

Witnessing in the Book of Acts

The Book of Acts records the actions of the first century believers. These apostles and disciples learned how to witness from the Master. We are told in Acts, that the first century disciples walked in the fear of the Lord, proclaimed the Word of God everywhere, and a great many souls were saved.

How did the disciples preach in the Book of Acts? Here is a summary of the entire book: When sharing with the lost, the disciples referred to the Law of Moses approximately 15 times.¹ As well, they referred to the Old Testament prophecies no less than 15 times.² There were also 12 references to the resurrection³ and no less than 8 references to repentance.⁴ There were about 5 references to the cross,⁵ and 5 warnings of the coming judgment.⁶ A few times they gave historical background⁷ and there were 2 significant references to creation⁸ – specifically when preaching to those who did not believe in the one, true Creator.

Why did they witness this way? Well, God’s moral law reveals the knowledge of sin and convicts us of our need for the Savior. The prophets point us to the solution. The resurrection proves Christ’s claims and assures us that there is hope. And, of course, without repentance there is no salvation. The cross is where God’s justice was served and His mercy shown, and the reality of eternal judgment makes our decision urgent and imperative. The historical background explains God’s grand plan for mankind, and special creation declares to all our accountability to the Creator.

How not to witness

The Book of Acts is a crucial evangelism guide because it records the actions of the first century believers – those who spread the gospel everywhere. These disciples consistently referred to the moral law in order to convict of sin. They also repeatedly explained the Old Testament prophecies which anticipated the coming Messiah. Paul even tells us that he said “no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said.”⁹ The disciples also explained the purpose of Christ’s death and resurrection, and warned of future judgment. When necessary they laid out the history of the Old Testament leading to the coming Messiah. And whenever preaching to those who did not know of the one, true Creator God, they brought their listeners back to Genesis to explain creation and the Creator.

¹ Acts 2:23; 2:36; 3:13-16; 4:10; 5:30; 7:2-50; 7:51-53; 8:20-23; 13:16-41; 14:15-17; 17:16-31; 24:10-21; 24:24-25; 26:1-27; 28:23-29

² Acts 2:16-21; 2:24-35; 3:18; 3:19-21; 3:22-25; 4:11; 7:2-50; 8:28-35; 9:20-22; 10:34-43; 13:16-41; 13:44-48; 17:2-3; 24:10-21; 26:1-27; 28:23-29

³ Acts 2:24-35; 3:13-16; 3:19-21; 3:26; 4:10; 5:30; 10:34-43; 13:16-41; 17:2-3; 17:16-31; 24:10-21; 26:1-27

⁴ Acts 2:38; 3:19-21; 3:26; 5:31; 8:20-23; 14:15-17; 17:16-31; 26:1-27

⁵ Acts 2:23; 2:36; 5:30; 10:34-43; 13:16-41

⁶ Acts 3:22-25; 10:34-43; 13:44-48; 17:16-31; 24:24-25

⁷ Acts 3:13-16; 7:2-50; 13:16-41

⁸ Acts 14:15-17; 17:16-31

⁹ Acts 26:22

Now here is a fact that may shock you. The Book of Acts does not mention the word love once. Why? Because once the sinner understood his sin, then Christ's death and resurrection were obvious evidence of God's love and gracious provision. There is also no mention of a "wonderful new life" on earth. Nor did the disciples ever compromise the gospel with man-made techniques. Like Jesus, they were not "Seeker Friendly."

How different is the watered-down gospel that is so often preached today. If we truly desire to see the Holy Spirit move mightily to save souls, then we too must walk in the fear of the Lord, expose sin and reveal God's holiness using the law, warn every man to repent or face eternal judgment, and explain God's plan of salvation through faith in the prophesied Messiah.