

## **Ye shall be my witnesses**

Acts 1:1-11

This passage of scripture is both an Ascension passage as well as pre-Pentecost reading. It captures the very last encounter of Jesus and his disciples before his ascension, with the words:

**“Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”**

**Then they gathered around him and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”**

**He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”**

Some of us are familiar with the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington National Cemetery in Washington, DC. It has a guard 24 hours a day. Every hour on the hour, 365 days a year, a new soldier reports for duty. When the new guard arrives, he receives his orders from the outgoing guard. The words are always the same: "Orders Remain Unchanged."

The same could be said of the orders that Jesus gave to His disciples. Just before He ascended to heaven, He told His followers, "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

In a definitive statement made moments before His ascension, Jesus indicated to His disciples what their responsibility to Him was during the period before His return to earth.

The disciples were clear about their mandate. But that mandate wasn't so clear to everybody:

The story is told of a barber who wanted to witness about his faith to others. He took a class like Evangelism Explosion and was trained on questions to ask, things that needed to be said to lead people to Christ. One of the questions was: if you died right now would you be ready to meet God? So he began thinking of ways that he could get people to listen to him. Then it occurred to him that when customers were sitting in the barber chair, it was a perfect time to witness. The barber decided the next day he would try his new tactic.

A man came into the barber shop and asked for a shave and a haircut. The barber prepared to shave the man. He put lather on his face and got the razor out. Just before the barber started to shave the man he worked up the

courage to start the evangelism plan. The barber turned to the man, razor in hand and asked: if you died right now, would you spend eternity with God?

The man was so scared that he jumped up from the chair and ran out of the barber shop with the lather still on his face.

Well, that barber clearly got it wrong. But I am sure there are less intimidating ways to be a witness.

The truth is we are all meant to be witnesses! Your life and mine, we are meant to show the work of Jesus in what we do and how we live.

We are a living, breathing testimony for Jesus. Our lives should be that witness to others, because we are simply sharing with others about our best friend, Jesus Christ, and the influence he has had on our life.

The Psalmist in Psalm 71: 15 - reflects this experience when he says, **“My mouth will tell of your righteous acts, of your deeds of salvation all the day”** and again in Psalm 66:16 -

**“Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will tell what he has done for my soul”**

True Christian disciples want to tell others about their story.

1 Peter 3:15 says, **“Always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who calls you to account for the hope that is in you.”**

So a witness is one who communicates the truth of their relationship with Jesus Christ

Stuart Brisco offered a definition - **A witness is someone who by explanation and demonstration gives audible and visible evidence of what he/she has seen and heard without being deterred by the consequences of his action -**

Now, witnessing is at the core of Christianity.

Rick Warren - <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2802947749730684>

Why most people do not witness?

1.) Lack of knowledge - Don't know how

The biggest reason that most people do not witness or share their faith is simply that they don't know how.

1. I believe the church as a whole has done a poor job in preparing people to be contagious about their faith.
2. We have failed to show people how easy it is to share our faith with others.
3. Often, we believe that we have to have the right words, the right plan or the right system.

But the truth is, there is no one way to share your faith. I believe that we need to approach different people in different ways with the same message. Your best tool in witnessing is your own personal story. Tell others what God has done for you.

1. Our lives are filled with moments that God has helped you and each of those moments can be used to share your faith.
2. Tell others what God has done for you and then share the message of the Gospel. The good news that Jesus died for our sin and that He lives today.

So yes, one of the most effective tools in your "spiritual tool box" is your personal testimony.

You are an expert on your own story. You may not be an apologist, you may not be a theologian, you may not be a Bible scholar, but you are an expert on you.

And I say that because no one can really argue with what God has done for you.

They can argue with you about what the Bible says and argue with you about other things, but they can't argue with your own story of how Christ transformed you.

So simply put, your testimony is your personal story of how you came to know Jesus Christ. And every believer has that story to tell.

Granted, some may be more dramatic than others, but all testimonies are valid. The fact of the matter is, when you boil it down, we all have the same basic story, just told differently.

Your personal testimony will include your life before Christ, how you came to Christ, and your life after you came to Christ.

2.) Lack of courage

Howard Hendricks says - **In the midst of a generation screaming for answers, Christians are stuttering** -

I know there is fear, and fear can rob us of a proper perspective.

1. We can allow fear to paralyze us.
2. We can let fear steal away our potential for real Kingdom building.

But if you back down every time that you are afraid to share, you will never do it. The only way to overcome fear is to do that which you are afraid to do.

### **My motor vehicle accident**

A poll was conducted by a church directory service a few yrs. ago. Asked: "Why did you choose to come to this church?"

Results:

18%--Prior denominational ties;

9% They loved the pretty building.;

3% because minister came to visit;

Well over half came for one simple reason--somebody invited them!

1. We are not seeking to get people to accept only a creed.
2. We are not attempting to get people intellectually convinced of the superiority of Christianity.
3. We are concerned to show that our faith is both relevant and related to all and every aspect of a person's life.

So all our life, our relationships, habits, and goals should be a witness unto Jesus Christ. It is not just a matter of telling; it is a matter of living.

We want people to receive Christ as the Way and as the Truth; as a result, in life we must demonstrate and declare our witness for Christ.

Sometimes it takes a conversation which leads to an invitation to your church for people to experience what you have been experiencing.

Lets go forth and be true witnesses for Jesus Christ!