

Living a Life of Power and Influence

by John White

The sermon emphasizes the importance of living out our faith in a way that is consistent and authentic, and of being a witness for Jesus Christ in our workplaces.

Duration: 38:08

Scripture: Acts 1:4-5, Acts 1:7-8, Acts 2:41, Acts 2:47, Acts 3:12-13, Acts 4:10-11

Topics: "Influence"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by referencing a biblical story where Peter and John heal a man and give credit to God for the miracle. The speaker then shares a personal experience of starting a fire department in a city called Laos of Ricardinus. He relates this experience to the power of the Holy Spirit and emphasizes the importance of being filled with the Holy Spirit. The speaker concludes by highlighting the significance of being witnesses for God and obeying His commands.

Transcript

My ministry, as it was mentioned, for the last 30 plus years has been encouraging firefighters to live their lives for Jesus Christ. And our mission and our ministry, I'm talking about us, you and me, should be to encourage men and women, boys and girls, see this young man down here, the couple young men down here, young men, boys and girls, encouraging them to live their lives for Jesus Christ. That's what we've been called to do, that's what God has called us to do, by being God's man or God's woman in the world.

One of my buddies came from North Ireland here a couple weeks ago and was at our international breakfast and he was telling me about the very first day that he was on a job in North Ireland. The captain came in, they're all new recruits, and he said, how many of you guys are Christians? And he raised his hand and realized he was the only one there that was a Christian. And the captain says, well, I hope the so-and-so word doesn't bother you too much.

And he used a word that we try to forget about. And my buddy just shrugged and he was making fun of him right from the very first day. But 13 years later, that same captain came to my buddy Gary and said, Gary, I need to ask you to forgive me for what I said to you 13 years ago, making fun of you as a Christian.

During that 13 years, Gary had built credibility, he built respect, he was the man that God wanted him to be in the fire service. His ethics were right. He was a man of God.

He didn't waver. And it impacted that captain to where he thought about it for 13 years. He finally came to him and asked him to forgive him for what he said.

His life showed that he is a man of God. He had been God's man in his world. And I find a model in the book of Acts of how we should live.

I've been looking at Acts lately, and I want to see how these guys operated from men that had just spent three years with Jesus. And I'm getting a lot of different ideas on how we ought to live today. But I went back to these guys to see how they operated.

I call it a look at the champions. You know, Jesus said in the last three words, or last in his last words, they just took up three verses in the Bible. I'll read them to you.

Jesus gave this command, do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized in water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit. They, we, must be filled, indwelt with the Holy Spirit.

Jesus went on to say that, they said, Lord, at this time you're going to restore the kingdom to Israel? He said to them, it's not for you to know the times and the dates the father has set by his own authority. It's not for you to know. All you need to know is who are you, who you are going to be, who you will become.

Let's see who they're going to be. In Acts 1, 8 and 9, but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth. You will be, it's a done deal.

This is what I'm going to make you, turn you into. That's what God has called us to be, his witnesses. Acts 1, 8 is for us today.

I am convinced of that. The next verse says, and after this he was taken up before their very eyes. He was taken up in a cloud and the cloud hid him from their sight.

Whoa, they'd seen a lot of stuff. They'd seen him walk on water and now he's caught up into a cloud. Man, what do we do now? Well, they just did what they'd seen Jesus do.

They obeyed him first, they went back to Jerusalem and then they did what he used to do. They went to an upstairs room and they started praying. The whole church that we have today, this big outreach you're going to have this Easter, was started in a prayer meeting with some guys that were faithful to let Jesus be the Lord of their life.

I believe that's for us today, folks. The Ministry of Firefighters for Christ International started with two men in an upstairs room at the headquarter station in downtown Los Angeles in 1973. It's where the power of encouragement, folks, is found and is formed.

That's why I go on Friday morning to meet with a bunch of men, about 100, 150 guys on Friday morning to pray with them. Then on Tuesday I go to the Firefighters for Christ office from 6 to 9 and pray with some more guys. Because things happen when you get together and pray.

We prayed for three years in that fire station from 73 to 76. From 7 to 8 o'clock every morning there was somebody in that room upstairs at the station praying. And the results of it, God showed us one day to, why don't you have a breakfast? Why don't you just invite some guys to see if anybody will show up? Well,

we figured we might get 10, 15, 20, maybe 30 guys.

And then we put out the flyers and that morning 140 guys showed up. And it wasn't because of anything we did, it was just we'd been praying. Wow, 140 guys.

It was obvious that God was going to do something to the fire service. Acts says that the disciples, they started their church with about 120 as a result of prayer. And after that 120, most of the ministry was done in small groups, two and three people at a time praying together, going out together and sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And God added to their numbers daily, as Acts says. Well, Peter, you know, his first message there was probably 5,000 men that that turned to follow Jesus. 5,000 men, when you add the women and children, they were probably there that day, there's probably 15,000 that followed because Peter gave a message and it was already prayed into being.

In Acts 3, Peter and John were going up to the temple and along the way they found a beggar that was by the side of the road. He'd been there every day. People brought him out there and he thought the man was thought they were going to get a handout, but Peter wasn't interested in giving him a handout.

He didn't have any. Silver and gold in Acts 3, 6. Silver and gold I don't have, but what I do have I'm going to give you in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, get up and walk. The power in the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

Man, he jumped up and he couldn't get rid of them then. They're on their way to the temple and he's walking and leaping and praising God right up to the temple steps. And isn't it interesting? Peter and John got in trouble for this.

There's such an uproar that he had to confront the men of Israel. He said in Acts 3, 12 and 13, men of Israel, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or goodness we had made this man walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers has glorified his servant Jesus. This is what has happened.

You know what folks? God is still doing that same type thing today. God gave firefighters for Christ the very same type thing. See how this story pans out.

Youth with a Mission called us. They were taking the Anastasis down to a city down below Acapulco called Lausitra Cardenas and there was 200,000 people there and they had no fire department. So they called us and could we help them start a fire department.

Well you know to start a fire department you need a fire engine. We didn't have one. And so on Monday morning, the ship is leaving next Saturday, on Monday morning I'm on my way to pray with some guys.

And I read Acts 3 and when I closed that chapter after this miracle had been done, God spoke to my heart and said I'm going to do the same thing in Mexico. And I thought you mean we're going to see a cripple healed? And there was just silence. But I knew that God was going to do something.

I told the guys there. And so I didn't know what it was going to be. And so that day we prayed about it and we went down to Los Angeles County because supposedly they had a fire engine.

They wanted \$10,000 for it. It was a used one. And we only had \$4,000.

They wanted \$10,000. So I mean that's a long ways off. So why go down there? But we went.

And when we got down there the guys, we looked at it and good looking apparatus. And I said, well, we've only got \$4,000. We'll put a bid on anyway.

Put a bid in. Well, you want \$10,000. Well, just put it in.

And the guy says, there's only one problem. Once you put a bid in, then it has to be posted. And it has to be posted for five full working days.

So if we put a bid in on Tuesday, the following day, it'd be posted on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, the next Monday and Tuesday. And then the next Wednesday we get to get it if we got it. And the ship's leaving on Saturday.

Well, we'll just put it in anyway. So I did. We put the bid in on Tuesday morning.

And on Wednesday, I get a call and the guy says, hey, John, come down, pick up your fire engine. Now, there was a county supervisor that had tried to circumvent that five day waiting period before. And they said, and he couldn't pull it off.

And he's a county supervisor. Right. And I said, well, how did that happen? He said, don't ask me, just come get your fire engine.

So went down on Wednesday and we drove it around a bit and it was a clunk in the thing. And I thought, oh, did we make a mistake here on this? Well, we'll have our mechanics look at it. They brought the mechanics out on Wednesday.

They tore that transmission open. They found something loose in there. They tightened it up and said, you know, you got to leave it here with us tomorrow because we want to put our mechanics on it and work on it today and tomorrow.

So it'll be perfect for you guys. They don't you know, it's already sold. They don't do that kind of stuff.

So Thursday you go to pick it up. Boy, it ran good, pumped like crazy. It was a beautiful thing.

And then somebody said, well, you don't have any ladders on that thing. We'll get you a ladder. We better put hose on.

And for the next three hours, they're putting hose and ladders and gave us 12 breathing apparatus sets and spare bottles. And then we're loaded down when we left. And then I stopped by to my city, L.A. City, and showed them what the county had given me.

Well, they couldn't be outdone by the county. So they started loading up. Man, we could hardly drive that thing back to San Diego.

And Friday morning, we put it on the ship and sailed. On the way down, I was trying to get, you know, it had L.A. County on the side. I'm trying to get Lausanne Gardenists and I went to the artists on the ship and I said, can you do me a logo for the sides? Oh, yeah, we'll do it.

Well, we get to Lausanne Gardenists. Nobody gave me a thing. A lot of, yeah, we will.

But nobody with all this talent, nobody did it for us. Because God had a reason for it. A guy flew down and gives me this big envelope.

I open it up and it's Lausanne Gardenists and reflective letters made in L.A. City for the rig. I didn't even know it was coming. Well, we went to see the mayor the next day and the mayor says, I want to have a great parade.

And so tomorrow we want to drive the fire engine through the city and we want all the people to come and be there. And the next day we were driving down through the main street of the city, 200,000 people in the town, and everybody was coming out for this special day. And I felt like the guy that was walking and leaping and praising God.

And I said, Lord, is this what's happening? Is this what you mean? We got to the city hall steps. When I saw these steps going up, they went way up and reminded me of what maybe the temple looked like. There were not high steps, little steps, but there's a lot of them and they're a long way apart, went way up.

When we got there in front, the mayor said, I want you to drive it right up here to the doors of the city hall and I want you to park it here. And then I want you to get out and tell us what happened. I was given a microphone and I read to them from Acts 3.12. Men of Israel, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare as if by some of our power of godliness we made this man walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob has glorified his son, Jesus.

And I said, you know, God showed me he was going to do a similar type thing down here. And then I reread it and I said, men of Lazarus Cardenas, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by some power of godliness we had anything to do with getting you this fire engine? The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers has glorified his servant, Jesus. God is working the same way today as he did then.

The fire chief that we put, kind of put in as the fire chief there, he wanted Bibles for all of his men. He was not a Christian. He wanted Bibles for all of his men.

He gave them reading assignments. And each man on his fire department had to read a section of scripture and then come back to him at the end of the week and report to him on what they had read on and share it with him. God goes before us.

Getting back to Peter and John, now they're up on charges before the Sanhedrin and they're in trouble because they healed this guy. So Peter says, then filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, rulers and elders of the people, if we're being called to account today for an act of kindness showed to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, then know this, you and all the people of Israel is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, but God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. He is a stone that the builders rejected, which has become the capstone because there is salvation found in no one else.

For there is no other name under heaven given to men by where we can be saved. And when they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus. And in our life, wherever we go, the people around us need to watch our life and say, whoa, these people have been with Jesus.

You know, the Sanhedrin was having problems with this. You know, we need to tell these guys to knock it off. It's not doing any good.

They keep on going. So this is what Sanhedrin said. What are we going to do with these men? They asked.

Everybody living in Jerusalem knows that they have done an outstanding miracle and we cannot deny it. But to stop this thing from spreading any farther among the people, we must warn these men to speak no longer to anyone in this name. You ever hear that in your workplace? And then they called them in again.

They commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John replied, well, you judge for yourself whether it's right God's sight to bay you rather than God, for we cannot help speaking about what we've seen and what we've heard. They can't help but speak about it.

And that's a challenge to us. Peter says, and later on Peter says when he writes, he said, but in your heart set apart Christ as Lord, always prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope that you have. But do this in gentleness and respect.

Do it in a way that it's palatable for the people, keeping a clear conscience so those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. Back to Acts 4 29 and 31.

Now Lord consider the threats that they're giving us and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus. And after they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken and they're all filled with the Holy Spirit and the word of God was spoken boldly.

Man, these guys, they don't back off. 433 says, with great power, Jesus said you're going to receive power, with great power the apostles continued to testify to this resurrection of the Lord Jesus and much grace was upon them all. And I've seen this happen in a fire station where you're not supposed to talk about it and you do and God just then brings in his grace and meets you with what you need.

Well, you get arrested again, all right? They can't stay out of jail because they've mentioned the name of Jesus. He arrested the apostles and put them in jail. And during the night, an angel of the Lord opened the door of the jail and brought them out.

Go stand in the temple courts, he said, and tell the people the full message of this new life. I guess they hadn't been telling them everything, but he meant, you know, you think the angel would have said, okay, I'm breaking you out and I get out of town. You know what I mean? No, he didn't say that.

No, don't get out of town. Go back and do some more. That's why I got you out of jail.

So they're in trouble again. Man, that name of Jesus drives them nuts. Acts 5.28 says, we gave you strict orders not to teach in this name.

Yet you filled Jerusalem with your teaching and you're determined to make us guilty of this man's blood. Peter and the other apostles replied, we must obey God rather than men. We must.

I forgot where I am. Well, all of a sudden, Gamaliel, who was one of the Sanhedrin, a very well-known man, he came to their defense and his speech in Acts 5.40 said, his speech persuaded them to not kill

them or whatever they're going to do. So they called the apostles then, they had them flogged, they had them beaten.

Then they ordered them to go out and not speak in the name of Jesus again and let them go. The apostles left the Sanhedrin rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the name. And day after day in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ.

You get the drift of what I'm saying here, folks? This is how the men that Jesus personally disciplined operated. They didn't play any kind of games. I believe it's a model of ministry for us in Acts.

In Acts 6, the twelve disciples, they chose Stephen and six others to help with the ministry. They chose men who were known to be full of the spirit of God and wisdom. In Acts 6.8, it says that Stephen was a man full of God's grace and power and he did great things.

But folks, he was stoned for it. If any of you don't know what stoning is, they just take the person in the middle and they keep throwing stones at them until they hit them so many times you die. That's what stoning is.

And his response, Stephen's response to the stoning was while they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. He was going up yonder. Then he fell on his knees and he cried out, Lord, do not hold this sin against them.

And when he had said this, he died. And Saul was there, who later would become Paul, and he was giving his approval to that death. Folks, you think that didn't have an impact on Saul? He sees a man that's being stoned to death, and he said, God, forgive them.

Don't hold this against them. I know that had impacted Saul in a powerful way. Scripture doesn't mention it, but how could it miss? Be the men, women, boys and girls that God has called us to be.

And then the word go. Here they've been speaking it. Now go.

When God calls us to go, go. Peter had a vision one day, and the sheet, they had all the animals that he couldn't eat were in this sheet. And the Lord said, kill these animals and eat, Peter.

No, no, God, I can't do that. I'm not going to do that. But the Lord was showing Peter that you need to, anything I say is clean.

It's clean. And Peter was Jew, and it had nothing to do with the Gentiles, and he was getting, he's getting ready, getting Peter ready for something. While Peter was still thinking in Acts 10, 19 and 20, while Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit of God said to Simon, to Peter, there are three men downstairs looking for you.

Get up and go down, and do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them. And then in Acts 10, 29, when he got to Cornelius's house, the man who sent for Peter, because an angel told him to send for Peter, he told him, he said, well, here I am. And so when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection.

May I ask you why you sent for me? Well, Cornelius wanted to know the message of the gospel. He told them the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. And the whole house and his

neighbors gave their life to the Lord, because Peter was obedient to go.

And God calls us to go at times. A week ago Monday, I was at a memorial service for one of our firefighters that had died, was killed. And when I got there, I'm sitting next to a guy, and he told me, one of my old-time buddies, he was a, this guy's a legend on our job.

I haven't seen him, well, since my retirement dinner five years ago. He's an absolute legend on our job. He said he's in the hospital.

I don't know how well he's doing. And God, that day on Monday, made it clear that I was to go from Irvine here to Glendale to see him in the hospital. Somehow I'll go see him on Wednesday.

Well, on the way to Glendale, and I had already had a date to speak at a little high school in Hawaiian Gardens. And after I spoke to the kids, a little small Christian high school, the teacher, whoever it was, said, we want to have Mr. White get on his knees in front here, and we're going to pray over him, and send him up there to Glendale. So I got down on my knees, and these kids, from seventh grade to twelfth grade, not all of them, but twelve or fifteen of them, they came and they put their hands on me, and they prayed that God would give me the words to speak to my buddy in the hospital.

They prayed that he would, his heart would be softened, and he would hear the gospel. Well, I went to the, got to the hospital, and man, I was sent off. These kids sent me out.

And I said, Lord, let me, let me see him where he's not in therapy, or something like that. He just had two hips replaced. He'd had open-heart surgery twice.

I mean, he was, he could check out anytime. And I punched the elevator, and the elevator door opens, and here he is in a wheelchair in this huge hospital. Here he is in front of me.

They're taking him back to his room. They're just done with his therapy, and we went up to his room. Well, Jules is hard of hearing, and so as I talked to him, asked him a few little things about where he stood with, with God.

He said, well, I sure hope Jesus would be my friend. I said, oh, Jules, you, he needs to be your Savior more than your friend. And I said, would that be something that would interest you? And he kind of nodded.

And now, he's hard of hearing, so I had to really speak up. And there's a guy in the next bed there. He's hearing every word we're saying.

And I read this prayer to him. I said, it's in my business card. I said a prayer like this.

This is how he becomes your Savior, Jules. Lord Jesus, I believe you died on the cross for my sins, and that you were buried, but you arose from the grave as your word says. I ask you now to come into my heart, my life, and forgive me for my sins as you promised in your word.

Help me to follow you and live according to the plan that you have for my life. Thank you, Lord, that you're now living in my heart. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

And I said, Jules, would that, would you want that to be your prayer? He says, I would, Johnny, I would. I've known him since 1958. He was so pleased that I was walking with God, but he wasn't interested in it

over the years.

But he was pleased that I was, and he reached out and took the card and he put on his glasses and out loud in a very loud voice, in a very emphatic voice, he prayed and asked Jesus to come into his heart according to that prayer. He made it his prayer. I said, Jules, where is Jesus now? And he, big old hand of his, on his chest, and he says, he's in my heart, Johnny.

He's in my heart. Man, it doesn't get any better than that. I mean it.

I wish I had time to tell you the stuff God is doing, but I don't. It doesn't get any better than that, folks. Just go from, I go to a memorial where one of our guys is killed, and two days later, one of our old legends gives his heart to the Lord.

Ephesians 3.20 says, Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond anything we could ever ask or think according to his power that he has chosen to work through us. Young man, God wants to fill you with his power so that you'll be a witness in your school. Young man, God wants you to be a man filled with his power so that you'll be a witness for Jesus in your school.

The kids that sent me out were seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth, twelfth grade. Romans 10 says that everyone like my friend, everyone like my friend who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

But how can they call on the one that they haven't believed in? How can they call on him if they haven't believed in him? And how can they believe in him if they have not heard of him? And how can they hear of him without someone telling them? That's what Peter's been saying. Tell them, tell them, tell them, tell them. And this is a beauty.

And how can they tell them if someone doesn't send them to tell them? I got sent out by high school kids to tell them. They took care of the business for me. I just had to tell them.

And the results of they got a big brother in heaven. What about you here today? We're closing now. Are you going up yonder to heaven? I tell you today, if you have Jesus in your life, you are.

If you don't have Jesus in your life, you're not. You go, don't tell me that. I'm a good person.

That's what the Bible says. The Bible says if you have Jesus, you have life. If you don't have Jesus, you don't have life.

How clear is that? And the way you have Jesus, you invite him to come into your heart, just like my buddy, like my buddy did. You might have come here today because you've had it with a life that you're living in and you're going, man, I'm going over there because I need him in my life. Maybe you've already made up your mind.

You came here for that reason. You need him in your life. My buddy, I hope Jesus is my friend.

As I said before, Jules, he needs to be your Savior and your Lord. Then he can be your friend, Savior first. Where is Jesus now, Jules? He's in my heart.

The Bible says that everyone that receives Jesus, they have the right to become children that God receives. It's a gift. You give a gift.

The gift is not a gift. It's not total until a person receives it. It's basically an offer.

Until it's received, then it's a gift. The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ. The payment for our sin, folks, is death.

But the gift of God is eternal life through His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. And when you invite Jesus into your heart, John writes, he says, that you might know that you have eternal life. If you have Jesus, you have life.

If you don't have Jesus, you don't have life. But I write these things to you so that you might know that you have eternal life. Can we bow our heads, please? Is there a person, I'm not going to make you come up here or anything like that, but is there a person here today that has never before invited Jesus into your heart? And as you're sitting there, you didn't understand maybe a lot of it, but one thing you do know is you need to know Jesus, the one that they crucified, but He went freely to pay the price for your sin.

You go, well, you don't know how bad I've been. I don't ever get, you know what, folks? I don't ever give my testimony because I can't, I just don't want to hash through it anymore because it stunk before Christ. But He takes all that away and He gives you a new spirit, a new life.

Is there anyone here tonight that just by the show of your hand, you just give me a little hand raise that that's what you'd like to do tonight. You'd like to ask Jesus into your heart. Is there anyone here tonight who would like to do that? Is there anyone here? May I see your hand? I believe that there are people here tonight that need to know Jesus.

Is there anyone here? Can I see your hand? You're spread out and it's hard for me to see, but is there anyone here tonight? Yes, I see your hand in the back there, dear. Yes, yes. Anyone else? Anyone else? Anyone else? You know, it's interesting that a young person back here, if it could be that this service was just for you and for you alone, but that's the extent that God will go to to bring somebody into His family.

He'll have a whole service just for you. Let this be your prayer or a prayer like it. Lord Jesus, I believe that you died on the cross for my sins.

I believe that you were buried, but you rose from the grave. As your word, the Bible says, I ask you now to come into my heart and into my life and forgive me for my sins. You promised that you would in your word.

Help me to follow you and live according to the plan that you have for my life. And I thank you, Lord, that you're now living within my heart because I've asked you to come in. In Jesus name, I pray.

Amen. Well, God's word certainly holds true that when one repents and comes to the saving grace of Jesus Christ, there is a celestial celebration in heaven. The angels celebrate, we celebrate as well for that one who came to Christ tonight.

Can we welcome them to the family of God? Yeah. Thank you.

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