

PREPARING TO WITNESS

WITNESSING WITH CONFIDENCE

A Personal Witness Resource Witness Guide

Our Call to Witness

Every Christian has been given the call to declare the praises of the True God who has called him or her out of the darkness of his or her sins into God's marvelous light. Thus the Apostle Peter, speaking by the Holy Spirit, made that clear when he wrote, "⁹*But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*"¹ 1 Peter 2:9

Our Savior has called us to be His witnesses. He did not say, "Would you (please...maybe) consider being My witnesses?" Nor did He say, "You must...ought to be...have to be My witnesses". He said, "*You will be My witnesses...*".

Every Christian, by virtue of the call to faith, is a witness to the Savior. All Christians are witnesses to what they know and believe about Jesus Christ.

The Content of Our Witness

We witness to the **Person of Jesus**, "³*concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh*"⁴ *and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,*"² Romans 1:3-4 Jesus Christ is both a true man, but without sin, and true God, the eternal Son of God the Father.

We witness to the **work of Jesus**, Who was "*...born of woman, born under the law,*"⁵ *to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.*"³ Galatians 4:4-5 Jesus placed Himself under God's Law keeping it perfectly for us. Our Savior, Jesus made Himself "*...to be sin for us...*" 2 Corinthians 5:21, suffering the punishment for our sin on the cross. By His resurrection from the dead, Jesus showed that He has conquered sin, death, and Satan – for us. As a result, God credits us with what Jesus did and pronounces us forgiven and righteous (declared to be no longer accountable for the sins we have committed).

We witness to **God's Law**. In His Ten Commandments, God tells us how He created us to be and therefore what we are to do and what not to do. He tells us to have no other gods, not to take His name in vain, to remember the Sabbath Day (a day for worship and rest), to honor our parents, not to kill, commit adultery, steal, give false testimony about our neighbor, or covet anything that belongs to another person. He tells us that He expects us to live a holy and perfect life (Leviticus 19:2 and Matthew 5:48). In fact, He will be satisfied with nothing less (James 2:10). He also tells us the consequences of our disobedience. "*The wages of sin is death.*" Romans 6:23 This death is not only physical death, but spiritual and eternal death, separation from God forever.

We witness to **God's Gospel**. "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*"⁴ John 3:16 If we only knew God's Law, if we

¹ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. 2001 (1 Pe 2:9). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

² *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. 2001 (Ro 1:3-4). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

³ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. 2001 (Ga 4:4-5). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

⁴ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. 2001 (Jn 3:16). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

never knew about God's Good News (Gospel) about Jesus, we would be miserable and hopeless people. We could only be afraid of God; afraid of His anger and deserving of His punishment. But God so loved the world – you, me, and all people – that He gave His Son, Jesus, to be our Savior. Because of what Jesus did by His life, death, and resurrection we are forgiven of every sinful thought, every sinful word, every sinful act. We are forgiven for what we have done wrong and for what we fail to do right. Because of what Jesus did, we are restored as God's own dear children and heirs of eternal life. Not only can we live with peace, hope, and joy in this life, we will also live a perfect life with our Savior in heaven forever. All this is a gift of God's grace, His undeserved love and mercy. *"The free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."*⁵ Romans 6:23

This is our Christian faith.

Our Fears

We are to witness to our Christian faith.

But we have fears that often keep us from being confident witnesses. We are afraid that others will reject us along with our witness. We are afraid that when we open our mouths to witness the words won't come out or they will come out all wrong. We are afraid of saying the wrong thing. We are afraid of messing up. We are afraid we won't be able to give an answer to people's questions and objections. We have many fears and therefore tend to avoid opportunities to witness.

Satan wants to keep us from witnessing. He will use any and every trick he has to stop us. He doesn't want anyone to hear and believe the Good News about Jesus.

When fears arise, we should listen instead to these words of comfort and encouragement from our God and Savior:

*11 "so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it."*⁶ Isaiah 55:11

"So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?" Hebrews 13:6

Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, 1 Peter 3:13-15

Our God never fails. He will take our witness, however simple or inadequate it may seem, and make it serve for good. We can witness. We can talk about Jesus.

⁵ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. 2001 (Ro 6:23). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

⁶ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. 2001 (Is 55:11). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

Key Questions

We witness to our Savior by the way we live. Serving our neighbor gives glory to God (Matthew 5:16). But our actions alone will not tell others what they need to know and believe about Jesus. We also need to be ready to witness with our words.

“always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you⁷.” 1 Peter 3:15

One way to be ready to witness is to be prepared to ask a question that will provide an opportunity for personal witness. When asking a question, it helps to ask permission to do so, “May I ask you...” or to say, “Would you tell me...” Sometimes it works to place the conversation to a ‘third person’ format, saying, “If someone were to ask you...”

Questions that could be asked include: “Have you reached that point in your life that you are certain that you will spend eternity with God in heaven?” “What’s holding you back from worshipping God at church?” “You seem to have little (or no) interest in God (Jesus or the church), tell me (may I ask) what holds you back? “What’s your understanding about Jesus? Who is He and what did He do?” “Tell me, do you think God has an interest in you...if so, what do you think it is?” Reflect on this with others or by yourself, and you will discover more questions.

In your daily life be prepared. Know what you want to say about Jesus; and trust that God will open the door.

However a person answers your question, there are two important things to remember. One – Let the person know you understand what is being said (“I understand what you are saying, where you are coming from”). If you don’t understand, provide feedback by saying, “I understand you to be saying...” Two – Don’t criticize the person at this point for what is said. Don’t say, “You’re wrong... If that’s what you think, you can be sure that God will...” Don’t tell the person what he or she must believe or do. “You have to believe in Jesus or... You should go to church, because...”

Rather, this is the right time for your own personal witness. Say, “May I share with you what I think... what I believe about that... why I go to church, etc”. Talk about Jesus – Who He is and what He has done. Talk about your faith – your hope in eternal life – and how that comforts and strengthens you day by day. Talk about your reasons for worshipping God, going to church, and serving Him. Avoid “you” messages: “This is what YOU must believe...do”, etc.

Two Key Statements

How do we respond to the beliefs, concerns, questions, and objections that may be raised in a witnessing situation? Two key statements are helpful.

Often a person’s response will reflect beliefs that are contrary to what the Bible teaches or the response will mask the real reason a person is holding back from hearing the Word and worshipping. A person may say, “I don’t go to church because...there are too many hypocrites there...all they do is talk about money...I don’t get anything out of it...it’s boring”. These responses may just be excuses hiding a deeper reason like a bad experience, fear, or anger. However, a person responds to your question, your best

⁷ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. 2001 (1 Pe 3:15). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.
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response may be a more probing question such as, “Tell me, what makes you say that?” This may lead to a fuller understanding of the person’s concerns and objections and pave the way for your personal witness statement. “May I share with you...”

Sometimes a person doesn’t want to talk further about religious matters. If that happens, go on naturally with your conversation.

Personal Action Plan – Four Easy Steps

Our witness begins with a solid understanding of God’s Word. We grow in the faith through faithful attendance at Divine Service, and Bible Study both corporate and private.

STEP ONE

Identify among your family, friends, relatives, and neighbors people who: Do not confess faith in Jesus Christ; do not attend church; may never have been Christian or who have fallen away from church and the Christian faith. We commonly speak of this as a FRAN network. This is an acronym for **F**riends, **R**elatives, **A**ssociates, **N**eighbors.

When we speak of a person as being unchurched, we typically mean a person who is an unbeliever (not a member of the Holy Christian Church as we confess in the Apostle’s Creed) or who is unshepherded (not actively involved in a Christian church and under a pastor’s care).

Make your own personal mission list: A list of people for whom you have spiritual concerns, people you want to witness to and invite to hear and learn God’s Word. The list may include a family member or relative, close friend, co-worker, newcomer to the area, neighbor, friend at school, a person recently widowed or divorced, a person who has recently experienced a personal crisis. Use the **Personal – Identify a Friend form** to list the names in your F.R.A.N. network. Post this sheet on your refrigerator (under one of your many refrigerator magnets) as a daily reminder of the people on your personal mission list. Your list may include one or two names; it may include five or ten names. You may, from time to time, add names to your list.

When you contemplate your personal mission list, you may choose to focus your attention on one or two persons because they hold a special concern for you. They may have experienced a personal crisis, or they may be easier for you to communicate with.

It is also important to **build bridges** to the names on your personal mission list; to find activities you can do with these people; perhaps to invite them to your home on occasion, and to introduce them to other Christian friends. The more exposure people get to Christian friends and activities, the easier it is to invite them to learn more about Christian faith and life.

STEP TWO

Pray for the people on your personal mission list – specifically, regularly, and humbly.

Our Savior tells us, “*Ask and it will be given you.*” Matthew 7:7 “The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.”⁸ James 5:16 And, “*You do not have because you do not ask God.*” James 4:2

Pray **specifically** for the individual names on your personal mission list. Don’t just pray for all the unchurched in general, but pray for people by name, asking for the blessing and working of the Holy Spirit in their hearts and lives.

Pray **regularly**, not just now and then or when you happen to think of it. Pray for these people over and over again. Be insistent and persistent with your prayers. God will hear and He will answer. Recall Abraham’s persistence in praying for the people of Sodom (Genesis 18:16ff) and Jesus’ lesson about boldness in praying (Luke 11:5ff).

Pray **humbly!** This means you ask God to give you the strength, the courage and the words to witness to the person for whom you are praying when God provides you the opportunity to share your faith.

STEP THREE

Talk about Jesus!

Sometimes people say that this is the hard part. They’re not sure what to say or if they can say anything. We can talk about Jesus because He has promised He is with us always and will enable us to speak. We can talk about Jesus as readily as we can talk about the weather, about our health, about sports, about our children and grandchildren, about our job and home.

We can talk about Jesus because we know Who He is and what He has done for us. We can say, “I am a Christian and, although I have repeatedly disobeyed God in what I say and do, Jesus has paid for my sins by His death on the cross. I know I am forgiven. I know I will live with God forever in heaven, and I know God helps me every day to become more and more Christ-like” We can say, “I go to church and worship God because I need to be reassured again and again of the forgiveness of my sins. In hearing God’s Word I am assured of my forgiveness of sins and enabled to live more and more like Christ in faith toward God and love and service to my neighbor.”

When talking about Jesus, it is helpful to speak of things you know such as a discussion about the Apostles’ Creed. We can explain to a friend the meaning of each article and phrase of this confession of faith. For example, “I believe and worship God Who has revealed Himself as the Almighty Creator of everything. I believe in Jesus Who is God’s eternal Son Who came to this earth to be everyone’s Savior. I believe in the Holy Spirit Who has made me God’s child by faith in Jesus, Who uses God’s Word to keep me close to Him and Who helps me in the daily struggles of life.” We may also use one Bible verse as a witness outline, such as Romans 6:23, “²³ *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*”⁹ God’s Law is taught in the first half of the verse and God’s Gospel in the second half. By explaining the key words, sin – wages – death – gift of God – eternal life – Jesus Christ our Lord, you will be telling a person the basics of Christian faith.

⁸ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version.* 2001 (Jas 5:16). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

⁹ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version.* 2001 (Ro 6:23). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

STEP FOUR

Invite people to attend a church service, a Bible class, or a church activity where they can become acquainted with your church and other Christian friends. All of these are opportunities for people to hear and learn more about the meaning of Christian faith and life. Remember to help your invitee understand what is going on at the church service and to feel welcome.

When un-churched people were asked the reason they have not been attending a church, the most common answer given was, “No one asked me”. When they were asked what they would say if they were invited, one out of four indicated that they would react positively. But, this doesn’t mean they will always follow through when they accept an invitation to attend. They may just say this to put you off.

What do we do if people decline an invitation or don’t follow through on an invitation? Invite again – and again – and again. Don’t assume that ‘No’ always means ‘No’. There are many stories of people finally following through and attending even after months and years of saying ‘No’. Be persistent in your inviting. Why? Because you have concern for their spiritual welfare, and because God is listening to your persistent praying.

*“⁵⁸Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.”*¹⁰ 1 Corinthians 15:58

Prayers for the Witness

Dear Lord, You know how weak and fearful I can be. Forgive me when I show a lack of concern for the spiritual well-being of my friends and relatives. Forgive me for the times when I didn’t witness to You. Give me boldness and courage. Give me a rich measure of Your Holy Spirit. Teach me to trust You more fully. Help me to witness to my Savior. I ask this in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Dear Lord, I come to you on behalf of _____. He (she) does not profess to be Your child and is unwilling to hear and learn Your Word and worship You. Give me opportunities to witness to _____. Give me the right words to say. Give me boldness to talk about You. Lead me to a right time to invite him (her) to come with me to hear and learn Your Word. I ask this for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

Dear Lord, I praise You for Your grace and mercy in my life. You have forgiven my sins and led me to faith in Your dear Son, my Savior Jesus Christ. Lord, there are people all around me who don’t follow and worship you. Help me to identify them, to pray for them, to talk about Jesus with them, and to invite them to come and learn the Good News about Jesus. I ask this in His name. Amen.

How to Use This Personal Witness Guide

1. Review this guide occasionally to refresh yourself in the basics of personal witness.
2. Underline or highlight key phrases.
3. Prepare a list of unchurched family members and friends.
4. Decide on and memorize one or more leading question(s).
5. Write out a personal witness statement of what you know and believe about Jesus, what He has done for you, and why you regularly hear His Word. Practice your personal witness statement.
6. Pray. **Pray. PRAY!**

¹⁰ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. 2001 (1 Co 15:58). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.
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