

Effective Witnessing

Acts 3:1-19

12/27/09

Intro

The book of Acts is an exciting book of miraculous events, harrowing escapes, court room dramas, the power of the Holy Spirit, and most importantly the spread of the gospel and lives radically changed. The word “witness” occurs many times throughout the book and is one of the major themes of Acts. This morning we are going to take a closer look at Peter, one of the most important persons in Acts, and learn several essential attributes of being an effective witness. This Book also has a more personal application for me as I join eight others from our church in an outreach called “More Than Gold” to bring the gospel message to Vancouver, BC during the Winter Olympics in February.

I. Know Your Savior Personally

- 1 Compare the Peter of the Gospels with the Peter of Acts. Just a few weeks before Peter denied he knew Jesus in front of a little servant girl, and now he is boldly proclaiming the gospel in front of large crowds. Peter had experienced a personal transformation because he witnessed Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection and knew Him as his Lord and Savior.

A. You First Need to Trust Jesus

John 3:3 Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God

- 2 Like Peter, we first have to be transformed, and this starts with salvation. You must receive Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior. We cannot expect others to believe and trust in something which we ourselves have not already experienced.

Illus – A few years ago Katie and I took a vacation up at Whistler, BC during the summer. One of the fun things we did was go on zip lines that are up to 200 ft above a canyon floor and stretch for almost ¼ mile. There was no way I was going to put my life in that harness unless I saw our leader do it first.

B. Commit Yourself to Prayer

- 3 Peter and John were on their way to pray when first encountering the crippled man. In the Gospels we rarely read about the apostles devoting themselves to prayer, but starting in Acts it is what they devote themselves to:

Acts 1:14 These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer...

Acts 2:42 They were continually devoting themselves to the apostle’s teaching and to

fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

- 4 Prayer is simply communicating with God. It means both talking to Him and listening to Him. God desires to meet you in prayer every day. How can we know what His will is for our lives, including witnessing, unless we are listening to what He has to say?

C. Be Filled with the Spirit

- 1 In chapters 2-4 of Acts Peter boldly proclaims the gospel three times and it is no coincidence that the phrase “filled with the Spirit” is also mentioned three times: Acts 2:4, Acts 4:8, and Acts 4:31.

Ephesians 5:17-18 So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, *but be filled with the Spirit ...*

- 5 The phrase “be filled” is imperative; it is a command. It is also present tense which means it is continual. Note too that in being filled we are acted upon. It is God who does the filling. Some people think they need to persuade God to fill them with the Holy Spirit; however this is not the case. God *wants* you to be filled.
- 6 The obvious question then is: how can I be filled with the Spirit? Acts 5:32 gives us the key: Obedience.

Acts 5:32 And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him.

- 7 You need to give God complete commitment and continual control of every area of your life.

Illus – Imagine inviting a guest into your house and telling them to make themselves at home. Then you discover them lying on your bed and reading personal letters or email. You would probably be upset. Sometimes we treat the Holy Spirit the same way.

- 8 Is there an area of your life that you are not surrendering to God; that is out of bounds to the Holy Spirit?

II. Be Prepared to Give an Answer

- 1 In addition to the fact that more than 8000 people came to faith in Christ after Peter’s first two sermons, one of the more amazing truths is how each time he spoke it was unplanned. Peter was responding to the events around him as they unfolded

A. We Are All Witnesses

- 2 Scripture calls us to take the message to others. So, it is not so much a question of whether we are a witness or not, but how effective are we?

Matthew 28:18-20 All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

Act 1:8 but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.

B. Explain the Gospel

- 1 We need to have a firm understanding of the gospel message if we are to clearly communicate it to others. Here are gospel truths found in Peter's sermon:
 - Man is guilty of sin; separated from God (Acts 3:13-14)
 - Jesus died and was resurrected (Acts 3:15, Acts 4:10)
 - Man needs to repent (Acts 3:19)
 - God forgives our sin and blesses us (Acts 3:19)
 - Jesus is the only way of salvation (Acts 4:12)

III. Get to Know Your Audience

A. Speak in Terms They Can Understand

- 9 Use terms they are familiar with. Peter used the phrase "God of Abraham" to Jews, but contrast that to how Paul addressed the men of Athens in Acts 17:22-28.

1 Corinthians 9:19-23 For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more. To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I may win Jews To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some. I do all things for the sake of the gospel so that I may become a fellow partaker of it.

Illus – Katie recently taught 5 year olds about Jesus walking on water. She was trying to make the point that Peter took his eyes off of Jesus, but they all had a different problem in mind.

Illus - Freddie and Kandee Harris, our missionaries from France, recently did an activity with the youth group to demonstrate different communicating styles of different cultures.

B. Don't be Discouraged by Rejection

- 2 Each time Peter and Paul spoke there those who accepted their message and those who rejected it. Peter and John were thrown in jail for one night even after thousands placed their faith in Christ. We shouldn't be surprised when people do not respond.

God desires a personal relationship with you and has a plan to use you to be an effective witness of His gospel message right where you are at. He has placed each of us in our own community or "sub-culture" whether it is work, school, sports, activities, or even our neighborhoods. Our communities are full of people who are in desperate need to hear the good news of Jesus Christ. What a privilege it is to be, as the apostle Paul called it, "fellow partakers of it."