

# Purpose Driven Life, XI

*The Task of Testifying (Chpts. 36-38)*

May 9, 2004

## MINISTRY AND MISSION

This set of chapters begins with the statement: You were made for a mission. And I like the distinction Rick draws between our *mission* and our *ministry*.

- Our ministry is our service to believers
- Our mission is our service to unbelievers

And our chief service to unbelievers is introducing them to God through Jesus' sacrifice.

... [God] reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. - 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 NIV

Good works and service to unbelievers is vital and wonderful, but it should never sidetrack us from our main mission.

The enemy doesn't mind us doing all types of good deeds toward unbelievers, as long as we don't take 'em to Heaven with us.

In the *great commission*, Jesus said:

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. - Matthew 28:19-20 NIV

This isn't the *great suggestion!* The body of Christ has a shared responsibility to carry on Jesus' mission to extend the Kingdom.

**[Jesus said to God:]** As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. - John 17:18 NIV

As a church, we're seeing the results of our *shared mission*. Last Sunday, we baptized thirty three men, women, and children.

## OUR SPECIFIC ASSIGNMENT

Besides having a *shared mission* to reach the world, we also have a *specific assignment* as believers: Our specific assignment is the task of testifying

Sharing your testimony is an essential part of your mission, because it is unique. There are people that only *you* can reach because of your location, personality, and background.

**[Paul said:]** ... I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me – **the task of testifying** to the gospel of God's grace. - Acts 20:24 NIV

Q: Does that make you nervous: **The task of testifying**?

This whole business of testifying, witnessing, sharing our faith can leave even outgoing believers feeling nervous, overwhelmed, and inadequate or incapable of the assignment.

**[Yet, John said:]** Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart. - 1 John 5:10 NIV

Q: So what's the real issue here?

Two things: the first issue is that we tend to amplify, intensify, and exaggerate what it means to testify (or witness). We often worry about things that aren't part of the task.

In a courtroom, the witness is not expected to: argue the case, prove the truth, or press for a verdict.

[The Holy Spirit] will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment ... - John 16:8 NIV

Jesus said: "You'll be my *witnesses*" not "You'll be my *attorneys*."

- The witness simply reports what they've experienced

You might say: "But I don't know when to share or how to bring the subject up."

Q: In the courtroom, when does the witness testify?

A: When they're asked too. Otherwise they wait and watch.

A witness doesn't barge into the courtroom: "I'm gonna tell you what I saw!" If they did, they'd be excused and ushered out.

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 ... - 1 Peter 3:15 NIV

- That doesn't mean that we never introduce the topic.
- It simply means that we're not expected to force it.

I've known many believers who are routinely excused and disregarded because they're insensitive and disrespectful to the very audience they're trying to reach.

There are Two Parts to the Task of testifying:

1. Sharing God's grace when given the opportunity
2. Building relationships while patiently waiting

The more practiced we are at waiting and watching, the more perceptive we'll become at recognizing the many subtle opportunities that present themselves to us.

Some well-intentioned believers try to forgo the *relationship-building* aspect, which renders the *sharing* aspect about as effective as chasing after cows with buckets of feed.

- Even if the cows are hungry they're gonna run from you!

The key to enjoying the "task" is realizing the importance of building natural relationships, and then waiting for natural moments to share.

You might say, "But even if I recognized the moment, I wouldn't know what to share. I don't know theology! I'm not a pastor!"

Q: In court, what is the witness expected to share?

A: *Only* what they've personally experienced (seen and heard).

Your testimony (i.e. experience) is more effective than any sermon because unbelievers see pastors as *professional salesmen*, but they see you as a *satisfied customer*.

Q: Have you ever found a product you loved and told other people about it (just because you knew it would benefit them)?

On TV the "pro" pushes the product and we yawn; then a "real" person shares their experience with it, and we're interested.

- Everyone is curious about experiences they've never had.

You have a storehouse of experiences that He'll use to bring others to forgiveness, purpose, peace, and eternal life.

## A LACK OF LOVE

Q: "But what if I'm asked a question I don't have an answer for?"

A: That's impossible! Because "I don't know" is an answer!

- Or: I know who you could talk to (bring 'em to church).
- Or: Do you want me to help you find the answer to that?
- Or: I have a book you could read (and buy it for them).

So, exaggerating our assignment is the first issue. But, what if we're hesitant to testify even when the conditions are right? We often justify ourselves: "I'm too bashful; too shy; too timid; or, I'm just not wired that way." However ...

Q: In court, what happens if a witness refuses to talk?

A: Contempt!

Q: In court, what if a witness holds back some of the truth?

A: Contempt!

**[The Apostle John said:]** There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear ... - 1 John 4:18 NIV

You run into a burning building to save your child because your love for the child *drives out* your fear of personal peril.

- The second issue isn't fear; it's a lack of love for others.

It's vital to understand this, because we may pardon ourselves for being timid and shy, but usually *not* for being unloving.

Perhaps you don't need to pray for more courage, but for greater love - to care passionately about what God cares passionately about: the redemption of the people He made.

- Someday the *great commission* will be the *great completion*.

Imagine the joy of greeting people in heaven that you helped to get there! A big part of our created purpose is to share the good news of Jesus as:

- The center of our joy
- The source of our peace; and
- The hope of our future

All He asks is that we testify to the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help us, God.