

The Bible Speaks To Me About My Witness

Session 7: Part 1 -- Overcoming the Fear Factor

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Session 7

Overcoming the Fear Factor

Session Overview

A look into the lives of those in the Bible who faced fear
The Holy Spirit makes up for our inadequacies
Application
Exam
Discussion Guide for Mentor and Participant

Learner Objectives

At the end of this session, you should:

- be able to discuss scriptural examples of lives changed in boldness.
- realize that the Spirit-filled Christian can still face situations when he or she has to rely on the Holy Spirit.

Introduction

If the thought of sharing your faith leaves you feeling nervous or even quaking in your shoes, does that mean you're not Spirit-filled? Not at all! We'll discuss how through the power of the Holy Spirit, we can become as bold as the proverbial lions!



Overcoming the Fear Factor

Notes

Oswald Chambers said in *My Utmost for His Highest*:

“We have the notion that we can consecrate our gifts to God. You cannot consecrate what is not yours; there is only one thing you can consecrate to God, and that is the right to yourself (Romans 12:1). If you will give God your right to yourself, He will make a holy experiment out of you.”

A holy experiment! I don't know about you, but those words intrigue me. Wouldn't it be a challenge if we let God take us beyond what we've experienced before in effective witness? Say to yourself: “Today, God's holy experiment starts in me!”

My Hands Sweat, My Mouth is Dry

I have shared what Jesus means to me hundreds of times. I have regularly gone to visit people and have had the privilege of sharing the gospel with them. Many of these people have accepted Christ and today are active in the church.

Yet to this day, when I go out on a call with the goal of sharing Christ, my hands sweat, and my mouth gets dry. I have come to accept a certain amount of nervousness as normal. Increasingly, I am convinced that fear is the silent thief of our effectiveness, both in witness and soul winning. There is tremendous resistance to personal witnessing and to personal evangelism by many Christians. If they searched deep down, I think they would discover that the root is fear.

Remember, you are doing a loving thing when you offer Christ to a friend. There is danger that your friend might misunderstand, and you will offend him or her. We all fear offending people. Yet, as Richard Peace puts it in *Small Group Evangelism*, “If our intention to be faithful witnesses to Christ is serious, then we must confront and conquer our fear.”



Peter - Before and After

It is important to realize that fear may produce a truly human and legitimate response. Look at Peter in Mark 14:66–71. He was afraid to be associated with Jesus, because Jesus was very unpopular at the moment. Jesus was headed toward the cross, and it's anybody's guess what might happen to those who identify with Christ. When a servant girl asked him about his association with Jesus, Peter denied knowing Christ. His decision and response in this fear-filled situation was sinful.

Something changed Peter, though. In Acts 4:1–13, he faced great fear-producing circumstances. He had been preaching Jesus. He was arrested and imprisoned for it. Then he faced a harsh grilling by the authorities.

Now notice his decision and response: "Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them . . ." (v. 8), and there follows his courageous speech for Christ. His courage is great enough to be noticed (v. 13). Peter was different because he'd been filled with the Spirit (2:4). The fullness of the Spirit is the major source of sufficient courage to witness.

It is not enough to leave it there. The disciples were called before the Sanhedrin again, threatened, and dismissed. The story continues in chapter 4:

On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. "Sovereign Lord," they said, "you made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David:

'Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his Anointed One.'

Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs



and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”

After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the Word of God boldly.

Obviously, Peter experienced fear again. He and others pray that the Lord will “consider their threats” (v. 29). The disciples’ great concern was not self-preservation, but that God would “enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness” (v. 29). God’s answer was a fresh infilling of the Holy Spirit and its result was, again, bold speech (v. 31).

In all three cases, Peter experienced fear. In all three cases, Peter was in danger. In all three cases, he decided what he would say about Christ. In the first case, he denied Him. In the next two, he spoke boldly for Him. The difference was the power of the Spirit.

It is necessary for even the Spirit-filled Christian to have fresh infillings of the Spirit (v. 31) in order to have sufficient courage for new challenges. No wonder we have discussed witness out of the overflow. Realistically, we admit that even a Spirit-filled Christian may feel fear in a new situation and may need to pray afresh—and be filled afresh.

New Testament Courage

Early in my Christian life, I thought that it was the state of the Spirit-filled Christian to be free from fear. Then one day I read the testimony of the Spirit-filled Apostle Paul: “I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling” (1 Corinthians 2:3). In the very next verse, he said his message came “with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power.”

Paul felt fear, even as a Spirit-empowered person. As a result, I have a new definition of courage. New Testament courage is not the absence of the feeling of fear. It is the willingness to do what God wants you to do, even though you have the feeling of fear.

There are a number of sources for fear. We may feel we will fail, because someone will say no to our witness. Did Jesus fail in His witness? Did He fail when the rich young ruler refused to put God first? Did He fail because one of the thieves on the cross failed to acknowledge Him as Lord? These facts



have led Bill Bright to this conclusion in *Evangelism in the Twenty-first Century*: “The ministry of Jesus Christ modeled for us a liberating truth about our witnessing efforts: *Success in witnessing is simply taking the initiative to share Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit, and leaving the results to God.*”

Former district superintendent Keith Wright has made some helpful observations about this fear issue in the *Personal Evangelism Training: Trainee Study Guide*. We may fear that we don’t know Scripture well enough. He reminds us that Jesus used fishermen. We may fear that questions will be raised that we cannot answer. He suggests we ask permission to return later with the answer. We may fear sharing the gospel prematurely. He reminds us that most people need to hear the gospel several times before they respond. Admitting fear is rational, because most people experience it, according to Rev. Wright. However, our love for Christ must be greater than the fear that keeps us from sharing God’s love.

Most of us will work through our fears about witnessing through a series of steps. God is pleased if we can make progress, even if we haven’t reached the final goal. I’ll review the stages I’ve gone through in more than 60 years of sharing my Savior with others.

1. As a new Christian, I was anxious to tell people what Jesus did for me. I talked to many people. Only a few ever accepted Christ.
2. About six years into my first pastorate, I took a one-week course in Campus Crusade training and learned how to present the “Four Spiritual Laws.” This was helpful to me, because it gave me a structure for presenting basic truths to people. However, for the last day of the seminar, they asked us to go calling and present the gospel. I told them I was too busy with my sermon preparation for that Sunday (which was true). This was my conscious reason. Now I realize my subconscious reason was my fear.
3. A few days later, a man I’ll call Hal came to see me in my office. He and his family had recently begun coming to our church. He told me there was something wrong in his life. He felt guilty. He had no purpose. He wasn’t happy. Did I know what was wrong? I used my new training and shared the “Four Spiritual Laws” with Hal. He repented, accepted Christ, and was changed. His wife and children accepted Christ. Hal and his wife joined the church. My confidence soared. It worked!



4. I began to witness with the “Four Laws” being my structure to present the basic faith of the gospel, and I saw others accept Christ.

5. After nine years pastoring that first church, I entered the field of full-time evangelism. During a revival, Rev. Dale Galloway took me calling door-to-door. I was amazed to see how responsive people were to a warm and relaxed approach. This was primarily “friendship calling.” At the end of the first day, Rev. Galloway said, “We’re going to do this again tomorrow. Only this time, you’ll do the talking at the door.” I went home terrified. I prayed. I felt God wanted me to do it, despite my fears. The next day, I led the calls, and people were responsive again. My confidence moved up another notch.

6. Two and a half years later, I started an assignment teaching evangelism at Nazarene Theological Seminary. Dr. James Kennedy had just spoken at a conference on evangelism in Kansas City. Some of our other seminary professors heard him and thought it would be good for me to attend his personal evangelism school. In a few days, I received an invitation to Dr. Kennedy’s school in Florida. That night as I prayed, I was gripped by that old fear: I was comfortable with a “Four Laws” approach, I had just started to teach, and I didn’t know if I could handle one more change. Yet, despite my feelings, I was sure God wanted me to go. It was an extraordinary experience. I came home convinced that Kennedy’s *Evangelism Explosion* approach would make me a better witness.

7. I enthusiastically announced to my seminary classes the results of my experiences at Kennedy’s school. I offered to go calling with any student who had a prospect. That Friday, I was leading a call, and I saw people praying to receive Christ. My fear was defeated again.

8. Now I am regularly sharing my witness, offering Christ and His plan of salvation to people, and seeing them accept Christ.

I have convinced of the truth of 2 Tim. 1:7: “For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love, and of self-discipline.” Despite continuing experiences of wet hands and dry mouth, God’s Spirit of power predominates. Have you battled fear as I have? Would you let God lead you past your present fear to the next stage on your journey of courage for the cause of Christ’s witness?



Try Friendship Evangelism

When we studied the approach of Andrew and Philip to Peter and Nathanael in John 1, you may have noticed that Andrew and Philip gave a simple witness and brought their prospect to Jesus. Jesus did the intensive work and called them to commitment. It may be best to think of Andrew and Philip as doing “friendship evangelism,” rather than simply personal evangelism. That could be a starting place for you, too. Of course, you must be intentional to have contact with lost people. Notice the intentionality of Jim and Connie:

When Jim, my husband, and I first began learning about Personal Evangelism, we had this nonsensical fear of sharing the message of salvation with others.

As we asked God to deepen our desire to see people commit their lives to Jesus Christ, He helped us to catch a vision of personal evangelism that has forever changed the way we live.

Now, we strive to always have three types of people in our lives:

1. People who do not know Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, so that we might have opportunity to share the message of salvation with them;
2. People who have accepted Christ but long for a deeper walk with God; that we may help them grow, and
3. People who can mentor us on our spiritual journey.

It is for those who do not know Christ that we work towards developing relationships (a) at work, (b) with our neighbors, and (c) at the places we regularly visit, such as the coffee shop where we now have a close-knit group of friends.

For us, personal evangelism is not a program we attended but a lifestyle. Living out our salvation, developing relationships, and sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ with others in our “little corner of the world” must be intentional because faith *is* worth sharing.

Friendship evangelism teaches Christians to build bridges of love and friendship with non-Christians. The friendship is built on a common need or common interest. Both the Christian and non-Christian may be interested in sports, and that common area becomes the basis of friendship. That’s why a church softball team can become an evangelistic tool.



Other common interests can be crafts, business interests, children, and service clubs. From the friendship, we introduce the non-Christian to the church and other Christians. It may be another Christian who will call them to decision for Christ. Friendship evangelism is less threatening than personal evangelism, and many more Christians will be able to do it. Learning to build these bridges of friendship with non-Christians is important, because we tend to have fewer non-Christian friends the longer we are in the church.

Observe the friendship evangelism in this report: David served as a civil engineer in the country of Kuwait. He'd established his home there with his wife, Linda, and their children, Charles, age 11, and Sarah, age 9. As far as we know, David and Linda and Charles and Sarah were the only Nazarenes living in Kuwait. Back when Saddam Hussein's Iraqi troops invaded Kuwait, we were concerned about David and Linda.

How did David ever become a part of the Church of the Nazarene? A graduate of the University of Rhode Island, he came to work as a young engineer for Black and Veatch in Kansas City. As he was driving one day, he spied a group of teenagers on a church parking lot washing cars. He pulled in to have his car washed, and he was so impressed with their warmth and friendliness that when they said to him, "David, why don't you visit our church this Sunday?" he came to the worship service at First Church of the Nazarene.

That was the first time he had ever been in a Nazarene church. The first call I made as a member of the staff at Kansas City First Church was to David. I discovered that he had come to know the Lord in college through a Christian group on campus. David had a lot of questions, so I found a young seminary student who was willing to meet with David every week and lead him through the *Basic Bible Studies*. David eventually joined this church as a new Nazarene.

I am happy to report that at the time of the invasion, David and his family were vacationing in the United States and were spared the tragedies of the war. Although the ministry of the church to David was not directly winning an unsaved person to Christ, the dynamics were the same. The common interest between the teens and David was cars. They exercised friendship and invited him. I was the one God used for the more direct encounter dealing with his present relationship with God. Friendship evangelism at work!



Application

As you have read this chapter, you have had some thoughts about what you would need to do to overcome fear. It has been suggested that most of us work through our fears by progressive steps. What is the next step you need to take this week to move forward in overcoming fear? Is it _____

- a. inviting a fringe family of your church into a social activity?
- b. inviting a loved one or friend or neighbor into a social activity?
- c. witnessing to a person on your prospect list?
- d. committing yourself to a personal evangelism training class?
- e. arranging to go on a personal evangelism call where you can observe the gospel being shared?
- f. Other _____



EXAM – Session 7

1. Since fear is a silent robber of our effectiveness in witness and soul-winning, _____
 - a) I will not try to witness until I am totally free of the feeling of fear.
 - b) I will remember that I am doing a most loving thing when I offer Christ to a friend.
 - c) I expect to never feel nervousness in my witness.
 - d) I expect none I witness to will be offended.

2. Peter experienced fear. Sometimes it produced a sinful response, sometimes a truly human and legitimate response. What statement about fear is true? _____
 - a) As Jesus faced the cross, a servant girl asked Peter about his association with Jesus. He denied knowing Christ. His response to his fear was sinful.
 - b) In Acts 4:1–13, after preaching Jesus, Peter was arrested and imprisoned. His harsh grilling surely produced fear. Yet he spoke boldly for Christ. People noticed his courage (v. 13). The secret of his courage—filled with the Spirit (v. 8).
 - c) Later in Acts 4, after release, Peter and John met with other Christians and prayed. In their prayer, they spoke of "their threats"—obviously another fear-producing situation. They experienced a *fresh infilling* of the Spirit (4:8, 4:31) and speak boldly.
 - d) All of the above

3. New Testament courage is _____
 - a) a deliverance from the feeling of fear.
 - b) shown in Paul's life, who said, "I came to you in strength and courage and great steadiness."



- c) not the absence of the feeling of fear. It is the willingness to do what God wants you to do, even though you have the feeling of fear.
- d) All of the above

4. Friendship evangelism _____

- a) was shown by Jim and Connie who expect that, in their casual and relaxed approach, spiritually needy people will come to them.
- b) taught Christians to build bridges of love and friendship with non-Christians, based on common needs or common interests.
- c) would urge you to avoid such interests as crafts, sports, business, children, and service clubs.
- d) would expect the longer you are a Christian, the more friends you naturally have in the world.

Notes



Discussion Guide for Mentor and Participant

1. Share with each other some of the things you fear in witnessing. Then discuss possible answers or solutions to these fears.
2. What are some examples of Friendship Evangelism you have seen work?
3. Discuss your responses to this lesson's "applications" section.
4. What Friendship Evangelism event might you engage in together?