

Speak So They Will Believe.

Does the way we speak affect whether others believe on Jesus?

Yes. When Paul and Barnabas went to Iconium they “so spake, that a great multitude both of Jews and also of the Greeks believed” (Acts 14:1). Speaking in such a way that *many* will believe is a goal worthy of *lifelong study, prayer and discipline!*

Let me suggest, though, that clumsy witnessing is better than saying nothing to warn sinners of the danger of eternal punishment and failing to tell them of the love and salvation God offers. For years my cowardice, laziness and busyness in lesser things delayed my obedience to the Great Commission. Then I suspect my early bumbling witnessing would be pretty embarrassing if I had to watch it now.

Let me share some lessons learned in the 47 years since my first belated, weak attempts at witnessing that have helped me bring *many more* to a public profession of repentance and faith in Jesus.

1. Talk kindly.
2. Use the commands of Christ to show them how guilty they are. Then they will see that they need to repent and that they need a Savior.
3. If you speak to more people you can win more people.
4. Be filled with the Holy Spirit.
5. Happy, confident people who praise God attract others to fear God and believe.
6. Ask God for what you need.
7. Be sure to give the true Gospel; God commands all men everywhere to repent.

First, talk kindly. Years ago a man told me something I needed to hear. I was trying to point him to Jesus and was unsuccessful. He said, “You can catch more flies with honey than you can with vinegar.” He didn’t like my attitude. I needed to be kinder. “Pleasant words are as a honey comb, sweet to the soul and health to the bones” (Pr. 16:24). “The sweetness of the lips increaseth learning,” that is, kind talking increases persuasiveness (Pr. 16:21). If a person or group senses that you like them, they are more likely to pay attention to what you say. The people of Israel believed God *when they heard He was concerned for them* (Ex. 4:31).

Besides seeing kindness in us, people need to see their own sin and guilt. Many people are contemptuous of the Gospel; they do not see a need to repent. But we have a wonderful tool and an effective weapon—the law of God. “By the law is the knowledge of sin” (Rom. 3:20). Paul said, “I had not known sin but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, ‘Thou shalt not covet’” (Rom. 7:7).

When I show someone that looking on a woman with lust is adultery, that whoever hates his brother is a murderer, when I warn him that all liars shall have their part in the lake of fire, when I show him that when he fails to love his neighbour as himself, he has not just made a minor mistake—he has broken the big one—the Great Commandment; when I remind him that by disobeying his parents, he rebelled against God’s authority, or when he realizes that he has been too lazy to do his work or has never returned what he stole; *his own conscience convicts him of his guilt.*

When he sees his guilt, and sees the danger of facing a holy God and the punishment of everlasting fire, then he is much more likely to run Jesus for mercy! “By the fear of the Lord men depart from evil” (Pr. 16:6). “The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith” (Gal. 3:24). I have found that preaching the commands of Jesus, such as in the Sermon on the Mount, has been very effective in showing people their need of the Saviour.

Third, if you tell more people the Gospel, you can win more people. He who sows sparingly will reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. In my case this means, if I only preach in churches, I may reach a few hundred a week. But if I also preach five days a week in schools, I may reach several thousand a week with the Gospel! Or I can witness and argue with a few people who don’t even want to listen, or I can preach to sometimes a thousand at a time in schools that are attentive and responsive. Also, I can give God my spare time, or I can devote my whole life to reaching as many as possible with the good news of salvation.

Fourth, there is a vast difference between preaching the Gospel and preaching in the power of the Holy Spirit. “But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto Me...” (Acts 1:8). Certainly all Christians are indwelt by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9), but not all Christians are filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18). The fullness of the Holy Spirit may mean the difference between five or six being saved and hundreds being saved. Jesus said, “How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?” (Luke 11:13).

Some evidences of being filled with the Spirit are thanking God and singing from your heart to the Lord. “Be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things...” (Eph. 5:18-20). And the person who praises God for how God has helped him out of his difficulties will have the attention of those around him. Many will take God seriously and trust Him. “He has put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord” (Ps. 40:3). David wanted God to restore the joy of his salvation because then sinners would be converted (Ps. 51:12,13).

Finally, ask God for what you want and need to effectively obey the Great Commission. God gives good things to those who ask Him (Matt. 7:11). I’ve seen God heal in answer to prayer and give me a car that cost me nothing and give me a very good, sweet and pretty wife. But what I pray for more than these things is God’s help in bringing people to Jesus. I pray that God will enlarge the borders of my ministry. I need the favour of those in charge of these large public schools, the good will of the teachers and students, the enemy of men’s souls to be put to shame and confusion and the weather to be nice, since many of the school assemblies meet outdoors. “Ye have not because ye ask not” (James 4:2).

I need good attention and discipline in the crowds of hearers. I need for them to understand my English. I believe God sometimes supernaturally helps some of the Afrikaans speaking children, especially in the farm school where they don’t know English so well, to understand my preaching. I know they understand me because so many of them answer my questions. The teachers are sometimes impressed that these children understand the message so well.

Let’s speak so that multitudes will truly believe in Jesus! But they must hear and believe the true message. It essential that people repent. A gospel without repentance is a false gospel. “And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations...” (Luke 24:47). On the day of Pentecost when the multitudes were convicted of their sins, they asked Peter what they should do. Peter’s first word was “Repent.”

The Great Commission is to “make disciples” not to just tell people to ask Jesus into their hearts. A disciple is someone who has forsaken all to follow Jesus.

In fact, you can tell if you really know the Lord, that is, if you are saved, “if you keep His commandments” (1 John 2:3). The one who says he knows the Lord, but does not keep His commandments, is a liar (1 John 2:4).

But someone will say, “I thought you just believe; doesn’t the Bible say, ‘Whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life’? Yes, when you believe on Him you believe what He says. He preached, “Repent.” He commanded us to preach repentance. The reason He came into the world was to call sinners to repentance (Luke 5:32). If your faith does not have works of obedience, it is dead faith, the same kind of faith the demons have (James 2:17,19).

Let’s speak in such a way that many will believe and live a life of obedience.

Reflect & Apply

1. Did the way Paul and Barnabas spoke affect whether others believed?
2. Have you noticed what ways of presenting the Gospel help people believe, and what is not so effective, or what hinders?
 - In personal witnessing?
 - In preaching?
 - In giving an invitation?
3. The _____ of the lips increases learning.
4. What brings the knowledge of sin?
5. When someone looks at a woman with lust, he has already _____.
6. Whoever hates his brother is a _____.
7. All liars will have their part in the lake of _____.
8. By the _____ of the Lord men depart from evil.
9. If you sow bountifully you can expect to reap _____.
10. When you receive the Holy Spirit you will receive _____ to witness.
11. Are all believers indwelt by the Holy Spirit?
12. Are all believers filled with the Holy Spirit?
13. God gives the Holy Spirit to those who _____ Him.

14. When people see our song of praise for what God has done for us, they will _____ God and _____ Him.

15. As we work at making disciples, there will be a lot of challenges, and we'll need a lot of God's help! "Ye have not because ye _____ ."

16. The Great Commission in Luke 24:47 requires that _____ and remission of sins should be preached to all nations.

17. "And hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His _____.

18. The one who says he knows the Lord, but does not keep His commands is a _____.

19. Will you make it a lifetime goal of speaking so that multitudes will believe on Jesus?

20. Will you make a practice of showing people the commands of Christ so that they will be convicted of their sin, see their need of the Savior and submit to His authority?

21. Will you make it a lifetime goal to reach as many as you can with the good news of salvation?

22. Will you continually seek the fullness of the Holy Spirit? See 1 Chr. 16:10,11.

23. Will you make a practice of emphasizing repentance when you witness, preach and teach?

24. Will you show people that they can know that they are saved if they are obedient to God's commands?