

The Bible Speaks To Me About My Witness

Session 1: Part 1 – Soul-Winning Eyes:
Who’s a Witness?

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Session 1

Soul-Winning Eyes: Who's a Witness?

Session Overview

Who Is a Witness?
God's Concern for the Lost
Application
Exam
Discussion Guide for Mentor and Participant

Learner Objectives

At the end of this session, you should:

- be able to discuss the biblical understanding of being a witness
- be able to discuss the biblical perspective of sin.
- be able to articulate why we need to have a concern for the lost

Introduction

What does it mean to witness? Isn't it only the pastor or professional minister's job to talk to people about their spiritual lives?

To witness means to simply tell the story of what God has done for us . . . to make others aware of Jesus, who He is and what He has accomplished, and to let them know that they can also have a relationship with the God who created them.



Soul-Winning Eyes: Who's a Witness

Notes

The spring day was hot and muggy. My wife and I were on a short-term teaching and preaching assignment in Greater Manila, Philippines. Our home base was an upstairs apartment on the seminary campus.

A young woman appeared at our door asking for work. I'll call her Janet, and she wondered if we needed a maid. At the missionaries' urging we hired her—the going rate in that area at that time was 10 pesos, or 36 cents an hour. Janet had a husband and three children. Her home was without water, electricity, or refrigeration, with dirt for a floor.

I thought a lot about Janet. She was a gracious and helpful presence in our home-away-from-home. I knew she had previously worked for other missionaries. Their lives and words no doubt prepared her to hear about Jesus.

One day as I crossed the campus, the Holy Spirit said, "You have given her a job. Will you tell her about Jesus too?"

I invited Janet to join Nancy and me for lunch the next day. During our time together we learned that through the loving witness of previous missionaries, Janet had made a commitment to Christ. After only a few minutes of conversation, Janet began to cry. Her relationship with Jesus was not what it should be. There at the lunch table she prayed, renewing her commitment to God. The next Sunday, Janet went to church and knelt at the altar as public testimony of her changed life.

Over the next weeks, we watched Janet grow spiritually. When we left Manila, she said through tears, "I'm sorry you're going, but I'm happy in the Lord." Janet renewed her commitment to Christ because we were *witnesses*.

Soul-winning eyes see things other eyes don't see. Soul-winning eyes understand Jesus. He said, "Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest" (John 4:35). Soul-winning eyes see people who need the Savior and those ready to receive Him.



What is a witness? I am a Christian witness when I tell another person what Jesus means to me and what He has done for me. After Jesus delivered the demon-possessed man, he wanted to travel with the Lord to His next ministry assignment. Instead, Jesus said, “Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you” (Mark 5:19).

Notice the elements of good witness included in Jesus’ instruction. First, we are to go to our family—the people we best understand and with whom we have the most rapport. Second, we are to *tell*. Though people will notice our changed life, it is still necessary to tell who made the change—Jesus! Third, we are to stress *how much* the Lord has done for us. Our testimony should highlight the positive benefits Christ has brought to our life. Fourth, we are to emphasize the *Lord*. The focus is not what we have done for God but what He has done for us.

Witnessing is personal. You are telling your story. You are sharing your experience. Sometimes a witness is indirect. You are telling what Christ has done for another. But the most easily understood and effective witness is *your* story. When Peter stressed his personal experience, his testimony was so powerful that the Jewish religious authorities of the day commanded him to stop speaking about Jesus. Peter replied, “We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20).

Witnessing is telling another what Jesus means to me and has done for me. We also need to understand another term: *soul winning*. Soul winning is attempting to bring people to a personal acceptance of Christ as Savior and Lord. Those who are soul winning present the facts of the gospel and call for a decision. It is more thorough than witnessing and involves explaining biblical truths needed for one’s salvation. It involves an element of persuasion. Witnessing may consist of a one-sentence testimony: “John, I can only say that in the place of an empty life, Christ has given me purpose and meaning.” Almost all soul winning involves witness, but a witness does not always result in immediate soul winning. The Christian’s hope is that the end result of a witness is a soul won to Christ.

In the New Testament three words are used to describe spreading the Christian message by word. One is to “proclaim,” another is to “tell good news” (connected to our word “evangelize”), and the third is to “bear witness.” The word “witness” was used primarily as a legal term. A witness was one who personally experienced and accurately reported facts or events. Or a witness vouched for the truth of a thing. Sometimes people



bear witness, sometimes God or the Spirit bears witness.³

The Old Testament calls God's people to witness for Him against speechless idols. Isaiah 43:12 states, "I have revealed and saved and proclaimed—I, and not some foreign god among you. You are my witnesses," declares the Lord, "that I am God." The resurrected Christ urged His disciples to witness in Luke 24:46–49:

This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.

The early New Testament use of the word "witness" was limited to those who knew Jesus in His earthly ministry and resurrection. Michael Green, author of *Evangelism in the Early Church*, pointed out that this limitation was eventually removed. A sense of personal encounter with the risen Jesus became the basis for genuine witness. That means people like you and me—who have met the living Christ—can be His witnesses.

John's Gospel is a book filled with witness. Jesus gives witness to His own person. The Father, the miracles, the Scriptures, all bear witness to Jesus. In addition, there is an internal witness of the Spirit to those who accept the testimony.² Indeed John's whole purpose is to witness for Christ. His goal is bringing people to experience the life Christ gives. John exclaimed, "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31).

Witness as a term from the courtroom must not mislead us. The Christian witness needs to be presented in a different spirit from the argument of the court. Let's put it this way: The witness does not see himself or herself as a winner of arguments, but as a winner of people to Christ. The witness is going to hungry and needy people with joyous, life-changing news. The prospect is not an enemy to be fought, but a person to be loved and won. It's not so much like arguing a case in a courtroom, but wooing and winning.



God's Concern for the Lost

When I was five years old, my parents sent me to Sunday School with a six-year-old neighbor girl. One set of parents took us to Sunday School, and the other set picked us up.

One Sunday there was a mix-up. No one picked us up. The six-year-old, sensing her maturity, was sure she could lead me home. After all, it was only a mile-and-a-half walk in a small city of 32,000. We started south, but our homes were actually east. About an hour later, my frantic mother and two frightened kids were reunited outside the police station. To this day, the fear of being lost still haunts me. There are people in our world who are lost—apart from God—and uneasy because of it.

When Jesus prayed for His disciples in John 17:11, He addressed God as “Holy Father.” God is holy. People without grace are sinful. There is a gap between a holy God and sinful people. God is also Father. He loves us, and He is patiently trying to reach us in our lostness.

Matthew's gospel was written especially to Jews. For this reason, he shows how Christians are Abraham's seed. The ancient promise of Genesis 15 is honored: “Count the stars . . . So shall your offspring be” (v. 5). As the spiritual descendants of Abraham today, we are to “go and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19). So strongly does the God of the universe and the ages feel this that through Matthew, author Michael Green wrote in *Matthew for Today*, He teaches us to see (9:36), to care (v. 36), to pray (v. 38), to receive words from the Holy Spirit (10:19–20), and to go (vv. 5–6).⁷

Concern for our sin (Romans 3:23) and spiritual death (6:23) caused God to make a way for us to come to Him. Christ tells us, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). Conversely, “Whoever rejects the Son will not see life, [but] God's wrath remains on him” (v. 36).

Some have asked if people can be saved without Christ. In his book *Nothing to Do but to Save Souls*, Robert Coleman answered that such knowledge has not been disclosed to us. God may do what He wants, within His nature, but we can only act on the word of Scripture that He has revealed to the world. To teach people to expect another way of salvation is dangerous, says Robertson McQuilkin.



A Christian witness may be compared to a security guard whose job is to protect the tenth-floor residents of a nursing home, Coleman illustrates. He has a floor plan with the fire exits all marked. What if fire breaks out? Can you imagine the guard discussing with the residents the possibility of other escape routes besides those on the map?

Some today teach that because God loves, He forgives everyone, under all circumstances. Henry Cook wrote in *The Theology of Evangelism* that these teachers “[have] emptied His love of all its desperate seriousness, and have made the cross unintelligible. If God is so kind as to forgive under any circumstances why did Jesus have to die?”

If God sent His Son to die for us, then we who follow Christ must be concerned for the lost. Michael Green said in *Evangelism in the Early Church*:

Now if you believe that outside of Christ there is no hope, it is impossible to possess an atom of human love . . . without being gripped by a great desire to bring men to this one way of salvation. We are not surprised, therefore, to find that concern for the state of the unevangelized was one of the great driving forces behind Christian preaching . . . in the early church.

Christ summarized His ministry this way: “The Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost” (Luke 19:10). To His followers Christ says, “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you” (John 20:21).

Jesus’ concern for lost mankind was so great that He told the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son in Luke 15. Here we learn no one is so worthless but that the Lord is deeply concerned for him or her (v. 4). No effort is to be spared to recover the lost (v. 4).

Nothing brings as much joy to Christ and to all of heaven as when one sinner repents (vv. 7, 10). Notice the great *searching love* displayed in Jesus and the Father in these parables. His love actively seeks us even in our separation from Him.

In the southwestern United States, a man named Seth and his three sons, Mark, Milton, and Matt, owned and operated a large cattle ranch. Because the ranch included mountainous areas at an elevation of more than 7,000 feet, winter storms could develop suddenly and without much warning. Seth’s family had a winter emergency plan just in case this happened.



One day a storm moved in faster than the weatherman predicted. Seth immediately implemented his plan. He designated their home as headquarters. The four then left in different directions to secure the ranch. The corrals were to be opened for the cattle to come in. Water was to be made available. They were all to meet promptly back at headquarters in two hours. The absence of one man after two hours was the signal that he was in trouble.

They left early in the morning. With a hard wind blowing, both snow and the temperature were falling fast. It was a typical southwestern blizzard. After two hours, three men returned to the ranch house. Mark did not arrive. Seth and his two sons waited nervously around the fireplace to get warm. After 15 minutes passed, Seth put on his coat again. "Wait here," he told his boys. "You're finished. I'm going out to look for Mark!"

His middle son stopped him at the door: "Dad, until everybody's home, nobody's finished!" The three went to search together. They followed the designated route. Soon they saw Mark, his truck blown off the road and stuck in the snow. In a short time, Dad and all three boys were at the ranch home —safe, around the fire's warmth.

Can you see that God is like this? Whether it is seeking the lost sheep, the lost coin, or the father running out to meet the lost son, the truth is the same. *"Till everybody's home, nobody's finished!"* The Father isn't finished. The Son isn't finished. The Spirit isn't finished. I'm not finished. You're not finished. As long as there is a lost friend or loved one or lost person anywhere, *"Till everybody's home, nobody's finished!"*³

Notes

1. Janet is not her real name. The names of individuals cited in this book will be changed to protect their privacy. The case histories are true.
2. John 2:22; 3:11, 32–33; 5:32, 36–37, 39; 8:13–14, 18; 9:4; 10:25; 15:26; 16:13; 18:37; 19:24; 1 John 5:10.
3. The source of this story is Dr. Jesse Middendorf, former senior pastor, First Church of the Nazarene, Kansas City, and General Superintendent Emeritus. Previously he was pastor of the men in this story.

Application

Write in three sentences or less the positive things that have come to your life since you have received Christ. This should be part of your witness or testimony.



EXAM – Session 1

1. In Manila, Dr. and Mrs. Shaver gave Janet a much-needed job, but the Holy Spirit said, _____.
 - a) “You have given her a job; don’t you think you should expand her hours?”
 - b) “You have given her a job, and I am pleased you have met your Christian responsibility.”
 - c) “You have given her a job; will you tell her about Jesus, too?”
 - d) “You have given her a job, and that’s all you can do in this culture.”

2. I am a Christian witness when I tell another person what Jesus means to me and what He has done for me. After the demon-possessed man was delivered by Jesus, Jesus told him, _____.
 - a) “Go home to your family”—the ones you best understand and with whom you have the most rapport.
 - b) “And tell them”—your changed life would be noticed, but you still need to tell who made the change.
 - c) We are to stress how much the Lord has done for us. Share the positive benefits Christ has brought to your life.
 - d) Emphasize the Lord—not what we have done, but what He has done for us.
 - e) all of the above

3. Jesus said, “You are witnesses of these things” (Luke 24:46–49). Though witness is a term from the courtroom, today’s effective witness is not so much like arguing a case in a courtroom, but wooing and winning. _____.
 - a) True
 - b) False



4. Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). The Christian witness is like the security guard on the tenth floor of a nursing home. He has a floor plan with all the fire exits marked. When fire breaks out, he should _____.

- a) call a meeting in the lounge to discuss alternate ways to get out.
- b) urge residents to jump out the nearest window.
- c) destroy the fire exits' floor plan and tell residents that all ways out are equal as long as you are sincere.
- d) lead them to the nearest marked fire exit.

5. Jesus' concern for the lost was so great _____.

- a) but, even so, he urged his disciples to only seek the wealthiest.
- b) that he told three parables of the lost sheep, lost coin, and lost son—found in Luke 15.
- c) that nothing brings so much joy to Christ as when the king gets saved.
- d) that he expects at least 50% of our energy to be expended to win the lost.



Discussion Guide for Mentor and Participant

Be prepared to discuss the following with your mentor.

1. Have you ever been physically lost or known someone who has been lost?
2. What does it feel like to be lost? to be found?
3. What are some of the Biblical teachings on witnessing?
4. Tell of a time when you witnessed to someone—or tried to.
5. How does God's concern for lost people impact your concern for the lost?

Notes

1. John 2:22; 3:11, 32–33; 5:32, 36–37, 39; 8:13–14, 18; 9:4; 10:25; 15:26; 16:13; 18:37; 19:24; 1 John 5:10.
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