

YOUR TESTIMONY IS A SWORD THAT WILL OPEN HEARTS ...

By John Gagliardi



The ministry of the Kingdom business professional is more than just doing “business” and raising money for the Kingdom – we are also called to “do the work of an evangelist” by always being ready to share our faith “in season and out of season” (2 Timothy 4: 2).

The bottom line (we business people like “bottom lines”) is that if we are truly Christian - “of Christ” - we are called to obey the teaching and commands of Christ. He has given us the Great Commission, which is to go and preach the Gospel to “everyone, everywhere” (Mark 16: 15), and to “make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28: 19).

The Oxford Dictionary defines a “commission” as “the authority to perform a task or certain duties ... an instruction, command or duty.” When we are commissioned to perform a duty, we are given a mission, a mandate, a warrant. As is often said, Jesus did not give us the “Great Suggestion”.

One of the most powerful ways we can “preach” the Gospel, is to share our own stories – our “testimonies” to use the Biblical term. As a long-time journalist, I have learned that the one thing people always want to hear about, is other people. That is why people are almost always quoted in newspaper stories, and most of the stories are about people and what they are doing. We call it in the trade “human interest”.

There is incredible power to simple truth and reality – you don't have to be a great orator to share your own testimony, to tell someone how it used to be, what Jesus has done in your life, and how it is now. And your testimony doesn't have to be a “gutter to glory” high drama story, just tell it like it is – and let the Holy Spirit use it to do God's work.

In my own case, my testimony is quite colorful – I had become well known in Australia as a journalist and political lobbyist, living a life of power and privilege, followed by a crash into depression and alcoholism, and a dramatic conversion in a personal encounter with the Lord at the point of suicide.

With a story like that, I quickly became “flavor of the month” on the local speaking circuit – for several years I shared my testimony in Full Gospel Businessmen meetings, churches, and other similar groups across the country. Almost without exception, I ended my testimony with an invitation to accept Christ, leading to many decisions.

But just as powerful as the public testimony, is the one-on-one encounter, where the Holy Spirit opens someone up to hear what you have to say. God used me in this way to lead a number of influential people to the Lord, including three government ministers. Indeed, Jesus specifically tells us that we will be brought before rulers and government leaders “for a testimony” (Mark 13: 9).

Having said that, let me add a note of caution – in my personal opinion, God does not expect you to preach to every person you meet in your daily walk or business activities. If you are a salesperson, you may not do so well if you share Christ with every potential customer instead of doing what you are paid to do.

I believe God will bring people across your path, with whom He wants you to share Christ, and when that happens, you will know it. You will sense that inner voice, the “still small voice” of the Holy Spirit, prompting you. To illustrate, let me give a personal example of how this can work.

Some years ago, I was flying from Brisbane to Sydney for a business meeting, and was tired after a very hectic schedule. I was sitting in Business Class, and a very well-dressed man sat next to me. I felt a prompt from God to talk to him, but I was tired, and resisted it.

For the entire trip to Sydney, I kept my nose in a newspaper, and except for a cursory “good morning” I totally ignored the man next to me. The nagging of the Lord continued, but I resolutely resisted the impulse to start up a conversation.

Finally, the captain announced that we are about to land in Sydney, and that we should put on our seat belts, put our seat backs up, etc etc. Now I thought, well, I can

say hello, because there isn't time to get involved in any long conversation. So I just turned and said to him, "How are you?"

To my amazement, he said: "Terrible. My business failed recently, and I am facing bankruptcy, and on top of that, my wife has just left me. I am desperate – I don't know where to turn – in fact, I am going to Sydney to meet with a witchcraft group I have heard about, because they say they can help me."

You can imagine how I felt – all along, I felt prompted to talk to this man, but had resisted, and he was in a state of crisis and desperation. Quickly, I mentally repented, and asked God to forgive me, and if possible, to open an opportunity to talk with the man in depth.

To my utter amazement, right at that moment, the captain came back on the PA and announced that air traffic over Sydney was stacked up, and that we would have to circle for some time before being cleared to land.

For the next 40 minutes, as the plane circled over Sydney, I shared Christ with this man by telling him my own story, and led him to Jesus. He got off the plane transformed, full of the joy of the Lord, and heading to Pastor Phil Pringle's Christian City Church.

We are called to be a "light" to the world (Matthew 5: 14) – we can shine that light, a reflection of the "true Light", by opening ourselves up to opportunities to share our testimony with other people. You never know from the outside what is going on inside people – and often, the more senior and high-profile the person, the greater the pressure and inner turmoil.

When I was at my lowest ebb, I still kept an outward façade of success and stability; inwardly, I was a mess, but outwardly I "had it all together."

Like one of the government ministers I shared my testimony with in Australia – I went to his office in the early evening, and sat in a huge leather chair across a sumptuous desk in a palatial government office. That man looked like he had it all together too.

But within an hour, he was – quite literally – lying on his carpet, sobbing his heart out, repenting, and accepting Jesus into his heart. He later went on to become a preacher of the Gospel in his own right, and wrote a book in which he described this experience (I read a review of the book, strangely enough, on a recent trip to Brisbane).

We must never be put off by someone's supposed importance, or outward appearance – in fact, prominent people are often ignored by Christians, who feel daunted at the prospect of sharing the Gospel with them. They will happily go and speak in prisons, hospitals, and to the down-and-out, but stop short of approaching the "big wheel".

That is a particular role Christian business people can play – we are quite accustomed to dealing with high-profile people, and we can get in to see them, opening up a very fertile field for evangelism that is often closed to many pastors and full-time church workers.

Again, relating to my own personal experience, I have been invited to speak in the Russian Parliament, both the Australian and the Queensland Parliaments, and in a Senior Cadres In-Training School in Vietnam, based primarily on my business profile. My business background opened the door to amazing opportunities – God will use us in incredible ways if we let Him!

Never be ashamed or embarrassed to testify about Jesus (2 Timothy 1: 8) – “Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 10: 32 and 33).

In Revelation 12: 11, believers overcome the devil by the Blood of the Lamb, “and the word of their testimony” – if it is good enough for the Revelation saints, it should be good enough for us as we resist Satan and all his works in our daily lives. Our testimony is a powerful spiritual weapon – it is a sword of truth, cutting a swathe through the lies and deception of the enemy, and opening a straight path for the Holy Spirit directly into the hearts of those held captive by Satan.