

# The Man in the White Cravat

by Ray Comfort

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*Don't let fear and intimidation hold you back from sharing the Gospel with others; take the initiative to bring eternal hope to those who are perishing.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 27:1, Proverbs 29:25, Matthew 10:28, Mark 16:15, Luke 12:4, John 4:13, Romans 1:16, 2 Corinthians 4:18, 2 Timothy 1:7

**Topics:** "Evangelism", "Overcoming Fear"

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## Description

Ray Comfort shares his struggles with fear, particularly when faced with intimidating individuals he refers to as 'the man in the white cravat.' Despite his fears, he emphasizes the importance of sharing the Gospel boldly and not being hindered by intimidation or self-doubt, drawing inspiration from Jesus' example of injecting eternity into temporal conversations. Comfort recounts various encounters where he overcame his fears to share his faith, highlighting the urgency of reaching out to others with the message of salvation, regardless of personal fears or perceived barriers.

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## Transcript

I often struggle with fear. It isn't a run of the mill fear. It's a fear of the man in the white cravat. A man who smokes a pipe and wears a smoking jacket often wears a cravat (sometimes called an "ascot"). It is a type of silk handkerchief that sits like a small puffy pillow in place of a tie. When Charles Spurgeon spoke of the preacher who sees one of these upper class folks in his congregation, he said, "A preacher is all on a quiver because a person [is wearing] a white cravat..."

I often see the man with the white cravat, as I am about to open my mouth to preach open air. He stands out in the crowd. He isn't really wearing a white cravat, but his clothes show me he might as well be. He is tall. He is dressed impeccably. He carries a genuine leather brief case. His demeanor intimidates me. When I begin to speak, I imagine that he is thinking thoughts of condescension.

When I am about to witness one-to-one, he usually whispers in my ear that I should keep my faith to myself, or at least have the decency to wait until people ask me about it.

But when the woman at the well asked Jesus why He had spoken to her, He didn't say, "Because I was thirsty. Thanks for the drink. Have a nice day." Instead, He injected eternity into the temporal. That was His agenda, so He took the initiative. He didn't keep it to Himself.

The Great Commission isn't "Wait until people come to you." It is "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." So when I see someone who I suspect is unsaved, I make the first move...no matter how much it scares me.

When Mr. Cravat intimidates me I think, "If this person dies in his sins, he will go to hell for eternity. Do I care about him or about myself? Am I ashamed of Jesus Christ? If I am, I am a shame to Him."

Let me share with you a few days of my life, and my constant battle with the man in the white cravat. It was near midnight. Kirk Cameron and I had just returned to our hotel in Wichita, Kansas, after speaking at the opening sessions of a conference. The receptionist was a male in his early twenties. He was wearing two metal studs inside his nostrils. They sat, like two shiny rocks at the entrance of two small caves. Christians don't usually wear studs in the inside of their noses, so I put out a "feeler" to see where he was spiritually. I asked him if he was going to the conference.

Things weren't right between him and God, so we gently spoke to him about eternal matters. He was very open, and sincerely thankful that we had taken the time to reason with him about his eternal welfare.

Kirk left early the next day for Los Angeles. I left eight hours later, and as I walked into the airport I saw a police officer hold up a million dollar bill tract and say to an airport worker, "Kirk Cameron gave it to me." I smiled as I thought about how Kirk was ignoring the man in the white cravat.

As I walked behind a tall slow-moving and cool-looking black youth, I thought, "He's walking so slowly, I think I can witness to him before we part at the end of this hallway." I ignored my fears, caught up to him and said, "How are you doing?" As he responded with a cool "Wasssup?" I handed him a million dollar bill and said, "Did you get one of these? It's a gospel tract. Have you had a Christian back ground?" He had. "Do you think you are a good person?" He did. So I went through the Commandments, into grace, repentance and faith. He was very thankful that I had spoken to him about eternal things, and I left him with a booklet called, Save Yourself Some Pain.

A few minutes later I walked passed four airport cleaners. I again ignored my fears and handed each of them a million-dollar bill. They loved them, so I did some sleight-of-hand. I then told them that the bills were gospel tracts, and spent the next five or so minutes sharing the gospel with them as they stood by their cleaning equipment. I gave the one named "Janitorial" (it was written on her uniform) a free book, and the others some more literature. After those two incidents, I was on a roll. All fear had gone.

Even though the flight to Los Angeles was almost full, the seat next to me was empty. An Oriental woman wearing glasses sat one seat over from me. As I sat in my seat I could see three obvious reasons not to witness to this woman. First, she was Oriental, and therefore probably didn't speak English. Second, she was sitting one seat over, so there could be no real depth of conversation. She might as well have been on the other side of the Grand Canyon. And third, she was wearing glasses and therefore was an avid reader--obviously well versed in the things of the world, and therefore extremely intelligent and highly educated to a point where she would be condescending toward the things of God. There was no doubt about it--she was wearing a white cravat. Fear was back.

However, if she was unsaved she would die in her sins and go to hell for eternity. I struck up a conversation with her and found that she had a Christian background, but wasn't baptized. I then asked her if she thought that she was a good person. She said she was, so I took her through the Commandments, and explained the love of God in the cross, and the necessity of repentance and faith.

She listened to every word, was very humble in attitude, gratefully took, *Save Yourself Some Pain*, and immediately read it from cover to cover. She then leaned forward and closed her eyes in silent prayer for a few moments. I was so pleased that I hadn't listened to my fears, and instead injected eternity into the temporary.

The next day I had to meet a termite inspector at our house. He checked for termites, and as we walked to the gate I gave him a copy of, *101 Things Husbands do to Annoy Their Wives*, and inquired if he had had a Christian background. He said he was Catholic, so I asked him if he considered himself to be a good person. He did, but after we had gone through a few of the Commandments, he held up both hands and headed for his car. He said that he didn't want to hear any more, and almost ran away from me. I was disappointed that I didn't even get to share the cross, and was tempted to think that I had failed. But God is the best judge of what is success and what is failure. I prayed for him and went back to our ministry.

Minutes after I arrived, two police officers were ushered into my office. A week earlier Kirk and I had rented an orangutan for a day for our TV program on the subject of evolution, and the officers had posed for pictures with "Bambam." They were there to pick up the pictures.

As we made small talk, I began feeling that I should witness to them. Suddenly these men looked like two giants wearing white cravats. It was their uniforms that were intimidating me! I reminded myself that they were ordinary men in special clothes, and if I cared about them I would ignore my negative thoughts. One was a Christian, so I gently zeroed in on the other officer. It was a little awkward as he (as an officer of the law) admitted to being a lying thief. Nevertheless, he thanked me for speaking to him about eternity, and took some literature.

That night I read where Charles Spurgeon said,

"No sinner looks to the Savior with a dry eye or a hard heart. Aim, therefore, at heart breaking, at bringing home condemnation to the conscience and weaning the mind from sin. Be not content till the whole mind is deeply and vitally changed in reference to sin."

When Sue and I arrived home that night, there was a stranger up our driveway. I parked the van, grabbed a book (I keep a supply in the van), and walked back to the gate to where the man had retreated. He was some sort of salesman, so I struck up a conversation with him, gave him the book and then swung to the spiritual and shared my faith with him. He didn't run away. He listened closely and thanked me for talking to him about eternal things.

Two days later I found myself waiting in a store. I had ordered three potpies for dinner, but after I placed the order I was told that I would have to wait for 25 minutes while they were being baked. I reluctantly sat at a table and doodled. I'm not a good doodler. After two minutes, I was pleased to notice that two members of the staff were chatting, presumably on a break. I walked over, greeted them and did some sleight of hand. I then gave them a million dollar bill and asked, "Do you two consider yourself to be good people?" They did, so we went through the Law, into grace, repentance and faith. They both thanked me, and I thanked God that I didn't have to doodle any longer than two minutes. The world can doodle all it wants, but as a Christian, I dare not.

Think for a moment about the late President Kennedy. One moment he was sitting in his limo with his wife, smiling and waving to adoring crowds. The next moment he was in eternity. A small piece of fast-moving metal sent him there in a split second of time. Imagine you were taken back in time to the moment before

he got into the limo. You can't stop the assassination but you can talk to him for a few moments about eternity. Are you intimidated by his status to a point of silence? Of course you aren't. You know what will happen to him! You look beyond the white cravat. You look into his eyes. You see the frailty of his humanity, and think how in a moment of time he will be blasted into death.

All around us, people are smiling and waving at each other. They aren't thinking about eternity. They don't see the invisible. They have no concept of the eternal. You do. You know what awaits them. Death is snatching them every minute of every day. Please don't be intimidated into silence. Don't doodle while they sink into hell. Take the initiative. Seize the moment for eternity.

"While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:18).

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