

## Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

### How to Witness

Selected Scriptures

1360

1983

Well, you know, in our little times together, we've talked about some very important things in terms of the Christian life. We've talked about prayer and the importance of prayer, the study of the Word of God, and we've talked about how important it is that we experience real fellowship. And that kind of thing works within the family of God. But there's one other thing we need to talk about, and that's witnessing to those who are outside the family of God. Now indirectly, if those other things are right, we're going to have an impact on other people. But we need to talk a little bit about the direct approach of communicating the saving gospel of Christ to other people.

Just a couple of verses to get us thinking along that line. In John 15 Jesus says this, verse 26, "When the Comforter is come whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth who proceeds from the Father, He shall testify of Me." Now the first thing you learn from that verse is that the Holy Spirit is in the business of witnessing. The Holy Spirit has come to testify of the truth concerning Christ. And then it says in the next verse, verse 27, "And ye also shall bear witness," and He says to the disciples, "because you've been with Me from the beginning." The Holy Spirit then was sent into the world and into our hearts to bear witness to Christ and He therefore bears witness through us, doesn't He? And we who have been with Christ are witnesses first hand to who He is and what He can do in a life and the ministry of witnessing is committed to us. Just a couple of verses to get us thinking along that line. In John 15 Jesus says this, verse 26, "When the Comforter is come whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth who proceeds from the Father, He shall testify of Me." Now the first thing you learn from that verse is that the Holy Spirit is in the business of witnessing. The Holy Spirit has come to testify of the truth concerning Christ. And then it says in the next verse, verse 27, "And ye also shall bear witness," and He says to the disciples, "because you've been with Me from the beginning." The Holy Spirit then was sent into the world and into our hearts to bear witness to Christ and He therefore bears witness through us, doesn't He? And we who have been with Christ are witnesses first hand to who He is and what He can do in a life and the ministry of witnessing is committed to us. Acts 1:8 says, "You shall be witnesses when the Spirit of God has come upon you," right? So we're all called then to communicate the saving gospel of Jesus Christ.

Now we want to talk about what that means and how to do that effectively as we share together in our session today. So who wants to start with a question?

QUESTION: John, do you have to be specially trained to witness, or can just anyone do it?

JOHN: I would say in answer to that question that it's good if you have some training. But anyone who knows Jesus Christ can do it. That's the condition. Let me give you an illustration.

When I was assistant pastor some years ago in a church where my father was a pastor, one day the secretary came running in the church door and she says, "There is a fight on the parking lot. There's a fight on the parking lot." It was kind of a boring day so I figured I go out and watch it, right? So I went out the door and here was a guy laying in the dirt...he was about 50 feet from where I came out the door of the church...and this fellow was kicking him, just pummeling his body, in fact there were two of them doing it. And I realized this was very serious. So I came out the door and I thought, "Boy, I've got to do something about this."

So I said, "Hey you guys, break this up." Nothing. I mean, they didn't even respond to me. And I thought, "Well, maybe they didn't hear me." So I yelled a little louder. "Break it up!" And nothing. So I started toward them and as I got there I heard him say, "Kill him...kill him." And I realized, this was not a fight, this is a murder and there I am saying, "Break it up, break it up," you know, and they're paying no attention to me.

Well I finally walked out there and they saw me and by that time the guy was a bloodied mess, you couldn't even distinguish his face and he had been kicked literally senseless. And so this big guy turned toward me, I mean, he was really big. It turned out that he was about six foot five, 250 pounds, he was a professional dock worker and played rugby, great big guy. And, you know, I'm not real small and I've always said, "I'd pick a fight with anybody smaller than me whose had a recent illness," you know. But I mean, I'm not going to...

So I was kind of paralyzed for a minute, see, because he turned toward me. He says, "What do you want?"

And I said, "You better break it up and leave this guy alone." And he pulled back his fist and I...my instinctive reaction was to back up, right? And I backed up and he kept coming after me. And I figured I'd just keep moving cause it was drawing both of them away from this guy. And they kept moving and I kept moving. Finally got right back to the church door and I stepped in the door, I figured they're not going to come in the church and I'll get somebody to call the police. Came right in the door.

And my dad came out, he had been studying and he says, "What's going on here?" And this guy took a shot at my dad. So that kind of irritated me. So I called and said, "Call the police." Well they panicked and the other guy had picked up this guy that was just senseless and smashed his head on the wall and then dropped him behind a bush and they ran for a getaway car. And so I ran out to get the license and I'm running down the street, you know, with a pencil writing down a license. And the police got there. And I gave them all the information I could give them. The guy was alive but he said, "I don't want to press charges, I don't want to see them again, I don't want to testify, I don't want to do anything." He was literally scared to death.

And so they went ahead and got those guys. They found them because they went to their apartment and found bloodied shoes and all that kind of stuff. And they called me to court. And I'll never forget as long as I live what happened when I went to court. I walked in there, you know, and I put my hand up and they said, "Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?" And I said I do. And the attorney walked up to me and he said this, "Reverend MacArthur, you tell us what you saw, what you heard and what you felt." That was exactly what he asked me. And on those

terms, I became instantly a witness. What I saw and what I heard and what I felt made me a viable witness, right? I mean, I was there. And ever since that event, I've always thought of 1 John 1:1 where John says, "The things that we have seen with our eyes, and heard with our ears and handled with our hands declare we unto you concerning the Word of life."

So what is a witness? Somebody who has seen and heard and felt the power of Jesus Christ. So in answer to your question, who can be a witness...anybody who's been with Christ. And that's what we saw in John 15 didn't we? "You shall witness of Me because you have been with Me from the beginning."

So when you know Jesus Christ and when you have seen Him and heard Him and touched Him in your life, you become one who can speak concerning Jesus Christ, right? I mean, you may not know all the doctrines of the Bible and you may not know every in and out of theology, and you may not have all the little systems and all the little gimmicks and all the little methods and booklets and angles, but if you have walked with Jesus Christ, you've got something to say and you can be a firsthand living testimony to the power of Jesus Christ. Let me tell you something, that is far more important than knowing a formula...far more important than knowing a formula. You know, I knew a preacher who got up in front of his church one time and said, "I just want you to know that I've been the pastor of this church, I think it was ten years, and he said, 'Today I came to know Jesus Christ as my Savior.'" And from then on he became for the first time in his life a witness to the power of Jesus Christ. Before that he knew the facts and the methods, he didn't know Christ and that personal power wasn't there in the energy of the Spirit of God.

So who can be a witness? Everybody who is a Christian, everybody who knows Jesus Christ. And I think we're mandated. I mean, didn't Jesus say to the disciples, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel," right? Make disciples of everyone. And all of us are mandated to go out and communicate the Christ we have seen and heard and felt. And I mean, it's...it's obviously a terrible thing to defer from that. I mean, not to do that, to not tell the world what we have known of Jesus Christ is to withhold from them the greatest thing they'll ever hear, right? So everyone of us as Christians are a witness.

Now, let me tell you something else. Even if you don't say anything, if people know you're a Christian, you're a witness. You may not be a very good one, but you are one because they're reading the meaning of Christ in your life and the value of Christ in your life by your life. And if you don't say anything, then Christ isn't that valuable. Christ can't be that meaningful. I mean, if you're a Christian and you can hide it for years, it can't really be that big of a deal or else it's some secret society only for the initiated. So we are witnesses. I mean, He doesn't say we'd like you to be them, He says you are, just be sure you're an effective one. And only a Christian can really be an effective witness.

Having said that, let me say this. The gospel is so powerful that even in the mouth of that preacher I mentioned who wasn't a Christian, the gospel itself could transcend his lack of experience, you know, I mean God used Balaam's ass, right? I mean even a donkey. So there's a sense in which the gospel is so powerful that it transcends the vehicle. But in order to be a true and effective witness, you have to know Jesus Christ. And that's really all there is to it...at least to start.

How about another question.

QUESTION: John, I've heard a variety of different definitions concerning witnessing and what does the Bible actually define witnessing as?

JOHN: Well I think we've already got into that a little bit and witnessing would be defined as this. A person communicating testimony about something they have experienced. I mean, when you have a court case, they don't want second-hand witnesses. Right? They want...what's the term they use? Eyewitnesses, right? I mean, they want somebody who is there. They don't want information passed down through several sources.

Let me give you a perspective that will help, all right? The world is like the jury. Christ is on trial before the world, right? I mean, the world is trying to decide about Jesus Christ. And the Holy Spirit is the lawyer for the defense. The Holy Spirit has taken up Christ's case in the world and His task is to convince the world that Christ is who He says He is. And the Holy Spirit calls into the courtroom witnesses. That's us, see. So we become witnesses for the defense of Jesus Christ before the watching world. That's a great concept, isn't it? And we're called into the courtroom, as it were, and as we live in the world we exist in the courtroom and Jesus Christ is on trial. Now that's the seriousness of our witnessing role. I mean, this is a serious thing, right? If you, for example, were called into the Superior Court, or the State Court or the Supreme Court of the United States of America and somebody said, "Will you defend Jesus Christ?" Would you? Of course you would, if you were on trial actually there. I mean, I've often thought if I was only there when He was before Caiaphas, I would have said some things. If I was there when He was before Annas, I would have said some things. I wouldn't let those guys get away with false judgments on Christ. He deserved better than that. They lied about Him, etc.

Listen, the world is making a judgment and the whole environment that we exist in is a courtroom and the Spirit of God, the lawyer for defense, calls us to give our witness. And there are some people who are going to make their conclusions about Jesus Christ based upon our testimony, right? So as we begin to understand witnessing, we have to begin to understand that the Holy Spirit is calling us to be a witness for Christ.

Now let's ask this question, too. What is the element that makes a person willing to be that witness? And I've got to be honest with you right at the beginning, it's sacrifice. There is a price to pay because when you name the name of Jesus Christ and step out, there's going to be some flack, right? I mean, you can't...you can't confront a Godless Christless world and not expect to get some reaction.

You know, I had occasion to be on a college campus, a college of about 25- or 26- thousand students. And they asked me to come and to speak on Christianity and culture on the open forum. And several thousand students were gathered around and I was to speak on Christianity and culture. What am I going to say, right? So I could exhaust everything I know about Christianity and culture in about ten minutes. And then I decided since the predominant number of students didn't know Jesus Christ that I would speak on the deity of Jesus Christ and how to know God through Him. And so I went ten minutes on Christianity and culture, 40 minutes on the deity of Jesus Christ, and I just proclaimed salvation through Jesus Christ. You could have heard a pin drop. I know the Spirit of God controlled things because it was really just straight-on gospel. And there are those times, you know, when you preach and you feel like you're just pushing and it's hard and there's resistance. And then there are those times when you're just flying. And I felt like I was just soaring. I mean, I was

freewheeling and stuff was coming and the power of God was there.

And I got all done and it was incredible what happened. One guy walked up to me, he said, "I need to know Jesus Christ." And I had the privilege of leading him to Christ. Another guy I had the privilege of seeing in my office a few days later, came to Christ and went to seminary. I mean, God really touched some lives. But the impact of it was, they banned all Christians from the campus. They closed down the free speech platform. They took the Christian book table off the campus. And the next time I spoke at a near campus, the whole group of students from the other campus that protested came over and ringed the podium where I was speaking and shouted the whole time. They called our home in the middle of the night with obscene phone calls, threatened the family, threatened my wife. And my first reaction was..I've got to quit doing this, you know, this is creating problems. My second reaction was, I think I made a wave. I mean, I think I made a dent in the kingdom of darkness. And I began to realize what Peter said that when you're persecuted for righteousness sake, the Spirit of grace and glory rests on you. And there was a tremendous sense of identification. I felt sort of quasi-apostolic, you know, I was knowing what some of those guys went through. So I really believe that when you approach this responsibility of standing before the world to testify for the sake of Jesus Christ, you've got to realize that it's a hostile world. And if the gospel is truly preached, they're going to react.

Now I can also say this. If you just talk about love and nice things and talk about God is a good guy and don't bring in sin and don't confront people with the fact that they live in violation of God, they may not react negatively. But that isn't the true gospel, either, is it? You've got to confront the truth of sin and righteousness and the truth about Jesus Christ. And when you do that, there's a sacrifice to be made. So you need to decide in your life whether you're going to close up your mouth and be as some people say like the Arctic River, frozen over at the mouth, you're just going to clam up and you're going to say, "My own personal reservation, reputation, whatever is worth more to me than testifying of Christ." You have to make that decision. Or whether you're going to say, "Hey, I don't care really what happens to me, I'm expendable," right? I mean, if I die, Paul says, getting the gospel to you, he says if I am offered on the sacrifice of your faith, I rejoice. I mean, if I die getting you saved, sweet death. And so that's the kind of sacrifice we're talking about.

I always think of John Patton who went to the New Hebrides Islands to be a missionary. They were inhabited by man-eating cannibals. I mean, you know, that's a tough assignment. I mean, you go to...you know what I would have said. I would have said, "Lord, look, don't send me there, they'll eat me, you know, and you'll waste a good one. I mean, I graduated from seminary, right? I mean, send a guy that dropped out, they'll eat him, who will know? Or maybe he never would have made it anyway. Why send a good one?" But Patton went and he took his wife and they dropped him off and he rode to the shore and they built a little lean-to on the shore and how do you reach natives like that? They're cannibals, they don't speak your language. I mean, what do you do? You don't put up a sign in the sand that says, "BBS starts Saturday, bring your children," you know. What do you do?

Well you pray a lot, right? And night after night they stayed in that little lean-to and prayed and after he had been there a couple of months, his wife gave birth to a baby and the baby died and a few days later his wife died. And Patton said he buried their bodies and slept on the graves to keep the natives from digging them up and eating them. Now he's all alone. That's really coming to the end, isn't it? I mean, that's when the bottom line is drawn..do you stay or do you go?

Well he stayed. And the miracle of his life is that he stayed 35 years. And he said at the end of those

35 years, "I do not know of one single native on these islands who has not made at least a profession of faith in Jesus Christ." And he said, "When I came here I heard the cry of cannibals. As I leave, I hear the ringing of church bells." Is that incredible? But see, that's what can happen if you're willing to make the sacrifice. Not everybody will be a John Patton, but everybody can do the thing that God's called him to do if they're willing to pay the price. So being a testimony in the world, anybody can be a testimony, and you have to realize that there's a price to pay. If you're a Christian and you're really sold out to Christ, you're willing to pay that price. And it's not necessarily a one-time deal though, from now on I'll do it. You fight that battle all along, don't you? Whether you're willing to speak for Christ.

Another question. Yeah, Dan.

QUESTION: John, with all the sacrifice and commitment that you talk about and witnessing, and even the frustration when people don't respond, isn't it...or why wouldn't someone just desire to pursue God and read His Word rather than witness when God promises to bring men to Himself anyway?

JOHN: Yeah, in other words there's so much heartache involved in doing it, wouldn't it be better to just retreat and commune with God and let God take care of the saving on His sovereignty? Well again we're back to something we talked about in one of our other discussions together. It's not for you to figure out those kinds of things. You're not going to say, "You know, God, You've got a good plan. But I've been thinking about it and I think I've got a better one. I'd like to suggest it to You." You know, because what you're doing is you're doing the thing that man always wants to do and that is to assume his mind is ultimate. And if I can't figure it out, it certainly can't be reasonable. But the Bible says here's why you witness. I told you so. I told you to. That's enough. I mean, sometimes you've got a little child and you say, "Now I want you to do this," and you get this standard answer, "Why? Why, Daddy?" And you know you can't explain why because they don't understand why. So you just say, "Because...what?...I told you to," end of discussion. And that's the way we are. We are little children in terms of comparing ourselves with God's infinite mind. And so God says do this. And we say, "Hey, I took in all the data available, why?" And He says, "That's not for you to ask, get on it, do it." And so we're commanded. You know, our Lord says as we mentioned earlier in Matthew 28, "Go into all the world and make disciples." And that's enough for me. I mean, somebody said to Spurgeon one time, they said, "You know, Mr. Spurgeon, you believe in the election doctrine. You believe that certain people are elect for salvation. Why don't you just preach to the elect?" He said, "Well, if you'll go around and pull up their shirttails so I can see if they have an "E" stamped on their backs, I will." And the point was, he doesn't know that. And so what his responsibility is, is to preach to everybody. God will take care of what His part of it is. It's our responsibility to preach the gospel to every creature.

You know, if you follow that kind of logic, Dan, you could say this, "If...if people who don't hear the gospel," and you hear this sometimes, people say, "If they don't hear the gospel, they're not lost," right? Because they haven't had an opportunity. The best thing is not to ever tell them. But that's contrary to the command, too, isn't it? The fact that we're told to go preach to every creature means that even the ones who haven't heard are lost. So our responsibility is to go out there and be obedient and preach the gospel and not try to get into all kinds of rational arguments about it.

Now let me talk about another element of this. I believe we're commanded to go out there right now and do it and we're responsible to do it because it isn't a matter of theological knowledge. In other

words, I think we all are responsible. Somebody could say, "Well, I mean, I'm not trained. I can't witness. I've got to wait until I get my training. I've got to be built up so that I can answer all these arguments and all these questions," and so forth. But I think we are all witnesses because we're commanded to be and because it isn't a matter of theological knowledge. It is first and foremost a matter of what we've seen and heard and felt. And our witness begins at that point. And I may know very little, right? I may only know that Jesus saved me, but that's enough. You know, we have baptismal services in our church all the time. And you've been there. I mean, the power of those testimonies is overwhelming. And nobody is in there giving this big discussion of the doctrine of ousia, you know, the being of God, or distinguishing sublapsarianism, infralapsarianism, and a Labrador Retriever. You know, nobody is giving big theological treatises in seminary language. What they're doing is saying I used to be a drug addict, or I used to be...I'll never forget the guy that came in here one night and he was really rough, you know, his vocabulary wasn't very polished and I'm sure a few of the older saints were having a little problem with the way he was talking. And he said, "I was the head of the Hell's Angels in Houston." And he said, "The last time I was in a church, I want you to know we rode our motorcycles up the front aisle and up the middle aisle and we threw a rope around the pastor in the middle of his sermon and we dragged him down the middle aisle, down the steps, down the street, and down the block." And he wound up in prison for I think a murder charge. It wasn't first degree so he was out of prison. But he said, "I'm here to tell you that during the last few weeks of my time in prison I came to know Jesus Christ and I'm here now because I want to worship the Lord Jesus Christ." Now that kind of testimony...I mean, you don't have to have a whole lot of theology to handle that. I mean, that's powerful and people are just sitting out there saying, "Wow, can Jesus Christ transform somebody like that?" Or you have somebody come in and say, "You know, for years and years I've been a homosexual, or whatever, and Christ has changed my life." Or "For years and years I've been just your average good guy without fulfillment and meaning and Christ has given me peace and joy." So, you see, that's where the witness begins and you don't need to back off from that. You need to realize that we witness because we're commanded to and because we're fit to. We really are fit to if Christ has changed our life. And it will get better and we'll be better able to answer questions later on, but still we have the power of a transformed life. And that's so very, very important.

Another question.

QUESTION: Well it's obvious we're supposed to witness but what are the elements that make a witness effective?

JOHN: Well that's an important question, Paul, because some of us have tried to witness and we walk back from that occasion and we say, "There must have been a better way, right? I mean, there must have been another approach. I got turned off when I was only on step one."

What do we really need to understand about witnessing? All right, let me give you a broad picture, first of all. Basically, the corporate testimony of the church is foundational. For example, you attend a church, right? And the reputation of that church in the community really sets the foundation for whether anybody is going to listen to what you have to say. For example, let's say you attend a church where they are having a fight, the church is split, the pastor ran off with the secretary, it's chaotic, it hits the newspaper, everybody knows and you go down and you're from that church and the people at your school or your work or your neighborhood and you say, "I just want to tell you the Lord is wonderful and we all live for the Lord and I want you to know Jesus Christ." And he says, "You go to that church down there where the pastor just embezzled all the money...you know?" End

of testimony, right? I mean it's the corporate community that sets the foundation to make individual witness meaningful and believable.

I remember one of the attorneys came to me one Sunday and said, "I just had a terrible experience." I said, "Well what was it?" He said, "Well, I was in court this week and I was working with this other attorney and I invited him to church. And he said to me, what church do you go to?" And he said, "I told him, I said I go to Grace Community Church and John MacArthur's the pastor." He says, "You go to that church?" He says, "Yeah, I'd like you to come." He says, "Are you kidding? I'd never come to that church." He says, "The most crooked attorney in this city goes to that church."

Well this lawyer came and he said, "Well that just broke my heart."

So I got up in the service that morning and I told that story. And I said, "I don't know which of you attorneys that goes here is that crooked attorney, but I wish you'd get your life cleaned up because you're making it very hard for the others to witness." You understand the point? I mean, you know, you're out there and you're going to have to defend the Christianity you belong to. It's tough some times, isn't it? Newspapers like to play up, you know, the bad things that happen to Christian people and the media loves that kind of thing. So we have to live that life, we have to be that salt and that light that consistent thing.

So, Paul, in answer to your question. Some of your effectiveness in witnessing is dependent on other people. It is. And the foundation of believability that they have laid. Have you ever gone in to witness to somebody, to share Jesus Christ with somebody and they've already met so many dear, good, solid Christians that you're just...the slide is greased. I mean, you just go sailing on through. And that's very important, that corporate testimony. And again we're back to John 13 where Jesus said, "By this shall all men know that you're My disciples when you have love for one another and when you see the purity of the church." Now Peter exhorts, "Have your behavior honest among the pagans," right?

And when you come, you come into the Pauline letters to Timothy and he's telling how the church ought to be organized, and then to Titus. And he says, "Boy, when you start picking leaders, pick leaders whose lives are blameless in the world because if they can shoot down your leaders, they'll wipe out your whole movement and you lose your testimony." So in a very real sense, we're dependent on each other. And what you do in your life may affect my testimony. You meet somebody, you try to share Christ. "Ah, I met a Christian and they were such-and-such and such-and-such and I'm not interested." So that's a very important element of it.

Now let me talk a little bit about another thing. You go from the corporate testimony to the individual testimony. And this is essential, too, that your life be right. The place you're going to have the most impact in your witnessing is the environment you live in all the time. I mean, that's where you sink or swim, right? We say, "Oh, it's so hard to win my family to Christ." That's right because unless they see day in, day out the virtue of Jesus Christ coming through you, it's going to make it tough. And we're talking from the human viewpoint. We know that God is at work, but nonetheless, from our side there's a pure life that lays a foundation. First Peter 2:15 says, "By doing right, you silence...remember that verse?...the ignorance of foolish men." You know, people want to slander Christianity, they want to put it down, they want to knock it, but it's your right living, your virtuous life that shuts the mouths of the critics. I mean, we all long for a Christianity that's blameless, don't we? I mean, wouldn't we love to be demonstrating to the world the blamelessness of a Christian's life? Not

perfection, but just that honest, upright integrity that says, "Sure I fail, but I go to the Lord and He helps me with those." That's really what we want as a foundation...very, very important.

Now, just another thought along this line. As you witness now on that individual pure life, we've talked about the corporate foundation, the pure life, as you move into witnessing with those as the basis, I think it's essential that you articulate your testimony. In other words, that people be hearing about how Christ has changed your life. Because most people that come to the gospel, that come to Christ, come from the standpoint of feeling a need. They feel incomplete. They feel lonely. They feel depressed. They feel unfulfilled. That's basically where men are. They're looking for pleasure, and they're not finding it. They're looking for love, and they're not finding it. You always think about Roquentin, the main character in the Sartre book. Sartre wrote a book on life, he called it Nausea, that was the title of it. Really bad approach to life, right? And the main character says, "I thought I could find life in pleasure, in thrills, so I tried all the thrills...all the thrills. And I found that if I was meaningless then I could only bring my meaningless to my pleasure. So I decided that pleasure must be in serving mankind." He said, "I found it easy to love humanity, it was people I couldn't stand, right? In the broad terms he could be very philosophically condescending, but in terms of real relationships, couldn't cut it. So I decided that it must be in intimate love with a person of the opposite sex." And he said, "Everyone that I touched, I turned into lust and destroyed." And so at the end he says, "I decided to take my life to remove one more superfluous life."

Well everybody isn't quite as philosophical as Sartre about life. But basically people are looking for fulfillment...they're looking for a lot of things that are within the category of fulfillment. They're looking for freedom from guilt, believe me, guilt is very difficult to deal with. You wonder why the mental institutions are packed with people, I think it's primarily it's due to guilt. They can't throw off anxiety built upon them by guilt. Then there's this whole thing of purposelessness, Edna St. Vincent Malay, you know, says, "Life must go on, I just don't know why." And Arthur Miller says, "Life has deteriorated to the miles we get on our Volkswagen." I mean, there's nothing there, no purpose. And then there are those people who are literally victims of their own passion and they can't rise above it. They just can't rise above it. And here's this meaninglessness of life. And so when you witness to somebody and you come at them and you say, "Hey, peace in life, purpose in life, this is in Jesus Christ," right? And that's the initial, but you can't stop there. I mean, that's not enough. I think the rich young ruler came to Jesus because he had a felt need. He comes to Jesus and he runs. And if a guy's running, he's got some problems, he's hurting. And he slides in on his knees and looks up and says, Ah, ah, ah, you know, panting, "What do I have to do to obtain eternal life?" That was a felt need, wasn't it? But the Lord didn't say, "Hey, sign on the dotted line, guy, and you're in." "Hey, believe," you know. The Lord hit him with something that was absolutely unbelievable. He said, "Keep all the commandments." Keep all the commandments, which commandments? God's commandments. Remember he listed some of them there in Matthew. What was the Lord doing? The Lord was taking him to the next step in evangelism. It's got to be beyond a felt need, they have to realize that they're living in sin and rebellion against God. And sometimes that is the hardest thing to tell someone. You can find a person searching for purpose and they can get all excited about that. "Oh man, meaning and purpose and value in life, fulfillment, potential." And then you say, "But wait, you see the real issue with you is...the reason you don't know those things is because you're living in rebellion to the God who give those things and you'll never know them until you come to grips with that rebellion. You're living in violation of God's law, you're a sinner. You have broken God's commandments." And then you can name those commandments. And you need to bring them to the point where they admit it.

Now Jesus gave all those commandments to the rich young ruler, and what did he say? "All those things have I kept. What am I lacking?" It's impossible to bring that guy to conversion because he didn't admit that he was...what?...a sinner. I mean, he wouldn't admit that he was out of sync with God. Therefore all he was looking for was a placebo. All he was looking for was a panacea, a temporary relief from the symptoms and he wouldn't admit there was a deeper problem. And so you have to take people to the point where they really affirm the fact that they are sinful. And that sometimes is hard to do.

And then you take them one step further, I think, and that is you take them to the point where they will acknowledge that they need to submit their life to the control of God. Remember the rich young ruler, "Then Jesus said to him, I want you to do something. Sell everything you have, give it all to the poor, come follow Me." And the Bible says he split. He was going to be the lord of his life. Sure he wanted eternal life, he wanted peace, he wanted freedom from anxiety, he wanted all that stuff, but he wasn't willing to do it on the terms that he had to admit he was a sinner because he desperately needed to preserve his own sense of self-esteem. And secondly, there was no way he was going to subject his life to the lordship of somebody else. And those are conditions we have to bring people to.

So the knowledge of your testimony as it's blended in with the Scripture, and that means you confront people with the Word of God. And the Word of God says you're going to have to deal with sin and the lordship of Jesus Christ.

Now there's another thing you need to do, too, in the elements of effective witnessing, and that is this. You need to recognize that you're dependent on the power of the Spirit of God. You say, "Well why is this important?" Because it keeps you from manipulating people. It's very easy sometimes to get somebody who is emotionally agitated and really in desperate need to sort of manipulate them into doing something. And so you want to be sure you're not doing that. And so you depend upon the Spirit of God. Hey, nobody ever got saved by your cleverness, or mine, or anybody else's. You don't con people into being Christians. That's a miracle, isn't it? And that miracle is a supernatural miracle. And so we are dependent on the Spirit of God.

You know, I love that story in Acts 16 about Lydia...I call her Lydia the liberated lady. The Bible says that Paul came and preached the gospel...and I love this...and the Lord opened her heart. Boy, isn't that good? The Lord opened her heart. You know, somebody said to me one time years ago, "Do you get distressed when people don't respond to the gospel? When they don't come to receive Jesus Christ?" And I say, "Well there's a sense in which my heart is sad, but God never called me to save people, He only called me to preach the gospel to them. The saving is his business. So I don't have a lot of anxiety about that. If I've been faithful to clearly discharge the presentation of the gospel, that's all I can do. That's all I can do. I'm not going to manipulate them to do something that they're doing emotionally that isn't genuine. And I'm not going to assume that I'm the guy that gets people saved.

You know, I was sitting in a church and I was getting ready to preach back in Wisconsin, and the pastor is a dear guy. He leaned over to me and said, "You see that guy in the front row?" And I said yeah. He says, "One of my converts." I said, "Really." He says, "Yeah, mine not the Lord's." I said, "Your's, not the Lord's." He really had a point, didn't he? "This was a guy that I wormed into getting involved with Christ and the Lord never changed his heart." Sometimes that will happen to us, it really will. It's good when you can recognize that because then you know you have to be dependent

on the Spirit of God.

Who is it that convicts of sin, righteousness and judgment? John 16:7 to 11, it's the Spirit. Jesus says, "When I send the Spirit, He will convict the world of sin and righteousness and judgment." So from the start, you're dependent on the Word of God to come through your life, dependent on the Spirit of God to come through the Word, dependent on the Spirit of God to convict. So all of that is the Spirit. And then it says, "We're born...John 3...born of the Spirit." The second chapter of 1 Corinthians really brings this home. Let me just mention it to you. First Corinthians chapter 2, and draw your attention to what is a very familiar passage, but it says to us in verse 9, "As it is written, eye has not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things that God has prepared for them that love Him." You know what that's saying? Men on their own terms can't understand what God has for them. So the unsaved person can't understand salvation in all its blessing and benefit. He can't. It says, "Eye hasn't seen it and ear hasn't heard it." That means it's not available objectively. You know, it's not empirically available. It's not out there where you can grab it. And then it says, "Neither has it entered into the heart." It's not available subjectively or rationally. So he can't know it outside himself. He can't know it inside himself. How's he going to know it? "But God...verse 10...has revealed them unto us by His Spirit."

So when you're witnessing to someone, you really have to watch the Spirit of God do His work. And that is such a wonderful confidence, isn't it? It's also a wonderful thing to be a part of that, to know that the Spirit of God will use us as we're involved. And that brings us to our responsibility. We're talking about the responsibility of the Holy Spirit, what is our responsibility? Now let's get right in to talking about the actual method. How do we go about it? Let me see if I can sort of crystalize some of the things we've said.

First of all, I like to suggest that you start with your personal testimony. How did Christ come into your life. So that they don't see it as some very bizarre kind of far out thing, you know, you went into some very clandestine corner of a cathedral and God did something to you mysterious. You know, so that...you know, you hear people give their testimony all the time, they say, "Well the other day I was driving on the freeway and I was saved." You know, or, "I was sitting in my living room and the Lord convicted me. I was by my bed, I was talking to my friend, or I was in a restaurant, or I happened to be in a church service." And it's diverse, isn't it? I mean, all of you, probably different places, different circumstances...so people aren't looking for some very mystical thing, share your testimony.

I was raised in a Christian family. I mean, we've got preachers in our family, five...I'm the fifth generation preacher. If you're a boy in our family and not a preacher, you've got to duck, you know, they expect that. So...so I was raised in the church. But, you know, you could be raised in the church and not know the Lord. I mean, you can have it all around you and you just sort of never personally make it your own. And I was a little guy and I...my dad was doing an evangelistic meeting and I was there, our whole family was there. We were in this little town in Indiana where you're from, Barbara. We were in Indiana. And my dad was preaching every night in this church and we were having a great time. And one of the guys in the church, one of the...had some kids and the kids said, "Come on, we're going to do something today." I was just a little guy about eight or nine years old. And they took us out and they vandalized the school, see, and turned over sand boxes and desks and ink wells. And I...I mean, I was with them. And I...you know, you want to be one of the guys, right? When you're nine and it's the thing to do. So later on I went back to the...we were staying with the pastor, see, so we were staying in the pastor's home and this guy came to the door and banged on the door and said, "Some kids vandalized the school and we're just checking the neighborhood." Small little

town, right? "And we wondered if your son could have been involved," they said to my dad, the visiting... "Oh no, my little Johnny," and he gives a big speech, you know, on the wonderful little kid. And I'm in the background and I'm just feeling my ears are getting redder and redder. And I never told my dad about that till I was eighteen. I mean, I just couldn't get up the courage to tell him, I wanted to wait a long time, right? Till I was bigger than he was, anyway.

But, you know, that night I went to the meeting and I sat in the back of the meeting and I was so overwhelmed with the guilt of what I had done that when that thing was over and he was leaving the church, I said to him, "Hey, Dad, could I talk to you?" He said, "Sure, Johnny." And so they shut the door, I'll never forget, we sat on the steps in the dark outside that church and I said, "I think I need Jesus Christ in my life." And it was because of the sense of sin. And so on the steps there we prayed together and I think I was about eight or nine years old. And that was kind of the start of really a personal knowledge of Christ.

Later on in my life I had a car accident, I got thrown out and slid along the highway and got all torn up. And that's when I really came to grips with giving the Lord everything in my life in obedience. But I think that's a good way to start a testimony because that puts Christ in a real life situation. So when you witness to somebody, start with what Christ has done in your own life. And I think that's a good starting point. And you might even bring into it, if you were old enough to know that, your former dissatisfaction and how Christ has transformed you.

I'll never forget a little five-year-old kid praying a prayer one time in a prayer room, he says, "O God, save me from being a miserable sinner." You know, how miserable can you be at five? But basically you've got to start there, I think, because that puts it into life with real people. And then as you explain your conversion, make a transition to the Scripture and let the Scripture speak. Hey, the Word of God is alive and...what?...powerful and living and powerful. So you want to use the Word of God. Get the verses in the right order, you need to show people that they're sinful, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, and as many as received Him...John 1:12...to them gave ye the right or the authority to become His children." You know, do it with the Word of God. Use the Scripture. You might even want to take them to John 3 and just take...go through the account of Nicodemus. Or you maybe want to go to Matthew 19 and talk about the rich young ruler and why he didn't come to Christ, why he didn't become a believer. Use the Scripture.

And then emphasize the Law. Emphasize the Law of God, the broken Law of God, so people see themselves as sinners in need of salvation, having violated infinitely holy God. You know, you can't preach the good news until you tell the bad news, right? You can't preach grace unless they understand Law. And they'll never understand mercy unless they understand judgment. So you have to talk about the Law of God. When Romans begins, and Romans is the gospel, isn't it? The book of Romans, you've got chapter 1, chapter 2, chapter 3 and it's nothing but an indictment of the human race. And then when you're sufficiently indicted so that it says in Romans 3, "Every mouth is...what?...stopped or shut." I mean, nobody's got anything to say. You can't defend yourself against your violation of the Law of God. Into that comes the gospel of Jesus Christ. So you have to talk about the Law, then you talk about the grace of God.

Now you affirm then, having talked about that, the need that they should repent of their sin. Jesus came and His message was repent, for the Kingdom is at hand. Turn...the prophet said...turn ye, turn ye. And so we want to talk about that and submission to obedience to Jesus Christ. What you're saying is, I received Jesus Christ, Romans 10:9 and 10, "If thou shalt confess with they mouth Jesus

as...what?...as Lord and believe in thine heart that God has raised Him from the dead." You've got to believe the right stuff, but you also have to confess His lordship.

Now I don't believe that you may understand all that. You know, when a person comes to Christ, I don't think they understand the full implications of His lordship. I don't think they understand the full implications of what it means to turn from sin. But I think there is a willingness there and I really want to tell you, I believe that that's worked by God. I don't think that a normal person by himself is going to turn from his sin. I think that's part of the saving work. And I don't think a person apart from Christ is going to affirm Christ's lordship, I think that's part of the saving work also. And that's why Jesus said, "With men it's impossible, but with God....what?...all things are possible." You see, men aren't going to turn and men aren't going to affirm the lordship of Christ. But God can work the heart around to do that and that's necessary.

Well, we have time for one more question and maybe you have another one. Yes.

QUESTION: After you've been allowed the privilege of leading someone to the Lord, what responsibilities do you have in that person's life?

JOHN: That's really important, isn't it? Now you're talking about follow up. What do you do afterwards? We've all had that opportunity maybe to lead someone to Christ and they disappeared, we can't find them, we don't know where they are and we thought they were so genuine. Well that reminds us that we can't always tell the wheat from the tares, can we? But how do you follow up? Let me just give you some...just some basic simple things. Okay?

Some basic elements, and I think they're found in one passage, and it might be good to look at that. It's 1 Corinthians chapter 4 and it just kind of flows out of...of Paul's relationship to the Corinthians. Now he says in 1 Corinthians 4 verse 15 this, he says, "In Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel," right? Okay, he says I led you to Christ, you're my spiritual children. So he's led them to Christ. Now what's his responsibility? He's writing them back as the one who led them to Christ and what does he do? Watch, first of all, verse 14, "I write not these things to shame you but as my beloved sons I warn you." There's the first thing. I think you need to love somebody. I think you need to demonstrate a genuine concern for that person. And that's the key to follow up. They need to know you love them. And what does it mean to love somebody? Feel emotional about them? Get spiritual goose bumps? No. God so loved the world that He...what?...He gave. And if you love your brother, 1 John 3 says, if you say you love your brother and close up your compassion, you don't love him at all. And Jesus said in John 13 that He wanted His disciples to love as He had loved and He had just loved by washing their dirty feet, meeting their need, giving service, sacrificial service...that's love. And I believe the best way to follow somebody up is just to demonstrate that you really do love them, that you really love them by giving up some of your own time, your own priorities, your own enterprises to invest in their life. And that's where it starts. Hey, Paul continually said to the churches where he evangelized, "I long to see you," right? "I long to come back and perfect that which is lacking in your faith." And he says, "Though I love you more and you love me less for it, I'll keep loving you." See, he gave himself to those people. He offered himself to them. I mean, he was sick, he was nigh unto death was Epaphroditus who was with him in his relationship to another church, it's just part of abandoning yourself and love is the key to follow up. I think what I'm saying is, don't hand them eight books of follow up and not give them your life and your heart.

There's a couple of other things we need to talk about and it's in this passage, too. Verse 14, "I warn

you," I think that's part of it, too, don't you? You can't raise a child with just affirming love. You also have to warn them, don't you? Keep doing that and you're going to have a problem. That's what the Bible calls admonishing. That's warning with a view toward judgment. In other words, you keep going down that track, you're going to get into problems. So if you really want to follow somebody up, you've got to warn them about the way they're going. Warning is a key element.

Now there are some other elements in this passage we need to talk about. Let me show you this one. We need to be an example. He says in verse 17, "I'm going to send Timothy to you who is my beloved son, faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which are in Christ." I'm going to send a guy to you that's just like me, you can follow him. Now Paul said many times, in case of the Corinthians he said it to them in the eleventh chapter, "Be ye followers of me as I am of Christ." I think it's critical to be an example. So what is an example? You get your life alongside theirs, right? And you just keep walking the Christian walk and let them see how it's done. And that is the most powerful followup there is. You're literally one on one teaching them biblical living...teaching them a sanctified life style. And that's how you followup.

There's some other things...teaching. He talks about at the end of verse 17 his teaching everywhere in every church. I think followup involves input. It involves telling them the truth of God they need to hear. And then in verses 18 and 19 he goes on to talk about the fact that if they don't shape up when he gets there, he's going to come with a rod. And that means discipline...that means discipline. There are times when we have to discipline folks. How do you discipline somebody you're following up? I think verbally you confront them, you say, "Hey, you've got to stop doing that. I want to help you change that pattern in your life." There has to be a willingness to confront somebody. You say, "Well I don't want to say anything about that. Those people just...who am I to say...I've got problems of my own." Okay, you get the beam out of your own eye and then work on the one in their eye, but you can't leave them alone. You're not going to help them if you don't say what ought to be said.

Well, I hope those things kind of give you a basic start. We've talked about who can witness and we've said basically that anybody who is a Christian can witness, and must witness and does witness because you have had a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. We've said witnessing is simply giving testimony to the watching world of Jesus Christ being who He is who can do what He says He can do. We talked about the fact that witnessing is essential and there's a price to pay, right? There's a sacrificial price to pay. We've said it's necessary because we're commanded to do it and we're equipped to do it. After all, we know the Lord Jesus Christ. And then we talked about some of the features that make it effective and we've talked about methods, how to put our testimony into it and work through the Word. And we've talked about followup.

That kind of gets it into one little package. And if we can work on these things and internalize these things, and maybe a little at a time put them into practice as we communicate Christ, I believe God will be honored in the way we witness. Let's share in a word of prayer.

Thank You, our Father, for the great privilege of being ambassadors for Jesus Christ and being given the task of calling men to Him, giving testimony to Him. Father, we can't understand why You would want to have us be Your witnesses who are so frail and failing and yet we know that by the power of the Spirit of God You can use us. We thank You for that privilege. For the glory of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

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