

HOW TO BE A GOOD WITNESS: FROM THE BOOK OF ACTS

Throughout the book of Acts we repeatedly find believers boldly, unashamedly telling others about Jesus Christ! Often, they are recorded as having punctuated their fearless, outspoken sharing of the gospel by declaring: “***WE ARE WITNESSES!***” And almost every time, they state that specifically regarding Christ’s incredible, undeniable resurrection from the dead!

- 1:8
- 1:22
- 2:32
- 3:15
- 4:33
- 5:32
- 10:39-41
- 13:31
- 22:15
- 26:16

Notice several things about those early believers & their sharing of the gospel of Christ:

A. NOTICE THEIR *MANNER*:

1) *BOLDLY & FEARLESSLY* sharing the Gospel *WITHOUT APOLOGY!*

Peter:

2:32 cf. 2:36

3:15 cf. 3:13-16, 19

4:10-12 “*with boldness*”

4:29-31 “*with boldness*”

4:33

5:32 cf. 5:27-29

5:41-42

Stephen:

7:10 cf. 7:51-53

Paul:

9:20-22

9:28-29

10:39 & 41

13:31, 46

14:2-3 (notice that they didn’t run from trouble)

14:21-22

18:6

22:15

23:3-5

24:10-11 & 25-27

cf. – “*Speaking the truth in love*” – Eph. 4:15; 2 John & 3 John

2) An *URGENCY TO TELL OTHERS* & also an *EVIDENT SINCERITY*!

2:22-24, 32, 36, 39-40

3:6, 12-19

4:19-20, 29-31

5:28-33

6:10 & 7:51-53

9:20-23, 29

11:23

13:38-41

3) An unwavering practice of *DEFENDING TRUTH & REFUTING ERROR*!

9:22

11:2-4, 16-18

13:6-12

13:30, 33, 34, 37

17:3, 18, 31, 32

18:4, 19, 28

19:9

23:6

24:12, 15, 21 & 25

26:8, 23

B. NOTICE THEIR MESSAGE & TOTAL EMPHASIS: —A constant habit of declaring *THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST FROM THE DEAD*!

- 1:3
- 1:22
- 2:24—36 (esp. vv. 24, 31, 32 & 34)
- 3:15, 26
- 4:2, 10, 20 & 33
- 5:30, 32
- 10:39-41
- 13:30, 33, 34, 37
- 17:3
- 17:18
- 17:31-32
- 22:15
- 23:6
- 24:15, 21
- 25:19
- 26:8, 23

“A Buddhist in Africa who was converted to Christianity was asked why he changed religions. He replied, ‘*It’s like this: If you were walking along and came to a fork in the road and two men were there and one was dead and the other was alive, which man’s directions would you follow?*’”¹

¹ Erwin Lutzer, “*Christ Among Other gods*,” quoted in “*Reasons we Believe-50 lines of evidence that confirm the Christian faith*,” by Nathan Busenitz, (Crossway: Wheaton, IL, 2008), p. 191

C. NOTICE THEIR BELIEF IN GOD'S SOVEREIGN CONTROL OF ALL THINGS: They were willing to turn *DIFFICULTIES & DISAPPOINTMENTS* into *OPPORTUNITIES FOR SHARING CHRIST & the GOSPEL!*

7:54-8:4

12:6

14:19-22

16:23-25

18:5-17

24:10-11

“For the apostle Paul, suffering for Christ’s sake was not only a certainty; he saw it as a beneficial feature of faithful gospel ministry (see 2 Cor. 4:8-12). As Paul says in that marvelous passage in 2 Corinthians 12:9, ‘*Power is perfected in weakness.*’ For Paul, this was a rich benefit. Suffering reveals how much like Christ we are, and when we accept suffering and the perfecting work that it brings, we are conformed to the likeness of our Savior. He continues, ‘*Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast in my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions and hardships, for the sake of Christ, for when I am weak, then I am strong*’ (vv. 9-10).”² – cf. John 15:18-21; 1 Peter 2:18-25; 1 John 3:1, 13; 4:6

D. NOTICE THEIR LIFE & LIFESTYLE: *DRAMATICALLY DIFFERENT FROM THE WORLD!* – 4:16

Our conduct and behavior make a huge difference as to whether we are bold witnesses for Christ or else we say nothing to others. Does your life & lifestyle seal your lips? It certainly didn’t seal the lips of the believers in Acts, even in the face of persecution and death!

Consider the following examples:

- 5:33 – they wanted to kill them i.e. Peter & John
- 7:13 – they were slandered and misrepresented
- 7:54 – they hated & killed Stephen
- 9:16 – Jesus promised that Paul would suffer greatly
- 9:23-24 – they plotted to kill Paul
- 9:29 – they tried to kill Paul
- 12:2 – they killed James
- 12:3-ff – they imprisoned Peter
- 13:50 – they kicked Paul & Barnabas out of town
- 14:19 – they stoned Paul and left him for dead

- 1) **A CRUCIAL REMINDER**: Unsaved people can be-*and often are*-as nice or nicer than we are! People won’t get saved just because we’re nice! *We have to share the gospel message!*

² John MacArthur, “On Finishing Well: The Apostle Paul’s Strategy for a God-Blessed Ministry and Life-long Devotion to Christ” (Grace to You: Panorama City, CA, 2025), pp. 16-17

- 2) **CHRISTIANS ARE TO BE DIFFERENT FROM THE WORLD, BUT...** that doesn't mean be weird... or ignorant & out of touch with current events & what's going on in the world... or live our life in some sort of a "*Christian bubble*", avoiding contact with the unsaved! We have to mix & mingle with the unsaved, in order to have opportunities to share Christ with them! It also doesn't justify or give us an excuse to be judgmental or condemning of others, or for us act aloof, smug, or better than others!
- 3) **And don't forget... LIVING A GODLY LIFE IS NO GUARANTEE THAT THE UNSAVED WILL RESPECT YOU... or EVEN LIKE YOU!** *In fact, they may hate you more!* – 2 Tim. 3:12 "*All that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution*" cf. 1 Pet. 1:6-7; 2:12, 18-20; 3:9, 13-17; 4:4, 12-16 & 5:6-10, etc.

E. NOTICE THE WAY that they witnessed: *REASONING WITH & PERSUADING PEOPLE! BUT... IT MUST BE DONE HUMBLY & BE BIBLICALLY BASED!*
 – 1 Pet. 3:15 "*...and be ready always to give an answer (i.e. a defense) to every man that asks you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear (i.e. gentleness and reverence)*"

This practice of reasoning, discussing & persuading people is seen throughout Acts:

- 9:20-22
 - 9:28-29 – "*disputed*" ("*talking & arguing*"-nasv)
 - 17:2-3 – "*opening & alleging*" ("*explaining & giving evidence*")
 - 17:4 – "and some of them *believed*" ("and some of them *were persuaded*")
 - 17:16-18 – "therefore *disputed* he in the synagogue" ("so he was *reasoning* in the synagogue")
 - 18:4
 - 18:19
 - 18:27-28 – "for he *mightily convinced* the Jews" ("for he *powerfully refuted* the Jews") ("*utterly proved the case*" – Peter Masters)
 - 19:8 – "*disputing and persuading*" ("*reasoning and persuading*")
 - 19:9 – "*disputing daily*" ("*reasoning daily*")
 - 22:1
 - 24:25-27 – "and as he *reasoned*" ("and as he was *discussing*")
 - 28:23-24 – "to whom he *expounded and testified* the kingdom of God, *persuading* them concerning Jesus...and some *believed* the things which were spoken, and some *believed not*" ("and he was *explaining* to them by *solemnly testifying* about the kingdom of God, and trying to *persuade* them concerning Jesus...and some were being *persuaded* by the things spoken, but others would not *believe*."
- These last three are simply Paul's "*defense*" at his "*courtroom*" hearings after his arrest in Jerusalem:
- 25:7-8 – "while he *answered* for himself" ("while Paul said in his own *defense*")
 - 26:1-3 – "*answer* for myself/himself" ("proceeded to make his defense/my *defense*")
 - 26:24-26 – "and as he *spoke* for himself" ("and while Paul was saying this in his *defense*")

1) **BE SURE TO USE *SCRIPTURE*!** – cf. 1 Cor. 1-4 cf. Heb. 4:12; Jer. 23:29; etc.

- Acts 17:2
- Acts 18:28
- Acts 26:22
- Acts 28:23

2) **USE THE O.T. “*LAW*” TO BRING CONVICTION** – Gal. 3:21-24

See for example, the tract “*Are you a good person?*” & the book “*God loves you & has a wonderful plan for your life*” (both by Living Waters/Ray Comfort)

“How does the disclosure of divine truth commend itself to the *enemies* of truth? Because ‘**The word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart**’ (Heb. 4:12). The truth of the Word of God strikes the conscience. We have an ally in the hearts and minds of unregenerate people. We have an ally even in those that are without God and without Christ. That ally is the law of God written in the heart (**Rom. 2:15**). The conscience is triggered when the law of God—written on their hearts—confronts their behavior.

“When we are faithful to proclaim the truth boldly rather than adulterate the Word, twist the Word, pervert the Word, or tamper with the Word in order to accommodate people’s preferences, **God’s Word will bring conviction**. When we proclaim the truth to every person, there is a receptor in every human being: the law of God in the heart. **That’s our ally in the human heart, and that’s why we aim our message at the conscience.**

“IT DOESN’T MEAN THE RESPONSE WILL ALWAYS BE POSITIVE!” [see **Rom. 1:32**]

...But it *does* mean the unadulterated truth will always bring conviction. Charles Hodge said, ‘(Paul) knew that the truth had such a self-evidencing power that even where it was rejected and hated it (still) commended itself to the conscience as true.’”³

3) **USE YOUR *TESTIMONY* AS A METHOD OF WITNESSING** – 1 Tim. 1:12-17

This is an excellent, indirect way to share the gospel. It will often cause an unsaved person to listen to the way of salvation without immediately erecting mental barricades and feeling like they’re being “put on the spot.” **But you need to be sure to quote Scripture throughout the sharing of your testimony** because, as noted above, it’s the Word of God that pierces the heart and will bring conviction, not your personal story!

³ Ibid, pp. 13-14

4) **BE PREPARED TO RESPOND TO SOME TYPICAL QUESTIONS & ARGUMENTS YOU MAY HEAR FROM SKEPTICS & UNBELIEVERS:**

(Notes on most of these subjects can be found under the “Apologetics” & “Creation vs. Evolution” tabs)

- a) What to say to someone who says they’re an atheist or that they don’t believe in God.
- b) What to say to someone who says they don’t believe the Bible or that it’s full of errors.
- c) What to say to someone who says, “*love is love*”, that Jesus was loving not condemning, & that judging others is wrong, hateful & unchristian. – cf. John 7:24; Matt. 7:1 cf. 6; 12:25-45; 15:1-14; 23:1-38; John 8:11; 2 John 1-11; 3 John 1-8, etc.
- d) What to say to someone who says they don’t believe Christ rose from the dead.
- e) What to say to someone who says we’re just the highest animal & a product of evolution.
- f) The *REAL* reason most people don’t believe in God, the Bible, etc.
(see the tract & also the book “*Faith is for weak people*” by Living Waters)

F. **FINALLY, NOTICE THEIR *RESULTS*** – Acts 17:30-32

**SOME MOCKED.
SOME PROCRASTINATED.
SOME BELIEVED!**

**IT’S ALWAYS BEEN THAT WAY, AND IT ALWAYS WILL BE!
NO SURPRISE, RIGHT?**

**SO... SHOULD WE THROW IN THE TOWEL?
NO!!!**

“It’s required in stewards, that a man (or woman) be found FAITHFUL!”
– 2 Cor. 4:2

Notice, he said faithful, not successful!

“Paul was certain about his own insignificance. He writes, ‘*But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves.*’ (2 Cor. 4:7). ‘*This treasure*’ is a reference to the gospel... That treasure is packaged in us. Paul describes himself—and us—as ‘*earthen vessels.*’ It’s not an elegant description; it could literally be translated as ‘clay pots.’

“What does Paul intend to convey? After all, a clay pot is fragile, frail, feeble, flawed, sometimes even ugly. Not sophisticated. Not worthy of praise or admiration in and of itself. **A clay pot is simple, common, cheap, and easily replaceable. That is how we have to see ourselves.** We are *ostrakinos*—weak, breakable, essentially insignificant. That is who we are, and yet within us God Himself has deposited the most glorious treasure in the universe...

“The enemies of Martin Luther called him a privy pot—the most squalid and despicable kind of clay pot. Rather than take offense, Luther agreed. In himself he was nothing. Paul uses similar imagery in 2 Timothy 2:20, when he writes, ‘*In a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of clay, and some to honor and some to dishonor.*’ The honorable vessels are the ones used to serve the food. Dishonorable vessels are the ones used to take the waste away. **We are wastebaskets, in a sense—or worse. Compared to the glory of the gospel treasure that is in us, we are like a chamber pot. **The amazing reality is this: that our weakness and our smallness and our insignificance does not prove fatal to the work of the gospel. It is the very means God has chosen (1 Cor. 1:27-29).**”⁴**

“I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.”

- 1 Cor. 3:6

Remember, it is God alone who gives the harvest & the increase!

“Paul...knew that the ultimate fruit of his ministry was completely subject to the will and work of God (1 Cor. 3:6-7) In short, results depend on God... (2 Cor. 4:3-6). Paul is making a point that is vital to understand. **No matter how well you declare the gospel, you are proclaiming it to people who are in darkness... If your gospel is veiled, if they don’t understand it, if it doesn’t penetrate, if it doesn’t get through, it is because of their condition (cf. Eph. 2:1-2)**

“...This is illustrated in Jesus’ parable of the soils (Mark 4:3-9). What matters most is the state of the *Soil*, not the skill of the *Sower*. But when a heart opens up, it is just like creation.... (2 Cor. 4:6). In other words, salvation is a divine miracle. It is a sovereign miracle. All results belong to God. Spiritual life is a creative miracle, done by God. **If you’re faithful to proclaim the truth, that’s as far as you can go. Only God can save the soul.”⁵**

Let’s follow Paul’s exhortation in 1 Corinthians 15:58:

“Be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, inasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord!”

⁴ Ibid, pp. 15-16

⁵ Ibid, pp. 14-15