

How Can I Share My Faith?

John 1:4-9 (NLT) says: "The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it. "God sent a man, John the Baptist, to tell about the light so that everyone might believe because of his testimony. John himself was not the light; he was simply a witness to tell about the light. The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world."

In 2 Corinthians 4:5-7, Paul explains his ministry as follows: "You see, we don't go around preaching about ourselves. We preach that Jesus Christ is Lord, and we ourselves are your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, 'Let there be light in the darkness,' has made this light shine in our hearts so we could know the glory of God that is seen in the face of Jesus Christ.

"We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves."

In one of His final teachings before going to the cross, Jesus told His closest disciples the secret of spiritual growth. He said: "I am the Vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do *nothing*. ... When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father" (John 15:5, 8).

After His resurrection, Jesus gave those same disciples this commission: "'I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the

commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:18-20).

Notice He did not say, "Go and share your faith." He said, "Go and make disciples ... teaching them to obey."

What is a disciple, and how is a disciple made? How did the Lord intend for His original disciples to interpret that command? These are significant questions for those who desire to hear and respond wholeheartedly to the Lord.

Jesus gave many indications of what constitutes discipleship, more than we can cover in this context. However, the essence of discipleship involves following, coming under the *discipline* of another.

Jesus never indicated that discipleship was easy, quick or even possible in human power. He said that apart from Him we can do *nothing*.

The fruit of all spiritual growth is not something we produce. Rather, growth occurs spontaneously when we remain submitted to the Vine. We must be disciples ourselves, following and receiving life through the Spirit, before discipleship can be transferred through our lives.

Hebrews 12:2 (NKJV) states that Jesus is the "author and finisher of our faith." The New Living Translation says, "the champion who initiates and perfects our faith." That means Jesus both begins and completes the entire process as we yield to His Spirit (see Rom. 8:13-14).

So what is our part in "sharing our faith" with others? The answer to this question can be seen in the lives of those who first followed Him: the woman at the well (see John 4:19-30,39-42), Mary Magdalene (see John 20:1-18) and Paul (see Acts 26:1-22). Please take a few minutes to review these passages. Here are three examples of those who served effectively as His "witnesses."

A witness, by definition, has to have seen something. The experience of seeing *produces* a true witness. Each of these people actually saw Christ, and the experience of seeing Him forever transformed them. So the question is: Have you seen Him?

On the other side of seeing, their testimonies occurred spontaneously as did the “fruit” forthcoming from their testimony. In other words, they did not set out to campaign.

Rather, they *responded* to the One they saw, the Glorious One before whom the elders fall down in heaven and the four living creatures cry “Holy!” See Him and you will testify! Faith always involves seeing! (See Heb. 11:26-27.)

There is a time and place for us to share what God has done for us and whom we have discovered Him to be as a result of our experiences. However, the pivot of our witnessing life turns, not on our initiation, but on how much of Him we have seen and how much we have allowed ourselves to be transfigured by His life reigning within.

Personal evangelism is not a matter of effort but of authentic encounter. Real encounter and real response naturally result in our becoming a living witness. The power will come from Him (see Acts 1:3-8).

If you find that you are not motivated to share Him, consider the state of your relationship to the Vine. Have you seen Him lately in such splendor that you were changed?