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## Forward

Do you take time to tell others what God has done for you—forgiving and saving you, answering your prayers, supplying your needs?

Retelling your story will help keep memories of God’s faithfulness alive in your family

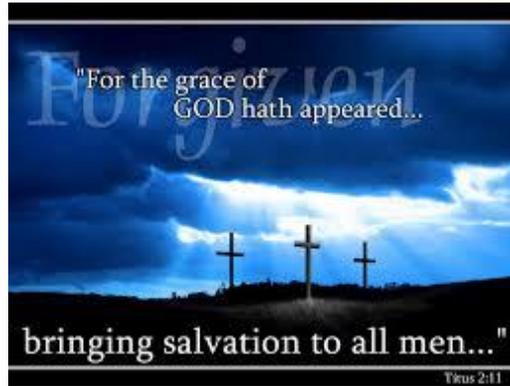
**Witnessing is the story of the great commission.**

Don’t hide your light at home: our families are fertile fields for planting gospel seeds. Let your parents, children, spouse, brothers, and sisters know of your faith in Jesus, and be sure they see Christ’s love, helpfulness, and joy in you.

The Good News about Jesus Christ must be shared, for no news is more important. We must not forget those who are dying without it. We must not become so preoccupied with our own faith that we neglect sharing it with those around us.

In this study, you will see many Scriptures showing the need and methods seen and used in witnessing for Jesus Christ.

## Chapter 1



**Others may not welcome your message.**

**Genesis 6:22**

**So Noah did everything exactly as God had commanded him.**

Noah got right to work when God told him to build the ark. Other people must have been warned about the coming disaster (1 Peter 3:20), but apparently they did not expect it to happen.

Today things haven't changed much. Each day thousands of people are warned of God's inevitable judgment, yet most of them don't really believe it will happen. Don't expect people to welcome or accept your message of God's coming judgment on sin.

Those who don't believe in God will deny his judgment and try to get you to deny God as well. But remember God's promise to Noah to keep him safe. This can inspire you to trust God for deliverance in the judgment that is sure to come.

## **Speak up for God when you have the opportunity.**

### **Genesis 40:8**

And they replied, "We both had dreams last night, but there is no one here to tell us what they mean."

"Interpreting dreams is God's business," Joseph replied. "Tell me what you saw."

When the subject of dreams came up, Joseph focused everyone's attention on God. Rather than using the situation to make himself look good, he turned it into a powerful witness for the Lord. One secret of effective witnessing is to recognize opportunities to relate God to the other person's experience. When the opportunity arises, we must have the courage to speak, as Joseph did.

## **Why some may not listen to you.**

### **Exodus 5:3**

But Aaron and Moses persisted. "The God of the Hebrews has met with us," they declared. "Let us take a three-day trip into the wilderness so we can offer sacrifices to the Lord our God. If we don't, we will surely die by disease or the sword."

Pharaoh would not listen to Moses and Aaron because he did not know or respect God. People who do not know God may not listen to his word or his messengers. Like Moses and Aaron, we need to persist. When others reject you or your faith, don't be surprised or discouraged. Continue to tell them about God, trusting him to open minds and soften stubborn hearts.

## Witnessing to relatives and family

### Exodus 18:8-11

Moses told his father-in-law about everything the Lord had done to rescue Israel from Pharaoh and the Egyptians. He also told him about the problems they had faced along the way and how the Lord had delivered his people from all their troubles.

Jethro was delighted when he heard about all that the Lord had done for Israel as he brought them out of Egypt.

"Praise be to the Lord," Jethro said, "for he has saved you from the Egyptians and from Pharaoh. He has rescued Israel from the power of Egypt! I know now that the Lord is greater than all other gods, because his people have escaped from the proud and cruel Egyptians."

Moses told his father-in-law all that God had done, convincing him that the Lord was greater than any other god. Our relatives are often the hardest people to tell about God. Yet we should look for opportunities to tell them what God is doing in our lives because we can have an important influence on them.

### Joshua 4:21-24

Then Joshua said to the Israelites, "In the future, your children will ask, 'what do these stones mean?' Then you can tell them, 'This is where the Israelites crossed the Jordan on dry ground.'

For the Lord your God dried up the river right before your eyes, and he kept it dry until you were all across, just as he did at the Red Sea when he dried it up until we had all crossed over.

He did this so that all the nations of the earth might know the power of the Lord, and that you might fear the Lord your God forever."

The memorial of 12 stones was to be a constant reminder of the day the Israelites crossed the Jordan River on dry ground. Their children would see the stones, hear the story, and learn about God. Do you have traditions—special dates or special places—to help your children learn about God's work in your life?

Do you take time to tell them what God has done for you—forgiving and saving you, answering your prayers, supplying your needs? Retelling your story will help keep memories of God's faithfulness alive in your family.

### 2 Tim. 1:5

I know that you sincerely trust the Lord, for you have the faith of your mother, Eunice, and your grandmother, Lois.

Timothy's mother and grandmother, Eunice and Lois, were early Christian converts, possibly through Paul's ministry in their home city, Lystra (Acts 16:1).

They had communicated their strong Christian faith to Timothy, even though his father was probably not a believer. Don't hide your light at home: our families are fertile fields for planting gospel seeds.

Let your parents, children, spouse, brothers, and sisters know of your faith in Jesus, and be sure they see Christ's love, helpfulness, and joy in you.

## Chapter 2



**Don't assume someone doesn't want to know God.**

### Joshua 2:8-13

Before the spies went to sleep that night, Rahab went up on the roof to talk with them. "I know the Lord has given you this land," she told them. "We are all afraid of you. Everyone is living in terror.

For we have heard how the Lord made a dry path for you through the Red Sea when you left Egypt. And we know what you did to Sihon and Og, the two Amorite kings east of the Jordan River, whose people you completely destroyed.

No wonder our hearts have melted in fear! No one has the courage to fight after hearing such things. For the Lord your God is the supreme God of the heavens above and the earth below.

Now swear to me by the Lord that you will be kind to my family and me since I have helped you. Give me some guarantee that

When Jericho is conquered, you will let me live, along with my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all their families."

Many would assume that Rahab—a pagan, a Canaanite, and a prostitute—would never be interested in God.

Yet Rahab was willing to risk everything she had for a God she barely knew. We must not gauge a person's interest in God by his or her background, life-style, or appearance. We should let nothing get in the way of our telling people about God.

Rahab recognized something that many of the Israelites did not—the God of heaven is not an ordinary god! He is all-powerful. The people of Jericho were afraid because they had heard the news of God's extraordinary power in defeating the armies across the Jordan River.

Today we can worship this same powerful, miracle-working God. He is powerful enough to destroy mighty, wicked armies, as he did in Jericho. He is also powerful enough to save us from certain death, as he did with Rahab.

**Don't get so preoccupied with your faith  
that you don't share it.**

### 2 Kings 7:3-10

Now there were four men with leprosy sitting at the entrance of the city gates. "Why should we sit here waiting to die?" they asked each other.

"We will starve if we stay here, and we will starve if we go back into the city. So we might as well go out and surrender to the Aramean army. If they let us live, so much the better. But if they kill us, we would have died anyway."

So that evening they went out to the camp of the Arameans, but no one was there! For the Lord had caused the whole army of Aram to hear the clatter of speeding chariots and the galloping of horses and the sounds of a great army approaching. "The king of Israel has hired the Hittites and Egyptians to attack us!" they cried out.

So they panicked and fled into the night, abandoning their tents, horses, donkeys, and everything else, and they fled for their lives.

When the lepers arrived at the edge of the camp, they went into one tent after another, eating, drinking wine, and carrying out silver and gold and clothing and hiding it.

Finally, they said to each other, "This is not right. This is wonderful news, and we aren't sharing it with anyone! If we wait until morning, some terrible calamity will certainly fall upon us. Come on, let's go back and tell the people at the palace."

So they went back to the city and told the gatekeepers what had happened—that they had gone out to the Aramean camp and no one was there! The horses and donkeys were tethered and the tents were all in order, but there was not a single person around.

According to the law, lepers were not allowed in the city, but were to depend on charity outside the gate (Leviticus 13:45-46; Numbers 5:1-4). Because of the famine and the presence of the Aramean army, their situation was desperate.

The lepers discovered the deserted camp and realized their lives had been spared. At first they kept the good news to themselves, forgetting their fellow citizens who were starving in the city.

The Good News about Jesus Christ must be shared too, for no news is more important. We must not forget those who are dying without it. We must not become so preoccupied with our own faith that we neglect sharing it with those around us. Our “good news,” like that of the lepers, will not “wait until daylight.”

## Chapter 3



### Dealing with feelings of rejection in witnessing

#### 2 Chronicles 20:11

Now see how they reward us! For they have come to throw us out of your land, which you gave us as an inheritance.

As the enemy bore down on Judah, God spoke through Jahaziel: “Do not be afraid or discouraged. . . . For the battle is not yours, but God’s.” We may not fight an enemy army, but every day we battle temptation, pressure, and “rulers. . . of this dark world”

(Ephes. 6:12) who want us to rebel against God. Remember, as believers, we have God’s Spirit in us. If we ask for God’s help when we face struggles, God will fight for us. And God always triumphs.

How do we let God fight for us?

- (1) By realizing the battle is not ours, but God’s;
- (2) By recognizing human limitations and allowing God’s strength to work through our fears and weaknesses;

- (3) By making sure we are pursuing God's interests and not just our own selfish desires;
- (4) By asking God for help in our daily battles.

### **Winning the right to be heard**

#### **Esther 2:10**

Esther had not told anyone of her nationality and family background, for Mordecai had told her not to tell.

With virtually no rights and little access to the king, it was better for Esther not to reveal her identity. While boldness in stating our identity as God's people is our responsibility, at times a good strategy is to keep quiet until we have won the right to be heard. This is especially true when dealing with those in authority over us. But we can always let them see the difference God makes in our lives.

### **You may be surprised at how many will listen to you**

#### **Jonah 3:4-9**

On the day Jonah entered the city, he shouted to the crowds: "Forty days from now Nineveh will be destroyed!"

The people of Nineveh believed God's message, and from the greatest to the least, they decided to go without food and wear sackcloth to show their sorrow.

When the king of Nineveh heard what Jonah was saying, he stepped down from his throne and took off his royal robes. He dressed himself in sackcloth and sat on a heap of ashes.

Then the king and his nobles sent this decree throughout the city: "No one, not even the animals, may eat or drink anything at all.

Everyone is required to wear sackcloth and pray earnestly to God. Everyone must turn from their evil ways and stop all their violence. Who can tell? Perhaps even yet God will have pity on us and hold back his fierce anger from destroying us."

God's word is for everyone. Despite the wickedness of the Ninevite people, they were open to God's message and repented immediately. If we simply proclaim what we know about God, we may be surprised at how many people will listen.

### **Using others' curiosity as an opener to**

**Matthew 3:4-6**

John's clothes were woven from camel hair, and he wore a leather belt; his food was locusts and wild honey.

People from Jerusalem and from every section of Judea and from all over the Jordan Valley went out to the wilderness to hear him preach. [6] And when they confessed their sins, he baptized them in the Jordan River.

John was markedly different from other religious leaders of his day. While many were greedy, selfish, and preoccupied with winning the praise of the people, John was concerned only with the praise of God.

Having separated himself from the evil and hypocrisy of his day, John lived differently from other people to show that his message was new. John not only preached God's law, he *lived* it. Do you practice what you preach? Could people discover what you believe by observing the way you live?

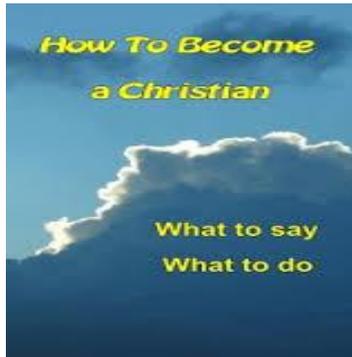
John must have presented a strange image! Many people came to hear this preacher who wore odd clothes and ate unusual food. Some probably came simply out of curiosity and ended up repenting of their sins as they listened to his powerful message. People may be curious about your Christian life-style and values. You can use their simple curiosity as an opener to share how Christ makes a difference in you.

Why did John attract so many people? He was the first true prophet in 400 years. He blasted both Herod and the religious leaders, daring acts that fascinated the common people. But John also had strong words for his audience—they too were sinners and needed to repent. His message was powerful and true. The people were expecting a prophet like Elijah (Malachi 4:5; Luke 1:17), and John seemed to be the one!

When you wash dirty hands, the results are immediately visible. But repentance happens inside with a cleansing that isn't seen right away. So John used a symbolic action that people could see: baptism. The Jews used baptism to initiate converts, so John's audience was familiar with the rite. Here, baptism was used as a sign of repentance and forgiveness. *Repent* means "to turn," implying a change in behavior. It is turning from sin toward God. Have you repented of sin in your life? Can others see the difference it makes in you? A changed life with new and different behavior makes your repentance real and visible.

The Jordan River is about 70 miles long, its main section stretching between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. Jerusalem lies about 20 miles west of the Jordan. This river was Israel's eastern border, and many significant events in the nation's history took place there. It was by the Jordan River that the Israelites renewed their covenant with G

## Chapter 4



### Drawing those around us to Christ

#### Matthew 4:18-20

One day as Jesus was walking along the shore beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers—Simon, also called Peter, and Andrew—fishing with a net, for they were commercial fishermen.

Jesus called out to them, "Come, be my disciples, and I will show you how to fish for people!" And they left their nets at once and went with him.

The Sea of Galilee is really a large lake. About 30 fishing towns surrounded it during Jesus' day, and Capernaum was the largest.

Jesus told Peter and Andrew to leave their fishing business and become "fishers of men," to help others find God. Jesus was calling them away from their productive trades to be productive spiritually. We all need to fish for souls. If we practice Christ's teachings and share the gospel with others, we will be able to draw those around us to Christ like a fisherman who pulls fish into his boat with nets.

These men already knew Jesus. He had talked to Peter and Andrew previously (John 1:35-42) and had been preaching in the area. When

Jesus called them, they knew what kind of man he was and were willing to follow him. They were not in a hypnotic trance when they followed but had been thoroughly convinced that following him would change their lives forever.

### **Jesus' call for help in witnessing**

#### **Matthew 9:37-38**

He said to his disciples, "The harvest is so great, but the workers are so few. So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send out more workers for his fields."

The good news of the kingdom was that the promised and long-awaited Messiah had finally come. His healing miracles were a sign that his teaching was true.

Jesus needs workers who know how to deal with people's problems. We can comfort others and show them the way to live because we have been helped with our problems by God and his laborers (2 Cor. 1:3-7).

Ezekiel also compared Israel to sheep without a shepherd (Ezekiel 34:5-6). Jesus came to be the Shepherd, the One who could show people how to avoid life's pitfalls (see John 10:14).

Jesus looked at the crowds following him and referred to them as a field ripe for harvest. Many people are ready to give their lives to Christ if someone would show them how. Jesus commands us to pray that people will respond to this need for workers. Often, when we pray for something, God answers our prayers by using *us*. Be prepared for God to use you to show another person the way to him.

## **Persecution gives opportunity for witnessing**

**Matthew 10:17-18**

But beware! For you will be handed over to the courts and beaten in the synagogues.

And you must stand trial before governors and kings because you are my followers. This will be your opportunity to tell them about me—yes, to witness to the world.

Later the disciples experienced these hardships (Acts 5:40; Acts 12:1-3), not only from without (governments, courts), but also from within (friends, family; Matthew 10:21). Living for God often brings on persecution, but with it comes the opportunity to tell the good news of salvation. In times of persecution, we can be confident because Jesus has “overcome the world” (John 16:33). And those who stand firm to the end will be saved (Matthew 10:22).

## **Our responsibility to tell others about Jesus**

**Matthew 28:18-20**

Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given complete authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

God gave Jesus authority over heaven and earth. On the basis of that authority, Jesus told his disciples to make more disciples as they

preached, baptized, and taught. With this same authority, Jesus still commands us to tell others the Good News and make them disciples for the kingdom.

When someone is dying or leaving us, his or her last words are very important. Jesus left the disciples with these last words of instruction: they were under his authority; they were to make more disciples; they were to baptize and teach these new disciples to obey Christ; Christ would be with them always. Whereas in previous missions Jesus had sent his disciples only to the Jews (Matthew 10:5-6), their mission from now on would be worldwide. Jesus is Lord of the earth, and he died for the sins of people from all nations.

We are to go—whether it is next door or to another country—and make disciples. It is not an option, but a command to all who call Jesus “Lord.” We are not all evangelists in the formal sense, but we have all received gifts that we can use to help fulfill the Great Commission. As we obey, we have comfort in the knowledge that Jesus is always with us.

Jesus’ words affirm the reality of the Trinity. Some people accuse theologians of making up the concept of the Trinity and reading it into Scripture. As we see here, the concept comes directly from Jesus himself. He did not say baptize them into the *names*, but into the *name* of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The word *Trinity* does not occur in Scripture, but it well describes the three-in-one nature of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The disciples were to baptize people because baptism unites a believer with Jesus Christ in his or her death to sin and resurrection to new life. Baptism symbolizes submission to Christ, willingness to live God’s way, and identification with God’s covenant people.

How is Jesus *with* us? Jesus was with the disciples physically until he ascended into heaven, and then spiritually through the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4). The Holy Spirit would be Jesus’ presence that would never leave

them (John 14:26). Jesus continues to be with us today through his Spirit.

The Old Testament prophecies and genealogies in the book of Matthew present Jesus' credentials for being King of the world—not a military or political leader, as the disciples had originally hoped, but a spiritual King who can overcome all evil and rule in the heart of every person. If we refuse to serve the King faithfully, we are disloyal subjects, fit only to be banished from the kingdom. We must make Jesus King of our lives and worship him as our Savior, King, and Lord.

### John 4:35

Do you think the work of harvesting will not begin until the summer ends four months from now? Look around you! Vast fields are ripening all around us and are ready now for the harvest.

Sometimes Christians excuse themselves from witnessing by saying that their family or friends aren't ready to believe. Jesus, however, makes it clear that around us a continual harvest waits to be reaped. Don't let Jesus find you making excuses. Look around. You will find people ready to hear God's Word.

## Chapter 5



### Who can witness

#### Mark 2:14-15

As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alpheus sitting at his tax-collection booth. "Come, be my disciple," Jesus said to him. So Levi got up and followed him.

That night Levi invited Jesus and his disciples to be his dinner guests, along with his fellow tax collectors and many other notorious sinners. (There were many people of this kind among the crowds that followed Jesus.)

Capernaum was a key military center for Roman troops, as well as a thriving business community. Several major highways intersected in Capernaum, with merchants passing through from as far away as Egypt to the south and Mesopotamia to the north.

Levi (Matthew), a Jew, was appointed by the Romans to be the area's tax collector. He collected taxes from citizens as well as from merchants passing through town. Tax collectors were expected to take a commission on the taxes they collected. Most of them overcharged and vastly enriched themselves. Tax collectors were despised by the Jews

because of their reputation for cheating and their support of Rome. The Jews must also have hated to think that some of the money collected went to support pagan religions and temples.

The day that Levi met Jesus, Levi held a meeting at his house to introduce others to Jesus. Levi didn't waste any time starting to witness! Some people feel that new believers should wait for maturity or training before they begin to tell others about Christ. But like Levi, new believers can share their faith right away with whatever knowledge, skill, or experience they already have.

### **Jesus' principles about witnessing**

#### **Mark 2:16-17**

But when some of the teachers of religious law who were Pharisees saw him eating with people like that, they said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with such scum?"

When Jesus heard this, he told them, "Healthy people don't need a doctor—sick people do. I have come to call sinners, not those who think they are already good enough."

The self-righteous Pharisees were indignant that Jesus would eat a meal with such sinners. But Jesus gladly associated with sinners because he loved them and because he knew that they needed to hear what he had to say. Jesus spent time with whoever needed or wanted to hear his message—poor, rich, bad, good. We, too, must befriend those who need Christ, even if they do not seem to be ideal companions. Are there people you have been neglecting because of their reputation? They may be the ones who most need to see and hear the message of Christ's love in and from you.

## Enthusiasm about witnessing

Mark 5:19-20

But Jesus said, "No, go home to your friends, and tell them what wonderful things the Lord has done for you and how merciful he has been."

So the man started off to visit the Ten Towns of that region and began to tell everyone about the great things Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed at what he told them.

Jesus told this man to tell his friends about the miraculous healing. Most of the time, Jesus urged those he healed to keep quiet. Why the difference? Here are possible answers:

The demon-possessed man had been alone and unable to speak. Telling others what Jesus did for him would prove that he was healed.

This was mainly a Gentile and pagan area, so Jesus was not expecting great crowds to follow him or religious leaders to hinder him.

By sending the man away with this good news, Jesus was expanding his ministry to people who were not Jews.

This man had been demon-possessed but became a living example of Jesus' power. He wanted to go with Jesus, but Jesus told him to go home and share his story with his friends. If you have experienced Jesus' power, you too are a living example.

Decapolis, or the Ten Cities, was located southeast of the Sea of Galilee. Ten cities, each with its own independent government, formed an alliance for protection and for increased trade opportunities.

Greek traders and immigrants had settled these cities several centuries earlier. Although Jews also lived in the area, they were not in the majority. Many people from the Decapolis followed Jesus (Matthew 4:25).

### **Jesus' resurrection is the key to**

**Mark 16:15**

And then he told them, "Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone, everywhere.

Jesus told his disciples to go into all the world, telling everyone that he had paid the penalty for sin and that those who believe in him can be forgiven and live eternally with God. Christian disciples today in all parts of the world are preaching this gospel to people who haven't heard about Christ.

The driving power that carries missionaries around the world and sets Christ's church in motion is the faith that comes from the resurrection. Do you ever feel as though you don't have the skill or determination to be a witness for Christ?

You must personally realize that Jesus rose from the dead and lives for you today. As you grow in your relationship with Christ, he will give you both the opportunities and the inner strength to tell his message.

**Don't blame yourself if your efforts are rejected**

## Luke 9:5

If the people of the village won't receive your message when you enter it, shake off its dust from your feet as you leave. It is a sign that you have abandoned that village to its fate."

Shaking the dust of unaccepting towns from their feet had deep cultural implications. Pious Jews would do this after passing through Gentile cities to show their separation from Gentile practices. If the disciples shook the dust of a *Jewish* town from their feet, it would show their separation from Jews who rejected their Messiah. This action also showed that the disciples were not responsible for how the people responded to their message. Neither are we responsible if we have carefully and truthfully presented Christ, but our message is rejected. Like the disciples, we must move on to others whom God desires to reach.

## Chapter 6



### How to acknowledge Jesus in your life

Luke 12:8-9

"And I assure you of this: If anyone acknowledges me publicly here on earth, I, the Son of Man, will openly acknowledge that person in the presence of God's angels.

But if anyone denies me here on earth, I will deny that person before God's angels.

We disown Jesus when we

- (1) Hope no one will think we are Christians,
- (2) Decide *not* to speak up for what is right,
- (3) Are silent about our relationship with God
- (4) Blend into society,
- (5) Accept our culture's non-Christian values.

By contrast, we acknowledge him when we

- (1) Live moral, upright, Christ-honoring lives,
- (2) Look for opportunities to share our faith with others,
- (3) Help others in need,
- (4) Take a stand for justice,
- (5) Love others,
- (6) Acknowledge our loyalty to Christ,
- (7) Use our lives and resources to carry out his desires rather than our own.

### **Witnessing in a non-divisive way.**

**John 3:25**

At that time a certain Jew began an argument with John's disciples over ceremonial cleansing.

Some people look for points of disagreement so they can sow seeds of discord, discontent, and doubt. John the Baptist ended this theological argument by focusing on his devotion to Christ. It is divisive to try to force others to believe our way. Instead, let's witness about what Christ has done for us. How can anyone argue with us about that?

### **Why many try to change the subject**

**John 4:16-20**

"Go and get your husband," Jesus told her.

"I don't have a husband," the woman replied.

Jesus said, "You're right! You don't have a husband— [18] for you have had five husbands, and you aren't even married to the man you're living with now."

"Sir," the woman said, "you must be a prophet.

So tell me, why is it that you Jews insist that Jerusalem is the only place of worship, while we Samaritans claim it is here at Mount Gerizim, where our ancestors worshiped?"

When this woman discovered that Jesus knew all about her private life, she quickly changed the subject. Often people become uncomfortable when the conversation is too close to home, and they try to talk about something else. As we witness, we should gently guide the conversation back to Christ. His presence exposes sin and makes people squirm, but only Christ can forgive sins and give new life.

The woman brought up a popular theological issue—the correct place to worship. But her question was a smoke screen to keep Jesus away from her deepest need. Jesus directed the conversation to a much more important point: the *location* of worship is not nearly as important as the *attitude* of the worshipers.

“God is spirit” means he is not a physical being limited to one place. He is present everywhere and he can be worshiped anywhere, at any time. It is not where we worship that counts, but how we worship. Is your worship genuine and true?

## Overcoming prejudice to witnessing

John 4:7-9

Soon a Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Please give me a drink." [8] He was alone at the time because his disciples had gone into the village to buy some food.

The woman was surprised, for Jews refuse to have anything to do with Samaritans. She said to Jesus, "You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. Why are you asking me for a drink?"

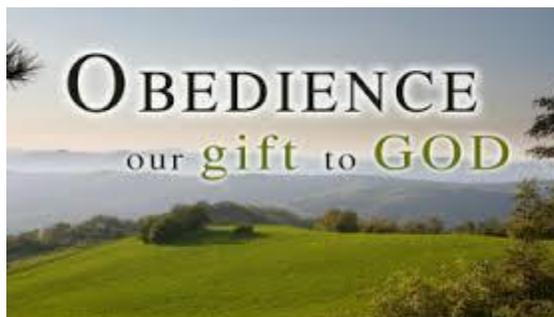
Jacob's well was on the property originally owned by Jacob (Genesis 33:18-19). It was not a spring-fed well, but a well into which water seeped from rain and dew, collecting at the bottom.

Wells were almost always located outside the city along the main road. Twice each day, morning and evening, women came to draw water. This woman came at noon, however, probably to avoid meeting people who knew her reputation.

This woman (1) was a Samaritan, a member of the hated mixed race, (2) was known to be living in sin, and (3) was in a public place. No respectable Jewish man would talk to a woman under such circumstances. But Jesus did.

The gospel is for every person, no matter what his or her race, social position, or past sins. We must be prepared to share this gospel at any time and in any place. Jesus crossed all barriers to share the gospel, and we who follow him must do no less.

## Chapter 7



### **Results may not be immediate**

#### **John 4:15**

"Please, sir," the woman said, "Give me some of that water! Then I'll never be thirsty again, and I won't have to come here to haul water."

The woman mistakenly believed that if she received the water Jesus offered, she would not have to return to the well each day. She was interested in Jesus' message because she thought it could make her life easier. But if that were always the case, people would accept Christ's message for the wrong reasons. Christ did not come to take away challenges, but to change us on the inside and to empower us to deal with problems from God's perspective.

### **Don't let fear keep you from witnessing**

#### **John 7:13**

But no one had the courage to speak favorably about him in public, for they were afraid of getting in trouble with the Jewish leaders.

Everyone was talking about Jesus! But when it came time to speak up for him in public, no one said a word. All were afraid.

Fear can stifle our witness. Although many people talk about Christ in church, when it comes to making a public statement about their faith, they are often embarrassed. Jesus says that he will acknowledge us before God if we acknowledge him before others (Matthew 10:32). Be courageous! Speak up for Christ!

**Acts 4:20**

**We cannot stop telling about the wonderful things we have seen and heard."**

We sometimes may be afraid to share our faith in Christ because people might feel uncomfortable and might reject us. But Peter and John's zeal for the Lord was so strong that they could not keep quiet, even when threatened. If your courage to witness for God has weakened, pray that your boldness may increase. Remember Jesus' promise, "Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven" (Matthew 10:32).

### **Four typical reactions people have to Jesus**

**John 9:1**

**As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man who had been blind from birth.**

we see four different reactions to Jesus. The neighbors revealed surprise and skepticism; the Pharisees showed disbelief and prejudice; the parents believed but kept quiet for fear of excommunication; and the healed man showed consistent, growing faith.

## **Need not know everything to witness**

**John 9:25**

"I don't know whether he is a sinner," the man replied. "But I know this: I was blind, and now I can see!"

By now the man who had been blind had heard the same questions over and over. He did not know how or why he was healed, but he knew that his life had been miraculously changed, and he was not afraid to tell the truth. You don't need to know all the answers in order to share Christ with others. It is important to tell them how he has changed your life. Then trust that God will use your words to help others believe in him too.

## Chapter 8



### **Avoiding discouragement in witnessing**

#### **John 12:37-38**

But despite all the miraculous signs he had done, most of the people did not believe in him. [38] This is exactly what Isaiah the prophet had predicted:

"Lord, who has believed our message?  
To whom will the Lord reveal his saving power?"

### **Disciples aided by Holy Spirit**

#### **John 14:12-13**

The truth is, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father. You can ask for anything in my name, and I will do it, because the work of the Son brings glory to the Father.

Jesus is not saying that his disciples would do more amazing miracles—after all, raising the dead is about as amazing as you can get. Rather, the

disciples, working in the power of the Holy Spirit, would carry the gospel of God's kingdom out of Palestine and into the whole world.

### Acts 1:8

But when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you will receive power and will tell people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Power from the Holy Spirit is not limited to strength beyond the ordinary—that power also involves courage, boldness, confidence, insight, ability, and authority. The disciples would need all these gifts to fulfill their mission. If you believe in Jesus Christ, you can experience the power of the Holy Spirit in your life.

Jesus promised the disciples that they would receive power to witness after they received the Holy Spirit. Notice the progression:

- (1) They would receive the Holy Spirit,
- (2) He would give them power, and
- (3) They would witness with extraordinary results. Often we try to reverse the order and witness by our own power and authority.

Witnessing is not showing what we can do for God. It is showing and telling what God has done for us.

Jesus had instructed his disciples to witness to people of all nations about him (Matthew 28:19-20). But they were told to wait first for the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49). God has important work for you to do for him, but you must do it by the power of the Holy Spirit. We often like to get on with the job, even if it means running ahead of God. But waiting is sometimes part of God's plan. Are you waiting and listening for God's complete instructions, or are you running ahead of his plans?

We need God's timing and power to be truly effective.

This verse describes a series of ever-widening circles. The gospel was to spread, geographically, from Jerusalem, into Judea and Samaria, and finally to the whole world.

It would begin with the devout Jews in Jerusalem and Samaria, spread to the mixed race in Samaria, and finally is offered to the Gentiles in the uttermost parts of the earth.

God's gospel has not reached its final destination if someone in your family, your workplace, your school, or your community hasn't heard about Jesus Christ.

Make sure that you are contributing in some way to the ever-widening circle of God's loving message.

### **How God is glorified through witnessing**

**John 15:8**

**My true disciples produce much fruit. This brings great glory to my Father.**

When a vine bears "much fruit," God is glorified, for daily he sent the sunshine and rain to make the crops grow, and constantly he nurtured each tiny plant and prepared it to blossom. What a moment of glory for the Lord of the harvest when the harvest is brought in.

## Chapter 9



### Risks of witnessing

#### Acts 4:3

They arrested them and, since it was already evening, jailed them until morning.

Peter and John spoke to the people during the afternoon prayer time. The Sadducees moved in quickly to investigate. Because they did not believe in the resurrection, they were understandably disturbed with what the apostles were saying. Peter and John were refuting one of their fundamental beliefs and thus threatening their authority as religious teachers. Even though the nation was under Roman rule, the Sadducees had almost unlimited power over the temple grounds. Thus they were able to arrest Peter and John for no other reason than teaching something that contradicted their beliefs.

Not often will sharing the gospel send John and us to jail as it did Peter. Still, we run risks in trying to win others to Christ. We might be willing to face a night in jail if it would bring 5,000 people to Christ, but shouldn't we also be willing to suffer for the sake of even one? What do you risk in witnessing—rejection, persecution? Whatever the risks, realize that nothing done for God is ever wasted.

## **Witnessing no matter what the cost.**

### **Acts 5:40-42**

The council accepted his advice. They called in the apostles and had them flogged. Then they ordered them never again to speak in the name of Jesus, and they let them go.

The apostles left the high council rejoicing that God had counted them worthy to suffer dishonor for the name of Jesus.

And every day, in the Temple and in their homes, they continued to teach and preach this message: "The Messiah you are looking for is Jesus."

Peter and John were warned repeatedly not to preach, but they continued in spite of the threats. We, too, should live as Christ has asked us to, sharing our faith no matter what the cost. We may not be beaten or thrown in jail, but we may be ridiculed, ostracized, or slandered. To what extent are you willing to suffer for the sake of sharing the gospel with others?

Have you ever thought of persecution as a blessing, as something worth rejoicing about? This beating suffered by Peter and John was the first time any of the apostles had been physically abused for their faith. These men knew how Jesus had suffered, and they praised God that he had allowed them to be persecuted like their Lord. If you are mocked or persecuted for your faith, it isn't because you're doing something wrong, but because God has counted you "worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name."

Home Bible studies are not new. As the believers needed to grow in their new faith, home Bible studies met their needs, as well as serving as a means to introduce new people to the Christian faith. During later

times of persecution, meeting in homes became the primary method of passing on Bible knowledge. Christians throughout the world still use this approach when under persecution and as a way to build up believers.

### Rev. 1:9

I am John, your brother. In Jesus we are partners in suffering and in the Kingdom and in patient endurance. I was exiled to the island of Patmos for preaching the word of God and speaking about Jesus.

Patmos was a small rocky island in the Aegean Sea, about 50 miles offshore from the city of Ephesus on the Asia Minor seacoast (see map).

The Christian church was facing severe persecution. Almost all believers were socially, politically, or economically suffering because of this empire-wide persecution, and some were even being killed for their faith. John was exiled to Patmos because he refused to stop preaching the gospel. We may not face persecution for our faith as the early Christians did, but even with our freedom few of us have the courage to share God's Word with others. If we hesitate to share our faith during easy times, how will we do during times of persecution?

### **Lessons learned from Philip's sharing with Ethiopian eunuch**

#### Acts 8:29-35

The Holy Spirit said to Philip, "Go over and walk along beside the carriage."

Philip ran over and heard the man reading from the prophet Isaiah; so he asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?"

The man replied, "How can I, when there is no one to instruct me?" And he begged Philip to come up into the carriage and sit with him.

The passage of Scripture he had been reading was this:

"He was led as a sheep to the slaughter.  
And as a lamb is silent before the shearers,  
He did not open his mouth.  
He was humiliated and received no justice.  
Who can speak of his descendants?  
For his life was taken from the earth."

The eunuch asked Philip, "Was Isaiah talking about himself or someone else?" So Philip began with this same Scripture and then used many others to tell him the Good News about Jesus.

Philip found the Ethiopian man reading Scripture. Taking advantage of this opportunity to explain the gospel, Philip asked the man if he understood what he was reading. Philip

- (1) Followed the Spirit's leading,
- (2) Began the discussion from where the man was (immersed in the prophecies of Isaiah), and
- (3) Explained how Jesus Christ fulfilled Isaiah's prophecies. When we share the gospel, we should start where the other person's concerns are focused. Then we can bring the gospel to bear on those concerns.

The eunuch asked Philip to explain a passage of Scripture that he did not understand. When we have trouble understanding the Bible, we should ask others to help us. We must never let our insecurity or pride get in the way of understanding God's Word.

Some think that the Old Testament is not relevant today, but Philip led this man to faith in Jesus Christ by

### **Using Old Testament in witnessing**

**Acts 8:35**

So Philip began with this same Scripture and then used many others to tell him the Good News about Jesus.

Some think that the Old Testament is not relevant today, but Philip led this man to faith in Jesus Christ by using the Old Testament. Jesus Christ is found in the pages of both the Old and New Testaments. God's entire Word is applicable to all people in all ages. Don't avoid or neglect to use the Old Testament. It too is God's Word.

### **Finding common ground in**

**Acts 17:22**

God overlooked people's former ignorance about these things, but now he commands everyone everywhere to turn away from idols and turn to him.

For he has set a day for judging the world with justice by the man he has appointed, and he proved to everyone who this is by raising him from the dead."

Paul was well prepared to speak to this group. He came from Tarsus, an educational center, and had the training and knowledge to present his beliefs clearly and persuasively. Paul was a rabbi, taught by the finest scholar of his day, Gamaliel, and he had spent much of his life thinking and reasoning through the Scriptures.

It is not enough to teach or preach with conviction. Like Paul, we must be prepared. The more we know about the Bible, what it means, and how to apply it to our lives, the more convincing our words will be. This does not mean that we should avoid presenting the gospel until we feel adequately prepared. We should work with what we know, but always want to know more in order to reach more people and answer their questions and arguments more effectively.

Paul's address is a good example of how to communicate the gospel. Paul did not begin by reciting Jewish history, as he usually did, for this would have been meaningless to his Greek audience. He began by building a case for the one true God, using examples they understood (Acts 17:22-23). Then he established common ground by emphasizing what they agreed on about God (Acts 17:24-29). Finally he moved his message to the person of Christ, centering on the resurrection (Acts 17:30-31). When you witness to others, you can use Paul's approach: use examples, establish common ground, and then move people toward a decision about Jesus Christ.

### **Varying methods but not message**

**Acts 17:30-31**

God overlooked people's former ignorance about these things, but now he commands everyone everywhere to turn away from idols and turn to him.

For he has set a day for judging the world with justice by the man he has appointed, and he proved to everyone who this is by raising him from the dead."

Paul did not leave his message unfinished. He confronted his listeners with Jesus' resurrection and its meaning to all people—either blessing or punishment. The Greeks had no concept of judgment. Most of them preferred worshiping many gods instead of just one, and the concept of resurrection was unbelievable and offensive to them. Paul did not hold back the truth, however, no matter what they might think of it. Paul often changed his approach to fit his audience, but he never changed his basic message.

### 2 Cor. 4:2

We reject all shameful and underhanded methods. We do not try to trick anyone, and we do not distort the word of God. We tell the truth before God, and all who are honest know that.

Preachers, teachers, and anyone else who talks about Jesus Christ must remember that they stand in God's presence—he hears every word. When you tell people about Christ, be careful not to distort the message to please your audience. Proclaim the truth of God's Word.

### 1 Thes. 4:8

Anyone who refuses to live by these rules is not disobeying human rules but is rejecting God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.

Sexual standards were very low in the Roman Empire, and in many societies today they are not any higher. The temptation to engage in sexual intercourse outside the marriage relationship has always been powerful. Giving in to that temptation can have disastrous results. Sexual sins always hurt someone: individuals, families, businesses, churches. Besides the physical consequences, there are also spiritual consequences. For more on why sexual sin is so harmful, see the note on 1 Cor. 6:18.

Sexual desires and activities must be placed under Christ's control. God created sex for procreation and pleasure, and as an expression of love between a husband and wife. Sexual experience must be limited to the marriage relationship to avoid hurting ourselves, our relationship to God, and our relationships with others.

### **Don't assume "religious" people know about Jesus**

#### **Acts 17:23**

For as I was walking along I saw your many altars. And one of them had this inscription on it—'To an Unknown God.' You have been worshiping him without knowing who he is, and now I wish to tell you about him.

The Athenians had built an idol to the unknown god for fear of missing blessings or receiving punishment. Paul's opening statement to the men of Athens was about their unknown god. Paul was not endorsing this god, but using the inscription as a point of entry for his witness to the one true God.

Paul explained the one true God to these educated men of Athens; although these men were, in general, very religious, they did not know God. Today we have a "Christian" society, but to most people, God is

still unknown. We need to proclaim who he is and make it clear what he did for all mankind through his Son Jesus.

## Chapter 10



### **Holy Spirit increases opportunities to witness**

**Acts 22:30**

The next day the commander freed Paul from his chains and ordered the leading priests into session with the Jewish high council. He had Paul brought in before them to try to find out what the trouble was all about.

Paul used his times of persecution as an opportunity for him to witness. Even his enemies were creating a platform for him to address the entire Sanhedrin (Jewish council). If we are sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading, we will see increased opportunities to share our faith, even in the face of opposition.

### **How to react to sarcasm**

**Acts 26:28-29**

Agrippa interrupted him. "Do you think you can make me a Christian so quickly?"

Paul replied, "Whether quickly or not, I pray to God that both you and everyone here in this audience might become the same as I am, except for these chains."

Agrippa responded to Paul's presentation with a sarcastic remark. Paul didn't react to the brush-off, but made a personal appeal to which he hoped all his listeners would respond. Paul's response is a good example for us as we tell others about God's plan of salvation. A sincere personal appeal or personal testimony can show the depth of our concern and break through hardened hearts.

Paul's heart is revealed here in his words: he was more concerned for the salvation of these strangers than for the removal of his own chains. Ask God to give you a burning desire to see others come to Christ—a desire so strong that it overshadows your problems.

### **Be gracious in witnessing**

**Col. 4:6**

Let your conversation be gracious and effective so that you will have the right answer for everyone.

When we tell others about Christ, it is important always to be gracious in what we say. No matter how much sense the message makes, we lose our effectiveness if we are not courteous. Just as we like to be respected, we must respect others if we want them to listen to what we have to say. "Seasoned with salt" means that what we say should be "tasty" and should encourage further dialogue.

## **Point to Christ not yourself when witnessing**

### **2 Tim. 2:6-8**

Hardworking farmers are the first to enjoy the fruit of their labor. Think about what I am saying. The Lord will give you understanding in all these things.

Never forget that Jesus Christ was a man born into King David's family and that he was raised from the dead. This is the Good News I preach.

Paul told Timothy to reflect on his words, and God would give him insight. God speaks through the Bible, his Word, but we need to be open and receptive to him. As you read the Bible, ask God to show you his timeless truths and the application to your life. Then consider what you have read by thinking it through and meditating on it. God will give you understanding.

False teachers were a problem in Ephesus (see Acts 20:29-30; 1 Tim. 1:3-11). At the heart of false teaching is an incorrect view of Christ. In Timothy's day many asserted that Christ was divine but not human—God but not man.

These days we often hear that Jesus was human but not divine—man but not God. Either view destroys the good news that Jesus Christ has taken our sins on himself and has reconciled us to God. In this verse, Paul firmly states that Jesus is fully man (“descended from David”) and fully God (“raised from the dead”). This is an important doctrine for all Christians.

## **Training others to witness**

**2 Tim. 2:2**

You have heard me teach many things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Teach these great truths to trustworthy people who are able to pass them on to others.

If the church were to consistently follow this advice, it would expand geometrically as well-taught believers would teach others and commission them, in turn, to teach still others. Disciples need to be equipped to pass on their faith; our work is not done until new believers are able to make disciples of others (see Ephes. 4:12-13).

## **The church's greatest responsibility**

**2 Tim. 4:1-2**

And so I solemnly urge you before God and before Christ Jesus—who will someday judge the living and the dead when he appears to set up his Kingdom:

Preach the word of God. Be persistent, whether the time is favorable or not. Patiently correct, rebuke, and encourage your people with good teaching.

It was important for Timothy to preach the gospel so that the Christian faith could spread throughout the world.

We believe in Christ today because people like Timothy were faithful to their mission. It is still vitally important for believers to spread the gospel. Half the people who have ever lived are alive today, and most of them do not know Christ. He is coming soon, and he wants to find his faithful believers ready for him.

It may be inconvenient to take a stand for Christ or to tell others about his love, but preaching the Word of God is the most important responsibility the church and its members have been given. Be prepared for, courageous in, and sensitive to God-given opportunities to tell the Good News.

“Be prepared in season and out of season” means to always be ready to serve God in any situation, whether or not it is convenient. Be sensitive to the opportunities God gives you.

Paul told Timothy to “correct, rebuke and encourage.” It is difficult to accept correction, to be told we have to change. But no matter how much the truth hurts, we must be willing to listen to it so we can more fully obey God.

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**Holy Bible: New Living Bible translation.**

**Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print**

