

HOW TO MAKE DISCIPLES: 2 Timothy part 4

Testifying for the Lord

There are many things that we do simply because they are the right thing to do. Regardless of what part of the world you may live in, regardless of your culture, your background or your age, these things are right, and every one knows that they are right. For example, it is right for parents to take care of their children. I don't think anyone would debate that fact. It is right that we pay our bills. It is right for children to obey and to honor their parents. Certain things are just right. In the Christian life, there are also some things which are without question right. One of those things is the issue of evangelism. Christians are to share their faith with those who are not believers. We are to do that because it is right.

As Paul writes the book of 2 Timothy, his last words to his disciple, he says in verses 7-8,

“So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God....”

Our world desperately needs the message of Christ. If we are not careful, we can come to the conclusion that most of the people around us know about Jesus. After all, we have plenty of churches, Christian music, Christian television, Christian radio, Christian magazines, Christian bookstores. We are surrounded by Christian things. The truth is, however, that most of the people you pass by in daily life do not know the Lord and know very little about the Lord.

George Barna is a man who does much research to determine where we are in our country on a spiritual level. In nationwide surveys conducted by the Barna research group it was found that seven out of 10 adults have no clue what John 3:16 means. Barely one third of all adults know the meaning of the expression "the Gospel."

Most of the people in our nation are like a group of people standing on an island with water all around them who never get wet. The words of Paul to Timothy are the only answer for that problem—"do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord." Jesus said it this way in

Acts 1:8: " But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

A witness is simply someone who tells others what he has seen and heard, and if you know Jesus Christ, you can do that. An elevator operator in a hospital in Nashville said, "I am just a nobody telling everybody about somebody who can save anybody."

Fears that keep us from witnessing

One of the greatest reasons that we as Christians do not share our faith as we should is simply that we are afraid to do so. It seems as though Timothy may have been a shy person. So Paul says in verses 7-8,

" For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline."

Paul says, "God did not give you a spirit of fear. Fear did not come from him. Fear was not in the plan of God when he created the human race. Looking back into the Genesis account, you find that there was no fear even among animals for people or people for animals. All of God's creation lived in harmony with one another in a perfect society. It was sin that brought fear. So, how do we overcome fear in witnessing for Christ? The first step is to understand why we are afraid.

1. The fear of inadequacy

Many of us do not feel adequate when it comes to sharing our faith. We are afraid that someone will ask a question we don't know how to answer and that in the process of our "mess up," we will actually drive the person farther away instead of closer to God. You need to understand that the unsaved person is already away from God, and he cannot get any farther way than he already is. What are you going to do? Are you going to drive him to Hell number two?

2. The fear of unbiblical expectations

Many Christians have a preconceived idea of what outreach means. They are afraid that they are expected to share the Gospel in a way this not natural to them to do so. We need to realize that there is more than one way to share your faith.

a) The CONFRONTATIONAL style

In a cartoon, a crusader is riding a horse and carrying a big shield with a cross on it. He is thrusting his spear down on the throat of a man on the ground who is saying, "tell me more about this Christianity. I'm terribly interested." Most of us would not feel comfortable with that kind of approach. When Peter spoke to people in the book of Acts, he had a "in your face" kind of style. For example, on the day of Pentecost Peter spoke with the people gathered and said these words:

Acts 2:38, "Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins."

That's pretty confrontational.

b) The INTELLECTUAL style

In Acts 17:3 we read about how Paul reasoned with the Jews and God-fearing Greeks in the synagogue in Athens, “explaining and proving” Christ’s resurrection. (Acts 17:3). He also debated with the philosophers of this Grecian city. Peter’s style would never work in Athens because instead of reasoning with the people he would have just told them to repent. An approach like would not work with the intellectuals of Athens.

c) The TESTIMONIAL style

In John 9, we find Jesus healing a blind man. The religious leaders were very upset that the Lord healed this man on the Sabbath. When he was questioned by the religious leaders, his answer was pure and simple, “One thing I know. I was blind and now I see.” This approach is very simple-just tell your story about what Jesus has done in your life.

d) The INVITATIONAL style

When Matthew became a Christian, he threw a party and invited his some of his unsaved tax collector friends along with Jesus and his disciples. The purpose was to get the two together. If you can invite someone to a church get-together like our Christmas party, a picnic on the fourth of July, then you can use this style in reaching people for Christ. Just get them with other Christians so their relationships can be built.

e) The SERVANT style

Acts 9 records the story of a woman named Dorcas who impacted her city with her deeds of kindness, making clothing for the poor in the name of Christ. If you can do good things for other people in the name of Christ, you can use this style. You don't have to be something that you are not in order to evangelize. You only have to use what you are.

3. The fear of failure

Some people can't stand the thought of failure. Years ago, when I would share the faith with someone who rejected what I had to say, I would feel that maybe I did something wrong. Maybe, if I would've said it this way instead of that way they would have received Christ. Maybe if I would have waited a little bit longer. It is a liberating experience to understand that God does not expect you to produce results, he simply expects you to be faithful in getting out the message.

ANSWERS TO OVERCOMING FEAR

1. UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU ARE OFFERING

Sometimes it seems that we feel that if we share the Gospel with someone we will be imposing on them. It is almost as if we are asking them to come mow our yard or clean

our car. We've got to understand that when we share the gospel with someone, we are offering them the things that they most need in life.

1 John 1:1-4, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. ²The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. ³We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. ⁴We write this to make our joy complete."

According to the words of John, when you tell someone about the saving power of Jesus, you are offering them three things. First you are offering them forgiveness of sin and a home in heaven. Secondly you are offering them fellowship with God. And last, you're offering the fellowship with God's people. It seems like a pretty good deal to me.

2. ALLOW YOUR LOVE TO OVERCOME YOUR FEAR

1 John 4:18, "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love."

This is a tremendous verse. If you understand it and live by it, it can change your life. What is the answer to overcoming insecurities? What can you and I do to be more bold and less fearful? The Bible says "perfect love drives out fear." One of the reasons that we are insecure around other people is the fact that we are concentrating on what they are thinking about us rather than on what we can do to meet their needs. Many years ago, I took a class in a distant city. I remember sitting in that class being nervous about the fact that the teacher may call upon me to give an answer. As I went back to my motel room that evening, I remember praying and saying something like this, "Lord, I really don't want to be this way. I don't want to be fearful." And I remember the Lord dealing with my heart about first Corinthians Chapter 13, the love chapter. As I concentrated on that chapter, I realized that my fear was all about myself. The Lord seemed to tell me that day that if I would concentrate on loving the professor and the other students, I can overcome my fear, and that is exactly what happened. When I went back the next day, I did my best to make the professor feel comfortable in my responses, and I experienced boldness that allowed me to answer questions and engage myself in conversation.

Having a genuine concern for the needs of other people will enable you to do what she would not be able to do otherwise. I read about a man out on the farm, whose neighbor's tractor turned over on him. When the accident occurred, and he heard him cry for help, he ran to him, saw the man dying right in front of his eyes, so he just reached down there, grabbed the radiator, and though it burned his fingers to the bone, not feeling anything, he reached down and lifted up the end of this tractor that probably weighed hundreds of pounds. He lifted it up and held it in the air several minutes until some men came and

pulled their friend out from under, and then he let it back down. He went out there the next day, and couldn't even budge it.

When your love and concern for the on believing person is greater than your fear, you will have no problem speaking about the Lord. You'll find within yourself a boldness to be a faithful witness for Christ.

3. TRUST GOD TO HELP YOU

*Psalm 118:6-7, "The LORD is with me; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"⁷
The LORD is with me; he is my helper."*

The Psalmist says in

Psalm 34.4, "I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears."

Psalm 118.5-6, "I called on the Lord in distress; the Lord answered me and set me in a broad place. The Lord is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"

The Bible mentions the "fear of God" many times. The fear of God is not a slavish kind of thing that keeps us tied in knots emotionally because we are afraid that God will strike us down dead. The fear of God is a deep and awesome respect that we have for him. The fear of God leads us to understand that he is in fact the sovereign being of the universe and that he controls all things. It is because we know God and believe in his sovereignty and His love that we do not have to experience unhealthy fear in our lives.

A group of scientists and botanists were exploring remote regions of the Alps in search of new species of flowers. One day they noticed through binoculars a flower of such rarity and beauty that its value to science was immeasurable. But it lay deep in a ravine with cliffs on both sides. To get the flower someone had to be lowered over the cliff on a rope. A curious young boy was watching nearby, and the scientists told him they would pay him well if he would agree to be lowered over the cliff to retrieve the flower below.

The boy took one long look down the steep depths and said, "I'll be back in a minute." A short time later he returned, followed by a gray-haired man. Approaching the botanist, the boy said, "I'll go over that cliff and get that flower for you if this man holds the rope. He's my dad."

When you speak out for the Lord, you may feel like you are jumping off a cliff. The truth is you will not fall because God is holding the rope.