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Making a difference by  
taking a stand.  
by JP Robinson

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In 2016 I shut my classroom door for the final time, choosing to leave a dream job and face an uncertain financial future because of my faith. By no means was this choice an easy one. The list of reasons to stay was long and daunting.

I was the sole breadwinner in our family. My wife and I had just purchased our first home. I had devoted countless hours to building up an academic program at the school. And, most of all, I loved my job.

But while working with high school students afforded me everything I wanted and more

in a profession, a higher call, another voice compelled me to be a living witness, to show those around me that conscience is more sacred than a career and faith more powerful than fear.

So I resigned.

### Faith in action

By no means was I the first to have to make such a choice. The Scriptures are full of examples of men and women who were willing to forsake everything for the cause of Christ in their generation. When ordered to deny their faith by King Nebuchadnezzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego opted to stand with God. He, in turn, stood with them in the midst of the flames.

It was not that those three Hebrew boys had anything against the king or his subjects. In fact, they had thrived under his rule,

rising to places of prominence in the very heart of the government. But when lines were drawn and they had to compromise or be cast into the fiery furnace, they chose to be living witnesses and showed the world the power of faith in action.

With this mindset, I handed in my resignation. But the conflict didn't end when I turned in my ID badge and keys — at least, not for me. That day began a prolonged battle with depression that threatened to drag me down for more than two years. Questions, to which I had no answer, raged in my mind: *Who am I? How can I provide for my family? Where is the constitutional guarantee of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" when I can't teach unless I accept liberal ideologies that contradict my religious beliefs?*

## Sovereign God

In the midst of this inner turmoil God's abiding presence became more of a reality. Jesus' injunction to "pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:44), and the assurance that He orders the details of every believer's life, were the only truths I could cling to. I admit there were times I struggled with bitterness. Like the disciples on the stormy sea of Galilee, I felt my boat of life being tossed about by waves I could not control.

But Jesus was still in control and always had been. That is the cornerstone of the Christian's faith — that God has a purpose He is working to accomplish in everything. Yes, our nation may be in chaos and our world falling apart, but God is not worried. In Isaiah 46:9, 10 we read:

"Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say, 'My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.'"

A greater plan overrides the petty ambitions of earthly governments, just as a greater plan overrides our own understanding of how our lives should be ordered. The Bible shows us that God's path is mysterious and His ways are unsearchable (Romans 11:33). Like a student myself, I was about to experience that spiritual truth in a whole new way.

## Power on display

In 2018 I went back to the school and attended the gradu-

ation ceremony of some of my former students. That day is forever etched in my memory. While the moving music and my pride in my students' accomplishments were meaningful, the comments I heard from parents and other members of the community linger in my mind. They had learned why I had left and were inspired by my choice.

Then I understood. The most effective witnessing I had ever done in that community was when I had made the decision to leave. Why? Because the world saw then that there is a power in Christianity — a power to stare in

to make decisions that will allow it to be displayed in our lives. But that submission to the Holy Spirit is precisely what gave the early church victory in spite of their bitter suffering for their unrelenting faith.

The might of the pagan Roman Empire was leveraged against a group of seemingly insignificant radicals. These included believers like Aquila and Priscilla, who were confronted, on the one hand, by the permissive nature of Roman society and, on the other, by its militant oppression of all who refused to accept its licentious ways.

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the face of overwhelming opposition and refuse to bow. It was not my words that impacted the community; it was my deeds.

That day revolutionized my understanding of the power of a Christian witness. While we must testify to the gospel with our words, *living* our testimony is an even more effective way of showing Christ's power. Our choices under pressure will ultimately determine how much of an impact we have on the individuals around us.

It is easy to talk about the power of God; it is much harder

This couple did not compromise. They did not bow to the gods of man. They refused to back down or give in to the pressure to conform. As a result, these believers changed the world, sowing seeds that are still bearing spiritual fruit after more than two thousand years.

## Fulfilling the Great Commission

Now it is our turn to push the Great Commission closer to its fulfillment. Like our spiritual forefathers, we live in a world hostile

to truth. Like them, we are faced each day with opportunities to stand up and boldly proclaim our faith, not only with our words but also by our actions. Yes, the choice to proclaim Christ may drive us to our knees, but isn't that where every believer stands tallest?

Let's look at this on another level. John 1 declares that Jesus is the Word — the incarnation of every messianic prophecy. Jesus didn't just talk about God; His life brought God on the scene. His ministry wasn't one of simply words but one of supernatural

His death, Jesus promised that He would rise again (John 2:19). Those were bold words that no mortal had ever uttered. Yes, prophets, like Elijah, had raised other dead people, but Jesus claimed ability to raise Himself *after* He had died. How could it happen?

It seemed impossible, but early on that Resurrection morning, Christ became a living witness of the power of that promise. Almost eight hundred years earlier, David prophesied, "Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest

identify with Joel's prophecy. A witness who could prove by his own life that the tomb could not hold the Son of God.

God requires us to speak His words of truth, to proclaim the power of the gospel with every breath we take. But if we truly wish to be effective witnesses, we must be willing to show the truth of every biblical principle with our lives. That is how believers can best impact the world.

### New strength

Shortly after that momentous decision, I was blessed to see my writing ministry grow in ways I could not have anticipated. It is as if the testimonies I have lived are now to be shared through the written word. Despite a period of great pain and personal struggle, God's faithfulness brought healing and forgiveness to my heart when it was most needed. Through it all, I now find myself stronger in Him and more determined to impact lives for Christ than ever before.

Let us resolve not to limit our Christian witness to our words alone, but, with full trust in Him who has promised never to leave or forsake His own, let us be living voices that proclaim the risen Christ to a dying world. **BA**

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power that revealed the heart of God to everyone He met.

The crowning moment of Jesus' ministry came that fateful night in Gethsemane when He made a decision no other could make. "Not my will but thine be done," He said. Those were tough words, but they were followed by actions that made Him a living witness of God's great plan.

According to Isaiah 53:11, "After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities." Before

secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay" (Psalm 16:9, 10). Christ's literal body was living proof that this prediction was the Word of God.

On the Day of Pentecost, the disciples themselves became living witnesses. Previously they could quote Jesus' promise that they would be "clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). When Peter stood before the masses that day in Jerusalem, however, he brought them more than words. He was a living witness — one who could joyfully

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