

YOUR GREATEST WITNESS FOR CHRIST

TEXT: (II Corinthians 3:3, NLT)

³ Clearly, you are a letter from Christ showing the result of our ministry among you. This “letter” is written not with pen and ink, but with the Spirit of the living God. It is carved not on tablets of stone, but on human hearts.

INTRODUCTION

1. “Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel” (Philippians 1:27, KJV).
2. “Above all, you must live as citizens of heaven, conducting yourselves in a manner worthy of the Good News about Christ. Then, whether I come and see you again or only hear about you, I will know that you are standing together with one spirit and one purpose, fighting together for the faith, which is the Good News” (Philippians 1:27, NLT).

I. A LITTLE HEAVEN ON EARTH—THE WORLD IS WATCHING

A. Make Your Home a Haven of Peace

1. “Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:2-3, NIV).
2. “You’re blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight” (Matthew 5:9, MSG).

B. Communicate Intentionally

1. “A good person produces good things from the treasury of a good heart, and an evil person produces evil things from the treasury of an evil heart. What you say flows from what is in your heart” (Luke 6:45, NLT).
2. “So then, let us aim for harmony in [our homes] and try to build each other up” (Romans 5:19, NLT).
3. “Don’t say anything that would hurt [another person]. Instead, speak only what is good so that you can give help wherever it is needed” (Ephesians 4:29, GWT).
4. “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption” (Ephesians 4:30, NIV).
5. “Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice” (Ephesians 4:31, NIV).
6. “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32, NIV).

C. Blessing, Not Blasting

1. “Don’t use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them” (Ephesians 4:29, NLT).

II. PRACTICING JESUS—THE WORLD IS WATCHING

1. “Anyone who claims to be intimate with God ought to live the same kind of life Jesus lived” (I John 2:6, MSG).

2. “No prolonged infancies among us, please. We’ll not tolerate babes in the woods, small children who are an easy mark for impostors. God wants us to grow up, to know the whole truth and tell it in love—like Christ in everything. We take our lead from Christ, who is the source of everything we do. He keeps us in step with each other. His very breath and blood flow through us, nourishing us so that we will grow up healthy in God, robust in love” (Ephesians 4:14-16, MSG).
3. “Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won’t be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love” (Ephesians 4:14-16, NLT).

A. Speak the Truth in Love

1. “Speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ” (Ephesians 4:15, NIV).
2. “Correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction” (I Timothy 4:2, NIV).

B. When Angry, Do Not Sin

1. “And ‘don’t sin by letting anger control you.’ Don’t let the sun go down while you are still angry, for anger gives a foothold to the devil” (Ephesians 4:26-27, NLT).
2. “He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand.’ He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored” (Mark 3:5, NIV).
4. “Better a patient man than a warrior, a man who controls his temper than one who takes a city” (Proverbs 16:32, NIV).

C. Speak the Language of Forgiveness

1. “If a believer sins, correct him. If he changes the way he thinks and acts, forgive him. Even if he wrongs you seven times in one day and comes back to you seven times and says that he is sorry, forgive him” (Luke 17:3-4, GWT).
2. “If a fellow believer hurts you, go and tell him—work it out between the two of you. If he listens, you’ve made a friend” (Matthew 18:15, MSG).
3. “If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen” (I John 4:20, NIV).
4. “For God called you to do good, even if it means suffering, just as Christ suffered for you. He is your example, and you must follow in his steps. He never sinned, nor ever deceived anyone. He did not retaliate when he was insulted, nor threaten revenge when he suffered. He left his case in the hands of God, who always judges fairly” (I Peter 2:21-23, NLT).

III. PRACTICAL APPLICATION

A. A Biblical command to listen

1. “You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. Human anger does not produce the righteousness God desires. So get rid of all the filth and evil in your lives, and humbly accept the word God has planted in your hearts, for it has the power to save your souls” (James 1:19-21, NLT).
2. “Post this at all the intersections, dear friends: Lead with your ears, follow up with your tongue, and let anger straggle along in the rear. God’s righteousness doesn’t grow from human anger. So throw all spoiled virtue and cancerous evil in the garbage. In simple humility, let our gardener, God, landscape you with the Word, making a salvation-garden of your life” (James 1:19-21, MSG).
3. “Clearly, you are a letter from Christ showing the result of our ministry among you. This ‘letter’ is written not with pen and ink, but with the Spirit of the living God. It is carved not on tablets of stone, but on human hearts” (II Corinthians 3:3, NLT).

B. Understanding takes effort

1. “Spouting off before listening to the facts is both shameful and foolish” (Proverbs 18:13, NLT).

C. The Right Word at the Right Time

1. “Congenial conversation—what a pleasure! The right word at the right time—beautiful” (Proverbs 15:23, MSG)!

CONCLUSION

1. “He who guards his mouth and his tongue keeps himself from calamity” (Proverbs 21:23, NIV).
2. “Watch your words and hold your tongue; you’ll save yourself a lot of grief” (Proverbs 21:23, MSG).