

How To Talk About Jesus Without Freaking Out

**Jim & Karen Covell,
Victorya Michaels Rogers**



Thrilling Life Publishers
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Praise for

How To Talk About Jesus Without Freaking Out

“This book is practical, challenging, and compelling. It contains vital information that will help today’s Christians effectively share their faith in the twenty-first century.”

JOSH MCDOWELL
BESTSELLING AUTHOR AND FOUNDER, JOSH MCDOWELL MINISTRY

“Because every one of us has missed an opportunity to share the Good News with people in bad situations, we need Victorya, Jim and Karen’s down-to-earth encouragement to move beyond our common fears and freeze-ups. Their stories will inspire you to trust God for a bolder faith. Their practical insights will give you the tools you need for a fresh discovery of the joy of leading others to Christ.”

DANIEL HENDERSON
PASTOR, AUTHOR AND PRESIDENT OF STRATEGIC RENEWAL

“If your life has been changed by Christ; if you can learn to start a conversation, and if you can learn to frame and tell your story you can be a superstar evangelist. No excuses, no fear. This book is an insightful resource to give you encouragement, perspective, and practical wisdom on how to share what Christ has done in your life and can do for others.”

ANDY ROLLER
EXECUTIVE PASTOR, NORTHWOOD CHURCH

“My friends Jim and Karen Covell and Victorya Rogers have for years helped many in Hollywood become bolder in sharing their faith. In a winsome, inspirational, and practical way, their book challenges the concerns and hesitations we have about witnessing. They help us to become more alert to the many exciting encounters God arranges in our lives every day, and they give us the tools we need to build our confidence in sharing the Good News. Their enthusiasm is contagious!”

NANCY STAFFORD
ACTRESS AND HOST OF TELEVISION’S *MAIN FLOOR*, *AUTHOR, BEAUTY BY THE BOOK*

“It has been my privilege to get to know the authors of this book. I can tell you from firsthand exposure that their passion for Christ and for sharing Him with the world is both genuine and winsome. It is my pleasure to share them with the world through this book”

KEN GIRE
SPEAKER AND AUTHOR, *WINDOWS OF THE SOUL*, *REFLECTIVE LIFE*

“From the first page to the last, *How to Talk About Jesus without Freaking Out*

is a book about doing, about acting, about actually being the witness we are all called to be. Jim, Karen, and Victorya have honed their skills and developed their talent in the nation's most difficult witnessing field – Hollywood. Like Paul in Athens, they have not been cowed by the culture around them. Like Paul, they have figured out how to talk to family, friends, business colleagues, and total strangers about the gospel. You can have the benefit of their experience, and your witness will change dramatically as a result.”

HUGH HEWITT

*NATIONALLY SYNDICATED RADIO SHOW, THE HUGH HEWITT SHOW, AND AUTHOR,
TALK WITH PAGANS AND SEARCHING FOR GOD IN AMERICA*

“This book is for the 90 percent of believers who have never presented the full gospel to an unbeliever. The authors learned the techniques they present in the often hostile environment of Hollywood, where I minister. If these techniques work in Hollywood, they will work any-where. And I can assure you, they do work in Hollywood!”

LARRY W. POLAND, PH.D

CHAIRMAN AND CEO, MASTERMEDIA INTERNATIONAL

“Most believers want to share their faith, but don't know how. Jim, Karen, and Victorya have produced a myriad of useful insights on evangelism that are bathed in personal experience and are biblically based. They hit the nail on the head with their section on using your personal testimony, which is the most important, persuasive tool a believer possesses – ‘I was blind but now I see!’”

TIM TIMMONS

SENIOR PASTOR, NEW COMMUNITY CHURCH,
AUTHOR OF *CALL IT LOVE OR CALL IT QUILTS* AND *HOOKED ON LIFE*

“In a day and age when being spiritual is popular but being a Christian isn't, this book is a perfect evangelistic tool! I applaud the way it breaks down the ‘Christian-ese’ and helps a person deliver the good news of Jesus.”

HOLLY MCCLURE

NATIONALLY SYNDICATED MOVIE CRITIC AND RADIO TALK SHOW HOST

“If you want to learn how to share your faith in a practical and natural way, this book is for you. We have used it at our church to teach small groups and for people preparing to go on mission trips. Thanks for a valuable tool.”

KEN SURRITTE

FOUNDER, HEARTS AND HANDS, INTL.

“With so many distractions from our calling to proclaim the Gospel, I am grateful for the focus this book brings to our faith community. With simple boldness in these pages, we are reminded that it's not hard to share our faith but rather something we've already been equipped to do. This is a great guide and a refreshing outlook for every Christian, every congregation, and every mission

field.”

KIM DORR
ASSOCIATE PASTOR, BEL AIR PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
AND CEO, DEFINING ARTISTS AGENCY

In a fast changing world that’s growing more and more hostile to expressions of faith, people often feel hesitant to share their story with others. That’s why “How to Talk About Jesus Without Freaking Out” is so important and timely. It’s practical, funny, and will completely transform the way you talk about Jesus. Get the book. The Great Commission isn’t a suggestion, so it’s time we became more confident at engaging today’s culture with a message of hope.

PHIL COOKE
FILMMAKER, MEDIA CONSULTANT,
AND AUTHOR OF *ONE BIG THING: DISCOVERING WHAT YOU WERE BORN TO DO*

“The Bible tells us that the wise man wins souls. In this book Jim & Karen Covell and Victorya Rogers take the anxiety out of sharing our faith. With practical guidance and Biblical insight this book lives true to its title by clearly explaining the difference between “evangelism” and “witnessing”, offering encouragement for every person to be a witness for the Lord Jesus Christ. I highly recommend this as a training tool for every believer.”

TOM LANE
EXECUTIVE SENIOR PASTOR, GATEWAY CHURCH, SOUTHLAKE TX

“Authentic, enlightening, energetic and practical. It’s one of the few books I keep accessible. It’s a staple in my library, and great to repeatedly go back to for inspiration and focus. My favorite book!”

LISA ROSE
FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT, PROJECTHANDUP AND FIRST FRIDAY WOMEN

“Karen and Jim Covell and Victorya Rogers have provided a practical, powerful pathway forward for any believer who understands our assignment as ‘witnesses’ unto Christ and His Kingdom. They serve a value – including written, workable ways people-who-care can make an impact; a value I have pursued since I was 16 years old, until this very 78th years as a Kingdom agent for Jesus.”

JACK W. HAYFORD – FOUNDER AND CHANCELLOR
THE KING’S UNIVERSITY – LOS ANGELES

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**Jim & Karen Covell,
Victorya Michaels Rogers**



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*We dedicate this book to all the people who have taken our class.
Thank you for your commitment to obey the Lord
and go out into all nations.
You have been an encouragement
and an inspiration to all three of us.*

Acknowledgments

From All Three of Us

Most importantly, thank You, Jesus, for giving us the words and the passion to write this book. We love talking about You!

Many thanks to Ken Gire, Glen Evans, and Sandra Sterud, who gave us invaluable feedback on our first draft. We are indebted to Josh McDowell and Hugh Hewitt. Your hearts for reaching the world are contagious, and your support of our vision has meant so much to us.

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From Jim and Karen

Victorya, three strands truly are stronger than two. You are more of an inspiration to us than you will ever know. We love you! We also believe this update of our book never would have happened without our dear friends, especially Phil Cooke, who keeps telling us to write, and the Rileys, Batalis, Rices, Higleys and Leonards, who have been devoted friends and our prayer warriors for the past years. And our Genesis class friends who continue to hold us up, support us and pray for us. The Spucks, the Lagaces, the Lewis', the Kleins, the Whites, the Garcias, Gary Montecuollo and Roger & Lilli Bosch, thank you for your life-long love and encouragement and love for us and our ministry.

Our families – every single one of you – deserve more than thanks for your unconditional love and support. And a final thank you to our wonder boys, Christopher and Cameron, the joys of our lives. Now that you're grown, we continue to pray that you'll be "mighty warrior attack sheep" throughout your lives! Oh, and Vic, isn't it great that we never freak out...?

From Victorya

Jim and Karen Covell, it has once again been such a privilege to work with you on this book on the passion of our hearts – helping people experience eternal significance on a daily basis!

I deeply appreciate all the love, prayers and encouragement from my amazing husband Will, our precious kids Matthew and Katie (how your Dad and I love seeing your passion for sharing Jesus grow every day). Thanks, as always, to my parents, Curtis and Sandra Sterud; my brother David Sterud and sister Teri Rippeon. Pamela Bolen and Debby Wade, my dear friends who encourage me through everything! (And Pam, your habit of always telling me the truth in love – even when I don't want to hear it – gets annoying, but I love you for it!) Karol Ladd, you truly are forever the Positive friend – keep Tweeting!

Lastly, very special thanks to Lisa Rose and the entire FirstFridayWomen.com Team, plus Denise LaPosta and my Bible Study gals for all your love and support during the many challenges we faced during the past 5 years – you were there every moment to lift me up and keep me going. Love you all!

Preface

Daily significance... Imagine fully experiencing your life purpose every day. Wow, don't we all want to feel that? That's why we originally wrote *How to Talk About Jesus without Freaking Out* and why we decided to update it for this 2013 version. Here's *your* chance to live with daily significance just by stepping out of your comfort zone and sharing your story of your encounter with Jesus. It's still an easy-to-read, how-to manual on sharing Jesus without freaking out or freezing up. We've just updated it to be even more relevant for TODAY.

Hard to believe that when *How to Talk about Jesus* first came out, in 2001, the internet consisted basically of a few sites and this new thing called AOL where people were going to send messages to each other. Pagers were for doctors and businessmen. Installed car phones were the rage, and hand-held smart phones with blue tooth technology were a figment of someone's imagination. In 2006, MySpace was twice the size of both Facebook and YouTube combined. Now, our kids live on Facebook and YouTube and everyone we know has a cellphone, and not just any cell phone, but a "smart phone" with unlimited texting and Apps like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, to name a few. So we knew we needed our guide updated to seamlessly work with any platform of communication.

Written for everyday believers of any age who want to talk about their love for Jesus but just don't have the courage to do it, this book will lead you through the stages of effectively sharing your personal faith, using our time-proven, revolutionary three-step approach – Their Story, Your Story, His Story. For the past twenty years we've been teaching it to Christians in the entertainment industry, as well as to believers across the country. We've been blown away by the outpouring of letters, emails and phone calls sharing stories of how lives have been transformed as believers boldly and passionately use this approach to spreading the Good News of Jesus.

May you find daily significance as you embark on the adventure of a lifetime – sharing your story to your world. We are so excited for you!

Jim Covell, Karen Covell, and Victorya Michaels Rogers
in Los Angeles, CA
January, 2013

Introduction

Years ago, Karen was managing a singing group at a prestigious Los Angeles club. When she sat down to schedule their rehearsals, the male singer, Pendleton, suggested that Wednesdays would be a good night to practice. Karen was a fairly new Christian and had just committed to attend a Bible study on Wednesday nights. Without thinking, she said she couldn't meet on that night of the week because of her Bible study.

“A Bible study?” Pen said. “Is that nun practice? Well, we don't want to get in the way of nun practice, do we? By all means, let's pick another night.”

Every week from then on, Karen would hear some comment about her “nun practice.” She laughed about it, but she was very embarrassed. She vowed never again to tell anyone in her business about her Christian life. It just wasn't worth it.

Chickens Anonymous

Does this scenario look familiar? When you find yourself in a situation in which you ought to be telling someone about Jesus, do you freeze up? Have you had a bad experience when you've tried to talk about your faith? We're here to tell you that we all feel hesitation, trepidation, or even total panic when it comes to talking about Jesus. It's natural.

Nevertheless, we know we're supposed to do it. We know God wants to use us to reach out in His name, and we know the person we're talking to needs what we have. But we're just so scared. Stuck between responsibility and fear is not a good place to be. In the end we may keep quiet, let the moment slip away, and then beat ourselves up about it for days – or even longer.

If talking about Jesus is so important, why do we do it so rarely and only hesitantly? Why do we sit next to that co-worker day in and day out, yet never engage in that desperately important conversation about Jesus Christ? How many times do we try to muster the courage to bring up the subject with Dad or Aunt Lorraine? Why do we come to the edge of the diving board, only to lose our nerve and climb down the ladder, humiliated?

It must be because we're at risk when we talk about our faith. We put ourselves out on a limb, spiritually and emotionally, and we become

vulnerable – primarily to rejection. And none of us wants to be rejected, especially for our faith.

For years, the three of us have taught classes to help professional Christian entertainers overcome their fears about sharing their faith. The class, called How to Talk about Jesus without Freaking Out, is nicknamed “Chickens Anonymous.” All of us feel we need a twelve-step program to get over the fear of sharing our faith.

We work in Hollywood, the entertainment capital of the world, where believing in Jesus is considered the equivalent of a box office flop, and talking about Him is even worse. But we can tell you that rich and famous people need Jesus Christ just as much as your family member, friend, or hairdresser. Because of our experiences in this spiritually unreceptive place, we can teach you ways to be effective when you’re asked to give an account for the hope that is in you.

You will also benefit personally from talking to others about Jesus. Do you know that talking about Jesus will actually help you grow in your faith? One little verse in the Bible has changed our whole perspective on how to live out our Christian faith as effective messengers of truth:

*I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith,
so that you will have a full understanding
of every good thing we have in Christ.*

PHILEMON 6, NIV

How do we experience all the good things that the Lord has to offer and live a life that bears ripe fruit? We talk about Jesus!

I’m No Billy Graham

Witnessing. Ugh! The W word. Few words strike so much fear into the hearts of otherwise bold believers. Research has shown that getting up in front of an audience is the number one fear in America. Fear of death is second! We would venture to guess that if they added sharing one’s Christian faith to the equation, it would be a strong contender for first place.

So what does it mean to witness to someone about Jesus? The New Webster’s Dictionary defines a witness as: “One who personally sees or observes anything; that which furnishes evidence or proof; a testimony.” A witness, then, is just someone who tells what he knows or has seen.

Witnessing is not the same as evangelism. Webster defines evangelism as: “The fervent, zealous preaching or promulgation of the

gospel.” That’s what we’re afraid of, isn’t it? Getting out there and preaching like a fanatic.

The Bible doesn’t command us all to be evangelists. Jesus told His disciples that they were to be His witnesses (Acts 1:8). Some people have the spiritual gift of evangelism. If you have that gift, that’s wonderful. Go for it! But if you don’t, don’t panic. You probably haven’t been called to go out and preach the gospel to the multitudes. Neither do you have to be a zealot, with all the negative baggage that term carries.

But you do have to be ready and willing to tell what you know or what you have seen about Jesus. You have to be a witness.

*Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you
to give the reason for the hope that you have.*

But do this with gentleness and respect.

1 PETER 3:15B, NIV

All God expects is for you to understand your own experience of God through Jesus and to be able to explain it when it is appropriate or when you are asked.

This Little Light of Mine

This should be a great relief to those of you who take all the unsaved people in the world on your shoulders and feel personally responsible to lead them all to the Lord.

This will not be a relief, however, to those of you who have decided not to talk about Jesus to anyone because you feel that it’s not one of the gifts God gave you. This is also less than thrilling for those of you who know you should tell others about your faith but have decided that you can’t until you have had more Bible training, done more memorizing, earned more theological degrees, or stopped making so many mistakes.

From this moment on, those arguments will not work. Witnessing – telling other people about Jesus – is not just something for professional clergy and the spiritual elite. Nor is it optional. The minute someone learns that you’re a Christian, you have become a witness. Sorry, there are no secret agents for the Lord. One reason God didn’t beam you up into heaven the moment you were saved is that He wanted to have a representative right where you are. You’re His ambassador to the “nation” that is your social circle.

The good news is that effective witnessing isn’t very hard. As we

saw in the case of Karen and Pendleton, even the slightest comment identifying you as belonging to Jesus sets you apart from the world. You are a city set on a hill, a candle burning in the dark. Though the darkness may not like your light, it certainly can't ignore you. And guess what? The darkness cannot overpower the light (John 1:5).

What's hard about witnessing is being willing to stand up and be counted as a Christian. Take it from us, we know there are times and places in which it is very difficult to do that. When you know you're going to be ridiculed, ostracized, passed over, or marginalized, it's a daunting prospect.

Yet you wouldn't have picked up this book if there weren't something in you that wants to stand up for Jesus, whatever the cost. It is for you, brave reader, that we have written this book.

In these pages, we'll give you a few tips about how to talk about Jesus without panicking. We'll also give you simple, practical tools to help you talk about Jesus without being pushy, rude, or obnoxious. So stop freaking out! It's actually fun!

Who Are We? Jim Covell

I grew up in a functional family. I learned about Jesus at an early age and have had the privilege of following Him throughout my life.

I met Karen, my wife, while studying music composition at the University of Southern California. There at USC, God was preparing me to work in the most influential mission field in the world – the American media. I am a film and television composer, a husband, and a father of two wonder boys. I've found that as a composer I can have a positive influence on the producers and directors with whom I work – and even on the content of the music I score – just by being available to God's leading.

Who Are We? Karen Covell

My family went to church every week but we never talked about God, let alone Jesus. We were an artistic family, so when I went to college, it was with a singular focus: to take over the theater world. But I didn't know what God had in store for me.

During my freshman year as a theater-producing major at USC, my roommate started talking to me about Jesus. Our discussions eventually led me to become a Christian. God then began to show me that His plan for me involved much more than just theater.

For three decades I have been a producer of television

Documentaries and Specials. I have created TV movies, produced children's video series, and worked with a host of amazingly creative Christians and non-Christians. Yet my fulfillment comes not from my career, but from my ministry, my relationships with co-workers, with the Lord, with Jim and our two boys, Christopher and Cameron, and from telling others about Jesus – something I never would have even been capable of imagining years ago.

Who Are We? Victorya Rogers

For 16 years my career was in Hollywood. 11 of those years I was a talent agent. I represented a variety of people for television and feature films: producers, writers, directors, actors, editors, cinematographers, sound mixers, stuntmen, designers, cartoon writers and make-up artists. My clients have won awards across the board – everything from Emmys to Oscars. It was an exciting career indeed.

Even with all the perks that Hollywood brought, nothing could lift me higher than sharing Jesus with someone – even when I did so with rattled nerves and shaky knees. You see, in Hollywood, it's considered politically correct to be "religious" about something – even something spiritual. But it's definitely not acceptable to worship Jesus Christ. Getting past my fears and speaking up has been life changing and thrilling.

At night, while still an agent, I earned my master's in theology and became an ordained minister. Shortly thereafter I married a man who loves God as much as I do. We left Hollywood for Oklahoma and 7 years later we settled in Southlake, TX with our two children. For the past decade I've been a faith-based life coach, helping women make better choices in love and life so they can discover the abundant life Christ offers. It's such fun to get to talk about Jesus as part of my "day job."

The Rest of Karen's Story

Soon after the singing group parted ways, Karen got a phone call from Pendleton. He began the conversation with, "You know that nun practice of yours?"

This will never die! "Yes."

"Well," he said, "I'd like to get together to talk about that."

She anxiously drove over to his house. They sat in her car while Pen explained that he had grown up in the church but had gotten away from God. His life hadn't turned out the way he had expected, and he thought

it might be time to get his spiritual affairs in order.

Karen told him about her personal relationship with Christ, and she got the incredible privilege of praying with Pen as he received Christ into his life right there in her car.

She realized then that Pen's jabs at her "nun practice" had not been meant for her at all. It was his own spiritual struggle coming out as his heart was convicted. He could handle his conflict only by poking fun at the source of his conviction. And yet, the very person he chose to talk to about Jesus was Karen – who went to nun practice!

By the way, today Pendleton is an incredible Children's Minister and performing artist who records praise CDs and leads many young people to Christ.¹

¹See: <http://www.pendletonbrown.com/pensmusic.html>

PART I

Freaking Out



CHAPTER ONE

Excuses, Excuses

When the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you will receive power and will tell people about me everywhere – in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

ACTS 1:8

Jim Says: I was grounded in my faith by the time I was in junior high. I knew that my commitment was based on truth, not only because I had grown up in a Christian home with great role models, but also because I had looked into the facts of the Bible on my own and had come to my own understanding of who God is.

By my sophomore year of high school, however, I hadn't had many opportunities to share my faith, and so witnessing hadn't become a natural part of my life. I was following God, but not thinking much about witnessing to others.

One day I was driving my dad's sports car. My friend Rick was in the passenger seat, and my new driver's license was in my pocket – life was good. In mid conversation, Rick turned to me and said in all seriousness, "Jim, you seem different than our other friends. You're so happy all the time and seem to handle life really well. What makes you like that?"

Suddenly all of my confidence vanished. I had no idea what to say. The few words I got out were empty and meaningless: "Um, well, I don't know. That's just the way I am, I guess." In my head I said, He doesn't want to hear about God. He'll think it's so stupid. Maybe I can just change the conversation. I know I have to say something. But...I changed the topic.

To this day, I have not forgotten Rick and his searching question that I never answered. I still wonder what happened to him. I pray that he found someone else who was more prepared to tell him about Jesus than I was. I determined then and there that I would never miss a divine opportunity like that again.



I'm Afraid I'll Fail

Fear of failure is universal. Talking about Jesus is taking a risk – and risk, by definition, involves the chance of failure. The thing to remember is that the outcome of a discussion about Jesus is not up to you.

Isn't that reassuring? We get so stressed out with performance anxiety that we forget we're only the messengers. You may think it's all up to you to persuade someone to come to Christ, when in reality it's up to God, who has strategically placed you in this specific situation and chosen to use you with this person – maybe even in spite of yourself. All you have to do is just show up and open your mouth.

It is easy to conclude that a witnessing encounter is a “failure” if the person to whom you are witnessing doesn't end the conversation by falling to his knees and asking Jesus into his heart.¹ But this is only a failure in your eyes. If you were obedient to speak the words God gave you to say, then that encounter was a success. God used you to deliver to that person the message He wanted her to hear. What happens after that is up to God.

Ever notice the effect of one pebble tossed into a still lake? The ripples cause change throughout the entire body of water. When you drop pebbles of truth in the water of someone's life, God takes care of the ripple effect. That person is responding to the Lord, not to you, even if she happens to be directing her reaction at you. Sometimes the messenger does get shot. But God gives you a bulletproof vest. You may get bruised, but you'll survive.

You never fail when you say something good or truthful about your Lord and Savior. The only failure in sharing your faith is not to share your faith at all.

Dr. Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, defined witnessing as “taking the initiative to share Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, and leaving the results to God.”² This is a perfect example of the Trinity at work in your life. You just bring it up – drop that pebble into the still water of a lost soul – and your part is done! You may still be called upon to act as God's spokesperson, but if so, your role will have changed. Then you're the *intermediary* between that person and God.

That is so freeing for us. It means we aren't the ones doing the

converting. That's God's job. We only have to take the initiative. The pressure is off; the awkwardness is gone. How can you fail at witnessing if it is God's job to persuade someone? If you were a U.S. marshal, it would be your job to hand someone a court summons, but it would not be up to you to get that person to court. As soon as you've done your part, the matter is between that person and the law.

The Christian Businessmen's Association has another definition of witnessing: "Taking the initiative to help a person move one step closer in the process...not necessarily making 'a close.'" Doesn't that take the pressure off? "Making the close" is not the final test of whether you have witnessed successfully or been an effective ambassador for the Lord. If the people to whom we witness don't pray the "sinners' prayer" we are *not* failures. The final test of success is whether you have witnessed.

Looking at the New Testament, we see that in the days of the early church Christianity was spread through the power of the Holy Spirit. The same is true today! It is God who saves, not salesmen! All we have to do is believe, then ask the Holy Spirit for opportunities to share. When opportunities arrive, take the initiative, speak the truth, and trust the power of the Trinity to take care of the results.

The rest is up to God!

I Don't Want to Move to Africa!

Karen's greatest fear of becoming a Christian was that God would send her to a mission field in some third world country. Victorya had the same fear. It wasn't until we matured in our faith that we realized that we're all missionaries wherever God places us. A missionary is simply someone who shares his faith in Jesus to a world that is lost without Him. We think every church should post a large sign at the exit saying:

***You are now entering your
mission field.***

In fact, Karen has that very phrase painted on a sign right above the inside of the front door of her office, as a reminder, every time she walks out. We live and work in the entertainment industry in the famous city of Hollywood. But Hollywood is also our mission field. In fact, it is the world's most influential mission field because it impacts virtually every other mission field around the globe. If Washington, D.C., is the seat of power for the entire world, Hollywood is the seat of influence. An overseas missionary friend told us that he couldn't fathom how we could

try to share our faith with people in Hollywood. “That must be the hardest place on earth!”

The truth is that the people here who do not know the Lord are as hungry for the truth as people in Kenya. The only difference is that some people here don’t know they are starving. But they are, and deep inside they want to hear good news. As we work side by side with them and become their friends, we talk about Jesus and what we personally know about Him. In turn, people around us begin to learn who He is.

It may be that God *is* calling you to foreign missions. But it is more likely that He is calling you to home missions – to be a light in the darkness right around you (1 Corinthians 7:20–24). Don’t assume that if you say yes to God, He will send you to the deepest, darkest part of Africa. Wherever God has placed you is your mission field. Start noticing the unsaved people you come in regular contact with right where you are.

The people you work with who do not know the Lord are hungry for truth. Maybe you’re the only one around who can feed them. Author Max Lucado says:

Do you ever get tired or bored with your work? Christ says turn your work into a ministry.... Don’t let it be just a vocation. Reach out to people. Let your time at work be a source of joy and encouragement to others, and you’ll find greater personal joy and satisfaction as well.³

That may be why you were given that position only temporarily.

The same thing goes for the people you live next to. Maybe you’re the reason that family moved in next door. Maybe you’re the only one around who can offer them hope and life. God has prepared works for you to do (Ephesians 2:10). He moves His sowers into fields that are ready for the seed.

You have been commissioned to go out to all the nations. While that may include a foreign land, it most certainly includes your neighborhood, your workplace, your school grounds, and even your own home. People all around you are spiritually starving – and you have the bread of life! Once you realize that you are a missionary – no matter where you are – you’ll talk about Jesus more comfortably and boldly, and you’ll become a more effective witness.

Here’s some advice that sounds obvious but is rarely heeded: You must share the gospel to people in their own language. Poor people lack

many of the basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, and shelter. When you help supply those needs, you may find that they are seeking God. Although the wealthy have more than enough money to meet their basic needs, they may be dying emotionally and spiritually. They need help with those needs as well. Suicide, violence, drug addiction, and alcoholism are rampant among the rich. Speak their language. Help them at the point of their felt needs. Then they may be willing to listen to what you have to say.

Henrietta Mears believed that whoever does not know Jesus is miserable! Rich and poor alike search for meaning and significance in any way they can. When one avenue disappoints, in despair people turn to something else. Each of us has unique needs, but we all need Christ.

So don't go pack your suitcase just yet. God probably wants you exactly where you are right now.

Karen Says: I once had a conversation on a plane with a Jewish man named Sam. He told me that the previous year his wife of fourteen years had had an affair. Sam was devastated. Unable to stand the pain, he left her. Within a couple of months he found another woman and, even though he was still married, began an affair with her. He rationalized the affair by saying that he truly believed God had “miraculously” brought him this woman and that the relationship was meant to be.

During our brief conversation, I was oversensitive to the fact that Sam was Jewish and that he was at least starting to acknowledge God in his life. I became a wimp and wasn't as bold about the truth of the gospel as I should have been.

I should have pointed out lovingly that he was just as wrong as his wife had been. God would not bring him a soul mate while he was still married, and he wasn't going to find fulfillment in a woman. That could only come through Jesus, who was indeed his Messiah.

I didn't do any of that. However, I did take his card. A few days later, as I wallowed in my guilt over a failed witnessing experience, I pulled out Sam's card and wrote him a letter explaining the points of the gospel that I had not brought up in our plane conversation.

I explained who God is. I told him that God's actions never contradict His words to us in the Scriptures. I said that if Sam were really seeking answers, emotional healing, and fulfillment, he would have to find out about this Jesus, who was not only a Jew Himself, but the only one through whom he could find true and lasting fulfillment.

I sent the letter off and prayed. (See the full text of this letter in



But I'm Not Qualified!

“How can I get someone to pray the sinner’s prayer or tell someone that even though she’s nice she’s still going to hell? I can’t. I just can’t! What if someone asks me something I don’t know? What if they ask me about Buddhists or transubstantiation or something? I’d need a seminary degree to feel secure out there on the front lines. I didn’t even graduate from vacation Bible school!”

It’s natural to feel intimidated about talking about Jesus. A certain amount of stage fright or performance anxiety is to be expected. But that doesn’t give anyone permission not to do it.

God wants real people, not perfect ones. When you become a Christian you become a new creation (1 Corinthians 5:17), but that doesn’t mean you are instantly perfect. Most of us will never be at a place in which we feel truly qualified to be a good witness. But if we are seeking after God with all our heart and soul and mind, God can use us mightily.

What God is looking for is someone who wants to be used by Him – a volunteer. All He asks of you is that you have a willing heart filled with love for your lost friend, family member, or acquaintance, and that you trust Him to use you as an instrument of peace in this world. Our hardest job is to get out of the way so that God can take over.

Just look at the Bible. God has always used ordinary people! “God deliberately chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose those who are powerless to shame those who are powerful” (1 Corinthians 1:27). The Gospels reveal how inadequate even Jesus’ twelve disciples were, yet they changed the world. God wants to use you that same way, no matter who you are, what you do, or what you know.

You don’t have to wait to have your life together and all your spiritual ducks in a row for God to use you. You don’t have to understand the Torah, memorize the Sermon on the Mount, or point to theological degrees on your wall. Just be willing. Just show up.

Don’t let what you consider a lack of expertise be the trick the enemy uses to keep you from opening your mouth. God will give you the words

He wants you to say. Even if you appear to lose the battle, the words you say may eventually win the war.

But I'm Such a Bad Example!

“But I’ve messed up in front of my unbelieving friends. You don’t know how bad. How can I possibly be used of God with them now?”

Guess what: No one is perfect. Solomon said, “There is not a single person in all the earth who is always good and never sins” (Ecclesiastes 7:20). And yes, you are going to sin, and most likely there will be people watching you do it. That doesn’t mean it’s okay to sin, nor does it get you out of your responsibility to bear witness to the hope that is in you. You will fail. Count on it. But sometimes how you handle your failures will be what makes the difference to unbelievers around you.

No one wants to be around someone perfect. All that does is make the imperfect one feel inferior. We’re not saying to rush out and mess up in front of unbelievers. We’re just making the point that we need to be transparent in order to be approachable by unbelievers. Let your friends see your disappointments and fears. Let coworkers see you wrestle with ethical issues and moral dilemmas. Let more people know your thoughts and even your questions about life and God. Your vulnerability is more important than your image.

Karen Says: Years ago I ran the office of a film festival. I hired Terry as the festival assistant. Though she had interviewed well, it wasn’t long before the two of us began to clash. Terry began reacting with rage at work: Some days she slammed doors, yelled, cried, and ignored my requests.

I prayed for Terry and tried to talk with her, but nothing seemed to help. Finally one night she called to tell me that she had put up with more than her share of my demands and that she refused to do what I had asked. Jim happened to answer the phone. Terry was so rude to him that I said, “Tell her we’ve had enough. She must not want to work here, so tell her she doesn’t need to come back.” Terry said, “Fine,” and slammed down the phone. I just broke down and cried. I had really blown it. Not only had I lost my temper, but also I hadn’t loved Terry unconditionally. Worse yet, I was so unprofessional that I had fired her through Jim! It was terrible.

In the ensuing weeks I left messages on Terry’s answering machine saying that I was thinking of her, hoping that she had found another job,

and praying that she was all right. She never returned my calls. After about three months, I left one last message, saying how sorry I was for my behavior and for the horrible way our relationship had ended and could we talk.

The next day Terry called to say that she would meet with me. Our meeting was miraculous. We both cried. We talked about how much both of us had wanted our relationship to work. I learned that she had come from a frighteningly bad family and that she was still reeling from severe abuse and neglect. She had been a Christian as a child, but it had come to mean nothing to her because all she saw in her church and in her home were hypocrites.

Terry told me she greatly desired to get back into a relationship with the Lord. I got a chance to offer my support and prayers; I even offered to disciple her. We agreed to get together once a week. The following year she went to seminary. And despite my initial poor witness, Terry is now a certified pastor, counseling others who have gone down similar paths.



We're All Recovering Humans

You've seen the bumper sticker: Christians aren't perfect, just forgiven.

We all know the apostle Paul was a hero of the Christian faith. But what we need to remember is that he was Saul before he was Paul. Saul hated Christians and was responsible for murdering many of them, including Stephen. Look how Jesus forgave him and transformed him into a new creation.

King David plotted to have Bathsheba's husband killed so he could marry his widow. Yet God later accepted his repentance and declared that David was a "man after his own heart." Moses murdered an Egyptian and spent the following forty years in exile herding sheep. Yet God called him to deliver His people from Egypt and lead them into the Promised Land. Queen Esther did not want to go to the king to plead for the lives of her people. Yet even though she felt inadequate, she went boldly in obedience and saved the entire nation of Israel from slaughter.

The examples go on and on throughout the Bible. God knows your weaknesses and your imperfections, yet His plan is bigger than anything you can possibly comprehend. He washes away the sins you committed

before you knew Him, and He forgives the sins you commit after coming to know Him. God's grace is certainly sufficient to cover all your mistakes – past and future.

Winston Churchill once said, "Success is going from failure to failure without a loss of enthusiasm." Everyone understands failure. If you're not failing, you're not attempting anything very hard. What people want to know is: Do you keep coming back? Is your faith there for you even when you blow it? Is it truly part of your life, or is it just a passing phase like last year's trendy diet? What people are looking for is something that will be there for them even if *they* fail.

So if you've blown it, don't freak out. Don't let it sideline you. Stay in the game and take part in the great commission. Cultivate the attitude that speaker Tim Timmons is talking about when he says, "I'd rather be a flawed diamond than a perfect brick!"

It's Not Up to You

Unsaved people want us to be honest and vulnerable. If we are, Jesus will shine through us. We love what Paul said after the Lord told him, "My grace is sufficient for you":

So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may work through me. Since I know it is all for Christ's good, Most people aren't as opposed with my weaknesses and with insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities.

For when I am weak, then I am strong.

2 CORINTHIANS 12: 9–10

There will always be a hundred good excuses you could give for not opening your mouth about Jesus. But aren't excuses just smokescreens we put up to disguise our real reasons for doing or not doing something?

Don't worry about your perceived inadequacies. At times, the three of us fear we are not competent to effectively represent the Lord. But we push through it for the greater purpose of Christ. Focus on seeking Jesus through all the seasons of your life. As you keep your eyes on Him, you will feel confident in your weaknesses because you trust that His power will come through. Remember, this isn't about you. It's about God and a person who needs Him. Revel in the knowledge that when you are weak, Christ makes you strong.

So how can you talk about Jesus without freaking out? The best way to lower your blood pressure when trying to tell someone about Jesus' unconditional love is to remember that the results are not up to you.

1. Throughout this book, whenever we use male pronouns for people (he, his, him) we mean to include both males and females. Writing “he or she saw his or her friend at his or her desk” becomes distracting.

2. Dr. Bill Bright, *Witnessing without Fear* (San Bernardino, Calif.: Here’s Life Pub, 1987), 67.

3. Max Lucado, *Stillwater Gifts Daily Calendar* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Pub, Inc., 1998)