



Up Beat

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER |
UNITED PARISH
SEPTEMBER 2020

When Our Witness Falters - Rev. Jonathan Landry Cruse is pastor of Community Presbyterian Church in Kalamazoo, Mich

I knew a pastor in Philadelphia with a reputation for being a very gifted evangelist. According to the near-fantastical stories told about him, anyone whom he engaged in conversation, whether on the subway or in line at the store, would invariably give his life to Christ.

I would venture to say that most Christians don't have such an impressive evangelistic résumé. In fact, when it comes to witnessing, we may sense that our failures far outweigh our victories. Why does our witness often falter? In this article, we will examine four common reasons—but don't lose heart. We will also see how God can use even these poorest attempts for His glory.

FUMBLING AND FORGETTING

Conversations, especially those of a religious nature, cannot be choreographed. The mental rehearsal beforehand is flawless, and afterward every snappy rejoinder comes quickly to mind. But in the moment, hardly anything goes according to plan. Have you ever completely blanked while answering a particular objection to a biblical doctrine or fumbled over how best to present the faith?

The biblical command is to “always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you” ([1 Peter 3:15](#); NKJV). The word translated “ready” carries the sense of being properly arranged. We speak of getting our house “ready” for guests to come over, which doesn't happen on its own but takes work. The same is true with our witness. If we are failing to articulate the faith because we have not prepared, we must repent and revive our studies of the Scriptures.

That being said, no amount of preparation will make us perfectly eloquent in every encounter. And that's OK—even the most gifted orator cannot do justice to the majesty of the message. So don't walk away from a “failed” conversation with your head low, decrying rhetorical inadequacies. Instead, go with confidence, because the gospel goes forth “not in plausible words of wisdom” but rather “in the power of God” ([1 Cor. 2:4-5](#)). God can—and will—use our earnest, though unpolished, proclamations for His glory.

GETTING CAUGHT IN SIN

Witness is not just evangelistic conversation; it's all of life. We damage our testimony when our lives contradict the message we profess. Perhaps you have been caught in a sin that has tarnished the reputation of your faith. An unbelieving coworker says, "I didn't think Christians would cheat their employers." Or an unsaved neighbor, who knows you claim Christ, overhears a heated domestic dispute: "Some temper you have for being a Christian!"

Moments like these are embarrassing, and our instinct is to excuse the behavior and hide our sin. But self-justification is antithetical to the gospel. Instead, a most compelling way to evangelize is now provided: confessing your sin to an unbeliever. Though humbling, this proves the universal need for Jesus. It shows the world that Christ did not come for the righteous but for sinners ([Matt. 9:12](#)). We are living proof that the promises of God are not contingent upon the character of His people. That is not something to hide—that is good news worth sharing.

HAVING THE WRONG MOTIVATION

When you have opportunity to engage with an atheist or skeptic, do you view him as an image bearer of God, created with an eternal soul? Or is he more like a chess piece that you are determined to topple over? God is not pleased when our goal is merely to win an argument and not win a person, motivated by a desire to show off superior piety or maybe to flex intellectual ability. If we want to be more successful in our witness, we must take the long view. Eternity is on the line, which is profoundly more important than the outcome of a brief debate. Care and compassion for the lost are paramount. If you struggle with this, ask God to open your heart to receive lost souls with love and not to objectify or belittle them. Always remember how Jesus encountered you and won your soul: He never put His wants ahead of your needs. In fact, He was filled with such compassion for you that He set aside His divine right and "humbled himself . . . to the point of death, even death on a cross" ([Phil. 2:8](#)).

REMAINING SILENT

Undoubtedly, our greatest failure in witnessing is failing to witness at all. How often have we allowed opportunities to slip through the cracks or not pursued a conversation further? How often has the fear of man shut our mouths? We may be overcome by guilt, punishing ourselves with the thought that a sinner is headed for hell because we didn't speak out. But a better, more biblical response is to renew our trust in God. Ultimately, the spread of the gospel is His business. He cannot be silent, and when His Word goes out it always succeeds ([Isa. 55:11](#)). When we keep that exhilarating reality in view, our fear will melt away and our mouths will open.

A SUCCESSFUL SOVEREIGN

God's sovereignty frees us from the burden of failure because it teaches that witness ultimately doesn't depend on us. "Your kingdom come" are words we pray but God fulfills. Dear Christian, there is not a single soul that has missed out on heaven because of your weak, misguided, or seemingly failed attempts to share the faith. Our Savior says, "All that the Father gives me will come to me" ([John 6:37](#)). The Father will even use our mess-ups to that end. So head out, with renewed hope and boldness, into a world that desperately needs to hear the gospel—even from our imperfect lips.

Mothers of the Famous

Columbus' Mother: "I don't care what you've discovered, Chris. You still could have written."

Michelangelo's Mother: "Mike, can't you paint on walls like other children? Do you have any idea how hard it is to get that stuff off the ceiling?"

Mary's Mother: "I'm not upset that your lamb followed you to school, Mary, but I would like to know how he got a better grade than you."

Batman's Mother: "It's a nice car, Bruce, but do you realize how much the insurance is going to be?"

Goldilocks Mother: "I've got a bill here for a broken chair from the Bear family. Do you know anything about this, Goldie?"

Albert Einstein's Mother: "But, Albert, it's your senior picture. Can't you do something about your hair? Styling gel, mousse, something...?"

George Washington's Mother: "The next time I catch you throwing money across the Potomac, you can kiss your allowance good-bye!"

Superman's Mother: "Clark, your father and I have discussed it, and we've decided you can have your own telephone line. Now will you quit spending so much time in all those phone booths?"

Thomas Edison's Mother: "Of course I'm proud that you invented the electric light bulb, Thomas. Now turn off that light and get to bed."



United Parish Fellowship Committee

Marty Wheeler - Sharon Marquardt

Sympathy extended to family members with the loss of Daniel Norvodvorsky.

Thank You

Thank you so much for allowing us to use your church for the tribute to my other, Norma Welin, during this difficult time of meeting together. Mom was a member here for over 20 ;years and looked forward to visiting every summer. We appreciate your graciousness.

Karen & Jim Charnholm



September: Birthdays

09 – Kaden Moore

13- Shari Turner

14 – Mary Lou Reamer

15—Doug Bremner

19-Ovidia Schneider

September Anniversaries

28—Rod & Noreen Bahn

United Parish

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www.unitedparishbottineau.com

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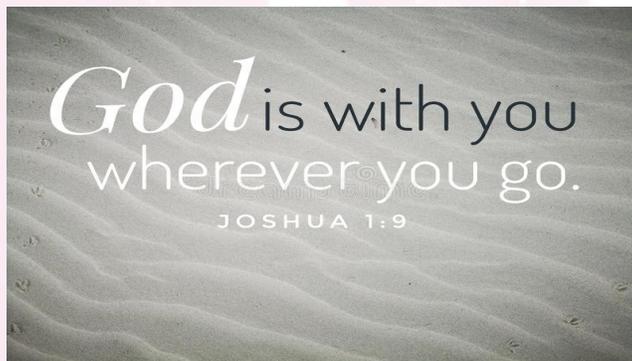
unitedparishbottineau@gmail.com

Deadline for October Newsletter is

August 26 - looking for articles

Church office - 228-2800

Secretary - 228-8123



September Calendar

Sept. 2 Parish Council 7:00 p.m.

Sept. 6 Worship with Pastor Carol

Sept. 13 Worship with Janell Shannon

Sept. 20 Worship with Pastor Carol

Sept. 27 Worship with Janell Shannon

Services will be at Tommy Turtle Park

Weather permitting.

The Parish Council wanted to take this time to answer some questions that some of our members had asked Council members recently. We continued to explore solutions for our empty pulpit but have been greatly hampered by the Covid-19 pandemic. Nothing has moved passed the discussion phase and we continue to look at all viable options. The Church finances have improved compared to this time last year. However, this is due mostly to the removal of the expenses allocated for a minister from our budget. Tithing is still needed and appreciated. Finally the church is currently closed due to Covid-19. Until we reopen ONLY employees of the church or members of the Parish Council are allowed in the building without special approval from the Parish council. We are implementing this rule for the safety of our staff as well as fairness to all groups who had previously utilized or church. We thank you for your understanding. If there are any questions on any of these topics, please feel free to contact any of the Parish Council Members.