



How do I tell someone about **Jesus?**

If you picked up this pamphlet today, then it is probably not necessary to convince you of the importance of telling someone about the Lord! The Lord Jesus sends us out into the world to be his witnesses: "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (John 20:21). If we are God's children we can't help it – we want to bear witness for Jesus.

Of course, there are many ways of doing so. We bear witness through our deeds of charity, through the example of our life, and even more so, through our relationship with others – it is through our love for one another that the love of Jesus Christ becomes visible to others. Our surrender to God in our worship of him is also a testimony. But we must also be witnesses through our words. We must tell others about Jesus Christ. Romans 10:14 asks how people could believe if no-one spoke to them about Christ! This is what this pamphlet is about: telling others about Christ.

Five points to remember

1. Your own story

If you bear witness for the Lord, you are always (even without knowing it) telling your own story. I cannot speak about anything else than about what the Lord means to me in *my* life. But, when you realise that you don't have to speak about anything but your own experience, bearing witness becomes quite a nice thing to do. It means that you have to think a little about what the Lord means to you and about what he is trying to teach you in your life now. Pray and speak to the Lord about what he wants to show you; then you will know what must be in your testimony.

This also means that, when you want to tell someone about Jesus, you are definitely not going to speak about that person's life and death. We cannot know another person's heart, can we? We must not even for a moment presume to tell them what they miss in life or what terrible flames of hell await them. We are not called to convince others of their sins or to pronounce judgment over them; we are sent out to speak about our life with the Lord Jesus.

2. Listen first

Remember, there are (at least) two people necessary for a conversation: first you must also listen very carefully to what the other person wants to tell you. Listen with sympathy. How are things going? Are there questions or concerns? Without first listening we have no right to speak. Besides, it is possible that your sympathy already speaks more powerfully about the Lord's love than words could ever do. Of course, it is also possible that the Lord wants to teach you a couple of things through the conversation.

3. You cannot ever explain everything

Accept that it is not possible to explain everything about God. It is indeed true that we cannot fully understand God. We also don't have to try to defend him or to justify what he does. God has it in his power to do this himself!

All that we have to do is to share with others our small insights into God's plan or our special experience of him. Sometimes one can speak quite confidently about the Lord, at other times one can't even guess where he is heading with one's life and the conversation at hand. And luckily one doesn't have to know for sure.

Remember, too, that no two instances of bearing witness are the same. There are no recipes. Every person experiences God differently. Everyone's relationship differs quite a bit from your own. And that is quite alright.

4. You are not alone

Luckily, you can be sure that you are not alone. Long before your decision to speak to someone about the Lord, the Holy Spirit has already spoken to that person. Long after you parted, God will still be with that person. The Holy Spirit convinces people that they need God and his love, and brings them to the point where they open their lives to him.

We need not force, persuade or frighten people into giving their hearts to the Lord. We don't have to keep tally of how many people we lead to God. We simply bear witness to what he

means to us. He uses our love and our words – no matter how crooked or bent – to convince others of his love in his own time.

5. Who become converts?

One of the wonderful things is that you get to know the Lord better when you speak to others about him. Just as much as God is busy in the heart of the person you are talking to he is busy in yours. You will often find that you are filled with even more amazement about God during the conversation than you suspect of the other person. When we speak to others about God, God speaks also to us again.

If one understands these five principles, bearing witness becomes rather nice. We must bear witness, but we are not alone – and we may share the little we know. And then we leave things in God's hands...

Let's get practical

Pray and wait

It goes without saying that we should start on our knees, praying. Ask the Lord to make you see when, to whom and what you should say. Then open yourself up to become aware of the opportunities God puts in your path. When we pray, the Lord hears us. He will prepare the person to whom we should speak and he will prepare us too.

Before you speak with your mouth

Remember that you already say a lot with your actions, your attitude, your smile, the love that shines from you. Build a relationship with the other person, show interest in understanding the other person's life before you say even one word. Love the person first. When we bear witness before people from a different language, race or religious group – actually this goes for anybody – it is important to show respect, acceptance and love, and we should never impose and push ourselves forward. Make sure that your life will confirm, not belie, your testimony!

It is mostly necessary to take trouble to become friends with someone before starting to testify before that person. This is called friendship-evangelisation. This is especially important when speaking to someone from another religion about Christ.

Your story

Reflect on what you want to say about the Lord and discover what the Lord wants to teach you at this moment in time. Sometimes you will tell about how the Lord takes care of you and helps you, at other times, about how the Lord has set you free of sin and guilt. Many testimonies are about the healing of bodies, souls or relationships; others bear witness to our hopes for this life as well as the life hereafter. Sometimes we speak with certainty, other times with astonishment (or in awe like Job). Even just praying for someone, albeit haltingly, can be a wonderful testimony.

And the Bible?

Of course, we must make use of the Bible when we bear witness, but not as if it's a book of magic or laws in order to support our clever arguments or just to show how well we know the Bible. It is always better to speak in the vein of the Bible or to retell Bible stories rather than to quote small chunks or verses out of context. We believe that we can hear God's voice in the pages of the Bible. Explain by all means how the Lord seeks one and leads one through his Word, and make sure that you have a Bible to give away if the person wants to learn more after your conversation.

What else is there to use?

When we are eager to bear witness there are all kinds of resources to use. There are very functional, ready-made materials to help explain the essence of the gospel, materials such as the different colours of the wordless book, interesting pictures and informative pamphlets. We could give someone a good book or invite the person to a special discussion or meeting for worship. There are wonderful electronic materials... but the most important remains a sincere, spontaneous, personal witness coming from our heart.

Follow up

Follow up on your conversation. Of course, this doesn't mean that you have to tag the person all the time! Make a new appointment; try to bring the person to the attention of a local congregation. When the time is ripe, you can invite the person to one of the congregation's gatherings and make sure she or he feels at home. An invitation to drink coffee together or even a meal is an excellent idea – it is often around a table that the Lord joins people together or draws them to him.

Examples of testimonies in the Bible

Only a few examples from the Bible are given. Go ahead and read them closely:

- In John 1:6-8, 19-33 en 3:22-36 we read that John the Baptist points away from himself to Jesus by saying: *“Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”*
- In John 4 Jesus bears witness before the Samaritan woman at the well. He crosses cultural as well as other borders, and listens before he testifies.
- In Acts 2 we see how Peter and other believers boldly bear witness after the Holy Spirit has been poured out.
- In Acts 10 we read how Peter goes to the non-Jewish officer, Cornelius in order to testify. Peter learns in the process more about God.
- Paul testifies in Acts 9:1-19, 22:1-21 and 26:12-18 about his own conversion and God's grace.
- In 1 Peter 3:15 we are called to be always and anytime ready to tell about the hope that lives in us.

The deepest motivation for our bearing witness is always love. Paul says: “Christ's love compels us” (2 Corinthians 5:14). This is why I can freely keep on telling people about the Lord, even when I do not know exactly how to go about it. If my testimony comes from love the Holy Spirit will bless it.