

Our Life Together: Witness
James 1:22-25; Philippians 4:2-9
November 21, 2010

This morning we're going to talk about the final vow we take as members of Sunrise Church – the vow to Witness. It's most appropriate on this Stewardship Sunday. After this message each of us is going to have an opportunity to place on the altar an expression of our witness to our faith in Christ and our witness to His lordship in our lives by declaring how we will use the spiritual and material gifts He has entrusted to us.

There is not one of us that does not already witness on a regular basis. You might not think of what you do as witnessing, but it is. Here are some examples of witnessing that I do:

- I witness to my love for my family by displaying this picture on our mantle at home.
- I witness to my love for Sarah by displaying her picture in my study and by wearing this wedding ring on my finger for all to see.
- I wear Duke sweatshirts and have this blue fan-hair so that people will know which ACC team I cheer for.

How do you witness? I'm sure you do many of the same things. Maybe you witness to your desire to sport the latest fashions by the clothing or jewelry you wear. Maybe you witness to others by the kind of car you drive or the type of house you live in. No matter what other examples you can think of, the truth is...we all witness to what is important to us by what we say and what we do.

Why do we witness to the things that we do? We do it because we want others to know what things/concepts/ideas/activities are important to us. Sometimes we witness to someone because we want them to come over to our way of thinking, or we want them to join us in what we are doing.

Our two passages from James and Philippians encourage us to move beyond merely knowing in our hearts and minds that witnessing for Christ is important, to actually doing something about it. We are challenged to live our lives in such a way that others can know Christ.

A devotional I read this week used the following scripture and then made an interesting point about the reason for witnessing.

*"But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."
Philippians 4:19*

What is it about your life that you cannot explain apart from God? Do you know that's the only part of you that is believable?

Let me illustrate. If your neighbor can explain you, then you are just like him - only you're religious. Friend, your life as a religious person is not going to convince him of the

power of God. But when he sees God supernaturally meeting your needs, then you're going to be believable.

Folks, the only way that anyone is going to be able to witness God supernaturally meeting your needs is if you face your fears and put your entire life in His care.

The reason we witness to the people around us by what we do and what we say is so that they will be brought into a relationship with Jesus Christ. Christ is at the center of everything we are as Christians. You and I make decisions and choose courses of action, not based on our own wisdom or intellect (or even based on our fears), but based on what Christ would have us do.

When we act based on God's will, then we have something tangible others can see, and it points them to Christ. In the words of the devotional writer, they will be able to see God working supernaturally in your life. When we act only within our own will and comfort level, they see a person who has a thin veneer of faith; it's enough to look respectable but it's not strong enough to hold your life together. In the end your friends end up seeing only you and not Christ. Why would they want the kind of relationship with Christ that looks like you are having trouble holding things together? They are already living that kind of life without Him.

This leads me to my final question. If you are truly going to live and make decisions in a way that clearly shows that Jesus is your Lord, what will your witness cost you? Kind of funny question, isn't it? But it's a question that must be asked and answered, because any time you make a decision to act it's going to cost you something.

When you decide to tithe as a witness to your faith, it's going to cost you control over some amount of money. It's going to cost you the ability to make your own decisions regarding 10% of the money that God has given you control over. Tithing may initially cost you a little peace of mind until you let God prove to you that He is sufficient to meet all of your needs, and that He will keep His promises. While tithing may initially cost you, what you gain in the long run, spiritually, will be worth the price.

When you decide to witness to your faith by changing what you do with your time, it's going to cost you. Some of your old activities may have to fall by the wayside in favor of new ones. You'll probably have to explain your decisions to friends with whom you used to do things. And they may challenge your priorities. But when they see how God is supernaturally changing how you approach the circumstances of your life, then your witness will be doing its job – pointing them toward Christ.

Folks, as I said at the outset...we all witness to something with the words we use, and the actions we fill our lives with. The questions you need to answer once and for all are these:
Am I tired of witnessing to the futility of worldly things?

Am I ready to make decisions that will lead others to know that what is most important in my life is my Savior Jesus Christ?

There comes a time for each of us (to use the old fishing idiom) to cut bait or fish. Are you going to live your life preparing to live for Christ, or are you going to go ahead and just do it!? What will your witness be today?