

Spiritual Fitness — Do I Share What Jesus Did For Me?

February 5, 2023

Good morning CrossWinds! This month, we are focusing on spiritual fitness. We are learning what it looks like to be a healthy Christian, and what it looks like to be in good spiritual shape.

To give us an outline for the series, we came up with six W's. These are six qualities of a healthy Christian life, that all begin with the letter W. This gives us six areas in our life we can examine, like we check the oil of our car, to check our spiritual fitness.

Since repetition is the mother of all learning, at the beginning of each message in this series, I am taking a few minutes to review these words and what they mean.

Word — A healthy Christian knows God through the applied word of God under the direction and empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

The Bible tells us that God's Word is alive! God uses his word to create and sustain spiritual life. We should not just be in the Bible on Sundays but I challenged us to be in the Bible a little bit every day of the week with a daily Bible reading plan. A number of you took up that challenge. I have talked to some of you who told me that God always seems to have a verse you need to hear that you run across in your daily Bible reading. God is using the Bible to guide your life. That is great. That is what God does when we read his word.

What Does A Healthy Christian Look Like?



Worship — A healthy Christian manifests a lifestyle of worship and prayer based on close daily communion with God.

We looked at worship and prayer the second week. We learned that prayer in a healthy Christian's life is like breathing for human life. It is something we should do all the time. Sometimes we pray out loud. Sometimes we pray in our hearts. Sometimes we are thanking God for good things in our life. Other times we ask God for wisdom and help in our time of need.

We also looked at worship. Worship is not something that is only part of our life on Sundays. We worship by the way we live every day of the week in the choices we make. We also learned that since our God is the best, we worship him by giving him our best, not the leftovers of our life.

What Does A Healthy Christian Look Like?



Warmth — A healthy Christian engages in meaningful life-on-life relationships that reflect the love of God and leave people impacted and changed.

We looked at warmth last week. By warmth, we were not talking about temperature warmth on a cold day in January. We were talking about relational warmth. That is the way we treat one another. We learned that healthy Christians are recognized by the love they have for their brothers and sisters in Jesus. Last week we focused on love in the church. When Christians love one another in the church, they make the church a relationally warm place in a relationally cold world. People are drawn to the church because of the love they experienced from people in the church.

We also learned that for the church to be a warm place, we need to use our gifts to love and serve others in the church. Each one of us is given at least one spiritual gift by God. When we use our gifts in the church to serve others, we make the church a relationally warm place.

Witness — A healthy Christian lives under the commission of Christ to win and grow disciples, integrating outreach into all aspects of life.

We will look at this topic this morning.

Works — A healthy Christian builds up the body of Christ through their spiritual gifts and passions.

Wisdom — A healthy Christian manages their skills, money, and time putting them under the Lordship of Jesus.

This morning, we will look at how a healthy Christian is a witness for Christ. We will answer four common questions about witnessing.

First, what does the Bible say about witnessing? Second, do I need special training to share about Jesus? Third, how can I be an effective witness? Fourth, if I lead someone to Christ, what responsibilities do I have?

What does the Bible say about being a witness?

In the Bible, there is what is known as the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. Jesus said the greatest commandment is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. He also said the second greatest commandment is to love your neighbor as yourself. If you boil all of God's commandments down to two, it is simply to love God with all of your strength and love other people the same way you love yourself. Those are the greatest commandments.

The Great Commission is Jesus' command to take the good news of what Jesus has done for us and share it with others.

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” Matthew 28:19–20 (ESV)

If you have good news that will help people, but you won't share it with people, something is wrong. Jesus wants us to share what he has done with others. That is why this is known as the great commission, not the great suggestion. I think it is fair to say that Christians, who never speak about Jesus when they are around those who need to hear about Jesus, are probably not in a healthy relationship with Jesus.

The problem with telling people about Jesus is that it is hard. When we bring Jesus into a conversation, people look at us like we are speaking another language, like we are speaking Klingon from Star Trek. That is discouraging. The good news is that when we tell people about Jesus, we have help. The Holy Spirit promises to help us.

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Acts 1:8 (ESV)

Here we see God's Holy Spirit came on Jesus' disciples and helped them tell people about Jesus. When it comes to telling people far from God about the love of God, we have the Holy Spirit's help. How does the Holy Spirit help us? He does two things.

First, the Holy Spirit promises to help us speak what needs to be said. He helps us share the good news about Jesus with greater clarity and boldness.

Second, the Holy Spirit is at work when we witness softening the hearts of people when we share about Jesus. The Holy Spirit is like a plow breaking up the hard earth of hard hearts so the seed of the gospel can penetrate a life. We don't have to soften hard hearts. That is the Holy Spirit's job.

It is said that the average person needs to hear the good news about Jesus seven times before it starts to make sense. Don't be discouraged if you tell a friend about Jesus and they reject you. Don't be discouraged if you invite someone to church, and they are not interested. Maybe you are number four. It won't be until the seventh person that their heart is soft enough to respond.

Do I need special training to witness, or can anyone do it?

First, it is good to take a course on evangelism or read books on how to tell people about Jesus. That will only help us share Jesus with greater clarity. That doesn't mean we need a special course to tell people about Jesus.

About a decade ago, when we lived in our previous neighborhood, Cindy and I went to sleep early on Saturday night. We had church the next morning, so we went to bed early. That night, we completely missed what happened in our neighborhood and almost happened on our front lawn. Two men in the neighborhood were drunk. The cops were called. One of the drunk guys hit a cop over the head with a chair injuring him. The other drunk threw the other police officer into a bush. You can imagine what happened in the next 5 minutes when both officers radioed in that they were attacked, bleeding, and on the ground. Police swarmed our block from everywhere. Not just Spirit Lake, but police from Arnold's Park and surrounding communities showed up. The men were arrested. The officers went to the hospital for stitches. It was tense. Sometime after that,

the police stopped in my office at church. Since this took place only feet away from my front yard, they wanted to know what I saw, and what I heard since I was probably their best eyewitness. The problem was what I told you earlier. Cindy and I went to sleep early because of church. We slept through the entire thing! I had no idea what happened until Sunday afternoon when I talked to my neighbors. All the information I shared with you about that night is second-hand information that I learned from my neighbors.

When the police asked me to be a witness, I didn't need special training. All I needed to do was share what I heard and saw. That is a good picture of what it means for us to be a witness for Christ. All we need to do is share how the Bible seems to speak to us when we read it. Since we asked Jesus to take away our sin and be in charge of our life, our desires have changed. The way we look at life has changed. We are now different. We don't need to give detailed theological explanations about complex theological arguments. All we need to do is share the story of what happened to us when we trusted Jesus and began following him. It is that simple. In the letter of first John, that is what John did.

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— 1 John 1:1 (ESV)

If you are a Christian, you can be an old Christian, or you can be a new Christian, but each of us has a story to tell about the way Jesus and the Bible changed our life. We can share that with people. That is all it takes for us to be a witness for Jesus.

There is an urgent need for our witness.

Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.” Matthew 9:37–38 (ESV)

In this passage, Jesus tells his disciples that while not all people will be receptive to Jesus, there are many people who will respond to the good news of Jesus if somebody simply took the time to tell them. There is an urgent need for more people to be witnesses for Jesus.

Like you, there are many times when I don't bring Jesus into a conversation when I should bring him into conversation. There is an urgent need for me to talk about Jesus more. This can be hard. In our politically correct world, we are told to hide our faith in Jesus and not tell people about Jesus.

Today, we are seeing more sports figures use their God-given success as an opportunity to be a witness for Jesus. For example, Brock Purdy from the San Francisco 49ers frequently talks about Jesus in his interviews. Damar Hamlin of the Buffalo Bills was a great witness for Jesus on his team before his heart attack on the field, and he has become an especially great witness for Jesus after his heart attack. If those football players find a way to bring Jesus into conversations on the national platform God gave them, surely I can find a way to bring Jesus into the much smaller platform God gave me.

I am witnessing, even when I don't try.

Even if we don't say anything about Jesus, if people know we are Christians, we are being a witness, just probably not a good one. If we never say anything about Jesus to people around us, we are unintentionally telling them

that Jesus isn't that valuable to us. Jesus is not important to us, or we would talk something about him. We always talk about things that excite us. If we are about to go on vacation, we tell people about it. If our wife is pregnant, we can't help but tell people about it because we are excited. The same is true about Jesus. If we are excited about Jesus, we will talk about Jesus. He will bubble into conversations. If we never speak about Jesus, we subtly tell people he is not that important in life.

Suffering for Christ is part of witnessing.

I don't know if you saw the story in the news about the old military veteran that rode a bus in the city. He wore a Maga hat, which in some places, is an unsafe thing to do. He was roughed up by some of the young men on the bus for wearing his hat, but he wouldn't take it off. The bus driver came to his rescue, so the young men didn't hurt him. As I read the story, it turns out, that this wasn't the first time he was roughed up on the bus for that hat. It is the third time, but he keeps wearing the hat. The old guy wears said he wore the hat because he was willing to suffer for his political beliefs.

As Christians, we have something far more important than a political ideology to tell the world. We have Jesus. If that old man was willing to be roughed up three times on a bus for openly sharing his political views, may it not be said about me that I keep quiet about Jesus because I am afraid of a little embarrassment among friends. Jesus is far more important than politics. If that old man is willing to suffer for a hat, I should be willing to suffer to speak about Jesus.

In your mind, turn the pages of your Bible and think about Jesus and the early church. Did Jesus suffer for speaking the truth about God and how to be made right with Him? You bet He did. They nailed Jesus to a cross. All of the disciples, except for John, died torturous deaths for bearing witness to what Jesus did when he died on the cross and rose back to life. Paul was repeatedly beaten when he shared about Jesus. He was jailed when he shared about Jesus. He was flogged when he shared about Jesus.

If you think about it, it is normal for Christians to suffer when they speak of what Jesus has done in their life. As Christians, when we tell people about Jesus, we should expect to face suffering. If we never suffer when we share Jesus, it is probably because we are not speaking about Jesus loud enough or clearly enough. Whenever we speak about Jesus, we should expect opposition.

The good news is, the suffering we face today is not a whipping, jailing, or the loss of our life. Most of it is social suffering. It is people ignoring us. It is people who make fun of us. They belittle us.

I want to encourage you that if you are suffering when you speak about Jesus or live to honor Jesus, you are probably doing something right. In addition, the Bible promises that we are blessed by God when we are willing to suffer for speaking about Jesus.

If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. 1 Peter 4:14–16 (ESV)

Peter promises that if we suffer because we share about Jesus, we will be blessed by God in that time of suffering. What does that blessing look like? Peter

says the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon us. This means that in those hard times we will experience an especially close relationship with Jesus. We will have a richer experience of God's love and peace. We will grow in our knowledge of God and our love for God like we never have before. While none of us want to suffer or like? to suffer, the good news is that if we suffer for sharing Jesus, God promises to transform those hard times into some of the most blessed and happy times in our relationship with our Savior.

Witnessing is engaging in a cosmic battle.

One thought that has proven especially helpful to me when I experience suffering and pushback when I tell people about Jesus is to remember that as soon as we speak about Jesus to those who are far from God, we engage in spiritual warfare. This is why you can talk to people about Amway and Essential Oils, and they might not be interested in those products, but they aren't offended by those products. We can talk to the same people about Jesus, and how he changed our life, and the same people will have nasty pushback. Why does that happen? Satan and his demons have footholds in people's lives. When we speak about the life-saving power of Jesus, Satan, and his demons leverage those footholds to make some people strongly opposed to the gospel message in hopes of keeping us from sharing the gospel.

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Ephesians 6:12 (ESV)

We must remember that whenever we share the gospel, we engage in spiritual warfare.

How can I be an effective witness?

I want to spend most of our time on this question. This is where most of us find ourselves. We know we should be better witnesses for Jesus. We know we will face pushback when we share about Jesus. We just want to be better witnesses for Jesus. Let's see how we can do that.

The church is foundational to effective witnessing in our community.

As Christians, we attend church. Churches have a reputation in their community. The reputation of the church sets the foundation for the effectiveness of our witness. If you are part of a church where the financial guy embezzled money, or the worship leader had an affair with the secretary, that news gets around the community in a hurry. The church gets a black eye in the community. As soon as we talk to people about Jesus, and they hear we come from the church known to be a dumpster fire, it is hard to be a good witness. People want to separate themselves from those things, not join them.

One of the churches I served before coming to CrossWinds, was known for its extremely short pastoral tenures. Two or three years was normal. When I met people in the community and invited them to church, people would roll their eyes and tell me they were not interested. While the church's reputation preceded me, people around the community for a long time knew about it. The church had a hard time shaking off that legacy.

The corporate witness of the church in the community is a big part of what breaks the ice with people, helping our personal witness in the community. This is why, as we finish construction in Spencer and Spirit Lake, we will get back to our

focus on serving our community. As we have said in the past, we believe it is good works that create good which opens door to people hearing the good news.

I will give you a quick example. Last Sunday, I was in the hospital visiting Pat Oleson before her surgery on Monday. Her nurse came in, and Pat introduced me as one of her pastors at CrossWinds Church. The nurse immediately responded, "I have heard many good things about that church. I want to visit." That made witnessing easy. She was interested because of the positive Vibe CrossWinds has in the community.

The credibility of my life is an important part of my witness.

Our church's behavior backs up our witness. Our personal behavior also needs to back up our witness. If we are irritable, difficult, and nasty people that are dishonest and bend the rules. People will notice. Our witness will not be effective. It will not be believable. If I am telling people how Jesus changed my life, but I am flirting at work, my testimony is not believable.

This doesn't mean we need to be a perfect person to be a positive witness for Jesus. None of us are perfect. We all mess up. The good news is that we can redeem our mess when we handle our sins differently. When most people sin, they ignore their sins. They blame their sins on other people and tough circumstances. As Christians, we handle our sins differently. We don't blame our sins on other people. First, we ask Jesus to forgive our sins. We recognize that we sinned against God. Second, we also go to the person we wronged. We apologize and ask them to forgive us. Today, most people don't do that. Third, if we need to restore what we broke, we take the initiative and try to right our

wrongs. That is rare today. When people see that today it gives us an opportunity to turn our bad witness for Jesus into a good one.

We talked about how to turn our sins and failures into a positive witness for Jesus, but what should we do if we find ourselves in a hostile work environment? What should we do if the people at work are opposed to us and belittle us because of Jesus? Peter tells us what to do.

[For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. 1 Peter 2:15 \(ESV\)](#)

When we are slandered at work for our faith, our response should not be to battle back with hurtful words. It should be to double down and work even harder. We should silence our critics through the good works of our lives.

This means that on the job, we always do our best at work. The job we do should always be done right. It should be done on time. It should be done with first-rate quality. If we drive a truck, our employer should be able to count on us to deliver that load on time. If we need to work extra hours and extra hard to get the job done right, we do that. At work, even if people do not respect our faith, they should have respect for us because of the quality of our work and the excellence of our work.

What if work doesn't feel fair because we are working harder than others, but we are treated worse than others? In those cases, we must be known for our positive attitude, helpfulness, and positivity. One thing we must remember is what I tell my sons. The cream always rises to the top. It just takes time. You will rise to the level of your competence. If you want to be a shift supervisor, put out the kind

of quality, attitude, and leadership of a shift supervisor. In time, you will rise to that position.

The point is that when a good reputation precedes us, people may be negative about Jesus, but they will respect us and our work. That makes our witness more believable.

The law of God is an important part of my witness.

When it comes to talking about Jesus with people, it is easy and non-offensive to simply talk about the way Jesus changed my life. He has given me meaning. He has given me purpose. He has given me joy when I am depressed. I feel loved by Jesus. When many people talk about Jesus, the only part of God's story they tell is, "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life." It is true that God loves us. It is true that God has a wonderful plan for our eternity. Unfortunately, that is not an effective witness because it is an incomplete witness. The story must not stop there.

In Luke 18, we read the story about the rich young ruler. He came to Jesus and fell on his knees, asking, "What must I do to obtain eternal life?" Jesus didn't say, "I love you and have a wonderful plan for your life." Sign on the dotted line, and I will give you peace, purpose, and happiness. Instead of that, Jesus hit him with God's law.

You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery, Do not murder, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother.' " And he said, "All these I have kept from my youth." Luke 18:20–21 (ESV)

Jesus tried to show him his sin. It would only be when the rich young ruler saw his sin that he would see his need for God to save him from his sin. The problem was this guy didn't see himself as sinful. He saw himself as a good

person, a perfect person. He thought he had kept all the commandments.

Newsflash. The problem was he hadn't kept the commandments. No one has kept all the commandments. He only evaluated himself by the external things he did with his hands. He skipped evaluating himself by the internal things he did in his heart. Look what Jesus said about breaking the Ten Commandments in our hearts.

"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire." Matthew 5:21–22 (ESV)

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart." Matthew 5:27–28 (ESV)

Since this guy didn't see himself as a sinner, all he was looking for was a self-improvement version of Jesus. He was looking for a Jesus that made him feel better about himself. He didn't see himself as a murderer in his heart. He didn't see himself as an adulterer in his soul who was in desperate need of a savior to rescue him from his sins.

Look what the Apostle Paul says in the book of Romans about our sins.

... "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one." Romans 3:10–12 (ESV)

That is a verse I can relate to. What is the result of our sins?

...but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear. Isaiah 59:2 (ESV)

If we are going to be effective witnesses and truthful witnesses, we can not simply tell people that God loves them and has a wonderful plan for their life.

We must tell them that we have all broken God's laws, if not externally, then for sure in our hearts. Our sins have separated us from God. There is nothing we can do to save ourselves. We need God to pay for our sins and restore our broken relationship with God. That is what Jesus came to do. The big problem in our life is not Jesus bringing us fulfillment and happiness. It is Jesus forgiving our sin and restoring our relationship with God. That is what we need.

An effective witness must include God's law, so we see our sins and turn to Jesus to save us from our sins. For the rich young ruler, he didn't see himself as a sinner so he would never see Jesus as his savior.

The Lordship of Jesus is an important part of my witness.

Let's return to the story of the rich young ruler. After Jesus asked him if he kept the law, and he had the mistaken thought that he wasn't a sinner, Jesus asked him an unsettling question.

And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. Mark 10:21-22 (ESV)

Is this telling us that we must sell our possessions to follow Jesus? No, it is not. Jesus was testing the man. Do you want to follow me? Let's see if you will obey me if I give you something hard. Do you want to be in charge of your life or, when you follow me, do you want me to be in charge of your life? Let's find out. The Bible tells us he went away sad. He wanted Jesus for meaning and purpose, but he didn't want Jesus to be in charge of his life. He didn't want Jesus to tell him what to do with his money. He was in charge of that part of his life.

The same thing happens today when we follow Jesus. We like to follow Jesus when he gives us meaning and purpose. We like to follow Jesus because he loves us and saves us from our sins, but if following Jesus means he directs our life, many of us draw the line. We want Jesus to be a genie that serves us. We do not want a Jesus who is in charge of us. We want Jesus to be our savior, but we do not want him to be our Lord. Effective evangelism doesn't just present Jesus as the one who saves us from our sins but the one who needs to be in charge of our life when we come to him.

This simply makes sense. Think of Jesus' identity. Jesus is the one who created everything. He created us. I think he has the right to be in charge of our lives. We deserve the lake of fire. Jesus loved us so much that he died a horrifying death on the cross to save us from our sins and make us the most blessed beings in the universe simply by trusting in what he has done for us. After all that Jesus did for us on the cross, making us the most blessed creatures in the universe, I think Jesus deserves to be in charge of our life, not a cheap get-out-of-hell-free card, while we live life for our own personal fame and glory.

Look what the Bible says about being made right with God.

...if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. Romans 10:9 (ESV)

Notice this says we must confess Jesus as our Lord. It doesn't say we are to confess Jesus as our savior. We are to confess him as the Lord of our life. He is in charge of our life.

At this point, many people bristle at the thought of having Jesus in charge of their life instead of themselves. We think that if Jesus is in charge of our life,

he will take all the fun out of life. We think Jesus will ruin us. We think we know what is better for us than Jesus does.

Folks, that is completely false. We must understand that everything God says in his word about how we are to live doesn't come out of a heart that wants to ruin our lives, but out of a heart that loves us and always wants what is best for our lives. If Jesus loves us so much that died on the cross to save us from our sins, why do you think anything he says in his word about how to live would be to ruin our life when everything else Jesus has done on the cross for us is to give us the best life?

Where do we content ourselves with having Jesus as our savior but not wanting him to be our Lord today? Let me give you one example. It is what the Bible says about sexuality and marriage.

Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous. Hebrews 13:4 (ESV)

God says that those who do not honor the marriage covenant and keep their sexuality inside of marriage will be judged by God.

For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; 1 Thessalonians 4:3 (ESV)

The word sexual immorality in both of these verses is the Greek word *porneia*. It means any sexual activity outside of marriage.

Our culture doesn't believe this. When it comes to sexual partners, the day's theme is to try before you buy. Live together before the wedding to make sure you are sexually compatible. Make sure you have many different sexual partners to see which one you like best. That may be what our culture says is best, but that is not what God says best. God says to save sex for marriage. God

says to get married and in the safety of life-long commitment, enjoy the gift of sexual intimacy. Remember God created sex. It was his idea. It is a good idea. He just wants us to enjoy sex in the safety and commitment of marriage. When it is enjoyed anyplace else, it will cause great damage and regrets. Remember that God loves you when he says this. He is not trying to ruin your life. He wants what is good and best for your life.

Many people close their eyes to these verses. They choose to ignore these verses and think they are smarter than God. They think they know what is best for their life. That is not true. Let Jesus be the Lord of your life. Believe him and obey him on this one, even if it is hard.

Today, what should you do if you are living with someone? It is simple. It is repent. It is saying, "God, you are right on this one. I am wrong. I want to make it right. I need to propose. I need to get married. I don't need an expensive wedding. More important than an expensive wedding in everyone else's eyes is I need to be right in God's eyes. That is the best thing I can do for myself and for my relationship."

Dependence on the Holy Spirit is an important part of my witness.

One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. Acts 16:14 (ESV)

Notice that Paul didn't manipulate anyone into trusting in Jesus. He simply shared the good news of Jesus and invited people to trust in Jesus. He left the result of that invitation up to God. Remember that we are farmers. All we can do is scatter the seed of the gospel. It is God's job to germinate that seed in people's hearts. That is what he did for Lydia. If you share the good news of Jesus with

friends and family, but they don't respond by turning to Jesus, don't let that get you down. All you can do is plant the seed. God's spirit is what plows up the hard soil of hard hearts. God's spirit causes conviction of sin and brings people to respond to the gospel. We cannot change hearts. That is the Holy Spirit's job.

And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: John 16:8 (ESV)

If I lead someone to Jesus, what responsibilities do I have?

This is talking about follow-up. How do we follow up with someone who trusts Christ? As I thought about that question, I remembered that Paul planted churches. He led people to Christ. What responsibilities did he feel he had toward those people? A great place to examine that is in the Corinthian letters. He led the Corinthians to Christ when he shared the gospel with them.

For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. 1 Corinthians 4:15 (ESV)

Paul claimed the Corinthians as his spiritual children. How did he treat them? Let's see what responsibilities Paul had to them.

I am to love those I lead to Christ.

I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. 1 Corinthians 4:14 (ESV)

As new Christians, Paul didn't try to shame or embarrass them. He focused on loving them. That doesn't mean Paul had mushy emotional love for them. It means he genuinely cared about them. He made sacrifices for them. He spent time with them. He invested his life into their life. It is no different from how a father or mother loves their children. Mom and dad make time for them and genuinely care about them. That is how kids know they are loved.

I am to warn those I lead to Christ.

I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. 1 Corinthians 4:14 (ESV)

Paul says he admonished them as his beloved children. The Greek word translated as admonishment means warning someone with a view to judgment. In other words, if you keep heading in this direction, it will not end well. You will run into problems. I care enough about you not to ignore you, but to warn you because I love you.

This is the same kind of warning parents give to their children. They don't let them go their own way. They warn their children about bad consequences and pain in life because they love their children and want what is best for them. That is one of the ways we care for new Christians. We lovingly and gently warn them about sin from a heart that genuinely loves them.

I am to spend time with those I lead to Christ.

A big part of following up with new Christians is simply inviting them to spend time with you and to be part of your life.

Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ. 1 Corinthians 11:1 (ESV)

That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ,... 1 Corinthians 4:17 (ESV)

Paul opened up his life to new Christians. They hung around with Paul. They watched the way he lived. They learned about the Christian life by watching him. Many new Christians have no idea what a godly marriage looks like until they spend time with a Christian married couple. They watch the way the couple loves one another. They watch the way the couple handles disagreements. As

they watch, they are discipled. They learn how to follow Jesus by being part of our life and watching us.

I am to teach those I lead to Christ.

...to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church. 1 Corinthians 4:17 (ESV)

Many of you thought I would begin with this point. I intentionally kept it last. Too many of us throw books at a new Christian instead of opening up our lives to new Christians. Yes, it is important to study the Bible with new Christians. Yes, it is good to read through books on the basics of the Christian life, but when that takes place without a loving relationship with other Christians that have opened up their life, that is a disservice. Paul didn't just teach the Corinthians he led to Christ. He loved them and opened his life to them. That is what good follow-up looks like for new believers.

Conclusion

This topic of witnessing is something personal to me. Many of you know I grew up in a Christian home. My wife didn't. She grew up far from God. In high school, a guy was interested in her. He gave her a gospel tract. He asked her if she wanted to trust in Jesus to forgive her sin. At the time, she said she wasn't interested. I am sure he felt like he failed. She put the tract in her books, brought it home, and left it in her dresser drawer. A few years later, while going through a hard time in her life, she ran across the tract. She read it, got down on her knees, and confessed her sins to God. She asked Jesus to forgive her sin, and she was born again. For her, her conversion was a radical time filled with tears and a

complete transformation of her life. That guy had no idea that the gospel seed he planted would one day bear fruit.

As a new Christian, she went to a church. There an older couple met her. That week, they invited her over to their home for dinner. They built a relationship with her. They loved on her. For the first time, she saw what a godly marriage looked like. They studied the Bible with her. They kept inviting her to their home for the next three years. Her faith grew like crazy.

I met her at the end of that three-year period. At that time I found her more spiritually mature than most young women who grew up in the church. For a wonderful godly wife, I owe a debt to a young man in her high school that gave her a gospel tract he thought was useless. I owe a debt to an older Christian couple who took her under their wings for three years as they loved her and opened their life.

My friends, when it comes to witnessing, let us never underestimate the power of sharing the simple gospel story and opening up our lives and the Bible with new Christians.



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