

Spirit-enabled Witnessing

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Have you ever felt impressed or directed by the Lord to speak or act toward another person on God's behalf? Most every believer has had this experience and when we do, it is an example of what is called "witnessing in the Spirit." 1Thessalonians 1:4 and 5 says, "...we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction." (NIV) All effective evangelism is done in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is truly a divine experience to have God direct you to someone who needs to hear a word from Him. Our job is to be ready to be used. Here are three principles that have guided me for many years as a personal evangelist.

Be open to be used of God

Being led by the Spirit involves inviting Him to control and empower you - to enable you to live a holy, godly life and to make you a fruitful witness for Him by faith. It does take a bit of boldness. I saw this on a T-shirt not too long ago: "I am a Wide-eyed, Sanctified, Blood Bought, Spirit Taught; Bible Totin', Scripture Quotin', Satan Blastin', Sin Trashin', Christ Followin', Pride Swalloin', Hard Praying', Truth Conveyin', Faith Walkin', Gospel Talkin', Bonafide Big Time Believer! And proud of it! (Romans 1:16)." Whew! I've never been quite that bold but I do believe that God will lead us to people who need to hear the Gospel if we are open to that idea.

What does it take to be used of God? Two things come to mind. The first is submission. God has chosen submission as a receptacle for His power and blessing. God has set up lines of authority that He sends His power, blessings, and resources through. The word submission means “to be arranged under.” Submission is connected with the word humility. If we humble ourselves and submit to God’s authority He will lead us to hurting people. There is power in submission.

The second way we can be used of God is through obedience. God will never force us to be obedient to witness, just as He never forces us to any obedience. However, when we are faithful, He will overcome any barriers in our way. Satan is a subtle deceiver who tries to discourage us, but nothing Satan can do is powerful enough to make our witness a failure when we are faithful to do what God has called us to do. We must remember that success is simply living our lives as Christian witnesses, sharing the Gospel whenever we can, and trusting God for the results. A Christian who resists or neglects the Holy Spirit is like a lamp that's not plugged in—the power is there but not being used.

God is always in control of any situation, and we cannot fail if we do not remain silent. Did you hear about the guy who hardly ever showed up at church? He finally attended a service and the preacher said to him, "You need to join the Army of the Lord!" The man replied, "I'm already in the Army of the Lord, Preacher." The preacher questioned, "How come I don't see you except for Christmas and Easter? He whispered back, "I'm in the secret service." That's not us! We're called to be His “ambassadors.”

God doesn't want us to be "spiritual knick-knacks." —people who look good but do nothing. Let's be ready to be mightily used of God.

Be sensitive to the Work of the Holy Spirit

As we witness for the Lord, learning to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit is an extremely profitable pursuit. Most Christians really care about those who don't know Christ and long to share the good news of salvation with them. But many of our approaches actually drive non-Christians away instead of drawing them in. These days, the rules of communication between the church and outsiders have changed. People today want to know that you genuinely care about them and their situations. Not too long ago I returned an Avis rental car at the airport. Most of the time these lots are some few miles from the main air terminal and such was the case on this day. When I got on the van to return to the airport I was the sole passenger. Over the rearview mirror the sign said, "Your driver today is DANNY." He asked which airline I was traveling on. I said, "To Delta Danny!" "I'm drawn to Delta today." I love to joke around so I said, "Danny, have you ever noticed how some people are drawn to their own destruction?" "How is it that a man can have two sons and one can be obedient and stay home and work and the other one is rebellious and runs away and spends his life in wantonness and loose living." Danny said, "Are you a preacher?" "I've got goose bumps all over my arms." It then occurred to me that God was dealing with this boy. I said, "Danny, you're that boy who left home aren't you?" He said, "Yes sir—that's me." I said, "Now is the time for you to come back home." As we

pulled up to the airport parking spot right there on that van Danny gave his life back to Christ and was wonderfully saved. God is at work in the life of the believer and the unbeliever to bring them together. We must be sensitive to His leading.

Be used by His power to witness

Several years back the Merv Griffin Show had a guest that was a body builder. During the interview, Merv asked, "Why do you develop those particular muscles?" The body builder simply stepped forward and flexed a series of muscles from chest to calf. The audience applauded. "What do you use all those muscles for?" Merv asked. Again, the muscular specimen flexed, and biceps and triceps sprouted to impressive proportions. "But what do you use those muscles for?" Merv persisted. There was a moment of confused embarrassment as the body builder sat down in bewilderment. He didn't have an answer for the use of all his muscles other than to display his well-developed frame. Let's not be like him! Jesus said in Acts 1:8 that the power of the Holy Spirit is for us to be witnesses for Him everywhere we go. God's power is bestowed upon us for a real purpose not just to flex our "spiritual" muscles.

What you can do now

Record the names of at least three persons to whom you believe God would have you speak about Christ within the week. Ask the Holy Spirit to prepare these individuals, freeing their minds so they can make a logical, intelligent choice to receive Christ as Savior. Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you to these individuals at the proper time, and to speak through you in giving them the message of Christ. As you witness,

remember that it is the Holy Spirit who penetrates the mind of the other person, revealing spiritual truth. In 1 Corinthians 3:6 the writer says, "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase." (KJV) We will either be sowing the seed or watering what has already been planted but rest assured, the Lord will give the increase.

Sidebar:

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 - c. Demonstrate the Fruit of the Spirit
3. Learn to SHARE
 - a. Find the TIME for Daily Devotions
 - b. Use Your TALENTS for Ministry
 - c. Give Your TREASURE as a Steward
4. Learn to FIGHT
 - a. Understand Spiritual Warfare
5. Learn to LOOK
 - a. The Second Coming of Christ and the Millennium

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