



Lutheran[®]

L I F E

WINTER 2019

Inside this issue:

*The who,
what, why,
and how of
witnessing.*

CALLED

to be a

WITNESS

*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit
has come upon you, and you will be My witnesses
in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and
to the end of the earth.*

(Acts 1:8)

Since the time of Jesus' instructions to His disciples before His ascension, up to this very moment, all who follow Jesus are called to be His witnesses by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is part of what it means to follow Jesus.

In the last issue of *Lutheran Life*, we unpacked what it means to be called to something through our various vocations. Being a witness to Jesus is a vocation that every follower of Jesus has, starting with Jesus' first disciples.

We know about our vocations, so now what does it mean to be a witness? Here is how the Merriam-Webster abridged dictionary defines *witness*:

1. attestation of a fact or event, . . .
2. one that gives evidence . . .
3. one asked to be present at a transaction so as to be able to testify to its having taken place
4. one who has personal knowledge of something
5. a. something serving as evidence or proof . . .
b. public affirmation by word or example of usually religious faith or conviction

Notice the two parts inherent to being a witness. First, a witness has seen or experienced something. Second, a witness speaks about it in either a legal setting or otherwise, giving a testimony of what he or she knows to be true based upon personal experience.

As the Early Church carried out Jesus' call to be His witnesses, to attest to His death and resurrection, the word for *witness* began to take on a different meaning. The word in Greek is *martyr*. Today, we recognize a martyr as someone who not only declares what he or she knows to be true (witness) but also willingly dies for such a conviction.

Because of the Early Church's unwavering witness to Jesus even in the face of persecution, the very word for witness—*martyr*—is forever loaded with meaning. What a witness in and of itself that is!

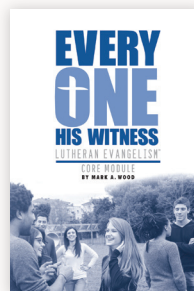
Christians around the world today continue to live out the definition of *martyr*, being so committed to their faith in Jesus that they are tortured and killed for it. Let us pray for our brothers and sisters in these situations that they may be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit to give unwavering witness.

May the witness of these Christians around the world and throughout time give us conviction and boldness to speak ever more freely and confidently of what we know to be true: Jesus Christ is Savior and Lord.

Throughout this issue, we'll consider some practical ways to follow Jesus' command to be His witnesses among the people and in the places we find ourselves so that we can winsomely and confidently attest to the fact that Jesus is Lord to the glory of the Father. ‡

Scripture: ESV®

EVERY ONE HIS WITNESS



Begin witnessing to those in your life through our Lutheran evangelism program, Every One His Witness. The kit includes everything you need to get started in groups of 12: pens, journals, Experience Cards, DVD, workbooks, and access to a Leader's Guide. Understand the LASSIE approach to witnessing and start naturally sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ today. Find this title and others from this magazine at cph.org/llresources.

WHY?

Finding your motivation to share Jesus

“Called to Be a Witness” might seem like a shocking or scary way to start an issue on witnessing. Why talk about persecution and martyrdom when trying to encourage others to witness?

Before we consider why we should witness, let’s consider what keeps us from telling others about the most remarkable truth in our lives—that we have eternal life through Jesus.

Many of us shy away from witnessing—but not for a lack of knowledge of Jesus’ call to be His witnesses. We know we’re supposed to tell others about Him. So what makes it so challenging to do? What keeps you from witnessing about the most important truth in your life?

There is one force underlying all my reasons: fear. Do you see a similar pattern in your answers? I’m afraid of not having all the right answers or saying something wrong or losing a friend. Fear.

Considering all of that fear, why would we dare tell someone about Jesus?

What’s my motivation to witness? Love. God’s love for me, my love for God, my love for others, and God’s love for others. Love.

As we consider how fear and love factor in to how we are to interact with others in response to who God is and what He’s done in our lives, we can remember the words of the apostle John, who reminds us that fear has no place in love. He says, “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. We love because He first loved us” (1 John 4:18–19).

God’s perfect love for us is both our confidence and our motivation to love—and witness to—others. We love because God has first loved us.

In His love, God has defeated our greatest threats: sin, death, and the power of the devil. What fears can compare to those? Therefore, we join the psalmist in proclaiming, “The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?” (Psalm 118:6). God’s love is our confidence.

God’s love is also our motivation. One of the best ways we can love God is by doing what He commands (1 John 5:3). That means taking seriously the Great Commission to go and make disciples (Matthew 28:19–20), that is, to witness, to tell others about Him. Jesus sends us with His authority to baptize and teach others what He has taught us. And in doing so, He promises to be with us always. As people claiming to follow Jesus, let’s take seriously His command for us to witness. Let’s show others the love God has first shown us. ‡

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Reasons to tell others about Jesus.

I love them

It's the best news I could ever share with someone

It has eternal implications

Jesus tells me to and promises to be with me

What are your reasons for telling others about Jesus?

Reasons that keep us from witnessing.

It's scary.

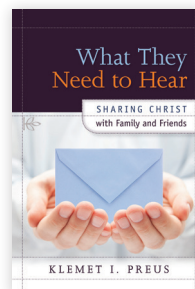
I don't know what to say.

What if someone asks me a question I don't know how to answer?

What if I offend someone and ruin our friendship?

What are your reasons for not witnessing?

WHAT THEY NEED TO HEAR



Bringing Christ into conversations with nonbelievers takes courage. Be inspired by this real-life story of how one man returned to faith in Christ through the witness of his son-in-law. You can find this title and others from this magazine at cph.org/lresources.

WHO?

Understanding the right relationship to witness

In last quarter's issue on vocation, we asked you to take an inventory of who your neighbor is by considering those you are in relationship with at home, church, work, and in the world. Whom has God placed around you in each of these spheres of your life? Do you remember who you wrote down?

Vocation and witnessing are connected. *Vocation*, or *calling*, is a term used to describe the work God has put in front of us to do for the benefit of our neighbor in every station and place we find ourselves throughout our lives.

One way we love our neighbors is by telling them about Jesus! This includes both our Christian and non-Christian neighbors.

Have you ever considered witnessing to those who already know Jesus? It might sound funny, but remember, witnessing is simply giving a testimony of who Jesus is and what He has done in your life. This is an excellent way to encourage your brothers and sisters in their own faith.

Typically, however, the focus of our witness is rightly aimed toward our family members, friends, co-workers, and others who do not believe that Jesus Christ is Lord. Just as relationships are central to directing your vocational responsibilities, so they are central when considering who we witness to and how.

While the Holy Spirit can work through witness given to a random bystander, our witness is much more effective when it's done within an established relationship, because the key to such witness is establishing a level of care for the person, along with listening to his or her story. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to witnessing. Rather, we seek to witness by creating a point of connection that fits the specific person and situation. We present our Christian witness in a way that speaks to each person's story. This is difficult to do when speaking to a stranger whom we know nothing about.

With that in mind, let's consider how to deepen our relationships with the people on our list and look for ways to make meaningful connections.

St. Paul shared how he became "all things to all people," taking on characteristics or lifestyle traits of the people he was trying to reach—all while remaining under the law and convictions of Christ. (Witnessing does not involve doing anything against conscience or Christian faith.) Paul became weak to the weak and strong to the strong. He took on customs and traditions of the Jews while he lived among Jews. He took on customs and traditions of Gentiles while among Gentiles. The purpose behind his approach was to make a compelling witness to the Gospel to each person or group of people, depending on who they were (see 1 Corinthians 9:19–23).

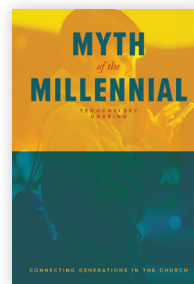
*There is no
one-size-fits-
all approach to
witnessing*

What about you? What would it look like for you to become "all things to all people" in order that you might win some for Christ? Think about people you seek to share your Christian witness with. Consider how you could establish a point of meaningful connection in that relationship. Is there a team you could start to follow, a fitness group you could join, or a certain restaurant you could frequent in order to build a relationship in the hopes of gaining an opportunity to share about Jesus?

How might you position yourself to have those opportunities? ‡

Scripture: ESV®

MYTH OF THE MILLENNIAL: CONNECTING GENERATIONS IN THE CHURCH



Millennials are the least-churched generation in our nation's history. The problem is not just that they continue to leave the church. It is that they aren't coming back. This book contains ideas on how to build strong intergenerational relationships to engage a generation that is generally apathetic and disinterested in the church. Find this title and others from this magazine at cph.org/llresources.

WHAT?

Giving witness is a full sense experience

Did you know that whether you're making a conscious effort or not, you're always giving witness?

In the “Why” section, we discussed being afraid to give witness. But that doesn't mean we're not giving some kind of witness. By your very association with Jesus, you represent Him. It's not a matter of *if* you give witness but rather *what kind* of witness you give.

We give witness with both our actions and words. Often, they work in tandem.

Being a witness to Jesus starts by how you live your life. Even before you open your mouth to speak about the Good News of salvation in Jesus, people are watching to see how following Jesus affects the way you live. What difference does it make? How you spend your time and money, where you go and what you do, what you wear and how you treat others are all opportunities to give off the “aroma of Christ” as Paul describes in 2 Corinthians 2:14–16. They're opportunities for people to stop and wonder why you're different, why you “smell” different than other people.



BUT THANKS BE TO GOD, WHO IN CHRIST ALWAYS LEADS US IN TRIUMPHAL PROCESSION, AND THROUGH US SPREADS THE FRAGRANCE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF HIM EVERYWHERE. FOR WE ARE THE AROMA OF CHRIST TO GOD AMONG THOSE WHO ARE BEING SAVED AND AMONG THOSE WHO ARE PERISHING, TO ONE A FRAGRANCE FROM DEATH TO DEATH, TO THE OTHER A FRAGRANCE FROM LIFE TO LIFE.

(2 Corinthians 2:14–16)

The aroma of Christ smells like Christlike love. In the final instructions Jesus gave His disciples before He was arrested and taken away, He told them that what would make them different—what would make people take notice—is their love for one another:

A NEW COMMANDMENT I GIVE TO YOU, THAT YOU LOVE ONE ANOTHER: JUST AS I HAVE LOVED YOU, YOU ALSO ARE TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER. BY THIS ALL PEOPLE WILL KNOW THAT YOU ARE MY DISCIPLES, IF YOU HAVE LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER.

(JOHN 13:34–35)

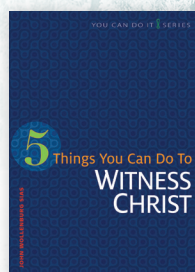
The aroma of Christ is marked by love. Does your life smell like Christ?

Unfortunately, well-meaning Christians sometimes think they have only to smell like Christ to give a witness. But a witness is one who attests to the truth. It requires we open our mouth and speak the Word of God. How are people to call upon Jesus and believe in Him if they've never heard of Him? How will they hear if no one tells them? Paul answers these wise questions with the simple truth that faith comes by hearing, that is, by receiving the Word of Christ (Romans 10:14–17).

You see, the Gospel is impossible to preach without words. Or, more accurately, the Gospel is impossible to preach without *the* Word, that is, Jesus, the Word made flesh (John 1:14). If we don't identify Jesus as the source of our witness, then people may attribute our good deeds of thoughtfulness and care to our following Allah or seeking good karma or just trying to make the world a better place. It's not until we share the message of our salvation in Jesus that we can fully witness to the truths of who Jesus is and what that means for our lives. ‡

Scripture: ESV®

5 THINGS YOU CAN DO TO WITNESS CHRIST



Witnessing Christ is supposed to be part of our way of life. We are given our greatest gift from Jesus Christ and called to share it with all whom we meet. Be encouraged to live as a disciple of Christ, formed and shaped by God's Word. Find this title and others from this magazine at cph.org/llresources.

HOW?

Caring is the first objective to witness

NOBODY CARES
HOW MUCH YOU KNOW
UNTIL THEY KNOW
HOW MUCH YOU
CARE

This adage has been attributed to President Theodore Roosevelt, although the original source is not truly known. Regardless of when or where it was first spoken, the saying holds much truth, both for life in general and for witnessing specifically.

The best way to witness, then, is to start by establishing your genuine care for the person you're talking with. This starts in prayer. Pray for God to give you a heart of kindness and compassion for the person you are witnessing to. Pray also for the Holy Spirit to be pursuing this person and already preparing his or her heart for the witness you will share. Pray for opportunities to

speak about Jesus with this person. And pray that the Holy Spirit would have His way, both with you and with this person, to accomplish His work.

In the resource kit *Every One His Witness*, author Rev. Mark Wood identifies listening and asking questions as key parts of being a witness. By listening to others and asking them questions, you learn about their lives. This also lays a foundation of care and respect—one in which you aren't just talking *at* someone but truly engaging in a dialogue *with* that person. You engage in an effort to seek understanding and learn what's important in that person's life.

As you listen, key in on significant experiences or exasperations of the heart. What is the person passionate about, afraid of, searching for, or seeking to mend?

An incredible strength of our Christian witness is that we can present Jesus in countless ways. Jesus is the answer of peace and hope in the face of any of life's struggles. Listening gives insight into how a person might need to hear about Jesus specifically. What one person needs to hear about Jesus may be different from what another person needs to hear. The substance of your witness doesn't change, but how it's shared does depending on the person's situation.

Here are a few examples, taken from *How to Share Christ Confidently* by Milton Rudnick:

| | |
|---|--|
| Those who reveal recognition and regret over wrongdoing . . . | are ready to hear that Christ paid for our guilt with His own blood and death. |
| Those who are in pain . . . | need to know . . . Christ has suffered for us , so that we can look forward to a life in which there will be [no suffering]. |
| Those who are lonely . . . | need to know that Christ empathizes with them, has experienced and overcome the worst kind of loneliness —separation from God—and will fill the void with His own presence. |
| Those addicted to any evil substance or behavior . . . | need assurance of Christ's liberating victory over forces that hold us in bondage . |
| [Those] worried about death . . . | can find hope in knowing that by His death and resurrection Christ has made a way for us through death to a life that never ends . |

WHAT IF?

Witnessing needs cultivating and the Holy Spirit

So, what happens when you intentionally build a relationship with someone, pray for that person, listen and ask questions about his or her life, seek a moment to share your witness of Jesus . . . and nothing happens?

The person might be polite, but ultimately is dismissive. “I’m glad that Jesus thing works for you,” is as far a response as you get. The person’s life doesn’t seem to change. He or she isn’t interested in any further conversation on the topic. How discouraging! But Paul reminds us of a greater story at play, one we often don’t get to fully see.

In a letter to the Church in Corinth, where people were fighting over who was responsible for their conversion, Paul explained, “I [Paul] planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth” (1 Corinthians 3:6). In other words, multiple people were part of the process of telling you about Jesus, but ultimately, only God creates faith.

It’s exhilarating to witness a person’s conversion moment, but more often than not, we’re called to till the soil or water the seed. We’re helping prepare the heart for another witness from another person to come at another time. We may never know in our lifetime how our faithful witness impacted someone else, but God knows. And ultimately, He is responsible for the growth. Don’t judge how many conversions you’ve seen as the mark of your success as a witness. Instead, focus on remaining faithful to sharing your witness as Jesus has called you and all believers to do.

Any win for Christ is accomplished not by your charming witness but only and fully by the work of the Holy Spirit. It is the Lord who gives the growth. Remembering this should quickly humble us when we think we have all the answers or deserve all the accolades when it comes to making disciples.

This truth should also free us when we feel burdened by the reality of someone not coming to faith. Sometimes, instead of celebrating conversion stories, we’re grieving a loved one who has passed away while rejecting Jesus as their Lord. This reality stings. And it always should.



I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe
in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy
Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His
gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith.

In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies
the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus
Christ in the one true faith.

In this Christian church He daily and richly forgives all my
sins and the sins of all believers.

But we are not responsible for a person's rejection of the Holy Spirit. Creating faith in a person is not within our power or control. In his explanation of the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed, Luther explains that it is the Holy Spirit who calls, gathers, enlightens, sanctifies, and keeps us in the one true faith.

What is within our control is following God's call to be faithful witnesses of His work in our lives. Our job is telling others who Jesus is to us.

Still, it's hard to make sense of why some people believe and others do not. While we don't have the understanding and perspective of God to answer this question, we can cling to the truths of God's promises and love shown

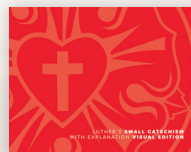
to us in Jesus. Remember, God's perfect love displayed for us in our lives is our confidence and motivation for telling others about who He is.

Yes, God's love is our confidence and motivation: our confidence that He knows what is best for His creation and our motivation to honor Him with our lives by speaking, with all gentleness and respect, of the hope we have in Him. †

Scripture: ESV®

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LUTHER'S SMALL CATECHISM WITH EXPLANATION—2017 VISUAL EDITION



Experience the Small Catechism through stunning illustrations alongside Luther's profound teachings. With three major sections—full Small Catechism text, 2017 Synod explanation, and appendix—the Visual Catechism is a beautiful way to learn Luther's teachings through text and visuals. Find this title and more from this magazine at cph.org/llresources

WHEN?

Always being ready to share Christ

As we end this issue talking about our Christian witness, let's take some time to reflect on God's Word and seek encouragement and direction from it. A passage commonly referenced on the topic of giving a witness is 1 Peter 3:14–16. Let's use it to process the methods that we have discussed.

"But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed"

Peter recognizes that we may indeed be persecuted or harmed for talking about Jesus. He was not naïve to or unfamiliar with this reality. Neither are we. Let's not be surprised when people hate us on account of Christ. They hated Christ first (see John 15:18).

Peter goes on to identify as blessed those who are persecuted for their faith in Jesus. We read this here and throughout Scripture (see Matthew 5:10). Peter encourages us to have no fear of such persecutions or be troubled by them. Rather, we can be strong and courageous knowing that the Holy Spirit goes with us and speaks through us. Eternal blessings are promised for those who endure persecution on behalf of Jesus.

"In your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy"

Notice that before talking about what we will say, Peter addresses how we are to *live* as faithful witnesses. Living

in a way that honors Christ as holy is a key part to what it means to be an authentic witness. Let people smell the sweet aroma of Christ. Make people you meet wonder why you're different from other people they might know.

"Always being prepared"

When are we to be ready? Always. We are to always be ready to share our witness as God provides opportunities. Remember, our witness includes both actions and words.

A person may not be ready yet to hear our witness. In such a case, we have more listening and asking to do. As we ask and listen, we should always be on the lookout for opportunities to connect the person to Jesus' story and share God's Word. Look back at the chart in the "How" article for ideas on how to connect with a person about who Jesus is, based on what that person needs to hear.

"Make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you"

What prompts our defense? Answering someone's question for the reason you have hope. Remember, being a witness starts with holy living and transitions to asking questions and listening. As you do, be prepared for the questions to come back your way. And the questions



will come. How are you so strong as you go through chemo? How are you so at peace even though you're going through financial hardship? How do you keep such a positive outlook when this world seems so dim? In other words, what's the reason for the hope that is within you? Refer back to the answer you wrote down on page 5, and keep practicing your answers.

While apologetics—defending the faith—is certainly a valuable tool and definitely has its place in the life of all Christians, notice here the defense you're giving is for the hope you have in Jesus. It's an answer based on your personal experience of hope in Jesus. While sharing compelling evidence from science and history in giving witness to your faith can be helpful, you don't need to have an academic dissertation ready to be a faithful witness. Moreover, don't let that keep you from sharing witness altogether. Keep it personal and share from your heart. Why do you have hope? What does Jesus mean to you?

“Do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame”

How do we share? With gentleness, respect, and a good conscience. In a way that communicates your genuine care to the other person. You're not here to win an argument. You're here to give a faithful account of your experience with Jesus. Remember, you will be blessed and rewarded if you suffer or are slandered for your witness. Let even your response to slander be witness to the fact that you hold Christ in your heart as holy. Let people wonder at how you live even as they slander you.

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope” (Romans 15:13). Amen. †

Scripture: ESV®

But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.

(1 Peter 3:14–16)



About This Issue's Author

Amy Bird is a child of God and wife of Aaron. She holds an M.A. in Systematic Theology from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and is continually amazed at how precisely God's Word speaks into life today.



LOOK INSIDE TO LEARN ABOUT
BEING JESUS' WITNESS AND HOW TO
WITNESS IN YOUR LIFE.

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L I F E



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