

I Will Build My Church – Part 3

Matthew 16:18-19 (KJV) And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

- This series is about discovering God's blueprint for building His church!

PRINCIPLE #6: THE POWER OF A TESTIMONY

(Acts 3:6, 4:13)

Acts 3:6 (KJV) Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.

Acts 3:6 (NLT) But Peter said, "I don't have any money for you. But I'll give you what I have. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, get up and walk!"

Acts 4:13 (KJV) Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.

Acts 4:13 (NLT) The members of the council were amazed when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, for they could see that they were ordinary men who had had no special training. They also recognized them as men who had been with Jesus.

- **Notice the events that happen in this story:**
 1. Peter and John are already in the habit of **PRAYER** and **UNITY**, setting the stage for everything that follows (3:1)
 2. The lame man expects to receive help with his **PHYSICAL** need before he even thinks about his **SPIRITUAL** need (3:2-5)
 3. Peter and John are willing to give **WHAT THEY HAVE** (3:6)
 4. God's miraculous work in one man's life affects **ALL THE PEOPLE** (3:9-11)
 5. Peter uses the opportunity to **SHARE A TESTIMONY** (3:12-13 and 4:9-10) *Notice that Paul also shares his testimony of conversion six times in Acts, and each time does it a different way to relate to his audience!*
 6. The Bible lets us know that this man had been crippled for more than 40 years ... but Jesus didn't do anything for the crippled man until **HIS DISCIPLES** reached out to him! (4:22)

7. This encounter coupled with prayer brings more **BOLDNESS** to witness (4:31) *How do you learn to pray? Start praying! How do you learn to witness? Start witnessing!*

- **A PERSONAL TESTIMONY IS STILL THE MOST PERSUASIVE MEANS OF COMMUNICATION!**

- It is unique – there are no others just like it.
- It is personal and easy to understand.
- I am the authority on it, so it is difficult to argue with.
- People love a personal story – and remember it.
- People can relate to it, so it builds a relational bridge.
- In a postmodern world, it is the most effective witness.

FOUR PARTS OF MY TESTIMONY

1. What my life was like before I met Christ. (LEAST TIME)

- What common circumstances would an unbeliever identify with?
- What were your attitudes that an unbeliever would identify with?
- What was most important to you?
- What substitute for God did you use to find meaning in your life? (sports/fitness, success at work, marriage, sex, making money, drugs/alcohol, having fun, entertainment, popularity, hobbies)

2. How I realized I needed Christ. (MORE TIME)

- What significant steps led up to your conversion?
- What needs, hurts or problems made you dissatisfied with the way you were living without God?
- How did God get your attention?
- What motivated you?

3. How I committed my life to Christ. (EVEN MORE TIME)

- What specifically did you do?
- Where did it happen?
- What did you say in your prayer? (be specific)

4. The difference Christ has made in my life. (MOST TIME)

- What benefits have you experienced or felt?
- What problems have been resolved? (give current example)
- How has Jesus helped you change for the better?
- How has Jesus helped you in your relationships?

- If you became a Christian AS AN ADULT, use the four basic steps to compose your testimony.
- If you became a Christian AT AN EARLY AGE BUT WALKED AWAY, use the same four steps but start with the time just prior to your RECOMMITMENT.
- If you became a Christian AT AN EARLY AGE AND NEVER STRAYED, use the same four steps but point out some deep need or common problem that others struggle with, and explain why you never had to experience it.

SUGGESTIONS FOR PREPARING

- Pray and ask God to give you the right words.
- Keep it short and to the point. Avoid excessive, unnecessary details.
- Refer to experiences most people have in common.
- Don't imply that all of your problems ended at conversion.
- Spend the most time on the difference Christ has made in your life.
- Emphasize WHY you received Christ (the benefits of doing it).
- Mention the benefit of being certain of your destiny when you die.
- Don't exaggerate or brag about pre-conversion sins.
- Don't make negative remarks about other religions or people.
- Don't quote a lot of Scripture (a maximum of one or two verses).
- Don't answer questions they haven't asked.
- The more specific you are, the more dynamic it will be.
- Avoid using dates, names and ages. It doesn't matter to them.
- Speak casually and informally, in a matter-of-fact tone.
- Don't dramatize or embellish your story.
- Don't share mystical experiences. Share on THEIR level, not yours.
- Don't talk down to people. Don't sound "preachy."
- Use humor – it reduces tension and relaxes people. Smile!
- Choose a central theme for your testimony.

POSSIBLE TESTIMONY THEMES

HOW TRUSTING JESUS HAS HELPED ME DEAL WITH MY ...

Worries / Anxiety
Guilt / Shame
Anger / Temper
Emptiness / Lack of purpose
Grief
Stress / Burnout

HOW TRUSTING JESUS HAS GIVEN ME ...

Inner peace
Forgiveness and a fresh start
Patience and love
Purpose and meaning in life
Comfort and joy
New energy and power for living

Low self-esteem
Poor health
Disappointment
Insecurity
Regrets
Discontent / Frantic activity
Fears
Loneliness
Lack of emotional support
Addictions / Habits
Self-centeredness
Despair / Depression
Cheap thrills
Boredom with my life
Fear of death
Feeling something was missing
Bitterness and resentment
Pain of rejection
Marriage problems
Financial problems
Business problems

Significance (I'm valuable to God!)
Healing or strength to go on
Trust in God's good plans
Confidence and sense of security
A second chance at life
Contentment and peace
Faith to face my fears
Assurance God's always with me
A church family that supports me
Freedom and power to change
Love for other people
Hope
Real and lasting happiness
Adventure with God
Assurance of heaven
A sense of fulfillment
The ability to be free from my past
God's unconditional love
Positive changes in my marriage
Positive changes in my finances
Positive changes in my business

Remember that you have more than one testimony!

- God allows us to have many experiences in our lives so we can relate to others in similar situations who need the Lord!
- Different situations will require different testimonies!
- Choose the testimony that best matches your listener.
- Realize you can tell about how others' lives have been changed, too.

The Bible doesn't tell us to share our **FAITH**, but to share our **HOPE**.
Faith is what you believe, hope is the benefit of what you believe!
SHARE THE HOPE!

"Jesus called out, 'Come follow me and I will show you how to fish for the souls of men.'" (Matthew 4:19, LB)

- Following and fishing go together!
- We are to be matchmakers, not salesmen.
- We are to be fishermen, not hunters.

HUNTING	FISHING
Aggressive	More gentle
Based on confrontation	Based on attraction
Go out there and shoot them	Get them to nibble on the bait
Uses one-size-fits-all bullets	Allows you to try different lures
Take your best shot – it's over	Requires give and take to reel it in
Scares animal away if you miss	You get more than one chance
The animal has no choice	The fish gets a choice
Must be a skilled shot	Anyone can put bait in water

Three Keys to Spiritual Fishing

1. Identify your fishing pond.

MY FISHING POND		
ACTS 1:8	MY CHURCH	MYSELF
Jerusalem	Fredericton	Family
Judea	New Brunswick	Relatives
Samaria	Canada	Friends
The World	Every Country	Acquaintances

2. Learn about the kind of fish in your pond.
3. Remember fish get hungry at different times.

- **It is impossible to build an Apostolic church without YOUR TESTIMONY – that's why God saved you!**

Acts 4:20 (KJV) For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

Acts 4:20 (NLT) We cannot stop telling about the wonderful things we have seen and heard.

- **You don't have to be a theologian, just a Christian!**

John 9:25, CEV The man replied, "I don't know if he is a sinner or not. All I know is that I used to be blind, but now I can see!"

- ***What a sin to have a condemned man's pardon and not deliver it!***

So I Stay Near The Door

I stay near the door.

I neither go too far in, nor stay too far out,

The door is the most important door in the world –

It is the door through which people walk when they find God.

There's no use my going way inside, and staying there,

When so many are still outside and they, as much as I,

Crave to know where the door is.

And all that so many ever find

Is only the wall where a door ought to be.

They creep along the wall like blind people,

With outstretched, groping hands,

Feeling for a door, knowing there must be a door,

Yet they never find it ...

So I stay near the door.

The most tremendous thing in the world

Is for people to find that door – the door to God.

The most important thing anyone can do

Is to take hold of one of those blind, groping hands,

And to put it on the latch – the latch that only clicks

And opens to the person's own touch.

People die outside that door, as starving beggars die

On cold nights in cruel cities in the dead of winter –

Die for want of what is within their grasp.

They live, on the other side of it – live because they have found it.

Nothing else matters compared to helping them find it,

And open it, and walk in, and find Him ...

So I stay near the door.

- Sam Shoemaker