

# **The Bible Speaks To Me About My Witness**

Session 8: Part 2 – Overcoming the Fear Factor

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## Session 8

# Overcoming the Fear Factor 2

## Session Overview

What are the social barriers between us and those who don't know Christ?

How do we overcome those barriers?

Application

Exam

Discussion Guide for Mentor and Participant

## Learner Objectives

At the end of this session, you should:

- understand some of the barriers that stand between our sharing the faith and others hearing it.
- know what the Bible says about some of the situations we face.
- have ideas to help stay clear of questionable situations. realize that the Spirit-filled Christian can still face situations when he or she has to rely on the Holy Spirit.

## Introduction

While we are eager to share our faith and build relationships with others, in doing so we have to follow the scriptural mandate to be as wise as serpents and as harmless as doves. This session can help us be alerted to some common situations and remain above compromise.



## Overcoming the Fear Factor

## Notes

### Hurdling Social Barriers

Many Christians are afraid to witness because they don't know how to handle the social barriers between themselves and non-Christians. These are real. For example, in the United States culture, you can't say to the unsaved person, "Come to a party," and expect them to understand. In the secular realm, "party" connotes a gathering with alcoholic beverages.

The Bible calls us to maintain separation from the world (James 1:27 and 4:4), and yet we are exhorted to love, evangelize, and win the ungodly. The implications of the call of Jesus to be "fishers of men" (Mark 1:17, KJV) is that to catch fish, you have to go to where the fish are. Jesus models this for us, as in His association with tax collectors and sinners at Matthew's home (Matthew 9:9-13).

It would be shocking to ever think Jesus would get drunk, become involved in sexual immorality, tell dirty stories, or cheat someone out of his or her hard-earned cash. Yet, He evangelized those who did such things. He saw them as sick people who needed a doctor.

I have discovered ways to deal with these social barriers. When I am inviting a non-Christian into a social setting, I give a *clear, specific* invitation. It is *not*, "Come to a party at my house." It's, "Come to our place Saturday for hamburgers on the grill. Then we'd like you to be our guests at the baseball game. The Royals play the Red Sox." Or, "Please come with us to church on Sunday night. After service, we'd like you and some of our friends from church to come to our place for refreshments. We'd be proud for our church friends to meet you."

Notice how this invitation gives them a clear understanding of what will happen. They won't feel tricked, and knowing what to expect reduces their fear.

Another help for me in regard to social barriers is that I keep control of the situation. Let me illustrate. Our neighbors invited us to their Christmas party. We had seen the party the previous year. About 20 guests left very intoxicated. My main job the next day was picking up their liquor bottles



from my lawn. My wife and I did not think we could do much good for the cause of Christ at their party—their turf, their friends, their agenda, their liquor. It would be 18 drunks and two sober Nazarenes. Yet our response to their invitation was important. We are not to condemn. “Bill and Mary,” I said, “thanks for asking us. We’re not able to come, but let’s get together another time.”

The next year my wife and I planned an “international Christmas party.” I invited international students from Nazarene Theological Seminary, where I taught, to come to the party. Each was asked to bring a food representing his or her country and to be prepared to tell about Christmas customs in his or her country. I also asked for some students to weave a bit of personal testimony into the Christmas custom report. We invited neighbors and told them that seminary students were coming so they would know the nature of the evening.

That night, our home was filled with unchurched people. They enjoyed exotic food and heard tales of Christmas in the Cape Verde Islands, Holland, Mexico, and elsewhere. When Cor Holleman reported on Holland, he skillfully wove his testimony into the report. Five years later, a guest of that evening, who had moved to another part of town, returned to tell of how she and her husband had recently received spiritual help. We believe the seed was sown the night of the international party.

We have been laying down principles to help overcome social barriers and build bridges of friendship. So far we have discussed:

1. Give a clear invitation.
2. Keep control of the situation.
3. Contact others socially.
4. Establish a common interest.
5. Don’t condemn.

Two other principles are:

6. Arouse interest.
7. Don’t go too far.

“Arouse interest” means you choose some words that raise your hearer’s



curiosity or interest, and then you continue speaking to those who respond. It means you are being salt to help arouse people's thirst for Christ. Christ intrigued the Samaritan woman into further questions by His comments in John 4:13. "Don't go too far" means we give only as much message as the prospect is ready for. Our tendency is to see a faint glimmer of interest and rush in with the whole story. By relying on the Holy Spirit, we can gain poise.

"Don't go too far" protects our feelings as Christians. One person said to me that she was afraid to witness because people would make fun of her. However, if you only share as much as people are ready to hear, you may protect yourself while being effective with them. None of us likes to be made fun of. It will help us to remember, however, that though the sinner's way is the average, the Christian's way is normal. If someone chides you for being a Christian, try the casual approach. Ask your friend, "Have you ever really tried living the Christian life?" When he or she says, "Well, no," give a big smile and say, "Don't knock it till you try it!"

### **Opportunities and On Purpose**

When Matthew was converted to Christ, he brought his pen with him from his tax books. God used this man of careful detail and organizational skills to write the story of Jesus. So we have Matthew's Gospel. Today, God often uses the gifts and skills already developed in a person as a channel for witness. Charles Colson, a former adviser to U.S. President Richard Nixon, was convicted for crimes and imprisoned. In the midst of his gathering troubles, Colson found Christ. God gave him a powerful witness to the political community and the prison population. God used his past skills, contacts, and experiences. Ann Kiemel Anderson, a popular speaker and author, prayed that God would make her creative. When Ann was reaching out to Scott and his junior high friends in their boys' club, Scott's mother called and asked permission to provide refreshments for the boys. What do you suppose Ann said? She now had a chance to reach Scott's mom and dad. Creativity helps us to see opportunities everywhere.

My friend Denny is a plumber. Denny found Christ in a Billy Graham Crusade. He gave his trade to God. In that setting, God has used him to witness. Here is his report:



I think the sudden difference in my life scared the men I worked with. I stopped cursing. I didn't get mad easily. I stopped hitting the bars after work . . . I didn't force my testimony on anyone at work, but a lot of people asked why I had changed so much, and I told them what had happened.

The people in my shop know that I'm a Christian. One time, when I'd just returned from a Work and Witness trip to Africa, we were having our monthly foremen's meeting. Our guest speaker was late, so the president of the company asked if I would like to tell about my trip to Africa.

I said, "Sure." I talked about Africa, and I told them what the Lord was doing in my life. I talked about how much my relationship with Jesus Christ means to me, and why I take time off from work and pay my own way to Africa to work there. As I finished speaking, the door opened, and the speaker walked in.

Taking advantage of opportunities often means that we have to take initiative and do some things on purpose. In the spring and fall, as part of my teaching at Nazarene Seminary and as part of my minister of outreach responsibilities at First Church of the Nazarene in Kansas City, I would set aside each Thursday night to go calling. I always tried to take students and laypeople with me. The goal of our calling is to witness to people about Jesus, share the gospel, and invite folks to accept the Lord—when the Holy Spirit opens the door. In the summer I do not carry on such a specific calling program. Would you believe that we see far more people won to Christ in the spring and fall than in the summer? Intentional witness and personal evangelism is blessed by God.

In *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, Robert Coleman said of Jesus' on-the-job training of His disciples:

They observed how He drew people to himself; how He won their confidence and inspired their faith; how He opened to them the way of salvation and called them to a decision.

Experience shows that classroom teaching does not have a very major effect unless it is tied to on-the-job experience. One year, Nazarene Theological Seminary and 18 area churches launched into the fall with a personal evangelism banquet. Seventeen people gave testimony, primarily of how they had found Jesus in recent months. One was Mark, who owned a cleaning business. He tells how a personal soul winner impacted his life:



I attended church for 32 years because it was the right thing to do. Good people go to church. Unfortunately, the gospel was never really shared with me. I believed that I wasn't worthy of the Lord's love and that I could never be good enough to get into heaven. However, then Tom shared the gospel with me and told me that I am somebody because God loves me. By the grace of Jesus Christ, I was saved.

My whole life was changed. I have a confidence and assurance that has changed my relationships. I have a peace that I've never had before. I'm so grateful for that.

The man who led Mark to the Lord, Tom, was won to Christ about five years earlier when, I took two young men from our church to call on him. Over barbecued beef we shared the gospel with Tom. A few days later he prayed to receive Christ.

One of the people on the call was a seminary student named Joe. Later Joe told me he would have never gone out on an evangelism call except that I required him to do it. I asked him when he would have developed his skills in personal evangelism. He said he didn't know—maybe after he had pastored a few years. You see, Joe was being real with me by admitting his fear. But on-the-job experience helped break the fear barrier for him.

### **Pray for the Right Questions**

Years ago, the late Dr. Paul Orjala, missionary and professor, taught what he called the best method of evangelism. Of his prospects, he said, "I pray God will cause them to ask me the right questions." They can't get angry when you answer their questions, can they?

Earlier I led you through the steps I'd traveled to come out of my fear. Let me add some detail. When I was at Dr. James Kennedy's school of evangelism, he taught us to ask diagnostic questions under the right conditions. For instance, "Tom, have you come to the place in your life where you know for certain if you died tonight you'd go to heaven, or is that something you're still working on?"

I had not led anyone to Christ using that approach. I returned to Kansas City and told my students I'd call on their prospects. A student asked me to call with him on Jerry and his family. Jerry's family had recently been attending



the little church the student pastored. We drove 70 miles to Jerry's community. We were warmly greeted by Jerry, his wife, and child.

I was nervous. It was my first time since returning home from Dr. Kennedy'to try to present the gospel. Besides that, Jerry's relatives kept arriving at the front door. Jerry decided since I was coming to visit, he should invite all his relatives over. Soon there were 11 adults and 5 children milling about the house. I was praying. Remember Paul Orjala's advice: "Pray that God will cause them to ask you the right question." Just then Jerry asked me a question: "Rev. Shaver, you're a minister. Maybe you can tell me. Our little boy died in infancy. *If my wife or I are privileged enough to get to heaven, will we recognize our little boy as our little boy?*" (Italics mine.)

I said, "Jerry, we do believe we will recognize our loved ones in heaven. The issue is if you and your wife get to heaven. May I tell you how a person may know for sure he or she is going to heaven?" He responded, "Oh, please do."

In a few minutes, Jerry's wife called us all to the kitchen for a huge fried shrimp dinner—11 adults, 5 children, the student pastor, and me. At an appropriate time in the table conversation, I told them all of Jerry's question. I asked if they would like to hear what I promised to tell Jerry. They did! That night I shared the gospel with that roomful of people. That night, nine adults prayed to receive Christ as Savior. Seven said they weren't sure they'd had an answer yet but would keep searching. The other two gave clear testimony to their salvation. The next week the student told me they had a record attendance at their little church on Sunday because Jerry brought his family.

I learned that when we are committed to witness and win souls, the Holy Spirit goes before us. He prepares people. He works. Witnessing was God's idea before it was ever mine or yours. God yearns for these people to be saved even more than we do.

The Christian leader Bill Bright taught us to leave the results of our witness up to God. Yet let me emphasize that everyone used in personal evangelism expects to find interested people led across his or her pathway. There is a burden not only to give the witness but to see the person won to Jesus. There is great confidence in the drawing of the Holy Spirit.





## Faith Expanded to Meet Witness Specifications

“If you want to know the worth of a human soul, try to save one,” said Phillips Brooks in *No Easy Road*. The task is no easy one. For most of us, to see one soul won to Christ will take great faith.

Most of us not only have trusted Christ for our salvation but also have developed other areas of faith. For example, in my early Christian life, I learned to trust God for finances. When another new area of challenge for finances arose, I could apply my past faith experiences to the new need—because they were so much alike. I call it case-for-case transfer of faith. Small financial need—I trusted God. Medium financial need—with a little stretch of my soul, I could trust God again. But when I moved to a new area like healing or soul winning, the stretch of the soul was more demanding.

In *Forging a Real World Faith*, Gordon MacDonald wrote of being pushed into a new sphere of reality, into an unexpected challenge only to discover “my faith was not enlarged enough.” Remember when Jesus was sleeping in the boat and a furious squall came upon the boat and disciples (Mark 4:35–41). The disciples were paralyzed with fear, but Jesus stilled the storm. Jesus questioned, “Do you still have no faith?”

MacDonald wrote:

Didn't they have at least a little bit of faith when they chose to follow Him in the first place? Of course. But He was speaking of that dynamic element of faith, the part that is supposed to enlarge to fit each circumstance. And their faith had clearly not yet expanded to meet storm specifications.

“Faith . . . expanded to meet storm specifications.” And we need something just like that—faith expanded to meet witnessing and soul-winning specifications! Our faith expands when we read or hear of it in others. When I read the book *Rees Howells, Intercessor*, by Norman Grubb, my faith expanded to trust God for finance. When I read Ann Kiemel Anderson's chapter, “The Art of Being Human,” in *The Art of Sharing Your Faith*, my faith leaped to believe God can use me to win others to Christ. Even as you read this chapter, God is challenging you to believe Him for souls—in some cases, even specific people—to be won to Christ!

Have you ever been able to picture yourself as a witness and soul winner? Gordon Cosby counseled in *Handbook for Mission Groups*, “Let Jesus Christ



... resuscitate within us all those wild hopes that world has taught us to distrust." Pray your dreams and dream your prayers. And dream big, my brother, my sister! Pray big!

### **Application**

Now complete this statement.

In order to move forward in overcoming my fear of witnessing and with God's help, this next week I will

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Report the result to a trusted friend next week. Or report to the class studying this book.



**EXAM – Session 8**

1. In hurdling social barriers between you and an unsaved individual,

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- a) you can simply say, "Come to a party."
  - b) give a clear invitation, don't condemn, and control the situation.
  - c) when invited to a home where there will be much liquor consumed, you will need to respond, "No, thanks, I don't drink. I'm a Christian."
  - d) All of the above

2. Some of our witness happens because of opportunities that open before us; beyond that, Christians take initiative to do some things on purpose.

Which of the following would be an example of "on purpose"?

- \_\_\_\_\_
- a) Mark was saved because he saw Tom praying over his meal at the restaurant.
  - b) Earlier, Tom was saved a few days after Dr. Shaver and Joe and another man shared Christ with Tom. Later, Joe said he wished he had not gone on the call.
  - c) On-the-job experience helped Joe break the fear barrier. He said he would have never gone on the soul-winning call except he was required to do so.
  - d) Denny attended his foreman's meeting at work. When the guest speaker was late, the president of the company asked Denny to tell of his recent Africa trip.



3. Paul Orjala believed the best method of evangelism, concerning his prospects, was, "I pray God will cause them \_\_\_\_\_

- a) to ask me the right questions."
- b) to be deeply convicted."
- c) to listen to me preach."
- d) to go through a difficult life experience that will awaken them."

4. To witness is challenging. For many to do so, their faith will need \_\_\_\_\_

- a) many trying experiences to ever do so.
- b) to be expanded to meet witness specifications.
- c) nothing more. Their "saving faith" should be enough.
- d) to happen only in the heart of hopeful witness. There is little that the lives of others can do.



### **Discussion Guide for Mentor and Participant**

1. Report to your mentor the goal you set for yourself in your "application" from this lesson.
2. Ask your mentor ways he or she overcame fear of witnessing. Ask his/her opinion of ways to achieve your goal.
3. Pray together specifically for this goal to be achieved.