

# Bearing Witness: COVID-19 Style

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Friendship Baptist Church | Saturday, May 16, 2020

# Opportune time to be a *witness*: Why?

1. Something with a 100% success rate is starring all of us in the face: morality
2. Objects of hope/trust — jobs, health, economy, strength, reason, security, etc. — are crumbling
3. Folks are anxious, tired, etc. (like we are)
4. Many gripped by the “virus” fear and anger

# *Pre-Evangelize* Witness

What should we be doing now **before** we evangelize? What must we do to earn the right to evangelize? Evangelize – giving the plan of salvation.

# What is a witness?

- *God has not left himself without a witness (Acts 14:17)*
- Can be a thing (Psalm 19) or a person
- One who has firsthand knowledge of a fact or an event
- One who may be called to testify

# *Pre-Evangelize* Witness

Understands God's role and my/our role

# God is the eager evangelist

We simply cooperate with Him.

# God's role in evangelism

- God does 'the heavy lifting': What a Relief!
  - He convicts unbelievers of their sin [John 17:8]
  - He takes the initiative and pursues unbelievers [Abraham's story, our story; Luke 19:10]
  - He makes the effectual call to unbelievers [John 6:44]
  - He woos unbelievers with his common grace [See Noahic Covenant; Matthew 5:45]
  - He takes the rejection [Luke 10:16]

# God's role in evangelism

- God does 'the heavy lifting', (cont'd)
  - He opens the heart of unbelievers to receive His testimony [Acts 16:14b; Luke 8 – Parable of the Sower]
    - His testimony can take many forms – Supernatural, **Creation**, Common grace, **His Word**, Glory of man, Our lives [Acts 14:17]
  - He (and others) have labored or sowed before **we arrive on the scene** [John 4:34-38]



# God's role in evangelism

- God does 'the heavy lifting', (cont'd)
  - He does the saving [Acts 2:41]
  - He gives us the words [Luke 21:14]

# God's role in evangelism – The Big Idea?

- God is navigating salvation history – we need to be listening carefully for *His orders*:
  - What is my role here, Lord? How do I cooperate with you Lord? Do I hang out without sharing the gospel? Or do I serve or fight some injustice? Or listen? Or share the gospel?

# God's role in evangelism – The Big Idea?

- God is navigating salvation history – we need to be listening carefully for His orders (cont'd):
  - Every friendship with an unbeliever **does not** have salvation as a *telos* (goal) - - okay with this?
  - Loving Jesus means obeying Jesus or heeding His voice – e.g., Paul eager to evangelize Asia but Acts 16:6!
- We cooperate with God, The Eager Evangelist

**Our role...bear witness.**

How?

**Disclaimer.**

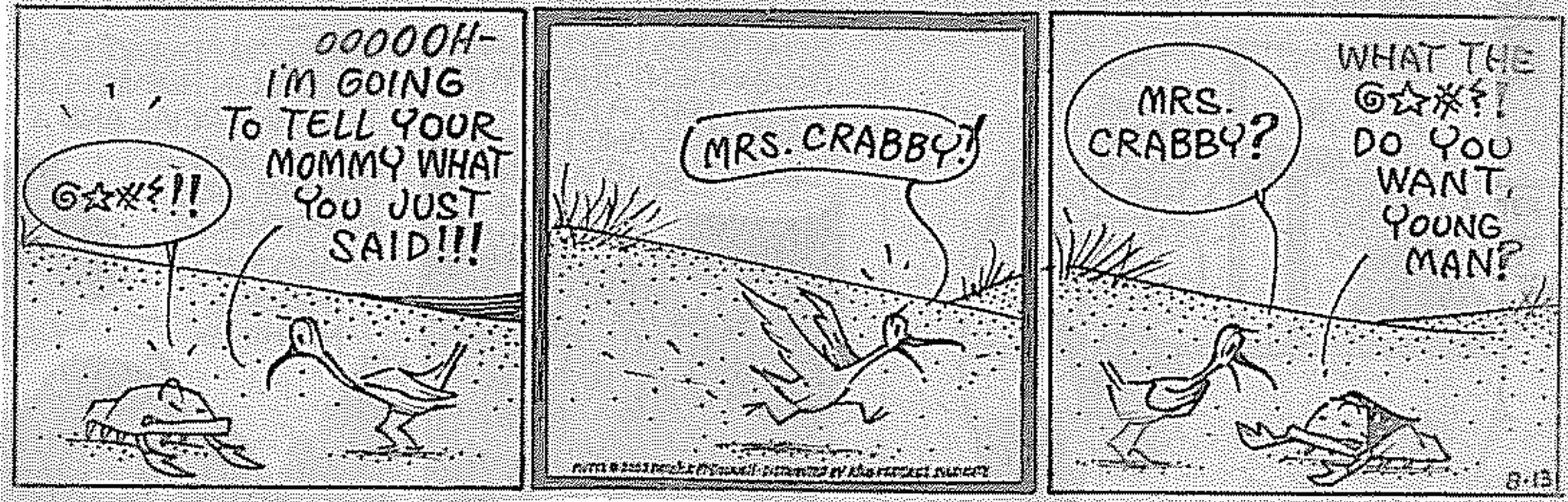
Not a technique.

# Understanding our role.

Must spend time before God's face.

# Imitation

MUTTS / By Patrick McDonnell



We spend time with Him to capture and embody  
His ways, His language, His love for unbelievers.  
We spend time with Him to learn to be like Him.

# What is a witness?

- One who has firsthand knowledge of a fact or an event
- One who may be called to testify
- This is how we “testify” of the truthfulness of God’s word...by fulfilling our role...



# Our role

- Embrace a biblical view of unbelievers
  - Not a ‘notch on our belt’; do not treat as ‘a project’
  - “A sheep without a shepherd” – garner compassionate and empathy
    - Meaning of “compassion” [Luke 10]
    - Compassion is the currency in this moment.
  - Treat with deep respect and dignity—why?

# Theology: Glorious Ruins like us

- Genesis 1 – glorious, inestimable value & worth
- Genesis 3 – deformed, broken, ruinous
  - “Evil...had left on that body an imprint of deformity and decay.” Dr. Jekyll referring to his **second self**, Mr. Hyde, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde and Other Stories*, Robert Louis Stevenson.
- Genesis 1 + 3 = “glorious ruins”

# Our Role: bear witness

- Know the times -- It's a Pandemic! | Students of culture
- Love and serve well\*\*\*\*
  - Obey local, state, and national leaders (Rom 13:1f; 1 Peter 2:13f; 1 Tim 2:1f)
  - Ask, "How are you doing?" and listen compassionately
    - Two listening principles
    - Vicki's Story

# Our Role: bear witness

- Our neighbors need to see *our works* more than *hear our words*.
  - "Preach the Gospel and *when necessary use words*."  
St. Francis of Assisi
- Be prepared to answer questions and common objections (1 Peter 3:15-16)

# Common objections

1. Exclusivity of Christianity (John 14:6)
2. Christianity is a white's man religion, white supremacy, racism
3. Hypocrisy among Christians and leaders
4. Human Suffering and a God who claims to be all powerful and loving
5. Church's poor treatment of immigrants and those of the LGBT community
6. The Bible's outdated morality
7. Christianity has no historical footing, a grand myth
8. Fragmentation or tribalism among Christians

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# Our Role: bear witness

- Be prepared to answer questions and common objections (1 Peter 3:15-16)
  - Holiest words?
- Live a life that is attractive - how attractive is your life?
  - “Integrity bears witness.” W. E. B. DuBois, 1961

# Our Role: bear witness

- “Lip and life” coherence (antidote to hypocrisy)
  - Former President Bill Clinton, Democratic National Convention (2008), “[hope that] people around the world are more impressed by the *power of our example* rather than the example of our power.”
- “Authenticity bears witness.” – Luke Bobo



# Our Role: bear witness

- Study God's word
- Pray earnestly & fervently for unbelievers
- Study & befriend unbelievers
  - Paul in Athens – took time to observe before speaking
  - Find common interests
- Know our reputation among unbelievers
  - Be ready and willing to apologize

# Summary: Best Biblical Practices

# Best Biblical Practices

- Acknowledge that God is the true Evangelist – implications?
  - Loves unbelievers *too*
  - Pay attention...God is already at work
  - Saving process and who He saves belongs to Him
- Treat with respect and dignity—listen!
- Pray
  - For soft & receptive hearts
  - For the right words to say
  - To remain faithful

# Resources

- *Learning Evangelism from Jesus*, Jerram Barrs
- *Urban Apologetics*, Christopher Brooks
- Min. Luke Bobo, [lukebobo@fbckcmo.org](mailto:lukebobo@fbckcmo.org)
- [fbckcmo.org/ministries/christian-education](http://fbckcmo.org/ministries/christian-education)

# Survey

1. *What did you learn?*
2. *What was “muddy” or unclear?*
3. *What other topics do you like Biblical instruction on during this quarantine?*
4. *I was sent the Zoom link and password? Yes or No?*

*Send responses to: [lukebobo@fbckcmo.org](mailto:lukebobo@fbckcmo.org)*