

What a Good Witness Needs to Know

John 4:1-35

1 What does a good witness need to know?

Let me tell you the story of Rachel. 2 Rachel is a fourteen-year-old girl who lives with her family in a remote mountain village in Vietnam.



Most of the people in her village meet in her parent's household church. ³ Rachel teaches twenty children in her bedroom each week.



One Sunday morning while she was teaching, a group of men burst into the house and began yelling at the villagers assembled there. They warned the church that if they continued worshipping God they would be arrested. ⁴

The government of Vietnam wants the country to be Buddhist because they can control the population better that way. The authorities become threatened when people become Christians. Rachel says, "The Lord wants me to go like an apostle. So even though I am small and young, still the police feel like I am the one who is against them."

Police began to stalk Rachel after the church break in. They watched to see if she would "defy" them. ⁵ One day they discovered her sharing her faith with another girl.



The police grabbed her, dragged her to a jeep and drove her to the jail. ⁶

They put her in a cell. "The police had asked me to raise my arms", she said, "and put nails under my feet

for fifteen minutes. I stood against the wall on the nails and prayed, 'Lord help me'. If I slipped, they would use a rubber hose to beat my legs. I could not bear it any longer, I felt so tired. It was so painful; I fainted and fell down. I fainted for about an hour. I believe the Lord held me up so I could bear it." Later that day, the police allowed her father to come and take her home.

Rachel is in a Bible school with one more year to complete her studies. She concludes, "I want to become a teacher. I want to go and share the Word. I would like to go back to my village more or go to other villages to share about God's Word. I am not afraid to be arrested again. My favorite Bible verses are John 3:16 and Psalm 23. If I am faced with persecution, difficulties, because of the Bible, I will never withdraw. I will continue on. I will never be afraid."

Who is your hero? Rachel is definitely one of mine! I want to be as bold about sharing my faith as she was about sharing her faith. How about you?

Today's scripture will give you some tips on how you can share your faith. What a good witness needs to know in sharing their faith can be found in John, Chapter 4, verses 1 through 35. ¹ 7

The Pharisees heard that Jesus was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John, although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. When the Lord learned of this, he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee.

Now he had to go through Samaria. So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour. ² 8

When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a

¹ "Vietnam's Most Wanted", The Voice of the Martyrs.

² v1-6.

**Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?”
(For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)³ 9**

Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.”

“Sir,” the woman said, “you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?”⁴ 10

Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.”⁵ 11

³ v7-9.

⁴ v10-12.

⁵ v13-15.

He told her, “Go, call your husband and come back.”
“I have no husband,” she replied. Jesus said to her,
“You are right when you say you have no husband.
The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man
you now have is not your husband. What you have
just said is quite true.” “Sir,” the woman said, “I can
see that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on
this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place
where we must worship is in Jerusalem.” ⁶ ₁₂

Jesus declared, “Believe me, woman, a time is coming
when you will worship the Father neither on this
mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship
what you do not know; we worship what we do know,
for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming
and has now come when the true worshipers will
worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the
kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and
his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.” ⁷ ₁₃

⁶ v16-20.

⁷ v21-24.

The woman said, “I know that Messiah” (called Christ) “is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.” Then Jesus declared, “I who speak to you am he.” ⁸ ₁₄

Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, “What do you want?” or “Why are you talking with her?” Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, “Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?” They came out of the town and made their way toward him. ⁹ ₁₅

Meanwhile his disciples urged him, “Rabbi, eat something.” But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you know nothing about.” Then his disciples said to each other, “Could someone have brought him food?” “My food,” said Jesus, “is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. Do you not say, ‘Four months more and then the harvest’? I tell you,

⁸ v25-26.

⁹ v27-30.

open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. ¹⁰

**What does a good witness, like Rachel, need to know?
The first thing from this passage is . . .** ¹⁶

I. Don't Be Afraid of People

Who Are Different! - v7-9

. . . don't be afraid of people who are different! Notice these verses again, When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, “Will you give me a drink?” (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?” (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.) ¹⁷

This woman was probably someone you wouldn't want to associate with. ¹⁸ First of all, she was a woman. In ancient Jewish culture men were not even supposed to look at women in public. Men and women

¹⁰ v31-35.

normally didn't speak to one another in public unless absolutely necessary. ¹⁹

Another thing, she was a foreigner. Samaritans were almost always Jewish half breeds. When Assyria conquered the northern kingdom, they deported the best educated Jews from the ten tribes and imported people from the other countries they conquered. This mixed population intermarried to become the Samaritans. In Jewish orthodox circles, even today, if a Jew marries a non-Jew their family would have a funeral for them. The family member marrying outside the Jewish race would be considered dead! Racial purity among Jews was very strictly enforced. So, a Jew talking to a Samaritan would be frowned upon by the Jews and the Samaritans! ²⁰

She also had moral implications. Being married and divorced made her immoral to a Jew. This happened to her five times! Then, living with a guy outside of the bonds of marriage really made her immoral! The

implication here is that she may have even been a prostitute. ²¹

Here is the first advice for witnessing; ²² verse 7 tells us ¹¹ Jesus spoke to her anyway! He used tact to establish rapport with her, **Will you give me a drink?** When you share your faith, use care when you approach people.

The next bit of advice we can find in this scripture is in verses 10 through 15, ²³

¹¹ John 4:7 - When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

II. Lord Jesus Wants to Perform His Ministry In & Through You! - v10-15

Lord Jesus wants to perform His ministry in and through you! ²⁴ Verse 10 ¹² states that He wants people to have His gift regardless of their background, behavior or status in life. You represent Him when you introduce Him to them.

The Lord Jesus Himself is present in you through the Holy Spirit, He promised you. ²⁵ On the day the church was started, Peter promised, **Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.** ¹³ The Lord is eager today to perform His ministry in and through you! ²⁶ Verses 13 and 14 ¹⁴ emphasize that you will never be thirsty

¹² John 4:10 - Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

¹³ Acts 2:38.

¹⁴ John 4:13-14 - Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

spiritually if you allow the Lord within you, the Living Water, to quench the thirst of others!

The next bit of advice is found in verses 16 through 18

. . . 27

III. Be Aware of Your Own Sin & Inadequacies - v16-18

. . . be aware of your own sin and inadequacies. 28

There is evidence here that this woman may have been a prostitute. ¹⁵ 29 She was shacking up at that very moment with a man she had never married. This was common among prostitutes but not among other women. 30 Another indication was that she could approach men easily, ¹⁶ which was not normal for a woman in that culture. 31

¹⁵ John 4:17-18 - I have no husband," she replied. Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.

¹⁶ John 4:28-30 - Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" They came out of the town and made their way toward him.

This woman became sin conscious. ³² She was very much aware that she had played "musical chairs" with the men in her life. She wasn't much different from our culture today. We tend to trade in spouses as easily as used cars! ³³

She felt so uneasy talking about her moral condition she immediately changed the subject to religion; "Which church is the right church?" ³⁴

The advice for witnessing here is, don't get sidetracked when the heat is turned up! A natural tendency is to change the subject to a more comfortable topic. Questions tend to turn to religion rather than to the Lord! ³⁵ The right question isn't "What's the right church?" It's "Who is the right Lord?" Stick to the subject!

The next piece of advice which is often forgotten is found in verses 19 through 26. ³⁶

IV. Your Ability to Witness is in Proportion to Your Devotional Life - v19-26

Your ability to witness is in proportion to your devotional life! ³⁷ If you are a genuine Christian the Lord is dwelling within your life through His Holy Spirit. ³⁸ He is struggling to perform His ministry through you. Since the Lord created you in His "image and likeness", He honors your free will. ³⁹ He may be restricted by what He will do through you by your unwillingness to be His instrument. ⁴⁰

The question is not, "Where do you go to church?" but "What are you doing with Jesus?" ¹⁷ A United Press release once told of a hospital that had a construction flaw that put everyone there in great jeopardy. The city's main water line extended only four feet into the building and then it stopped! It wasn't connected to anything! The staff and patients felt completely safe assuming the firefighting system

¹⁷ John 4:21 & 24 - Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem . . . God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

worked properly. Although the expensive equipment, with its polished valves and well-placed outlets, was adequate for the building, it lacked the most important thing, the water! ¹⁸

So it is with life. You don't need a church where you can feel comfy as much as you need a close walk with the Lord where you can feel used! Your connection with Him is what's most important. That's where your devotional life comes in. ⁴¹

Verses 25 and 26 fit in here, **The woman said, “I know that Messiah” (called Christ) “is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.” Then Jesus declared, “I who speak to you am he.”** The real question is coming to grips with "Who is the Lord Jesus?" He has to be Lord of your life. He must be able to call the shots in your life! Is your faith really affecting your life or are you just going to church? Power in your ability to witness depends upon your devotional life.

¹⁸ "No Connection", Our Daily Bread, August 27.

The last bit of advice this scripture gives us is found in verses 28 through 35. ⁴²

V. Enthusiasm & Zeal Can Often Overcome Personal Obstacles - v28-35

Enthusiasm and zeal can often overcome personal obstacles! ⁴³ Notice verses 28 through 30, **Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, “Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?” They came out of the town and made their way toward him.** Funny thing: in spite of all the things the Samaritan woman had going against her witness, she had throngs of men pouring out of the town of Sychar to meet the one she was talking about! ⁴⁴

Then, the Lord made this statement, ¹⁹ **Do you not say, “Four months more and then the harvest”? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.** What does "ripe for harvest" mean? The

¹⁹ John 4:35.

King James translation says, **white already for harvest**. Sychar was noted for its corn harvest. It was white corn, so it had white stalks and husks. Men coming out of the town in their light-colored robes were a harvest ready to be reaped! ⁴⁵

Here is this scripture's final advice for witnessing. ⁴⁶ John, Chapter 3, verses 14 and 15, **Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life**. The Lord Himself, here, was being lifted up! ⁴⁷

The main objective in witnessing is to lift the Lord up onto the cross. ⁴⁸ When you lift the Lord up by relating the gospel story you are sowing seeds of salvation for those who hear. ²⁰

One night a man was walking home across an open field. Looking up, he saw his little son running across the field to meet him. Suddenly the little guy stumbled

²⁰ Romans 10:17 - Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.

and disappeared into the tall grass. The father grinned as he continued to walk towards his little son. As the boy came into view the father realized his son had fallen into an old well. He quickly reached into the well and snatched up his child. Gurgling and sputtering the little guy cried out to his dad, "Daddy, why didn't you hurry!" ⁴⁹

This incident left an impression on this father. The story continues. Later at church an Indian pastor was the guest speaker. His words were, "My people are dying! Why don't you send the gospel faster?" ²¹

How about you? Remember Rachel, our fourteen-year-old Vietnamese girl? We have a lost and dying world out there which needs to know that their Creator also paid the price for their redemption.

Arm yourself with the advice this passage gave you. Don't be afraid of people who are different; Lord Jesus wants to perform His ministry in and through you; be aware of your own sin and inadequacies; your ability

²¹ "Why Don't We Hurry!" Our Daily Bread, May 20.

to witness is in proportion to your devotional life and enthusiasm for your message can often overcome your personal obstacles!

Be like Rachel. Share your faith boldly!

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