



# Can I Get a Witness?: Essays, Sermons, and Reflections (The James N. Griffith Endowed Series in Baptists Studies)

*Bill J. Leonard*

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As the twenty-first century muddles along, perhaps the phrase "Can I get a witness?" will sharpen our thinking about the current state of religion in American culture, particularly for Protestants. Indeed, the permanent transition that characterizes American religious life offers an opportunity to revisit the word "witness" and its meaning for the future.

The materials in this volume survey issues in American religious communities developed through academic research, classroom teaching, sermons, and years of working with ministerial students. A final section is a collection of representative columns written for Associated Baptist Press, addressing questions in American religio-cultural life, past, and present.

Each essay reflects responses to a time in which old systems of organization and identity are changing, reforming, declining, and disappearing from the ecclesiastical landscape. Thus methods for offering Christian witness are undergoing significant reexamination by denominations, congregations and individuals. The witness of the church remains a work in progress as faith communities celebrate shared identity through tradition, worship, instruction and care of souls, while refining specific ministries in response to location, conscience or a specific historical moment.

If the essays in this volume facilitate a reexamination of the nature of Christian and ecclesial witness in twenty-first-century America, they will have done their duty.



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