

The Bible Speaks To Me About My Witness

Session 3: Part 1 – Witness
Out of the Overflow

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Session 3

Witness Out of the Overflow

Session Overview

What should occur in our lives before we can witness?
Learn the motivations and factors behind evangelizing.
Application
Exam
Discussion Guide for Mentor and Participant

Learner Objectives

At the end of this session, you should:

- be able to discuss biblical motivations for witnessing.
- understand how the Holy Spirit is the Master Evangelist.
- see how spiritual disciplines help us in our evangelism goals.

Introduction

Why should we witness? The early disciples witnessed out of gratitude for what Christ had done. Likewise, while our responsibility and obedience to Christ's command are vital, our hearts today also have to be full to overflowing for us to be able to effectively witness with the right attitudes.



Witness Out of the Overflow

Notes

My friend Peter Gunas witnessed to me in my room at Dartmouth College. He told me the greatest before and after story I had ever heard, and Christ was the Agent of change. On November 20, 1955, at 9 P.M. in the Claremont, New Hampshire, Church of the Nazarene, under the ministry of Ralph Ferrioli, I met Jesus Christ. What a change! My perception of life changed from night to day, from sadness to gladness, all in a moment.

Within hours I thought, "I've got to tell my loved ones about this. *Since Christ has done so much for me, I have to tell them about Him.* They, too, could be forgiven and know God personally." I began to pray that each of my blood relatives would come to know the Lord. I went home and told my mom. That next summer, she came to radiantly know the Savior and was saved from sin and delivered from suicidal tendencies.

Why Witness?

Our motive for witnessing should be loving gratitude. In *Evangelism in the Early Church*, Michael Green points out that the main motive for evangelism among early Christians was the sense of gratitude for what Christ had done for them. He says, "Magnetized by this love, their lives could not but show it, their lips could not help telling it; 'we cannot but speak of the things which we have seen and heard.'"¹

John wrote, "Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (1 John 4:11). That meant Christians must live lives of loving works.

John continued, "And we have seen and *testify* that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world" (v. 14, italics mine). That meant that Christians must give verbal witness or testimony to Christ. Both the works and the words flow from God's prior love. The main motive for witness among early Christians was, according to Green, "because of the overwhelming experience of the love of God which they had received through Jesus Christ."

Loving gratitude as the driving force for witnessing is important to grasp. It is frequently assumed that the direct command of Christ in the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18–20 was the motivation behind early



witnessing and evangelism. In fact, the Great Commission was quoted very little in the second century. I believe the Great Commission is important. Its importance is not because it is a harsh command to be kept, however, but because that command expresses the heart mission of those touched by Christ. Early Christians obeyed the Great Commission from a natural overflowing love created within by Christ, not a forced obedience.

Responsibility toward God (John 8:29; 2 Corinthians 5:9–11), concern for the lost (Matt. 7:13–14), and concern over the coming of Christ (1 Thessalonians 1:5–10) were motives for evangelism. To witness is to be like God. Wayne Ward says, “Evangelism grows out of the very nature of God himself who in his great love reaches down in Jesus Christ to reconcile sinful men unto himself.”⁴

Love for God more than love for the lost must motivate our witness. If our focus is people, then evangelism loses its central power, which is the presence of God. Remember Jesus asked Peter, “Do you love *me*?” (John 21:17, italics mine). Then He said, “Feed my sheep.” He did not ask, “Do you love the *sheep*?” The focus was on Christ. Romans 5:5 gives the secret: “God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.” Someone has defined witness as “one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread.” In the light of what Jesus has done for you and me, shouldn’t we be telling others how to find Him? If we love enough, we will find a way!

A Daily Relationship

“Unless we believe that what’s happened to us in our relationship with Christ ought to happen to everyone, then probably too little has happened to us,” proclaims Lloyd Ogilvie. As loving gratitude is the major motive for witness, so our relationship with Christ is the source of witness. A present, daily relationship with Christ is essential to this process.

Jesus taught that fishing for men was a result of *ongoing following* with Him (Matt. 4:19). The vine and branches teaching of John 15 speaks of reproduction only as there is moment-by-moment sustenance from the Source. Jesus said, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit” (v. 5). Our spiritual life—and our ultimate salvation—are dependent on a continuing relationship with Christ. In verse 6, Jesus continued, “If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch



that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.” This theme is reiterated in other Gospels.

Michael Green, in *Matthew for Today*, commented on Matt. 13:47–50, “There is no trace in Matthew of any doctrine that we can have instant salvation apart from constant perseverance. We must be righteous and live with the Righteous one.”

I came to Christ while I was a student at an Ivy League college. Much about my college was not a friend to grace. My faith was often challenged. I dared not leave my room any morning to face either problems or people until I first faced God. The Psalmist taught me, “In the morning, Lord, you hear my voice” (Psalm 5:3). The habit of a regular daily time with my Heavenly Father has become a major factor in maintaining a daily relationship for me.

Rev. Ray Matson says it is impossible to move people’s hearts on six minutes a day in prayer.⁶ His words encourage us to move increasingly into a ministry of intercession. Could we be so bold as to pray for the spiritual awakening defined by David Bryant in *With Concerts of Prayer*:

When the Father wakes us up to see Christ’s fullness in new ways, so that together we trust Him, love Him, and obey Him in new ways, so that we move with Him in new ways for the fulfillment of His global cause?

A person in daily relationship with Christ reads the Scripture with the expectation of being changed. Richard Foster has reminded us, “The central purpose of the work of Scripture is the transforming of life, not to amass information.”⁸ Let us hold ourselves accountable to the demands of the grace-filled Word.

Is it possible to live in daily spiritual renewal? Yes, as we learn to practice the presence of God. When I face temptations, I say, “Lord Jesus, You live in me, and You are willing to release Your power through me.” When I need to have my faith strengthened, I remember the words of Hudson Taylor, “Not by striving after faith, but by resting on the Faithful One.”

When I face a new day, I recall George Mueller’s statement: “I consider it my greatest need before God and man to get my soul happy before the Lord each day before I see anybody.”



If I see sin in my life, I remember God never reveals sin except to remove it by Christ's cleansing blood (1 John 1:7).

When I look within, I practice Robert Murray McCheyne's advice: "For every look you take at yourself, take 10 at Jesus Christ."

Paul Little said in *How to Give Away Your Faith*, "Inner spiritual reality developed by a secret life with God is essential for an effective witness to a pagan world." Second Peter 1:3 proclaims, "His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him."

My friend Mike and his wife had just had their first child, but Mike wasn't very happy. The company for which he had worked 20 years had laid him off, along with many other senior employees. Although he had searched regularly for a new job, he would receive only two more unemployment checks.

I suggested he come to the early Friday morning men's prayer meeting at our church and ask the men to pray. At 7:15 A.M., we prayed. At 8:30 A.M. he phoned a company where he had put in his job application only to be told there was no opening. At 1:40 P.M., a representative from the same company called back and said, "Mike, you have the job!" He was one of 400 applicants.

Mike was excited. He began to praise the Lord. He phoned his mom to tell her God answers prayer. He phoned his friends and praised the Lord. It was a natural witness flowing out of God's answer to his prayer.

It wouldn't be hard to witness with an answer like that, would it? Consider Ann. She is a committed wife and mother. She prays daily. But recently her husband left her. Yet, Ann stood in a Sunday School class and witnessed to God's keeping presence and power in her life. No matter what our circumstances, witness and daily relationship with Christ go together!

Often Christian workers can be trapped into thinking that their Christian service can substitute for their devotion. I am helped by the words of Lois Lebar: "Never let service for Jesus take the place of fellowship with Jesus."



The Spirit and Witness

Second, religious pluralism can also refer to a particular theory of religions. You will be discouraged in your attempts to be a witness unless you realize the Holy Spirit is the Great Evangelist of the Trinity. He is the Master Evangelist in the world.

While you speak to a person's ears what Jesus means to you, the Holy Spirit speaks to the person's heart. Jesus said, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them" (John 6:44). The *Father is drawing*. Jesus promised the Holy Spirit would "prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment" (16:8). The *Spirit is convicting*. Jesus said, "But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. . . . He will glorify me" (vv. 13–14). The *Spirit is bringing glory to Jesus*. Jesus taught that "when the Advocate comes . . . he will testify about me" (15:26). The *Spirit is testifying about Jesus*. Verse 27 continues, "And you also must testify."

F. F. Bruce said in *The Epistles of John*, "John and his associates bear witness to the truth of what they have seen and heard" (1 John 1:2–3; 4:14), "but behind their witness lies the witness of the Spirit" (3:24; 4:13).

The one-two punch of the person's witness and the Spirit's witness is demonstrated in Acts 5:32, "We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him."

There are at least 41 references to the Holy Spirit's working in the Book of Acts. There are 29 other references specifically to divine leadership, frequently references to the leadership of the Spirit. Commonly, an Acts reference combines the Spirit's work with help in speaking God's message. As 4:31 reads, "After they prayed . . . they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly."

Are you starting to believe that God's Spirit will help you witness?

Michael Green wrote, "God's gift of His Spirit was intended not to make them comfortable but to make them witnesses." Again: "Every initiative in evangelism recorded in Acts is the initiative of the Spirit of God."

I was scared. A new Christian, I was increasingly uncomfortable with my



membership in a national Greek letter fraternity at my college. I had recently read in the Word, “Do not be yoked together with unbelievers” (2 Corinthians 6:14). The fraternity was built on principles of secrecy and snobbishness. Whether I wanted it or not, my social tax helped buy their beer.

I went to the vice president and told him I felt I must leave the fraternity because of my Christian convictions. He was understanding, but he said I did not have the right to decide, and neither did the local fraternity executives. I had to go before the all-college interfraternity council.

I feared they would never understand. This council was made up of 12 fraternity men, and 6 were fraternity presidents. I knew they’d brand me some kind of a nut if I said I wanted to leave my fraternity for religious reasons. But there was no other way. The date for my meeting was set. I was in my room before the appointment, nervous, wondering what to say, and seeking the Lord’s help. I was reading in Luke, and 21:14–15 lit up for me: “But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict.”

I believed those words meant that God, by His Spirit, would especially help me speak to the council.

As I sat in the waiting room outside the council chambers, I fretted anxiously. It was already 25 minutes past my appointment time. I leaned over to the man sitting next to me. Timidly, I asked, “Are you wanting to get out of your fraternity?”

“Yes,” he responded, “I’ve gotten married, and I’d like to get out of the fraternity so that I can live with my wife.”

Oh, boy! I thought, *I hope he doesn’t ask my reason.*

At that moment, it seemed the Lord moved into the room at ceiling level. He maneuvered till He was right over me. Suddenly He dumped the whole bucket of peace into my heart.

Just then the big oak door opened. “Mr. Shaver, we’re ready for you.”

I was ready for them too. A member of the council asked why I wanted to leave the fraternity. It seemed the only thing I could do was give my witness.



I told them that Jesus had become my Savior, had changed me, and had given me a sensitivity to issues that had never bothered me before. Most of them were upset by what I said. Eventually they ended the meeting by saying, “We’ll write you a letter and let you know if we are going to dismiss you from your fraternity.”

In three days, I had a letter giving permission to leave my fraternity. The next year the same fraternity invited me back to speak to a house meeting about what it meant to be a Christian! Indeed, I was discovering that the Spirit intended not to make me comfortable but to make me a witness.

The resurrected Christ told His disciples that repentance and forgiveness of sins would be preached in His name to all nations. He went on to explain their role in the process: “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” (Luke 24:48–49).

Our focus is witness and the power to do it. That concern was answered in one of the most important witnessing verses of the Bible, Acts 1:8: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Jesus was concerned for His disciples. He urged them to seek the Spirit’s fullness and power. On occasion, He had rebuked them for their pettiness, selfishness, and concern for position (Matt. 20:20–28). As He faced the cross, He carried a great burden for the twelve.

In John 17:17, Jesus prayed for His disciples, “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.” In verse 20, He continued, “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message.”

In this prayer, Jesus interceded for His generation and ours. Our generation comes to Christ through a message carried from the first generation. The cost of delivering that message is so extreme that only the person fully yielded and fully cleansed will be faithful. Jesus’ prayer for the disciples’ sanctification helps remove the lingering barriers of selfishness in their lives. He risked His whole cause on these 12 men. Our generation is forced to face the same issues, because the next generation depends on our passing on the message. People simply quit when the going gets rough unless the fire on the



inside is greater than the pressure on the outside.

The disciples were “filled with the Holy Spirit” on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:4). Peter says that God also “purified their hearts by faith” (15:9).

That’s another way to say they were sanctified entirely. To be filled with the Spirit is the standard of Christian experience. Once a person has been filled with the Spirit, it is important for him or her to remain in that state.

Ephesians 5:18 is written in the present tense: “Be filled with the Spirit,” which means, *keep* filled with the Spirit. Some Christians have been justified freely but have not yet been sanctified entirely. They have been born of the Spirit but not filled with the Spirit. And there are those who were once filled with the Spirit who today are not. Are you Spirit-filled just now?

Application

Make a personal study of the first four chapters of the book of Acts. Highlight every reference to the Holy Spirit. Then, pick two of the references and describe how or why they are important to your life right now.



EXAM – Session 3

1. The main motive for witness and evangelism in the early church was _____

- a) a sense of loving gratitude for what Christ had done for them.
- b) the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20).
- c) concern for the lost.
- d) the coming of Christ.

2. A daily relationship with Jesus Christ is essential for continued spiritual life and witness. Which of the following statements bolster your continuing daily life? _____

- a) “Unless we believe that what’s happened to us in our relationship with Christ ought to happen to everyone, then probably too little has happened to us” (Lloyd Ogilvie).
- b) “I dared not leave my room any morning to face problems or people until I first faced God” (Chic Shaver).
- c) “For every look you take at yourself, take 10 at Jesus Christ” (Robert Murray McCheyne).
- d) “His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him” (2 Peter 1:3).
- e) All of the above



3. Which statement about the Spirit and Witness is not true? _____

- a) The Spirit is convicting (John 16:8), the Spirit is bringing glory to Jesus (John 16:13-14), and the Spirit is testifying about Jesus (John 15:26).
- b) “God’s gift of His Spirit was intended not to make them comfortable but to make them witnesses” (Michael Green).
- c) “Nearly half of the evangelism initiatives in Acts are initiatives of the Holy Spirit” (Arthur Brown).
- d) “Every initiative in evangelism recorded in Acts is the initiative of the Spirit of God” (Michael Green).

4. In John 17:17, Jesus prayed for His disciples, “Sanctify them by the truth: your word is truth.” In 17:20, he continued, “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message.” What is another way to express Christ’s concern? _____

- a) If these disciples have truly accepted Christ as their Savior, they would have what they need to pass the message to the next generation.
- b) The cost of delivering the message is so extreme that only the person fully yielded and fully cleansed (sanctified) can be counted on to be faithful to pass the message to the next generation.
- c) If these disciples would not accept God’s sanctifying power, then Jesus would go to plan B.
- d) This teaching does not apply to our generation.



Discussion Guide for Mentor and Participant

Be prepared to discuss the following with your mentor.

1. Share with your mentor the results of your study of Acts 1–4 and especially explain the references most important to you.
2. Share with each other the practices that are part of your prayer times with the Lord. What are two things you could do to make this time more effective?
3. Each of you share a time when you believe the Holy Spirit worked in a special way in your life.