

The Credible Witness

by

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“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.” Hebrews 4:15 (ESV)

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.” 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 (ESV)

Men, as a writer and mentor, I have discovered that a book or story or testimony is best received when there is blood, sweat, tears, and extreme challenges overcome by the speaker attached to it. This gives credibility to the message, for the messenger has experienced firsthand what he is presenting and he is perceived as credible. Every generation has this need to see an experience in someone rather than be presented a theory, but none more than the Millennial Generation. Why is this? Some people call it the “me me” generation, for they seem preoccupied with wanting what is good for themselves over others. But I think this is an unfair assessment. I believe their attitude has developed because of basically losing trust in older generations and our integrity, and they feel responsible for making things happen to get ahead. Truth in advertising, truth in politics, truth in the news, and even truth from many churches has become seriously challenged in their eyes. This makes them vulnerable to a philosophy being taught in public schools and universities, which is, “*there is no absolute truth.*” They are taught that truth is what you want it to be. This theory works for them and keeps them happy because of little accountability, as long as there is no challenge. But when life is fully experienced with its good and bad, this theory caves in like a house of cards. When this happens, these men and women are looking for answers from a *credible witness* who will help them navigate the troubled waters they find themselves in. They do not want just another theory from self-help gurus to feel good, or prosperity driven messages from the pulpit. That sounds too much like the false advertising they have grown up with. This person is vulnerable as never before, and needs a man or woman to step into their life and become the *navigator* they are looking for. We live in a new generation of men and women who will face tragedy and challenges as they begin to mature, and they will not know how to deal with them. But this will be a great harvest opportunity, one that Jesus said would be coming, and He is preparing His *Laborers* for it. How does He prepare us? Remember what I said about blood, sweat, tears, and challenges that have been overcome that give us credibility? This is why it happens for you and me.

I have had many people say (ignorantly) that a person who truly walks with God in faith, and with no sin in his or her life, has no disease or hardship. This “theory” and philosophy could not be further from the Biblical truth. It is true that we often bring on ourselves the consequences of poor choices, especially if they go against a clear directive from God with things we are to avoid. But there are many godly men and women who have not brought on themselves the disease or tragedy they deal with. It has fallen on them for some unclear reason. Throughout history, we have seen the most prolific testimonies given to the Body of Christ

by paraplegics, disabled veterans, and disabled writers confined to bed for years, while giving us hope by what they have found in their intimate encounter with Christ during their suffering. One cannot discount the Apostle Paul's challenges, nor can we discount the brutality that Christ's disciples have received since His ascension. Being stoned, beheaded, flayed to death with knives, spears and wild animals, these heroes of the faith never wavered in their faith, and the extreme examples of the testimonies of these saints set the world on its head, and thus began a deliverance of a message called, "the Gospel." The credibility of their message came from loss of blood, tears, sweat, and standing strong until God delivered them, or even when He chose not to. This is how a "Laborer" is formed. It doesn't come easy. But it brings with it a tremendous ability to persuade and transform the listener. It creates a *Credible Witness* who will be heard.

Why do I share this information? Well, God has recently given me even more experience with His presence and comfort in the most trying time, even a time last week that gave me only 50/50 shot that I would make it back. I do not want to belabor what I went through only to say what I must to convince you that our God reigns, and He is an ever present companion while we battle our trials in life. I speak from experience. I give a testimony that points eyes and hearts back to Him and not to me, for I know He has made me to be a "Laborer," and He gave me the credibility of making it back to share with you His faithfulness. Let me briefly share it.

Following a successful knee revision about three weeks ago, a few days after the surgery I began to have chills and fever. Inside of a few hours, I was in the E. R. and the ICU, as my body became septic, my blood pressure began to fall, and almost 105 degree temperature ravished my body. I was taken to my surgeon in Little Rock by helicopter to perform an emergency clean out on the knee, and then hooked up to antibiotics, as tests were performed to see what bacteria was attacking me. The bacteria was identified and I was then hooked up to a pick line with antibiotics being fed into me 24/7. It will be with me a few more weeks. Yesterday I had my first lab evaluation since being released from the hospital and I was told that there is no further sign of infection in me and all my other blood work is stellar. I plan on returning to a limited work schedule this week, and next week to be back giving it my best. God has been so good to me, and it is apparent.

So what will be "my best for the Lord" that I hope to give? It will be to simply share how faithful my King is to me ... and to be a *credible witness*. It is to share how in those moments of darkness in a hospital room of fear, how I felt an overwhelming, comforting presence that assured me that He is with me, and for that reason, I do not have to fear what may come. I felt more love and intimacy with the Holy Spirit than ever before, and it set my mind and countenance in a place to be able to minister to everyone who came to my bed. I was given a comfort that I cannot adequately explain, and it allowed me to comfort others with it. But that is what the passage in Hebrews tells us, in that Jesus knows firsthand what we are going through, and because of His own suffering, He is able to both sympathize and comfort us when we are being challenged with our suffering. But the next passage pulls it together for me, as Apostle Paul tells us that the comfort we receive from the Lord empowers us to comfort others. This is when a "Laborer" is prepared for his or her ministry. Here is a truth I have learned through this process. God has a plan for us when we go through our trials and we can rest assured that He will never waste any of our tears. Because of this I now get encouragement in the midst of my challenges, for I know from experience that it is only a matter of time that the heat will be turned down and I will be released to influence my world around me, more powerfully than before.

God has given me a message to deliver about His invitation for His family to come close to Him, and to live in close proximity with Him. As long as He allows me to remain alive, it is my hope that I will faithfully deliver this message, as I pray that others will catch it and carry it forward to others. This message is needed as never before, for there is a ground swell around us that shows me that something big in the Body of Christ is about to erupt. Therefore, do not be afraid if God is allowing you to experience some challenges that have come upon you, for He might be preparing you for your part in a great campaign for the souls of men and women around you. During your trials, press close to Him and let Him comfort you with His presence. Through this experience with Him there will be something magnificent that will happen to you and it will reach out to others through your life. Let Him make of you a *credible witness* that comforts others. Your trial will only be temporary, and through it He will make of you a powerful Influencer who will rock his world around him. That is His plan for raising up *Laborers* for a world in desperate need of us. Let Him raise you up.