



SESSION #2 THE FOUR-STEP WITNESS

Here are four simple steps that, combined with prayer and kindness, are very helpful for a spoken witness to anyone, especially those who are not Christians.

1. Listen

Do you know what is happening in your friends' lives—their health, family, and various struggles? When we truly listen to people, they feel valued and respected. It helps us know how to further care as we learn their interests and needs. By listening, we discover which areas of their lives especially need to be connected to specific parts of the good news.

Do you know what your friends believe about God, life, death, and what comes next? Each person is different. Many call themselves Muslims, Hindus, or Christians but know almost nothing about their religion's beliefs and practices. Some think more about spirits, magic, and protection than about the actual moral teachings. Others are knowledgeable and devoted. To know where to start, ask questions and listen. Prayer will then open the door.

Move from get-acquainted questions to deeper things about the values that are deeply important to them. Here are some examples:

- *Where did you live before coming to America and what do you miss about it?*
- *Did your parents practice a certain religion or focus on specific values?*
- *What do you especially like about being a Buddhist?*
- *Do you think there is a God we can pray to?*
- *How do you feel when you think about death?*

"Sympathize with them in their trials, their heartaches, and disappointments. This will open the way for you to help them" (The Ministry of Healing 159).

2. Affirm Similarities

There are many differences between the practices of various religions. Many Christians quickly jump to witnessing about the uniqueness of Jesus and salvation through His death. It is usually more effective to come close to people by first focusing on similarities. This builds steps up towards truth rather than closing doors through debate.

What do Bible-based Christians hold in common with many Jews and Muslims? They all believe in the eternally existing Creator God. All three religions value what we call the Old Testament. Do we have anything in common with Hindus and Buddhists? We share similarities in our understanding of judgment, that everyone reaps the good or bad that they sow. With animists and spirit-worshippers we have significant differences, but we share a belief in a supernatural world that cannot be seen. We can even find things in common with atheists and secular people by talking about values such as compassion and equality that matter to us both.

As we share about new things, we can most easily move from what they already value. For example, with many we cannot start with Jesus as the eternal Son of God who alone can forgive sins. However, we can move from Jesus as a wise teacher, to a compassionate friend of the poor, to a miracle worker. As they value Him through their own values it will be easier to believe in His supreme characteristics. We can affirm with words such as:

- *I really appreciate your culture's emphasis on family and respecting elderly people.*
- *I also do not eat pork or drink alcohol. I want my body to be strong to serve God.*
- *I love that idea you shared. I often think of what Jesus said that is similar....*

"Agree with the people on every point where you can consistently do so. Let them see that you love their souls, and want to be in harmony with them so far as possible. If the love of Christ is revealed in all your efforts, you will be able to sow the seed of truth in some hearts; God will water the seed sown, and the truth will spring up and bear fruit to His glory" (Evangelism 140).

3. Share about Differences through Stories

People may not want to discuss religion, but if you are their friend, they will listen to your story. Prayer, enthusiasm, and sincerity will make the truths come alive. If you want them to understand about a living God, tell them something that happened when you asked for

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His help. If you want them to believe Jesus can forgive sins, talk about your struggles and the peace you found in the story of the cross. Match their interests and needs to stories!

You might make a notebook with various topics on the top and then gather short outlines of stories underneath. Categories might include: Sickness & Healings, Fears & Protection, Habits & Victories, Poverty & Provisions, Failing Families & Reconciliations, Ghosts & Deliverance, Hard Hearts & Conversions. This will help your mind be ready. You can gently introduce the telling of a story like this:

- *I have a friend who went through similar problems in his family. Can I share with you what happened to him?*
- *I used to be worried about everything. What really helped me was when....*
- *Can I share with you an ancient story that really helped answer my questions about....?*

"Our confession of His faithfulness is Heaven's chosen agency for revealing Christ to the world. We are to acknowledge His grace as made known through the holy men of old; but that which will be most effectual is the testimony of our own experience....These precious acknowledgments to the praise of the glory of His grace, when supported by a Christ-like life, have an irresistible power that works for the salvation of souls" (Desire of Ages 347).

4. Invite to a New Experience

It is absolutely essential that we give our friends a chance to experience God's goodness and power. Small choices to try something we have shared will become solid steps into a relationship with the living God. Try inviting them like this:

- "May I pray for your troubled teenager?" (the reality of God)
- "Would you like to try memorizing this scripture that helped my relationship with my dad?" (the Word of God and family values)
- "Would you like to join us this Saturday on our nature exploration trip? It has really helped us grow close as a family and has helped my stress-level too." (creation and the Sabbath)
- "Would you like to go walking with me and stay for a fruit smoothie?" (health)
- "Would you like to ask Jesus to forgive your sins and give you a new heart? (salvation)

"The secret of our success and power will be found in making direct, personal appeals to those who are interested, having unwavering reliance upon the Most High" (Pamphlet 118 2).

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