



CHAPTER 2

THE LITTLE ENGINE THAT COULDN'T

As I looked around at the décor in the cozy office, I noticed that nearly everything had something to do with fishing. I had scheduled an appointment with a godly older man, Mr. Garvin, because I knew he loved to witness. He calls it “fishing.” He is continually sharing exciting stories of people whom he has led to the Lord. I wanted to glean from his advice and ideas.

While I was in his office, his phone kept ringing, so I listened with interest.

“Can you remember the last time you led someone to the Lord?” he asked the caller.

Pause

“No? Well, have you ever prayed and asked God to make you a fisherman?”

Pause

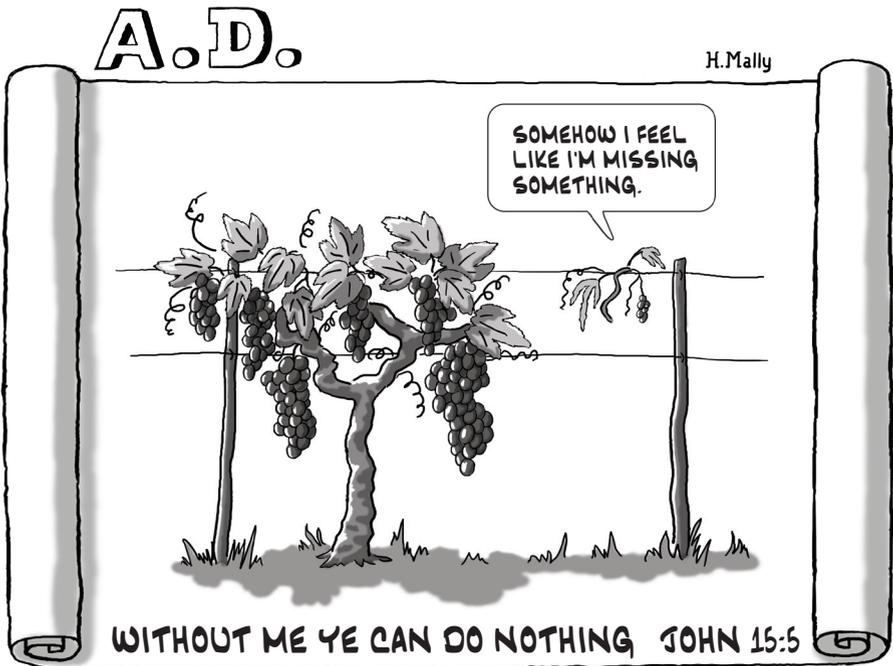
“Do you want to pray and ask God to make you into a fisherman right now?” he asked.

Good point! I thought. Jesus said, “Ask and it will be given unto you” (Matthew 7:7). If witnessing is a weak or absent area of your life, it may be because you haven’t asked the Lord to make you a fisherman. If you truly desire to be fruitful in your witnessing, remember that this is something *Jesus* does in you. Jesus said, “Follow Me, and *I* will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19).

When we see weaknesses or failings in our lives, we have a tendency to respond in one of the following two ways:

- We think, *It is impossible for me to change, so why even try? I would never be able to do that.*
- We have the opposite response and ardently resolve, *I can do this! From this day on, I'm going to be different!*

Both of these are actually incorrect responses. We should not give up, nor should we rely on our own strength. The correct response is to **pray**, asking *God* to change us. That which is impossible for us is *very* possible with God. None of us have the ability to witness as we should, but God is able to make us into powerful witnesses for His glory. If we do not believe this is possible, then we are underestimating God's power and insulting Him through unbelief. None of us have sufficient love, boldness, zeal, or strength—and we are not supposed to pretend we do. We are supposed to walk humbly with our God (Micah 6:8), drawing our strength from Him. “I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5).



To take this point further, let's consider a far-fetched scenario. Imagine you are taking an architecture class and your professor hands you your assignment: “Build a two-story facility for your church with 12-foot ceilings and plenty of natural light.”

You stare at the assignment in disbelief. “You actually want me to *build* something? Not just draw the blueprints, but construct an actual building? That’s impossible!”

Then the professor says, “By the way, I’ve already designed the plans and bought the piece of property. I hired the construction crew and put \$10,000,000 in the bank for this project. Oh, and I’m going to be working with you.”

Now you are thinking, *Seriously? I can’t wait to get started!*

In the same way, witnessing can feel like an impossible assignment. We know we are inadequate and we often don’t even know how to start! Witnessing doesn’t come naturally for any of us, and there is an enemy trying to stop the work. We conclude it’s too difficult. We would prefer to sit back, relax, and return to those forms of ministry with which we feel more comfortable.

Jesus has definitely not given us an easy task. He tells us to go into all the world and make disciples of all nations. No shortcuts. No leave of absence. *How can we possibly carry this out?*

The answer lies in the next few pieces of relevant information: “By the way, if you need anything—just ask. Provisions, strength, wisdom—just ask. There is no need to fear; the enemy has already been defeated. Resist him and he’ll flee from you.” His directives continue, “You don’t need to worry about seeing visible results or numbers—that’s not how things are measured around here. Oh, and one more thing—I’ll be coming with you.”

Jesus is coming with us? Well, that certainly changes things! (To see Scripture’s exact words, see Philippians 4:19; John 14:13-14; James 1:5; James 4:7; 2 Corinthians 4:18; Luke 16:10; and Ephesians 1:19.)

Right at the beginning of this book, let’s be clear about two things. 1) Witnessing is not easy. 2) We are working alongside our King who created the universe and upholds it by His power.

We state, “It’s impossible,” but God reminds us, “That’s the point!” He tells us to do what is humanly impossible so that we depend on Him for every inch of the journey.

Although Jesus has given us a staggeringly high calling, when we start looking at the details of the work-assignment, we see that there are some things to be majorly encouraged about!

This is God’s work, not ours. Success is measured by His standards, not ours. God goes before us and prepares the way. He has His troops all over the earth, and we are just one of the millions whom He can deploy at any minute. He even works for good in spite of our mistakes. God is not limited by anything! Jesus told us to “be of good cheer,” because even though we will have trouble in this world, He has already overcome it (John 16:33). We are

already on the winning team.

Knowing all of this gives us peace as we work. We realize it's not all on our shoulders. He does the heavy-lifting, the orchestrating, and the brunt of the work. He is the One who draws people to Himself (John 6:44). It is merely a privilege that He allows us to help—and it is actually sort of baffling when you think about it. Here's the best news in the world—and *we* get the thrill of sharing it!

WHO GETS THE CREDIT?

“They're out of gas,” my dad said after going inside the small, rundown gas station in “nowhere,” Missouri.

“There's just one guy in there, sitting at a table—reading,” Dad reported to the rest of us back in the van.

“Why is he even open if he is out of gas?” we asked.

Sounds like a good witnessing opportunity, I thought. Maybe we could give him something else to read.

I joined my dad as he walked back in, and the man stood up to greet us. I glanced over at the little table where he had been sitting and was shocked to see a familiar book—one we often give to unbelievers. In fact, we had it in our give-away box in the van at the time.

God must want us to talk with this man! we concluded.

“How do you like the book?” my dad asked him.

In a thick Italian accent, he explained that he believed in Jesus, but he thought that one must also earn his own salvation.

“But if you earn it, then who gets the credit?” my dad asked.

“That's how you earn it—by getting credits! Go to church. Believe. Pray,” he said.

Obviously, he didn't understand Dad's point!

“If we earned it, then it would not be by God's *mercy*,” Dad explained.

Stumped, the man thought for a second, but then returned to his salvation-by-works mentality.

Now what? How do we convince someone in one conversation that we can't earn our salvation, when he has been thinking that way for his entire life? Often, we can't. But we have a special tool—prayer. The God who put the book in his hands and brought us across his path (on the very day he was reading it!) is the God who is powerful enough to change his thinking too! This is another reassuring aspect of knowing we are working by God's side—on His team. We don't have to bear the responsibility of convincing people or converting them. We simply get the joy of being the message bringer—leaving the results in God's hands. We are only one piece of the puzzle.

Before that trip I had prayed that the Lord would prepare the hearts of the people to whom we would witness along the way. He answered that prayer a little more vividly than I was expecting!

SURPRISES IN STARBUCKS

“Lord, please lead me to someone to witness to,” I prayed while running errands.

I walked into Starbucks, just to check if there would be an opportunity there to witness. I was quite surprised by what I overheard!

“It’s very interesting,” an older man was explaining to another customer. “It’s a whole museum in Kentucky based on the book of Genesis. It proves by science that evolution couldn’t have happened. Very convincing!”

Okay. I was in Iowa. I was at Starbucks. The Creation Museum was 500 miles away. *Sure, it is an item of growing interest, but people don’t just talk about it everywhere!*

It is not a coincidence that I am here, I thought.

I walked over to his table and introduced myself. “I’m sorry to interrupt, but I just had to say something,” I told him, “because I have actually spent quite a bit of time at that museum. In fact, I volunteered there for several weeks. I agree—it’s a great place and something our country definitely needs!”

If God wants me here for a reason, I’d better see what it is, I decided. I ordered an iced latte and sat down at a table in the café that was not too far from his. Right away he began asking me questions—and soon I found myself fully engaged in a friendly conversation with a laid-back, elderly man who reminded me of a fun-loving grandpa.

After a few minutes of discussion, I laid a tract down on the table in front of him, hoping it would take the conversation to another level. It did.

“Can I ask you a question?” I said.

“Sure,” Mr. Grandpa replied.

“Do you think eternal life is a free gift or something we have to earn?”

“What’s that?” he asked, surprised.

I restated my question.

He hesitated. “I guess I haven’t really thought about it much. What’s *your* opinion?”

I love it when people ask that!

“Well,” I said, “Romans 6:23 says that ‘the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.’ So the Bible says that eternal life is a gift—which is great news for us! I know that I could never make it to Heaven on my own (God’s standard is perfection!) but Jesus died the death I deserved.”

He seemed to be interested, so I continued, “If you think you have to earn your way, you’ll never know when you’ve been good enough. But the Bible says that we can be sure before we die that we are going to Heaven. First John 5:13 says, ‘These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may **know** that you have eternal life.’”

“I’ll have to say, I really can’t argue with you,” he said. “Honestly, I don’t know why I believe some of the things I believe.”

“Well, people teach many different things these days,” I replied, “so it’s important that we know the Bible well and compare everything with it.”

“You sound a lot like my grandson and his wife,” he told me.

My ears perked up when I heard this. *Maybe he has a believing grandson who is praying for him!*

“They’ve been trying to get me to go to church with them,” he continued, “and, you know, I should probably go one of these days ... ”

After asking him a few questions, I was very surprised to discover that I knew his grandson’s wife! Just a few months earlier, a friend had introduced me to a young mom who loves to witness, and I had met up with her to talk about witnessing! Now here I was, witnessing to her grandfather-in-law. Could this be an answer to her prayers?

I knew this was no coincidence.

About 30 minutes had passed now. Here we were, total strangers—still sitting a few tables apart from each other—but having a lively conversation about spiritual things. *And maybe adding some interest to everyone sitting in Starbucks.*

Eventually, Mr. Grandpa came and joined me at my table.

I suppose if we are going to keep talking, it does make sense to sit at the same table!

“What do you think about life after death?” he asked.

I explained that I am 100% sure I’m going to Heaven, not because I’m a good person but because I believe the Bible when it says, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.”

There were others in Starbucks pretending to read the newspaper, but I had a feeling most of them were listening to us. My feelings were confirmed when a lady came up to our table and said, “I’m sorry to interrupt, but your conversation was so interesting! I just wanted to know what you were talking about.”

“Have a seat!” I offered.

Now there were three of us sitting around the table.

I asked her the same question: “Do you think eternal life is a free gift or something you have to earn?”

“Oh my, honey, you gotta earn it,” she said. “You gotta work for it every day, doing what’s right, being a good person . . .”

“So how do you know when you’ve been good enough?” I asked.

“Well, if you’ve been a good person all your life, then you can pretty much know that you’re going to Heaven,” she said.

About this time, I looked up and was surprised to see a friend of mine, Ally, walk in!

“Ally!” I waved her over. “I’m talking with two friends here that I just met. Do you want to join us?”

Now we had four people around the little table. This was getting really fun!

“You know,” I explained, “we may *think* that we are a ‘good person’ compared to someone else, but we can’t just compare ourselves with those around us because God’s standards are higher than ours.”

“Well, you tell me what you think then,” the lady told me.

“Okay,” I said. *If you insist! [smile]*

I shared, once again, the good news that we don’t have to earn our salvation. This time I used the example of the thief on the cross, explaining that when the thief believed on Jesus, Jesus told him, “Today you will be with Me in paradise.” But the thief had not done even one good work to get there. Not one! And even if the thief had done thousands of good works, it wouldn’t have earned him a place in Heaven. His sin needed to be paid for, and only Jesus could do that.

“That’s right,” the lady agreed emphatically, “you can’t get there on your own! No, no, we need God’s forgiveness!”

Hmmm, I thought, she just said the opposite a few minutes ago. I wonder if she really understands.

I replied, “But if God is a *just* Judge, He can’t forgive someone merely because they are sorry. A truly good judge wouldn’t let a murderer go free, would he? No matter how sorry the murderer was! The reason God can forgive and still be just in doing so is because Jesus took our punishment. *Now* we can go free—and God can still be just [in letting us go free].” “That He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Romans 3:26).

Ally added, “I think it really helps to think of God as a Father. Once we are in His family, we *want* to obey Him and do good works. But we don’t do them out of fear, but out of love.”

“And we don’t do good works to *get into* His family. We are born into His family by believing in Jesus,” I explained.

The lady agreed and asked if she could take the tract that was lying on the table.

As Ally shared some of her testimony, I was thinking, *It is no coincidence that Ally walked in just now.*

A guy sat down at the table right next to us and opened his laptop. I wondered, *Is he actually working or is he just listening to our conversation?*

The next item of discussion at the Starbucks Theological Seminar table was the accuracy of the Bible. Before I knew it, two hours had passed in the Starbucks café. I left with the excitement of knowing that *God* had orchestrated our paths to cross, and *God* would still be at work in their hearts. He starts the work. He finishes the work.

When Ally walked into Starbucks, I was so happy to see her—and I was strengthened by her presence and support. There is a special fellowship we experience among believers when we do more than “hang out” together, but rather, actually “pull” together—working side by side in the gospel. But do you know what is even more emboldening than the support of our brothers and sisters in Christ? It is the promise that Jesus made to His disciples right after He gave the Great Commission. He said, “... and, lo, I am with you always[s], even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:20).

Have you ever said to a friend, “I’ll do it, if you go with me?” How about having the Creator of the universe as the Friend who is going with you?

ADVENTURE

We all love adventure, right? Inside, we have this innate desire to *be where the action is*. So, what is the most exciting adventure of life? Sky diving? Competing in the Olympics? Getting married? Being a fighter pilot or an astronaut?

The *most* exciting adventure in life is being with God and obeying God. Nothing else even compares. Think of it this way: God designed the universe, orchestrated history, and strategized victory over every spiritual force of wickedness. He is daily deploying His troops to “battle,” building toward the most incredible showdown the world has yet to witness (Revelation 19:11), and He has assignments for *you* to do! You are a part of the work the Lord is accomplishing in this world (Ephesians 2:10). He is using your labor for Him to fulfill a portion of the beautiful tapestry He is weaving. Everything God does is important. No matter how small the assignment may seem, each assignment from God is significant, and each one brings adventure!

Witnessing is one of those adventures. There are unknowns. We can’t predict how the other person will respond, but we know that God is at work. One might think that unknowns would make it frightening, but it actually makes it exciting. We have to step out in faith, trusting the One who is calling us to action. We realize that we are not actually in true danger, no matter

what happens, because the enemy can destroy our body but not our soul (Matthew 10:28). If we allow ourselves to think, “What if this happens,” or, “What if that happens,” it will only fuel our fear and anxiety. But when believers take their eyes off of their failures and inabilities, and put them on the Lord and His strength—watch out! That kind of faith produces children of God who are overcomers and who greatly impact this world. “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (1 John 5:4).

Let’s be honest. Do you *feel* capable to strongly impact this world for Jesus? Neither do I. Each one of us is, well, a little engine that simply “can’t.” But look at who God is!

“Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of His understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength (Isaiah 40:28-29).

“I, even I, am the LORD; and beside Me there is no saviour ... Yea, before the day was I am He; and there is none that can deliver out of My hand: **I will work, and who shall [reverse] it?**” (Isaiah 43:11-13).

“Ah Lord GOD! ... **there is nothing too hard for Thee** ... the Great, the Mighty God, the LORD of hosts, is His name, Great in counsel, and mighty in work ... ” (Jeremiah 32:17-19).

“My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure ... yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; **I have purposed it, I will also do it**” (Isaiah 46:10-11).

“Who is like unto Thee, O LORD, among the gods? ... glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, **doing wonders?**” (Exodus 15:11).

DRIVEN TO ACTION

The knowledge of the awesomeness of God should never cause us to lean back and relax—rather it should drive us to action. As we realize the power behind us and the needs in front of us, we are compelled to move forward with boldness. This is exactly what one soldier did about 3,000 years ago, during a time of great distress in the land of Israel. This soldier saw that his people were on the brink of disaster. The angry army attacking them consisted of 30,000 chariots, 6,000 horsemen, and people like the sand on the seashore in abundance. And his own army? Only about 600 men. In addition to the

horrendous odds, the 600 did not even have weapons. Impossible situation? Pretty much! The terrified people of the land hid themselves in caves, cliffs, and cellars, and some moved out of the country.

However, this soldier had faith in the power of God. He decided that he would attack the entire army by himself. Yes, just he and his armor bearer. At least that's the way it looked on the surface. It was actually he, *his God*, and his armor bearer. Jonathan saw the need and didn't wait for someone else to do it. He rose up to do it himself. As Jonathan approached the Philistines to attack, he explained his reasoning to his armor bearer. "... there is no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few" (1 Samuel 14:6). Jonathan's great faith in God drove him to climb up a cliff, enter the enemy camp, and take on the entire army. The Lord won a great victory for Israel through Jonathan that day. (Read the full story in 1 Samuel 13-14.)

We have the same God. Without faith it is impossible to please Him (Hebrews 11:6), but with faith we can do the impossible—because He does it, not us. He is pleased when our confidence in Him propels us to bold action. The more difficult the odds, the more God gets the glory.

Initiative is taking responsibility and assuming leadership instead of waiting for someone else to do it. It is demonstrating courage and vision because we know the God whom we serve.

Sometimes God opens wide a door for us to share about Jesus. Maybe someone asks us a question or makes a comment about spiritual beliefs, and we get the joy of sharing the gospel. But often it's not that easy. Sometimes God doesn't open the door in an obvious way. Sometimes people do not ask questions. Does that mean we don't get to talk about Jesus? Of course not!

Jesus has commanded us to go and proclaim the gospel. This requires taking initiative, looking for ways to open doors, and using creativity to turn conversations to Jesus.

My dad is continually coming up with ideas of how to start discussions about the gospel.

"I think we should use Thanksgiving as a door-opener for getting into conversations," my dad announced to our witnessing team as we were driving to a shopping mall on a busy mid-November day.

Hmm ... I think that will just make it more awkward, I thought.

We arrived at the mall, prayed, divided in pairs and began looking for people with whom we could talk. Since I was paired up with my dad, we used *his* plan. (Funny how that works out. *[smile]*)

My dad was right; using a question about the holiday made a very nice flow from a normal conversation to a spiritual one. Here's what happened:

"Would you be willing to answer some questions about Thanksgiving?"

my dad and I asked a young couple who were strolling past the food court.

“Sure,” they said.

“Great. The first question is, do you have Thanksgiving traditions in your family?”

“Yes.”

“Who do you give thanks to?” we asked.

“Well, to God, of course,” they answered, with an expression implying *Who else would we thank?*

“What do you thank Him for?” we asked.

“For food and health and family . . . ” they replied.

“Great. Have you ever thanked Him for eternal life?”

They looked at each other a little surprised, and the guy, Daniel, said, “Well, you can’t thank God for eternal life until you *have* eternal life—and you can’t have that until you’re dead.”

We took some time to explain from the Bible how we *can* know before we die, and, in fact, how we *must* know before we die. But like most other people, they thought eternal life was something you had to work for.

“If you have to earn it, you can never know *when* you have earned it,” my dad explained. “But the Bible tells us that we are not good enough, and never could be.”

This was a new concept for them. They were very interested and brought up a number of questions.

My dad asked them, “Why can the death of one Man save us?” This seemed to arouse their curiosity.

Dad explained, “It wasn’t really the Roman soldiers who were punishing Jesus—even though it looked that way. It was God. He was punishing Jesus for the sin of the world.”

I mentioned that we could never get to Heaven on our own, but that Jesus is the only way. I explained, “He is like the . . . the . . . ”

“The ticket?” Francisca asked.

“Yes—exactly—He’s like the ticket that gets us to Heaven . . . ”

We continued to discuss these things for about 45 minutes. Daniel told us, “I think God is using you as His mouthpiece to speak to us today.”

The girl, Francisca, agreed.

“Well, if the Lord is bringing this to your attention, then you should take care of it right away and not put it off,” we told them, explaining that we have a responsibility to respond to the Lord.

Sensing that their hearts were open, we continued, “You said you have never asked God for eternal life. Is that something you would like to do now?” We offered to pray with them, and I began looking for a corner where we

could escape the busy flow of people walking by.

“We can pray right here!” Daniel said.

If it's okay with them, it's fine with us!

Right there in the busy stream of holiday shoppers, we bowed our heads to pray. First, my dad prayed for them (it's good for non-believers to hear us pray), and then Francisca said she wanted to pray. She confessed her sin and asked the Lord for eternal life. Francisca texted me later that evening expressing thankfulness, and a few weeks later my dad and I drove to her town to take her to a church in her area. We continued to stay in touch.

I was so encouraged by that conversation in the mall! Notice, however, that the witnessing opportunity wasn't thrown into our lap; we had to work for it. Missionaries throughout history have had to labor for these gospel conversations by traveling over mountains, enduring harsh conditions, risking the persecution of unfriendly governments, and laying down their very lives. In light of their hardships, going to the mall with a little holiday questionnaire doesn't feel quite so aggressive or bold!

If we do not make an intentional effort to engage people, it is unlikely that we will have many opportunities to share the gospel. Every time we witness we gain more experience, acquire new ideas, and become a little more comfortable with the process. It takes time to learn—but we will never learn if we never start.

SO HOW DO WE START?

What should we say first? How should we say it? What if no ideas are coming to mind? That's what I wondered one time when Mom was gone for the evening. I was about seven or eight years old, and I had an interesting new task set before me: making dinner for my brother and dad. *What should I make?* This was quite a big decision! I looked in the fridge. I looked in the freezer. I looked in the cabinet. I couldn't think of anything. After pondering my predicament, I suddenly had an idea—frozen corn! I warmed it up in the microwave and set it on the table. “Time for supper, Dad and Stephen!” I'm not sure what my dad and Stephen thought, but they acted like they appreciated the corn!

Without experience, it's unlikely that one would have many ideas of how something should be done. It takes time to learn. We can't expect to know everything about witnessing overnight.

I am not very good at chess. My brother Stephen and I would play occasionally when we were little, and Stephen would have me in checkmate in about eight moves. It was sort of depressing. I hated seeing all my little conquered pieces in a pile by Stephen's side. Soon I would get tired of the game and give up. In future years when people would ask me if I wanted to

play chess, I'd simply say no to save myself the embarrassment! Who enjoys losing? However, if I had applied myself and played more often, I would have improved. (Maybe. *[smile]*)

Have you noticed that when you improve in a certain skill or activity, you also begin to enjoy it more? With practice, things that were scary become comfortable. Things that were intimidating become second nature. Things that were petrifying can even become fun.

If you are terrified of witnessing, chances are you have not practiced very much. You haven't learned from your mistakes because you haven't even given yourself the opportunity to make mistakes!

How does someone who has cooking skills that peak at Ramen noodles and toasted cheese sandwiches develop into a gourmet chef? They practice often, they collect good recipes from others and improve them, they learn how ingredients work together, they gain knowledge from those who are more skilled than they are, they read blogs and watch YouTube videos about cooking, and they are not scared to try something new. All of these principles apply to witnessing.

THE BIG CELEBRATION FOR ... WHO IS HE AGAIN?

It's loud, it's busy, and swarms of people are just waiting around for the parade to start. Most people don't even know who St. Patrick was, and with curiosity they receive our little tract called *History of St. Patrick*. Many express gratefulness, and some ask for a second one for a friend. We have found that three people can pass out 1,000 tracts in an hour at the parade. But with 10 or 12 people ... you do the math. It's simply a matter of how many we want to print and fold beforehand! After passing out the tracts, we try to get into conversations. The goal is to cover the gospel with the person you are witnessing to before the marching band goes by!

I approached two guys and a girl who looked like they were in their mid-twenties.

"Hey, I'm taking a survey," (which I now prefer to call questionnaires) I said to a group of three. "Would you mind answering some questions?"

"What's it about?" they replied.

"It's about St. Patrick and the Ten Commandments ..." I answered.

"Oh, we're bad people," they laughed as they took another drink from their beer bottles.

But one of them, who I'll call Joe, said, "Sure, I'll take the survey."

"Okay!" I replied. "The first question is, where was St. Patrick born?"

"Ireland," Joe replied.

"Nope! Nice try, but he was actually English. He was captured as a kid,

sold as a slave, and brought to Ireland. Second question: Why do you think St. Patrick was such a great person?"

"Uh ... he was Irish and he drank beer?" he guessed.

"Uh, no, sorry," I smiled. "He was a missionary and brought the gospel to Ireland. The third question is, do you consider yourself to be a good person?"

"No, I'm bad!" Joe emphasized.

"Yeah, he is!" his friends told me. "He's going straight to Hell!" they joked.

"The fourth question," I continued, "is if God judged you by the Ten Commandments, would you be innocent or guilty?"

"Guilty. Definitely," Joe said.

"That's for sure!" his friends added.

"Would you like to know what St. Patrick preached about how we can be sure we are going to Heaven?" I asked him.

"Sure," Joe agreed.

"Well, St. Patrick preached that we have all sinned and when God judges us, we'll all be guilty. But when Jesus died on the cross, He was taking the punishment that we deserved from God. It's as if Jesus switched places with us and He took our punishment. That doesn't mean the whole world is going to Heaven now—but it means that those who choose to come to God and believe Him *can*, because He made a way for us to be forgiven."

I was encouraged to see a serious look in Joe's eyes as I said this, and I felt that he was comprehending what I was saying.

His friend interrupted again, "Are you saying that my friend is going to Hell because he is Irish and he drinks?"

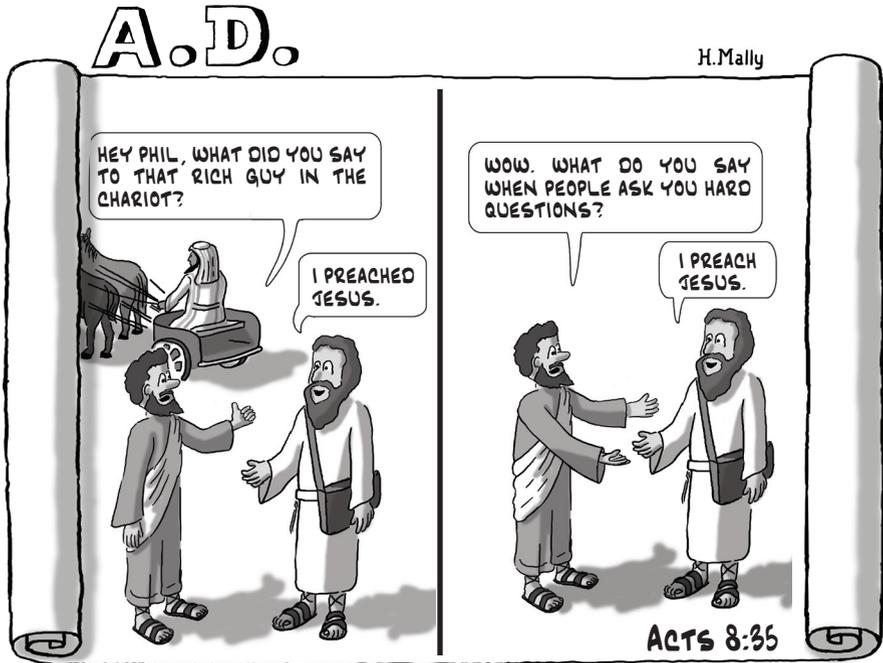
"You weren't listening, were you?" I said with a smile.

"He never listens! But *I heard you*," Joe stressed, looking me in the eye.

Those last words stuck with me. His warm response indicated to me that he would at least think about what I had said.

What is successful witnessing? If we feel unsuccessful in our witnessing, it could be that we have the wrong measure of success. Success is not measured by how many we lead to Christ. It is not winning a debate or handing out all the tracts in our bag. It is not keeping everyone happy. It is not even escaping with our life! Successful witnessing is accurately representing Jesus on earth. It is being obedient to the Lord, trusting Him to give the fruit. It is being faithful. It is proclaiming the gospel boldly as Jesus did—no matter what response we receive.

One day we will be able to look back and see all the ways God was putting the puzzle pieces together. In some cases, our witnessing may simply consist of



planting or watering a seed. It could be quoting one Bible verse, handing out one tract, or communicating one concept about salvation. We do not know all that God is doing in people's lives; we only see a small fraction of it. But we know what our job is: to speak of Jesus.

God is calling each of us to do great things for Him. As Jesus said, "He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father" (John 14:12). Most of us set life goals that we think we can reach. But if we can reach them in our own strength it means they are far too small. It means we are not taking into consideration the fact that we serve a God who is able to do exceedingly and abundantly above all that we ever ask or think (Ephesians 3:20).

In reality, the Great Commission we have been given is not completed when someone trusts in Jesus Christ as Savior. That's actually only the beginning. We are also called to *disciple* others, teaching them all the things that Jesus has commanded us. Jesus said, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations ... teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20). Yes, this is an enormous assignment. And yes, we have a powerful God!

"And they went forth, and preached everywhere, **the Lord working with them ...**" (Mark 16:20).

Justified by Injustice

By His wounds I am healed.

By His blood I am cleansed.

By His bondage I am set free.

By His poverty I am made rich.

He was humiliated to remove my shame.

He became sin that I might become righteousness.

He was rejected that I might be welcomed home.

He became a curse that I might be blessed.

He became an outcast that I might become an heir.

He was numbered with the transgressors
that I might be numbered with the saints.

He stepped down to the lowest place
that He might raise me up to reign with Him.

He died that I might live!

ENCOURAGING YOUNG PEOPLE TO WITNESS

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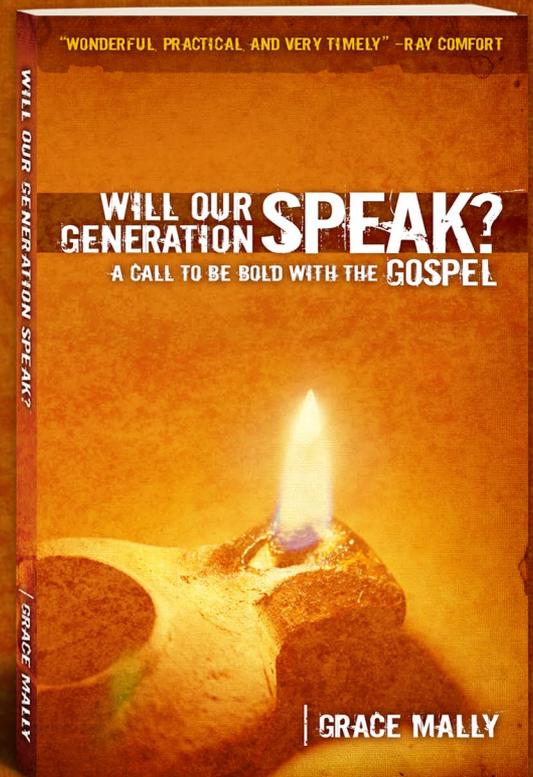
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Grace Mally, 23, helps lead the Bright Lights youth discipleship ministry. In 2002, she coauthored the book *Making Brothers and Sisters Best Friends*.



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