

The Bible Speaks To Me About My Witness

Session 10 -- What Will You Tell Them?

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Session Overview

A Planned Approach
Elements of a Good Testimony
Application
Exam
Discussion Guide for Mentor and Participant

Learner Objectives

At the end of this session, you should:

- be familiar with Paul's testimony to King Agrippa and how it applies to our faith sharing.
- know some practical pointers for giving a testimony.
- understand the illustration of God knocking at our doors.

Introduction

The best witnessing occasions are not usually spontaneously just bursting forth with our faith. Instead, we can prepare ourselves ahead of time so we're ready to walk through any doors the Holy Spirit opens.



What Will You Tell Them?

Notes

A Planned Approach

Paul has told us that the gospel “is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes” (Rom. 1:16). Many believe that learning a plan of salvation or a planned approach for sharing the gospel is very effective. Such a position does not mean a particular plan saves a person. It is simply a vehicle for delivering the Good News. Only the gospel is the power of God for salvation.

Most of us believe a pastor will preach better if he or she prays and prepares the message before standing to preach it. Most of us believe a Christian will benefit from memorizing Scriptures that may be shared with others under the right circumstances. Most of us do better in presenting any truth—secular or spiritual—if we have thought through the needs or questions of our hearers in advance. You will give a more effective witness if you think through your presentation rather than begin spontaneously. Get the basics into your mind and heart in advance.

Earlier I said that the Bible does not give a simple five-point outline to be used for sharing the gospel. However, we have noted certain basic truths that show up numbers of times in both the instructions of Jesus about witnessing and in early preaching. These include Christ’s death and resurrection, repentance, faith, and the forgiveness of sins. There are also basic creeds or forms of confession of faith in the New Testament: Romans 10:9; 1 Corinthians 12:3; 1 Peter 1:18–22, for example.

William Abraham wrote in *The Logic of Evangelism* that the church found it essential to do several things to guard its intellectual treasures. One was to develop basic summaries of the faith, which became ways to identify the Christian community. If this is true, then why would it not be appropriate to assemble basic Scriptures and principles explaining how a person may come into right relationship with God? Let me reiterate that the gospel outline in Lesson 9 is such a tool.

I could make a strong case for the value of a planned approach in sharing the gospel. Instead, I’ll tell you this story. Fifteen days before I wrote this page, a couple approached me after prayer meeting service. They



reminded me that I had held a personal evangelism clinic at their southwestern church 10 years ago, when they were only month-old Christians. They listened to my lectures on evangelism, learned a gospel outline, and went with me on a call.

When we arrived at the prospect's door, I thought she looked sick, so I asked if we should come back later.

"No. Come in," she said. During a Spirit-led time in that home, the husband accepted Christ. The wife was already a Christian. We rejoiced as they drove me back to my room.

They couldn't wait to get rid of me. They were burdened to call on their longtime friend Ben. Since their conversion a month before, this couple had been trying to witness to Ben. Ben felt he had too many sins to come to Christ. They seemed to get nowhere. He had suffered a heart attack and lapsed into a coma a few days later.

However, on this day, the doctor had called to say Ben was conscious. The couple witnessed to Ben again. He prayed to receive Christ, and a wonderful peace filled him. In a short time, he went to be with the Lord. This statement from the couple who had witnessed to him was in bright neon for me: "We had no idea what to say in witness. Now with the seminar and the call, we knew what to say." It is hard work in learning to be a good witness for Jesus, but if we care enough about people like Ben, it's worth it.

A Good Testimony

"There is no denying the zeal and the sense of discovery that marked the witness of the early church both in their public and private testimony, both in their written and their spoken word," states Michael Green in *Evangelism*. Personal witness was a major way to spread the gospel in the Early Church. Luke reported Paul's full testimony three different times in Acts (chapters 9, 22, and 26). Other portions give a more condensed testimony.

Charles Swindoll wrote in *Come Before Winter*, "On six separate occasions between Paul's third missionary journey and his trip to Rome, he stood before different audiences and presented Christ to them (Acts 22–26). Six times he stood alone. Six times he addressed unbelievers. Do you know *the method Paul used each time? His personal testimony.*"



Here is Paul's testimony before King Agrippa:

Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You have permission to speak for yourself."

So Paul motioned with his hand and began his defense: "King Agrippa, I consider myself fortunate to stand before you today as I make my defense against all the accusations of the Jews, and especially so because you are well acquainted with all the Jewish customs and controversies. Therefore, I beg you to listen to me patiently.

"The Jews all know the way I have lived ever since I was a child, from the beginning of my life in my own country, and also in Jerusalem. They have known me for a long time and can testify, if they are willing, that according to the strictest sect of our religion, I lived as a Pharisee. And now it is because of my hope in what God has promised our fathers that I am on trial today. This is the promise our twelve tribes are hoping to see fulfilled as they earnestly serve God day and night. O king, it is because of this hope that the Jews are accusing me. Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?

"I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the saints in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. In my obsession against them, I even went to foreign cities to persecute them.

"On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. About noon, O king, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions. We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'

"Then I asked, 'Who are you, Lord?'

"'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,' the Lord replied. '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 of me and what I will show you. 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.'

"So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven. First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds. That is why the Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me. But I have had God's help to this very day, and so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen—that the Christ would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles."

At this point Festus interrupted Paul's defense. "You are out of your mind, Paul!" he shouted. "Your great learning is driving you insane."

"I am not insane, most excellent Festus," Paul replied. "What I am saying is true and reasonable. The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do."

Then Agrippa said to Paul, "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?"

Paul replied, "Short time or long—I pray God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains."

The king rose, and with him the governor and Bernice and those sitting with them. They left the room, and while talking with one another, they said, "This man is not doing anything that deserves death or imprisonment."

Agrippa said to Festus, "This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar" (Acts 26:1–32).

Notice that Paul told: (1) what life was like *before* he met Christ (vv. 4–11), (2) *how* he met Christ (vv. 12–18), and (3) what Christ meant in his life *since* (vv. 19–23). He made sure his testimony was filled with basic facts of the



gospel such as Christ's death and resurrection. Since the testimony was his only vehicle for proclaiming the gospel in this situation, he followed it with persuasion, trying to convince Agrippa to accept Christ (vv. 27–29).

The skeptics may disbelieve Paul's doctrine or yours. They may criticize the church. The sermon may bore them. But Paul's human interest story or yours—how you found peace and purpose—is a hard thing to put aside. It seems that Agrippa was close to being persuaded—but not quite. Yet, the Bible is so honest that it includes this story of one not converted. This can keep us from being discouraged. Some of Paul's prospects didn't get saved under his witness. We should understand if some of ours don't either.

1. Make it interesting. Avoid misunderstood words like “saved” and “born again.” Use picturesque language.
2. Be specific regarding the time you received Christ.
3. Be practical and honest. Don't promise more than the Bible does.
4. Be warm and genuine. A smile breaks down barriers. Don't present the news of great joy with a deadpan face.
5. Describe the positive things God has done for you. One person testified that when he became a Christian, he lost his job and all his friends. Few would want to find Christ if that is the result. Emphasize joy, peace, purpose, God's presence, love, and a sense of value.
6. Be logical. Give the before, how, and since, as Paul did in his testimony. However, there is an exception. If your testimony is to lead into an extended presentation of the gospel as in the outline in Lesson 9, do *not* stress the how. If your prospect is open and the Spirit is working, your goal is to ask your prospect two diagnostic questions. One is about the basis of getting into heaven. In your testimony, you do not describe the how, because your prospect will tend to parrot back to you what you said instead of giving his honest response. So, if your goal is extended presentation of the gospel, don't give answers to questions you'll ask later.
7. Identify with your prospect. As you talk to your prospects, listen to what they say about their secular and church backgrounds. Then, when you witness about your life before meeting Christ, select truthful



statements that will enable them to see themselves in your life. When I talked to a drug addict, I told of how certain sins controlled me before I found Christ. When I talked to Ruth with her good church background, I stressed my regular church attendance but no certainty of eternal life before I met Christ.

8. If your witness is leading into a gospel presentation similar to the outline I have presented in Lesson 9, be sure you include at least one sentence about receiving the certainty of eternal life. Your main thrust should be the benefits of the gospel here and now, but at least one allusion to eternal life is needed to make your first diagnostic question logical.¹⁴

How does your testimony or witness come across to an unsaved person? Earlier you read Dan's testimony, which was given in church. Here is the testimony of Elsa, a member of a Nazarene church, as she would give in a home setting. After telling about being raised in church, she moved to the place of her marriage:

Many problems arose during my marriage. I used alcohol to push aside the problems of the day. On weekends, I'd go where the parties were to escape from the problems at home. But I became a very depressed person with no energy to carry out daily tasks. I'd go to work, but the thought of going home afterward would weigh me down. There was a feeling of worthlessness about myself and my family. My life had no direction, and no goals; it seemed as if my future was hopelessly anchored. I knew there had to be more to life.

One day I began to read my Bible. Each time I read it, the Bible gave me a lift. It was like I had been energized. This experience brought back some memories of the things I had heard during my church attendance.

One evening, a member from my church came by looking for my daughter, who had been attending their services. She wasn't home, so he began to talk with me. Incidentally, I failed to mention that once just before this meeting, I had prayed that the Lord would help me find a church I could faithfully attend. The man began to ask me questions that made me think about my life. He shared the gospel with me, and I receive the gift of eternal life.

Since I made that decision, my life has not been the same. Not only did I receive eternal life, but also trials, problems, and situations that seemed



to plague me before didn't seem so hard to deal with. Those depressed episodes changed to purposeful work activities, whether cleaning my house, shopping, working, or studying. It's almost as if I received a new lease on life, one that won't expire. There is hope where there used to be none. Those deep feelings of worthlessness are gone, and I'm interested in reaching out to others and letting them know what God can do for them.

One of the things that really impressed me was seeing snapshots of myself before and after I made my decision. There was a difference in my life I could definitely feel, but those pictures showed the difference in my facial expressions. Christ has really made a change in my life.

A Knock at the Door

Steve was guiding me through my exercise program at the health facility. He was close to his university graduation and exploring career options. I got to know him better through multiple conversations. In it all, I heard no indications of a spiritual life. I figured a safe question I could ask would be, "Steve, have you ever thought much about spiritual things?"

Without tension or embarrassment, he answered, "No, not really."

I responded, "If you ever do, I'd love for us to talk about it some time." Steve was comfortable with that. That was a low-threat conversation, and the door is open for future discussion. This is a wise approach to a person with low spiritual hunger.

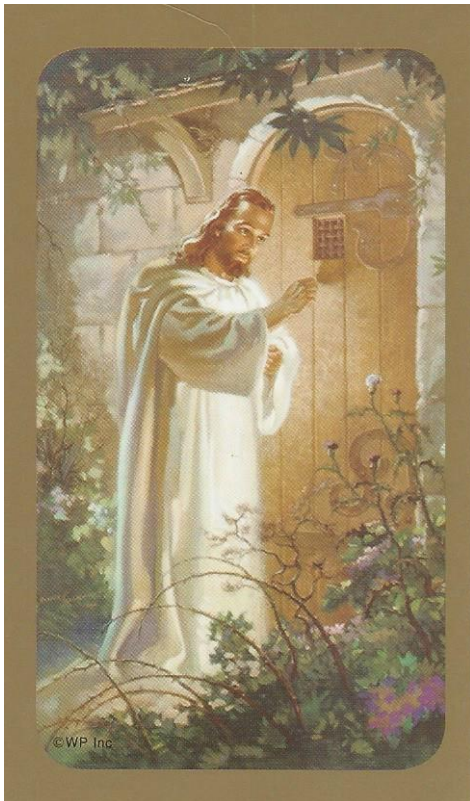
If I become engaged in conversation with a person who shows spiritual openness, but who has little understanding of the gospel, I seek permission to share the gospel with thoroughness. If the individual is willing, I share key facts of the gospel as guided by the outline in "What Will You Tell Them?—Outline of the Gospel Presentation."

Some sincere Christians who wish to witness feel this thorough approach is too difficult to remember. For these, I have suggested a little booklet that covers these truths: "Life's Most Important Question" from bmhbooks.com. This booklet is very close to the suggested outline.



For people with some understanding of the gospel, there is another possibility: Warner Sallman's famous picture of Christ knocking at the door. This picture is based on Revelation 3:20. The appeal was to the church in Laodicea. Though the call is for the lukewarm to open their church and lives afresh to Christ, this spiritual principle stands: Wherever there is an opened door, there will be an entering Christ. Thus, it can be applied to individuals needing salvation.

Here is my possible conversation with Fred and Patty after previous discussion showed their understanding of the gospel:



Christ at Heart's Door ©1942, 1970 Warner Press, Inc. Anderson, Indiana. Used with permission.

Dr. Shaver: Fred and Patty, here is a famous picture of Christ knocking at the heart's door. It is based on Revelation 3:20, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me." Notice the light over the door's stone archway and then to the left under the wooden arch? The light then tapers



down to Jesus' feet. With imagination, you can see the shape of a heart. Can you see that?

Fred: Yes, we can!

Dr. Shaver: Let's think of that as Jesus knocking at your heart's door. Notice the thorns growing around Jesus' feet as if He has been knocking a long time. It seems to me Christ has been knocking at your heart's door a long time. Do you sense that?

Patty: I think we'd both have to say yes, He has been knocking a long time.

Dr. Shaver: See the little window? It's dark inside because the life is always dark within when Christ is left out. Then, notice Christ only knocks; He doesn't try to open the door because the door must be opened from the inside.

Fred: I get it.

Dr. Shaver: A common way to lock doors in that day was to drop a plank in a metal bracket on each side of the door. To open the door, the one inside will have to push the plank out of the brackets and to one side of the door. The previous verse to Revelation 3:20, verse 19, ends with the word, "repent." If we are going to open the heart's door to Christ, we must tell God we are sorry for our sins and, with God's help, turn from our sins. In the imagery of this picture, we must push the plank of sin away if we really want to open the door to Christ. Is this making sense to you?

Fred: It sure is.

Patty: Yes, it does.

Dr. Shaver: If you open your heart's door to Christ, He promises to come in. But, you must understand, you are accepting Him as Savior, the forgiver of all your sins, and as Lord, the leader of your life. That means that starting now, you would do what He wants you to do. You let Him call the shots. Is this what you are willing to do?

Fred: Yes, it is.

Patty nods.



Dr. Shaver: It seems to me, Fred and Patty, that Christ is asking you right now if you would like to receive Him into your life and His gift of eternal life by opening the door of your heart and life to Christ. If I could help you do that by praying with you, is that what you would like to do?

Patty: Oh, yes!

Dr. Shaver: Would you like to pray your own prayer or repeat one after me if you can really mean it?

I would pray the following prayer, which they would repeat after me.

Dr. Shaver: O God, I am sorry for my sins (pause) and, with Your help, I turn from them. Just now, I open the door of my heart to You, Jesus. I receive You as the One who forgives all my sins and the One to take charge of my life. Just now, I receive You into my heart and life. Amen.

I would ask them to keep their heads bowed while I ask several questions.

Dr. Shaver: Fred, did you mean it when you told Him you were sorry for your sins and turning from those sins?

Fred: Yes, I did.

Dr. Shaver: Did you mean it when you invited Christ to come into your heart and become the Leader of your life?

Fred: Yes, I did.

Dr. Shaver: Jesus said that, if anyone opens the heart's door, He would come in. Do you think He meant that?

Fred: Yes, He did.

Dr. Shaver: If you turned from your sins and meant it, and you opened your heart's door and meant it, and Jesus said that, if you opened the door, He would come in, and He meant it, then where is Jesus right now?

Fred: He's in my heart.



Fred got very serious. I asked Patty similar questions. She answered, "He's in my heart," and began to weep.

We all raised our heads. I shook their hands and said, "Welcome into the kingdom of God!"

I immediately started a discipleship process with them that included starting them on *Basic Bible Studies*. I took the picture of Jesus and wrote on the back: "Fred Smith opened the door of his heart to Christ, February 13, 2018, Rev. 3:20." I asked Fred to sign the spiritual birth certificate and asked any who came with me to also sign. Then, I gave Patty a similar picture and statement.

The picture of Christ knocking at the door is a natural Gospel explanation with each element of the picture reminding you what to say next. And the great thing about this story - it really happened. It's a real case history.

The Gospel and God's Presence

Michael Green wrote:

All Christians were convinced that Jesus Christ was God's last word to man, the one who brought as much of God to us as we could appreciate in the only terms we could take it in, the terms of a human life; the one who is dying and rising again was manifestly vindicated in his claims and achievement. This they all believed in common. Their modes of expressing it depended to a large extent on their own intellectual and spiritual background and on that of their hearers.

We will present Jesus Christ, God's great last Word! As we move beyond witness to sharing the facts of the gospel, certain basic truths need to be heard and understood. I suggest these basic truths are well covered by the outline in Lesson 9. They are grace, humanity (including sin), God, Christ, and faith (including repentance). The scope of this book does not permit a full discussion of how to do that. You may be exposed to that in more detail by viewing the DVD *A Personal Evangelism Call*. Consider taking a step of faith by becoming involved in an extended personal evangelism class.

Is God still raising witnesses in our day? Consider Lee Atwater's testimony as



printed in the *Kansas City Star*. Atwater was once the National Committee chairman for the United States Republican Party, and was called the “pit bull” of American politics, because his methods were so vicious. But after diagnosis of an inoperable brain tumor, something changed. He said,

I have found Jesus Christ. It’s that simple. He’s made a difference, and I’m glad I’ve found Him while there’s still time . . . I don’t hate anybody anymore. For the first time in my life, I don’t hate somebody . . . I hope every one of you will find what I’ve found.

Along with his testimony, Atwater made apology and restitution to those he had mistreated. The apostle Paul, Dan, Elsa, Lee Atwater, and you and me— we can all tell them of Jesus. Everybody who knows Jesus can witness. And “somebody you know needs Jesus now.”

When witnessing seems difficult, remember Paul. After giving his testimony before a Jerusalem crowd, he came under accusation from the Sanhedrin and the guard of Roman soldiers. The cost of witnessing must have seemed very high! Acts 23:11 says, “The following night, the Lord stood near Paul and said, ‘Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome.’” The same is true for you and me.

Application

Write out your testimony based on the guidelines given in this chapter. After you’ve written it and studied your testimony, put it away. Then, prayerfully, try to share your testimony in word with at least one person this week. Share the results with a trusted friend or the class if you are part of one studying the book.



EXAM – Session 10

1. A planned approach in sharing the gospel is logical _____
 - a) though we know a pastor should preach by much prayer, with his decision for his subject just as he or she enters the pulpit.
 - b) and should include the facts of restitution, healing, and leadership.
 - c) and became a tool to help people like those mentioned earlier know what to say and lead their first soul to Christ.
 - d) though the early church did not find it necessary to develop basic summaries of faith.

2. A good testimony _____
 - a) was part of Paul's message to King Agrippa, but he did not use persuasion.
 - b) should be picturesque, and should press the use of words such as "saved" and "born again."
 - c) should be specific as to the time you received Christ, and stress the positive things God has done for you.
 - d) will not require you to identify with your prospect's secular and church backgrounds.

3. When you are using Warner Sallman's picture of Christ knocking at the door to explain the Gospel, you might say _____
 - a) "See the little window? It's dark inside because the life is always dark within when Christ is left out."
 - b) "We must push the plank of sin away if we really want to open the door to Christ."
 - c) "If you open your heart's door to Christ, He promises to come in."
 - d) "It seems to me, Fred and Patty, that Christ is asking you right now if you would like to receive Him into your life and His gift of eternal life by opening the door of your heart and life to Christ."
 - e) All of the above
 - f) None of the above



4. Lee Atwater, the "pit bull" of American politics, found Jesus Christ. In testimony and actions, _____

- a) his physical health played no part in his conversion.
- b) he said, "For the first time in my life, I don't hate somebody."
- c) because God had forgiven him, he felt it was not necessary to make restitution to those he had mistreated.
- d) the national press refused to get out his story.



Discussion Guide for Mentor and Participant

1. Share with your mentor what happened when you gave your testimony to a person this past week.
2. Show your mentor your written testimony, or give him/her your testimony. Let your mentor suggest ways to strengthen your testimony.
3. Using the picture of Warner Sallman's "Christ Knocking at the Door," imagine your mentor needs to receive Christ, and share Christ based on the images in the picture.
4. Pray together for whatever issues are most pressing upon your heart right now.