

Giving Testimony

SPEAKER	Matt Ryniker
DATE	Sunday, October 19, 2025
PASSAGES	Exodus 19; 1 Kings 10; Isaiah 42; Isaiah 49; Matthew 5; 1 Peter 3; John 9; Acts 26
MESSAGE	Begins at 1:06:54 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

Bearing witness is an everybody thing, not a special ops thing. A witness in scripture is simply a person who was there and says what they know — which means the qualification for giving your testimony is not expertise, eloquence, or a dramatic story. It is telling the truth.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ Some people are evangelists and apologists by gift. Everyone is called to bear witness. The gift is not the requirement.
- ◆ Peter calls the church a kingdom of priests, borrowing the phrase from Exodus. A priest never worshiped on someone else's behalf — he helped them worship, and he did not keep God to himself.
- ◆ The Queen of Sheba is Israel doing that job well: a foreign ruler came, saw, and blessed the Lord. The blessing on Israel was never meant to stay in Israel.
- ◆ “Witness” in the Bible is a plain courtroom word. Even the high priest who condemned Jesus counted as a witness to what Jesus claimed about himself.
- ◆ The man born blind in John 9 answered most questions with “I don’t know.” It did not weaken his testimony, because a witness is not an expert.
- ◆ You do not get to grade yourself on how people respond. Light can be annoying; being reviled is not evidence you did it badly.

- ◆ Shoehorning your story into a more dramatic shape undermines the word *testimony*. If you grew up in the church and love Jesus, say that.
- ◆ The most practical step Matt gave was the simplest: ask God to put someone in your path. He will, and sometimes he will do it by getting you into trouble.

► 1:06:55

This was a baptism Sunday, and Matt opened by pointing at the pool outside and reframing the question people usually ask themselves. Taking his cue from Philip and the Ethiopian official, he said: instead of asking “Am I ready?”, ask “What hinders me?” And he recommended a habit — say yes to the Lord quickly, rather than circling the spot like a cat deciding whether to lie down. “Why delay? What would hinder you from being baptized today?”

Bearing witness is an everybody thing

► 1:08:27

“It is a Christian discipline, not a special ops discipline.” Matt has watched the real gift at work and knows he does not have it. He once went out with a man who walked up to a group of goth girls in front of a strip mall and started, in Matt’s phrase, “dropping J-bombs right away” — Jesus this, Jesus that, zero to sixty. Matt braced for a train wreck. The girls were in tears and open-hearted. “The only train wreck is in your heart.”

The same goes for apologetics. There are people who read the latest atheist literature and answer it in book form; Matt’s favorite is the Oxford mathematician John Lennox, who does not win by fencing skill so much as by warmth — “really just like a lighthouse or a fireplace.” Beautiful, and unique. “We’re not all called to be John Lennox, but we’re all called to bear some kind of witness.”

A kingdom of priests

► 1:12:16

When Peter calls the church a spiritual house and a holy priesthood, he is quoting Sinai:

“If you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”

EXODUS 19:5-6 ↗

Israel had professional priests at the tabernacle, and yet the whole nation gets the title. So what does the word mean? A priest did not worship God for you. He helped you worship — made sure the offering was brought rightly, and blessed you with the name of God. “They didn’t keep God trapped in the tabernacle.” Which raises the question Matt wanted the room to sit with: if Israel was a kingdom of priests, whom were they helping, and whom were they blessing?

► 1:14:02

His example was a foreign head of state who traveled to Solomon on the strength of a rumor:

“The report was true that I heard in my own land of your words and of your wisdom, but I did not believe the reports until I came and my own eyes had seen it. And behold, the half was not told me... Blessed be the LORD your God, who has delighted in you and set you on the throne of Israel!”

1 KINGS 10:6-9 ↗

The blessing on Israel was not there to dominate her region; it was there so that she and her people would know who God is. A foreign leader ended up blessing the name of the Lord. That is a kingdom of priests working as designed — shining light where a place had been dark, helping someone else worship.

Light for the nations

► 1:16:25

Isaiah keeps a deliberate ambiguity about who the servant is — Isaiah himself, the nation, or one particular Israelite:

“I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon.”

ISAIAH 42:6-7 ↗

What is not ambiguous, Matt said, is the desire in God’s heart: light for all the nations, not only for his covenant people. [Isaiah 49:6](#) presses the same point — it is “too light a thing” for the servant merely to restore Israel; salvation is going to the end of the earth. He reads it as fulfilled most totally in Jesus, [who called himself the light of the world](#).

▶ 1:18:40

Which makes what Jesus says next genuinely strange — he hands his own identity over:

“You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden... let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”

MATTHEW 5:13-16 ↗

Not so strange, though, if we are not a company of people loosely held together by tradition and belief but members of his actual body. That is why Peter can apply the Exodus title to believers without straining: Jesus fulfills it totally, and his hands and feet walk in the same calling.

What the word actually means

▶ 1:21:27

“In your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience.”

1 PETER 3:15-16 ↗

Shining light into dark places means expecting to be reviled sometimes — “and that’s no indication of whether you did a good job or not. Light can be annoying for sure.”

Then Matt went after the word itself. It is the courtroom word from the ninth commandment, “You shall not bear false witness”, and from Matthew 18:16, where a charge is established by two or three witnesses. What is a witness there for? To say what they know. “These people are not there to give expert testimony on all things. They’re just people who were there.” The point is sharper than it sounds: at Jesus’ trial, the high priest tears his robes and asks “What further witnesses do we need?” — meaning the men who hate him have now witnessed his claim. You do not even have to believe to be a witness to what Jesus said about himself.

The funniest chapter in the Bible

► 1:25:09

Matt recommended John 9 for a laugh. Jesus makes mud, puts it on a blind man’s eyes, sends him to wash, and the man spends the rest of the chapter under interrogation about his own life. Are you the beggar? Yes. Were you really born blind? Yes. How can you see? A man named Jesus made mud, told me to wash in Siloam, I washed, and now I see. What do you say about him? He must be a prophet. Where is he? *I don’t know.*

“There’s your expert testimony. I don’t know.” When his parents get dragged in, they confirm the facts and duck the rest — he is of age, ask him. Called back a second time, the man delivers the line Matt clearly enjoys most: I told you already; why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples too?

“I don’t know how old the earth is. I know that I was born blind, and that he touched me.”

You are the witness, not the attorney

► 1:29:07

When the eleven look for a replacement for Judas, the job description is only this: he must have accompanied us the whole time, to become with us a witness to his resurrection. Not someone who has memorized the Torah — someone who was there. Peter uses the word the same way at Pentecost and after: you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead, “To this we are witnesses.”

“You’re not the judge. You’re not the defense attorney for Jesus. You’re not the jury. You are a witness.”

So you do not have to be skilled with rhetoric, or a public speaker, or the Bible answer man, or have a podcast — and, Matt added, you do not have to be impressed with what you just said. “There are a lot of times where I tried to do an evangelism and I thought, that wasn’t my best work.”

► 1:32:58

Paul in chains before Agrippa is the model, and what he does is tell a story — including the parts that do not flatter him: he opposed the name of Jesus, jailed the saints, cast his vote when they were put to death, tried to make them blaspheme (Acts 26:9–11). Then the road to Damascus, then what he has preached ever since — repent and turn to God — and then, plainly: “To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying” (Acts 26:22–23). He needed no special insight into Agrippa’s private life that morning. He needed the truth.

Don’t shoehorn your story

► 1:36:16

Here Matt named a habit he finds troubling — people bending their testimony into an expected shape, or apologizing for not having a lurid enough past. “I never was a terrorist, and that’s a real shame, because I wish I was so that my story would be more like this.” Twisting the story to improve it undermines the meaning of the word. Grew up in the church? “That’s awesome. Why do you love Jesus?”

And the answer is allowed to be modest. Matt walked through one out loud: I believe, and it is hard to explain why; something in the Bible about the Spirit testifying with my spirit that I am a child of God; he gripped me somehow. “Perfect. That’s great. Go with that.”

Four ways to get better at it

► 1:38:40

First — and he stopped to say this is the one to write down — ask God. “He’s very well-connected and he can put someone in your path. I really mean that. This is not fluff.” He can also get you into trouble, so that you end up explaining yourself.

Second, live differently enough from the world that people ask why. Even asked with disdain, the question is an open door. Third, tell your story unprompted; both prompted and unprompted are fine. Matt has a video working through Luke and Acts to test the maxim that people don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care — John the Baptist was not taking anyone to lunch first. Fourth, pursue an encounter with Jesus and actually submit to his rule, so there is something to say. If

someone asks why you are a Christian and the honest answer is “I don’t know,” that is a good place to start working.

Getting wet in public

► 1:42:23

Matt closed by tying the morning together. Going outside and getting into a small pool in front of people invites the question — what is this, a game, a penalty? And the answer is a testimony: Jesus told his disciples to make disciples of all peoples and baptize them; Jesus himself was baptized, and it is an honor to copy things he did; and what is being said in the water is that we are saved by grace through faith, buried with him in baptism and brimming with hope that we will walk with him in newness of life. A testimony made with your real body, in obedience, that prompts the question for you.

FOR FURTHER STUDY**SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE**

- [1 Peter 2:5–9](#)
- [Exodus 19:5–6](#)
- [1 Kings 10:6–9](#)
- [Isaiah 42:6–7](#)
- [Isaiah 49:6](#)
- [John 9:5](#)
- [Matthew 5:13–16](#)
- [1 Peter 3:15–16](#)
- [Exodus 20:16](#)
- [Matthew 18:16](#)
- [Matthew 26:64–65](#)
- [John 9](#)
- [Acts 1:21–22](#)
- [Acts 3:15](#)
- [Acts 26:9–11](#)
- [Acts 26:22–23](#)
- [Romans 8:16](#)
- [Romans 6:4](#)

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Matt reframed the baptism question from “Am I ready?” to “What hinders me?” Where else in your life are you asking the first question when the second is the honest one?
2. A priest helped others worship without keeping God to himself. Who is currently in your life that you are, in effect, keeping God to yourself around?
3. The man in John 9 said “I don’t know” more than once and it cost his testimony nothing. What question are you afraid of being asked, and what would happen if you simply admitted you don’t know?
4. Have you ever bent your story to make it a better story — sharper, more dramatic, more like someone else’s? What does the plain version actually sound like?
5. Of Matt’s four suggestions — ask God, live differently, tell it unprompted, submit to his rule — which one are you going to act on this week, and with whom?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Matt Ryniker is Hope Chapel's senior pastor — his own description of the job — and reports to the church's governing board, who he cheerfully calls his boss. He and his wife Mandy have been held up from Hope's own pulpit as an example to the congregation. He spent a stretch of his working life as a public school teacher, and he still teaches the parent dedication classes where families commit to raising their children to follow Jesus — a theme that runs straight into this message.

Watch the full message:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hxZDABIS1Qs&t=4014s>

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.