

# Five Reasons Why We Should Witness

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I remember a story that Dr. Stephen Olford related to me one day. He said he was riding in a taxicab in New York City and he was witnessing to the cabdriver who asked, "If you are a man of God, why would you want to live in a wicked city like this?" Dr. Olford replied, "Young man, I can tell by your accent that you are a Jamaican. I have often visited that lovely island. Now, let me ask you a question: have you ever seen the white lily that grows in the bog in your native land?" The cabdriver replied, "Oh, yes, mon, that lily is so white as it stands up in that black, dirty bog." Stephen Olford then remarked, "The reason I am in New York City as a minister of Christ is because I am a lily in the bog," and that's what we should be, friends, as believers living in a pagan society. We should be lilies in the bog. We should stand out. We should be a Gospel witness to the lost and be a light in the darkness to a perishing generation that marches blindly to a burning hell. But I fear we are not witnessing as we should. Some do not have a regular witness at all. Some of you haven't shared the Gospel with a lost person in over a year. But we must be regularly calling men and women and boys and girls to be reconciled to God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul declared in 2 Corinthians 5 this very thing in verse 20, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." But many of us don't do any witnessing at all. Some pastors feel if they preach on Sunday morning, they are doing their part even if they're preaching to the same group of people every week. But Stephen Olford taught me the importance of a regular Gospel witness, friends. When he was the pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Manhattan, he would make it a point on Sunday morning to feed the flock with solid expository preaching but on Sunday evenings, he made sure his congregation went out to the highways and hedges and brought the lost in to hear the Gospel presented that evening in a Spirit anointed evangelism approach. Stephen Olford told me he would often walk into a diner in New York City, prop his foot up on the ledge where the stools were and speak to that person about their soul and their need of the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior. Stephen Olford was a brilliant expositor of God's word but at heart, he was always first an evangelist and every one of you within the sound of my voice should be the same, friend. You have no excuse for not witnessing other than sheer laziness or pride. Laziness because you don't want to get up and get out with some tracts and hand them out to poor lost sinners or pride because you don't want your feelings hurt

through rejection. That's it in a nutshell. Listen friends, every single one of us should have an active witness for Jesus Christ in our generation and shame on us if we are not.

Today, I'm going to list five reasons why we should witness to the lost on a regular basis and the title of my message today is "Five Reasons Why We Should Witness." I want us to get out our pens and papers and jot these down as we proceed. First I will list the five reasons, then I will elaborate upon them as we go forward.

1. The Great Commission commands us to be active witnesses for Christ. We will see this in the Gospel of Mark in chapter 16, verse 15.
2. We are guilty of the sin of omission for not witnessing. We are careful not to sin with the sins of commission but we neglect to realize our sin of omission in not sharing the Gospel with others. We'll have no excuse when we stand before Christ at the Bema Seat of believers for not witnessing for him.
3. When we share our faith with others, God receives glory due him.
4. We must warn men of their great danger of dying in their sins and being cast into hell. If we passed a house that was on fire, would we not rush to the door and knock on it and ring the bell and shout, "Fire! Fire!" and warn those inside who were in great danger? Yet we fail to warn men of their great danger of dying in their sins and dropping into hell and its fires.
5. We should be a lily in the bog to our generation.

Well friends, let's look at this first reason why we should witness and that is 1. The Great Commission commands us to be active witnesses for Christ. This is seen in the Gospel of Mark in chapter 16. You can turn in your Bibles there now. We will be in verses 15-16 and I will quote several Scriptures today so be sure to jot them all down and look them up. Here now is the word of God as seen in the Gospel of Mark. May the Holy Spirit attend the reading of his written word. "And he said unto them." I will stop there, friends, and ask two important questions: who is the "he" that is speaking here? And who is the "them" to whom he is addressing? Why, it's none other than the risen Christ. He is the one giving the marching orders but to whom is he giving them? Is he giving this demand only to his disciples? No friends, his command is to his disciples in each and every generation and that means the Lord Jesus is addressing you and me.

Let us continue with our passage and our duty as followers of Jesus Christ. "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." That's a terrible word that our Lord uses here, friends, the word "damned." Oh, to be cast into hell and be damned forever! Listen to what the Psalmist declares regarding those who die without Christ. This is seen in Psalm 9:17, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." As followers of Christ Jesus, we are commanded to be a Gospel witness to poor lost sinners who apart from Christ will die in their sins and be turned into hell. Oh friends, to be cast into that pit of fire, that smoking hell of misery and flames! Jesus declared, "He that believeth not shall be damned." If only I could walk you, friend, to the rim of hell and lift the lid of that smoking pit of noise and allow you to peer into there, what you saw and heard would keep you up tonight. The cries of the

damned; their shrieks of terror and misery. How can we fail to carry out our marching orders of the Great Commission from our Commander, the Lord Jesus Christ? But many of us do. We are too fixed upon the pleasures of this world to think much of eternity. We'd rather sit in the comfort of our warm home and watch our favorite reality tv show and be entertained by hellish people than go out and reach those who are on their way to hell.

So our first reason to witness to the lost is: The Great Commission commands us to be active witnesses for Christ. This leads me to our second reason why we should witness. 2. We are guilty of the sin of omission for not witnessing. This may shock some of you. Some only think of sin as something which you avoid like adultery or lying or stealing but those, friends, are sins of commission, things you do. The sin of omission is just as great an offense to God as the other for God hates all sin. Let us see this in the book of James in chapter 4, verse 17 which states, "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

Let me illustrate this with a story. I was a 16-year-old boy and a friend of my mother's was sick and dying and she asked my mother if I could come over to her house and play my guitar for her, for it made her feel better. My mother told me all this and I refused to go and visit that dying woman and play my guitar for her. I was too busy hanging out with my teenage friends to worry about an old woman who I didn't even know that well and that woman died and when I became an adult, I felt bad about not going and visiting her in her time of need and doing something that would have lessened her pain. It's still painful to me today to think of that great sin of omission in not visiting that sick woman who asked me to come. How much worse is our sin of omission if we fail to go out and tell the sick in soul about a Savior who came down here so we can go up there at the judgment seat of Christ when we stand before Jesus and our life is reviewed and the books are opened. What excuse will we give Jesus for not witnessing for him while we had life in our body and our generation perish into hell? What will be our excuse? "Well Lord, I was busy watching my favorite cooking show on tv and I just couldn't get out and tell folks about you. I was busy at the football game. I was busy on the golf course and I just didn't make the time to share you with others. I'm sorry, Lord, I didn't want to experience rejection by handing someone a tract or telling them about what you did on Calvary and getting my feelings hurt."

Listen friends, when you stand before the one who gave himself for you, who hung naked on a bloody cross because of your wretched sins, who poured out his own blood on your behalf so you could have pardon from sin, what will be your excuse for not telling others about the mercy which you yourself received? What will be your excuse? Your mouth will be stopped because you won't have any excuse and you have no excuse today, friend, for not witnessing for Jesus on a regular basis because if you refuse to do so, it is a sin of omission.

Let me give you some Scriptural examples of sins of omission that are found in our Bibles. Turn if you will to Matthew 23:23 and let me read this striking passage to you which proclaims woe unto you for not doing as you should. Listen to the words of Christ

Jesus in his denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." Here now is another example of the sin of omission found in Matthew 25:45, "Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me." Now listen, friends, to this last example found in Luke's Gospel in chapter 12, verse 47 which states, "And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes." We know our Lord's will, friends, if we read our Bibles and his will is that we be active witnesses for him while we're on this earth. If we fail here, we fail greatly for we have not done as we were commanded to do by our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The sin of omission in not witnessing should drive us to our knees in repentance before him.

3. When we share our faith with others, God receives glory due him. This is seen in Psalm 96:2-3, "Sing unto the LORD, bless his name; shew forth his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people." This means when we evangelize and tell others about how God sent his beloved Son into the world for salvation of sinners, then God receives glory from that testimony, friends, and when we proclaim the wonder of Calvary to the lost then God receives glory. The Psalmist says, "Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people." We tend to think only of ourselves in regard to our Christian service but we must, friends, look at things from God's perspective and from his purpose in the salvation of man. As believers, our chief aim in life should be God's glory and what better way to bring him the glory due him than to tell others of his mercy for sinners. God should be at the center of all our thoughts and all our actions and this includes our witness for him in this sin-soaked world for when we speak to the unconverted about the Lord Jesus and his saving power to reconcile sinners back to God, this in itself honors and brings glory to the Father.

The fourth reason why we should witness is this, friends, 4. We must warn men of their great danger of dying in their sins and being cast into hell. If we were walking by a house in the evening hours and we saw smoke come out from an attic window, wouldn't we rush to the door and bang upon it with our fists and shout, "Fire! Fire!" to alarm those inside of their great danger? Why then will we not do the same with the poor sinner who is on his way to the danger of hellfire? Why are we silent? Did not someone else tell us about the mercy of Calvary and the Savior who died there?

Allow me to share the following story with you on the reasons why every one of us should be out knocking on doors and handing out tracts and telling folks about Jesus. In the biography of Duane Blue, there is a story which should ignite each of us to go knocking on doors and sharing Christ Jesus with those in our community. Duane Blue relates that when he was in high school, he came home one day and found his mother dead from suicide. He said that there were seven churches in their neighborhood and in all the time they lived there, not one of those church people ever came to their door or to ring it or to tell them about Jesus.

Listen friends, how can we say we are faithful Christians if we are not faithful in our witness for Christ to our generation? I believe a tract ministry is one of the most effective ways to witness on a regular basis. I've handed out tracts for years. I've even written some of my own tracts and had a local printer print up a couple thousand of them. You can buy tracts in bulk from the American Tract Society or from Bible True Publishers in Addison, Illinois. That tract you hand someone will keep on speaking to them long after you have left. I always keep a stack of tracts in my glove box in my car. But whether it's an effective tract ministry or a personal verbal witness, we must get proactive and do this fourth reason to witness which is to warn men of their great danger of dying in their sins and being cast into hell.

The last reason to witness is that we should be a lily in the bog to our generation. Listen friends, we live in a dark hour of world history that is growing more and more wicked every day. It seems at times that our society is one black bog of sin and evil and many are sinking in the mire of sin and need to hear the remedy for sin in the person of Jesus Christ. Our job is to be like Stephen Olford and be a lily in the bog to the community in which we live. We must tell our generation who live in darkness about the light of the world who "was the the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

You see friends, we live in a day where the church has committed a great crime by taking salvation out of the hands of God and putting it in the hands of men but it's not the will of the flesh that saves, nor the will of man, but of God. God is the author of salvation. We need to be honest with folks and tell them about the full counsel of God which speaks of man's ruin through sin and his redemption through Christ Jesus and his duty of repentance and his necessity of regeneration. We must be a light and share the truth with folks. We must care for their souls for if we do not share the Gospel with the lost, then we have the following indictment against us like this story I'm about to tell you.

Listen friends, to sin's penalty. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Listen friends, to God's mercy in his divine pleadings. "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?" But if you looked at the church today and the people who comprise the church, it would appear that most folks don't care if the wicked die and go to hell because most folks who are church members today don't witness. I know I've made my blunders in the past by not witnessing to the lost and I'll never forget his face, he was a worker doing some construction work on my house. He was part of a three man crew and he always showed up early and I had to pass time with him while we waited for the other men to show up. But I didn't have much time for him even though he seemed like he wanted to talk every time I saw him. A few weeks later, I picked up the newspaper and his face stared out at me from the obituary page. He was a young man in his 30s and had died quite suddenly and unexpectedly and he died without me ever bothering to tell him about Jesus Christ. His face still haunts me and his blood is on my hands.

I want to end this message, friends, with a passage from the book of Ezekiel which speaks to each of us here if you call yourself a follower of Jesus Christ. Listen to the striking passage and may it bring conviction to you who need to be convicted of your lack of witnessing and warning men of their great danger of dying in their sins. Here now is Ezekiel 3:18 which speaks of our great responsibility to be faithful witnesses for God to our generation. "When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand." Now friends, I want you to take a moment and look at your hands. Go on. Take a look at your bloody hands. They are witness against you. How can we not warn the wicked to turn from his wicked way?

Today, we have seen five reasons why we should witness but will we do it? Will we do it? People perish all around us while we make our excuses. May God give us the grace to be more faithful witnesses in this area of our Christian lives. Listen dear friends, there are few things more important in this world than the worth of a soul. Let each of us have hearts that care for the souls of men.