



Love Motivates Witnessing

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This morning we are going to look at how love motivates us to witness. Witnessing can be challenging. The motivation and desire to share truth with those around us is powerful. In fact, the motivation to share with others should help us overcome our fear. Think of this. People cannot know the truth if they don't hear it. How is it possible for them to call on the Lord to be saved if we are not the witnesses we should be? We should love Christ enough that we live in a way that brings Him credit. We should love those who don't know Him enough to share truth with them so they can also learn to love Him.

Witnessing is something Jesus said would take place after the disciples were empowered by the Holy Spirit. In the context of being a follower of Jesus Christ, witnessing is telling others about the forgiveness, love, deliverance, empowering, fruitful life and ministry you have found in Christ. The last things people say are often very important words to be heard. In those words we often find inspiration, direction, insight and comfort. Jesus' words just before He left earth and ascended to Heaven did all of those things. **Matthew 28:19-20 (NLT)**-**“Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”**

I. Love compels us to witness.

Those who witness in court do so for a number of reasons. They may be required to do so by the court. There may be a personal need to let the truth be heard. They may do so for the sake of justice. But the best reason why someone would be a witness and testify is because s/he loves the truth, s/he loves

the person for whom the witnessing is done and s/he wants people to know this is how it is. If you have ever seen court proceedings on TV, you know the important role of witnesses. They are the ones who support the evidence. They are the ones who make the case for the truth being known. The person who is testifying promises to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Everyone who has

experienced the forgiveness of sins is a witness. Being a witness is simply telling the truth about what you have seen, or heard, or experienced. That is all we need to do as a witness. When our word backs our lifestyle, it validates the truth of what God says in His Word. We live the truth of Christ's redeeming work which supports what scripture tells us Jesus came to do. Those around us hear the testimony, see our lives and it speaks to them that we are witnesses.

Acts 1:4-8 (NLT)-Once when he was eating with them, he commanded them, "Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you the gift he promised, as I told you before... John baptized with water, but in just a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." So when the apostles were with Jesus, they kept asking him, "Lord, has the time come for you to free Israel and restore our kingdom?"... He replied, "The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and they are not for you to know. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere, in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Jesus was giving them the gift of His Holy Spirit which would comfort them, bring the things He had taught them to their remembrance and give them the power they needed to be effective in their witnessing. What they said and lived, the things they did, the miraculous things that happened through them, supported their witness and was demonstration and evidence that Jesus was alive and working through them. They said, "For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard" (**Acts 4:20**). You are able to witness about Jesus, for you have met Him personally.

II. Where do we get what we need to be witnesses?

The authority to witness comes from Jesus. **Matthew 28:19-20 (NLT)-Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the**

age. The power and boldness to witness is given as a result of the work of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 1:8 (NLT)-But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. The willingness to witness is a decision each one must make. The message to share is the simple truth that "God loves you. Jesus saves all who come to Him in repentance of sin and who have faith in Him. He gives life (**John 10:10**), equips for living through the Holy Spirit and He is coming again."

Your own testimony is the best witness you can share. It is not just teaching Bible truths. It is "being" a product of those truths. In other words, don't just say it -- be and do it. Permit the Holy Spirit to produce within you the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, meekness, goodness, kindness, faithfulness, patience and self-control, thereby "becoming" what you are witnessing to. Next month we are going to be looking at the evidence of the fruit of the spirit in our lives.

Maybe we don't believe we have the gift of evangelism. We're not outgoing people, or our house isn't big enough to have the neighborhood over. The question isn't the size of your house or the outgoing personality that you might think you need. The question is, is your heart big enough? You can witness without loving, but you can't love without witnessing. When I have great news to tell, something that absolutely transformed my life, my thinking, or my family, I am passionate about letting other people know.

You are probably like me in that regard. The people you care about and love are the people you will most influence. Witnessing happens best when there is a relationship established. When people can both see and hear from our lifestyle and words that we are truly what we say we are, then it becomes easier for them to accept our witness. When we take time to build a relationship because we care about the person, the relationship gives us the privilege of being heard. Taking that uncomfortable first step of knocking on a neighbor's door and inviting them over for coffee can change your perspective and

begin to build a relationship that will eventually give you the opportunity to witness to those people.

Witnessing is less a question of spiritual gifts than one of simple obedience to God. Jesus told us to love our neighbor as ourselves. In order to do that we have to care about them in the same way we would care about ourselves. When we truly love someone, we will go out of our way to be close to them, to spend time with them, to do things that will build up and strengthen that relationship. At the heart of successful evangelism is love for other individuals; that's what touches them. Has anyone here prayed for a passion for pre-Christian people, or dechurched people? It isn't until you actually step out your front door and start to rub shoulders with pre-Christian people, your neighbors and work acquaintances that you really begin to feel a passion for them. Once we make ourselves available it is incredible how often the opportunities will come to testify for our Lord. We get fearful of what people might think of us or say about us. We get fearful of what questions people may ask us. Jesus clearly indicated to His disciples that they would be witnesses.

CONCLUSION:

How many of you have established relationships with unbelieving people? How many of you love those who are unbelievers enough to hang out with them, to eat with them, to invite them over to your home, to pray for them and serve them into the kingdom? We should be witnessing not because we have been instructed to do so or because we have been empowered to do so, but because the love of God within us motivates us to do so.

A very real obstacle to witnessing and loving people is the time factor. When running to and from work, school and even church activities, the neighborhood can become a pretty low priority.

We can't be so busy with other Christians in the 'holy huddle' that we don't plan any time for the non-Christians around us. If we only surround ourselves with "Christian people", we will find ourselves not having the impact on our culture that we need to be having. We will eventually find out that we don't have any people in our circle of friends to lead to Christ.

Jesus was considered a friend of sinners. He hung out with them, he loved them, he talked to them, he ate with them and ultimately He died for them. There is no greater love than a man lay down his life for His friends. Opening your home means opening yourselves to people including neighbors who need spiritual help. And that takes readiness through prayer.