

Give God Your Testimony

Football season is in full swing! Though some of you might not appreciate the finer subtleties of the sport, football can teach you some great lessons.

In 1972 the Miami Dolphins became the only football team to go undefeated in a season. Every year, there are several football teams with hopes and aspirations of duplicating this feat but 33 years later, it has not been done.

Besides their legacy of being the only undefeated team in NFL history, the Miami Dolphins have a new legacy in recent years. They have been known as a warm weather team.

Year in and year out, the Miami Dolphins jump out to a good start on the season. They work their way to a good record and look to be on their way to the playoffs when November rolls around. Unfortunately, by the middle of November into December, the team starts losing games. Maybe it is because they are accustomed to warm weather and can't go into places that are cold and win games. Maybe it is simply a mental thing that they cannot overcome. Whatever the case, down the stretch, when it is really needed the most, the team cannot win games that they need.

The plague of the Miami Dolphins is a sad one for their fans. Cub fans should be familiar with this. However, as much as I love it, football is only a game. What saddens me far more is when I see this "Dolphin syndrome" occur in mature Christians.

Some Christians start out ON FIRE for the Lord, but then something happens. They allow life to get to them, they get busy, or they get used to being saved, and the fire that they had begins to dissipate. It no longer is a large flame, but become a little spark.

When they first came to the Lord, they did things like:

- ◇ Poured over the Scriptures
- ◇ Had an excitement for worship and what was going on in the church
- ◇ Couldn't wait to pray for and with others
- ◇ Share their faith with as many people as they could

But too many Christians, aren't on fire for these things anymore. In fact, some have caught a bad case of the "Dolphin Syndrome", especially in the area of sharing their faith.

Today, we begin a new series on what you should give to God. We are going to spend the next month looking at your giving. I am not just talking about what you put in the offering plate. I am talking about all areas of your life that you should give to God. One of those areas is your testimony.

God has given you a story to tell, your testimony AND He wants you to place this story in His hands so that He can use it. Each of us has been given a story that you can keep to yourself. OR you can give it to God and share it with others.

2 Corinthians 5:19 (NLT) - *For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. This is the wonderful message he has given us to tell others.*

In other words, you are called to be God's Witness. Jesus said in Acts 1:8 that every Christian was His witness.

In a court of law, a witness isn't expected to argue the case, prove the truth, or press for a verdict; that is the job of attorneys. Witnesses simply report what happened to them or what they saw.

Jesus said, "You will be my witness", not "You will be my attorney." He wants you to share what happened to you because of Jesus Christ and what you saw in Jesus.

Why should you let God use your testimony?

1. Because only you can tell it.

You see, you are the expert on your life. Nobody can be a better witness on your life than you. Nobody can be a better witness of what God has done in your life than you, because you are the authority on your life - not some pastor, not me, and not some priest. Not anybody else. So God says I just want you to tell other people what's happened to you, what's happened in your life.

There was once a football coach who had two quarterbacks. The first team quarterback was gifted, aggressive, and a born leader. The second string quarterback was, let us say, limited. Oh, he was athletic enough but unfortunately, he lacked a mind for strategy. The championship game was in progress, the score was tied, the home team had the ball, and the clock was ticking down. An opposing player broke through the line of scrimmage and slammed the star quarterback to the ground with such force that he had to leave the game. Time was running out. The coach had no choice but to put in the back-up. The substitute trotted onto the field, huddled the team, and strode up to the line of scrimmage.

Surveying the opposing team, and much to everyone's surprise, he changed the play at the line. The ball was snapped, the quarterback handed it off to the half-back who busted up the middle and sped all the way into the end zone with the winning touchdown! An amazing play.

Moments later, in the ecstatic dressing room, the coach grabbed his second-team quarterback by the shoulder pads and said, "Son, that was great! How did you know to call that play?" The boy said, "Uh, well coach, it weren't easy. I got up to the line and looked across at two of the biggest players I've ever seen and I seen their numbers. One of 'em was wearing a six and the other one was wearing a seven, so I

just added them numbers together and got fourteen and called number fourteen." The coach hesitated a moment and said, "But son, six and seven make 13."

The boy, quite unmoved by the correction, said, "You know what coach? If I was as smart as you, we would have lost the game."

You might think that your not smart enough or good enough to tell your story, but that is just the devil whispering lies to you. You don't have to be smart enough. You have to be you.

God created you for such a time as this:

You may think so, but your birth was no mistake or mishap, and your life is no fluke of nature. Your parents may not have planned you, but God did. He was not at all surprised by your birth. In fact, he expected it.

Isaiah 44:2a (CEV) – *I am your Creator. You were in my care even before you were born.*

Long before you were conceived by your parents, you were conceived in the mind of God. It is not fate, nor chance, nor luck, nor coincidence that you are breathing at this very moment. You are alive because God wanted to create you!

Psalms 139:16 (LB) – *You saw me before I was born and scheduled each day of my life before I began to breathe. Every day was recorded in your Book!*

Most amazing, God decided how you would be born. Regardless of the circumstances of your birth or who your parents are, God had a plan in creating you. It doesn't matter whether your parents were good, bad, or indifferent. God knew that those two individuals possessed exactly the right genetic makeup to create the custom "you" he had in mind. They had the DNA God wanted to make you. While there are illegitimate parents, there are no illegitimate children. Many children are unplanned by their parents, but they are not unplanned by God. God's purpose took into account human error, and even sin.

Psalms 139:15 (MSG) - *You know me inside and out, you know every bone in my body; You know exactly how I was made, bit by bit, how I was sculpted from nothing into something.*

Not only did God create you the way you are, but **God put you right where you are:**

God planned where you'd be born and where you'd live for his purpose. Your race and nationality are no accident. God left no detail to chance. He planned it all for his purpose.

Acts 17:26 (NIV) – *From one man he made every nation ... and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live.*

Why did God put you right where you are? Why did God create you for such a time as this? Because He has chosen you to share your testimony!

Here's something that is amazing: God has chosen you to complete this mission of telling others what He's done in your life. This mission that Jesus Christ started when He came to earth, He says, I want you guys to finish it. Now, that's kind of a backhanded compliment, if you think about it. God puts the future of the world in our hands.

Romans 12:1 - *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship.*

What does it mean to offer your bodies? It means to give everything! In other words, when we see God's mercy, we will give God everything! This includes giving God the chance to work in your life through your testimony, your story.

To share your testimony, your story, you have to let Jesus take over. You have to give Him everything, even your shortcomings. Some people think that they have to have it all together in order to share their faith. They think they have to be:

- ◇ Rich and wealthy like a King, or at least have their finances together. Last time I checked Jesus is a King. You need to let Him take over and share what He has done!
- ◇ Powerful in the community, where you have everything under control. Last time I checked Jesus is God. He has everything under control. You need to let Him be the centerpiece of your testimony, not you.
- ◇ Perfect and without sin. The only person that was able to walk around without blame, sin, or mess ups in life is Jesus. Let Him take over in your testimony and share who He is – the perfect Lamb of God.
- ◇ Popular, where you are well liked and known. Then maybe people will really listen. The fact is popularity does not equal sincerity. They will not take your testimony seriously just because you are popular. Besides, Jesus is probably the most well-known historical figure of all time. He is more well known than the Beatles!

God wants you to trust in Him, and step out on faith. He wants you to share your testimony by allowing Him to take over. When Jesus takes over, He will show you when to share it. He will tell you what to say. He will be the centerpiece of your story, AND He will show you how to love in a deeper way through your story and testimony.

Maybe you think you can't. Maybe you think that you can not share your testimony. Maybe you think that you are not a good story teller. You have to know that the story is already in your heart.

1 John 5:10a (GNT) - *So all who believe in the Son of God have this testimony in their own hearts.*

Just share what is in your heart! Share what you know to be true about the wonderful grace of Jesus!

We should let God use our testimony:

1. Because only we can tell it, but also...

2. Because people are missing out unless you do.

People in Cerro Gordo may look like they have it all together, they might even believe in God, but there is something missing without Jesus.

Many of them are busy making a living instead of really living. They find ourselves agreeing with Isaiah when he said, *"I have labored to no purpose; I have spent my strength in vain and for nothing..."*

People are blind. They have never seen the light of Christ and have been blinded by the god of this age. They are blinded by:

- ◇ Guilt – They could have done better.
- ◇ Resentment & Anger – They rehearse the pain over in their minds. They clam up or blow up. A person can hold in resentment for a long time (years)!
- ◇ Pride – All of this hard work is mine. Why thank God when I did all the work?
- ◇ Fear – Afraid of what the future might bring.
- ◇ The Love of Money – they judge their value on what they have.
- ◇ The Need for Approval – by parents or peers

Most people mutter to themselves, "I hope life isn't a joke, because I don't get it."

Too many in this world have given up. Materialism, Pride, Self-centeredness, Laziness, Anger & Bitterness, Sexual lust, Envy, Gluttony, and Lying have taken a place in their hearts. They are truly oppressed, because they don't know God!

Galatians 6:2 (Message) – *Stoop down and reach out to those who are oppressed. Share their burdens, and so complete Christ's law.*

1 Corinthians 9:22b (LB) – *Whatever a person is like, I try to find common ground with him so that he will let me tell him about Christ and let Christ save him.*

We have to be people who want to share this love with these people. We have to say to God what Psalms 67:2 says - *Send us around the world with the news of Your saving power and Your eternal plan for all mankind!*

What are people missing out on?

1. LIGHT:

Ephesians 5:14 (NIV) - *For it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: "Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."*

Romans 12:2 – *you will be tested and approve what God's will is – His good and pleasing and perfect will!*

Their current state of affairs: DARKNESS

2. LIFE:

John 10:10 (NIV) - *I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*

You can either just make a living, or you can really live to the fullest!

Their current state of affairs: DEATH

3. LOVE:

1 John 4:19 (NIV) - *We love because he first loved us.*

Their current state of affairs: TWISTED LOVE

4. GRACE:

Ephesians 1:7-8 (NIV) - *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.*

Ephesians 1:7-8 (Message) - *Because of the sacrifice of the Messiah, his blood poured out on the altar of the Cross, we're a free people—free of penalties and punishments chalked up by all our misdeeds. And not just barely free, either. Abundantly free! He thought of everything, provided for everything we could possibly need!*

Their current state of affairs: BONDAGE TO DEATH & SIN

God doesn't want anyone to perish: 2 Peter 3:9 (NCV) – *...God does not want anyone to be lost, but He wants all people to change their hearts and lives!*

This is why He is sending you. And as long as there's one person on earth who doesn't know the Good News, God says we've got to keep reaching out.

We should let God use our testimony:

1. Because only we can tell it,
2. Because people are missing out unless you do, but also...

3. Because God is calling you to

We need to come to grips with the fact that you are called to use your testimony to reach people. In John 17:18, Jesus said this, *"In the same way that you gave Me a mission in the world, I give them a mission in the world."*

In John 20:21, Jesus said, *"As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."* Now, what are we being sent to do? What is our mission?

The Apostle Paul answers this for us. In Acts 20:24, he says, *"the most important thing is that I complete my mission, the work the Lord Jesus gave me to tell people the good news about God's grace."* – the Apostle Paul lays it out for us! We are to: tell people the good news about God's grace!

You see for God, you are it! You are His plan to tell the world about His love!

Imagine for a moment that you can see God in heaven. An angel comes up to Him and asks God how He plans to save the entire world from its misery. God looks at the angel and replies "My plan is to give the Good News to My children on earth and ask them to share it."

The angel is stunned. He knows the fickleness of people. He knows that they are easily distracted, so the angel asks God, "What if they don't? What is plan B?"

God says, "There is no plan B."

Ephesians 3:11 (GW) - *This was God's plan for all of history which He carried out through Christ Jesus our Lord.*

We're it. Sharing your testimony is the greatest privilege you're ever given!

1 Peter 3:15-16a (NLT) - *You must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if you are asked about your Christian hope, always be ready to explain it. But you must do this in a gentle and respectful way.*

I hope you each have captured the picture of why you need to give God your testimonies.

We should let God use our testimony:

1. Because only we can tell it,
2. Because people are missing out unless you do, and
3. Because God is calling you to

There are four possible responses to today's message

1. You can say like Moses, "who me?",
2. You can say like Jonah, "not me!",
3. You can say like Habakkuk, "why me?", or
4. You can say like Isaiah, "send me!"

The most dangerous prayer you can pray is like Isaiah did. He basically told God: "God use me!" When you begin to pray this, "God use me!", your life gets radical. It gets shook up and God starts to change you so He can use you. It is a dangerous prayer. I am asking you to pray it with boldness!

Praying this prayer is really giving God your testimony. You are saying to God, "here is my story – use it!" Are you willing to do that?

Some of you have never thought about your testimony before. God is asking you to pray Psalm 25:4-5 (NIV) - *Show me your ways, O Lord, teach me your paths; guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.*

If you pray Psalm 25:4&5, then God will show how to give Him your story, your testimony. Are you willing to do that?

There's Something About That Name – Folder #14