

Being a Good Testimony

Jesus said, “You are the light of the world.” That is great, but how are we that light? Session 5 focuses on:

- Exploring what being a good testimony is and isn't
- Illustrating how to be a good testimony when asked to participate in any activity we think is wrong, at least for us
- Learning the first step in articulating our biblical worldview, or in other words, beginning to “raise the flag” that we base our life decisions and actions on scripture



1. Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-23. How does Paul say he makes his life a good testimony to unbelievers?

2. Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27. How do these verses apply to Paul's strategy of being a good testimony?

Being a good testimony requires balance between living with grace (unconditional and forgiving love) and living with truth.

“Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.”

1 Corinthians 9:19-23

“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.”

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

Grace. Grace entails living among people with very different values without making them feel judged. We can maintain our good testimony when asked to participate in an activity we believe is wrong by:

- Expressing our personal choice simply without explanation (and perhaps suggesting an alternative)
- Not using our faith as an explanation for abstaining
- Not imposing our choice on the unbelievers.

Truth. To help unbelievers move from -10 to -8 (First Aware of Bible’s relevance to life – see A Four-Phase Process of Lifestyle Evangelism diagram from Session 3) on the decision scale, we begin by “raising the flag” which identifies ourselves not as someone who abstains from things but as someone who gets a lot of great ideas from the Bible. That’s a positive testimony!



3. How did Bill and Jackie demonstrate a good testimony in this segment?

4. Why is it crucial to avoid connecting faith in Christ with abstaining from certain activities?

5. What worth can you see in identifying ourselves as “people who get valuable insights from the Bible” rather than “Christians” or as “members of such-and-such church”?

Summary

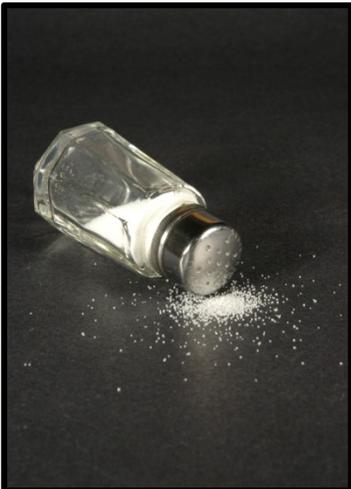
To function effectively among unbelievers:

1. Know what God's Word says about moral standards.
2. Know what you personally can and can't handle.
3. Based on these facts, determine what your personal standards really are.
4. Challenge your comfort zone, but stay within your boundaries.
5. Develop a way to say no gracefully.

Going Deeper

What Makes a Christian Different?

A person who lives in faith, hope, love, and truth sows life in all of his relationships. That person is the light of the world and the salt of the earth.



Faith

Believers are betting their lives on Jesus and His promises.

Hope

Believers don't need to fear the present or the future. Since Jesus was raised from the dead, we have confidence that we, too, will be raised to eternal life. Because He ascended to the Father and even now defends our case, we are secure in the Father's love for us. We can run to Him at any time with our needs and concerns. Because we know that Jesus will return to bring justice, we need not despair over the threat of nuclear war, oppression, or environmental calamities.

Love

We love because we are loved. We are free to love because we don't have to focus our energy on protecting ourselves from hurt or earning someone's approval.

Grace

God treats us not as we deserve, but with forgiving, patient love. That is grace. We treat others with the grace we have received when we look past a person's sins to see what God wants to do in his life. People aren't use to grace; they're use to either condemnation or indulgence. To be treated with grace is to taste redemption. Have you ever found yourself being accepted and understood when you expected and deserved the opposite? It's overwhelming.

Truth

The world muddles through without moral absolutes. Self-centered coping strategies keep backfiring, but the more we live by biblical truth, the more our families and work reflect a wholeness and integrity for which the world wants an explanation.

We must be sure that the truth we endorse is God's truth, not religious tradition or the values of our culture. We must ask ourselves, "Where did I get my opinions on finances, success, marriage, child-raising, business, time-use, sex, people, pleasure, education, progress, society, sports, politics, and religion?" It will take some work to find out what the Bible says about all of these issues, but the work is infinitely worthwhile. And once we trace our values back to God's Word, communicating our faith becomes vastly easier. We can discuss any subject, and the conversation will naturally turn to the good news.

Hope is attractive because it produces joy, peace, self-control, and endurance. Love and grace are what all people thirst for. The stable life that comes from living by the truth is a powerful testimony to the truth of our faith.

Do we fall short? Of course. But if we are truly pursuing God and meditating on the shocking truths of the gospel, our life will be transformed more and more into this pattern.

For Further Reading

Jim Petersen, *Living Proof*, chapters 9-11.

Joe Aldrich, *Life-Style Evangelism*, chapters 1.

Joe Aldrich, *Gentle Persuasion*, chapters 3.