

Speak Up!

Welcome back to Walking with Purpose! You know...Every day, you should get out of bed with hope and purpose! If you are still alive, God is not finished with you yet! We've looked at a lot of reasons God put you on this earth, and now we are exploring our mission: using what He's given us to tell others about Him! Paul Little, in his book "*How to Give Away Your Faith*," defines witnessing as "that *deep-seated conviction* that the greatest favor I can do for others is to introduce them to Jesus Christ." That's the "mission" you were made for! And that's what "evangelism" is all about.

There is a saying, "Three things will never come back: the spoken word, the spent arrow... and the *lost opportunity*."



Fellowship

1. Last week's homework was to begin preparing your testimony. Take a few minutes to share how Christ has changed your life!
2. Have you ever regretted a "lost opportunity"?



Discipleship

It's powerful, isn't it? Hearing how God has changed people's lives in so many dramatic and different ways! I love hearing them and can't wait to spend eternity hearing more! We're preparing our "testimonies", but in case you're unclear on just what that means, let's talk about it for a minute.

The word "testify" means "to affirm or declare to someone the veracity or trustworthiness of something. To have been a witness of it. To prove something through eyewitnesses or authentic documents."

You are that person, with your life story on how Christ changed your life. You affirm and declare that Christ is *real* and are a witness to prove that He is authentic! You demonstrate *His power* through *your witness*!

Let's take a look at one witness I'm really impressed with, found in Mark chapter 5, verses 25 through 34. "And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, because she thought, 'If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.' Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering. At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, 'Who touched my clothes?' 'You see the people crowding against you,' his disciples answered, 'and yet you can ask, "Who touched me?"' But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. He said to her, 'Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.'"

Whenever I imagine myself in the place of this woman, my heart beats faster. Imagine what she's been through...12 years of bleeding, spending *all* of her money, and for what?? She's worse off than when she started. No doctor, no advice...nothing does any good. She needs a touch of God and nothing less. Maybe you can identify with that. Maybe God has touched you *physically* when you needed a miracle. Maybe you had gotten yourself into a pit of despair, a sin, or addiction that wouldn't let you go. You'd tried everything, and nothing was working. You, too, needed God's rescue! So, she finally does what *we* do, reaching out to the only One who could help her: Jesus. And she's healed! She feels His power; she experiences relief...and then *He* requires her to speak up! She's scared! All these people, all waiting to see who had the boldness to go to God for help! Maybe the last thing she wanted was to talk about her embarrassing problem one more time...yet Jesus wants her to testify. So she's obedient. She tells what the power of God did for her, and is rewarded with the precious words of Jesus, "*Daughter*, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering."

A "witness" must have a first-hand experience of Christ. Hearsay is not acceptable in a court of law, nor in the court of this world's opinion. People will listen only to what we have personally seen and heard. That's what made *this* woman's testimony so powerful...and that's the power of yours as well! Who can argue with the power of a changed life? They may want to debate on certain passages of Scripture, or even whether the Bible is true. But a changed life is impossible to deny.

Then, a witness must be able to express himself verbally. We may witness effectively through our lives, our work, our relationships, our attitudes, our suffering and even our death...yet I Peter 3:15 says to be ready at all times to answer *anyone* who asks you to explain the hope you have. Did you notice that verse. It pre-supposes that the believers life will be so different—so full of hope, that people will actually stop you and ask about it. Do you have that kind of life? Have you ever really thought about how people see you? Every word that comes out of your life will lead people toward or away from Jesus. Every attitude and reaction will define for them what a "Christian is really like".

Thirdly, a witness will have *confidence* in the power of God. He relies on *God's power* to break through any defenses and change any heart. He knows that without God he can do nothing, but that *with God* all things are possible. There is no person alive and breathing who can be labeled as "hopeless". No one who doesn't need what you have to tell them!

And finally, a witness will have *compassion* for the spiritually lost. If that woman had 2 friends suffering from the same malady...don't you think she would be running to tell them? Likewise, we have been set free of what was dooming us to an eternity without God! We've found the cure for our sin problem and hope for eternity! It's been said that sharing your faith is just "one hungry man telling another hungry man where to find bread." The results are up to God...yet He asks for us to speak up!

But if this is ever going to happen, we always have to remember *how lost we were*. The reason most people don't want to be around Christians, is that we often begin to believe that we saved ourselves. We forget how lost we were. We forget how hungry we were. We forget the incredible good news that God saved us, when we didn't deserve it and couldn't do it ourselves. Only when you identify with the lost, will you value them enough to share the good news. One very happy hungry man, telling another really hungry man where to find all the bread he could ever want. That's what it's all about.

During WWI, Donald Grey Barnhouse led the son of a prominent family to the Lord. He was in the service, but he showed the *reality* of his conversion by immediately professing Christ before the soldiers of his military company. Well, the war ended and the day came when he was to return to his pre-war life in the wealthy suburb of a large city. He talked to Barnhouse about life with his family and expressed fear that he might soon slip back into his old habits. He was afraid that love for parents, brothers, sisters, and friends might turn him from following after Jesus Christ.

His mentor told him that if he was careful to make *public confession* of his faith in Christ, he would not have to worry. He would not have to give-up improper friends up...they would give him up! As a result of this conversation the young man agreed to tell the first ten friends he encountered that he had become a Christian.

The soldier went home. Almost immediately -- in fact, while he was still at the train station -- he met a girl whom he had known socially. She was delighted to see him and asked how he was doing. He told her, "The greatest thing that could possibly happen to me has happened!" "You're engaged to be married," she exclaimed. "No," he told her. "It's even *better* than that. I've taken the Lord Jesus Christ as my Savior." The girls' expression froze. She mumbled a few polite words and went on her way.

A short time later the new Christian met a young man whom he had known before going into the service. "It's good to see you back," he declared. "We'll have some great parties now that you've returned." "I've just become a Christian," the soldier said. He was thinking, "That's two!" Sure enough, again it was a case of a frozen smile and a quick change of conversation.

After this the same scenario was repeated with a young couple and with two more old friends. By this time word had gotten around, and soon some of his friends stopped seeing him. He had become peculiar, religious, and—who knows!—they may even have called him crazy! What had he done? Nothing but confess Christ. The same confession that had aligned him with Christ had separated him from those who did not want Jesus Christ as Savior and who, in fact, did not even want to hear about Him.

But it also did something else. It made it clear that no matter how much money you have, or how important your family is—you cannot save yourself. None of that is as important as knowing Jesus Christ. And so, as time went on, others saw the confession of our young soldier as something else. They saw it as hope. They saw it as a map to unbelievable treasure. Because if he was willing to so radically change his life and willingly...even happily “give up so much”—well, this Christianity must really be something valuable. As it turned out, that wealthy, powerful young man was really just one very happy beggar telling other beggars where to find bread...and riches that would last forever. Not like the cheap things we pursue and save up in this life—but something of real value.

Some people won't want to hear your story...while others feel like they are drowning at sea with no hope of rescue. Each of the people present that day when Jesus healed the bleeding woman was there by design! Think of it! He wanted them to hear her testimony! Who has God sovereignly placed in *your* path today? Who needs His healing power?



Ministry

3. Read 2 Corinthians 5:16-20. How does God make his appeal to the world today?

How can the first part of verse 16 embolden us to speak up for Christ?

What's the life-changing news we have the privilege of sharing (verse 19)?

4. Read I Peter 3:15. How are you prepared now to share your faith?

What further preparations do you need to make?

5. Sometimes *we* don't see the changes Christ has made in us as well as our friends do! How have you seen God working in each other?



Evangelism

6. Who is the person who will require the most courage to testify to?
7. Continue developing your testimony. This week, concentrate on the actual *salvation experience*: when did you reach out and “touch Jesus’ robe”? What did it take for you to take that “leap of faith”?



Worship

8. Read Psalm 34:1-10, thanking God for His answers to your pain!
9. Pray for each other and the courage (and opportunities!) to speak of His incredible power and love this week!