



How do I Witness to that Wild Student in the Next Dorm?

By Kurt von Schleicher

Adjusting to college life is exigent enough, but being a born again Christian who wants to shine your light and fish for souls on a secular campus can be even more challenging. In the midst of you dealing with the expected homesickness and trying to make new friends, you face all new forms of peer pressure there. That peer pressure as well as the normal college pressures can easily pull you off your smooth spiritual stride if you allow it to. So how do you hold on to your relationship with Jesus and your Christian values in the face of total hedonism and very alternative ideas? Getting real with God will help.

If you have seen wild movies about college, they probably aren't that far off from real college existence. That is not to say that some schools are more academically oriented, but many students are away from parent influences and succumb to attending parties where lots of drinking, drugs, and sex happening. After all, there is no authority figure there to say, "No, no!" Plus, alternative ideologies, values, new beliefs and radical ideas abound, which can be just as tempting to some as those "sins of the flesh."

As a Christian, those ideas can seriously make you question your faith. Sometimes people are rather convincing in how they present them too. Of course you will hear teachings that totally denounce your faith in lectures and at rallies. You will even hear people on campus espousing hatred for Christians and for God. The upside is that people won't be shocked to learn that you are a Christian or to hear about the claims of Christ. Some will even want to endlessly debate you and question you even though they aren't open at all. Yup, some really just enjoy that pastime and want you to see what a savvy philosopher they've become.

There are only two kinds of students: those who are looking for the love of God in Christ (they might be searching in all the wrong and wild places...) and those who have already found the Love of God in Christ.

Do you have a heart for them—even the off-the-chart-wild ones? They are the future leaders of nations. But college students often find themselves today in an environment that is simply tearing away at their moral and spiritual stability. The typical dorms, frat houses and secular college campus-environment will expose young people to many new ideas and worldviews and some of this can be very positive. For this reason, God calls many Christians to be present on hundreds of our country's university campuses. And God wants to use each Christian He places on these campuses to be a true fisher of lost people—a spiritual resource of sorts to provide the right information, the right training, the right kind of friendship. Christian students can provide Bible study fellowship opportunities that are evangelistic, where Christian teachers

may not be able to, in an environment that's conducive to biblical revival and growth. Imagine the changes the world would see if every one of the 60 million college students had an opportunity to hear and respond to the Gospel every year. We pray that many students will go from a place of unbelief to a place of belief in God, rather than merely entering college lost and leaving lost, or (for a Christian) entering their campus with a relationship with Christ and exit a beer guzzling backslider who fell out of fellowship with Him. We want to see students embrace the purpose, love and forgiveness that God offers them in a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Some college students really want to know if there is a God that is relatable and knowable and you need to be there for these people! They are hungry for more than the professor or school can give them. College campuses (including the students who are living off the property in the surrounding areas)—that's an important mission field. Some students are open and others are not yet open. But if a college student opposes your witness and the possibility of there even being a God, then be patient with them and realize that any evidence can be rationalized away or explained away by him or her. It's just like if a person stubbornly refuses to believe that people have actually walked on the moon, no amount of pragmatic information is going to change them and their thinking about this. The pics of astronauts tromping around on the moon's surface in the dust, the interviews with these men that were there, the moon rocks on display and all other evidence would be worthless to them, because this person has already concluded in their mind that people cannot visit the moon. When it comes to the possibility of the Lord's existence, the Word says that there are people who have seen enough evidence in the past, but they have suppressed the truth about God (check out: Romans 1:19-21). Yet, for those who really want to know God in a person way if He is knowable (as He is), God says, ***"You will seek me and find me; when you seek me with all your heart, I will be found by you"*** (Jer. 29:13-14). Ask yourself this: If God exists, would I even want to know Him as He really is?

You know inside that the radical complexity of this planet earth clearly points to a deliberate Designer who not only created our entire universe and those around it, but He still sustains it to this day. (i.e., The earth's size is absolutely wonderful—it corresponds with our gravity here holding a thin layer of mostly nitrogen and oxygen gases, and it only extends about 50 miles above the earth's dirty surface. If earth were a little smaller, an atmosphere would be impossible, like it is on the planet Mercury. If earth were bigger, its atmosphere would contain free hydrogen, like on Jupiter.¹ This earth God made is the only known planet anywhere that is equipped with an atmosphere of the right mixture of gases to sustain our plant, our animals and our human beings. Earth is located exactly the right distance from the sun. Consider the temperature swings that we experience on earth, roughly -30 degrees to +120 degrees. If this planet were just a little farther away from the star we call the sun, we would all freeze to death. If this planet were just a little bit closer we would all burn up. Even a slight fractional variance in the earth's positioning in relation to the sun would make life on this planet impossible. The Earth remains in this perfect distance from the sun as it rotates around this star at a speed of nearly 67,000 mph. That's petty cool. And it's rotating on its axis, allowing the entire surface of the Earth to be properly warmed and cooled every day. The moon is also the exact perfect size and distance away from this planet we live on for its gravitational pull. I love how the moon creates important ocean tides, waves and other submerged movement so the ocean waters do not stagnate and kill the fish and mammals in it, and yet our beautiful oceans are restrained from spilling over across all the continents.²

And think about the water on this planet. It colorless; it has no smell and no taste in it unless we add that ...and yet no living thing can survive without water. Plants, animals and human bodies consist mostly of water (about two-thirds of the human body is water). Water has a high boiling point and freezing point. Water allows us to live here in an environment of fluctuating temperatures and changes, while keeping our bodies at a steady 98.6 degrees or so. H₂O is a universal solvent for people. Water means for us that thousands of chemicals, minerals and important nutrients can be carried throughout our vessels and into our smallest blood

vessels.³ But H₂O is also chemically neutral. Without affecting the makeup of those substances that it carries. It enables food, medicines and minerals to be absorbed and utilized by your body. It has a unique surface tension. H₂O in plant life can therefore flow upward against the pull of gravity—it delivers life-giving liquid and nutrients to the top of even the tallest Redwoods. H₂O in the ocean freezes from the top down, so that fish can live through in the winter. Ninety-seven percent of the earth's water is in those oceans, but on our earth, there is a system that was perfectly designed which will remove the salt from our waters and then distribute water throughout the entire globe. Its evaporation and it takes the ocean waters, ditching the salt, and it actually forms beautiful clouds that are easily relocated by the earth's winds to transfer water over the land surfaces to where it is needed. I love it! Think about this system of purification and supply that God has established to sustain all life on this planet. It is a system of recycled and reusable H₂O.⁴

We could go on and on here. It's should be so obvious to students that there is a Creator—a Designer. And the good news is that He will allow Himself to be found, but we must never be pushy. We never want to offend our fellow students, but sometimes the Gospel Message that we share with them will offend some of them. We want to be especially careful in witnessing to our neighbors at school, because we live in close proximity to them.

It is simply repugnant to a lost person to hear a Christian preaching at them, especially when they've observed that Christian living wrong. Live right even though the temptations on campus are prevalent and the peer pressure is weighty. Our holy walk (our silent witness) must consistently come up to par with our verbal witness; our character must come up to par with our charisma.

My personal rule of thumb is this: *With people I am around a whole lot like campus roommates or dorm neighbors, I want to verbally share the Gospel less and preach it louder wordless, but at the same time remember that faith comes from hearing and hearing by the Word of God. There will always be a need to clearly hear the Message and understand it.*⁵ *With people I am around not very often, I want to verbally share the Gospel more* (if they are open to hearing it, and I will never know if they are open until I try sharing the Gospel with them the first time).

We need to be bright lights and very salty. God wants us telling the old story in a fresh way and He also wants us rich in good works toward all people as the Spirit will leads us in helping them, but especially with those living close to us. The Bible reveals that this is a practical and legitimate means of evangelism. The Apostle Peter said, ***"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven"*** (Matt. 5:16). It is God's will that ***"with well doing you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men"*** (1 Pet. 2:15).

Sinners may disagree with what you believe, but seeing your selfless good works will make them think the next time their headache is pounding from that hangover ...or that sin-breakdown. They might say to themselves, *"I don't believe what he believes, but man, that guy sure does. He might have some problems with life from time to time as well, but he certainly is sincere in his faith and somehow that helps keep a smile on his face. I want that same peace and joy like he has."* A friendly wave, a gift of some kind for no reason, fresh-baked goods, etc., can pave the way for effective evangelism.⁶ Pray for them every time you see them and pray for them when you are alone. Ask God to make them hungry for the Gospel and to give you an opportunity to share it with them. He will. Maybe offer to help them with their homework, or to mow your neighbors' lawn if they have a house or to help them repair their car that's been in four pieces for three months. Volunteer to pick up their mail, watch their dog and pick up their newspapers while they're away on a break or vacation and then do a good job for the Lord.

Compliment them on their gardening if it looks any better than that vacant lot near by and ask for gardening tips if it looks good and they even have time for such things.

Maybe invite them and their roommates over for a barbecue and then go out and get a good deal on some thick juicy steaks. Be sure to make it clear in advance that it's a non-BYOB meal of course.⁷ If they invite you, be sure to drive your car there or take a bike so you can retain walk-away power if they start to get drunk and lust after the ladies. Pray again and again for God to use you and to show you the right time to share the Gospel, and then be prepared for this when the time comes. Be humble and expect God to use you to plant seeds, water seeds and reap a harvest!

When we interact with people on a daily basis, we will have several opportunities for telling them our testimony and about what a personal relationship with Jesus Christ really means to us, including why we believe what we believe. Some will want to argue, or throw up smoke screens, or mock you just to look cool. No big deal. Pray to be willing to stand alone for Christ. Be willing to be rejected, to be scorned, or to be labeled a *Jesus Freak* ...or something much worse. Be 100% committed, be real and be yourself! *A person with an argument is never at the mercy of a person with an experience, but don't lean too hard on your experience.* Your spiritual experiences can return void after sharing them, but God's word will not ...so mix some Scriptures with good questions in there for them. Be sure you are courteous and respectful and don't interrupt them. Listen attentively, show interest in their non-lame interests. Set a good example for the entire block with your stewardship, ethics and diligence ***"as unto the Lord"*** (Col. 3:23).

When some dorm neighbors come around you to grumble and complain about certain ones in their dorm or classes, don't get involved in that gossip. You want to win all of them, not make enemies.

If your neighbors have been presumptuous or rude, please work it out with them and in your heart, forgive them. Too much is at stake here! As you respond to them in a Christ-like manner, angry dorm neighbors, stressed-out old neighbors and strange troglodyte neighbors will all be more open to hear what you have to say. Kindness and patience goes a long way. If your neighbors hate your Jesus bumper sticker (that doesn't have stupid or unbiblical wording on it that's false), just drive right. Drive legally and friendly. Maybe offer them a ride to class when you see them skateboarding there.

Show genuine interest in their lives. Invite them to Starbucks or to go grab a quick lunch just to get better acquainted. Weep with those who weep and laugh with those who laugh ...but not at their dirty jokes. Share their joys and sorrows by congratulating them in their good times and by offering to pray for them in their bad times. Offer to lead them to Jesus right there on the spot if they are willing to repent and trust Him. Ask what could be preventing them from coming ...if they seem kind of hesitant. Back off politely if they are not ready. Give them all the space and time they need to count the cost.

They will probably be moved by your genuine concern. Don't be nonjudgmental, self-righteous, or haughty. You are in school to learn.

You don't have to have all the answers like some know it all. They can see right through all that. Study the Word, know the Word, use the Word, and also the Ten Commandments with those who are proud. But do your best to be ready to answer their questions ...or know where to go to find the answers that they will need. Don't use churchy jargon or big religious words to try and impress anyone. Give it to them straight, simply, clearly, boldly and in a way that they can

easily understand. Use illustrations that open a window in their mind to get it. Define the Bible words you use giving the meaning from the context when you use these words.

The Bible says, ***"A friend loves at all times"*** (Prov. 17:17). Students are hungrier than ever today for true friendship and the love of God. They are looking in the wrong places for this kind of love and companionship and consequences do follow. We all reap what we sow.

Many are paying out the big bucks and being taught lies in the name of higher learning. Please don't get so busy with your school work or that side job that you don't have the time to go be alone with Jesus regularly—that you don't have any time to also go be a friend to someone. Listen to Christ speak to you in His Word. Never take a vacation from Him or from Christian fellowship. The Bible says, ***"A man who has friends must himself be friendly, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother"*** (Prov. 18:24). Be a warmhearted fun person to be around—a real uplifting fellow student that people can count on. A smile from time to time and just being there at the right moment, when they have a need, can make a powerful impact ...sometimes more so than a million eloquent sermons from some grand elevated pulpit. We can show our faith by our works even while in school. Don't have an *I-plan-to-be-strong-in-Christ-later-because-I-don't-want-to-miss-out-on-all-the-fun-while-young* attitude. Remember Holy is happy all the time. Others may not like a tree of righteousness, but they cannot help but like its fruit. Be sensitive, be vigilant and be aware. Pray for opportunities to share the Gospel, being careful not to infringe upon fellow classmate's privacy times like when they need to cram for a test. Expect Jesus to use you with His boldness!

On witnessing to young people, Billy Graham said, *"We are stewards of the Gospel. The power to proclaim the greatest news in heaven and earth was not given to the angels; it was given to redeemed men. Every Christian is to be a witness; every follower of Christ is to preach the Gospel. We can preach by sharing our experiences with others. We can preach by exalting Christ in our daily lives. Sermons which are seen are often more effective than those which are heard. The truth is, the best sermons are both heard and seen."*

The Bible Says:

"Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13).

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

"God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself ... and has committed to us the word of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:19).

"How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!'" (Rom. 10:14-15 nkjv).

"Always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you" (1 Pet. 3:15).

Here's a Strategy to Consider in Helping Someone Who Wants to Witness:

1. In order to witness effectively, an individual must know Christ personally. Ask the person wanting to be a witness if he or she has personally repented and trusted Jesus Christ as their own Lord and Savior.

2. After you have discovered that this person is a real Christian (or led this person to faith in Jesus) explain to them that Jesus must become very real to them—more than their closest friend in order for them to become an effective fisher! There will be very little to share with someone else if the Christian witness doesn't seek and maintain a close walk with Jesus Christ through reading and obeying the Bible and also daily cultivating a meaningful prayer life with Jesus alone and all through the day—their day. None of us have to be super-Christian to witness, but we must be genuine growing Christians. Urge the approaching inquirer to be sure that he or she is a genuine and committed Christian.

3. All witnessing begins in believing prayer. It's about right relationship with God. Prayer is not about getting our will done on earth, it's about seeing His will done on earth. Remember the prayer Jesus taught us to pray saying: Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done! Concerned candid prayer for those who need Christ will spiritually condition the Christian so to speak for witnessing to them effectively. A prayer list of "prospects,"—the people you really want to win—is a good place to start. This list may include family members, neighbors, an old friend, a fellow student, a co-worker, a new friend.

4. Advise the one with questions about how to witness to start gathering all possible pertinent information about each person that they consider to be a likely candidate for hearing the Gospel. They can do this in a natural way that doesn't make them look like a detective instead of a friend. Learning about people in the right way is important. The more carefully he or she plans their biblical approach with casual bridge-building seaways moving towards spiritual topics, as their verbal witnessing-impact takes [F.O.R.M.](#) (that's where they can discuss family issues, occupational interests and relationships, their religious background and then move towards sharing the actual Gospel Message using verses of Scripture), the more effective their witness presentation will be. And of course I don't mean that their communication needs to be ridged and so structured that they feel constrained to be something they are not. Taking F.O.R.M. if you will, is merely a ice-breaking tool—a tract to run on if the person need [some ideas](#) in order to end up heading for conveying the Message. The approach for many could be thought of in terms of flying about an airport, looking for the best place to go in and land and how to get there right. Some Christians with a desire to witness will circle the airfield time and time and time again, but they never come in and make their approach for fear that they will crash or lose that beloved unbelieving friend. They've earned the right to be heard so to speak, but it's hard to get blunt wisely though it is so necessary.

5. Suggest beginning with one friend. Tell them to be natural, to be caring, to be straightforward, to be yourself and friendly, without being patronizing. Entreat them not to overwhelm the unbeliever that they are targeting by trying to go too far too fast. The person doesn't have to hear everything there is to hear about the entire Bible in one sitting. Encourage them to be a good listener; most people really want to talk about themselves, their problems, their hurts, and their desires.

6. At this point, the Christian wanting to be a witness may share his or her own experiences they've had with Christ; you know their testimony. They can tell specifically how Christ came into their life and what His presence really means—what it's like. You

don't want to get them to lean hard on their feelings, like that's what it's all about or it isn't real, but it's ok for people to hear about those feelings.

7. This sharing could possibly lead into reading and explaining what the law of God says, how we've all fallen short of keeping it, what the God's plan of salvation is. The facts of the Gospel must be applied in such a way that they converge at the point of the individual's real need. Sin will have to be squarely faced, Christ's atoning death for sin accepted as the only way to God, and repentance and faith expressed for a person to be born again.

8. Advise the inquirer always to be aiming for a decision to turn—one that is comprehensive, intelligent, and definite. The witness should invite the person, lovingly but firmly, to make a permanent decision based on the presented facts of God's Word. The greatest service a Christian may render to another human being is to help that person understand the all-important step of surrendering his or her life to Christ's Lordship.

9. Encourage the inquirer to seal the decision with prayer. When their prospect is sufficiently knowledgeable, suggest that they offer their own prayer of repentance and commitment. If not, the witness could offer to guide the person in a prayer.

10. Following this, the witness should review with the prospect what has actually transpired in order to confirm their decision.

11. The ultimate goal in witnessing is obedience to the Holy Spirit. We want to be used to win people to faith in Christ so that they, themselves, may also know the joy of becoming effective, reproducing witnesses. In order for this to develop, it will be necessary to continue to dedicate time to the new believer, instructing on the importance of Bible reading, Scripture memorization and study (all of which can be a lot of fun), explaining the value and practice of prayer, and introducing them to other committed Christians for fellowship, reciprocal challenging, admonition, and encouragement.

Here's More Suggestions for Those Wanting to go Fishing for Souls:

1. Identify with a church where the Bible is preached and taught and where emphasis is placed on personal witness and soul winning.

2. Try to cultivate friendships with other witnessing Christians at school in order to learn from them: Observe it right, then do it right. God will help you. Evangelism is better caught than taught.

3. Enroll in any courses on personal evangelism at your local church, or at a church in the area where they make this training available.

4. Read and study books on Scripture memory, personal evangelism, and witnessing. A few good ones that I really like and are available are:

- The Art of Personal Witnessing by Lorne Sanny (The Navigators).*
- How to Give Away Your Faith by Paul Little (InterVarsity Press).*
- Know What You Believe and Know Why You Believe by Paul Little (Scripture Press).*
- Making God Known by Greg Laurie (Allen David Publishers).*
- Becoming a Christian by John Stott (InterVarsity Press).*

- *Topical Memory System (The Navigators).*
- *"Victory Scripture Memory" (Word Publications).*

*When you get the time, you'll love reading the Bible verses above in their own context. The words are defined by their context in the Bible. The Bible is God's love letter for the Christian so please repent and trust your first love, Jesus Christ [God], inviting Him into your person to save and help you with this Book and with life (See John 1 - 3). Allow Him to rule without rival. Remember, the Bible wasn't written to you, but for you, and the heavenly Father can speak to His child through it. Prayerfully understanding what God was saying to the original recipients is where we start. Understanding the Bible's application for you today is a must! As you meditate upon the Scriptures, ask what does God want me to know?—and what does He want me to do, or stop doing? It's wise to use the Bible to interpret the Bible.

¹ For info on Jupiter, see: R.E.D. Clark, *Creation* (London: Tyndale Press, 1946), p. 20.

² See *The Wonders of God's Creation*, Moody Institute of Science (Chicago, IL). Has sin affected all this on earth though? Sure it has. We have pollution here still. And Tsunamis and other birth pangs of the last days that we read about in the Bible will of course shake some of us up enough to seek God when nothing else will.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ The Bible specifically states, "***So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God***" (Rom. 10:17).

⁶ Be wise. If you are a single guy and they are a single girl, some sincere acts of kindness can be easily misinterpreted like you are hitting on them. Have the right motives, message and methods.

⁷ Many students are accustomed to getting drunk and witnessing to drunken people is a waste of time.