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*God, through His Son Jesus, provides eternal grace for our failures and human limitations.*

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## **Principals and Ethics Concerning Witnessing.**

(2013)

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The Bible not only reveals God's eternal plans purposes and promises  
But also shows how you can know God for yourself.

***Teach it, don't demand it.***

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## Principals and Ethics Concerning Witnessing.

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### Topics.

- Everyone who belongs to Christ is called to witness.
  - The Greeks, Romans, Jews and first century Christians.
  - The early church and professional religious leaders.
  - Jewish religious leaders could not accept a crucified Saviour.
  - Witnessing and selling God as a product.
  - Witnessing and proving the Christian faith.
  - Witnessing and changing a person.
  - Witnessing and the salt of the earth.
  - Witnessing and being holy.
  - Witnessing and overcoming fear.
  - Witnessing and being perfect.
  - Witnessing rewards and treasure in heaven.
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### Everyone who Belongs to Christ is Called to Witness.

When Jesus appeared to the eleven apostles after his death and resurrection he said to them that they will: -

- Receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon them, and that they will be his witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8).

The message the apostles were to take to the world was: -

- The message of the cross.
- The Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- The things Jesus spoke and taught them.

It is that message that leads to eternal life. Peter took the Gospel to Jerusalem, the disciples took the Gospel to Judea and Samaria and Paul took the Gospel to the ends of the earth and by extension every brother and sister in Christ are to continue the work of Paul in taking the Gospel to the world.

Unfortunately there has been in some Christian circles a misconception of what this means, some have taken it to mean that Christians are to force or impose the Christian faith onto the world, but God never did this and never will. God says the voice the Bride (church) says, come, it is an invitation not a compulsion.

The following notes will hopefully help those desiring to share their faith to share it in a relaxed atmosphere and not feel as though they have been rejected or failed the Lord if the person they are witnessing to turns against them and reject the faith they are sharing.

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## **The Greeks, Romans, Jews and First Century Christians.**

First century Christians were spoken of as being anti-social, godless and depraved, this is because their message proclaimed a crucified criminal.

**To the Greeks:** the Christian story showed how ridiculous the new faith was (a Savior crucified on a cross by his enemies).

**To the Romans:** the Christian story showed how weak and ineffective the new faith was (rather than fight, Christ surrendered to his enemies).

**To the unbelieving Jew:** the Christian story could not be stomached at all. They believed they were the chosen race with God and the Gentiles to be an unclean race without God and therefore considered Gentile Christians offensive.

If the early Christians were going to win anybody at all for Jesus Christ they had to mentally rise above the negativity of the Greeks, the Romans and the unbelieving Jews. Likewise today two thousand years later nothing has changed Christians who want to testify to their faith still have to mentally rise above the negativity of the unbelieving society surrounding them.

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## **The Early Church and Professional Religious Leaders.**

The central thrust and focus of the apostles preaching was, "Let all Israel then accept as certain that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36) it was the central message of the early church.

The emphasis of the early missionary's was upon the Messiahship of Jesus so much so that within a few years, Christ (the Greek word for Messiah) had ceased to designate Jesus' function as Israel's Messiah and had come to be a sort of surname.

The early missionaries were a handful of men who had no formal Rabbinic training attempting to change the theology, belief and the religious practice of properly qualified, professional religious leaders. They were standing against men who stood in a tradition of oral instruction which reached back to Moses.

To these religious leaders the early missionaries were considered nobodies and looked upon as untrained laymen. The unbelieving Jews regarded them with a mixture of wonder and contempt and the religious leaders and high priestly party constantly sought out ways to destroy them and their followers because they not only considered them false teachers, but also considered them an offense to God.

This should be encouraging to every lowly faithful brother and sister in Christ who stands against powerful and authoritative leaders of religious global institutions that have corrupted the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and the teachings of Scripture and chosen to be faithful to the traditions of the organization that employs them rather than be faithful to Christ and to his Gospel of Grace and teachings.

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## **Jewish Religious Leaders could Not Accept a Crucified Saviour.**

It was not easy for the Jews to think of a carpenter-teacher as the summit of Israel's development, and to believe that someone so recent could embody wisdom greater than that of Moses this was a great stumbling block to the Jews.

For the common Jew to accept that an un-ordained Rabbi who often came into conflict with the official exponents of the Torah could be the divinely authenticated teacher of Israel seemed almost absurd, how could this carpenter's son have greater wisdom than that of Moses.

By definition the promised Messiah was a deliver and a conqueror this is why in Jesus' lifetime so few of the Jewish religious leaders had any faith in him, but after Jesus' execution it was not merely difficult it was preposterous to think of him as

Israel's Messiah especially since the Jewish nation had been looking toward a Savior for around four thousand years who was going to conquer their surrounding enemies and lead them to victory.

To the Jewish religious leaders the message of a crucified Messiah was distinctly blasphemous and to make it worse the Old Testament made it perfectly plain that anyone hung on a stake was under the curse of God. How could the Jews accept that God's chosen ONE could possibly have been exposed in the place of cursing? They found the doctrine of a crucified Messiah a tremendous stumbling block.

Yet in the face of all this surrounding negativity the Christians of the early church shared their faith by word and lifestyle, they forsook the things of this world, were passionate and willing to die and because of the obvious reality of their faith and sacrificial love for Jesus multitudes of unsaved Jews and Gentiles were saved.

This evidences that having the reality of Christ and the love of God dwelling in the heart and living a life outwardly from this inward reality by far supersedes intellectual knowledge (no matter how brilliant) that lacks God's love and grace.

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### **The Format of Paul's Witnessing.**

Acts twenty-two gives some insight to the process Paul used for witnessing Christ. In this chapter Paul is speaking with zeal and passion giving his personal testimony to a Jewish crowd at Jerusalem. This crowd was not only hostile toward him but also wanted the authorities to do away with him because he had been teaching against the Law of Moses (primarily circumcision) (Acts 21:21) (Acts 21:36).

Now ponder for a moment how foolish Paul must have looked to the crowd when he told them: -

- How he had approved of Stephen being stoned to death.
- How Israel's God Jehovah had supernaturally allowed him to see the Righteous One Israel's Messiah and to hear him speak.
- How the Christ all Jews had been looking forward to come for over four thousand years had appeared to him.
- How Christ in a blinding vision knocked him off his horse and told him that he was called to proclaim the name of Jesus Israel's Messiah.
- How he was blinded and a man named Ananias a respected Jew restored his sight by speaking to it.

At the end of Paul sharing his testimony the Jewish crowd not only thought he was out of his mind they wanted him killed.

Now considered the thoughts that may have been running through Paul's mind while he was sharing his personal testimony, it is very likely the unspoken voices in his mind were saying something along the following lines: -

- No one is going to believe this it's too far over the top, tone it down, it sounds like a fantasy.

Paul overrides the negativity of his mind and shares what was real and true to him even though he was aware that the outcome was not going to be good. This example of Paul shines a spotlight on the truth that sharing our testimony is about sharing our personal story concerning Christ regardless of what others may think and about sharing the message of the cross and the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ and God's love and grace and not worrying about the outcome, good or bad.

In a certain sense it is a win, win situation for every faithful brother and sister in Christ who testifies of their faith.

This is because if the person being witnessed to responds then they have delivered them from the domain of darkness and transferred them into the kingdom of God's beloved Son (Col. 1:13) and given them eternal life. If they do not respond they have treasure stored in heaven for making the effort to sharing their faith.

This is because God understands that it takes faith, courage and humility to witness and therefore rewards the effort accordingly and not the result because we have no power or control over the outcome that is the ministry of the Holy Spirit working through God's word, our testimony and upon the heart of those that are being witnessed to. The Bible refers to these rewards as spiritual riches and treasures being stored in heaven

**Missionaries of the early church believed before a sinner could be united with God and saved to eternal life they must: -**

1. Believe God exists.
2. Believe they are a sinner before God.
3. Humble themselves and honestly repent before God.
4. Accept Jesus as their Lord and Saviour.
5. Seal their confession of faith with water baptism.

It is the calling and privilege of every brother and sister in Christ to share the Gospel, but it is not our right or role to steer a person to a particular decision that should always be their choice.

It's not our job to use emotion or music to manipulate others to our belief, witnessing is sharing information (the Good News of the Gospel) and allowing the listener to make a conscious choice.

When witnessing we must always respect the persons right to reject what we are saying, it is their choice, we should never feel offended, they have every right to reject Christ. God has given out an invitation for all to come to Him, it is not a compulsion, but an invitation to the most glorious wedding banquet this world will ever witness.

It is very much like a couple inviting their friends to their wedding, they don't want to force people to come, their desire is that the people they invite want to come and share the overwhelming joy of the wedding ceremony with them, so it is with God He is inviting people to a wedding feast with His Son.

Though God desires all will come to Him He has no desire to force or manipulate them into coming, in fact God is so loving He says, if people do not want to come to the wedding banquet of His most beloved Son they may as well enjoy this life as much as they can because that is all they will have. God is so loving He has created a wonderful world for those who reject Him to enjoy, because as He says that is their lot in life, it is all they have for their limited time on this earth.

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**Witnessing and Selling God as a Product.**

God in some churches is sold as a product. Sometimes witnessing can sound as though the evangelist is selling God. This is because a certain few forcefully present God in the same way that a salesman would sell a soap or vacuum cleaner.

Using sales techniques to sell God may produce a positive result in the same way that a door to door salesman makes an on the spot sale in a home, but once he is gone and the sales pitch has worn off the person often regrets their purchase or returns the product.

Even the secular world understands that the human mind can be influenced by skillful oratory and speech making this is why the law gives a householder who has made an on the spot purchase a fourteen day cooling off period.

To avoid this type of thing happening we should never force or impose God onto anyone, but rather share our faith and listen to the person we are sharing Christ with and be focused on what they are saying. When we don't listen to people it shines a spotlight on the truth that we do not care about them but are only interested in selling our product (God).

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### **Witnessing and Proving the Christian Faith.**

Though we fully believe the Christian faith, sometimes when we witness to others about Christ we feel hesitant because we know we cannot transfer the love that we experience to the person we are witnessing to.

Some of us can feel we have to be able to witness what we are feeling or that we have to prove the faith we believe, but the reality is we will never be able to present the hidden life of Christ that dwells within the heart and mind to another or prove that what we believe is true until the one we are witnessing to becomes a Christian. It is only then that we see the glory and truthfulness of the Gospel story shining in their face.

No brother or sister should ever let the negative thoughts of the mind make them feel like they are telling a fictitious story or that they have to prove their faith since the reality is only proved when a person responds to it with an honest and repentant heart.

Whoever responds to the Gospel message (as taught in the New Testament not by some churches) will never be disappointed and those who have witnessed to them will be vindicated.

If a man or woman does not respond to the message of the Cross and the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ there is nothing we can do to prove its reality, since it is a message of faith not science, the reality of Jesus only comes when a person surrenders their heart, mind and life to him (i.e., to Christ and his messages not to a church or religious leader).

The Bible says one of the functions of the Holy Spirit is to convict the world of sin. We have to learn to have faith in the Gospel and trust that it is the Holy Spirit of God working on the message of the Cross and the person's heart that brings about salvation and not our own cleverness. Our calling is not to save, but to be the mouth of God telling the story of salvation from an honest heartfelt faith all the while being fully aware we have no power to turn a person's heart toward God since that is totally dependent on the condition of their heart and the Spirit of God.

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### **Witnessing and Changing a Person.**

When we are faced with a person whose lifestyle seems so contrary to the standard God teaches in the Bible, thoughts can arise in the mind that shout, "You will never be able to change the way they are living, their lifestyle is normal to them, they are so ingrained in it, it is useless," but we must remember our job is to witness not change.

It is the work of the Holy Spirit to supernaturally work through the Gospel and on their heart to deliver them from the darkness they are in and translate them into the Kingdom of God's beloved Son (Col 1:13). We are called to invite others into a relationship with God and the Lord Jesus Christ, when they accept this invitation their heart, mind and passions are changed toward God and they begin their spiritual journey in Christ as they grow and mature in the love and grace of God.

We need to constantly tell the negative voices in our mind, it is not our job to change a person's lifestyle, because that is an almost impossible task and will hinder us from testifying to certain groups of people. We need to trust in the reality of God and His Holy Spirit, knowing when a person's heart knows and understands the love God has toward them that love will begin to change them from the inside out.

This change may be instant or take weeks, months or many years, depending on their background and past experiences, but if they remain faithful to God they will change and be saved to eternal life and everlasting glory.

We are not called to judge the unsaved since judging others never fixed or saved anyone, it is the work of the Holy Spirit to convict a sinner of sin. Our work is to share Christ and his Gospel in a spirit of love grace and mercy and trust God to clean them especially since we all need ongoing maintenance.

A sinner who comes to Christ can be likened to a sick person who goes into hospital, once they are in the door they are safe, but they still have to go through the ongoing surgery and respite home to fully recover from their illness, during this time they need (as we all do) comfort, patience, kindness, care, love and lavish amounts of mercy and grace.

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### **Witnessing and the Salt of the Earth.**

Jesus said, "You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored?" It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet (Matt. 5:13). Based on this verse and many others like it a Christian can feel that they cannot testify to the goodness of God until their life is free from sin, but if that was the case none of us would ever be able to witness.

Jesus is not saying unless one is sinless they are no longer good for anything, salt in this context does not mean being sinless, but carries the idea of being passionate and devoted to Christ and the things of God it is about aiming to live a life that honours God and brings a good name to the Lord Jesus Christ and the Christian faith. It is about being zealous about ones own salvation and passionate toward God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus is simply saying if a brother or sister in Christ has lost their passion for Christ and their zeal for God how are they possibly going to be a good testimony to God or motivated to serve the Lord in faithfulness.

### **NOTE.**

If anyone of us could attain a lifestyle that was sin free Christ died for no reason. There has only ever been one man who has lived without sin before God and his name is the Lord Jesus Christ the Lamb without blemish who laid his life down to a brutal, bloody and cruel death so that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).

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### **Witnessing and Being Holy.**

Jesus said to his disciples, "For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:20). When some faithful brothers and sisters begin to witness voices can arise in their minds that scream, "You are not worthy, you are not righteous how can you possibly witness for Christ, does your righteousness pass the righteousness of Scribes and Pharisees?"

But the focus of this verse is not upon sin, but upon the inward attitude of the heart. The Pharisees and Scribes outwardly adhered to all the ceremonial rites and holy days and kept all the religious Jewish laws customs and traditions added to this they served in the Temple of God and wore religious garments so they appeared to the people to be holy men of God, but on the inside they were prideful self-serving hypocrites who lacked compassion and mercy.

### **Righteousness that exceeds that of the Scribes and Pharisees is about: -**

- Being honest and having integrity in contrast to being full of hypocrisy and pretence.

- Being your authentic self in contrast to keeping up a religious appearance to appear holy.
- Being compassionate, merciful and showing grace toward others in contrast to being dogmatic and legalistic.
- Being humble in contrast to being prideful.
- Being willing to serve others in contrast to serving self.

The most effective witnessing is witnessing that comes from an honest heart and from a person's honest and authentic self rather than from an outward religious appearance that is false. Because of the mistaken belief that those in Christ must be holy there is a temptation to present to others a false image of righteousness for the following three reasons: -

1. To be esteemed and exalted by others as a holy person.
2. For fear of being rejected by the group.
3. To maintain religious control and power over others.

This kind of witnessing will never attract the world to Christ, and even worse than that it will make them resent us because they will perceive the hypocrisy and pretence dwelling within the heart.

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### **Witnessing and Overcoming Fear.**

In countries that are not aggressively hostile toward the Christian faith the mental fear that can come upon the mind and emotions before witnessing is way out of proportion to the reality since the worst that will happen is that the person being witnessed to will either tell us (politely in most cases) they are not interested and our pride may feel a little humbled or we might feel a sense of rejection.

If a faithful brother or sister in Christ feels rejected they should be encouraged, "Why some might ask?" Simply this, Jesus said, "They are not rejecting you, but him," don't take it personally and don't try to impose or force the Gospel onto anyone. God has given an invitation to all humans to accept or reject His eternal plan of salvation. Neither God nor Christ will force themselves upon anyone. In fact God says if a man or women is going to reject eternal life they might as well eat drink and be merry and enjoy this mortal life because that is all they have.

**Keep in Mind:** rejection and persecution can be seen as a complement since it proves that a person's faith is taken seriously, nobody bothers with a luke-warm or wishy washy person; it is the person people believe and take seriously that attracts persecution and rejection, with this in mind try to turn the fear into adrenalin and excitement and see witnessing as a spiritual adventure.

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### **Witnessing and Being Perfect.**

There is an old saying that states, "Anything worth doing is worth doing well," but since nothing difficult can be done well until it has been firstly done poorly this statement would be better stated, "Anything worth doing is worth doing poorly until you can learn to do it well." Especially since there are many who won't try to do the difficult, until they feel that they can do it well, but with this mindset they will never do it well because they firstly have to do it poorly to learn to do it well.

Imagine telling a swimming instructor that we refuse to get into the pool until we can swim properly, obviously anyone with this attitude will never learn to swim. Unless we jump in and splash around and put our head under the water and firstly swim poorly we will never learn to swim well.



Another wise man has said, "Better to do something imperfectly than to do nothing flawlessly." Don't allow imperfections and fear to keep you standing on the edge of the pool of life and refuse to get wet. A baby has to fall many times before learning to walk, and the falling is part of the learning process, we all learn and grow from our mistakes.

Always be encouraged by the truth when we witness and share our faith God is not going to judge us because we do it imperfectly, rather we will not only delight His heart for at least attempting to proclaim the name of Jesus but will also be storing up treasure in heaven since God's rewards are not dependent upon results, but honest heartfelt effort.

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### **Witnessing Rewards and Treasure in Heaven.**

No brother or sister in Christ should ever feel defeated if the person they share their faith with does not respond, God sees the effort and that effort becomes spiritual riches stored in their treasure chest in heaven, since Christians only have control over their own effort and absolutely no control over another person's decision. This is why God rewards effort not results.

No one who belongs to the family of Christ should ever feel like they have wasted their time no matter how many times their witnessing has been rejected since they maybe only one very small step in the process of God saving the one they are sharing their faith with.

Every faithful brother and sister in Christ should rest in the truth that God is all powerful and all knowing it is a small thing for Him to bring other faithful Christians across their path at the right time to add to what they have shared with them.

### **To many in the family of Christ witnessing Christ will take: -**

- Courage and humbleness.
- Overcoming shyness, timidity and the fear of rejection.

This is why God rewards those who do not hide their faith, this does not mean we have to be apostles or Peters and brilliant evangelist as Paul was these men were specifically called by Christ himself to the ministry that he purposed for them. For most in the family of Christ God's calling is to live a life that honours God and brings a good testimony to Christ and the Christian faith. This for many will simply mean: -

- They are faithful to their wives/husbands and children.
- They work honestly and with integrity in whatever they do.
- They do not hide the fact that they are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- When the opportunity arises they are excited to share their faith.
- They show compassion mercy and grace to those who do not yet know the love and grace of God.

### **NOTE.**

This does not mean that those in Christ have to be social or best friends with those in the secular world, but it does mean that they should understand that they do not yet know the love and grace of God as they do and therefore should endeavor to view them in the same spirit of love and grace as Jesus expressed in the following Scripture: -

- For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).

**Evangelism is not: -**

- A target on a wall in which the goal is to get people to agree with us about the meaning of life.
- A network marketing brother or sister trying to build their-own down line of people saved into Christ's Kingdom.
- Demanding or imposing our belief onto those we witness to (there must be respect for the space and freedom of others).

**Evangelism is: -**

- Reaching a felt need for forgiveness of sin and freedom from guilt before God.
- Sharing the Gospel, but respecting a person's right to reject it.
- Letting everybody live their own lives.
- Sharing the personal joy, love and grace you have found in the Lord Jesus Christ.

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End