

## Tips for Witnessing

By Dan Jensen (2023)

(In order to fully benefit from this essay, I recommend reading through my “basics” series first. It can be found on my website.)

This essay is for new Christians or Christians who are just starting to really take their faith seriously, who struggle to know how to witness to others about our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Some of you may not even know what Christians mean when they talk about *witnessing*. Most people have a general idea of what a witness is. We think of someone testifying in court as a witness. Such a person is supposed to truthfully tell the jury or the court what he or she knows concerning a certain matter. While we are not talking about a court context when we discuss Christian witnessing, the same basic idea applies. Christian witnessing refers to when we as true Christians tell unbelievers about the true Jesus. We are to truthfully tell them what we know and have experienced concerning Him. This is in order to glorify God as we tell the world about what He is really like in contrast to all of the false ideas and notions about Him out in the world, and in the hopes of being used in the process of someone coming into a saving relationship with Jesus.

A lot of Christians feel terrified by the prospect of witnessing. Many feel guilty if they do not share the gospel with almost every person they meet. All of this is very unnecessary. Not all Christians have the gift of evangelism. And even those that do, like myself, often do not witness to every person he or she meets. Most only evangelize in contexts where they feel very confident in doing so. So, for instance, I am generally not going to evangelize to someone simply because he or she is sitting next to me on an airplane. Some people with the gift of evangelism will often do this very thing and that is wonderful. But, that is not part of my gift. I am much better at witnessing to LDS missionaries and Jehovah’s Witnesses who come to my door. I am also very

comfortable witnessing to people online through YouTube channels, blogs, etc. Because I have a lot of background in apologetics, these contexts allow me to use my skills in that area when witnessing. With all that said, many people simply don't feel confident witnessing in hardly any contexts. And that is ok. Don't listen to pastors who try to make all Christians feel guilty for not constantly witnessing. They are mistaken in their belief that all Christians have the gift of evangelism.

The main thing is to never be ashamed of Jesus and always be ready to give at least some answer if people ask you about what you believe and why. To the surprise of many new Christians or Christians who are just starting to get serious about their faith, you do not need to say very much. You do not have to be a super mature Christian; you do not have to be an apologist; you do not have to be a scholar; you do not have to be heavily involved in ministry work at your church. If you don't know what the term *apologist* means, it simply refers to someone who defends the faith. *Apologetics* is the study and application of how to defend the faith. Allow me to give some very basic advice that all true Christians can easily follow when it comes to witnessing.

The best way to initially witness to people is through your temperament and your actions. It may take some time, but eventually people will notice. Even among those that are very spiritual and may have a lot in common with you, usually they will notice eventually as well. And when someone does ask you why you are the way you are, don't feel the need to say too much at first. If you come on too strong, people will think you are judgmental and a know-it-all. Unfortunately, many otherwise great Christians are so zealous to win souls for Jesus that they can often come off this way. For this reason, sadly, much of the church has this reputation as a whole.

I understand how badly we want to see people saved. We don't want to see anyone go to hell. But you must remember that God is in control and He is the one who saves. It is not our burden or responsibility to save people. Period. Our job is simply to witness when we are given the opportunity. Be obedient, but at the same time, allow God to do His work. I'm telling you, when you allow people to come to you and they are the ones

asking the questions and seeking you out, almost anything you say won't seem as weird or harsh to them. They are asking for your opinion and therefore most people in that situation will be fairly respectful. If anyone becomes overtly disrespectful at any time, kindly tell him or her that you are not interested in continuing the conversation with him or her. And you don't need to feel guilty about this at all, you are actually being obedient to Jesus (Matthew 7:6).

If someone does ask you what you believe, you can simply say something along the lines of, "I am a Bible-believing Christian. I love Jesus far above all else." You honestly don't have to say anything further than that at first. If the person continues to ask questions, as people so often will, you should continue to engage with him or her. But, if the person doesn't, you can wait for him or her to ask you questions further down the line. He or she may never do so, but you have testified to the truth of Jesus to him or her. You may not have said much, but that should be enough to get the person thinking. If he or she has a hardened heart and it doesn't get him or her thinking, you can pray that God would change that.

A lot of Christians get nervous at this point. Because there are so many false claims to "Christianity" out there, many worry that someone might think you are a Roman Catholic, or LDS, etc. This often leads to Christians trying to overly clarify things in their initial response to someone. The problem with this is that this will immediately sound to most people like you are simply part of just another religion. Making it clear that we are Conservative Evangelicals is important. Making it clear that you are part of a particular branch of the Christian tree is important. Making it clear that you are part of a particular denomination is important. But, these are all things that can be much better clarified down the road once you have gotten to know this person better. If you try to explain all of this to a person when he or she first asks you a question about what you believe, it will only leave him or her very confused. You have made it clear that you love Jesus above all else, and in subsequent conversations you can further clarify who the true Jesus is and what your opinions are on secondary, more debatable issues within the true church.

To make matters worse, many people, especially in countries with large numbers of people who claim some form of “Christianity,” will often respond to you with something like, “Oh cool! I’m a Christian too. I think I’m Methodist or something.” Such a person is probably a Liberal Protestant. Or where I live in Utah, many will respond with something like, “Oh that’s great. I’m a Christian too. I’m LDS. We have a lot in common. We should totally discuss stuff more sometime.” This can freak out new Christians or Christians who are just starting to take their faith seriously. This is because they rightfully don’t want this person to think that he or she is following the same Jesus because clearly he or she is not. If this happens, politely say something along the lines of, “Well, it’s actually a little more complicated than that. I would love to talk more about this with you some time.” Then let the other person respond. Don’t be pushy. Many will not like that response, but if they can tell you are not trying to be rude or pushy, they will respect it. Many will just leave things at that, but many others will take you up on your offer to discuss things further.

Many new Christians or Christians who are just starting to get serious about their faith wonder about what to do if someone says that he or she is a Christian as well, and you are not sure about the claim. You perhaps do not know this person very well. At the same time, some of his or her behavior makes you question the claim. However, you may not have seen enough to know whether or not he or she is simply a new or immature Christian. In such situations, don’t judge and give him or her the benefit of the doubt. Accept him or her as your brother or sister in Christ for the time being. You can respond by saying something along the lines of, “That’s amazing! We should totally get coffee sometime and talk about Jesus!”

If the person seems thrown off and reluctant, more than likely he or she is not a true believer. At that point, try to change the subject and pray that God would give you opportunities to witness to him or her. If the person is willing to go to coffee or something and you discover that he or she is part of a heretical group, you can very gently say, “I’m so sorry. I’m not at all judging you or trying to be rude. But, I have to say,

we don't worship and follow the same Jesus." If the person becomes offended, just keep saying that you had no intention of offending him or her, but you had to be honest. If you keep gently and humbly saying this, usually most people will back off. At that point, give the person his or her space, and pray that God would cause him or her to come back to you to ask you for more information without being offended. If this person does come back to you, you can explain the differences between the real Jesus and the "Jesus" he or she believes in.

The next question to answer is what to do if you have given someone the benefit of the doubt regarding his or her claim to being a Christian, you get to know this person better, and it becomes quite clear from his or her beliefs and/or behavior that he or she is not truly saved. If this is someone you do not know well, I recommend only praying for him or her in the hopes that he or she sparks up a subsequent conversation with you about Christianity. If that happens, you can be gently honest with him or her at that point. If it doesn't happen, I would not worry about it too much and continue to pray for him or her. However, if this is someone you do get to know well, you are probably obligated to say something at some point about how you thought he or she was a Christian like you, but that you are now not so sure. I understand how unbelievably hard this can be, but it needs to be done so that this person does not get the wrong idea. You don't have to say much and it doesn't even have to be in-person. You can send a polite email or text. And you don't need to say too much either. Below is what I recommend saying.

"Hey, I know this is probably going to sound weird and out of left-field. I also know this could sound really judgmental if you were to take it the wrong way. Please, please understand that I'm not judging you in any way. I don't think I'm better than you at all. I'm only writing this because my beliefs demand that I do so. In one of our first conversations, you asked me what I believe and I told you. You responded by telling me that you are also a Christian. And I said how great that is. But, it is important to me for you to know that as we have gotten to know each other, I don't think we actually share the same faith. Again, I'm not saying this out of judgment. It is just that in my understanding of Christianity, what we believe about Jesus matters a great deal. And I

don't get the feeling we believe the same things about Him on core issues. I'm not looking to argue with you about this or anything. We don't even need to discuss this further if you don't want to do that. But, it was important for me to make this clear. I really hope you understand as I really value our friendship."

Now, at this point you may be asking, "But, what if the issue isn't really one of doctrine. What if it is a matter of behavior?" This is a great question. Here is the thing though: if this person believes that he or she is a true Christian, but that he or she can brazenly disregard the commandments of Jesus without this being a reflection on his or her claim to being saved, this is a person who is rejecting the biblical doctrine of sanctification. So, it is actually a matter of belief at the end of the day. I understand that this may cause you to lose friendships, but we have to decide if we are going to please humans or God.

With all that background in place, once you get to a point where a more in-depth conversation is ready to take place, you don't need to feel like you have to have all the answers. All you must do is testify to what you know to be true and the vast majority of people will respect that, especially if you have let them be in the driver's seat regarding how the conversations have come about. Even if someone starts asking you more pressing questions right after he or she asks you what you believe, you can follow this basic model. No matter what anyone asks you; no matter how much he or she disagrees; no matter how much he or she provides counterarguments; no matter how much he or she says that what you are saying doesn't add up; no matter how much he or she may even mock what you are saying; simply keep repeating the basics of what you know to be true.

All true Christians can at the very least truthfully testify in this manner: "I know through the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit that the Bible and the Bible alone is the word of God." Now you might be worried right now that someone who claims to be a "Christian" that is not could say, "Well I believe that too." It is important to know that the vast majority of false groups that claim to be "Christian" who are not do not believe that the

Bible alone is the word of God. So, very few people who claim to be “Christian” who are not are going to respond in this manner. And if someone does and you know that he or she believes in heresy, you can say, “I may not know the Bible as well as I should yet. I am trying to improve in that area. But I have read enough verses to know that the Bible does not teach what you believe about such and such.”

At this point, many people will begin to object in many different ways. I cannot cover all of the ways people will object, but let me give you some practical advice as to how to deal with almost any objection. If someone tries to defeat you on the basis of evidence, whether it be philosophical; scientific; historical; textual; linguistic; archaeological; etc.; you can say, “I am not equipped to address these arguments. I am not a scholar or an apologist. And I am honest about that fact. But, I know that God does not only save scholars and apologists. In fact, the Bible is clear that most of the people He saves are not scholars or apologists. With that said, I know that the Bible and the Bible alone is the word of God because of the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit that God has given me. Therefore, I know that the evidence will support the Bible. So, I have absolutely no fear, none whatsoever, that if you truly seek out the truth in regard to the evidence, you will find that overall it supports the Bible as the word of God. I recommend you look at this website to begin your search.” And you can refer him or her to my website.

I understand that this may just seem like self-promotion on my part. Remember though, I am not a famous person and don't want to be one. I make no money off the material I post on my website. My goal is only to defend the truth and I have been doing it for over 20 years now. I have informally debated countless people from almost every worldview. And I can tell you that the evidence in favor of Biblical Christianity is overwhelming and the evidence in favor of all other worldviews is strikingly paltry. Further, eventually I will be writing response books to dozens of the best books out there defending other worldviews. And in my works, I provide resources to many others who are scholars and so the reader can check what I am saying as much as he or she wishes.

If someone objects like the person discussed above, namely by saying that he or she also believes that the Bible and the Bible alone is the word of God, you can also refer him or her to my website and he or she should be able to find where I address his or her particular worldview. Be aware of the fact that such a person may object by saying that you don't actually hold to the Bible because you cannot defend your positions from the Bible. If this happens, you can say something along the lines of, "No, that is not the case. I admit that I don't know the Bible as well as I should yet. I don't have all the key verses memorized and I admit that. But, I have read the key verses in context and they are very clear. Therefore, I know what you are saying is false. You can look up the key verses on the website I just gave to you."

Another common way many people will object is by saying something along the lines of, "You can point to your internal testimony all you want, but anyone can say that. A Muslim can say that Allah has showed him or her that the Koran and the Koran alone is the pure word of God. Many LDS folks will say that God has shown to them that the Book of Mormon is also the word of God." Many LDS people will say something similar along these lines, "I testify to you that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God and that the Book of Mormon is true." A lot of Christians don't know how to respond to this because it sounds like we are all just canceling each other out.

There are two key things you should say here. The first is, and be firm here, "I am not at all trying to be rude, but I know that what you are saying is not true because of the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit. I encourage you to begin fervently praying to God to show His truth to you and I hope and pray that He does." The second is to say, "If what you are saying is true then the evidence should back you up. It should show that none of the supernatural religions or worldviews, including my own, have very strong evidence behind them. I encourage you to look at the actual evidence and I know you will find that it doesn't back you up." If a person actually says something along the lines of what we discussed with LDS people above, you can make the same exact statement, only minus the second sentence. Don't ever forget that you have the Holy Spirit and that you know you are telling the truth. And don't ever forget that this unbeliever knows on



some level deep down that he or she is not being honest. By being calm and loving, but confident and firm, you will slowly start to cause this person to feel convicted as he or she knows that he or she is not being totally honest with you and himself or herself.

A lot of Christians at this point will say, "Ok, but it makes me feel like a hypocrite when I tell other people to take the time to look at the evidence when I myself have not done so. It is not that I don't want to, I just don't have time. What if these other people don't have time either? I can't expect them to become scholars right?" You are not being hypocritical though. You have not demanded that they seek out the evidence. You have merely made it available to them if they desire to seek it out. And you have also challenged them if they are the type of people that are all about evidence. For those who cannot seek after the evidence, you have told them to go directly to God in prayer and that is a perfectly legitimate and honest answer.

A lot of Christians at this point will say, "Alright, all of this makes a lot of sense. However, I still feel an obligation to look at the evidence more myself so that I can have even more peace of mind and also so that I can be a better witness." If that is the case, by all means, look at the evidence. I have nothing to hide. The evidence really is as strong as I have said. And to whatever extent you do familiarize yourself with the evidence, feel free to utilize it when witnessing. My only caution is to be careful not to utilize any evidence until you are ready. If you don't really have something down, don't pretend like you do. That will actually hurt you as a witness for Jesus. At the same time, don't feel like you have to have all of the evidence down before you can use any of it when witnessing. It can take decades to master all of it, trust me. What you can do though, is use the evidence you do have down, and when something comes up you don't have down cold, you can say, "Yeah, I'm not completely familiar with that argument. So, I recommend going to this website, where you can find more information on that."

At this point, a lot of true Christians will ask, "If the evidence in favor of Biblical Christianity is so strong, why aren't there more true Christians?" The answer is because

people are not converted to Jesus by the evidence. God can certainly use the evidence to bring conviction, and He often does. At the end of the day though, until God changes the heart of someone, this someone will not give his or her life to Jesus. The overwhelming vast majority of people on the earth never actually look at all of the evidence, *including most scholars*. That may sound like a shocking statement to you, but it is entirely true. Most people believe what they want to believe. The beliefs of most people are a combination of what they were raised in, the beliefs of most of those in their culture, and their own personal preferences. Most believe what they were raised in to some extent because that seems safe and familiar. And often there is a lot of family pressure to believe what the family believes.

Even most scholars are only scholars in their particular area. Hence, they may be aware of certain pieces of evidence that when taken alone are not favorable to Biblical Christianity. This often allows them to feel very justified in rejecting Biblical Christianity. I want to be clear that not every scrap of evidence in the entire world today and throughout the history of the world screams out in favor of Biblical Christianity. You should be very aware of this fact so that when someone skillfully presents a piece of evidence along these lines against our faith, it won't shake you up too much. Every worldview has evidence against it. Every person who has thoroughly examined all of the evidence will admit this if he or she is honest. All of us must look at all of the evidence (if we are going to look at the evidence at all) and then assess which worldview best accounts for all of this evidence. And when this is done with an open mind, it is not even close. Biblical Christianity stands head and shoulders above all the rest.

As far as the rare scholars that have looked at all of the evidence and still do not accept Biblical Christianity, it is clear from their writings that they do not want to believe the obvious. Many of these authors are positively hostile to true Christianity and this comes across quite plainly. They can sound very convincing to those who want to hear what they have to say, but most of the time they are using a lot of scholarly language to defend patently false positions. Let me give you one example. Many Roman Catholic scholars are robust scholars. Many of them are brilliant and passionate. Many of them

know the evidence very well. And yet they will still defend the doctrine that we are saved by faith and good works, as opposed to faith alone. They will use all sorts of fancy sounding arguments to make their case. At the end of the day though, you don't have to be a scholar to see that the Bible clearly and plainly teaches that we are saved by faith alone. There are too many abundantly clear passages on this point in the Bible to come to any other conclusion. See the second book of my "basics" series to see that this is the case (chapter 4). Roman Catholic scholars defend the indefensible because they like being Roman Catholic and do not want to change. Or "seekers" are drawn to the Catholic Church for a whole assortment of reasons, and thus in the end convert. But, they convert because that is what they wanted to do and not because of the evidence.

Be very aware of people who say that they were Conservative Evangelicals at one time, but they left because of bad experiences or because of the evidence. Many of them will point to a book or two that they read that allegedly sealed the deal for them. Bad experiences are not a good reason to leave a faith. If someone has had bad experiences in the true church, that is a travesty. The remedy though, is to find a good church. It is not to leave the church altogether. And as far as the evidence goes, reading one or two books does not make someone an expert. You can find a book on just about anything that will defend what you want to hear. The true seeker will read abundantly from all sides and then come to honest conclusions. I know that not everyone has the time to do that. The fact remains though, that if someone claims that he or she needs the evidence, he or she needs to be prepared to spend many years examining all of the evidence from every side.

Now that we have gone over all of these practical issues, a lot of Christians wonder where all of this is taught in the Bible. The Bible nowhere spells out an explicit formula for witnessing. This is why I have done my best in this essay to use the biblical data on the subject, along with common sense and experience, to come to the conclusions I have. If you do want to look at some of the biblical data that undergirds my conclusions in this essay, see my *Doctrine: Going Deeper*. Also, for advice on how to witness to your children, please see the same work above.

Finally, many new Christians or Christians who are just starting to take their faith very seriously ask, “What do I do about the fact that I don’t know a lot of sound teaching yet? I don’t even know what branch of the Christian tree I should join yet. I don’t even know how many branches there are yet! And I don’t know very much about the false religions that claim to be ‘Christian.’ I might want to take your advice with someone, but may not even realize that this person is not a true Christian until much later after I have studied something with more depth.”

Don’t get too stressed. God understands. Simply do your best and when you come to the realization that someone may not actually be a Christian whom you thought was, you can follow the advice I gave above about gently and lovingly confronting someone whom you thought was a true Christian, but now you have serious doubts. If someone has questions about what all Conservative Evangelicalism is and what the differences are between the branches within Conservative Evangelicalism, you can refer him or her to my website. Again, this is not a cop-out. Just explain that for the time being you trust me, that you are new to the faith or are just getting going on trying to understand your faith better, and that you are open to what the person asking you questions has to say. As you become more knowledgeable, you can begin to become more concrete about things.

When someone is ready to receive Jesus as their God and Savior, you can direct him or her to the prayer found in each of the prefaces to the books of my “basics” series. Or you can just read that prayer with him or her. Or if you feel comfortable enough, you can lead him or her in a similar prayer yourself.

I sincerely hope this essay will help you feel more comfortable when witnessing as the opportunities arise. May God be with you as you proclaim His truth to this hurting world!

## **Appendix A**

Earlier I mentioned unfavorable evidence towards the case for Biblical Christianity. This can make a lot of Christians nervous who do not have any background in apologetics. They may say, "If something disproves the Bible, isn't that game over. Like no matter how much good evidence we have, all it takes is one piece of evidence to disprove the Bible and our faith is lost right?" The answer to that is technically yes, but it is very important to distinguish between fatal evidence and evidence that is simply not favorable to one's case. Most people don't realize how hard it is to prove that a piece of evidence is absolutely fatal to a certain position. An example would be when Roman Catholicism has explicitly stated in many official documents from their church that they believe the Bible to be the word of "god" and they also believe that we are saved by faith and good works. They further have stated that they do not believe the Bible as we have it today has been radically corrupted. Hence, when we can point to many, many very clear passages in the Bible that say we are saved by faith alone, we have fatally destroyed the Roman Catholic worldview. We have demonstrated an overt and undeniable internal contradiction within their worldview. That is game over for them.

Let me give an example of something that is an unfavorable piece of evidence, but is not fatal. If you are a juror on a murder case, and the prosecution states that a husband murdered his wife because he was having an affair, and the prosecution proves that the husband did indeed have an affair, that is a very strong piece of unfavorable evidence for the defense. But, it is not actually fatal. A lot of people have affairs and don't then kill their wives. Another example would be if the prosecution proved that the defendant owned a lot of guns. That also would be a piece of unfavorable evidence for the defense, but it would be a fairly weak piece. A lot of people in this country own guns.

It is important to understand that because the Bible addresses all aspects of life and claims to interpret all of human history and reality, any piece of current historical or scientific data that does not seem to comport with the Bible can be used against it. The problem is that we are always discovering more historical and scientific data and so the interpretations of that data are constantly changing as well. Many, many pieces of historical data that were at one time not favorable to the Bible were later shown to be

not so strong after all. One example would be that at one time we had almost no evidence that camels were in use as far back as the Bible said they were. That was a piece of unfavorable evidence in regard to the case for the Bible. However, later it was shown that camels were in fact in use that far back. This type of thing has happened countless times. These types of evidence are along the lines of the defendant owning guns. Taken alone, they are not good for our case, but they don't prove very much. Be aware of this reality though, because the enemies of the faith love to point to these pieces of evidence. And often what they will do in documentaries; tv specials; books; YouTube channels; etc.; is only present these pieces of evidence and when that is done without any broader context it can cause Christians to be fearful. This is especially the case when all of these small pieces of evidence are presented together. It can seem like an overwhelming amount of evidence is being marshaled against our faith.

There are some pieces of evidence that fall more along the lines of the defendant having an affair. However, these are very rare and are far from fatal when put against the backdrop of the enormous amount of positive evidence we have for Biblical Christianity. An example of this would be the problem of evil. While there is an enormous amount of good and beauty in this world, we have to admit that there is a lot of pain and suffering. And some people have to endure torture so unimaginable that it can seem to call into question the idea that God is both infinitely loving and infinitely powerful. This is a very strong piece of evidence against Biblical Christianity. But, it is not fatal at all. For a fuller discussion on the problem of evil, see my *A False Kind of Christianity* (pages 196-197).

## **Appendix B**

A lot of Christians in our culture today struggle with witnessing because it can often lead to debates and disagreements. Sometimes these discussions can even become heated. Because our culture is so obsessed with tolerance, many Christians feel like they cannot ever allow a conversation to become a debate or even a disagreement. Even further, many Christians know that there are a lot of passages that condemn being

contentious. This causes them to often feel even more sure that they should never debate or disagree with anyone. What you need to understand is that there is no way to reconcile this approach to things with the Bible. When Christians take this attitude, they are allowing the world to dictate how they think and act in this area, rather than the Scriptures. I know what a sensitive topic this is, but please see my discussion on it in my *Doctrine: Going Deeper*.

### **Appendix C**

Many Christians also deeply struggle with the idea of categorizing and labeling people. Because this is such an essential part of witnessing, many Christians feel like they cannot witness. Once again though, this mindset does not come from the Bible. It comes from our current culture. And there is no way to reconcile it with God's word. I fully understand how hard it is to overcome our cultural prejudices that many of us were raised with, but all Christians must do this. Far too many American Christians feel that they get to be let off the hook here. And this is not so. We must fight against the cultural norms that go against the Bible in our own culture every bit as much as the Muslim convert in Saudi Arabia. For more on this very important topic, see my essay "Addressing Heresy." It can be found on my website.

### **Appendix D**

Finally, many Christians in our day in this country are petrified to talk about the LGBT+ issue. And because this issue so often comes up in witnessing encounters as a way to try to disprove Biblical Christianity, many Christians feel like they cannot witness. I fully understand how much pressure there is on us to conform on this topic in our culture today, but you have to be brave and stick to what the Bible actually says. For a great deal more practical advice on this terribly sensitive and difficult topic, please see my *Doctrine: Going Deeper*.