

Third Word - To Be a Witness, You Must be Withness

Jesus' third magnificent word is aimed at His mother and best friend, John, when He says, "Woman...behold your son. And John...behold your mother."

When you put your family's needs before your own, you are imitating Jesus in a powerful way.

Sometimes, as parents, when one of your children needs help, when they are suffering, but you realize that you cannot help them, even though you would change places with them in a heartbeat, all you can do is be near them in the midst of their pain.

Mary's grief and pain were easier to bear because she was WITH some of her family and friends. You need family and friends who will stand WITH you through the horrific times. We need each other. You need others! Life is not meant to be lived in isolation. Mary is not suffering in isolation, because she is surrounded by others.

We need people "standing by" us in life. The Greek word for "standing by" is *para*. We get the English word "parallel" that means "to be alongside, to stand alongside, or to walk alongside." May we be people who parallel our lives with others as we intentionally come alongside those who are suffering

This is what it means to be a priest. Henry Nouwen says, "A priest is a compassionate being-with." There are moments in life when all you can do is compassionately be with someone who is suffering. When you cannot fix someone's problem, the least you can do is come along side of them. Be there for them. God wants you to be a priest in somebody's life. It's part of the doctrine called the priesthood of all believers. You have the privilege and responsibility to be compassionate with those suffering. Showing up is 90 percent of all ministry. God designed you to have a priesthood, to exercise your priesthood and to grow in your priesthood.

What does that mean? It means *God has put something in you that He wants worked out for His purposes in other people's lives as you are WITH them on His behalf.*

Leonard Sweet says in his book, *Nudge*, "Sometimes it's less about our *witness* than our *withness*. In fact, our best *witness* is our *withness*. To be a *witness* you have to have *withness*."

You are just as usable and priestly as any pastor. That's why the Holy Spirit inspired Peter to write these words down to remind you who you are in 1 Peter 2:9.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Let's go back at the scene of Jesus' death.

Here in John 19:26-27, Jesus makes eye-contact with His friend, John, and His mother, Mary.

As Jesus is looking at His mother, He sees her suffering as she looks at Him. In those moments the prophecy that Simeon spoke over Mary when Jesus was dedicated in the temple as a baby was coming true.

Listen to what Simeon said would happen to Mary in Luke 2:34-35.

Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."

Men, dads, and sons, please take a close look at Jesus at this moment in His life and consider something. Just as Jesus refused to let personal agony distract Him from the practical duties of a good and faithful son, we too must at times move through our pain and be a man like Jesus demonstrated at this moment. Even if you feel crucified and in pain, be faithful to do the right thing for your family.

Your pain does not absolve you from your responsibilities.

This, men, is how you emulate Jesus—take care of your family.