WEEK 19 DAY 127

WITNESS

THE SEED OF THE GOSPEL IN YOUR OWN WORDS

Now, look back over the key terms you circled yesterday. Take each one below, and explain why they are important to the telling of the gospel in terms that someone today would understand. Think specifically of someone coming from a modern, non-religious, secular background.

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WEEK 19 DAY 128

WITNESS

THE FOUNDATION OF CHARACTER BEFORE YOU SHARE

READ 1 THESSALONIANS 4:9–12

1 Thessalonians 4:9-12

> Now about your love for one another we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. And in fact, you do love all of God's family throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers and sisters, to do so more and more, and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life: You should mind your own business and work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.

If you ascribe to "Cliché Christianity," you'll recognize the phrase "walk the talk." Like most clichés, that phrase finds traction in the truth of Scripture. I love how Paul compliments and challenges the Thessalonians with his words. Write down the "life qualities" that Paul highlights are important for building a platform for sharing Christ with others, and tell why you think each is important:

:

:

:

:

:

How important do you think it is, that we "earn the right" to share Christ with those around us?

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WEEK 19 DAY 129

WITNESS

OVERCOMING SATAN
"BY THE WORD OF THEIR TESTIMONY"

Revelation 12:10-11

> Then I [John] heard a loud voice in heaven say:
>
> "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Messiah. For the accuser [Satan] of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death."

Satan spoiled a really amazing creation when he deceived Adam and Eve and brought the curse of death and separation to the earth. Unknown to Satan, God had pre-planned a restoration of all that was broken and planned a revelation of the depth of His nature that would stop all of heaven and earth in its tracks. The real proof of what God has done through the work of Christ's death and resurrection is written in just one place – the changed hearts and lives of fallen humans. Our testimony is the expression of the gospel applied. Skeptics can dispute the claims of the gospel, but they have a hard time disputing "this happened to me, I once was but now I'm ." The curse is felt by all men, and all men are drawn to a story of restoration. A testimony is irrefutable, powerful, and, according to Scripture, is the final proof of Satan's removal from his seat of authority over men.

As one of Adam's sons or daughters, you were born into brokenness. As you grew up, you moved your unconnected life further and further from God. Your behavior to some extent followed your culturally influenced and satanically induced desires. The longer your journey away from God, the more distorted your story became. The start of your testimony is the *accurate and honest* telling of your condition before Christ. If you came from a Christian family and had a "tame" upbringing, your journey away from God probably took on a covert design. HONESTLY write about the state of your mind and the condition of your heart before Christ. Certain people *need* to hear that kind of testimony. Others have lives whose heart, behavior, and possibly even criminal record tell a blackened story. It is against this backdrop of stain and corruption that the power of the gospel will be shown powerful and effective. Spend the next few minutes writing down the B.C. (Before Christ) side of your testimony.

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WEEK 19 DAY 130

WITNESS

PAUL'S TESTIMONY (FOR EXAMPLE'S SAKE)

If the Apostle Paul (AKA Saul of Tarsus, Christian hunter) had a Facebook page, his old pictures and his "story" would have been hugely popular. How do I know? Well, in Scripture his testimony is told more times than anyone else's by far! It is so dramatic, yet simple. What is fascinating is how he uses his testimony in his witnessing life.

Today let's take a break from writing yours and study Paul's testimony from either his own pen or from Luke's (in the Book of Acts). For the sake of space, I'll skip the first record of how he came to Christ, though you might want to read that too for comparison's sake (**Acts 8:1-3, Acts 9**). Underline the parts of his testimony that stand out to you or you think he may have emphasized because of his audience. Jot down any notes that are relevant to your own testimony.

Acts 22:1-21

"Brothers and fathers, listen now to my defense."

When they heard him speak to them in Aramaic, they became very quiet.

Then Paul said: "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. I studied under Gamaliel and was thoroughly trained in the law of our ancestors. I was just as zealous for God as any of you are today. I persecuted the followers of this Way to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison, as the high priest and all the Council can themselves testify. I even obtained letters from them to their associates in Damascus, and went there to bring these people as prisoners to Jerusalem to be punished.

"About noon as I came near Damascus, suddenly a bright light from heaven flashed around me. I fell to the ground and heard a voice say to me, 'Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute me?'

" 'Who are you, Lord?' I asked.

" 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting,' he replied. My companions saw the light, but they did not understand the voice of him who was speaking to me.

" 'What shall I do, Lord?' I asked.

" 'Get up,' the Lord said, 'and go into Damascus. There you will be told all that you have been assigned to do.' My companions led me by the hand into Damascus, because the brilliance of the light had blinded me.

"A man named Ananias came to see me. He was a devout observer of the law and highly respected by all the Jews living there. He stood beside me and said, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight!' And at that very moment I was able to see him.

"Then he said: 'The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will and to see the Righteous One and to hear words from his mouth. You will be his witness to all people of what you have seen and heard. And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.'

"When I returned to Jerusalem and was praying at the temple, I fell into a trance and saw the Lord speaking to me. 'Quick!' he said. 'Leave Jerusalem immediately, because the people here will not accept your testimony about me.'

" 'Lord,' I replied, 'these people know that I went from one synagogue to another to imprison and beat those who believe in you. And when the blood of your martyr Stephen was shed, I stood there giving my approval and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.'

"Then the Lord said to me, 'Go; I will send you far away to the Gentiles.' "

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Acts 26:1-29

Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You have permission to speak for yourself."

So Paul motioned with his hand and began his defense: "King Agrippa, I consider myself fortunate to stand before you today as I make my defense against all the accusations of the Jews, and especially so because you are well acquainted with all the Jewish customs and controversies. Therefore, I beg you to listen to me patiently.

"The Jewish people all know the way I have lived ever since I was a child, from the beginning of my life in my own country, and also in Jerusalem. They have known me for a long time and can testify, if they are willing, that I conformed to the strictest sect of our religion, living as a Pharisee. And now it is because of my hope in what God has promised our ancestors that I am on trial today. This is the promise our twelve tribes are hoping to see fulfilled as they earnestly serve God day and night. King Agrippa, it is because of this hope that these Jews are accusing me. Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?

"I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the Lord's people in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. I was so obsessed with persecuting them that I even hunted them down in foreign cities.

"On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. About noon, King Agrippa, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions. We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'

"Then I asked, 'Who are you, Lord?'

" 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,' the Lord replied. 'Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen and will see of me. I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

"So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven. First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and then to the Gentiles, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and demonstrate their repentance by their deeds. That is why some Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me. But God has helped me to this very day; so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen— that the Messiah would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would bring the message of light to his own people and to the Gentiles."

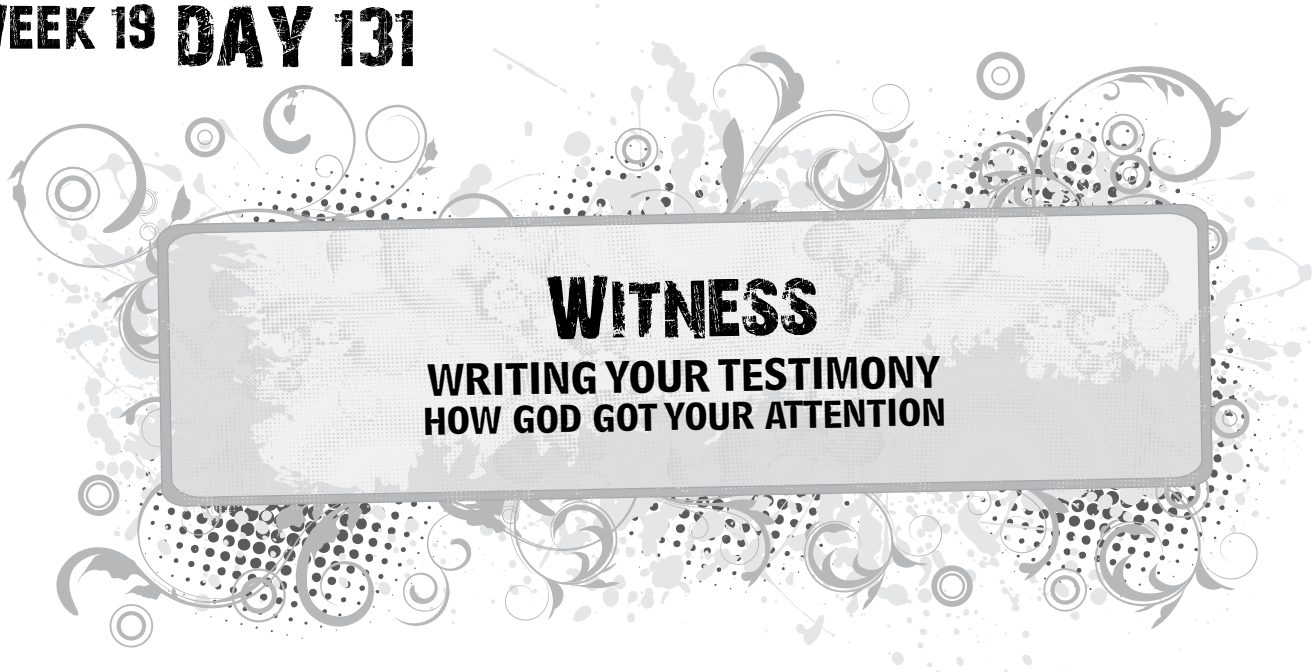
At this point Festus interrupted Paul's defense. "You are out of your mind, Paul!" he shouted. "Your great learning is driving you insane."

"I am not insane, most excellent Festus," Paul replied. "What I am saying is true and reasonable. The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do."

Then Agrippa said to Paul, "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?"

Paul replied, "Short time or long—I pray to God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains."

WEEK 19 DAY 131



WITNESS

WRITING YOUR TESTIMONY
HOW GOD GOT YOUR ATTENTION

Did you notice anything interesting in Paul's testimony? Perhaps one of the reasons it is so often repeated is that it was SO DRAMATIC. No one participating in this study will be blinded by a light from heaven or hear Jesus talk audibly. We probably weren't terrorists prior to coming to Christ, BUT ALL OF US were awakened by a loving God from a deadly spiritual coma. What is so rich is the way God awakens us and it is as varied as the animal kingdom or a collection of snowflake photos. Your testimony is unique to you and should be written, studied, polished, genuinely evaluated and shared. You've already written your condition B.C. Now, take your time and write how God got your attention. What situations did He bring together to wake you up? What was going on in your heart when He challenged you to give up and grab Him instead?

Know this… there are some people in your everyday life who NEED to hear your testimony *because* they are right on the edge of spiritual consciousness, ready to wake up and choose Christ. Your testimony is what God wants to use to nudge them awake. Writing crystallizes thought. By doing this exercise, you're helping your brain practice for when you'll share with others face to face *without notes.*

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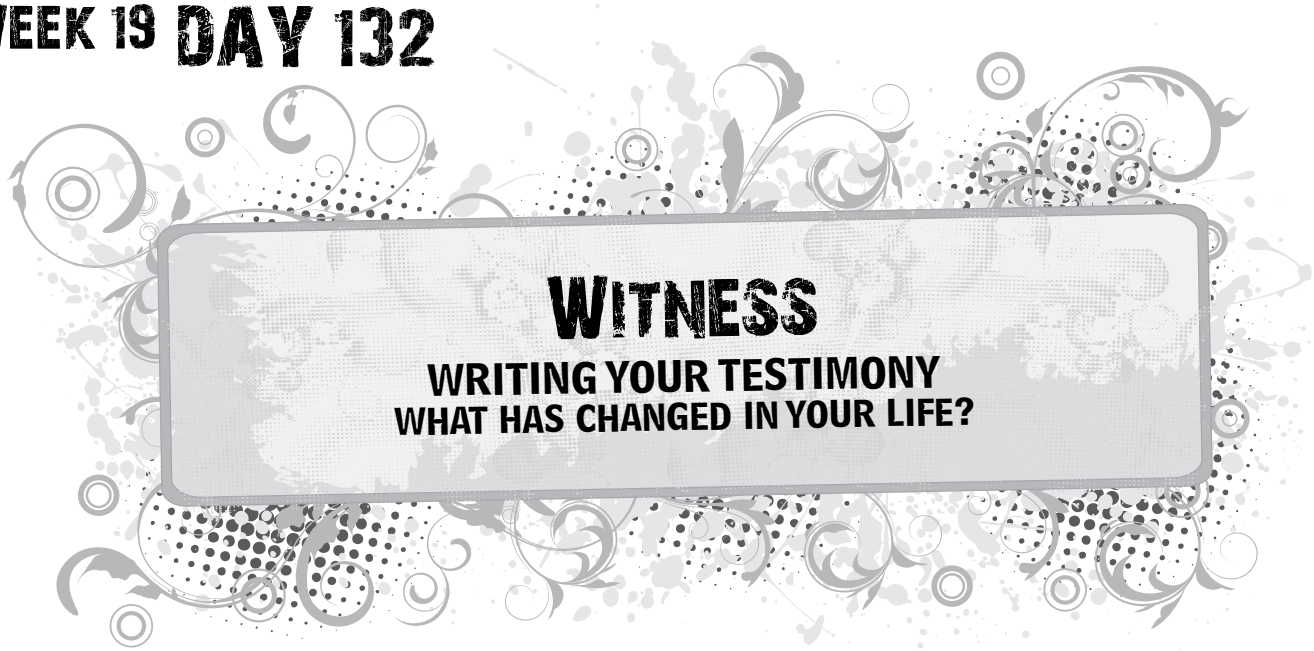
WEEK 19 DAY 132



You're 2/3rds done with your testimony! You've written what your life was like before Christ, and yesterday you detailed "how" God got your attention. As a result, what has changed? What is different about you now that Christ has stepped into the center of who you are as a person? What thoughts have changed? What behaviors have changed? How have your relationships been affected? What hasn't changed? (This is very important for transparency's sake – people can smell a phony!) Spill it all – write it down!

When you feel good about what you've written, please e-mail these to me!!! I'd LOVE to hear your story! If I share it, I'll withhold your name/identity. I know God will get LOTS of glory from your work, and I'm sure many folks will be drawn to Him because of your honesty! If you don't want me to share it at all, please say so.

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WEEK 19 DAY 133

WITNESS

OPPORTUNITY SENSITIVE

READ MATTHEW 10:18-20, ACTS 8:26-39

Matthew 10:18-20

On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

Acts 8:26-39

Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake (which means "queen of the Ethiopians"). This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet. The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it."

Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked.

"How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me?" So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

This is the passage of Scripture the eunuch was reading: "He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth. In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth."

The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?" And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing.

Who creates the opportunities for us to share?

Who gives us the words to say?

Who is building His Church?

What conditions need to exist in "us" before God puts us in these situations?

Ask God for the fullness of the Spirit to become "opportunity sensitive"!

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