

Do you remember the first job you ever interviewed for? Was it a great experience? That would be quite a surprise. I've rarely ever heard of anyone who felt confident, calm and prepared for their first job interview. Or even their tenth. Interviews are generally stressful and unpredictable, and you're working so hard to project a good image that you could easily forget your own name.

On the website snagajob.com, someone wrote about a crazy interview for a job at their local Subway restaurant. Not long after the interview, the interviewer texted him with the message, "Come up here ASAP we're in a nonstop rush, Oh and bring a green shirt, Congrats." (1)

That's a memorable way to find out you're hired. "Come here ASAP and bring a green shirt."

An uncomfortable job interview moment appeared on the website of *Inc.* magazine. This person had done well in the interview. They felt really comfortable and loosened up a bit. And then someone on the interview panel asked, "Do you know what job you're here for?"

The person being interviewed froze. What did that mean? Why was he asking that? Was there some big mix-up? And he blurted out, "No." He hadn't meant to say it. But he got so confused by that question that he couldn't recover his composure. Needless to say, he didn't get the job. (2)

I want you think for a few moments about what might seem to you the scariest job interview you will ever have—that is to be a witness for Jesus Christ in today's world. If you have a fear of rejection or a fear of speaking on your feet or a fear of ridicule because of your faith—Jesus' words that we are to be his witnesses first in Jerusalem, then in Judea and Samaria, and finally to the ends of the earth may be intimidating.

Did you ever think of the forty days between Jesus' resurrection and his ascension to heaven as one long job interview? During this time, Jesus spent time with his disciples and taught them about the kingdom of God. And with each day, his disciples got more and more excited. Finally, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" They thought that Jesus was preparing them to help in building his earthly kingdom. And they were ready, willing and able—or so they thought—to assist him. Did they know what job they were interviewing for? And that brings us to our Bible passage for today.

He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly

two men dressed in white stood beside them. “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.

Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day’s walk from the city. When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

“Okay, folks, change of plans. We are not going to restore Israel’s kingdom at this time. Instead, we’re going to start building the kingdom of God. But I’m leaving. I’m going back to my Father. And I’m leaving this job to you. But don’t worry, I’m sending you the Holy Spirit to give you the power to follow through.”

Last week, we talked about how Jesus’ final command to us gave our lives purpose. His final command to us was to love one another as he has loved us. By this, all people will know that we are his disciples, if we love one another. That is our life’s purpose. **In our Bible passage today, Jesus gives us a plan.** His plan for our lives is that we will be his witnesses in Jerusalem, and in Judea and in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Now before you pull up a map on your phone, let’s scale this command to our lives. Our Jerusalem is our city or community. For the disciples, Jerusalem was a dangerous place because they were opposed by the Roman government and by the Jewish religious leaders. Your Jerusalem is the place where you have the most influence, but it’s also the place where people know your past, your flaws. Judea is the larger region around you.

Samaria is the place you refuse to go because it’s outside your comfort zone, or the people there scare you, or you have some prejudice against “those people” that you don’t want to confront. Yes, Jesus did command you to go there. No more excuses.

And “the ends of the earth” doesn’t need any explanation. In a day and age when technology allows any sixth-grader to communicate with strangers around the world, we have the opportunity every day to share our faith to the ends of the earth. We have never been better equipped for this calling. So what does it take for us to complete the calling that Jesus gave his disciples? After all, we will need help because it is intimidating, so intimidating that very few people who say they follow Jesus actually attempt to be a witness at all.

First and foremost, if we are going to be his witnesses, we will need to pray. Action without prayer is like planting seeds in a desert. Better yet, get a team together and pray. Notice what the disciples did after Jesus was taken up into heaven. They returned to Jerusalem, and “joined together constantly in prayer.” We cannot be

witnesses to something we've never experienced. Prayer is the experience of taking on the mind and heart and will and wisdom of God. Prayer is the point where the Holy Spirit fills us with God's power. God never calls us to do His work unless He empowers and equips us to do it.

J. Arthur Rank was a successful British businessman and one of the U.K.'s most successful movie producers from the 1930s to the 1960s. Rank's colleagues said he never used the elevator in his office building. Instead, he preferred his "Prayer Stairs." Rank took the stairs every morning so that he could start and end his day in prayer. Each morning he would pray for God's guidance as he went up the stairs. And each evening as he walked down the stairs, he thanked God for His help that day. (3)

Like the disciples, we pray fervently for God to heal and transform this world. And God says, "Yes, I will answer your prayers. I will transform the world. Through you." Jesus spent his short life on this earth praying to the Father and preparing us for service. You are a witness, whether you know it or not. You are either a compelling witness for Jesus Christ, or you are a confounding witness against Jesus Christ. If the world is going to be healed and transformed, it will happen through our witness.

I like what Joe McKeever wrote on this subject. I just pulled out a few quotes to share with you. "Your assignment is to find out what the Lord is saying to your world—your family, your circle of friends and acquaintances, your co-workers—through living inside you.

You are God's answer to the questions of the skeptic.

The skeptic wants to know: Is God real? Are the promises of God true? . . . You are the answer . . . We are Exhibit A of Jesus Christ. Like it or not. The burden of that is staggering; the blessing is wonderful." (4)

If we are Exhibit A of Jesus Christ, what is our witness in our family? In our community? In the world? Do people see and experience the character and the blessings and the message of God when they look at us? If that question doesn't make us want to stop right now and pray fervently for God's power and guidance, then nothing will.

The second essential step if we are to be his witnesses is to go. Yes, we can share our faith and Jesus' love in our homes and in our churches. Those are the first and best places to live our faith enthusiastically and consistently. But we have to get outside our homes and our churches to prove that we are living out our purpose as Jesus-followers. Jesus shared his counter-cultural attitude and priorities and truth with people in the workplace, in the market, in the synagogues, in the streets. He spoke to the powerful and the powerless. He spoke to his friends and family, and he spoke to strangers and outcasts. He loved the unlovable, healed the hopeless, freed those in bondage, and stood firm in the face of persecution. By some estimates, Jesus traveled over 3,000 miles during his three years of ministry. (5) And everywhere he went, he

shared the message and the love of God by his words and by his actions. By the people he hung out with and ate with and healed and befriended. And that is what following Jesus will entail.

Olympic snowboarder Kelly Clark gets to share her faith as she travels around the world competing in snowboarding competitions. As she says, “My ministry, and what God is doing in my life, is really found in my career in the marketplace. I’m in an industry where it’s very foreign and it’s very counter-cultural. I get to love these people really well who would never step foot in a church.” (6)

That’s what we get to do too! We get to love people really well who would never step foot in a church. God isn’t contained inside these four walls. That’s the whole purpose of the Holy Spirit—so the living presence of God could take up residence inside every believer. That means that wherever you go, God goes too. The presence and the power and the love of God go with you into every situation. Doesn’t that make you want to get out there and fulfill your purpose? Doesn’t it reassure you that Jesus didn’t make a mistake when he chose you as his witness?

The final step if we are to be his witnesses is to trust God. This the hardest step, isn’t it? Sermons and discussions about sharing our faith make us feel nervous or guilty. Because we think that we don’t have the right personality, or the exciting faith story, or the eloquence, or the charisma. You know what’s wrong with that previous sentence? The word “we.” It’s not about you or me. It’s about God’s Spirit working in us. Trust that the Holy Spirit is putting power behind your efforts and conviction behind your words. Trust that the Holy Spirit is going before you, preparing the minds and hearts of those you encounter. You may never know how God will use your attitude, your choices, your priorities, your caring or your words to touch another life and open someone’s mind to the message of Jesus. Can you live with that? Can you commit to being a witness every day, in every situation, even if you never feel capable, even if you never feel ready, even if you never know how God is working in you to heal and transform the world?

When I was in 6th grade there was a school retreat given by father Springer a Jesuit priest. I enjoyed his stories about being a missionary. He was inspirational. I read books about missionaries all through middle school. You may not realize it but being a military chaplain is like being a missionary. We leave our homes. We dress according to local customs. Our diet is determined by the locality. We definitely speak a different language. I went to a meeting and at the meeting there was a Jesuit priest who belonged to the same province as father Springer. I told the priest that I always thought father Springer was an inspiration to my vocation. He said I was number 13. He explained that father Springer was a failure and being a teacher, a pastor, and a missionary. The Jesuits didn't know what to do with him. So they gave him the job of giving middle school retreats. There were no complaints about him. When he got too old to do that work he was put in the old priest home. he told the other priests that he was a failure. After he was there a couple of years a young Jesuit visited him and thanked him for the retreat he gave in his middle school. This made father Springer

happy that he wasn't as bad a failure as he thought. Over the next few years 11 more priests came to visit with the same story. I asked the priest where I could locate father Springer to tell him about #13. He said I am flying to father Springer's wake this evening but I am sure father Springer knows about his inspiration of me.

You never know when you give your witness to what God has done in your life when God will use that to turn someone's life around.

“(Jesus) said to them: ‘It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.’”

Jesus could have shared the whole plan with us. He could have answered all our questions. Would that make us more powerful witnesses for him? Probably not. Because it's not about you or me. He does not need you to be more eloquent or more charismatic or more extroverted. He needs to fill you with his Holy Spirit, the living presence and power of God, and send you out to live like he did, love like he did and share the message of God like he did. There's a world outside these doors that is waiting to be healed and transformed. And if you are willing to pray, to go and to trust God to work in you, then you will be his witnesses to the ends of the earth.

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1. <https://www.snagajob.com/job-interview/funny-interview-stories-2/>.
 2. “15 more hilarious tales of job interview embarrassment” by Suzanne Lucas, <https://www.inc.com/suzanne-lucas/15-more-hilarious-tales-of-job-interview-embarrassment.html>.
 3. From a book by Charles L. Allen.
 4. “The Incarnation: An Illustration” by Joe McKeever, August 7, 2012, <https://joemckeeper.com/wp/incarnation-illustration-2/>.
 5. “Where Did Jesus Travel While On Earth?” by Jack Wellman, December 17, 2015, Patheos, <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/christiancrier/2015/12/17/where-did-jesus-travel-while-on-earth/>.
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