

Is There Enough Evidence to Convict You?

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Day One

If you were on trial because you are a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you? That's the question I'm posing this week. It's a question that gets to the heart of whether those of us who claim to be Christians really live by biblical principles and priorities. Whether the world around us can see any difference in the way we live, the way we respond, the priorities of our lives as compared to everyone else.

Imagine you are on trial, having been accused of being a Christian. The prosecutor would call witnesses who would be asked whether they have seen any clear evidence to convict you of being a Christian. What would they say? Is there a coworker who would confidently say, "I know she's a Christian because. . ." Or how about a family member? Or a neighbor?

Jesus said, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven (Matthew 5:16).

How brightly is your light shining? Does it shine consistently enough so those who are in your world know that you are a Christian?

Years ago, for a period, I was not a shining witness for Christ. The people who worked with me would not have been able to accuse me of being a Christian. I remember once telling a coworker I went to church, and he was surprised. He said, "I didn't know you were a religious person." And it's true—he didn't know because there was no evidence in my life at that time that would have convicted me of being a Christ-follower.

That's a sad commentary for sure, but thank God it is not now the case, and thank God he puts our past behind us and opens new paths for us to serve him.

Paul wrote to his disciple, Timothy:

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity (1 Timothy 4:12).

That's a high bar, isn't it—to set an example in the way we talk, in the way we conduct ourselves, in the way we love other people, in the way we trust God, and in the purity of our lives. That's the kind of evidence that proves you have been changed by God through faith in Jesus Christ.

Day Two

If you were on trial accused of being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you? Let's look at some of the evidence that would prove you're a Christian.

Evidence in Your Speech

If everything you said was recorded for a day or a week, would your words be strong evidence that you are a Christ-follower, or would they sound no different than any others?

This is one of the most important ways our lives as Christians should be differentiated from others—the words we speak and the conversations we engage in. Here is the biblical standard for our speech—our words.

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen (Ephesians 4:29).

That's a high standard, isn't it? And it would be easily recognized as different in our world today. No unwholesome talk—only speaking what will build others up and benefit them. That is the kind of evidence that would show you are a Christ-follower.

In your normal everyday life, how do you speak about people you don't like? Are your words always full of condemnation and criticism, or do you speak of others—even those you don't particularly admire—in words of kindness and understanding? If your words were recorded for a week, would we hear a lot of griping and complaining, or would those recordings be full of praise to God and thankfulness?

Someone has said our words should be true, necessary, and kind. Apply those three principles to your speech, and if you're like me, you will say fewer words than usual!

Jesus said, a good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of (Luke 6:45).

What do you think the verdict would be? Would you be convicted of being a Christian because of the words you say, the conversations you engage in, the way you talk?

Day Three

The Bible tells us as Christ-followers, we are representatives on earth of Jesus and our lives should bear real evidence we are Christians. I'm asking if there would be enough evidence in your life to convict you of being a Christian. Yesterday, I talked about evidence in the way we talk. Here's another area that witnesses will note.

Evidence in Our Conduct

Imagine someone followed you around for a month or so and looked for evidence that proved you were a Christian. Would they be able to accuse you of:

- Faithful attendance to and involvement with a local Bible-believing church
- Daily times of personal worship—Bible reading, prayer
- Spending time helping others in various ways
- Involved in small group Bible study or some other regular Bible study
- Supporting God's work with your time and money

Would they accuse you of being joyful all the time? Would they have evidence that you always spoke the truth in love? Would it be clear by your conduct that you considered others more important than yourself, and you had a servant attitude?

If someone followed you everywhere you went, would they note you were very selective about the movies you watched, and the television programs you viewed? What books would they see you reading—edifying books that inspired you?

Would the way you spend your time indicate following Jesus was your highest priority—or would they observe you wasting lots of time on things that really don't matter? What would they say about the way you spend your money? Do you give faithfully to God's work, or do you spend it all on yourself?

When we stop and ask ourselves questions like this, it's a bit sobering, isn't it? But it's important we think about the messages our words and lives are sending to others.

Day Four

I'm asking you to consider this question: If you were on trial for being a Christian, would there be evidence to convict you?

Evidence in Love

There's an old song that goes, "They will know we are Christians by our love."

Jesus said, a new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another (John 13:34–35).

There's no wiggle room here, is there? Love is what we should be about. I ask myself, and I ask you, if you were on trial, could you prove you are a Christian by the way you love others? Jesus said two things were important—two principles: Love God and love people. And notice Jesus said this is a new command—to love one another. In other words, just keeping the law and checking off all the boxes is not enough; it has to come from a heart of love.

Thankfully, the kind of love Jesus refers to is not necessarily a feeling. It is an action, based on the definition of love as given in 1 Corinthians 13.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails (1 Corinthians 13:4-8).

Whether or not you like the way someone behaves or approve of their lifestyle—whether or not their personality suits you or not—you can show love to them through your actions.

We've looked at three clear pieces of evidence that should convict us of being a Christian: the words we speak, the lifestyle we lead, the love we show. Just asking those questions is an important exercise for me—to cause me to pause and ask God to control my tongue and how I spend my time, and to remind me to show the love of Jesus to everyone in my life. I truly want it to be readily clear that I follow Jesus Christ—and I'm sure you do as well.

Day Five

Imagine you have to stand trial because you are a Christian. The prosecutor must show evidence you are indeed a Christian. What evidence would there be?

Evidence of Faith

Could evidence be shown to prove you really have faith in God—that you trust him with your life? You know, if you are trusting God with your life, with your future, it will show. It will be evident.

When you're facing tough times and difficult circumstances, is it clear to others you are trusting God for those things? Are you ready and willing to tell how God has been faithful to you? Do you remember and share what God has done in your life to prove he is faithful and trustworthy? Could people who know you say, "I know she has faith in God because of the way she deals with life"?

Evidence of Purity

Living a pure life by biblical standards is not only considered impossible by many today, but totally out-of-step with today's "progressive culture." Purity of life includes sexual purity as well as a life of integrity, of honesty, of just simply always doing the right thing regardless of the cost. It includes your financial dealings and business practices. They should be so pure no one could find fault with them if everything was revealed.

Here's a simple poem that says a lot:

You are writing a Gospel, a chapter each day,
By the deeds that you do and the words that you say.
People read what you write—distorted or true.
What is the Gospel according to you?¹

People who don't know Jesus don't typically read the Bible. But they read the people who read the Bible.

We're not likely to be on trial any time soon—at least not in this country—for our faith, although that day could come. But the Bible says every true believer will stand before Jesus to give an account of how we've lived our life. So, the real question today for us Christians is: Will Jesus find evidence in our lives that we have been faithful witnesses of who he is and what he has done for us? Will your faith stand up in that court?

¹ Paul Gilbert