

### **144 Witnessing 3: Everyone IS in need!**

Our mention of Jesus Christ in conversation, even if this is done naturally and calmly, may well be met with a negative response. The mood of the age means that many people have reasons - sound reasons as far as they are concerned - for living their lives with little thought about a God, let alone about His supposed Son, Jesus Christ. Such talk seems so unnecessary, so irrelevant, so much a waste of time, hence a reaction of, "Don't bother me with all that stuff - I just don't need it".

To which we must agree - "Fair enough, IF you really don't need it, then such talk is a waste of time". But of course, everyone on the planet DOES need it, whether that need is recognised or not, and occasionally our basic witnessing will lead us on into demonstrating that universal need. How?!

We can start by asking, "When you die, what do you think will happen to you? Where will you go?". There are a few stock, Christ-ignoring answers. It might be, "I don't believe in heaven or hell - when I die, that's it, I cease to exist. Oblivion". A second involves re-incarnation: "I'll come back in another life, and when I'm good enough I'll get into heaven". A third - "I live a good life, I'll be OK, I'll see my Nan and Grandad, we'll all be together again". The validity of such beliefs can be tested by our simply asking, "Why? On what grounds do you believe in oblivion, or re-incarnation, or everyone getting in because they think they live good lives?". This little question "Why?" can swing the mood from rejection to interest "just like that".

And then we can come on to God's Law, summarised in the Ten Commandments - how does our listener "rate" with each of them?: putting God first, always; avoiding God-replacing idols; honouring God's name; observing a God-given weekly day of rest; honouring parents; no murder, adultery, theft, false witnessing or coveting. As we well know, it's quite a list, and none of us has a hope of passing this basic "Are you good enough?" test on our own merits.

Does that matter? Yes it does! Our failure to keep the Ten Commandments is the quickest, clearest advertisement for the Bible's basic message: that we are all in trouble before God; we are all incapable of climbing out of this trouble ourselves; so, Yes, we ARE all in great need! For Almighty God our Creator is utterly HOLY (Joshua 24.19 / 1 Samuel 6.20 / 1 Peter 1.15), every person will ultimately be judged according to those commandments, and all who have ever lived, apart from the Lord Jesus Himself, will be found guilty and will fail (eg Romans 3.23 / Galatians 2.16); the present

gulf between them and Almighty God will continue into eternity (eg Romans 6.23a). There is the Bad News, in the light of which any claim of "I have no need" is seen to be pure folly.

Yet those who belong to Christ the Lord, by accepting Christ's death as being on their own behalf, are waved through - for their punishment has been fully served, their debt fully paid off - by Jesus Christ Himself (Galatians 2.20 / Ephesians 1.1-14 / 2.1-10 / I Timothy 1.15). There is the GOOD News, which, through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, blows to bits the Bad News. The gate of glory stands wide open for all who would go in (eg Romans 6.23b / 10.9-13 / I Corinthians 1.18-21 / 15.54-58 / II Corinthians 5.17-21 / Colossians 1.12-22 / I Timothy 2.4-6 / II Timothy 1.9-10 / Titus 2.11-15).

So, praise God for the fourth answer, the best of them all, to that question about when we die: "I will be with my Saviour Jesus Christ in eternity and glory, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Luke 23.43 / Galatians 2.20b / Philippians 1.21).

The Lord God has "no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked should turn from his way and live" (Ezekiel 33.11). In His Son Jesus Christ, God our Father has done all that it takes to get us back. Our witnessing for Christ is to highlight three "greats": our great need; God's great love; and the great door of salvation still standing wide open that all may go in (John 10.9).

So it's no wonder we are called to "stand up for Jesus", for the worst mistake that anyone can make is to think, "I'm fine - I have no need".

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