthians 15:33). For those who are satisfied to let you be yourself, you can be firm about not participating in activities that are ungodly, even if you once did them together. Do this with a right attitude; don't be condescending.
- D) Interest. Although they may not be ready or willing to actually repent and believe in Christ, many of your friends may be interested in learning more. Invite them to church and do your best to answer any questions they have. Often, with patience and prayer, it won't be long before they too are saved.
- E) Acceptance. This is what every Christian hopes will happen when they share the good news of Christ with others. In this case it will be your privilege to help your friend repent and turn to Christ. If they express a desire to pray, you can lead them in the prayer provided in the lesson on salvation.