

BACKYARD EVANGELISM

How can I witness to my neighbor, when I am a sinner, he is a sinner, and we both know it? Perhaps he has seen me when I was angry, or heard me say something I should not have said. Won't he interpret my witness actions and words as hypocritical, as pietistic, or even as interfering? Perhaps my witness will strain our relationship. I wouldn't know what to say or where to begin. Maybe I won't be able to answer the questions or objections he could raise. Such are the excuses and reasons we could offer for our inability to witness to our neighbors and others.

But, the fact is, for better or for worse, I am a witness to my Christian faith to all who know me or perceive me as a Christian. I witness every day to what I am as a Christian by what I do and say. For this reason the question is not, can I be a witness, but how can I be a better witness to my neighbor? Perhaps these suggestions and approaches will offer some help.

Be A Friend

Jesus was a friend to people. He was approachable. He was compassionate. He became their helper and friend, especially through his healing miracles. In this way he drew many people to himself, and they became willing to hear his message. Be a friend to people -- a kind, compassionate, helping friend. In this way we develop rapport with people. In this way we can "earn the right" to speak to our neighbor about something as important, and personal as eternal salvation.

Be A Good Listener

One demonstration of our friendship is our willingness to "lend an ear" to our neighbor, not to hear gossip, but to listen to his concerns, whatever they may be - his job, society, morality, and even life itself. By listening, we get to know him, especially his spiritual thoughts and understanding. This will enable us to learn "where he is at spiritually", and so be in position to bring him God's Word of truth and life.

Be An Example

In an age when Biblical morality and piety are being disdained, we have an obligation, as well as the opportunity, to witness by portraying a Christ-like character. We would do well to take to heart what Paul once wrote to the Philippians, "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus." The world, and this includes our neighbors, needs to "see" in us a morality and piety befitting Christian faith and life. Christians are different people in this world, and that ought to be so evident in our daily life -- and so wonderfully different -- that people would say, "That's the way I want my life to be."

Be A Gospel Witness

It is common for people to "talk religion" over the back fence, and every other place. People like to talk religion. People like to argue religion. It is easy for people to be sidetracked into discussing religious pet peeves, peripheral matters, anything and everything but what really counts, the answer to the question: What will happen to me after I die? For this reason we want to let our Gospel witness be first and foremost in our religious discussions. I would say to my neighbor, who has raised a religious pet peeve, "That's an interesting point, but would you mind if we first reviewed what the Bible has to say about our salvation? For it is only when we understand God's plan of salvation, that we can understand other religious questions and concerns." Be a Gospel witness, first and foremost!

Be Ready With An Answer

Nevertheless, we do want to give answer to our neighbor's religious questions and concerns. In so doing, we must be careful never to "bluff" an answer. If we are uncertain how to give answer to his concern, objection, or question, it is preferable to ask permission to return with an answer. It might even be possible to ask permission for your pastor to come and give answer. This would be appropriate if your neighbor were unchurched. It could "open the door" for your pastor to that home and make possible further instruction in the Word of God. We should also remember that our pastor can be a good resource person to help us construct the answer to people's questions and objections. Yes, we can, as Peter says, "Be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope that you have." A witness to my neighbor? Yes I am! God, let me be the best witness I can be, to the glory of Christ.

This article was taken from the Evangelism material found on WELS.net.