



How do I Witness to a Relative or to Close friend?

By Kurt von Schleicher

It's all about cultivating long-term, genuine friendship in Christ, and the other person doesn't need to be saved in order for that to happen. You want to start with daily prayer for that person, calling out their specific needs vertically to God and asking God to prepare their heart for the appropriate words at the right time, that He wants you to speak with that person about. Remember that God wants them born again more than you do. But if you don't spend some time in prayer for this person regarding their needs, how will you care that much about what happens with them? Love is first expressed on its knees! Yes, God loves them far more than you do and He can give you His love for them. He will show you what to say, what not to say, plus when and how to say it. When you verbally witness to someone you know, for example to a family member or to a close friend, please don't lean on formulas or on your own ingenuity! It would come off weird to them if you expressed yourself in a non-natural way. Lean on Christ and keep it supernaturally natural, not weird, animatronic, TV-preacher-spooky, loud, religious or pushy.

Assuming you've already trusted God to empower you to live the life before them consistently—I mean that by the Holy Spirit's enabling, you've already earned the right to be heard by this person so to speak—please know that there also needs to be a time for you to open your mouth to proclaim the truth verbally so that they can learn that you identify with Christ and love Him the most. And by "proclaim" I don't mean thundering the words out like some opera star. Again, be down to earth and feel free to express old truth in a fresh new way—in words that are on their level, that they will easily understand. If they are a computer geek, you can use words like calibration, or configure, or delete ...or explain how God wants to wipe their inner hard drive clean to just to get rid of the worst virus so to speak (that's sin).

Too many of us that have already earned the respect and trust from our unbelieving loved one, become too afraid to lose that hard-earned ground we've gained so to speak, that we refuse obey the new promptings of the Spirit in order to keep this relationship on the same level or terms. We easily refuse to take the risk to tell the person who the most important friend in our life really is, because deep down we fear that all we've invested relationally will be lost if they quickly put us in the religious box. The Holy Spirit

never minds you testing what you feel is coming from Him, to make sure that what you are hearing is biblical and wise. Remember the proper application of what's biblical is always wise.

For most of us Christians, it is far easier to witness to a total stranger than to someone we really know and respect. Sure, we value that friendship so much and we basically never want to blunder. We never want to miss God in what we say, or do—anything dumb that might jeopardize losing that relationship or their precious camaraderie. But if we truly love them, we will want them to spend eternity with us in heaven and this means that we must be willing to take the risk. Why start putting that person ahead of God like a lame idol? Besides, verbal witnessing is kind of like an airplane ride. And the hardest part regarding spreading the Gospel is the take off and the landing part verbally. Once we start sharing our own story or some verses that made us think differently about Christ and eternity, it will be much easier to go on with it verbally, especially if the person is open and listening attentively to you.

Jesus said, ***"If you want to be my follower you must love me more than your own father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, more than your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple. And you cannot be my disciple if you do not carry your own cross and follow me"*** (Lk. 14:26-27 nlt).

Pray as you go, be yourself! You don't have to come off as perfect, but you can expect distractions and interruptions after you start. You know what I mean, as soon as God starts breaking through to their conscience and understanding, to convict and bring repentance, the enemy will not be kicking back taking a siesta under some palm tree. He won't be at all happy with you or your little Jesus interchange. But don't lose your composure! Follow through. Realize that the phone might ring, someone might knock on the door, or the baby might start crying ...so you want to prepare well for this encounter in advance and try to guard your conversation time as best as you can without getting all flustered. If the person starts to show some body language like they want to leave, simply ask if this is a bad time for them and give them an easy out if they want one. Don't feel like you must give them the whole nine yards in that one sitting. Giving them an out, often sets them at ease enough to go on or it often makes them want to come back for more later. Honoring their time is one way to show them respect. We are not there to give a preachy-show of anointment or oil splashing slapped on the forehead per se, or to impress anyone with our vast Bible knowledge, or to even force the Gospel on anyone! We want to remain in a casual, two-way friendship building mode with them.

An effective way to soften the Message without compromise it, is to speak to your friend or family member in the "first person" or in maybe in a testimonial form as the Lord would lead you. Maybe say something like: *"I didn't realize that the Bible warns people that for every idle word we have spoken, we will each give an account for those words on Judgment Day. I thought that as long as I believed in God and tried to live a good life as a churchgoer, I would certainly go to heaven when I died. Man, I was so wrong. Jesus said that we must repent and be born again. He said that if I as much as looked with lust at someone, I had committed adultery in my heart, and that there was nothing I could do to wash my sins away. He basically taught that if I prioritized anyone or anything ahead of my relationship with God, that I was guilty of being an idolater. I knew that if God judged me by His Top Ten List (the Ten Commandments) on*

Judgment Day that I would end up totally culpable—guilty, and worthy to go to hell. It was when I acknowledged my wrongdoings, my sinfulness, my inability to save or clean up my soul. It was then that I began to understand why Jesus came here, lived a sinless life, died on that tree and then rose again on the third day as the Scriptures prophesied about. This was all done to take the punishment for my sins, yes in my place, and also to take the full punishment for the sins of the world."

Again, depending on the person's openness, you may ask, *"By the way, how do you think you will fare on Judgment Day, if God judges you by His Top Ten List? What are you counting on to get you past that fierce Great White Throne Judgment bar of God and into His Holy Heaven? Is there anything that would prevent you right now from getting right with God?—you know, coming clean before Him in honest repentance and faith? If not, would you like me to first pray for you and allow you to get real with Him?"*

Landing the plane if you will, can be awkward for some, but it doesn't have to be that way when you verbally witness. You simply want to give that friends or relative an opportunity to get right with God through Christ on God's terms. Why use good bait, good reasoning, lots of prayer time and effort to reel them in only to cut the line before they get in the boat so to speak? I hate to use sales terms in relation to witnessing, but "closing the deal" if you will is an extremely important time during the whole the fishing process.

If you hear a "no" to this free offer, that in no way means that you've failed. God will feel so stoked that you even opened your mouth and witnessed! Many Christians never arrive at the place spiritually where they will even attempt that. You can't repent for them, and often times if the person hears you ask them to do some of the praying with them, they could quickly draw back, feeling that they can't begin to do that right. So you might not even ask them if they want to join you in prayer until after they say yes to wanting your prayer for them—until after you actually voice a candid prayer for them personally. Sometimes, if the person you are talking with hears you pray that short, sincere, simple prayer for them, for their needs and about their greatest need first, all fear of praying out loud in Jesus Name seems to just evaporate into thin air and you can then lead that loved one right into God's Kingdom. Go for it!