

Street Witnessing on a Mission Trip

There is something that every mission team must remember and it is this: There is a big difference between the words “MISSION” and “MISSIONS.” I hear many churches talk about church missions. The word “missions” usually means doing many different kinds of mission activities. The word “MISSION” means telling people about Jesus. Jesus left “HIS CHURCH” with “HIS PLAN” for reaching the world. We are to be “HIS WITNESSES” telling people the good news of Jesus Christ every where we go (Acts 1:8).

Many times it is easier to do the “good works” without telling the “good news.” Many mission teams spend thousands of dollars and days of travel doing many different kinds of “**good works**” but may never share the “**good news.**” Recently in Romania, Ron Wilcoxson, pastor of FBC Dexter, MO. trained a Romanian pastor in “STREET WITNESSING.” Within a few hours, a number of people made professions of faith in Jesus as their Savior. The bottom line was this: **People were saved because someone told them about Jesus!** I ask Pastor Ron to share his technique for street witnessing on mission trips. Here is what Pastor Ron has written:

- **Pray for God’s leadership and empowerment, and for the people you come into contact with on the street.**

“We were nearly to the end of the street when we came upon three ladies and a small child walking home. It was as if the Holy Spirit set those ladies apart from everyone else we had seen. I spoke up and said, *“This is it! This is where God wants us to begin!”*”

As you prayer walk a community, God will point out those He has been working with to cultivate a climate for your witness. Sometimes He directs you to them, and at other times, He uses their curiosity to direct them to you. Either way, it’s similar to harvesting fruit from fruit trees. There’s no need to prematurely jerk the fruit from its stem when it is green. When the fruit is ripe and ready for harvest, it falls into your hand with just a gentle touch.

- **The first few words we say and how we conduct our conversation after that initial greeting will dictate how far our encounter progresses.**

Being too forward in some cultures can make it difficult to proceed any further than your first “hello,” and it could possibly cut you off from being able to share at all.

- **As you approach a person, look him/her in the eye with the compassion of Christ before speaking a word.**

Many times in the Gospels, Jesus “was moved with compassion” before He performed ministry. (Matt. 9:36, 14:14, 15:32, 20:34, Mk 1:41, 6:34, 8:2, Lk. 7:13, 10:33, 15:20) Jesus was able to express His love to people through His facial expressions. Jesus genuinely loved them and they could tell it.

If you do not love the people you are attempting to share the gospel with, you are trophy hunting instead of sharing the Gospel! Stop whatever you are doing and get with God in prayer. Colossians 3:12 commands us to “put on a heart of compassion” (NASB). Don’t attempt to share Christ until you can love those whom you are trying to reach. You simply cannot exude compassion when it is not genuinely in your heart.

- **Open your conversation with an explanation of why you are there.**

My opening line is this: “*God has sent me here from America to meet with you today.*” (If I didn’t believe that, I wouldn’t be there.) “*He knew you would be here today and He sent me here to tell you about a wonderful gift He wants to give to you. Would you like to know about that gift?*” As far as I can remember, I have never had anyone tell me they did not want to know about that gift.

- **I go on to tell them the gift is all about how to get from (wherever I am at the time) to heaven.**

I follow up that statement with this question: “*Would you like to know how to get from here to heaven?*” Virtually everyone says: “Yes.”

- **Then I ask if they have a Bible?**

They usually do not, so I take a copy of God’s Word written in their language and open it to whatever passage I feel led of God to use. I hand the Bible to them and ask them to read selected verses out loud (if they are able to read). Then I gently guide them through the plan of salvation, allowing them to read the scriptures for themselves. I usually conclude with Romans 10:13 or Revelation 3:20 and ask them: “*Do you want to ask Jesus into your heart right now to save you and be your Lord and Savior?*”

- **By this time, many are thrilled that God loved them enough to send Jesus to suffer and die on a cross just to have a relationship with them.**

It is a rare thing for them to be compassionately confronted with the truth of God’s Word and not be moved with emotion. Tears are a common response to the love of God they have encountered for themselves in the scriptures. My biggest thrill in street witnessing, whether here in the U.S. or overseas on the mission field, is leading those who are touched by the Word and Spirit of God to a saving relationship to Christ!

- **I have already presented them with a copy of God’s Word that they can read and understand, so I explain that the Bible I gave them now belongs to them.**

It is such a blessing to be able to leave the Word of God in their hands. I remind them they ought to read it every day and most assure me they will. If I have other immediate follow-up materials, I will leave them copies of that also, and I take their name/address to give to the pastor who will stay in contact with them after we’re gone.

I never cease to be amazed at how simple the Gospel is and how easily people come to Christ when they see the truth for themselves. Leading people to faith in Christ is not a battle of wits between the saved and the lost. It is more akin to watching God do His amazing work of bringing lost people from spiritual death to eternal life right in front of our eyes!

By listening for the Spirit's voice as to the persons you are to approach, you can witness with confidence, knowing He instigates the encounter! He knows who is ready to listen to the Gospel and who is not. There is no need to argue or even forcefully persuade. The Spirit does that in the privacy of the lost person's heart (John 16:8) – sometimes long before we arrive on the scene.

In fact, when the lost person wants to argue, our witnessing encounter is over for the moment. When they begin to argue, I take that as my cue I am not the one who will reap the harvest in that person's life (at least, not now). I consider myself at that point as a seed sower in a long chain of seed sowers in their life.

Hopefully, that person will one day be ready to receive Christ. After all, God is working in the lives of all lost people to bring them to faith. It is not His will that any should perish (2 Peter 3:9). When they are ready, God will lead someone else to share the Gospel with them and lead them into a saving relationship with Christ. **If you're willing to go, maybe that person will be you!**

Dr. Ron Wilcoxson, Pastor FBC Dexter, MO