

Good Works, Witnessing, and Evangelism (three part study)

(appropriate for Mid Schoolers and older)

Michael R. Daily, October 2025

Other youth bible studies by Michael Daily available at: <http://gciweb.org/2011/04/youth-bible-study-materials-michael-r-daily/>

(Reference: Rev. John S. Mahon, Grace Community International, Houston, TX)

Tonight we are going to talk about the relationship between Good Works, Witnessing, and Evangelism. We are going to learn how to share the gospel effectively even if you don't have the spiritual gift of evangelism. But the problem is the non-christians don't really want to hear the gospel, do they? Is that the problem?

Luke 10:2

And He was saying to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore plead with the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."

Jesus said that the problem is not that the non-christians don't want to hear it. The problem is the Christians don't want to share it! Witnessing is hard when we are ashamed of the gospel.

Romans 1:16

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Many non-christians may not want to hear it, but enough of them do that if we share the gospel with them faithfully, the result will be a plentiful harvest. Why? Because the Holy Spirit is working alongside us. But what exactly is it that the Holy Spirit is doing? (note: see Appendix E for more info on the plentiful harvest)

John 16:7-8

But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. ⁸ And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment;

Every day the Holy Spirit constantly preaches a message into the heart of every non-christian. What is it?

"You're a sinner, God is righteous, judgment is coming, you won't survive it."

"You're a sinner, God is righteous, judgment is coming, you won't survive it."

"You're a sinner, God is righteous, judgment is coming, you won't survive it."

Deep in their spirit non-christians know they have a sin problem that will catch up to them at the Judgment. They may not be able to articulate this but they sense they need a solution. So our gospel presentation must address this. Not every non-christian is unhappy with their life on Earth, but every one of them is worried about what will happen at the Judgment after they die.

Hebrews 2:14-15

Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.

Even in the secular world people have a partial sense of this truth. A famous quote made in 1854 by Henry David Thoreau was, "The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation" (Walden, 1854).

With these things in mind let's get started. What is our goal in sharing the gospel?

II Corinthians 2:14

But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.

The key word in this passage is the word "knowledge".

The goal, when sharing the gospel, is to make sure that we clearly transmit the key information (i.e. the critical doctrines of the Gospel) that non-Christians need to hear to make an informed decision. Should I accept Christ or reject Him? God uses two types of people to do this - evangelists and witnesses. Are they the same thing? No. What is the difference?

Ephesians 4:11-12

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;

Who is to do the work of service? The saints. Who is that? The saints are, "all Christians". So sharing the gospel is work that all Christians are to do. All Christians are to be witnesses. How many are to be evangelists? Some (vs 11). So, all Christians are to be witnesses but only some are to be evangelists.

Evangelism is a Calling and a Gift

Evangelist: *One who preaches the gospel to others with the intent of converting them to Christianity*

Evangelism is a calling given to someone who has the spiritual gift of evangelism. In other words, they have a supernatural ability that other Christians don't have. A spiritual gift is not something you can choose for yourself. It is literally a supernatural power that the Holy Spirit chooses to give a Christian. Although every Christian has at least one spiritual gift, most Christians do not have the spiritual gift of evangelism.

A big failure mode in witnessing can occur when someone with the gift of evangelism is asked to teach a class on witnessing. Most of them will tend to teach the things that they do. Often, much of what they teach doesn't work for the rest of us. They only work if you happen to have the spiritual gift of evangelism. People with this supernatural gift can get away with things that the rest of us can't. For example, there is an evangelist named Ray Comfort. He's a good guy. Ray likes to walk up to strangers with a microphone in his hand and a video camera. He says something to them like, "Have you ever told a lie? (yes), Have you ever stolen anything? (yes), have you ever lusted after a woman? (yes). "So, you admit that you are a lying, thieving, adulterer! Isn't that right?" The person smiles sheepishly and says, "Yes, I guess I am!"

Why are people reacting that way to Ray? Because Ray has the spiritual gift of evangelism. But I don't have that gift. What would happen to me if I did exactly what Ray Comfort does? People would get angry at me, they might even try to hit me. The experience would be horrible, and I would vow never to share the gospel again! This is what can happen if those of us without the spiritual gift of evangelism try to do the things that evangelists do. For example, evangelists speak using second or third person language. They are speaking to the person and they use the word "you". For example they might say, "You are a sinner. You are separated from God"!

A Witness is Different

Witness: *one who has personal knowledge of something and provides testimony as evidence of a fact or event*

A witness speaks in the first person. (ex: "I was separated from God"). This is a very important difference. What if I said to you, "You are a sinner separated from God". What would you think of me? You might start getting irritated with me or argue with me. Someone with the gift of evangelism can say these things and get away with it, but I can't. I don't have that gift. But instead, what if I said, "I am a sinful person. I was separated from God". Now how do you feel about me? Me being sinful doesn't really bother you, does it? In fact, you might start feeling sorry for me. "Come on Mike, don't be so hard on yourself. You seem like a nice guy." The dynamic is completely different. Its hard to get mad at someone who is just talking about their personal knowledge instead of about you. This is very important because as soon as you use the word "you", you stop being a witness and you become an evangelist and if you don't have the spiritual gift of evangelism things can go bad pretty fast. So, as witnesses we say, "I", not "you".

Note: First person language: "I was a sinner separated from God". Second person language: "You are a sinner separated from God". Third person language: "Man was separated from God by sin".

Years ago, I was involved in a ministry where we received permission from the base commander to share the gospel and hold bible studies in dormitories on a USAF base. Each of us chose a dorm. I chose the dorm for soldiers at the special forces school. Once a week I would go through the dorm and share the gospel. I led one of the soldiers to Christ and would also have a short Bible study with him each week. One night, I was in one of the rooms and I was sharing the gospel with another soldier. For some reason, I started by saying, "The Bible says that you are a sinner separated from God". The soldier stopped me, looked at me and said, "Wait just a minute. You just met me. You don't know anything about me. How dare you call me a sinner!" And he showed me the door. I was not able to share the gospel with him. But if I had said "I" instead of "you" that would not have happened.

What if we say "man" or "we" instead of "you"? "Man was separated from God by sin" or "We were separated from God by sin." Someone may say, "I'm an atheist, I don't believe that". People will still interrupt you and argue with you. What about starting by asking someone if they are a Christian? They might say, "Yes, I'm a Christian, I'm Catholic (Mormon, Jehovah's Witness, etc)". Now what are you going to do? Call them a liar? What if you start by saying, "May I share with you what the Bible says about having a relationship with God?" I asked that question once and the person said, "Why, do you know more than the Pope? Do you know something all the Bible scholars and priests don't know?" Instead, let's just say, "May I share with you how I became a Christian? It only takes 5 minutes".

Remember, the goal is not to have an argument or a spiritual discussion with a non-Christian. The goal is to share the key doctrines of the gospel in such a way that they listen to and understand the gospel, and can make an informed decision to either accept Christ as savior and lord or reject Him. That's the goal.

I have shared the gospel hundreds of times in the form of the Bridge Illustration by speaking in the first person (i.e. "I"). I will show it to you in a few minutes. How many times have people interrupted me and argued with me? Zero. Once they agree to let me share with them how I became a Christian, every person has allowed me to go through the Bridge until I finish quoting the last verse (**I John 5:13**) which completes my job as a witness. Now that my job as a witness has been completed I then will become an evangelist by asking them three questions to bring them to a decision. During this part, some people may disagree or start arguing but that is OK because I have already completely shared the knowledge of the gospel with them as a witness.

Sometimes saying "you" will work even if you don't have the spiritual gift of evangelism. This can happen when the people you are talking to are very humble people such as small children or downtrodden people living on the street, but these are small subsets of society and I want you to be effective with everyone. So if you want to share the gospel effectively with your peers (someone who goes to the same schools or jobs that you do), or your superiors, you will need to speak in the first person (ex: "I was separated from God"). There is also the special case of when the other person and you have a very close relationship. In these cases the person may be willing to put up with hearing the word "you" because they don't want to lose the relationship. But, again, this is a special case and I don't want you to be limited in your effectiveness only to people you have a close relationship with. I want you to be effective with everyone!

What about using gospel apps on your phone or walking them through a gospel tract? I don't recommend it because it goes against the idea that you are sharing how you became a Christian. People are expecting to hear something personally meaningful to you but then you show them an app on a phone or a tract that is obviously not personal. Once again the app or tract puts you in the position of being an evangelist rather than a witness and some will start to disagree and argue. Better to just memorize the Bridge and present it. The fact that you memorized the Bible verses also communicates that this is something that is really important to you since you went to the trouble to memorize it.

Having said that, I do carry a "Steps to Peace With God" Billy Graham gospel tract with me in my shirt pocket. I don't use this to share the gospel but after I have shared the gospel with someone, just as we are parting ways, I offer the tract to the person to take with them for additional information and reinforcement of what they just heard. People almost always take it.

Properly Constructing Our Testimony

Testimony: *firsthand authentication of a fact; a solemn declaration usually made orally by a witness under oath*

Notice that when we give our testimony as witnesses it is to be a solemn declaration, done in a serious and thoughtful manner. It is not a time to ramble on about ourselves. It is to be something we have intentionally and thoughtfully prepared for. Why? People's eternal lives are on the line. As witnesses, we give testimony that certain things are true but there is no requirement for a witness to talk about themselves. For example, a witness in a court of law talks about what they saw or facts they know to be true, not about themselves. There is nothing in the Bible that says we have to talk about ourselves. In fact, just the opposite.

II Corinthians 4:5 - For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake.

Instead, our testimony is about God, eternal life, and Jesus Christ. We show up only briefly in a supporting role. In fact, God has already told us what our personal testimony is supposed to sound like (**I John 5:11-13**).

I John 5:11-13

And the (your) testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. ¹² He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. ¹³ These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.

Just as The Lord's Prayer is the model for what our prayers are supposed to sound like, **I John 5:11-13** is the model for what our personal testimonies are supposed to sound like.

This does away with the need for the "powerful" testimony. What is that? "Come tonight at 7pm to hear brother Johnson share his testimony. And you won't want to miss it because brother Johnson has a powerful, powerful testimony". What does that mean, "powerful testimony"? These are testimonies where the person goes into detailed descriptions of when they were a satanist, murderer, drug abuser, etc. "I was a hit man for the mafia, I killed 20 people, let me describe exactly how I killed each of them, and then I became a Christian".

But if that is a "powerful" testimony then what would a "weak" one be? "I was raised in a Christian home. My parents led me to Christ at an early age, and from my youth I have served the Lord". That would be a weak testimony, right? No! Do you see why its silly to talk about what we did instead of what God did? Instead, we will keep the focus on what God did for us, not what we did. We will keep our part as small as possible. The "powerful" testimonies can be useful for encouraging other Christians during times of fellowship but are of limited value when it comes to giving the non-christian the information they need to make a decision for Christ.

Where does this idea of sharing your story come from? Some may argue that Paul talked about many things when he preached on Mars Hill (**Acts 17:18-34**) or before Agrippa (**Acts 26:1-32**) but these were special cases. In one case Paul was invited to give a philosophy talk by the Greeks on Mars Hill and he was following their presentation format. In the other case Paul was in a court of law on trial and was presenting his legal case following their presentation format. If you are invited to give a talk to a university philosophy class or to defend yourself during a trial in a court of law you can do the same thing Paul did and follow their presentation format, but this is not the situation we are in when we share our faith with a friend, neighbor, or stranger.

Some point to the situation in **John 9:24-30** where Jesus restored sight to a blind man (i.e. "I was blind but now I see") and say that we should witness the way the blind man witnessed. The problem with this is that the blind man did not share the gospel. What the blind man did was provide physical evidence that Jesus performed a good work and a miracle, but the blind man didn't actually share the gospel. Since he didn't share the gospel, we can't use him as an example of effective witnessing. He also did not talk to the Pharisees with gentleness and reverence as we are told to do in **I Peter 3:15** (a doctrinal passage) but was somewhat rude and taunting. Finally, God does not comment on what the blind man said, either good or bad. Instead, the Bible just records what he said without commentary. As a result, we should not use the blind man as an example of witnessing.

Note: the passages mentioned previously in **Acts 17**, **Acts 26**, and **John 9** are passages of historical revelation (i.e. a record of something that happened to a particular person) rather than passages of doctrine (i.e. universal truth). We want to be careful not to set aside doctrinal truths, such as those of **I John 5:11-13**, and replace them with special cases of historical revelation. Its interesting that other examples of historical revelation regarding witnessing, such as the example of Stephen in **Acts 6 & 7** are almost never referred to. See appendix D for a more detailed discussion of doctrine, historical revelation, and Stephen's testimony.

We will also keep our words to a minimum and use God's Words as much as possible.

Why? Because His Words are powerful, ours are not. The written Word of God is unlike any other document. Why? Because God's written words are actually alive and energetically active and can execute judgment on people's thoughts and intentions. **This is true even if the other person doesn't believe in the Bible!**

Hebrews 4:12 - For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Witnessing is spiritual warfare

When the Holy Spirit gets ready for spiritual battle He goes into His war closet to get His weapon of choice. What is it? Is it the War Axe of Miracles? Is it the Club of Visions & Dreams? Maybe its the Spear of Healings? Or perhaps it is the Dagger of Speaking in Tongues? The Holy Spirit walks past all of these until He comes to His weapon of choice, the Sword of the Spirit, which is, the Word of God. The most powerful weapon we have is the Word of God. Therefore, our testimony must be saturated with the Word of God.

Ephesians 6:17

And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

I Peter 1:23

for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, *that is*, through the living and enduring word of God.

Romans 10:17 - So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

John 5:24

Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life

Mark 4:14 - The sower sows the word. (i.e. in the parable of the sower the seed being sown is the Word of God)

Salvation only comes from hearing the living and enduring Word of God. It doesn't come from hearing our words. Speaking God's Word does not mean restating Biblical concepts in your own words. If someone is hearing the Word of God it means that someone else is quoting Bible verses!

Mark 8:38

For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

Mark 8:38 is interesting. Jesus went out of His way to comment, not only on people who are ashamed of Him, but also on people who are ashamed of His words. Let's not be among those who are ashamed of His words.

(hold up a gospel tract) What is this? It is a dead tree. It has no spiritual life in it. Yet because it has verses from the Bible in it a non-Christian can read this and become a Christian. Something that is spiritually dead can make someone spiritually alive! Why? Because it contains the Word of God. That is where the power is.

In the first half of the 20th century one of the most successful evangelists in the world was a man named Charles Templeton. He led thousands of people to Christ. He was also Billy Graham's boss at a ministry called Youth for Christ, which continues to this day. After some time he left the ministry, took a secular job, and published a book called, "Farewell To God" where he explained that he was actually an atheist. He never believed in Hell or in the creation event as described in the Bible. He never actually believed the gospel. Yet he led thousands to Christ. How? By quoting Bible verses while sharing the gospel.

So, if a dead tree can lead people to Christ by quoting Bible verses, and if an atheist can lead people to Christ by quoting Bible verses then maybe Christians could lead people to Christ by quoting Bible verses! The power of the gospel that brings people to faith is not in the messenger, it is in the quoting of the Word of God. This is why our gospel presentation must be saturated with the Word of God to be maximally effective.

There are some people who will say that they had a spiritual discussion with someone without quoting scripture and that person became a Christian. What is going on in these situations is that some time previously that person heard the Word of God from some other Christian or source, but they decided not to become a Christian. Later, they have a discussion with someone or some other event occurs in their life and the Holy Spirit uses that to remind them of the scriptures they heard previously and they change their mind.

So, sharing the gospel without using scripture means that your effectiveness in sharing the gospel will be limited to those people who have already heard the scriptures from someone else previously. This is a very small percentage of the population and I want you to be effective with everyone, not just a small percentage. This is why the Bridge Illustration has us quoting 11 verses. That's where the power is.

What about inviting people to come to church with you so they can hear the gospel in church? Yes, there are people who will visit church with you and that can work with those people, but here's the problem. We live in a post-modern society now which means that the percentage of the population that is willing to visit a church is getting smaller every year. So, if that is your only witnessing strategy then, once again, your effectiveness is going to be limited to a small percentage of the population and I want you to be effective with everyone!

There are a lot of well meaning people who will try to get you to not quote scripture. They will say, "Yes, we should share the gospel but I'm not sure we should be quoting Bible verses. Just tell the story in your own words". But this is not what the Bible says.

If you try to share the gospel without quoting Bible verses, you are doing the spiritual equivalent of showing up to a sword fight with a pocket knife! You may win a few, but you have put yourself at a serious disadvantage.

"When the Gospel of Jesus Christ is presented with authority – quoting from the very Word of God – He takes that message and drives it supernaturally into the human heart" – Billy Graham in Quotes, Thomas Nelson Publishing, 2011

There are other benefits to quoting scripture when sharing the gospel. You don't have to modify your approach for cultural relevance, or their religious background. Why? Because when the Holy Spirit wrote the Word of God He made it supernaturally universally effective with all people, at all times in history, and across all the cultures and nations of the world. This means that if you are sharing the gospel using doctrinal passages of the Word of God, all of these things are already taken care of. The result being that you can share the gospel the same way, every time, with any person! All eleven verses used in the Bridge Illustration are passages of doctrine (universal truth) so they are culturally relevant to everyone on Earth – no adjustments are needed.

Putting It All Together

OK, I think we're ready. We want to give a first person testimony that is serious, focused on what God did, not what we did, and uses the Word of God as much as possible, providing the knowledge needed for people to become Christians. So, let's try it. "Randy (name of an audience member), may I share with you how I became a Christian? It only takes two hours". No? Wow. That did not go well, but I am not going to give up. I will try again. "Randy, may I share with you how I became a Christian? It only takes one hour". No? Gosh, I am not good at this witnessing thing, but I know why. I have figured out what the problem is. The problem is, I don't have the spiritual gift of evangelism. Is that the problem? No. The problem is I'm taking too much time! I have asked people in the U.S. how much time they would be willing to spend on something that was not part of their schedule for that day. The answer they gave back was "about 5 minutes". I have asked this same question of people in Zambia, Nigeria, and Cameroon. They all said "about 5 minutes". Guess what the answer is? About 5 minutes! If we can get the gospel message down to 5 minutes, the number of opportunities to share the gospel goes up exponentially, even in the most industrialized, busiest countries.

I'm sure you can find a college student willing to spend an hour talking to you about God, or a group of children who would be happy to hear you share the gospel for 20 minutes, but these are small subsets of society and I want you to be effective with everyone – not just small subsets of the population.

In the professional world people expect you to be able to explain complex and important issues in about five minutes. When I have to give a presentation for an executive they want the first slide of the presentation to be a “BLUF” slide (i.e. Bottom Line Up Front). In other words, they want all of the critical summary information and conclusions on the first slide and for me to give them a five minute overview. After they hear the five minute overview, then they will decide how much of the rest of the presentation they want to hear. If everyone in the world is being trained to deliver their critical messages in five minutes, then we need to be able to do it too if we want to be effective with everyone.

Key Point: Witnessing is providing a first person testimony that is serious, short, to the point, focused on what God did not what we did, and uses the Word of God as much as possible, providing the knowledge needed for people to become Christians.

I am now going to share with you a 5 minute presentation of the gospel in the form of a first person testimony that contains as little as possible about me and uses 11 verses from the Bible.

(Share the gospel using the presentation in appendix C).

Note: As I am sharing the gospel I avoid using the word “you” (until the end as described in the next section) and instead use the word “I”. However, some of the verses I quote have the word “you” in it. Since God is the one speaking, its OK to say “you” when quoting the verse. It doesn't bother people.

As you come to the end of your Bridge Illustration, we are going to break our rule about saying “you” one time and when we do we are going to turn into an evangelist. This is OK because at this point we have completed the communication of the knowledge of the gospel which was our goal as a witness. Now we are moving toward asking them to make a decision. As we approach the decision question we are going to ask, “If this is true, where would you be on this bridge?” At this point the spiritual battle can get intense and satan will throw up whatever distraction he can think of. Some people may argue with you or want to stop the discussion which is OK. Others may do the following: After telling you where they are on the bridge, the person may start asking questions or making statements about side issues - the “whatabouts”. What about evolution, what about drinking, what does your church believe about same sex marriage? At this point you must stay focused, understanding that this is a spiritual battle, not an intellectual discussion. No matter what they say, wait for them to take a breath and then say, “Would you like to pray right now to receive Jesus Christ as your savior and lord?” Often the person will stop, think for a moment, then respond with a yes or a no. satan will do anything to stop you from asking the question, “would you like to pray right now to receive Jesus Christ as your savior and lord?” Just ask the question, no matter what. Our goal is to share the knowledge of the gospel. Whether they decide to become Christians or not is not our job. That is between them and God.

END OF PART 1 / START OF PART 2

Why People Don't Interrupt or Argue

I think there are two reasons why people don't interrupt or argue (at least until after **1 John 5:13**). The first is what we have already talked about. Since I am saying “I” there really is nothing for them to argue about or disagree with. I also think that the first three verses of the Bridge Illustration (**Isaiah 53:6**, **Romans 6:23**, and **Hebrews 9:27**) resonate with what the Holy Spirit has been working on in them over the years (i.e. “*You're a sinner, God is righteous, judgment is coming, you won't survive it.*”). By the time you quote **Hebrews 9:27**, the non-Christian is listening intently because these first few verses are directly addressing their problem. This is also why we want to minimize the details about ourselves as much as possible. The first statement I make about myself when I start the Bridge Illustration is 16 words long. Why? Because I could not figure out a good way to make it 15 words! The more details we add about ourselves the more people are thinking, “That does not apply to me, and that does not apply to me”, etc. Their minds start to wander and they lose interest. So, remove as much detail about yourself as you can while also making your Bridge Illustration flow smoothly from one verse to the next. The more details about you, the less powerful your testimony is going to be.

Transitioning from Knowledge to Training

Now that we have the knowledge of how to be effective witnesses, its time to take the next step.

Let's start with a story

This is the story of a young woman who loved gymnastics. She loved to read books about gymnastics. She loved to watch videos about gymnastics, she loved to go to gymnastics meets and watch the live events. Whenever famous gymnasts came to town she loved to go to their "meet & greets" and listen to their talks. And when young Olympic hopefuls came seeking financial support for their training, she was happy to contribute.

After investing all of this time and money, would you say that this young woman had become a gymnast? No. What she had become was a person who deeply understood gymnastics, appreciated its value, and supported it financially. But she herself was not a gymnast.

One day, she decided that she wanted to actually become a gymnast. So, what did she do? She went to the gym and walked out onto the gymnastics floor. She remembered from her reading that one of the most common and critical moves was the back flip. Its used on the floor exercise, the balance beam, the vault, and a variation is even used on the uneven bars. So, she tried her first back flip. What happened? It did not go well! As she lay there on the floor looking at the ceiling she thought, "This is harder than it looks on the video!"

She decided it was too difficult and she would quit trying to be a gymnast. But just then, the gymnastics coach comes by to see if she needs help. He tells her that he has coached many young ladies over the years, some who have gone all the way to the Olympics. He says that they all started just the way she did. Then he shows her a video on his phone of another young lady doing back flips on a four inch wide beam of wood, elevated four feet off the ground, in a gym filled with hundreds of people cheering for her as well as for other events going on at the same time. Then the coach says, "If you practice the things I tell you to do every day, in less than a year you will be doing the same things the woman in the video is doing!"

Although it seems impossible, the young lady puts her faith in what the coach has said and decides to put real effort everyday into practicing her back flip. At first her progress is slow, but she decides to persevere. Although she works on it every day, it is not until her third week that she completes her first back flip. It wasn't pretty but it was a back flip! Over time she continues to improve and her back flips become easier and easier. She eventually gets to the point where she can do them on the floor exercise every time without error, and she doesn't even have to think about it anymore! The back flips have become automatic. She is on her way!

Hebrews 12:11

All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

Discipline: *training that corrects, molds, or perfects the mental or physical faculties or moral character with the end result being self-control in the trainee.*

Discipline is training with the intent of helping someone be able to obey God more fully in the habits of their life. Notice that, at the time, discipline is not fun and can seem burdensome and tedious – the benefits come later.

We need training because instruction with words alone rarely results in action. Why? Because most of what people actually do is a result of habits they have practiced for a long time.

So, we need something more than head knowledge to help us grow in the Christian life. That's where training comes in. The Greek word used in the New Testament that is translated "training" is:

Gymnazō: *to train in gymnastic discipline; to exercise in anything, to train-to-use.*

When we first start working on memorizing our Bridge Illustrations we quickly realize, "This is harder than it looks! I can't imagine ever getting to the point where I could easily present the Bridge Illustration to someone with little effort. It seems impossible! Maybe I should quit."

But if you commit to working on it for five minutes a day, every day, you will get there! How will it feel? **Hebrews 12:11** tells us that its going to feel “sorrowful”. Its not going to feel like fun. Just getting the first verse memorized will feel like a struggle. But slowly, over time, if you continue to work on it for five minutes a day, every day, it will get easier and easier and, believe it or not, you will get to a point were you can share the entire Bridge Illustration in five minutes, without even thinking about it. Just like the gymnast who does back flips with ease. How much practice does it take? Here’s a rule of thumb:

“Amateurs practice till they get it right; professionals practice till they can’t get it wrong.” - Anonymous

Most people who work on it for five minutes a day, every day, will need a month to get their Bridge Illustration down with about a 75% accuracy. If they continue working on it for another month (two months total) most people will be able to present the Bridge Illustration with an accuracy of 90% plus. After three months, they will be able to present the Bridge Illustration easily without even having to think about it. Some people may go faster or slower. That’s not really important. What is most important is to not give up.

I’m an engineer and one of the things engineers like to do is a worst-case analysis. If it all goes horribly wrong what is the worst thing that could happen? Let’s say, for some reason, it takes a whole year before you have your Bridge Illustration down to where you can easily share it with a non-Christian. So what? From that point on you can now share the gospel effectively with anyone who speaks English and you can do it for the rest of your life. Even if it takes you two years (it won’t), the spiritual return on investment is HUGE. The alternative is to spend the rest of your life struggling in this area or finding your effectiveness limited to only a small percentage of the population. The good news is that God promises to help us be successful in this if we deny our flesh and persevere in trying to obey Him.

Galatians 5:22-23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

II Timothy 1:7 - For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.

I Timothy 4:7-8

.... discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; ⁸for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and *also* for the *life* to come.

For a detailed study on discipline please see, “Discipline & Legalism” at: <http://gciweb.org/2011/04/youth-bible-study-materials-michael-r-daily/>

Note: If you decide to memorize the Bridge verses in a different translation, please look at how **I Peter 2:24** is translated in that version. I recommend using a translation with the word “cross” rather than “tree”. The non-Christians may not understand why you are talking to them about trees.

Errors in Thinking about Witnessing

1) **Cultural Relevance** – God’s Word is ancient. Modern man cannot relate to it. Therefore, quoting scripture should be avoided and we should witness in our own words. **Truth:** God’s Word has spiritual power. Our words do not. God’s Words are relevant to all peoples in all cultures, in all times of history. Our words are not. People often ask me, “How do I share the gospel with an atheist, a Mormon, Catholic, etc. If you are using a method that is focused on quoting doctrinal passages of scripture the answer is easy. We share the gospel exactly the same way with everyone! Why? Because God’s words are relevant to all peoples in all the nations of the world, in all the cultures of mankind, and in all times of history – past, present, and future. Our words are not. We don’t have to have culturally adjusted arguments tailored to persuade different types of people. Nice! In fact, the Bible actually tells us not to do that!

I Corinthians 2:4-5

and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.

And what is the source of power? – the Word of God. When I was on mission trips to Zambia, Nigeria, and Cameroon I led people to Christ using the Bridge Illustration with God's Word, even though I was an alien to them in culture. My ability to be culturally relevant was zero. This is also true for people in different subcultures in America. God's word is effective with children (1st grade and up), teenagers, college students, elderly people, siblings, mother-in-laws & father-in-laws, scientists, day laborers, oil field workers, hospital workers, computer programmers, businessmen, engineers, low level government agents, high level government officials, special forces soldiers, college professors, Mormons, and Catholics - all of which I have led to Christ using the Bridge Illustration. And you can too, because the power is not in the messenger but in the Word of God. You can take the Bridge Illustration anywhere in the world and if the people speak English, they will understand it, and some will become Christians. When the focus of your gospel presentation is quoting doctrinal verses from the Bible, cultural relevance is already built in.

Jesus described Christians sharing the gospel as being day laborers (**Luke 10:2 – “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few”**). What kind of work do day laborers do? Is it creative, innovative work? No. They do the same hard work, day after day after day - no innovation required. This is because cultural relevance has been built into the doctrinal passages of God's Word. So, we memorize the Bridge Illustration with eleven doctrinal verses of scripture and we share the gospel the exact same way day after day after day for the rest of our lives.

- 2) **Relationship Witnessing** – People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. **Truth:** The longer people get to know you, the more things they are likely to discover about you that they don't like! When we look in the Bible, we don't see Christians spending long periods of time building relationships with non-Christians before sharing the gospel. What we see is, the Christians show up and they start sharing the gospel. Building relationships is great but don't get tricked into thinking you can't share the gospel until you have spent a year becoming friends with someone. I've led people to Christ who sat next to me on an airplane that I had no relationship with (It's OK to do that, God doesn't mind). When I was in graduate school, I went to the dining facility at the Student Union early in the morning once a week. Only 20% of the tables were occupied and often by one person. I would go table to table until someone allowed me to share with them how I became a Christian. Every week I was able to find someone, often an international student, who would allow me to sit down and share the gospel with them – even though I had no relationship with them. There are pastors that have gospel presentation videos on line. People watch the videos and become Christians, even though they don't have a relationship with the pastor in the video.

God actually does have commands for us to follow in regard to our relationships with non-Christians, and we will look at those commands in just a minute. But for now, let's look at some pitfalls to avoid in relationship witnessing. For example, once you have become good friends with someone you may be afraid to share the gospel with them because you don't want to lose them as a friend. In this case, the relationship is causing you to not witness!

You might also fall into the trap of having a good opportunity to share the gospel with someone but not doing it because you have only known them a short time. Let's work through a scenario: New neighbors move in next door to you. They are friendly and you have met them and briefly chatted with them. Over the next month they get settled in and they invite you over for dinner. They love to cook and they thought it would be fun to try out a new dish with you. As you are enjoying the food and visiting with them one of them says, “I noticed you get dressed up on Sunday mornings and are gone most of the morning. Do you go to church or are you doing something else?” You respond that yes you go to church and you tell them the name of the church. Freeze the frame. What do you say next? You could say, “May I share with you how I became a Christian? It only takes five minutes”. What are they going to say? They will almost always say, “yes”. They invited you over, they were the ones who asked you about church, there is no time pressure, and you are only asking for five minutes of their time. You are virtually guaranteed to get a yes! Now let's rewind. You respond that yes you go to church and you tell them the name of the church. Then, before you can say anything else, satan comes along and says in your mind, “Too bad you can't share the gospel with them right now. You are just now getting to know them. You haven't developed a relationship with them yet. You haven't earned the right to share the gospel with them. Too bad. Try again in a year”. So, you end up talking yourself out of sharing the gospel because you haven't spent a year becoming good friends with them. This is not good.

By the way, what signal is there that will tell you when you have achieved a close enough personal relationship with them that you have “earned the right” to share the gospel with them? There isn’t one! Fortunately, the Bible gives us an answer to the question of when we should share the gospel.

II Timothy 4:1-2

I solemnly charge *you* in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: 2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.

God wants us to “preach the Word” when the time seems right (i.e. in season) and also when the time does not seem right (i.e. out of season). Imagine you are driving down a country road during harvest time. As you look out over a wheat field you see a farmer driving his harvester up and down the field harvesting the wheat. You think to yourself, “What a beautiful pastoral picture of agriculture”. The farmer is harvesting “in season”. Now imagine you are driving down that same road in winter. The field is covered with snow and ice, snow is falling, and the wind is howling. And off in the distance you can see something in the field. It’s the same farmer driving his harvester up and down the same field trying to harvest in the middle of winter! The farmer is now trying to harvest “out of season”. In other words, we have standing orders to share the gospel regardless of whether or not the time seems right.

It reminds me of when Ulysses S. Grant became supreme commander of the Union Army during the U.S. Civil War. For the first few years of the war the commanders of the Union Army were timid men who used a defensive strategy. As a result, the North was losing the Civil War. Eventually, President Lincoln was able to place Grant in authority over the entire Union Army. During his first major battle after his promotion his generals came to him and said, “Sir, what are your orders?” Grant looked at them with astonishment and said, “Gentlemen, your orders, now and forever are, attack the enemy, attack, attack, attack, attack!” From this point on, the North began to win the war. When we ask the Holy Spirit, “When should we share the gospel?” He looks at us with astonishment and says, “Ladies and gentlemen, your orders, now and forever are, share the gospel, share the gospel, share the gospel, share the gospel!”

So, you are now free to share the gospel. There is nothing in the Bible that says you have to earn the right to share the gospel. You are free to share the gospel anytime you want with anyone you want! If you have a relationship with someone, share the gospel with them. If you don’t have a relationship with someone, share the gospel with them. Relationships are nice, but they aren’t really relevant to whether or not you should share the gospel with them.

Note: Some of the spiritual gifts are highly relational (ex: mercy, helps, hospitality, pastoring). Christians with these gifts will tend to witness in ways that are highly relational, which is great! But that does not mean that a relationship is required before you can share the gospel with someone. If you are using first person language (i.e saying “I” instead of “you” or “man”) there are a lot of people who will listen to the gospel without first having a close relationship with you. In fact, I have been able to successfully share the gospel with people who do not like people, do not want a relationship with me, they don’t want to come to my house for dinner, they just want to be hermits and be left alone. I was still able to share the gospel with them using the method taught in this study. Many Christians have figured out ways to share the gospel that work well with their spiritual gifts. So, if you have a method of sharing the gospel that is working well for you and you are leading people to Christ, keep doing what you are doing! But if not, the method taught in this study can help you.

God’s Commands Regarding Relationships With Non-Christians

The Bible indicates that the best way to have a positive relationship impact on a non-Christian is in the way we talk to them when we are not sharing the gospel. God doesn’t say we have to watch football with them every Saturday or help them install their watering system. You can if you want to, but its not a requirement. The requirements God has for us in relating to non-Christians appear to be centered on the way we talk to them. We’re going to look at nine verses of scripture and piece together two summary statements. The first will be a summary statement of the ways that God wants us to speak to non-Christians. The second will be a summary statement of the ways that God wants us to not speak to non-Christians. We can then compare how we are doing against these commands and make any needed adjustments.

Colossians 4:5-6

Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. 6 Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.

Grace: *the quality or state of being considerate or thoughtful*

Our speech is to always be with grace. Lets' dive into this a little deeper to see what it involves.

Titus 2:7-8

in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, *with* purity in doctrine, dignified, ⁸ sound in speech which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us.

"Sound speech" is talk that is: *free from flaw, defect, and error, is logically valid, based on truth, and shows good judgment*. Speech that is "beyond reproach" is a style of talking that: *provides nothing that others can disapprove of or use as a reason to discredit* what we say.

Ephesians 5:4

and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.

Filthy talk is talk that is: *morally unclean, impure, or contaminated* with something bad. Silly talk is talk that: *exhibits a lack of common sense or good judgment*. Coarse jesting is joking around and teasing that is: *crude or unrefined in taste, manners, or language, and done with a tone that is disagreeable, uncomfortable, or painful to others*. Instead our speech is to be gracious.

Proverbs 22:11

He who loves purity of heart *And* whose speech is gracious, the king is his friend.

Gracious speech is talk that is: *marked by kindness, courtesy, tact, charm, good taste, and generosity of spirit*. In addition God tells us to avoid slander and abusive speech.

Colossians 3:8

But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth.

Slander is: *false charges or misrepresentations which defame and damage another's reputation*

Abusive speech is talk that is: *harsh and insulting*. Also, we are to malign no one.

Titus 3:2 - to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men.

To malign someone means to say things that are: *evil in nature, influence, or effect and that reveals an intensely vicious ill will*. God also tells us to not be a grumbler or complainer

Philippians 2:14 - Do all things without grumbling or disputing;

To speak with a gentle spirit

Philippians 4:5 - Let your gentle *spirit* be known to all men. The Lord is near.

And to intentionally avoid disagreements

Proverbs 20:3 - Keeping away from strife is an honor for a man, But any fool will quarrel.

In summary, when talking to non-Christians:

We are to speak in a way that is considerate and thoughtful, free from flaw, defect, and error, is logically valid, based on truth, shows good judgment, provides nothing that others can disapprove of or use as a reason to discredit what we say, is marked by kindness, courtesy, tact, charm, good taste, and generosity of spirit, communicates a peaceful and gentle spirit, and intentionally avoid disagreements.

We are to avoid speaking in ways that are morally unclean, impure, or contaminated with something bad, exhibit a lack of common sense or good judgment, joking and teasing in ways that are crude or unrefined in taste, manners, or language, or done with a tone that is disagreeable, uncomfortable, or painful to others, talk that is harsh, insulting, damaging to another's reputation, or that is evil in nature, influence, or effect, or that reveals an intensely vicious ill will, or speech that is characterized by grumbling and complaining.

In addition to our own speech, we also need to be careful not to condemn ourselves by unintentionally approving wrong speech by others.

Romans 14:22

The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves.

For example, you may think you are building rapport with your coworkers by hanging around the water cooler, listening while they complain about the boss or something your company is doing, but all you are doing is hurting your ability to witness to them later.

What about when people come to you complaining about something or someone else? We can say something like, "You know, I'm not really comfortable talking about that". It won't take long for people to stop sharing their complaints with you. They will also get a sense that they can trust you to not be complaining about them when they are not around.

What about when people ask you what you think about a particular politician? Instead of agreeing or disagreeing with them we can say something like, "You know, I'm not looking to a politician to save me. I'm looking to Jesus Christ." If you want to, and you are not in a work setting, you could even add, "May I share with you how I became a Christian? It only takes five minutes".

- 3) **Some Christians worry that people won't like them very much if they share the gospel with them.** Maybe, maybe not. There are two things going on here. First, some people will like you more after you share the gospel with them than they did beforehand. Why? Because if they know you are a Christian (or some type of religious person) and you have not shared the gospel with them, they assume that you are trying to work your way to heaven and, as a result, you probably think you are a better person than they are! Once you share the gospel of grace with them, they realize that is not the case and they like you more. But there is another factor found in **II Corinthians 2:14-16**.

II Corinthians 2:14-16

But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place. ¹⁵ For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; ¹⁶ to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life. And who is adequate for these things?

When we share the gospel with those people who are on a path toward salvation they will react to us like someone smelling a pleasant aroma or fragrance – like a spiritual perfume. But the people who are on a path to eternal destruction will react to us like someone smelling a dead body. This isn't something they are fully conscious of but they do react to it. Those who are smelling the stench of death may avoid us a little more and those who are smelling the aroma of life may become more interested in us.

- 4) **Visions & Dreams** – people have dreams and visions of Jesus which cause them to become Christians. **Truth:** People become Christians because a Christian shared the knowledge of the Gospel with them. God may or may not use visions and dreams to get people's attention, but people don't receive Christ because of a dream. They receive Christ because somewhere along the line a Christian shared the Gospel (i.e. by quoting scripture) with them. A dream may get their attention but then the Holy Spirit reminds them of the gospel the Christian shared and they change their mind and accept Christ. Here are some problems with the Vision argument:

Colossians 2:18-19

Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind,¹⁹ and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God.

People who take their stand on visions end up thinking they are better than the second class Christians (like me) who have never been visited by Jesus (we only have the Word of God). They also can end up worshipping angels. How? If you think Jesus is appearing to you, you might be tempted to fall down and worship Him. But what about this: name 5 facial characteristics that are different between Jesus and satan. What are they? You can't. You don't know what satan looks like and you don't know what Jesus looks like. You don't know what that vision really is, do you? It might be a fallen angel!

II Corinthians 11:14 - No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.

This is why we don't put our trust in visions of Jesus. We put our trust in the Word of God. We don't know what satan or Jesus look like. For example, how long is Jesus' hair? Its short!

I Corinthians 11:14

Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him,

Note: the first popular paintings of Jesus were funded by the kings of Europe during the Renaissance. They wanted Jesus to look like them. What was their hairstyle? Dishonoring long hair!

Bottom Line: Jesus isn't going to share the gospel for us. Its still our responsibility to do it.

For more on this please see, "The Dangers of Extra Biblical Revelation" at: <http://gciweb.org/2011/04/youth-bible-study-materials-michael-r-daily/>

- 5) **Traumatic Events** - Occasionally you may hear a testimony from someone claiming that they became a Christian because they experienced a traumatic event. Someone may say they became a Christian because they were in a serious car wreck and they almost died. If this was true then the best way to bring people to Christ would be for all of us Christians to drive around and intentionally crash into people's cars! **Truth:** The truth is this person was witnessed to by at least one Christian at some point in their life. At the time, they rejected Christ and forgot about it. When the car crash occurred, the Holy Spirit brought back to mind the knowledge of the gospel they had previously been given by the person who witnessed to them, and then they received Christ. God can use traumatic events to get someone's attention, but by themselves they don't bring anyone to Christ. This is why we witness faithfully and use the Word of God. So that He can use it in the other person's life both now and in the future. As the scripture says, it is the knowledge of the gospel in the Word of God that leads people to salvation.
- 6) **Good Works** – If people know that I am a Christian and they see me doing good works, they will become Christians. (i.e. "Share the gospel everyday and, if necessary, use words") **Truth:** People will give glory to God for your good works. Then they will die and go to hell! Good works draw people's attention and cause them to give glory to God, but that does not save them.

Matthew 5:16

Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

Ephesians 2:10

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

When people come up to you and say something like, "I just have to say I think what you (or your church) are doing is great, I'm impressed" what are they doing? They are glorifying your Father in heaven. When that happens that is our signal to witness to them – God is giving the opportunity to us on a silver platter!

Instead of saying, "Thank you", we could say something like, "It's because I am a Christian. May I share with you how I became a Christian? It only takes 5 minutes." Without the knowledge of the gospel, our good works don't result in people's salvation. We still have to share the gospel.

Key Point: *If you hear people praising you for your good works, that's your signal that it is time to witness to them. If we don't witness to them we are taking credit for God's work in our lives instead of giving that credit to Him, the rightful owner.*

- 7) **God will give me the words to say** - Some people may say that you don't need to prepare to share your faith because the Holy Spirit will give you the words to say.

Mark 13:9-13

"But be on your guard; for they will deliver you to the courts, and you will be flogged in the synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them. ¹⁰ The gospel must first be preached to all the nations. ¹¹ When they arrest you and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but it is the Holy Spirit. ¹² Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and have them put to death. ¹³ You will be hated by all because of My name, but the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.

But these passages, such as **Mark 13:9-13**, are talking about Christians living during the Tribulation when access to God's Word is intentionally limited by the anti-christ; pastors, Bible teachers, and mature Christians will have been raptured; and all the Christians will be less than seven years old in the faith. In that situation, as the baby Christians are being put to death, God will supernaturally give them the words He wants them to say. But for those of us living in the Church Age (pre-rapture) God wants us to prepare ahead of time.

I Timothy 4:7 - ... discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness.

I Peter 3:15 - but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you ...

I Peter 1:13 - Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober *in spirit*, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 6:15 - and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE;

Note: if Mark 13 is misinterpreted to apply to pre-rapture Christians then verse 13 is going to cause problems with assurance of salvation. In context, Tribulation Christians who endure until the end of the Tribulation will be saved from physical destruction when Christ returns to Earth and destroys His enemies. They will then enter the Millennial kingdom in their fallen bodies.

Some object to a memorized gospel presentation. But when we sing worship songs they are almost always songs with words we have sung before, even to the point where we have some of the songs memorized. The Lord's Prayer (**Matt 6:9-13**) is an example prayer that Jesus gave us. God doesn't mind memorized songs, prayers, or gospel presentations as long as they achieve His purposes.

- 8) **Talking about apologetics leads to sharing the gospel** - I have not found this to be true with non-christians. It usually leads to disagreement or confusion. If they ask me about an apologetics issue I usually say something like, "I'm happy to discuss that but first, may I share with you how I became a Christian? – it only takes five minutes". If they say no, they most likely are not really interested but I will still talk to them about apologetics if they want. If they say yes, I share the Bridge Illustration with them. After we are done, then I am happy to discuss apologetics with them. Apologetics are useful and encouraging for Christians but have limited value with non-christians, without the gospel first. I shared the Bridge Illustration with a college student sitting next to me on an airplane. He prayed to receive Christ. After that he had a lot of questions about science and the Bible that I was able to answer for him. Apologetics help to remove doubt in the heart of Christians, but apologetics do not have the power to generate a saving faith – only God's Word can do that. You can download and forward any of the PDF documents from the following website which includes apologetics topics such as beginning and age of the universe, evolution, ice ages, global flood, radiocarbon dating, and numerous issues of observational science mentioned in the Bible before science discovered them: <http://gciweb.org/2011/04/youth-bible-study-materials-michael-r-daily/>
- 9) **Having a spiritual discussion leads to sharing the gospel** - In college there were people who liked having spiritual discussions and this approach might work with some types of college students or retirees but in the working world most people don't want to spend the time. For those that do, the discussion often leads to disagreement. I recommend sharing the Bridge first, then afterward, I'm happy to have additional discussions. I shared the Bridge with a newlywed couple on an airplane once. They were already Christians. Afterward, they had a lot of questions about assurance of salvation that we discussed.
- 10) **I don't have to memorize verses – I can read the verses from my Bible** - What is the problem with this? Fumbling around looking up verses takes time, even with a phone, and most of the time when you have opportunities to share the gospel you won't have a Bible with you. Also, if you have it memorized, it becomes more natural to share the Bridge verbally over the phone or in situations where you can't write anything. I was asked to give my testimony during a church service with 300 people. I stood at the podium and presented the Bridge Illustration verbally. It worked just fine. I just had to change the ending a little.

Occasionally, I will have a non-christian friend or co-worker stop by or call me and ask me questions about salvation. With the Bridge verses memorized I can easily quote the scriptures for them as needed without taking up a lot of time looking up verses. It also communicates to people that this must be really important since you went to the trouble of memorizing it. Funny thing is, when you have the verses memorized and always ready to go – sharing the gospel actually does seem more natural!

There is also the issue of mission trips to closed countries. At immigration and customs, government officials in these countries will sometimes search your bags and confiscate any Bibles, tracts, or other religious materials. But if you have the Bridge Illustration memorized you can walk right in with your pen and blank sheets of paper and effectively minister in that country.

What to Expect When Sharing the Gospel

Once someone knows you are a Christian or some type of religious person start praying for them and look for a time when you might have an unrushed 5 minutes alone with them. When that happens ask them, "May I share with you how I became a Christian? It only takes 5 minutes." If they say, "No" your job is done. Smile and say, "OK, thanks." You have completed your task and God will reward you in heaven just the same as if they had said, "yes". What I have noticed is that if they know ahead of time that you are a religious person and their time really does not have any pressure on it they will almost always say, "yes" but only if you quickly add that it only takes 5 minutes. If they are feeling some time pressure or if you leave out the "5 minutes" part they will almost always say, "no."

If they say, "yes" then you share the five minute Bridge Illustration with them. At the end you ask them, "Would you like to pray right now and receive Jesus Christ as your savior and lord?" If they say, "no" your job is done. Smile and say, "Thanks for letting me share that with you" or, if appropriate, you could also ask them if they would like to meet with you to study the Bible and learn more about these things. Either way you have completed your task and God will reward you in heaven just the same as if they had said, "yes".

If they want to receive Christ you pray with them. Afterward you can talk with them about getting and reading a Bible and finding a church. They may have additional questions they want to discuss with you, which is great. You can also give them your email address if they want to contact you or a key website that could help them.

For those who are willing to meet with you for Bible study (either non-Christians or new Christians) I suggest starting by going through the Bridge Illustration with them again. But since there would be no time pressure, you can look up the Bridge Illustration verses in the Bible, have them read them, and then discuss each verse and answer any questions they have. Starting in your second session, I would start going through a “Lessons on Assurance” study with them. This study is available through Navpress (<https://www.navpress.com>) and has 5 Bible studies you can do with them. After this you can follow up with “Lessons on Christian Living” also from Navpress with 8 studies. By this time, you should also have them engaged in church in some way. If you want to continue in Bible study with them, Navpress also has a “Design for Discipleship” series of studies as well. Follow up with them and disciple them but don’t be discouraged if it doesn’t work out. Most of the people I have disciplined in my life were not led to Christ by me and most of the people I led to Christ I did not end up discipling. This is a team effort. Do what you can and trust God to use other Christians to help them further.

There have been times when I shared the Bridge with my barber and dry cleaner. In both situations we were the only ones in the facility. After receiving services I said, “May I share with you how I became a Christian? It only takes five minutes, and if a customer comes in I will stop”. In both cases I was able to share the gospel.

I’ve only had one instance where I asked if I could share with someone how I became a Christian and they said, “no.” I was on an airplane and had introduced myself to the lady sitting next to me. We chatted for a while during which time I let her know I was a religious person. How? When she asked me what I do I stated that I worked as an engineer but what I really enjoyed doing was working with teenagers at church. As the plane reached altitude I asked if I could share with her how I became a Christian, it only takes five minutes. She said, “I’d rather read my book” and then she reached into her bag and pulled out a book. I smiled and said, “OK, I’ll let you read your book”. I picked up an in-flight magazine and started reading. I was happy. My job was done. I had been a faithful witness and could now relax and enjoy the flight. After about five minutes I felt a tap on my shoulder. It was the lady with the book. “You said you became a Christian. That means there was a time when you were not a Christian, but now you are a Christian. Is that correct?” (yes) “Yes, I would like to hear about that”. So, I pulled out my paper and pen and shared the Bridge Illustration with her.

Have a Plan

Witnessing is not natural. It will take some intentional planning. Always have a blank sheet of paper in your shirt pocket and a pen wherever you go. If you are in a situation where you have 10 minutes alone with someone you can just ask them, “May I share with you how I became a Christian? It only takes 5 minutes.” Make a list of people you plan to witness to: Family, co-workers, neighbors, service people, people sitting next to you on airplanes, public events, etc. Pray for them and ask God to give you opportunities to witness to them. When you see the opportunity, share the gospel. If people praise your good works, share the gospel with them. And remember, it still counts if you ask the question, “May I share with you how I became a Christian? It only takes 5 minutes?” and they say, “No”.

For service people who are working and don’t have much time but who start asking questions about a Christian activity you are doing, it is helpful to carry a bridge tract you can hand them to look at later. As you hand it to them you might say something like, “This booklet has some Bible verses in it that I think might be an encouragement to you.” You can order bridge tracts from the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association titled, “Steps to Peace With God”. <https://www.billygrahambookstore.org/evangelism-and-discipleship/tracts-and-pamphlets>

Also, when talking or sharing the gospel with non-Christians avoid using words they are not familiar with. For example, I don’t use the term, “Son of God”. In the mind of the non-Christian everyone is a son of God, Buddha is a son of God, etc. It doesn’t mean anything. Instead, I say, “God came to the Earth in the form of a man named Jesus Christ”. People don’t know what an “AWANA” is - just say, “Bible Club”. They don’t know what “discipling” means – just say “mentoring”. Think through the terms you are going to use around non-Christians and make sure they are common terms. If we are using words that sound weird we can lose credibility and people may stop listening to us.

How to Get Started in Witnessing

The first step in witnessing is baptism. If you have not been baptized yet, that is your first assignment, just as it was when Paul became a Christian.

Acts 22:12-16

“A certain Ananias, a man who was devout by the standard of the Law, and well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, ¹³ came to me, and standing near said to me, ‘Brother Saul, receive your sight!’ And at that very time I looked up at him. ¹⁴ And he said, ‘The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear an utterance from His mouth. ¹⁵ For you will be a witness for Him to all men of what you have seen and heard. ¹⁶ Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.’

Why? Because when getting baptized you are witnessing to all of those who are in attendance at your church. Baptism is easy enough that any new Christian can do it, but its hard enough that most non-christians won't. So, it is a good way to test yourself to see if you are “in the faith”.

II Corinthians 13:5

Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?

Some people may say that they have been a Christian so long that its too late for them to be baptized. But time is not a factor. How long had Jesus been a believer before He was baptized? Trillions of years! So, if He can submit to baptism then we can too, regardless of how long we have been Christians.

The next thing is to memorize the 5 minute Bridge Illustration from this lesson and customize the dialog to fit your life but keep it as short as possible and remember that the focus of the presentation is on the gospel using God's Words. Your testimony is not really about you, its about Christ. Spend your 5 minutes sharing from God's Word what the person needs to know to become a Christian instead of sharing things about yourself that will only be relevant to a small percentage of people.

Now that you have the gospel presentation memorized, you can present it to people in your church and other people that you believe are Christians. For example, sometimes I get to church early and introduce myself to men who are sitting alone in the back row and visit with them and share the Bridge Illustration with them. Share it with as many Christians as you can think of. Perhaps you can share it in your Sunday School class or to a children's class (it only takes 5 minutes). What about Vacation Bible School? If someone visits your Sunday School class or Bible Study group this would be a good person to ask, “May I share with you how I became a Christian? It only takes 5 minutes”. In fact, make it a point to share the gospel with visitors to your church that you come in contact with since it only takes a few minutes. They are already open to listening to religious ideas since they chose to come to your church. Do the same with your Christian friends and relatives. This will provide you with practice and you will find, when you share the gospel clearly with them, that some of them are not Christians, even though they are supportive of Christian things, and you will lead them to Christ.

Now its time to think about those outside your church. The first step here is to get used to letting people know you are a Christian. How do you do this? When they ask you questions you answer truthfully. For example, if they ask, “Did you do anything interesting this weekend?” Instead of saying, “No”, you could say, “Yes, I went to church like I usually do.” “What do you like to do outside work?” “My wife and I like to work with teenagers at church”. “Do you have any hobbies?” “Yes I spend a lot of time helping teenagers figure out answers to their questions about life and the Bible”. “What do you think about the president/governor/congress and what they are doing?” “You know, I'm not looking to a politician to save me. I'm looking to Jesus Christ”. Now they know you are some type of religious person. When people ask me what I do I often say, “Well, I work as an engineer but what I really enjoy doing is working with teenagers at church”. Think of ways you can answer common questions so that people can tell that you are a Christian. That way when you later ask if you can share with them how you became a Christian (it only takes 5 minutes), they won't feel shocked or surprised. Do you pray when you are at restaurants? This is another way to let people know you are a Christian. How else can you let people know you are a Christian using honest answers to questions that come up in everyday conversations?

Now that most of the non-Christians know that you are a “religious person”, they may occasionally ask you questions or comment on something good they saw you do. If they ask you, “What do Christians believe?” or “What is the philosophy of your church” you can say, “Well, I can show that to you in about 5 minutes”, or if they say, “I was impressed with what you did in that situation” you can say, “It’s because I am a Christian. May I share with you how I became a Christian? It only takes 5 minutes”. One of my relatives was showing an interest in mission trips I had been on in the past so I said, “Would you like to see what I teach when I am on a mission trip? It only takes five minutes?” Then I shared my Bridge Illustration.

The key here is to always be ready. Review your verses once a week and carry a pen and folded piece of paper in your shirt pocket everyday so that you will always be ready if God gives you the opportunity to share your faith. If you can find one or two Christian friends to work on this with it will be more encouraging for you than trying to do it alone.

Ultimately God is in control of people’s eternal destiny. We are responsible for obeying God and sharing the gospel with others but their eternal destiny is in His hands, not ours (**II Timothy 2:10**). On a final note, there is a special reward or Crown that God will give to those who have been faithful to share their faith - the Crown of Exultation (**I Thessalonians 2:19-20, Philippians 4:1**).

Appendix A: Passages On Faith And The Word Of God

Faith comes by hearing the Word of God. This means that someone or something is quoting Bible verses!

Romans 10:17 - So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

I Peter 1:23 - for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, *that is*, through the living and enduring word of God.

John 5:24 - Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.

Mark 4:13-20

And He said to them, “Do you not understand this parable? How will you understand all the parables? ¹⁴ The sower sows the word. ¹⁵ These are the ones who are beside the road where the word is sown; and when they hear, immediately Satan comes and takes away the word which has been sown in them. ¹⁶ In a similar way these are the ones on whom seed was sown on the rocky *places*, who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy; ¹⁷ and they have no *firm* root in themselves, but are *only* temporary; then, when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away. ¹⁸ And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word, ¹⁹ but the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. ²⁰ And those are the ones on whom seed was sown on the good soil; and they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold.”

Romans 16:25-26

Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, ²⁶ but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith;

Galatians 3:2-5

This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? ³ Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? ⁴ Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? ⁵ So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

Mark 8:38

For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.”

Luke 9:26

For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory, and *the glory* of the Father and of the holy angels.

Appendix B: How Does The Bridge Method Compare to Other Ways of Sharing The Gospel?

There are many ways to share the gospel besides the method taught in this lesson. Each method, although effective in certain circumstances or with certain subsets of the population, has its weaknesses. The Bridge Illustration taught in this lesson, has been optimized by missionaries over many years and has been demonstrated to be effective with English speaking peoples in nations all around the world and with people from all levels of society. It has been intentionally designed to avoid most of the weaknesses of other methods. So far, I have found the Bridge Illustration to only have one weakness - we are going to have to memorize eleven Bible verses. What I have found is that most of the people who want to deviate to other methods are not doing so because they believe the other methods are more effective. They are doing it because they perceive those methods will be easier for them. But that is not what we are trying to achieve. We are looking for a method that is the most effective in enabling the maximum number of opportunities to share the gospel, in all circumstances, while also being maximally effective at giving the non-Christian the information they need to decide if they will receive Christ or not. Its not about what is most convenient for us. Its about what is best in helping people avoid a Christ-less eternity in the Lake of Fire.

Below is a list of questions to ask yourself about your method of sharing the gospel:

- 1) **Does it cover all the essential doctrines of salvation the non-christian needs to hear?**
Many gospel sharing methods leave out key doctrines. For example, the doctrine of God's Judgment of people after death is critical to include if non-christians are to come to Christ (**John 16:7-8, Heb 9:27**). Most experienced-based testimonies leave out this doctrine. Other doctrines that are often left out are the assurance of salvation (**Eph 2:8-9, I John 5:13**), repentance (**I Peter 2:24**), the need to receive Christ personally (**John 1:12**), the new life of following Christ (**II Cor 5:17**), and the need to make a personal decision to accept or reject Christ (**II Cor 5:20**). These doctrines need to be included in the gospel presentation to give the non-christian a full picture of what they need to know to make their decision.
- 2) **Is each doctrine supported by a direct quote from God's Word?** If not, the method won't be effective for everyone. God's spirit working with God's Word impacts and changes people (**Heb 4:12, I Ptr 1:23**). Our words don't. There might be situations where you have a spiritual conversation with someone without quoting Bible verses and they still become a Christian. How could that happen? At a previous time there was another Christian who quoted Bible verses with them but they rejected Christ. Then you came along and talked with them and the Holy Spirit used the conversation to remind them of the Bible verses they had previously heard and they decide to become a Christian. But I don't want you to be limited in effectiveness to only non-christians who have heard God's Word previously. I want you to be effective with everyone!
- 3) **Can it be presented in the first person** (e.g. "I was separated from God") or is it presented in the second person (e.g. "You/We are separated from God")? If the method presents the Gospel using second person language, you become an evangelist instead of a witness. As a result, it will tend to irritate all but the most humble non-christians, unless you have the spiritual gift of evangelism. Since the percentage of the non-christian population that is humble is small (the downtrodden or children?) and because few of us have the spiritual gift of evangelism, methods using second person language (including phone apps) have more limited application. For example, the Roman's Road method is often taught using second person language making it more of a method for evangelists rather than witnesses. Also, second person methods make it more difficult to get permission to start. You can't say, "May I share with you how I became a Christian"?
- 4) **Can the presentation be completed in five minutes or less?** Many people have their time tightly scheduled. They will not be willing to spend more than five minutes on unplanned, optional activities. Also, if you can't complete it in five minutes then you also can't start by asking, "May I share with you how I became a Christian? It only takes five minutes". That would be untrue, so you can't say that. As a result, you will have to say a longer time or not say a time. In either case, the most likely response will then be "no". If the method can be completed in five minutes, it maximizes the likelihood that people will say "yes."
- 5) **Will the method be as easy to use when you are 30, 40, 50, 60, and 70 years old?** Its one thing to witness using a particular method when you are a college student, but will this same method be one you can use when you are a 40 year old respected professional trying to share the gospel with your peer?

Appendix C: First Person, Five Minute, Bridge Illustration (NASB)

Michael R. Daily, October 2025

Other youth bible studies by Michael Daily available at: <http://gciweb.org/2011/04/youth-bible-study-materials-michael-r-daily/>

May I share with you how I became a Christian? It only takes 5 minutes.

(Take out a blank sheet of paper. Draw the two sides and label, "ME" and "GOD").

As a child my parents took me to church to learn about God and the Bible. I learned that I was a sinner separated from God. (Write: "ISAIAH 53:6").

Isaiah 53:6 - All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him.

I also learned that I was dead to God. (Write: "ROMANS 6:23").

Romans 6:23 - For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

And I realized I was heading for judgment. (Write: "HEBREWS 9:27").

Hebrews 9:27 - And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment,

In college, I was invited to attend a Bible study - so I did. This is where I learned that God loved me and wanted to give me eternal life. (Write: "JOHN 3:16"). In John 3:16 Jesus said,

John 3:16 - "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

He also wanted me to have an abundant life on the Earth. (Write: "JOHN 10:10"). In John 10:10 Jesus said,

John 10:10 - The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

In order to give me these gifts, God decided to come to the Earth in the form of a man named Jesus Christ. (Draw the CROSS). Jesus paid for my sins by shedding His blood and dying on the cross. He was buried and 3 days later He rose from the dead. By doing this, Jesus became a bridge for me to cross back over to God's side and have life. (Write: "1 PETER 2:24").

1 Peter 2:24 - and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.

In order to cross over to God's side I had to do 2 things. First, I had to believe these things are true. (Write: "BELIEVE" and under it write "JOHN 5:24"). In John 5:24 Jesus said,

John 5:24 - "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.

(Draw the arrow from the Me side to God's side)

Second, I had to RECEIVE Christ as my Lord and Savior. (Write: "RECEIVE" and under it write "JOHN 1:12").

John 1:12 - But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name,

So, when I was 18 years old, I prayed a prayer and it went something like this: “Lord I know I could never be good enough to earn my way to heaven. Thank you for paying for my sins by dying on the cross. Please come into my life right now and be my Lord and Savior”.

The moment I prayed that prayer God gave me eternal life and I can never lose it, because I didn’t do anything to earn it. (Write: “EPHESIANS 2:8-9”).

Ephesians 2:8-9 - For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; ⁹ not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Since becoming a Christian, Christ has changed my life for the better. (Write: “II CORINTHIANS 5:17”).

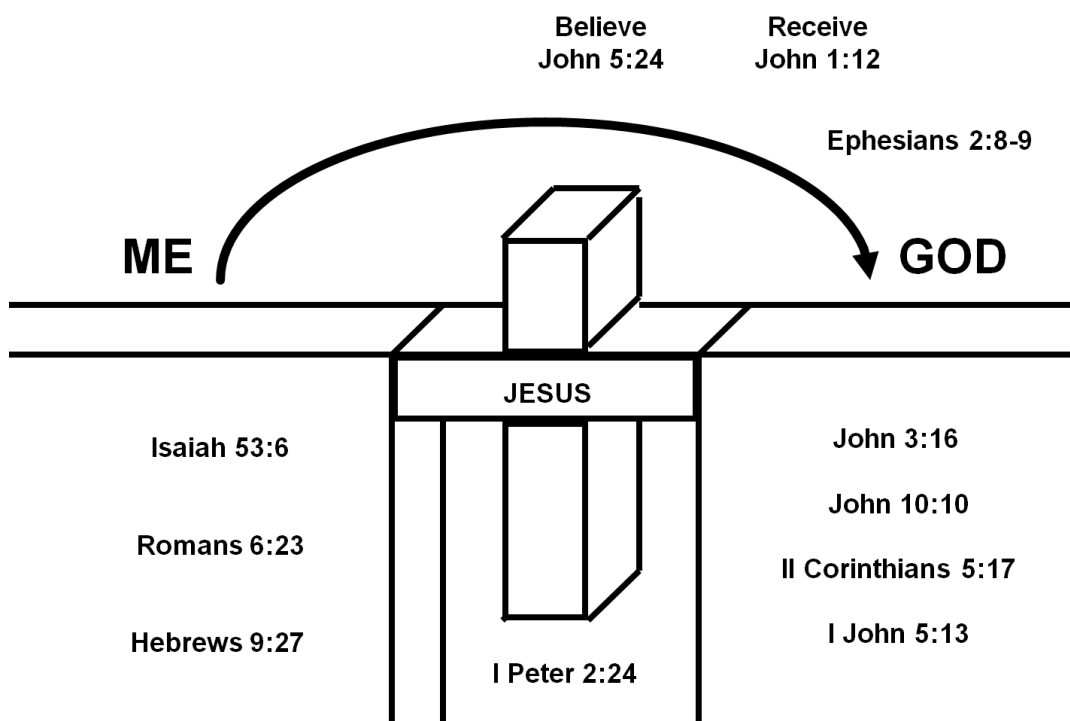
II Corinthians 5:17 - Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

And I know for sure – 100 percent for sure - that when I die I will live in heaven with God forever. (Write: “I JOHN 5:13”).

I John 5:13 - These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.

- 1) If this is true, how would a person cross over to God’s side? (if they are not sure or get it wrong just tell them – “Believe these things are true & pray to receive Christ as Lord and Savior”)
- 2) If this is true, where would you be on this bridge? (if they say anything other than God’s side ask question 3, if they say “God’s side” ask them when they received Christ. If they don’t know then ask question 3, if they really are already a Christian thank them for letting you share this with them).
- 3) Would you like to pray to receive Christ right now? (If they say “yes” then take their hand and pray with them to receive Christ as Lord and Savior. If they say “no” ask them if they would like to meet with you to study the Bible and learn more about these things. If they still say no thank them for letting you share this with them).

Draw the illustration below on a piece of paper while you are speaking. Let them keep the paper:



Appendix D: Discussion of Doctrine, Historical Revelation, & Stephen's Testimony

Is everything in the Bible doctrine? No. There is also something called Historical Revelation.

Doctrine: *the universal truths of the Bible that apply to all people, in the past, present, or future, living at any place on the Earth, in any culture. Doctrine is that part of the Bible that sounds like God is preaching a sermon to you when you read it.*

Historical Revelation: *the parts of the Bible that describe what happened to a particular person at a particular place and time in history, but it is not universal truth. It's like watching God's TV show about someone else's life. We can pull devotional truths from these passages but not universal truths.*

Ephesians 5:25

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her

Does this verse sound like God is preaching a sermon to you? Yes it does. Therefore, this is doctrine. It applies to all husbands at all times in history (past, present, and future), in all the nations of the world, and in all the cultures of mankind.

Hosea 1:2

When the LORD first spoke through Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea, "Go, take to yourself a wife of harlotry and have children of harlotry; for the land commits flagrant harlotry, forsaking the LORD."

Does this sound like God is preaching a sermon to you or does it feel like you are watching a show about something that happened to a particular person? Its more like a show about a particular person. Therefore, this is not doctrine (i.e. universal truth), it is historical revelation. We can learn devotional truths from passages of historical revelation but we need to be careful to not teach it as if it was doctrine (i.e. universal truth). In addition, if there is conflict between doctrine and historical revelation we go with doctrine as the priority. What we would never do is ignore or discard doctrine and replace it with historical revelation, as if the historical revelation was universal truth. This can lead to false doctrine if we are not careful!

For a detailed study on this topic please see the study, "How To Avoid False Doctrine", available at:
<http://gciweb.org/2011/04/youth-bible-study-materials-michael-r-daily/>

In application to witnessing, we have both doctrinal passages and historical revelation. Many people point to Paul on Mars Hill (**Acts 17:18-34**) or before Agrippa (**Acts 26:1-32**) or the blind man (**John 9:24-30**) for guidance on how to witness. But these are passages of historical revelation, not doctrine, so we need to be careful to not claim universal truth from these passages, especially if they conflict with doctrine.

As an exercise on the dangers of pointing to historical revelation as our guide in witnessing, let's work through Stephen's witness in Acts chapters 6 and 7.

The first thing we notice is that Stephen was performing miracles - signs and wonders (**Acts 6:8**). But we don't perform signs and wonders in the post-Apostle Church Age so we can't follow Stephen's example here. The next thing we notice was that as Stephen gave his testimony his face shown supernaturally like the face of an angel (**Acts 6:15**). Does your face shine supernaturally when you are sharing the gospel? No. Then Stephen spent about 10 minutes taking his audience through a review of God's historical interactions with the nation of Israel (**Acts 7:1-50**). Are you going to do that with your American non-Christians? (I'm not). Then, Stephen called everyone in the crowd a murderer (**Acts 7:51-53**). (I'm not going to do that either). Then Stephen saw the heavens open up and the glory of God the Father and Jesus standing by His side (**Acts 7:55-56**). Do you have these types of visions while you are witnessing? No. Then Stephen died.

We praise God for Stephen's witness and someday, when we are about to be martyred, perhaps our witness will be similar at that time. But this is a special situation that is very different from us sharing the gospel with our friends, neighbors, and co-workers.

Appendix E: The Paradox of One-on-One Witnessing and Reaching the World

Jesus said that the harvest is plentiful (**Luke 10:2**) but when it comes to our personal experience of witnessing to the individuals in our lives, it can often feel anything but plentiful. Was Jesus wrong? No. We will use some math to see how both of these things can be true at the same time and that the harvest truly is plentiful.

Imagine that you have been fully trained in sharing the gospel using the Bridge Illustration in this study and you have practiced it to the point where you can easily present it without difficulty. What kind of conversion rate would be reasonable to expect? I have used various forms of sharing the gospel over the years and have found that the First Person, Five Minute Bridge Illustration has a conversion rate of about 10% (which is higher than other methods I've used). In other words, if I share the Bridge Illustration with ten non-Christians, on average, one will pray with me to receive Christ. Now keep in mind that many of the people you share the gospel with will pray later by themselves when they are alone, and some will pray later in their lives, but we are not counting those conversions in the 10%. The 10% are the people who will pray with you to receive Christ.

OK, now how many non-Christians would you be able to consistently share the gospel with year in and year out over the course of your entire life? Ten? Five? How about two? Many Christians feel like they don't know that many non-Christians. But think about your neighbors, relatives, in-laws, co-workers, service people that do work for you (barbers, dry cleaners, home repair, etc.), strangers on airplanes, and people who engage in the same hobby or sport that you do and you can come up with quite a few people. Add to that the fact that many of these people change out on a regular basis and it's reasonable to conclude that sharing the gospel with two non-Christians a year is realistic. Once trained, is that something you could do on an on-going basis?

So, imagine that you share the Bridge Illustration with two non-Christians a year, every year, for 50 years. That would be 100 non-Christians that you shared the gospel with during your life. And with a 10% conversion rate that means you would have led 10 people to Christ during your life (not counting those that prayed when you were not around). So, as you go about your Christian life you share the gospel, on average, with two people a year and once every five years or so you lead someone to Christ. What will the result be?

On a local level no one is going to be that impressed! No one will say that you are a great evangelist. Most of the time, you rarely share the gospel and when you do few people become Christians. It may even feel like failure or that it is not even worth it to make the effort. The "plentiful harvest" that Jesus talked about just doesn't seem to be there. Or maybe I'm doing it wrong. Perhaps I should just leave sharing the gospel to the professionals. Please don't do that. Most of the people God has put into your life will never be reached by a professional evangelist. That is why God has you where you are. Before you get discouraged let's look at the global impact of your example. There are about 300 million evangelical Christians in the world and the population of the world is about 8 billion people (2023). If every Christian shared the gospel with two non-Christians a year how long would it take to reach the entire world?

The equation would look something like this:

$(\# \text{ of non-Christians who heard gospel}) = (\% \text{ of Christians sharing gospel}) \times 300 \text{ million} \times (2/\text{year}) \times (\# \text{ of years})$

So, 8 billion = $1.0 \times 300 \text{ million} \times 2 \times (\# \text{ of years})$, or $(\# \text{ of years}) = 8 \text{ billion} / 600 \text{ million} = 13.3 \text{ years!}$

If every Christian shared the gospel with two non-Christians a year the entire world would be evangelized in less than 14 years and it would result in 800 million people (10% of 8 billion) praying to receive Christ (and more than that becoming Christians without praying in front of someone)!

Another way to look at it is, what percentage of Christians would need to share the gospel with two non-Christians a year to reach the whole world in 50 years?

$8 \text{ billion} = (\% \text{ of Christians sharing gospel}) \times 300 \text{ million} \times 2 \times 50$, or $(\% \text{ of Christians sharing gospel}) = 8/30 = 26.7\%$

This is why Jesus said that the harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few (**Luke 10:2**). And this is why we faithfully continue to share the gospel in obedience to God's command even though our personal efforts may seem insignificant to us or to others. We share the gospel because we love God and trust Him for the harvest!

Appendix F: What Are People Being Saved From?

It is important to remember why people need to hear the gospel. It's not because they need to be saved from a meaningless life (although that is a side benefit). It's because they need to be saved from eternal torment. The idea of eternal torment is horrifying to think about which is why many people, including Christians, deny its reality. They would prefer to think that non-Christians just stop existing (i.e. annihilation) or that they just don't get to go to heaven (i.e. separation from God) or that they suffer for a period of time but not forever (i.e. purgatory). But the Bible is clear. Without Christ, people continue to exist forever in a state of suffering and torment. This is what the gospel saves them from.

"There is a deep seated unbelief among Christians just now, about the eternity of future punishment. It is not outspoken in many cases, but it is whispered; and it frequently assumes the shape of a spirit of benevolent desire that the doctrine may be disproved. I fear that at the bottom of all this there is a rebellion against the dread sovereignty of God. There is a suspicion that sin is not, after all, so bad a thing as we have dreamed. There is an apology, or a lurking wish to apologize for sinners, who are looked upon rather as objects of pity than as objects of indignation, and really deserving the condign punishment which they have willfully brought upon themselves. I am afraid it is the old nature in us putting on the specious garb of charity, which thus leads us to discredit a fact which is as certain as the happiness of believers" – **Charles H. Spurgeon, Nov. 20, 1864.**

Hades/Sheol

Today, when a person dies without Christ their spirit goes to Hades to await judgment. Their body remains in the grave. It is a temporary waiting place where God does not dwell. Hades is the Greek word used in the New Testament and Sheol is the Hebrew word used in the Old Testament but they mean the same thing. God destroys Hades at the final judgment so it is not eternal in nature, it is temporary (**Revelation 20:14**). The story of the rich man and Lazarus in **Luke 16** makes it clear that Hades is not a good place.

Luke 16:19-24

"Now there was a rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day.²⁰ And a poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores,²¹ and longing to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man's table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores.²² Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried.²³ In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom.²⁴ And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.'"

Even though the rich man experienced agony in the flames of Hades, this place is not the same as the Lake of Fire. There is a difference in intensity. You can think of the agony of Hades as the minimum level of torment for non-Christians as they await resurrection and final judgment which will occur after the Millennial Kingdom. We know this would have to be the minimum level of suffering because it occurs before each person is judged.

Lake of Fire / 2nd Death (Gehenna)

The Greek word translated as "hell" in most of the New Testament is "gehenna" and is the Lake of Fire. Another name for the Lake of Fire is the 2nd Death (**Revelation 20:14**). This is the final and eternal dwelling place of those who died without faith in Christ. After the Millennial Kingdom, nonbelievers spirits will be released from Hades and will be united with their resurrected bodies. They will then be judged by God and thrown body and soul into the Lake of Fire for eternity. The judgment will determine the level of intensity of each person's punishment in the Lake of Fire. The intensity can vary from the minimum of that experienced in Hades to a maximum of God's full strength (**Revelation 14:9-11**).

Jesus spoke often about the Lake of Fire.

Matthew 10:28

Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (gehenna – lake of fire).

All of the fallen angels will be judged and thrown into the Lake of Fire as well for eternity.

Matthew 25:41

“Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels;

Revelation 19:19-20

And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. ²⁰ And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone.

Brimstone: Burning Sulfur. When burned, sulfur melts to a blood-red liquid, emits a blue flame, and creates sulfur dioxide gas, notable for its peculiar suffocating odor.

Revelation 20:10-15

And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. ¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is *the book of life*; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. ¹³ And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of *them* according to their deeds. ¹⁴ Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵ And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Luke 16 describes the minimum level of suffering in the Lake of Fire (using Hades as the reference).

Revelation 14 describes the maximum level of suffering God appoints to certain people in the Lake of Fire. God’s judgment of each non-Christian’s life determines the level of intensity of their eternal punishment between these two extremes. Let’s analyze what **Revelation 14** says about the maximum level of suffering.

Revelation 14:9-11

Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand,¹⁰ he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. ¹¹ And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.”

Who will be tormenting the people in the Lake of Fire? God (verse 10).

How much of God’s strength is He going to use in doing this? Full Strength – 100% (verse 10)

How strong is God? Infinitely strong. The full fury of an infinite God is going to come down on these people. Fortunately, its only for a short time. Is that right? No. Its forever and ever (verse 11).

So, the full fury of an infinite God is going to come down on these people for trillions and trillions of years.

But at least they get breaks, right? No. There is no rest day or night. It is 24/7/365 with no breaks and continues forever (verse 11).

In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus the rich man in Hades is in agony in the flames but he is able to hold a conversation with Abraham.

But in the Lake of Fire the intensity level is much higher. No one is going to be talking in the Lake of Fire.

For a detailed study of this topic please see, “Heaven & Hell” at:

<http://gciweb.org/2011/04/youth-bible-study-materials-michael-r-daily/>

QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: *Good Works, Witnessing, & Evangelism*

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Luke 10:2, Romans 1:16*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *John 16:7-8, Hebrews 2:14-15*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *II Corinthians 2:14-16, Ephesians 4:11-12*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: *Good Works, Witnessing, & Evangelism*

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *II Corinthians 4:5, I John 5:11-13*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Acts 17:18-34, Acts 26:1-32*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *John 9:2-30, I Peter 3:15*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: *Good Works, Witnessing, & Evangelism*

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Hebrews 4:12, Ephesians 6:17*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *I Peter 1:23, Romans 10:17, John 5:24, Mark 4:13-20*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Mark 8:38, Luke 9:26*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: *Good Works, Witnessing, & Evangelism*

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Hebrews 12:11*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Luke 9:23, Galatians 5:22-23*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *II Timothy 1:7*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: *Good Works, Witnessing, & Evangelism*

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *II Timothy 4:1-2*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Colossians 4:5-6, Titus 2:7-8, Proverbs 22:11*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Ephesians 5:4, Colossians 3:8, Titus 3:2*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: *Good Works, Witnessing, & Evangelism*

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Philippians 2:14, Philippians 4:5*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Proverbs 20:3*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Romans 14:22*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: *Good Works, Witnessing, & Evangelism*

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *I Corinthians 2:4-5, II Corinthians 2:14-16*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Col 2:18-19, II Corinthians 11:14, I Corinthians 11:14*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Matthew 5:16, Ephesians 2:10*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: *Good Works, Witnessing, & Evangelism*

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *I Timothy 4:7-8, I Peter 3:15, I Peter 1:13, Ephesians 6:15*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Acts 22:12-16, II Corinthians 13:5*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *I Thessalonians 2:19-20, Philippians 4:1*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: *Good Works, Witnessing, & Evangelism*

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Acts chapter 6*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Acts chapter 7*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Mark chapter 13*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?