**Introduction**

A few years ago we pursued a series of DVD sessions and workbook entitled *Contagious Christianity* with material from Lee Strobel, Mark Mittelberg and Bill Hybels. Now imagine that you could sit down with Lee Strobel who has authored several books defending the veracity of the Christian faith and his frequent partner and fellow apologist Mark Mittelberg. Well, I did just that and I would like to share with you what I learned from these two gentlemen. How and when did I meet these two stellar champions of the faith you ask? No, I did not meet them in person, but I was able to study their book, *The Unexpected Adventure: Taking Everyday Risks to Talk with People about Jesus*, which contains forty-two stories equally told by the two authors. Permit to share some of their material and what I have experienced and learned about sharing our faith in Jesus. And in the process, I hope you are encouraged to be open and transparent in sharing your faith with family, friends, and neighbours.

1. **Share your unique story.**

If you do any research into the stories of people who have come to faith you will find some that have had amazing journeys from a life of crime, even murder and constantly arrested for law breaking. Some were drug addicts or drug pushers. Some were sex trade workers. Some like the apostle Paul persecuted Christians. Lee Strobel admits that he was an atheist, hard-drinking, immoral reporter who considered divorce when his wife converted to Christianity. That started him on a two-year quest to prove that Christianity was false. Near the end of his two-year journey he could not escape the evidence that the resurrection of Jesus was a proven, historical fact. As he later admitted he knew that it took more faith to be an atheist than a Christian.

Now, I recognize that not everyone has a dramatic conversion to faith like Paul on the road to Damascus.

Consider Paul’s statement in **Acts 26:22** (NIV):

***22****But God has helped me to this very day; so I stand here and testify to small and great alike.*

So, don’t be apologetic that you never were a serial rapist or axe murderer so other nefarious n’er do well. Your personal testimony is important. Consider this quotation from Chuck Swindoll.

*Do you know the method Paul used each time?* Swindoll asked, *His personal testimony. Each time he spoke, he simply shard how his own life had been changed by the invasion of Christ and the indwelling of his power. Not once did he argue or debate with them. Not once did he preach a sermon.”*[[1]](#footnote-1) The reason said Swindoll: *Because one of the most convincing, unanswerable arguments on earth regarding Christianity is one’s personal experience with the Lord Jesus Christ. No persuasive technique will ever take the place of your personal testimony…The skeptic may deny your doctrine or attack your church, but he cannot honestly ignore the fact that your life has been changed. He may stop his ears to the presentation of a preacher and the pleadings of an evangelist, but he is somehow attracted to the human-interest story of how you, John Q. Public, found peace within.”[[2]](#footnote-2)*

So, don’t procrastinate. Sometime today think through your story as humble as it may be. Consider writing it out to something you can share in 3 or 4 minutes. Don’t attempt to memorize it but be sure you can remember three key points that you can share. Then ask God to give you opportunities to share it with someone.

1. **What do you do when faced with a barrage of tough questions?**

**James 5:19-20 (The Message)**

*My dear friends, if you know people who have wandered off from God’s truth, don’t write them off. Go after them. Get them back and you will have rescued precious lives from destruction and prevented an epidemic of wandering away from God.*

So, you have prepared your personal testimony and prayed that God will lead to a neighbour or family member that you can share your story and encourage on the road to faith. But you have opened up a complex issue. Suppose this person is openly hostile to the truth, disputes God’s existence, and Jesus’ death. “Resurrection,” he says contemptuously, “dead people stay dead. They don’t back to life in three days or three decades!” Then he launches into a series of tough questions challenging the Christian faith. So, what do you do? The best answer is to admit that you don’t have all the answers

**Pr. 15:1 (NIV)**

*A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.*

Promise to do some research and get back to him with answers. Then do your homework. There are many fine books that have addressed the most tough questions that you are likely to encounter. Lee Strobel has written several including *The Case for Christ, The Case for Faith,* and *Finding the Real Jesus*

1. **Remember you are never on your own in sharing your faith.**

**John 14:26-27 (ESV)**

***26****But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.****27****Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.*

***John 16:7-8 (ESV)***

***7****Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.****8****And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment:*

We all have had promises made to us by various individuals only to find that they were empty promises—that the person could not or would not fulfill their commitment to us. But in these verses, we have a promise from the Creator of the universe, perfect in every way, and all powerful. At least twice he promised to send the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity to be with us. He is with us, in and using us to convict others of sin, righteousness and judgement. We couldn’t ask for greater help than that.

1. **Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit’s promptings.**

**Acts 16:6 (ESV)**

***6****And they (Paul & Timothy) went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia.*

As we consider the fact that the Holy Spirit is a powerful partner who is always there to help us, we should also be sensitive to his lead or promptings. Let me illustrate with a story from Lee Strobel’s life after he became a Christian and was still employed by the Chicago Tribune. I will reconstruct it as I understand it happened.

On that occasion with Easter services fast approaching where he and his wife attended, Lee felt a powerful urge to invite one of the paper’s managers to join them for their worship services. He did not ignore the prompting but went to this manager’s office and after a few pleasantries said something like, “Hey, Bob, Leslie and I would love to have you join us for our church’s worship services this weekend. We’ve got a great speaker and a warm caring group of people who will make you and your family feel very welcome.” “Look, Strobel, I have no interest whatsoever in your church family no matter how friendly.” Not to give up that easily Lee went on to try another tact. “Bob, I know you love good music. We have a wonderful band that will play a mix of classic and contemporary pieces. I think that you will be pleasantly surprised how an amateur band like that can move people with their enthusiasm.” “Come on, Strobel, yeah I like music but the idea of sitting on a hard church pew listening to boring church music when I could be out doing a round of golf just doesn’t excite me.” Lee decided it was time to go the very heart of the Easter message. “Bob, this is the most important service of the Christian calendar. Our speaker will be presenting incontrovertible proof of the resurrection of Jesus three days after his death on a Roman cross. You are an investigative reporter like me. You know how we pursue the facts. As we like to say around here, ‘If you mother tells you that she loves you, don’t believe it until you have corroborating testimony from three witnesses.” Bob stared at Lee for a moment, then apparently, he said to himself that enough is enough. “Look, Strobel, nobody comes back to life after three days or three centuries. Let me be perfectly clear, I’m not interested in your crummy church with its hooky music and wild tales about people jumping out of their graves. Why don’t you go back to work?” A bit chagrined Lee mumbled something like, “Okay, Bob, I hear you. If you change your mind, you know that our invitation is still open, and you know where to reach me.”

Lee returned to his office with a bruised ego. Didn’t he feel a powerful prompting from the Holy Spirit to invite this particular manager to Easter services? Yes, he was certain of that but how to explain the rude reception that he received to his invitation? Lee licked his wounds and put the incident out of his mind.

Now fast forward several years to another time and venue. But this time Lee is a teaching pastor at a major Christian church in his community. He had just finished speaking when a middle-aged man approached him and said, “Mr. Strobel, I just wanted to thank you for having such a powerful impact on my spiritual journey.” Startled and not recognizing the man, Lee replied, “Well, sir, thank you for the compliment but I must admit that I don’t recognize you. When and how did I help you in your faith in Christ?”

The man smiled and replied,” Well, I am not surprised that you don’t recognize me. Remember the time when you went into that manager’s office at the Chicago Tribune and invited him and his family to Easter services. Well, I was on my hands and knees behind his desk doing some retiling work. You see, I was out of work and asked a friend at the paper if he had anything I could do. He asked me if I could do floor tiling work. Since I had once done some tiling in my home, I said, sure, I can do that. So, my assignment was to retile the floor in that manager’s office. You didn’t see me, but I heard everything you said. When I got home, I told my wife, ‘Honey, we’re going to church this weekend.’ So we went to your worship services which were everything that you promised that unresponsive manager. Shortly after my wife and I and one of our children accepted Jesus as our Lord and Saviour. Praise God!”

So don’t ignore the Holy Spirit’s promptings to share your faith. You never know what the outcome will be.

1. **Don’t be afraid to be bold.**

**Acts 4:29 (ESV)**

***29****And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants (Peter & John) to continue to speak your word with all boldness,*

After we were married Barbara and went to visit her daughter who lived in Airdrie, a suburb of Calgary. She had many troubling things in her life, and I often prayed for her on the phone. Then she developed terminal cancer. As usual I prayed for her healing and peace in the midst of a life-threatening condition. Shortly before her death I asked her directly would she like to accept Jesus as her Lord and Saviour. To my astonishment she agreed. I did lead her through a short prayer, and she did accept Jesus as her Lord and Saviour.

Now, you may want to know what type of prayer to use with someone who wants to accept Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. I don’t believe that the exact words are crucial. Far more important is what is going in the person’s heart. But here is a simple, easy to remember formula if you find yourself in a situation like this. The three polite words are *Sorry*, *Thank You* and *Please*. Lord, I am sorry for the many sins in my life. I thank you that you came to this earth and died for my sins. Please come into my life and become the Lord of my life. Of course, each of these three points in the prayer can be elaborated on as the repentant person wants.

Back to Barbara’s daughter. Now when someone prays like that you hope that their commitment was sincere and that she wasn’t just trying to humour me. Sometime after we talking to Linda on the phone as usual. I happened to mention that I had lost a set of keys. Then she said something that surprised me. She said, “Maybe you should pray about finding the keys.” Actually I did find the keys about one year after losing them in the park near where we live. But both her mother and I were pleasantly surprised that Linda would suggest prayer as the answer to finding the missing keys. She had never suggested anything like that prior to her conversion. I took that incident as anecdotal proof that her repentance and acceptance of the sacrifice of Christ for her sins was genuine. Sometime after that she did succumb to the cancer ravaging her body and we know that she was healed not in this life but the next.

1. **Never give up praying for someone.**

**James 5:16 (NIV)**

*…The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.*

Lee Strobel shares another story of a time in his church when hundreds of new believers had flocked to the church to affirm their faith though baptism. Candidates wore a corsage or boutonniere. A middle-aged woman came over to Lee and asked to be baptised. She was accompanied by a man who was a few years her senior. He asked her if she had received Jesus as her saviour and Lord. Her face beamed as she exclaimed, “Yes.” Next Lee asked the man who accompanied her, “Are you her husband?” “Yes, as a matter of fact I am.” So immediately Lee had a follow up question, “How about you, sir? Have you given your life to Jesus?”

At first the man looked hurt and offended and glared at Mr. Strobel. Then he suddenly burst into tears and said, “No, I haven’t but I want to right now.”

Lee then proceeded to baptize both the man and his wife. The man confessed that he was a sinner and received forgiveness through Christ.

But this story does not end there. After the ceremony, a woman that Lee did not know came bounding up to him sobbing and repeatedly saying, “Nine years, nine years…” Not understanding what she was talking about Lee asked, “Nine years, what do you mean?” Through eyes reddened by tears she explained. The woman you just baptised is my sister-in-law and the man you baptised is my brother. I have been praying for him for nine long years. During that time he never showed the least interest in anything spiritual but look at what God did in his life today.”[[3]](#footnote-3)

So what is the takeaway from his story? This woman never gave up praying for her brother’s salvation for nine years. Perhaps you have been praying for a prodigal son or daughter for decades but he or she has never shown any interest in their salvation. Never give up. Remember James’ powerful statement, *“The prayer of a righteous person has great power...” (James 5:16 ESB)*

1. **Switch the “but’s”**

You may be thinking, “Well and good, but I’m not a Billy Graham or a Lee Strobel or a Mark Mittelberg, Andy Stanley, Charles Stanley, or some other prominent evangelist or celebrated Christian leader. But we all can play a role in leading someone to faith in Christ.

**1 Cor. 3:5-9 (ESV)**

***5****What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each.****6****I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.****7****So neither he who plants, nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.****8****He who plants, and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor.****9****For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building.*

Consider how many interactions it takes before someone finally agrees to accept Jesus and their Lord and Saviour. If you read the Christian literature on this subject, you will find a statement that it takes seven exposures to the truth of the gospel before someone who finally make a positive commitment to follow Jesus. Now, when I hear that figure, I wonder how it was determined. Is there some empirical proof based on a survey that someone like George Barna has done? If so, I have not seen it. However, this passage in 1 Corinthians does indicate that there are different people involved, “*servants through whom you believed*”. You may be the one who leads someone in a prayer of repentance, acceptance of Christ’s redeeming sacrifice and commitment to make him the Lord of their life. If so, that is wonderful and a thrilling experience. But based on my experience in the 50 years since I was baptised that is a rare situation for most of us. Remember that we don’t have be a Billy Graham to plant the seed of the gospel in someone’s mind or Charles Stanley to engage them by “watering” the seed that someone else planted in their mind. It is God who gives the growth. We are truly God’s fellow workers in making disciples of Christ.

**Conclusion**

We are nearing the end of our time together. I have tried to show by several examples that we all can have a positive role in leading friends, relatives, loved ones on the path to eternal life. Now, I can’t leave this message without asking you a pointed question that only you can answer. As you sit quietly listening to these words who do you sense the Holy Spirit is prompting you to reach? Will you plant the seed? Will you water the seed that someone else planted? Or will you ignore the prompting that is your mind right now? Will you shield or share your faith in our Lord and Saviour? God grant us all the temerity to boldly follow the leading of the Holy Spirit in his eternal life-saving work. Amen.

**\*\*\* Prayer and transition to Communion \*\*\***

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1. Swindoll, Charles R., *Come Before Winter and Share My Hope* (Sisters, Ore.: Multnomah, 1985), 43 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Lee Strobel and Mark Mittelberg. *The Unexpected Adventure: Taking Everyday Risks to Talk with People about Jesus. (*Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI 49530, 2009), 149 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)