



Being Ready to Witness

Acts 26 shows it can be as simple as saying what you've seen

Our Lord calls us to share the gospel but often we wonder how, when, or if we might be able to witness to others about Jesus Christ. The fear of not knowing what to say, and of therefore saying the wrong words, paralyzes us into saying nothing. And will we be laughed at? Not taken seriously? Rejected? Too often we find it hard to imagine that God will use our words and actions as a part of His process for bringing someone to Him. We know that He may in theory. But do our actions show that we believe He may in reality?

How Paul was prepared to be a witness

We have many excuses to not do what we know we should do. Instead of paying heed to them, let's turn our attention to Scripture, to see what we can learn from the example of Paul, and witness he gave to King Agrippa. In Acts 26 he tells the king the story of his conversion. In verses 16-18 we read that when Jesus appeared to Paul (then known as Saul), Jesus said to him:

"Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen and will see of me. I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me."

Paul speaks of himself as being called to be a *witness* and a *servant*. As a servant, he is appointed, rescued and sent by God. As a witness, he is to tell "*what I have seen*" and "*what he has showed me*." He ends by saying, "*So then, King Agrippa, I wasn't disobedient to the vision from heaven*" (Acts 26:19).

When Paul was dramatically confronted by Jesus, struck blind, and completely changed into a new creature whose old ways passed away, his knowledge of the true God was still limited. He had much to learn and he went through an unusual training that was specifically for him. As each day began, he was only able to tell what he had seen and what God had shown him up until that point in time. As his knowledge and experience grew, he had more to tell. It is the same with us.

So, let's ask ourselves — what have we seen and what has He shown us?

How we can prepare to be a witness

It's often difficult on the spur of the moment to gather all our information together in a cohesive presentation. But there are things we can do so that we will "*be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks*"? (1 Pet. 3:15) For example:

1. *Write down what God has taught you.* Most of us won't do it daily or weekly, but we could keep a notebook or file where we write down some of what we learn, and then re-read it now and again, to remind us.
2. *Take notes during the sermon.* How much of the sermon is really remembered? Note-taking solidifies the truths we hear and gives us the option of re-visiting those truths by reading those notes and Scripture passages later in the day, the week, or even months later.

3. *Keep learning.* If we reach the point where we think we know enough Scripture and theology to coast along, we are in a dangerous place. Just like an engine-propelled vehicle, we can only coast for a short while if the power to the engine is cut; eventually we will come to a standstill. We must read God's Word regularly.

All of these are reasons why our worship service and Bible studies are the most important activities that we do each week.

Used by God to change the world

Why should we tell what we have seen and what God has shown us? While we don't have exactly the same calling as Paul, we can still learn from the charge Jesus gave him in Acts 26:17-18 that God is able to use us. Through our witness too God can:

- open their eyes
- turn them from darkness to light
- turn them from the power of Satan to God
- grant them forgiveness of sins
- give them a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Him.

As blogger Matt Walsh posted late last year:

Only Jesus can save, of course, but He has delegated an enormous amount of power and responsibility to us. We have the capacity to spread truth and bring souls to Him. We are armed with abilities beyond our comprehension, and our actions, our words, our thoughts, will reverberate through the cosmos in ways that we cannot possibly understand.

Acts 26:16-18 says that the telling of what we have seen and what God has shown us will be used to turn people from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God. This is what we should do. Let us be obedient!

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