

The Habit of Witness

The Power of Spiritual Habits #7 - Pastor Gary Combs - September 28, 2025 - Acts 4:29-31

INTRO: Good morning church! We're concluding our sermon series entitled: "The Power of Spiritual Habits." It's a study of Christian disciplines that help us grow in Christ Jesus.

Series Theme: Ephesians 4:23-24 (NLT) ²³ Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. ²⁴ Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy.

Spiritual habits help us yield to the Spirit's work in us. Spiritual habits are means, not ends. Spiritual habits are a way of yielding to and cooperating with the Spirit's work in us for our sanctification.

Over the past 6 Sundays we've talked about the habits of #1 Daily Devotion, #2 Fellowship, #3 Service, #4 Rest, #5 Bible Study and #6 Generosity. Today, we're going to consider a 7th spiritual habit, THE HABIT OF WITNESS.

What is witnessing?

"Witnessing is simply taking the initiative to share Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and leaving the results to God." — Bill Bright

Why Witness? (4 quick reasons)

Christ commanded it. Mark 16:15 (ESV) And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.

People are lost without Jesus. Acts 4:12 (NLT) There is salvation in no one else! There is no other name in all of heaven for people to call on to save them."

Christ's love compels us. 2 Corinthians 5:14 (NIV) For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.

It is necessary for our spiritual growth. Philemon 1:6 (ESV) I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ.

Need: This 4th reason is the focus for today. For the habit of witness affects our spiritual growth in Christ. Yet, how are we doing in this spiritual practice? According to surveys by Barna, only 73% of born again believers believe that they have a personal responsibility to share their faith. And only 52% say they have actually shared their faith with someone else in the past year (George Barna, "Is Evangelism Going Out of Style?").

Why is this? Why aren't believers sharing their faith? Here are some "reasons" that people give:

- **Lack of knowledge.** "Fear that a question will be asked that I can't answer."
- **Rejection.** "Fear that the person won't like me."
- **Disapproval.** "Fear that the person will think I'm being too religious or uncool."
- **Impolite.** "It isn't politically correct to discuss religion."
- **No desire.** "I'm an introvert. I don't want to talk to anyone."

Trans: But what is "no desire" really due to? Spiritual lethargy. Lack of passion for Jesus. We tend to talk about whatever we're passionate about. If we love football, we'll talk about the latest game with a total stranger. If we love a new restaurant, we proclaim its food and atmosphere on social media to all who will listen. If we're recently engaged to marry, no one can stop the bride-to-be from showing off her new engagement ring. It's what we do. We just naturally talk about what or who we love. Proclamation follows passion!

BODY: In the book of Acts, Luke recorded that the first century believers were committed to witnessing to others about Jesus and the church exploded upon the scene, experiencing exponential growth in spite of persecution. We can cultivate a habit of witnessing to others about Jesus. How can we cultivate a habit of witnessing to others about Jesus? The text gives three essentials for cultivating the habit of witnessing about Jesus.

Read text: Acts 4:29-31 (ESV) ²⁹ And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, ³⁰ while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus." ³¹ And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

THREE ESSENTIALS FOR CULTIVATING THE HABIT OF WITNESS:

1. Prayer. Ask God to grant you witnessing opportunities.

EXP: (29, 31a) "After they prayed..." (31). Prayer is not a footnote to evangelism. It's the priority. It's the plow that prepares the soil of the heart to receive the seed of God's Word. How did they pray? "Lord, grant..." (29).

"**Lord, look upon**" (29) (ἐπεῖδον, *epeidon*) (AAM) - to look upon, to regard; behold.

"**Threats**" (29) (ἀπειλή, *apeilē*) - a threat; menacing. "Lord, you handle the threats, we're going to keep on." Peter and John healed a lame beggar at the Temple (Acts 3). The same leaders who had turned Jesus over to Pilate to be crucified, arrested Peter and John, jailed overnight, and brought them before the High Priest and elders threatening and charging them "not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus" (Acts 4:18).

"**Grant to**" (29) (δίδωμι, *didōmi*) (AAM) - to grant, give, supply. "Grant us opportunities to boldly witness."

"**Your servants**" (29) (δοῦλος, *doulos*) - a slave, bondman. We serve You, not man. We do it for You!

"**Speak**" (29) (λαλέω, *laleō*) - to talk, preach, speak. Implied: to bear witness of Jesus.

"**Your word**" (29; 31) (λόγος, *logos*) - doctrine, teaching, word. What word? The "Word of God" (31).

"**With all boldness**" (29) (παρρησία, *parrēsia*) - freedom in speaking, unreservedness in speech; without beating around the bush; free and fearless confidence, cheerful courage, boldness, assurance.

ARG: The apostle Paul asked the Colossians to pray for open doors for the Gospel of Christ:

Colossians 4:3-4 (ESV) ³ At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— ⁴ that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.

ILL: Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26–40). Philip wasn't out canvassing randomly. He was responsive to the Spirit's leading after prayer. The Spirit told him, "Go over and join this chariot," and a gospel conversation and baptism followed.

Paul and the man from Macedonia (Acts 16:7–10). ⁷ And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. ⁸ So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. ⁹ And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." ¹⁰ And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

APP: The first essential for the spiritual habit of witnessing is prayer! Prayer is not a footnote to evangelism. It's the priority. It's the plow that prepares the soil of the heart to receive the seed of God's Word.

How might this look for you? Write down the names of people you're praying for using our IT cards. Join the Prayer Team. Sign up to pray for people at our Whirligig Booth.

Have you heard of prayer evangelism? It's a great way to see God impact people. "**Prayer Evangelism** is praying for your neighbor's needs and then joining the Father's work in your neighbor's life through radical acts of kindness and sharing the gospel story" (Dr. Doug Banister).

2. Power. Rely on the Spirit to empower your witness.

EXP: (30, 31b) "Lord, stretch forth your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders..." (30). The place was "shaken" and they were "filled with the Holy Spirit (31). These are all expressions of God's power."

"**Stretch out your hand**" (30) (ἐκτείνω, *ekteinō*) - to stretch. "Lord, do mighty acts for your name's sake."

"**Heal**" (30) (ἰάσις, *iasis*) - a healing, cure. "Lord, heal people in Your name."

"**Signs and wonders**" (30) (σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα, *sēmeia kai terata*) - a sign; miracles. "The apostles not only desired boldness to speak, but they asked that God would continue to work miracles, and thus furnish to them, and to the people, evidence of the truth of what they delivered." (*Barnes' Notes on the Bible*)

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"Name of... Jesus" (30) (ὄνομα, *onoma*) - name. His name was the authority for spiritual power and salvation. His was also the name they had been charged and threatened to stop saying.

"The place ... was shaken" (31) (σαλεύω, *saleuō*) - a motion produced by winds, storms, waves, etc; to agitate or shake thoroughly. "The language here is suited to express the idea of an earthquake." (Barnes)

"Filled with the Holy Spirit" (31) (πίμπλημι, *pimplēmī*) - to be fulfilled, to be filled; imbue, influence, supply.

ARG: Our power comes from the Holy Spirit:

Acts 1:8 (ESV) 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."

ILL: **Electrical Appliance Without Power:** A lamp or phone might be designed perfectly—but without being plugged in, it's powerless.

APP: The 2nd essential for the spiritual habit of witnessing is rely on the Spirit's power! Answer this question: "Who saves, who changes hearts and minds? Is it your witness? No. It's the power of God. Remember "Witnessing is simply taking the initiative to share Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and leaving the results to God" (Bill Bright). We invite people to come to Jesus. He is the Savior!

3. **Proclamation. Boldly speak of Jesus to others.**

EXP: (31c) And they "continued to speak the word of God with boldness" (31). Notice the word "continue" (29, 31) is repeated. Witness was a continual, habitual, way of life, for them.

"Continued to speak...boldly" (31) - "This was the grace they asked, Acts 4:29. God gave it them, and with it all other graces necessary for them." (*Matthew Poole's Commentary*) Threats didn't stop them.

ARG: Paul said that they talked about Jesus everywhere they went.

Colossians 1:28 (NLT) So everywhere we go, we tell everyone about Christ. We warn them and teach them with all the wisdom God has given us, for we want to present them to God, perfect in their relationship to Christ.

When we "revere" Jesus as Lord, we'll always be ready to talk about Him.

1 Peter 3:15 (NIV) But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.

ILL: **Our three essentials match the history of the early church:** 1) Disciples wait and pray for 10 days (Acts 1). 2) Spirit falls on them like fire (Acts 2). 3) Peter preaches and 3,000 get saved (Acts 2).

APP: The 3rd essential for the spiritual habit of witnessing is rely on the Spirit's power! What if we took the challenge of trying to incorporate the name Jesus into a conversation every single day this week? What might that look like? The 1st century believers were threatened to stop speaking in the name of Jesus. Instead, they prayed for power to "continue speaking boldly!"

CONCLUSION: When we have a passion for Jesus, when we love Him above all others, we'll naturally talk about Him! We talk about sports, the weather, politics, etc. We do it on social media and when we're with others. When's the last time you talked about your relationship with Jesus?

Will you decide to cultivate the spiritual habit of witnessing today?

1. Praying for God to grant you witnessing opportunities?
2. Relying on the Spirit to empower you?
3. And Boldly proclaiming Jesus to others?

Let's pray.