

## THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUR TESTIMONY

Testimonies

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Revelation 12:11

The Lord has declared, "And they overcame him (the devil, verse 9) because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even to death" ( Revelation 12:11).

This verse is central to the lives of Christians. The blood of the Lamb is what made our salvation possible, and brought us to the place where we even have a testimony. The word of our testimony is not just about how we were saved, as though God entered our lives for that moment and we've never seen or heard from Him since. We all are supposed to have an ongoing testimony of our involvement in the things of God, and His involvement in our lives. We should be ready to answer the question, "What has God done in your life in the last month?"

We are to share God's involvement in our lives with Christians and non-Christians, as we see that God has opened the door for us to share. The Holy Spirit takes this testimony, and does His wonderful work in their lives. Sometimes they will respond with a Hallelujah!, and sometimes they will get a frown on their faces and change the subject. When this happens, it isn't that you have failed God, or that your testimony was not effective. What probably happened in the case of the frown is that your testimony brought the person under the conviction of the Holy Spirit (for reasons we don't need to know), and because of this discomfort he wanted to change the subject. You have done your part, and now the Holy Spirit will do His part. Another reason for getting a frown is that sometimes Christians with a testimony to share don't pay attention to whether the Holy Spirit is preparing that other person's heart to receive what we have to say, and we sometimes forget to ask the Lord, "Is this the right time?"

What is the big picture? It goes like this: In the Garden of Eden, mankind sinned for the first time, and fell into a "depraved" state, so that all people are born with a carnal, sinful nature. This was a work of the devil, in the Garden. Because of this tragic event, "the whole world lies in the power of the evil one" (I John 5:19). Everywhere (literally, all over the earth), the devil has seduced people into personal sinful bondage, and into the development of sinful practices, such as abortion, pornography, divorce, wife-beating, white-collar crime, etc. The world lies in darkness, and Jesus has called us, His disciples, to be "the light of the world". Our light shines as we manifest the Lord living inside us, in the person of the Holy Spirit. One of the powerful ways our light shines is when we testify to the wonderful works of God. We do want people to know what a wonderful God we worship and serve.

So, what does God want to do about this horrible condition of the world, all this darkness, all these millions of evil works of the devil? As led by the Holy Spirit, the Apostle John wrote these words, "The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil" (I John 3:8). Probably the primary work of the devil is that he "has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (II Corinthians 4:4). So, the lost have been blinded to prevent them from coming to Christ...so that they would perish in hell. This work of the devil must be destroyed, so that these perishing people can come to Christ.

Jesus told us, His disciples, in John 14:12, "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to the Father". Jesus gave us the Holy Spirit to empower us, so that we can do His work of destroying the works of the devil. Therefore, as we share the truth of the Gospel with a perishing person, the Holy Spirit takes that word and powerfully uses it in the life of this person with whom we have shared. Then comes to pass the word of God in II Corinthians 4:6, "For God, who said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness,' is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ". Thus, as the Holy Spirit shines God's light into this person's heart, this particular work of darkness, done by the devil, has been destroyed, and the person is now free to trust in Christ.

Now, all the preceding is about rescuing the perishing people of the world. But there is more. The devil doesn't just work on them....he also has plans to weaken or destroy believers in the Church of Jesus Christ. He has planted all forms of strange practices and doctrine in the church. The worst one I know is the doctrine that we have to work at becoming as sinless as possible so that God will overlook our past sins and let us in Heaven. This is "works salvation", and is from the pit of hell. The truth is that we are born with a sinful nature, and can never be good enough to earn or deserve to be admitted to Heaven. Only by receiving Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior can we appropriate for ourselves the forgiveness of sins that He purchased through His death on the cross. He died in our place, since we deserved that death, because of our sins.

In addition to this, the devil wants to get as many church groups (denominations) as possible to create a doctrine where their faith is a faith of the intellect, which usually involves an avoidance of feelings in the heart regarding our wonderful Lord and Savior. Some even say that God has no feelings. However, He has given us a "great commandment" in Matthew 22:37, to call forth our feelings as we love Him with all of our heart, soul and mind. This "faith of the intellect" doctrine also wants to avoid the wonderful supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. As we testify to the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, He breaks through intellectual walls created by this doctrine, and brings life lived in the Holy Spirit, an exciting joyfilled life, which blesses others and glorifies the Lord.

This section from Bill Johnson's book, "When Heaven Invades Earth" is very helpful. He begins by quoting from God's Word:

"The sons of Ephraim were archers equipped with bows, yet they turned back in the day of battle, they did not keep the covenant of God, and refused to walk in His law; and they forgot His deeds, and His miracles that He had shown them."

Then, Bill writes: "A very profound part of the Jewish culture was shaped by the command to keep the testimonies of the Lord. The family itself was driven by the ongoing revelation of God contained in His commandments and testimonies. They were to talk about the Law of God and what God had done when they went to bed at night, rose up in the morning, walked along, etc. Just about any time of the day was a perfect time to talk about God's wondrous works.

"To insure they didn't forget, they were to build monuments that would help them to remember the invasion of God into their lives. For example: they piled stones to mark the place where Israel crossed the Jordan River (Joshua 3:1-4:9). That was so that when their young ones would ask, 'Hey, Dad, why is that pile of stones there?', they could respond with the story of how God worked among them.

"The testimony of God creates an appetite for more of the activities of God. Expectation grows wherever people are mindful of His supernatural nature and covenant. When the expectation grows, miracles increase. When the miracles increase, testimonies increase as well. You can see the cycle. The simple act of sharing a testimony about God can stir up others until they expect and see God work in their day.

"The reverse is also true. Where they decrease, miracles are expected less. If there is less expectation for miracles, they happen even less. As you can see, there is also a possible downward spiral. Forgetting what God has done by removing the testimony from our lips ultimately causes us to become fearful in the day of battle. The story of the children of Ephraim is tragic because they were thoroughly equipped to win. They just lacked courage. Their courage was to come from their memory of who God had been to them."

The bottom line is that, through your words of testimony, you can make a difference in your friends' lives, destroying these very clever works of the enemy, and helping your friends "come alive in the Spirit". As they begin to think about what He has done, and Him living inside of them, ready to use them in wonderful ways, they will begin to bring blessing to others, and they will glorify the Lord Jesus.

#### Susan's Testimony

I had been in emotional pain most of my life and therefore, not surprisingly, suffered from chronic low grade depression. Twice, as a young adult, I slipped into more serious depression. When in my early twenties, I sought the counsel of a Christian psychiatrist who patiently helped me give expression to some of the emotions bottled up inside. A few years later, I went through a deliverance session with my pastor at my church in Charlotte, which also brought relief from my overall sense of dis-ease. I didn't realize, however, until in my early forties, that I still had not gotten to all the root causes of my emotional pain. The first time Dick and I ever met to talk, I was so worn out from my emotions and other of life's events (a painful church split, things going poorly at work, my husband and I not getting along, etc.), that I actually blurted out to him, "If you hurt me, I'll expose you!" Today I can hardly believe I said that to him and I can hardly believe he didn't show me straight to the door! I was one tough customer for sure, but I really didn't mean to be. I was just tired of being in pain.

Dick and I met a couple of times in his office just to talk and get to know one another. My anxiety level dropped considerably! At the end of one of our talks, Dick asked permission to pray for me. He laid his hands on my head and began asking God to fill me with His peace, from "the top of my head to the bottom of my toes". So many people pray these words that they seem more a Christian cliché than anything else. But when Dick prayed over me that day, the Holy Spirit responded! God has gifted Dick as a hydraulic pump dispenser of His glorious Peace. A thick blanket of Peace enveloped my tired and anxious mind and then draped down around my shoulders, down my sides and over my legs. I had never experienced such a profound, intoxicating peace as this before. I was so relaxed I couldn't move! And I didn't want to move! I don't know how long I sat there with my body pressed down into the chair under the weighty touch of the Holy Spirit. When I left Dick's office I could barely walk upright. Dick kindly escorted me down the long hallway as I giggled and staggered...unable to walk in a straight line. I bumped into the corridor wall, wonderfully and gloriously drunk in God's Spirit!

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During our meetings, Dick explained that my posture of self-protection, designed to protect my heart from further hurt, had left me determined to be in control of my circumstances. Since no person can really control their circumstances, these futile efforts leave one in varying levels of stress. This stress robs us of the peace of Jesus, and leaves us in our natural, or "flesh" state. I was simply not trusting God in the living of my life. He explained that we are to "trust in the Lord with all our hearts, and not lean on our own understanding" (Proverbs 3:5,6). He told me that I needed to surrender control of my life to God in a very thorough way, by allowing him to lead me through a "ceremony" which would accomplish that, and allow me to live in the peace of Jesus.

Pretty soon I was asking Dick to take me through the release of control ceremony. I was very serious about it and wanted to experience all the joy and freedom and PEACE God had for me. I was sick and tired of being sick and tired. The release of control ceremony freed me from a lot of burdens God never meant for me to carry, but the biggest one (after the care of my son) involved my sense of responsibility for the salvation of my family (the family I grew up in). To this day, I continue to pray diligently for them, but I know it is not my work that will bring them to salvation - it is God's work. I am no longer anxious for them. I am now experiencing a greater measure of the peace of Jesus than I've ever known.

Another problem we addressed centered on an image that had filled my mind's eye for a long time. In my mind's eye there existed a hand situated just over my right ear. This hand incessantly snapped its fingers at me - like a demanding, impatient person does when needing something immediately. I am a slow-paced, single-tasked person. From junior high school on, others frequently yelled at me, 'Hurry up! You're s-o-o slow; hurry up!!' With the following pressures of school, college and then work, the stress of performing to others' expectations manifested itself in this mental image of these snapping fingers. I frequently felt on-edge, anxious and stressed. Dick discerned the demonic base of this image and prayed with me to get rid of it. And it went away!

A little bit later, I met Dick again to go through deliverance. He called my session a 'text book case' as it went easily and without disturbance. He cast out numerous evil spirits, including rejection, self-rejection, fear of rejection, fear of abandonment, and fear of criticism, depression, to mention just a few. All this yielded a powerful result: another encounter with God. As Dick prayed for me, I could not soak in enough of Him! His love, His joy - and so much peace! God completely lathered me and washed me in His presence. I kept lapping up as much as I could. I felt brand new, spanking clean and wonderfully peaceful. For days after my deliverance, I experienced God's presence so intensely that I couldn't stop praising Him! Not that I wanted to stop! But it was so odd and so wonderful all at the same time. This praise kept pouring out of me around the clock for many days!

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Now, in the midst of all this glorious stuff, a discomfort, a pain, in the middle of my stomach remained with me. I didn't know what it was at the time and I certainly didn't know what I should do about it. One Sunday after church, Dick stopped me to get an update on how I was doing. I shared with him about this endless loop of praise coming out of me, but then, almost sheepishly, I mentioned the gnawing feeling in the middle of my stomach. "We need to schedule you for healing of the memories!" he replied. He had already explained this third part of his ministry when I met with him initially. Because I did not understand the connection between what I felt in my gut and the memories I held in my mind, I lacked conviction that I needed this healing session. To be honest, fear and skepticism also kept me from pursuing it. I doubted that any person this side of heaven could do anything more to ease this gnawing pain. I followed Dick to his office anyways to set up this next appointment. As Dick looked over his calendar, I started to share with him from an uncommonly open and transparent - vulnerable - frame of mind. Negativity mired my words and I felt ashamed. I started crying and then worried that Dick would reprimand me for being a negative Christian. I expected at the least impatience, but he listened patiently. I said how I always felt things never worked out for me; how I felt I grew up behind the eight ball. My own ineptness and the judgments of others blocked me from engaging successfully in life. Being a fraternal twin caused me great grief, especially through school. Intense and cruel comparisons by peers and even teachers stabbed at my heart. Everything took so much effort and in the end, left me drained. To protect myself and others from the black hole of need inside me, I kept everyone at arm's length. Unfulfilling relationships resulted. It just never seemed to stop.

Somewhere in the midst of my tears and belly-aching, Dick turned to me and gently asked me one simple question. In my frustration and pain as a young girl, had I made an inner vow that things would never work out for me? His question shot through me like a bolt of lightning. I think I literally gasped. His question brought almost instant clarity to this vague feeling of doom and gloom I'd carried around for years. I don't remember a specific time of declaration. Probably I had just repeated this attitude so much that the cumulative effect became a vow. Dick went on to explain that this not only affected me emotionally and psychologically, but spiritually as well. Such a well-set attitude robbed me of the faith to believe that Jesus' name could be effectively used to stand against the enemy. Resultantly, when I bound things in my life in His name, it only partially worked. Fear is a good example. In the past, whenever I bound fear, I rarely experienced full victory from it. Part of it always stayed with me. Dick asked me if I was ready to deal with this vow right then and there. "Yes!" I emphatically replied.

Dick led me through a prayer of renunciation wherein I declared this vow as ungodly and sinful. I asked God to forgive me for my lack of faith and for causing Him pain by not trusting in His goodness and provision for me as His daughter. I asked God to release me from the consequences of making this vow and I asked the Holy Spirit to fill me anew with hope and wholeness. With Dick's leading, I verbally took back from the enemy all that I had let him steal from my life: God's peace, His complete care, His strong arm at work on my behalf, and the full power of His name to bind the enemy's assaults. When we closed our prayer, I felt great release from stress as more peace and freedom filled my heart. God is so good -

this important breakthrough came from an impromptu conversation over an appointment calendar one Sunday after church!

Soon I returned to Dick's office for my scheduled appointment for healing. In prayer, Dick and I set the time aside for God to meet with us and to quiet my mind. Dick explained that the focus would be to let God choose what He wanted to heal in me. We would not spend time talking about what I wanted healing for. We would give God permission to direct me back to an event/memory/feeling that He deemed important to address. I could not figure out how this was going to work, but I had grown in my trust of Dick and proceeded readily. I verbally gave God permission to bring into my memory whatever thought, mood or event He wanted to heal in me. I sat quietly with my eyes closed, waiting for God to bring something forth, but nothing happened. I waited some more. Nothing came, no picture, no emotion, no incident. Dick sat patiently with me and we prayed again for my peace of mind and for God to use the time as He wished. More time went by. My mind stayed blank. Dick stayed patient.

Finally, after about 20 minutes of waiting on God, some of the blackness gave way to a picture of me as a very young toddler. I watched myself playing barefooted in the yard of my childhood home. There weren't many details, but I could see that I was running in the cool, green grass. Eventually I saw my twin sister playing near me. Dick asked me to look around in this picture for other details. I could see my mother. She was standing halfway outside the big front door of our house - yelling at us. Dick wanted to know how this made me feel. Her mood hurt and confused me. She frequently acted impatient towards my twin and me. Dick encouraged me to look around some more, but this time to look specifically for Jesus. Could I see Jesus anywhere? I started struggling again to see much of anything as blackness crept back in my picture. However, I could still see myself as a little girl. Dick continued to encourage me.

Jesus was near me, and He loved me and wanted to bring healing to me. Finally I saw the hem of His white robe, and then all of Him, but no details of His face. I watched as He picked me up and set me on the bend of His arm. He held me up high so I could be close to Him. We made a beautiful picture, I thought, Jesus and me. Dick asked if I would let Jesus hug me. "Of course," I answered. He instructed me to let Jesus hold me tightly so that we were chest to chest. Then he told me to push all my negative, hurtful, angry feelings into His chest, for Him to carry. Even though up to this point I felt I was an observer of myself as a little girl with Jesus, my real-life emotions stirred as I pushed these negative feelings off onto Him. Dick gave me a moment of quiet before he asked what was happening next in the picture. I saw myself playfully kissing Jesus' neck and chin, showing Him my joyful, child-like affection.

Suddenly, a startling realization shot through me as I sat there in Dick's office. I burst into tears, covering my eyes with my hands. The look I saw on Jesus' face as I kissed Him cut me to the quick. He was lit up

with joy, His eyes were beaming with gladness! His laughter expressed His delight with my affection! He was enjoying me!! At that moment, the picture I had been observing as a third person became real for me. Throughout all the spaces of my soul, I felt Jesus' personal, enveloping love for me. God had made me sensitive, introspective, and affectionate for HIS OWN PLEASURE. I realized that the black hole of rejection I felt came from my expectations time and again that other people would, and should, fill my needs for acceptance and love that Jesus wants to fill. I saw how rejection (and self-rejection) fueled so much of my emotional pain - pain I had carried since I was a toddler!! I could not stop crying. God was blanketing my broken heart with a thick, soothing, healing balm!

Since the time of my sessions with Dick, my confidence has grown tremendously and my ability to handle insult is much stronger. I have more respect for myself. Now, instead of focusing on how I wish God had made me differently, I simply look to God, and ask Him to continue to work in me what He wants. My husband, son and I are now missionaries in Eastern Europe! I have told Dick many times that I am on the mission field as a direct result of his ministry in my life. The culture change is difficult to adapt to and there are mishaps and miscommunications along the way. But now when I am hurt, I know how to run to Jesus and let Him pick me up again to love on me - and take the pain from my heart. I can go to Him like this because I know that He cherishes me, and takes delight in my company. He really does love me.

Susan

Kiev, Ukrainehis will bring a wonderful sense of fulfillment and joy to their hearts.

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