

Following Christ: Witnessing



Slice F9

Witnessing

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1 Memory Verse

Matthew 5:16 (NIV)

16 In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

2 Witnessing

Matthew 28:18–20 (ESV)

18 And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **19** Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20** teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Witnessing to others is how the Gospel message has spread around the world. From the very beginning, with the disciples obeying the great commission, the word of God has been carried by faithful men and women. By spreading the good news of Jesus, they have led people to understand that there is hope for them too.

For a new believer, it is a very natural response to want to tell others the wonderful news that you have found Jesus and started a new relationship that has opened your eyes and changed your life.

2.1 What is a Witness?

For most people, the word ‘witness’ means either being the observer of an accident or a crime, or the person sitting in the dock to give evidence in a courtroom. For them a witness is someone who has seen an event take place so that they are able to report what they saw, heard and experienced. This is exactly what is required of a believer, we are to tell others the truth that we have experienced and heard. We testify to the reality that Jesus is our Lord and Saviour.

Luke, the author of the book of Acts, records how Jesus calls his disciples witnesses and instructs them to go and take the Gospel message - the good news - to the ends of the earth by the power of the Holy Spirit:

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Acts 1:8 (NIV)

8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

In Slice F1 – You are a New Creation, we looked at how the new believer is a *talmidim* of the Lord Jesus. We have Jesus as our teacher, and we are to follow His example. When Jesus said the following, He made it clear that He had come to earth to be a witness to the truth to all who would listen:

Luke 4:18-19 (ESV)

18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, **19** to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.'

So as students of the Lord Jesus, we have the privilege of declaring to others the true and faithful God and His wonderful plan of salvation that we know and have experienced.

2.2 Testimony

The standard definition of testimony is 'to tell the story of how one became a Christian,' but it is far more than that. A believer's testimony is ongoing, it never ends. They have started a relationship with God and because of that, the believer will be able to continually testify as to the wonders God has performed in their life. These testimonies are an important witness to the reality of God's continual moulding and shaping of a believer's life.

A useful tool for all believers is a journal, in which the individual continually records the events that occur on the journey they are taking with the Lord. This record is a wonderful reminder of how God has continually been faithful to that person and, therefore, builds the effectiveness of a person's testimony.

You may start your journal by recording how you came to a knowledge of Jesus as your Lord and Saviour. Relate what your life was like before coming to know Jesus and the changes He has made in your life; how different your life has become. Explain the events that occurred to lead up to your coming to the epiphany (great revelation) that Jesus is your Saviour, convincing you to invite Him into your heart.

Revelation 12:11 (NIV)

11 They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.

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2.3 Mapping your World

Every believer should have the understanding that God knew us from before we were born and had a plan and purpose for each of our lives.

Jeremiah 1:5 (ESV)

5 Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.

So, the people who are in your sphere of life are not there by accident. God requires you to be an example to them, to *agape* (love) them, to pray for them, and to witness to them.

Dr Ralph F. Wilson, in his *Jesus Walk* Bible study on witnessing, recommends keeping a table in which you record the people that the Lord has placed in your life, who are not committed Christians. See his example:

Friends	
Family	
Work or school associates	
Neighbourhood or store personnel	
Recreation, clubs, teams	

Make your own table and fill in the names of people you believe that the Lord wants you to witness to. This will be a list of people to who you will reveal the love of Jesus; it is not a list of people who you target for salvation by any means. A sure way of turning a person off to the love of Jesus is for them to be continually browbeaten by an over-enthusiastic evangelist.

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Ways in which a believer can be a witness to others:

- Your lifestyle, which should reflect your Christian morals and values, should be a reflection of the character of Jesus to those around you. For example, in your daily demeanour and how you deal with difficult situations. Remember that people believe they know how a Christian should behave and they are quick to point out any perceived failures. They may be convicted by the changes in your life and to be able to label you as a hypocrite will make them feel better about themselves. Can you think of any examples that may occur in the work environment?
- Pray for the people on your list. God is a prayer answering God and will begin to work in their lives. Do not become despondent because you do not see an immediate change in the lives of those you are praying for. God is excellent at the long game; He sees things from a global perspective, and He will bring things to their full conclusion in time.
- If it is possible, introduce them to your circle of Christian friends.
- Invite those friends and family members who are not saved to your baptism. They will hear your testimony and be witness to an important initiation into your relationship with Jesus. Being completely covered by water symbolises burial, and being raised from the water symbolises a resurrection to 'newness of life.'
- When appropriate, use conversations to guide attention towards an all-powerful God who is continually at work in the universe. We have a God who knows the end from the beginning, so being able to tie prophecy into world events is an extremely useful tool for witnessing.
- Being available to help and assist others who are in need and listening to their problems thus being a sympathetic ear. By doing this you can ask them if they would like you to pray for them and in this way open the door for them to see God move in their lives.
- By being a person who is supportive and helpful to others you earn their trust, which allows you to openly ask them if they have a relationship with the Lord Jesus and, if not, whether they would like to ask Him into their lives. They will understand that the question comes from a loving heart, not a bully who thinks they know best.
- Be an authentic Christ follower.

2.4 The Holy Spirit and Witnessing

The Holy Spirit was given to us by our Lord Jesus as a guide and when we commit our days to Him, He can take us through the challenges of every day. This includes times when the Holy Spirit may place a burden on you to speak to a person who you have never met before. This is always a difficult task to perform, but it is important to be obedient to the Holy Spirit's leading.

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You could be rebuffed by them because you are the start of a process of events that God is working in that person's life, you are planting a seed. On the other hand, you could be the culmination of events that open the door to you leading them to repeat the prayer of salvation with you. The important point to understand is that we do not see the whole picture, only our small part, so a believer needs to be obedient to the Lord's leading. We walk by faith, not by sight!

2.5 A Prayer of Acceptance

When you have witnessed to a person (what Jesus has done for you) or shared the gospel message with them (what Jesus has done for them), and they indicate that they would like to invite Jesus into their lives, it is important to know a prayer of acceptance that you can have them repeat after you. The prayer needs to cover certain facts, such as their recognition of being sinful and needing the salvation that only Jesus can provide. An example would be:

Heavenly Father, I come before you confessing that I am a sinner needing your salvation. I believe that Jesus is your Son, that He died on the cross for my sins, that He was buried in a tomb and rose again for my justification (declared righteous).

I receive Him as my Lord and Master, as my Saviour and my Friend. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for dying for me, thank you for taking away my sins and giving me eternal life. I will do my best to serve you for the rest of my life.

Amen.

3 3. Sharing the Gospel

There is a distinct difference between sharing your testimony and learning to share the Gospel. If you would like to learn more about how to explain the Gospel message and reveal what Jesus has done for mankind, there are several ways of doing so, such as the 'Four Spiritual Laws,' and the 'Roman Road.' If you need help with the process, ask one of the elders or your home group leader.

3.1 Worldviews

As you mature as a Christian, it is important to learn about the dominant worldviews that other people live by. This helps when witnessing to people, because you then have an understanding of what foundations they have established their worldview on. For example, a common belief among the unsaved, which allows them to live the way they want to without feeling guilty, is that if you are a good person, you will go to heaven. Instead, scripture clearly says 'for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23 [ESV]). They will often use the old saying that 'all roads lead to Rome' to confirm this belief, in other words, all religions connect to God, which is called *pluralism*.

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Pluralism is an illogical philosophy as all religions can be wrong, but two opposing, contradictory beliefs cannot both be right.

The study of worldviews in relation to Christianity is called Apologetics. It is a very rewarding study as it gives Christians great confidence in the truth of the word of God and enables them to make a strong argument for their belief in a loving Saviour. A common example is that of an atheist, believing evolution is a science and stating that it disproves the Bible. The truth is that evolution is a philosophy, not a science, and it takes more faith to believe in evolution than it does to believe in a loving, great creator God.

3.2 Some Cautions

Dr Ralph F. Wilson gives some important cautions that a believer should be aware of before starting to share their testimony:

1. Be careful of **associating with old friends** who will influence you to go back to your old, sinful lifestyle. It is okay to talk with them about Christ; that is good! But remember that you have an enemy who wants to tempt you to sin. Be careful.
2. **Avoid 'missionary dating'**. Sometimes a Christian guy feels 'called' to date a beautiful girl 'so he can witness to her', or vice versa. Because we are sexual beings, too often our Christian love gets mixed up with other desires and the clarity of our testimony is lost. Be wise.
3. **Be sensitive to people**. Because your values have changed relative to those of your friends, you will probably seem a little weird to them. That is understandable. But remember to love. Don't be pushy, rude, impatient, or judgmental. Remember, it is the Holy Spirit who brings people to God; it is not all up to you. Love is primary here, not 'success.'
4. **Don't be afraid of not knowing all the answers**. No one expects you to. Just say, 'I will find out about that and then get back to you.' Then ask your guide or pastor to help you answer the question.
5. **Don't be ashamed**. Sometimes we are very aware that people may look down on us as Christians. That is to be expected. Some looked down on Jesus and persecuted Him too. But that did not stop Him from his mission. St Paul says:

2 Timothy 1:8 (NIV)

8 So don't be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God.

3.3 Pride Stands in Opposition to Love

Love and pride are at opposite ends of the continuum. Jesus our Lord came to earth to serve mankind in love so when we share Him with others, it must be done in the same light. Some have a religious spirit that seeks the praises of men, and so approach

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witnessing to people with the wrong motives. It is very rewarding to lead someone to accept Jesus as their Lord and Saviour, but we must always remember that the credit belongs to the Holy Spirit.

The focus of our witness to others should *always* be the Love of God, not the threat of eternal damnation. When we witness to others through the right motivation, the Love of the Lord comes through our words to the other person.

4 The Testimony of our Lives

Now that you are a new person in the Lord Jesus, people such as your friends, relatives and work colleagues are going to have to adjust to the new you. You have found Jesus and He will continually be working in your life to mould the new you into His image. Your testimonies to these events will help those around you understand that you have come out of darkness into the light. Remember that Jesus said:

Matthew 5:14–16 (ESV)

14 “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. **15** Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. **16** In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Your friends, family members and work colleagues are going to see the changes taking place in your life as even your topics of conversation will change. There will be different reactions from different characters; some may be curious while others may become wary, assuming that you have become ‘religious.’ In both cases your testimony to them is your explanation; you do not have ‘religion,’ you have a relationship, and it is that relationship with your new Father that has caused the changes in your life. The love you receive from your new Father is now to be directed towards others.

5 Practically

Keep a journal and record the events where God has guided your life. This record is a wonderful reminder of how God has continually been faithful to you and, therefore, builds the effectiveness of a person’s testimony.

You are called to be a witness to the truth and people who are in your sphere of life are not there by accident. God requires you to be an example to them, to agape (love) them, to pray for them, and to witness to them.

Keep a table in which you record the people that the Lord has placed in your life who are not committed Christians. This table will be a list of people to whom you will reveal the love of Jesus.

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Know the important points of a prayer of acceptance so that you can guide a person in prayer when they invite Jesus into their life.

6 Proclamation

'I declare that as I am a disciple of Jesus, I will seek to be His light in the community of people who are a part of my life and to share the Love of Jesus with them. I will bear witness to the wonder the Lord has performed in my life so that others may also come to know the truth of Jesus as Lord and Saviour.'

7 Prayer

'Thank you, Lord Jesus, for the wonderful gift of my salvation. I pray that through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, I may live a life worthy of You. I lift up to You all my relatives, friends and work colleagues who are not saved and ask that you will bless their lives with a special revelation of Your truth. Allow me, through the power of Your Holy Spirit working in my life, to be an example of Your love to others and to have opportunities to share the gospel message with them.'