

Attracting Others While Passing Through

by Johnny Hunt

TITLE:	Attracting Others While Passing Through
BIBLE BOOK:	1 Peter 2 : 11-12
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SUBJECT:	Witnessing; Christian Living
OBJECTIVE:	There are different ways for us to share what Christ has done for us. One powerful way to share Christ with others is through the beauty of a transformed life. Dr. Hunt effectively shares the importance of the witness which can and should be given through a life changed by the power, love and grace of Jesus Christ.

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Introduction

The power which transforms the entire personality of the one who yields himself to Christ is not only miraculous, it is marvelous! We can't help but sense something of this change in the life of the Apostle Peter. Recall his hard nature, impetuous, self-willed, and unpredictable. What a contrast now. The rocklike will of former years is now broken, matured in the love of Christ. The braggart has learned humility. Peter has become a usable instrument in the hands of his Master. Possessed by the Spirit of God, he has been mellowed until God's love pours forth in compassionate yearning for all believers to enjoy the same experience. We are obligated (divine imperative) to reveal the truth to others in the beauty of transformed lives.

I. The Exhortation For The Challenge 11

A. The Motivation For The Challenge 11a

"Beloved" - God's dearly beloved children; strongest N.T. word for His love for us. Peter reminded his readers of God's love for them on 8 different occasions in I & II Peter. In ourselves, there is nothing that God can love; but He loves us because of Jesus Christ. We read in 2 Peter 1:17, "For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. "Now, because of our faith in Jesus

Christ as Lord and Savior, we are "accepted in the beloved." Ephesians 1:6, "to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved." He showed grace (favor) upon us.

B. The Invitation For The Challenge 11b

"I beg you" - to call to one's side; to give an invitation; this invitation is extended in the gentle and sweet demeanor of one who calls his listeners "beloved."

C. The Inspiration For The Challenge 11c

"as sojourners and pilgrims" - these words describe someone who is only temporarily resident in a place and whose home is somewhere else. Hebrews 11:9 states, "By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise." Hebrews 11:13 reads, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." Hebrews 11:10, "for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God." We are "resident aliens" who have our citizenship in another country - heaven. "Sojourners" - literally means "beside the house," while "pilgrim" means beside the people. Sojourner indicates residence which is not intended to be permanent, for example, the residence of an alien who is on an official mission. Pilgrim, on the other hand, indicates a relationship to the people themselves. The believer is beside the people, ministering in Christ's name, but never among the people in the sense of belonging to their unredeemed race. It means the believer is in the world but not of the world. Does this truth inspire you? Yes! It affects my living (the way I live my life), my giving (what I do with my possessions), my serving (what I do with my time), and my leaving (how I will one day leave to be with Jesus). Also my loving (loving Jesus, and loving others for Jesus' sake). Have I ever been tempted to live as a permanent resident? Yes, I am asking God to forgive me and to set me free for Him; total abandonment in 2002.

D. The Implications Of The Challenge 11d

1. Body: Outward

Abstain from fleshly lusts - in order to have an impact on the world for God, Christians must be disciplined in an inward and private way by avoiding the desires of the fallen nature. Note that the precise nature of these fleshly desires is not the object of the present discussion. However, in 1 Peter 4:3, he lists them specifically. "abstain" - is literally "hold yourself constantly back from" - the implication being clear that the fallen nature whose power over the believer was broken when he was saved is still there with its sinward pull. We are told to hold ourselves back from doing the things which before salvation wrought its work in our beings we did naturally (present middle infinitive). According to Gal. 5:23 the fruit of the Spirit is "self-control." I must appropriate His resource for my victory by obedience. "fleshly lusts" - cravings, strong desires; these desires give a person temporary physical satisfaction.

2. Battle: Inward

"which war against our soul" - this present verse is intended to stress the effects of such desires upon the soul. Lust does wage war against the soul. The word war expresses the thought of an army, trained and equipped, set in full battle array, at attention, ready to launch the attack. To carry on a military campaign. Fleshly lusts are personified as if they were an army of rebels or guerrillas who incessantly search out and try to destroy the Christian's joy, peace and usefulness. Our real battle is not with people around us, but passions within us. D.L. Moody said, "I have more trouble with D.L. Moody than with any man I know." If we yield to those sinful appetites, then we will start living like the unsaved around us, and will become ineffective witnesses. In war we ready ourselves to obey the commander in chief for our own survival and that of the others in the army (Lord's army)

Three things happen when we loose the battle:

A. Hurts the Believer's Sense of God. A believer lured into evil by lust loses his sense of the presence and power of God.

B. Halts the Believer's Service to God. Satan stirs up desires to attack the soul of a saint with the purpose of inflicting a wound that will severely restrict service to God.

C. Hinders the Believer's Soul before God. "Soul"-the immaterial aspect of a man, the part of him that survives biological death. The soul is the spiritual battleground for man. It is not as much the body as it is the soul of man that endures these onslaughts.

How Can I Be An Overcomer? Galatians 5:16, "I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." Constantly give allegiance to the authority of the Holy Spirit, which presupposes complete abandonment of one's self, in full acknowledgment of utter helplessness. John 6:63, "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life." Galatians 5:17, "For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish." Ephesians 3:16, "that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man."

II. The Conversation In The Challenge 12

A. Conversation 12a

"having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles" Conduct refers to the outward expression of character and conduct, which is the result of the new birth. It is our whole conduct and the whole way of life. This word evolved from a word, which meant "to steer" and referred to the words of a helmsman on a ship. The word eventually came to mean "turn." The idea of the word is to turn to a new direction. The direction which the believer's life has turned is to be "honest." (honorable) Honorable implies much more than telling the truth and doing what is right. It carries with it the idea of beauty; that which is admirable, virtuous, or profitable. To use a cliché of the 60's, we must be "beautiful people." (Phil Sizemore) There should be nothing in our conduct that will give the unsaved ammunition to attack Christ and the Gospel. This virtuous conduct should be the saint's posture among the heathen so that his very lifestyle becomes its own refutation of the allegations of men who accuse the believers of evil. Our lifestyle should be distinctively Christian so to serve to encourage others to follow our example. Our conduct, deeds, and words are evaluated constantly by non-Christians who want to see if Christians indeed live up to what they profess.

B. Persecution 12b

"that when they speak against you as evildoers" - to slander Romans 1:30, "backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents." The early church was under fire. Slandorous charges were continually being made against the Christians and the only effective way to refute them was to live so honorably that they would be seen to be obviously untrue.

Whether we like it or not, every believer is an advertisement for Christianity; by his life he either commends it to others or makes them think less of it. The strongest missionary force in the world is a Christian life. Billboards all over town by placing our people in their work place. We read in 1 Peter 3:15-16, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed." Titus 2:7-8, "in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you." Christians should strive for such exemplary conduct that slanderous accusations of unbelievers remain groundless. Look at 1 Peter 2:15, "For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men."

C. Observation 12c

"they may, by your good works which they observe" - to gaze upon; checking us out. Matthew 5:16, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." To ceaselessly scrutinize; implies that their accusations have proved to be false in light of the good deeds done by the Christians. In more than 25 years of ministry, I have seen the powerful

impact Christians can make on the lost when they combine a godly life with a loving witness.

D. Visitation 12

(Glorification) "glorify God in the day of visitation" - God's visitation is one of grace and mercy whereby non-Christians accept the offer of salvation and glorify God in thankfulness for salvation. When these people do trust Christ, they will glorify God and give thanks because we were faithful to witness to them even when they made life difficult for us. J.B. Phillips, in "Letters to Young Churches" translates "visitation" as disasters. Believers and unbelievers alike must face the disasters of life: sickness, financial losses, poverty, death; which result in broken hearts, shattered nerves, and distressed minds. When disaster strikes, the believer has Christ to whom he may turn and find immediate help. (Heb. 4:14-16). But frequently when an unbeliever, who has been under the influence of a Spirit-filled Christian, meets disaster he will turn to the Christian for help, providing him an opportunity to lead a lost soul to Christ. None could escape the holy influence of a consecrated follower of Christ.