

The Writing on the Wall

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Wake-Up Call

Dreams are great things sometimes. In our dreams we can do things that we cannot do in real life. In our dreams we can enjoy life as we wish it to be. Many times we do not even realize we are dreaming, until we wake up. For me, it was like waking up in small increments, until suddenly I was confronted with the cold, harsh reality of consciousness. It was shocking, hard to handle, and it was not pleasant; but it had to happen. For me it came in the form of a wake-up call. It was a wake-up call to witnessing and I will never forget it, for I will never forget her.

I was the son of a pastor, a very evangelically minded family. I knew the importance of witnessing; I had even led several people to the Lord. But there was no sense of urgency, no real burden. At the time, I was a supervisor at Wal-Mart. I supervised the second shift cashiers. I had a bunch of teenager, wild young people of the world. I felt called to be an example to them of Christ, to minister at my job. All was good. I had a young girl who worked for me named Aakriti. She was beautiful, smart, good natured, a joy to be around. She was a vibrant person, full of life, and yet dead spiritually. She was Hindu, born into a Hindu family; she knew nothing about God or the Bible. Several times I felt the desire to share the Gospel with her, but each time I postponed it for a more opportune moment. I kept trying to engage her in conversation, building a relationship with which I could use to mount my appeal. But I steadfastly resisted the urge to just come out and share my faith with her, to challenge her with Jesus.

One weekend, it was insanely busy. I had just shut off her light and got her off a register, I made a special sacrifice to get her off on time, because I desperately needed

cashiers. As I walked away from her, busily trying to find a way to manage the mad rush of customers to the front, she said to me, “Thanks for getting me off.” “No problem,” I replied, “That’s my job.” I was off for a few days after that, and when I came back to work, October 16, 2002, I walked in to something that confused me. In the front of the store, was a giant photo of her. I did not understand. As I came to the time clock to clock in for the day, I saw a sign that said her name, and the dates of her birth, and the date October 14, 2002. I stared at the sign, and slowly reality began to set in, like a man awakening from a dream. I could barely believe it. How could someone with so much life be dead? She went to sleep Sunday night, and simply never woke up. Carbon Monoxide killed her, her father, put her brother in a coma for several weeks and hospitalized her mother. Our store was in shock. One of ours was gone, suddenly with no warning.

After the shock wore off, the guilt began to set in. I felt like a knife had been stabbed through my heart, for all I could think of was that Aakriti died lost and nothing I could do could change that. I would never have an opportunity to share with her the great Love of Jesus. Suddenly, for the first time I understood the personal responsibility that I bore for the lost. Suddenly, reality set in like a man who just received a wake-up call. I was not dreaming any more. I looked around me and I saw a host of people who were lost, each one a second closer to their end. Each one on the verge of being too late. Each day is a gift from God, and no one knows when their soul will be required of them – not them, and not you. I thought I would have a chance later to share with her, but I was wrong. I waited too long. I do not blame myself, but I do not want to forget either. A few days after she died, another cashier came up to me. Jason, he was a Christian, and he asked me if there was any chance that Aakriti would be in heaven. I looked him in the eye, and I told him, “Based on my understanding of Scripture, and of Aakriti...no. But let this be a lesson to you and to me that time is of the essence, and if you want to see any of your other friends in heaven then the burden lies upon you to show them the way.”

The point is this: Sharing the Gospel is scary; but when we let fear silence us we declare by our actions that we would rather someone die and go to hell than speak up and challenge them with the Gospel. This is unacceptable to me, what about you? Is that the

way you want to be? If the Gospel is going to save lives, it must be shared by us. By me, and by you.

Folks, I can not bear the thought of being responsible for one more person going to hell! I can not, and I will not! I do not want to forget the lesson that I learned from Aakriti's death. I remember, and I go tell.

If you had a chance to take a bullet for a friend, would you? If there was a chance that someone you knew would die tomorrow, would you make the time to share your faith? How many of you witness? How many of you feel as though you could do more? Take a guess at what percentage of the Church shares their faith. Less than 3% of the Church shares their faith. Why do you witness? Why do Christians not witness? It seems to me that there are several reasons apparent.

It seems to me that one of the biggest inhibitions to Christians witnessing with others is fear. Fear of losing that relationship motivates many to pass over opportunities to share about the relationship they have with Christ. Fear of losing prestige, power, or popularity in their chosen peer group motivates others to postpone possible chances to give the gospel to their friends. Fear of losing face or looking foolish or maybe failure immobilizes many others from helping their friends face eternity with confidence. What are you afraid of? We all face fear on a daily basis, and fear is a powerful force for sure, but I ask you this, Is fear the factor that forces you to forfeit your friends chance at saving faith? If so, then consider with me these passages of Scripture.

2 Timothy 1:7 tells us what Paul said to Timothy about his (Timothy's) witness, Paul said that Timothy was not to be fearful, but to be powerful (the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life) to show love (the motivation for your witness), and use a sound mind (the means by which you witness).

Let us stop here and consider for a moment. Our life as Christians is not to be marked by fear. We are not ruled by fear, we overcome it. How do we overcome fear? It is a process. And Paul outlines that process for us in this verse.

First he says we should be marked by power. What power? How do we possess this power? How do we display this power? This power is life changing power, it is spiritual power. It all starts with knowing Christ as Lord and Savior. You cannot possess

or display real power in life until you understand the Centurion Principle. The Centurion Principle states that man does not wield power of his own; in fact, man does not wield power at all. Man can only be the vessel through which power is wielded. This happens when man yields to power, then the power is wielded through him. Think back to Scripture, when the Centurion told Jesus that he understood how power worked, because he too was a man under authority. In order for him to have authority to wield, he had to yield to a higher authority. When you yield to a higher authority you have authority to carry out the agenda and wishes of the higher authority. When you submit your life to the Lordship of Christ, then His authority is given to you to accomplish His mission, which is to lead others to Him. Any time you step out of that authority structure, you lose the authority given to you from above.

We display this power by shaping our entire life around the person of Christ and letting Him change us from the inside out. In order for this to be successful we must lose our self from the equation. When we lose our self in Jesus, we will find our self changed – every time. Our personality, our actions, our priorities will begin to reflect the personality, the actions, and the priorities of Jesus Himself. And Jesus commands attention. If we display the mind of Christ everyday, then people will notice, they will wonder, and they will be struck by the immense power that we seem to possess. When we have this power, then what we say cannot be ignored, the Truth of our Gospel cannot be denied.

Next, Paul told Timothy to be marked by love. What does love have to do with overcoming fear of witnessing? It is vital. Love is the why. Love is the motivation for us to overcome our fear. Is there anyone who doubts the power of love to motivate a mother to protect her baby from danger despite her fears. I have seen a mother do amazing things when normally she would have responded differently because the safety of her children was at stake. I saw my own mother step between a homicidal woman with a butcher knife and her intended target and march her right back through the door because the life of her children was at risk. Fear is a powerful force to be sure, but love is more powerful yet.

Romans 3:23 says that all are sinners, and Romans 6:23 declares that the penalty for sin is death. John 14:6 points out that Christ is the only way to avoid hell. The reason

we witness is because we do not want to see people that we love go to hell. When we understand that all of humanity is destined to go to hell from the very start, and that Jesus is the only way to heaven, then not to overcome our fear is the very same as condemning that person to hell your self. Strong words, but I am deadly serious. If you let your fear keep you from giving a dying man the cure to his illness, then you are saying in deed that you would rather they die and go to hell, than for you to give him the Gospel. Think about that. Can you live with that? I cannot.

In verse 8 of 2 Timothy 1 and verse 16 of Romans 1 Paul encourages us not to be ashamed, but to partake of the power of the Gospel for it is the means of salvation for all.

Many people do not witness because they feel inadequate. They do not believe that they know enough. And this brings me to the last point that Paul makes. Paul told Timothy that he is to be marked by a sound mind. We as Christians have brains, we have heads and as my kung fu instructor tells us, we should use them for something other than a target. You as a witness are called to tell only what you have seen, heard, and experienced. (Acts 22:15) If you feel inadequate, then you should, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” (2 Tim. 2:15) And you should take comfort in the promise in Scripture, “For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.” (Luke 21:15)

2 Corinthians 4:3 says that if the Gospel is hid, it is hid from the lost. Romans 10:14-15 says, “How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!”

Now, remember the lost, and go tell!