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Witnessing in the New Testament

Lesson Aim

Discover New Testament secrets for witnessing that we can incorporate into our lives, beginning this week.

Introduction

How do we get started witnessing? What do we say? Should we ask people to make a decision in the first encounter? Isn't witnessing optional? Do some people have the "gift" and others don't? Do we need to build a friendship first before sharing the Gospel? These and many other questions come to mind as we think about witnessing.

We will begin this course by looking at how Jesus and His followers went about witnessing in the New Testament. Jesus Himself is (as in all things) our perfect Example of a fisher of men, and He promised in the beginning of His ministry that He would make fishers of men of those who faithfully followed Him (Matthew 4:17-19).

We will begin by examining three witnessing encounters. Following are some questions to help us dig and discuss.

A. Reading and thinking about New Testament witnessing encounters

Read the accounts of Jesus' encounter with the woman at the well (John 4:1-42), Philip's encounter with the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-40), and Paul's encounter at Mars' Hill (Acts 17:16-34). As you read, consider these questions about each of the encounters:

- How did the witness begin the encounter?
- What "tools" did the witness use (objects, stories, questions, sayings, Scriptures)?
- Did the witness encounter any distractions or objections? How did he handle them?
- On what topics did the witness focus?
- Did the witness try to bring the person(s) to a decision? If so, to what?
- Do you think the witness was "successful"? What were the outcomes of the encounter?
- What lessons can we learn and apply for our witnessing from these encounters?

B. Learning from the witnessing accounts

John 4:1-42 † *Jesus' Encounter With the Woman at the Well*

Acts 8:26-40 † *Philip's Encounter With the Ethiopian Eunuch*

Acts 17:16-34 † *Paul's Encounter on Mars' Hill*

 **Conclusion to Today's Lesson**

Read/Study

- Finish reading any of the three passages not discussed in class. Write any other observations about witnessing you made from studying them.

Do

- Ask God each day for alertness and opportunities for a witnessing encounter. Then, do it! Witness to at least one person this week. Note any lessons learned from your encounters that you can share with class members.
- Do any work that your teacher assigns you from Sections A, B, and C in the next lesson.
- *Prayer suggestion:* Pair up with another student; briefly share an insight from the class session and a prayer request related to the session; then pray for each other and for an opportunity this week to witness to at least one person.

Ponder for the Next Session

- › What are some of the fears that hinder me from witnessing?
- › What are some of the motives I have for witnessing (both good and bad)?

Next Lesson's Topics

- › Dealing with fear and weakness in witnessing
- › Reviewing our motives for witnessing

Dealing With Fear and Weakness; Motives for Witnessing

Lesson Aims

Acknowledge fears of witnessing and find ways to overcome them.

Review motives for witnessing and choose those that will best contribute to and sustain a lifestyle of witnessing.

Dealing With Fear and Weakness

Introduction

Perhaps the greatest obstacles to a lifestyle of witnessing are our fears of people's reactions and our feelings of weakness and incompetence. Here in the western world we are not so concerned that people will kill us for witnessing. We have many opportunities to witness. But we are afraid. How can we break through this hindrance inside us? Today's lesson may help as we discover that New Testament, Spirit-filled Christians struggled with fear and weakness just as we do today!

What are some fears that hinder us from being the witness Christ wants us to be?

A. Paul's emotions when witnessing (1 Corinthians 2:1-5)

1. What did Paul feel when he witnessed to the Corinthians? Why? _____

2. In what way did his emotions turn out to be his allies in witnessing? _____

B. How can difficulties in witnessing result in blessing?

1. Luke 6:22, 23 _____
2. 1 Peter 4:12-14 _____
3. 2 Corinthians 12:9, 10 _____
4. 2 Timothy 2:12 _____

C. How can we grow in boldness as witnesses for Christ?

1. Review the worst possible thing that could happen to us, and tell why it wouldn't be so bad after all!

2. Reflect on three possible responses to our witness and how they represent a "win" rather than a loss. We normally think, *if they accept my witness = a win; if they listen but delay accepting my witness = a loss; if they*

reject my witness = a loss. However, from a different point of view, each response is actually a “win.” Tell how each can be a winning situation for the witness. _____

3. Discover what true success is in witnessing: “Success in witnessing is . . . taking the initiative to share the Gospel in the power of the Spirit and leaving (or trusting) the results with God” (Bill Bright).

How can this definition help us in witnessing? _____

4. Follow the example of the early Christians. What did they do when they suffered for witnessing? What did they ask God to do? (Acts 4:20, 21, 23-31; especially verses 24, 29-31).
- _____
- _____

5. Learn an answer you can use for every hard question you may encounter:

Smile. Then say, “That is a good question. I am not completely sure of the answer. If you give me a week or two, I will research it for you. May I have your telephone number/e-mail address so I can get back to you with the answer?”

What are the advantages of a response like this to hard questions? _____

What resources would you access to find answers? _____

Motives for Witnessing

What may be some of the motives (both bad and good) that we have for witnessing? Why are these bad, good, or better motives?

A. Bad Motives for Witnessing

- › Guilt _____
- › Fear _____

B. Good Motives for Witnessing

- › Duty _____
 - › The need of the lost _____
 - › Feelings of compassion for the lost _____
- _____

C. Better Motives for Witnessing

- › Love for Christ _____
- › The glory of God _____