

BIBLE LIFE MESSAGES

A Holy Person's Witness to Others

I Peter 3:8-16

¹ We all know that when the Lord said, **Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you** ¹, He intended that Great Commission to apply to you and me. The question becomes, what kind of a witness can we effectively make to a lost, dark world? In this passage, the Lord teaches us what a holy person's witness ought to be. ²

Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. For, “Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech.” ² ³

¹ Matthew 28:19-20.

² v8-10.

He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.” Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. “Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened.” But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord.³ ⁴

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.⁴ ⁵

In the first half of verse 15, we are told . . .

³ v11-15.

⁴ v15-16.

I. It's to Be a Reasonable Witness - v15a

. . . It's to be a reasonable witness. But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. ⁶ This is the explanation you present. ⁷

The phrase "give an answer" ⁵ means "a speech in defense, a plea. So, it is a reasonable explanation. ⁸ It comes from the New Testament term "word" ⁶ which is a verbal expression of an idea. Lord Jesus was the Word of God in the beginning and became a man. He has the same relationship to the Father as a spoken word has to the idea it expresses! ⁷ ⁹ We get our English word "logical" from this word. ¹⁰ The college course "Apologetics", which presents the defensive

⁵ ἀπολογία.

⁶ λόγος.

⁷ John 1:1 & 14 - In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

facts and proofs for Christianity, come from this word.

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An effective witness needs to express what you believe and why you believe it! You need an explanation for your faith. ¹²

How can the church help you? It provides biblical sermons for you each Lord's Day. Each of these practical messages help you to understand God's will and apply it to your life. ¹³

Then, each Sunday you have Bible School classes. This gives you the opportunity to ask questions and discuss Bible principles. ¹⁴

Ask the elders of your church and other mature Christians about their faith. Their explanations can help you to formulate how you can express yours. ¹⁵

Have your own private quiet time with the word of God so you can meditate on holy principles and reason things out. ¹⁶

Ask for prayer support for your individual spiritual journey. The church is a support group, encouraging each other to spiritual progress. ¹⁷

Also from verse 15 we find that . . .

II. It's to Be a Gentle Witness - v15b

It's to be a gentle witness. **But do this with gentleness and respect . . .** ¹⁸ This is the way you present it! ¹⁹ Gentleness ⁸ means to be meek and humble. ²⁰ Meek doesn't mean weak! Meek is having the power and authority but not using it. ²¹ It's using restraint when it is appropriate. ²² Numbers, Chapter 12, ⁹ says Moses was humble (meek). Yet he was a very bold leader. Anyone who could lead more than two million people,

⁸ πραΰτης.

⁹ Numbers 12:3 - Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth.

plus all their livestock, for 40 years across the Sinai desert was anything but weak! ²³

Lord Jesus was considered meek. He could have called 12,000 angels to His rescue, but He didn't! ¹⁰ ²⁴

Meekness is a definite aid in teaching the truth. Second Timothy, Chapter 2, verse 25, in the Living Bible paraphrase says, Be humble when you are trying to teach those who are mixed up concerning the truth. For if you talk meekly and courteously to them, they are more likely, with God's help, to turn away from their wrong ideas and believe what is true.

"When Sheila and Mark moved into their new home, Sheila wondered about the neighbors. Would they accept the children? What about the dog? She soon found out. Shortly after they moved in, the football sailed into the yard of the elderly man who lived next door. When their son jumped the fence to get it, the

¹⁰ Matthew 26:53 - Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?

man chased him out, swore at him and told him it better not happen again."

"A few days later the dog was barking, and Sheila went out to quiet him. The man was waiting for her. He told her that if she didn't keep the dog quiet, he would call the police. Then he cursed again. Sheila's danger rose. Her cheeks turned red. Hot; angry words came to her mind - but she didn't express them. Instead she asked the Lord for help."

"Later that day, while she was baking blueberry muffins, she made an extra batch. Then, calling on God for courage, she took a large plate of them to the man next door. 'I made these for you,' she told him."

"The man didn't say much. But he accepted the muffins. In the weeks that followed Sheila continued to show kindness to him. Gradually his attitude

softened and one day he let her tell him about Christ."

¹¹ Your witness is to be a gentle one.

Verse 15 also tells us that our witness . . . ²⁵

III. It's to Be a Respectful Witness - v15

. . . is to be a respectful witness. ²⁶ This is the attitude you have towards the people you present it to. ²⁷

The word "respect" here ¹² means, literally, to fear. Here it means a respect for other people's dignity. ²⁸ This is the opposite of the bold, arrogant, haughty attitude some have when they preach to you. ²⁹ Remember, we are all dirty rotten sinners saved only by grace! Isaiah, chapter 64, verse 6 states, **All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags.** ³⁰

It is possible to be steadfast and faithful with your witness and still be humble and respectful. ³¹ We are

¹¹ "The Power of Blessing", Our Daily Bread, March 14.

¹² φόβος.

simply beggars showing other beggars where to find food! None of us have a monopoly on truth. ³² But we do have the word of God. So you have the responsibility of knowing it and the Lord it reveals!

Don't get on a guilt trip about what you don't know. Testify about what you do know. ³³ Then, get in the habit of constantly learning more! ³⁴ Besides, you are the expert on what the Lord has done in your life. Share that!

So, your witness is to be a respectful one.

Now notice verse 16. ³⁵ . . . keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. This verse says . . .

IV. It's to Be a Conscientious Witness - v16

. . . it's to be a conscientious witness. ³⁶ Your behavior is to be consistent with what you say so you can have a clear conscience. ³⁷

"Conscience", here, ¹³ means being aware of, having a moral consciousness, having a sensitivity. This is a matter of being genuine and consistent. ³⁸ You don't want to be a hypocrite, professing a Christian life but not living it. ³⁹ If you are at least "semi consistent" with living the life you profess, those who are inclined to point their fingers at Christians as hypocrites will find it difficult to use that line as an excuse for rejecting the Lord! So, strive to live as consistently as you can even though you're not perfect. ⁴⁰

There are principles for living a semi consistent holy life. They are found in some of the other verses in our scripture passage. ⁴¹

¹³ συνείδησις.

Verse 8 says, **Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another . . .** The first principle is that God wants you to live in harmony with your brothers and sisters. The world will know we are Christians by the way they see us loving one another. ⁴²

Now, verse 9. **Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.** The second principle is to respond to evil treatment with good! ⁴³

Then verse 15. **But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord.** The final principle here is to be serious about the Lordship of Jesus in your life! This verse is literally saying "make Christ holy in your hearts"! Let Lord Jesus call all the shots in your life. ⁴⁴

You want to represent the Lord accurately and in the most positive light. Make your witness reasonable, gentle, respectful and conscientious and you'll have the kind of witness God really wants!

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