

## “The Friendship Factor”

### Presentation Handout

#### Our Actions Speak Louder Than Our Words...

- Is witnessing sharing knowledge or living actions...? Here are some insightful thoughts from a college student who is serving as a student missionary that gets at the point of missional-relational witnessing as a Christ-follower.
  - “My high school religion teacher used to say, “Preach the gospel, and if necessary use words” *{adapted from St. Francis of Assisi}*.
  - “For the past couple of years, I have been grappling with the idea of evangelism. In general, evangelistic strategies seem to be condensed into this dichotomy: verbally sharing knowledge of Christ and then witnessing by emulating His character through one’s actions.
  - “While it would make sense for a Christian to create a balance between these forms of evangelism, I noticed that, in general, most Christians have a propensity to excel in one method over the other (my [presenter: David] thought is: it’s sharing knowledge/information, even debating....).
  - “In considering this, I began to wonder what the most successful method of evangelism was, witnessing through knowledge or actions?
  - “I found my answer by looking in the gospels to the best missionary to walk the earth, Jesus. Throughout Jesus’ ministry on earth, strangers were drawn to Him. What made Jesus’ ministry appealing?
  - “In looking at the gospel stories, I saw a theme in Jesus’ work. Of course, His sermons and stories were remarkable, but I think that over anything, strangers were drawn to His teachings due to His actions.
  - “**Actions preceded knowledge!** Jesus was loving and merciful to those He met, despite cultural norms and people’s societal standings. He was a fish swimming upstream, and it made others look at His mission in awe.
  - “Once they (others/strangers) realize that Jesus is not there to condemn them but to be their Friend, it is then that these individuals are open to His teachings.
  - “**Emulating the love of God came first, then knowledge of who He was came second.** In contemplating this, I think as Christians, if we want to **share** our knowledge of who God is, **first**, we have to **show** who God is!”

*{Thoughts from a collegiate student missionary from one of their mission blog posts}*

**TAKE-AWAY:** Back to our question: Is our witness, relational-friendship or sharing of biblical truth? I believe our collegiate student missionary has it correct! It’s both!! Our honest, heartfelt friendship-actions witness opens the doors for our verbal-knowledge witness. How one lives for Christ Jesus as His professed follower, opens or closes doors for one’s verbal witness!

## Friendship-Actions: A Relational Witness

- **Life of proclaiming worship & witness** {1 Peter 4:10-11}
  - The *first focus* of a Christian life should be worship—loving and believing in the Lord with one’s whole heart, mind, and soul {Deuteronomy 6:5-6; 10:12-13; 30:6}.
    - This is the foundational motive for all that happens in the life of a Christian!
    - Without this true motive a believer’s life would be a farce, drudgery, hypocritical, etc.
  - The *second focus* is proclaiming who God is and His truth to others {Deuteronomy 10:12b; 1 Peter 2:9-10}.
    - This is accomplished through two different witnesses/ways:
      - ❖ Friendship evangelism that encourages others, shows love and care for them, etc. through one’s actions, attitudes, etc. {John 4:1-9; 1 Peter 2:11-12; 3:15-16}.
      - ❖ Verbally sharing biblical knowledge through conversations, mentoring, preaching, teaching, etc. {John 4:10-26, 39-(41); 1 Peter 3:15b}.
  - Our friendship-relational and verbal witnesses should always be *done in a spirit of graciousness, kindness, etc.* {1 Peter 1:22; 3:8-12; 15b, 4:8-9; 5:2-3, 5; Ephesians 4:15a}.
    - Revealed through the attitudes/actions of:
      - ❖ Sincere love with a pure heart {1 Peter 1:22; 2:17, 3:8; 4:8}
      - ❖ Honor and respect {1 Peter 2:17}
      - ❖ Compassionate {1 Peter 3:8}
      - ❖ Tenderhearted {1 Peter 3:8}
      - ❖ Courteous {1 Peter 3:8}
      - ❖ Not retaliating—evil for evil, etc.—but giving blessing instead {1 Peter 3:9}
      - ❖ Being truthful {1 Peter 3:10}
      - ❖ Seeking/pursuing peace {1 Peter 3:11}
      - ❖ Being hospitable without grumbling {1 Peter 4:9}
      - ❖ Willingly serving as leaders with honesty and humility {1 Peter 5:2-3, 5}

**TAKE-AWAY:** Peter gives some specific relationship situations where these above-mentioned attitudes/actions in our friendship-relational-action witness can bless others and/or might change their attitudes toward God.

## Everyday Relationship Witness Situations

- **Non-believers and our culture in general** {1 Peter 2:11-12}
  - A believer’s honorable, gracious, holy actions/conduct glorify God and could be used by the Holy Spirit to win someone to God in salvation or sadly, one’s negative attitudes and/or actions could turn someone away from God.
- **Government officials** {1 Peter 2:13-16; Matthew 22:15-(22); Romans 13:1-7}
  - “Submit” = honor, respect, reverence.
    - Christians should honor with respect government officials at all levels of government by submitting to their authority through:

- ❖ Obeying all government laws, paying taxes, etc. unless they are in opposition to Bible doctrine/teachings {*Daniel 3:4-6, 12-18 (16-18); Acts 5:26-29*}.
  - This is God's will for His followers so that government leaders might view Christians as law abiding citizens, not willful law-breakers {*1 Peter 2:15-16*}.
  - **Masters (Employees)** {*1 Peter 2:18-25 (18)*}
    - "Submissive" = placed under the authority of another.
      - Today, we wonder why the New Testament writers didn't address the institution of slavery or advocate for its overthrow {*Adapted from The Apologetics Study Bible study notes, Copyright © 2007 by Holman Bible Publishers - PC Study Bible, © Biblesoft, Inc.*}.
        - ❖ First, we must recall the social situation of the young Church in the Roman Empire. They lacked political power and could do nothing to dismantle the institution of slavery.
        - ❖ Second, New Testament writers didn't seem to be social revolutionaries {see *1 Cor 7:17-24*}.
          - ✓ They did not believe overhauling social structures would transform culture.
          - ✓ Their primary concern seemed to be the relationship of individuals to God, and they focused on the sin and rebellion of individuals against their Creator. Therefore, they did not complain about the oppression imposed by others but concentrated instead on the godly response of believers to mistreatment.
          - ✓ If enough individuals are transformed, of course, society as a whole benefits and the Christian faith begins to function as a leavening influence for the good.
        - ❖ It is also crucial to note that the New Testament, nor the Old Testament, commends slavery as a social structure. It nowhere roots it in the created order, as if slavery were an institution ordained by God. [It] was invented by human beings.
        - ❖ [Instead, it] regulated the institution of slavery as it existed in society, but it did not commend it per se. Hence, Peter's words on slavery should not be interpreted as an endorsement for the system, even if he did not denounce the institution.
      - Also some commentators seem to believe that Peter is not referring to slaves as we would understand the term today, but household servants, which in reality were "slaves," though they could buy their release {*from Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright © 1997-2014 by Biblesoft, Inc.*}.
      - Could we apply the principles from Peter to employees? Maybe? Some have suggested this. To some extent we might be able to do so, but with limitations.
- **Marriage/Spouses/Family** {*1 Peter 3:1-7*}
  - How one responds/lives in their marital/family relationships can be a witness for or against God and the gospel. Peter gives an example for husbands & wives:
    - The wife/woman's focus should be on her inward, spiritual beauty/character, not outward adornment, etc. {*vv. 4-5*}.

- ❖ This doesn't mean she shouldn't care about her looks. Instead, it shouldn't be her main focus—where she finds her worth, status, life priority, etc. As a result Peter counsels women not to {*v. 3; 1 Timothy 2:9-10*}:
- ❖ “Arranging the hair”
  - ✓ Extreme hairstyles of the day that were faddish and expensive, which made one stand out to others' notice, particularly men, made a statement by shocking others, made one feel superior to others, etc. {*IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament by Craig S. Keener Copyright © 1993 by Craig S. Keener. Published by InterVarsity Press*}.
  - ✓ Probably, Peter & Paul probably had in mind how women would braid their hair with gold. It was a faddish, stylish, status statement.
  - ✓ The principle is: avoid following trendy fads that don't help one grow in the gospel. This principle applies to both men and women!
- ❖ “Wearing gold”
  - ✓ Meaning jewelry, like bracelets, earrings, necklaces, etc.
  - ✓ The Greek meaning is not moderation, but abstaining all together {*The Andrews Study Bible notes – 1 Peter 3:3*}.
- ❖ “Putting on fine apparel”
  - ✓ Women in Peter's day had a tendency to wear expensive clothing that flaunted their wealth, which created social-economic distinctions in the church.
  - ✓ Again, this clothing followed faddish trends that wasted money that could be used for the gospel and compartmentalized people.
- ❖ These prohibitions were not only out of a loving obedience to our Lord, but also for a missional-witness that honored God and led others to Him.
  - ✓ They were a selfless giving up of certain things that made others notice our Lord and not the individual, drawing others to a faith that was different than the culture.
  - ✓ It reflected the truths that everyone was special and equal in God's eyes; one's life focus should be on their inner spiritual character not one's outward beauty; nor cultural trends; etc.
  - ✓ Finally, outward actions, looks, etc. can inadvertently witness positively or negatively for the Lord.
- The husband/man should treat his wife/other women with understanding and honor as those who are valuable in God's eyes too {*1 Peter 3:7; Ephesians 5:25, 28-29, 33*}.
  - ❖ This is because wives/women were joint heirs of God's grace and salvation together with the husbands/men.
  - ❖ This would have been a radical theology and practice in a world where wives/women didn't have any or very little rights and were treated as property by their husbands and/or were expected to follow the religion of their husbands—the household religion.
  - ❖ The husbands/men's responsibility was more intense/weighty with more consequences than the wives/women!
- Church/general life {*1 Peter 3:8-12*}
  - How God's people treat one another is a witness for Him, positively or negatively, to the non-believing world around them {*John 13:34-35*}.

- Peter mentions what a positive interaction should include:
  - ❖ Being of “one mind” {v. 8}
    - ✓ This doesn’t mean uniformity but an unity of purpose in ministry and vision—a commitment to worship God and witness for Him as a corporate body united in the Holy Spirit.
    - ✓ This is so different from our divided, polarized culture/world we live in now.
    - ✓ God calls His people to be part of a healthy church family where they can be a blessing, encouragement, and/or mentor; and they in return can also be blessed, encouraged, mentored, held accountable, etc.
  - ❖ Compassionate {v. 8}
    - ✓ Even if God’s people disagree, they should disagree agreeably.
    - ✓ Church members should exercise the spirit of Jesus in their attitudes and actions with each other.
    - ✓ Give the others the benefit of the doubt. Don’t jump to conclusions.
  - ❖ Love each other {v. 8}
    - ✓ This involves a selfless care for others, concerned about them as well as oneself.
    - ✓ Wishing others well.
  - ❖ Tenderhearted {v. 8}
    - ✓ Treating others as one themselves would like to be treated.
    - ✓ It’s like wrapping up in a soft, cuddly, warm blanket on a cold day.
  - ❖ Courteous {v. 8}
    - ✓ Being gracious with one’s actions, attitudes, words, etc., not being rude.
  - ❖ Not returning evil for evil or reviling, but blessing instead {v. 9}.
    - ✓ This means not wishing evil on someone else, or paying them back in a way that hurts them.
    - ✓ This doesn’t mean one lives without boundaries, but it does mean there is not a mean payback mentality!
    - ✓ One is willing/open to working out/through disagreements or other issues that could hinder/destroy relationships.
    - ✓ It also involves not gossiping about other brothers & sisters or garnering support for one’s cause against another {v. 10}.
- This positive witness interaction is associated with God’s righteousness {v. 12}.
- How Church leaders lead is also a witness, positively or negatively, for God and the gospel {1 Peter 5:1-3}.
  - Peter counsels Christian leaders should lead with a spirit of:
    - ❖ Willingness, not a “have-to” mentality
    - ❖ Honesty with an eagerness to help and bless others
    - ❖ Servant leadership—not demanding from the members, but selflessly serving them in humility
    - ❖ Leading by example—willingness to do, instead of just asking or demanding

**TAKE-AWAY:** Even if our friendship-relational-action witness is in the spirit of Jesus and our verbal witness uplifts the beauty of God and His character, Peter reminds Christians that they may still suffer for their faith.

## Suffering for One's Witness

- Peter soberly reminds Christians that they may suffer embarrassment, harassment, and/or persecution in some way, sooner or later, for their faith and witness {*1 Peter 4:12-19*}.
- The reasons why God's followers may suffer:
  - Christians live in a world/culture/society that is not Christian—it doesn't embrace biblical, Christian faith and/or lifestyle principles {*1 Peter 4:3-4*}.
    - ❖ For example: politics is not Christianity. When Christianity caters to politics/political parties it risks losing its "soul" (as we'll discover in our next mile-marker "Forever").
    - ❖ Does this mean Christians should not address the issues of their culture/society, vote, etc. No!
  - The non-Christian world/culture/society doesn't understand Christian faith or lifestyle principles {*1 Peter 4:3-4*}.
    - ❖ Spiritual things are spiritually discerned only through the Holy Spirit, not a political parties, candidates, social media, etc. They can't!
  - Christ Jesus was rejected and suffered so will His followers in some way, sooner or later, if they follow Him and witness for Him {*John 16:1-3*}.
    - ❖ Ultimately, the mindset and lifestyle of Jesus that His followers grow in will not be understood by their world/culture/society around them, and they will suffer for their faith.
    - ❖ It happened to Jesus. It will happen to His true followers too (as we'll see in our next mile-marker "Forever")!

**TAKE-AWAY:** The Holy Spirit through Peter encourages us that though Christians may suffer some type of embarrassment, harassment, and/or persecution for their faith, God has promised His grace through the Holy Spirit to help them.

- God's grace that is sufficient!
  - Christians are promised the Holy Spirit when they suffer for their Lord {*1 Peter 4:14*}.
    - ❖ One is not alone when they suffer when they are in God's will, surrendered to Him {*1 Peter 4:19*}.
  - God's grace is a sufficient encouragement/help in all embarrassments, harassments, or persecutions suffered for following their Lord Jesus {*1 Peter 5:12*}.
    - ❖ And when one lives a life surrendered to their Lord, resting in His grace for them, they will have His peace despite what they may be enduring/suffering {*1 Peter 5:14b*}!

**LIVING CHOICE:** Will you by God's grace live a life committed to Him in faith and witness for Him in which you glorify and honor Him through your actions and attitudes and your words?