

Sermon: Witnesses
Feb. 27th, 2022
Impact Church London

Recap: Have to know where there is.

Hab. 2:14

For the earth will be filled With the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, As the waters cover the sea.

Isaiah 40:5

The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, And all flesh shall see it together; For the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

Eph. 3:9-10

"...and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms..."

This is God's eternal purpose: to bring forth, through a relationship of union with his church, an expression of himself that all of creation can see, feel, understand, by and through grace.

Intro: We are called to be his witnesses.

Acts 1:8

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Sermon: Witness

We are called to be his witnesses, but what does that look like in the 21st century, Post-Covid era? We truly are in those days described in Judges

Judges 21:25

"In the days there was no king in Israel and everyone did what was right in their own eyes."

Great opportunity in the market place of ideas and life philosophies. People want to hear something new, not from experts, but from everyday life and peoples stories.

1 John 1:1-4

*1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life— 2 the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us— 3 that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. 4 And these things we write to you **that your joy may be full.***

What they themselves experienced, and for the sake of others joy, not to be successful at the Christian project of church growth or “winning souls.”

When Jesus said be my witnesses, I think there is an obligation to tailor our approach to actually meet the people of our day where they are.

Hebrews 1:1-3

“In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son...”

God wanted to speak clearly so he became the message, the word made flesh.

Barna Reviving Evangelism in Canada¹

1. **Living not just speaking** - Half of Christian Gen Z (47%) say “letting your actions speak, rather than using words to explain your faith” is an act of evangelism
2. **Relational not propositional** - Four in five (79%) agree that having a conversation about faith is most effective when you have already established a significant relationship with that person.
3. **Process not an event** - Faith-sharing is more than a one-time event for Canadian teens. Spiritual conversations typically involve some kind of follow-up. Afterward, Christian teens feel more confident in their faith (73%) and eager to share their faith again (52%).

¹ Barna Study “Reviving Evangelism in Canada.” A Barna Report Produced in Partnership with Alpha Canada

4. **Conversation not Conversion** - Not conversion based, but Teens feel the best outcome of a spiritual conversation would be to better understand one another. On the other hand, many Christian Gen Z (44%) agree "it is wrong to share one's personal belief with someone of a different faith in hopes that they will one day share the same faith."

The changing context we live in requires changing methods. IT TAKES A COMMUNITY TO REACH A COMMUNITY!

Matthew 9:36-38 The Message (MSG)

35-38 *Then Jesus made a circuit of all the towns and villages. He taught in their meeting places, reported kingdom news, and healed their diseased bodies, healed their bruised and hurt lives. When he looked out over the crowds, his heart broke. So confused and aimless they were, like sheep with no shepherd. "What a huge harvest!" he said to his disciples. "How few workers! On your knees and pray for harvest hands!"*

He saw his culture and nation as a giant harvest field because he knew he could be their shepherd by embracing them with love.

Jesus message was "come to me, connect with me, you belong with me."

Matthew 11:28

"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."

John 7:37

Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink."

We have become excellent at being present with people in that space between where they are in their beliefs and values and behaviours and were Jesus alone can take them.

Jesus' first priority was not to get people to believe in Him, or even do what he said. His first priority was "come to me, come be with me, follow me."

Mark 2:14

And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him.

Mark 16:15

"...Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."

Acts 1:8

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

They went, and we have gone. But then he said "preach."

Jesus' priority and message is "come to me," before it is even "believe in me." When it comes to being witnesses, I believe we have been labouring under an erroneous set of assumptions. We believe that sin is the issue. I would argue that's not biblical.

2 Corinthians 5:19

"that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation."

Objections:

Universalism? Does sound doctrine matter?

Acts 4:33

And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.

Truth is a person. We need to trust that Holy Spirit is able to make Jesus known in the heart of people, to the people themselves.

1 John 2:27

But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.

We have to be able to be ok with being present in that space with people between where they are and where God will eventually take them, without judgement or expectation.

Distinction: Called out Ones?

What makes us different from an unbeliever? Our beliefs, our thoughts, our behaviour? Or, is it the power and presence of God's Spirit inside of us?

Acts 1:8

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you..."

Acts 15:13-19

"As it is written: 'Afterward I will return and restore the fallen tent of David. I will rebuild its ruins and restore it, so that the rest of humanity might seek the Lord, including the Gentiles— all those I have called to be mine. The Lord has spoken— he who made these things known so long ago.' "And so my judgment is that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God.

Let's not make witnessing weird where people have to learn our language, dress with our clothes, conform to our customs, look like us and talk like us. Let's not put up barriers to inclusion into God's people — lets not make it hard!

This is a new way to witness, but with the same message of Jesus, Come!

Summary:

Some points to consider and work out in getting ready to witness.

1. **Christ in you and You in Christ**
2. **Intentional Gathering**
3. **Welcome on Purpose and with Care**
4. **The Message**
5. **A Team Effort**
6. **Commit to the Conversation**
7. **Recruit**