

LESSON 5

EQUIPPED FOR WITNESSING

Jesus commanded His followers to make disciples of all nations. He gave a second commandment which has largely been neglected by those who take the Great Commission seriously. In Acts 1:4, He commanded the disciples to continue in Jerusalem until they had received power from on high. They were not to attempt to do the work of God until they had been filled with power (cf. Luke 24:47-49). Yet too often, we have tried to accomplish the Great Commission by hard work instead of asking for divine power in the execution of these tasks. The weakness of the church lies in its attempts to convert the world through sophisticated theology (the wisdom of man), administrative techniques, and economic and technical sources. Instead, we should be witnessing (sharing our faith) in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Defeated Christians Do Not Witness

Even though Jesus is Master and gave the command for Christians to share their faith, less than five per cent of the church members are obedient. Many Christians may not have come to an awareness and conviction of their responsibility to witness, but the majority fail to be obedient either because they do not know how to share their faith or they are not experiencing victory and joy in their own lives as Christians. If a person has not found in his Christian experience the power to make life different for himself, he will lack the confidence that Christ can really make a difference in the life of the lost person. On the other hand, those who experience a daily meaningful relationship to God through faith in Christ know that they have discovered the "pearl of great price" and desire to share the joy of this experience with others. A person will not be a successful witness unless he is experiencing joy and victory in his own spiritual life.

Every Christian can experience joy and victory. When he is led to depend on the resources God has made available to him, his own life is revived. When the discovery is shared with other members of the church, the life of the church is revived. When the life of the church is revived, the members assume responsibility for and experience a new joy in sharing their faith with the lost.

God has already placed great spiritual wealth on deposit and has made that wealth available to every Christian. The heavenly Father wants His children to have the fullest life possible and responds immediately to the slightest request for spiritual power. Only a life clogged by unconfessed sin and by lack of faith in the Father's goodness must remain spiritually impoverished.

The power of the Father has been promised; the Holy Spirit has been given to the Church; and the loving Father is waiting to bestow the fullness of the Spirit upon the cleansed, consecrated believer who by simple faith here and now claims and receives it. The child of God does not have to beg the heavenly Father for the fullness of His gift nor does he have to wait for it. Some insist that a night, or at least half a night, must be spent in prayer before the Spirit will be given in fullness. The only obstacle preventing the person whose life has been cleansed through confession from receiving the fullness of the Spirit is unbelief. John MacNeil gives the illustration that one cannot expect to fill a corked bottle with

Christians should not attempt to do the work of God without the _____ of the _____
_____.

(power, Holy Spirit)

Underline the two *main* reasons Christians fail to witness.

1. Lack of awareness and conviction of their responsibility to witness.
2. They do not know how to share their faith.
3. They are not experiencing joy and victory in their own lives.

(Underline 2 and 3.)

A Christian's life will be spiritually poor because of unconfessed _____ and lack of _____.

(sin, faith)

The obstacle to a Christian's receiving the fullness of the Holy Spirit is _____.

(unbelief)

water, even though he holds it under a running tap. Many have cried and waited and implored for the fullness of the Spirit, but the stopper of unbelief has prevented their empty hearts from receiving what they wanted.¹ God cannot give until man is willing to receive. Man receives by faith.

Witnessing Is the Accomplishment of the Spirit through Man

The Spirit gives courage for witnessing

After the Spirit came upon the 120 at Pentecost, Peter, who had denied his Lord with a curse at the trial, stood boldly before the people in the temple area and courageously spoke in the name of Christ. Peter would not have had the courage or the wisdom for the message apart from the filling of the Spirit (Acts 2:4). In Acts 4:13, the Sanhedrin beheld the boldness of Peter and John. Acts 4:31 records that the disciples "spoke the word of God with boldness." After the apostles were released from prison, they were commanded to go and speak in the Temple (Acts 5:20). The disciples had forsaken Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane for fear of imprisonment, but after being filled with the Spirit they disobeyed the command of the Sanhedrin to refrain from speaking in the name of Jesus. They were beaten and warned not to speak any more in His name, but they continued to teach. The Apostle Paul was ready not only to be imprisoned in Jerusalem but to die for the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 21:13).

The Spirit guides the witness in truth

Often Christians fail to witness because they are fearful that they do not have sufficient knowledge of the Bible to bring a person to conversion. Few Christians who do witness believe that they have an adequate understanding of the Scripture to answer all questions they may encounter. Their courage is based on a confidence that they are not alone in their service. They know that the resurrected Lord is present with them. Jesus promised His disciples, when they were arrested and placed on trial for their teachings that they would be given what to say by the Holy Spirit (Matt. 10:19f.). This promise was fulfilled in the experience of Paul. When he was arraigned before Agrippa and given permission to speak, he did not defend himself but gave testimony concerning his experience on the Damascus Road (Acts 26). Instead of judging Paul worthy of punishment, Agrippa concluded that he was innocent and would have been set at liberty had he not appealed to Caesar.

The Christian witness often feels that he must present a sophisticated argument to the person with whom he shares his faith. Scriptural examples and personal experience reveal that the Holy Spirit effectively uses a simple relating of what Christ has done in the life of the believer. If the conversion of the lost depended on the skill of the witness, he would need to prepare careful philosophical arguments to present his case. Since the success of witnessing depends on the power of the Spirit, the task of the witness is to share what Christ has done for him and what He can do for the person to whom he speaks.

¹ *The Spirit-Filled Life* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1896), p. 89.

Using the text and your Bible, find in Acts four accounts of boldness for witnessing through the Holy Spirit. Describe each one briefly.

1. _____
_____.
2. _____
_____.
3. _____
_____.
4. _____
_____.

Read Matthew 10:19-20.

Whose testimony at a trial confirms the Scripture you have just read?

_____ before _____.

(Paul, Agrippa)

Now take time to read all of Acts 26.

The Holy Spirit convicts the lost

Many neglect to witness because of their fear of failure. If they present the claims of Christ to the lost and the lost fail to respond in faith, the witness often concludes that the failure is his responsibility for not saying the right thing. In addition to remembering the promise of Jesus to His disciples that the Holy Spirit would give them words to speak, the witness should remember also that the response of the lost person in faith is dependent on the convicting work of the Holy Spirit. A Christian is responsible for faithfully sharing his faith, but the results come from God.

Jesus taught His disciples that He would send the Holy Spirit who would convict the world of sin. Only the Spirit can convict man of failing in his duty to God. It is beyond human power to convince a man of his sin and his need for God. The witness shares his faith with the assurance that the Holy Spirit is capable of dealing with the heart of any man. It is not his responsibility to point out and condemn the sins of the person to whom he speaks, but rather he should share the Word of God which sets forth every man's responsibility to his Creator. Each person is accountable to God for his conduct, and his rebellion against or neglect of the will of God justifies his condemnation. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would convict men of sin "because they do not believe in me" (John 16:9, RSV). Jesus was saying that any man who has not recognized Him as the master of his life or submitted to Him as king of the Kingdom with authority over the citizens of that Kingdom is living in sin. Whoever does not permit Christ to control his life by the attitude of submissive belief in Him as Lord is guilty of sin. The witness is responsible for presenting this truth to the unbeliever, but only the Holy Spirit can convict him of the error of his way.

The Holy Spirit will convict the world of righteousness (John 16:8, 10). Preachers proclaim the commandments of God as being right and denounce the unscrupulous activities of society, often with little effect. Our own generation is experiencing the spread of a "new morality," much to the dismay of sincere Christians. No amount of human argument will convince the pleasure-loving of their error. Sinful man through the process of rationalization is able to justify his actions. The work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the sinner, however, is able to convict him of unrighteousness. This truth is illustrated by the "Jesus Movement." Some young people who have rebelled against and disregarded Christian morality in their search for liberty and a satisfying life have, upon conversion, adopted and enforced very strict moral codes. Only the power of the Holy Spirit can bring about such a drastic revolution in life.

The work of the Holy Spirit is to convict the world concerning judgement, "because the ruler of this world has been judged" (John 16:11, NASB). The men of this world have entered into league with Satan to do his works and to live in his power. Satan promises success to the ambitious, whether in the realm of politics or economics, if they will follow his ruthless measures of a self-centred life. The concept is widespread today that the humble man will continue to be abused and mistreated in this life; therefore, he must return to power and violence to bring about justice. Only the Holy Spirit can convince a person that the use of ruthless power to accomplish one's greedy ambitions (Satan's way of life) leads to ultimate defeat and destruction.

The death of Christ on the cross and His resurrection from the grave exposed the wickedness of evil men who put Him there and reveal the eternal and glorious victory of the person who suffers for a season in this life in order to receive the power of God in the resurrection and eternal life. The way of Satan has been

Along with witnessing faithfully, a Christian should remember that the response of a lost person in faith is dependent on the convicting work of the _____

(Holy Spirit)

A witness is responsible for presenting the _____; the Holy Spirit convicts of _____

(truth, sin)

exposed in the death of Jesus, and Jesus' resurrection provides victory to those whose lives are submissive, humble, and devoted to sacrificial service. Satan promises victory in terms of worldly success by using power, deceit, and inhuman methods for getting what one desires. Economic and political success may be gained for a short season while a person lives on earth, but Jesus exposed the error and inadequacy of that way of life through His death and resurrection. The ruler of this world has already been judged and condemned. Only the Holy Spirit, however, can cause a worldly person to realize that the way of life he has been pursuing is the way of death.

The witness must avoid attempting to take the place of the Holy Spirit in convincing the lost man of his sin for rejecting Jesus, of his unrighteousness in relation to his fellow-man, and of the condemnation of the way of life he is following. The Holy Spirit is able to work within the heart of the sinner and enable him to recognize the error of his way.

A witness can share without extensive Bible knowledge

If the preacher or layman waited until he had mastered the contents of the Bible before sharing his faith, he would never become a witness for Christ. Successful witnessing does not depend upon the ability of a person to defend his faith by argument. In fact, the dependence on persuasion by argument reveals the lack of qualifications for successful witnessing. A person who attempts to convert the lost through argument is actually depending on his own ability and wisdom instead of the power of the Holy Spirit. What he needs is the conviction that Jesus Christ is real and that salvation is received through faith. No agnostic can controvert what has taken place in the life of the Christian; however, he might confound arguments proposed by the witness.

Instead of feeling alone in convincing the sinner of his need of God, the witness must realize that the Spirit of God is on his side and working in the heart of the man. He must learn to depend on the power of the Spirit and expect God to bring about results in the heart of the lost.

Prepared at all Times

Paul admonished young Timothy to be prepared at all times to preach the Word of God with urgency (2 Tim. 4:2). The Spirit of God opens unusual and unexpected opportunities for the witness to share his faith. A person who walks in the Spirit can expect opportunities most days to witness several times. How often the Christian has opportunity to share his faith and is unprepared! Either his heart is not warm and vibrant with the joy of the Christian life, or he is not aware of his opportunities. A person who has experienced a genuine new birth can always share his personal testimony with the uncommitted.

When a person walks in the Spirit, his words of witness are used in an unusually effective manner by the Holy Spirit. Charles Trumbull relates an experience of a friend who was a Christian businessman. This experience impresses us to count no opportunity as too slight.

A young man representing a hotel waxed eloquent and zealous in convincing his hearers of the advantages of lodging in the place he represented. The Christian businessman heard him and asked, "My young friend, are you a follower of Jesus Christ?" The young man replied that he was not. The Christian man replied, "Well, if you were in Christ's service, and would plead as earnestly for His cause as you do for the hotel you represent, you would be a valuable helper to your

A person who follows Satan in a self-centred life can see the error of his ways only by the _____

(Holy Spirit)

The Holy Spirit convicts a sinner of three things:

1. Rejection of _____
2. _____ in relation to others
3. _____ of his way of life

(Compare your answer with the text.)

True or False

_____ A Christian's witness should be that Christ is real to him and that salvation is received through faith.

_____ In order to witness effectively, a Christian should be able to defend his faith by argument.

_____ A Christian must depend on the Holy Spirit to bring about results in the heart of the lost person.

(True, False, True)

A Christian misses witnessing experiences because -

1. _____
2. _____

(His heart is not warm and vibrant with the joy of the Christian life. He is not aware of his opportunities.)

Read carefully the two experiences related in the text.

Have you had a recent witnessing opportunity? Write about it.

If you have not found an opportunity to witness recently, try to share your faith with someone today.

Master, and you would do a great deal of good to others. I wish you were in Christ's service, using your powers for him." The young man went on his way.

Several years passed and the Christian businessman was approached in his office one day by a stranger who inquired whether he was the person who asked a young hotel representative if he was a follower of Jesus Christ. The stranger identified himself as that young man. The Holy Spirit had used the words of the Christian to convict the heart of the young man, and he had become a devoted follower of Christ, dedicating his zeal to Christ's service.²

Bishop C. C. McCabe tells of the time he was visiting in a strange city and, as he got down from the coach at his hotel, he clasped the hand of the driver and said, "Good night, I hope to meet you again in Glory." He entered the house and soon retired. About midnight, the host knocked at his door and said, "Chaplain, that hackman has come back, and says he has got to see you tonight." The driver of the coach, with tears rolling down his cheeks, appeared at the door and said, "If I meet you in Glory, I have got to turn around. I have come to ask you to pray with me."³

When the Spirit of God is in control and the Christian is conscious of His leadership, his total conversation is dedicated to the service of God. He depends on the Holy Spirit to make effective the words which he speaks to his companions.

How to Stay Prepared

Spiritual preparation

Spiritual preparation must be daily. The heart of the Christian becomes cold and indifferent to the voice of his Lord if he does not communicate with Him daily. Daily communication should involve three elements:

1. *Confession of sins.*—With an awareness of God's presence, the Christian must acknowledge not only the sins of wrong acts and words but also the wrong attitudes of which he is guilty. After he confesses his sins, he can thank God for forgiving them on the basis of His promise (John 1:9). The witness must not permit sins to accumulate; otherwise, he will become indifferent to serving his Lord faithfully. Unconfessed sins weaken the Christian's service and rob him of the joy of Christian living.

2. *Surrender to Christ's will.*—The self or fleshly nature of man continues to attempt to regain control of his life. Only by constant surrender through faith to the will of God can self be denied control of life. Surrender must follow confession. Surrender is the invitation to the Holy Spirit to fill one's life and control him according to the will of God. This must be a daily exercise.

3. *Reading the Bible.*—The Holy Spirit speaks through the Scriptures to the hearts of God's children. The Christian should spend time each day dwelling on God's promises to him and his wonderful heritage as a child of God. God's promises include: answering the prayers of those who have faith and pray for the will of God to be done; victorious living for those who walk in the power of the Holy Spirit; the wonderful blessings God has for

² *Taking Men Alive* (New York: Young Men's Christian Association Press, 1907), pp. 152f.

³ *Taking Men Alive*, p. 153.

Why must a witness not keep unconfessed sin in his life?

(Compare your answer with the text.)

What daily step must follow confession of sin?

(Surrender to Christ's will)

A part of each day's preparation for one who wishes to witness should be _____ and _____

(Bible reading, prayer)

those who are in Christ Jesus; the love God has for His children; daily provisions for man's needs; and numerous other blessings.

Ready to witness at all times

In order to be ready to witness at any time, the Christian should begin each day with a period of communication with God. He should acknowledge that he is available that day to share his faith with the lost. Since sharing his faith is the will of God, he may ask and expect the Holy Spirit to fill him (to empower him) for the spiritual service God expects him to render. In addition to spiritual preparation, the witness needs to have available the Word of God, either in the form of a New Testament or printed scripture verses pertaining to salvation, which he can leave in the hands of the person to whom he speaks. God provides opportunities for the spiritually prepared to share their faith.

Growing through Bible Study

Although the Christian is not required to have a thorough knowledge of the Bible to realize success in sharing Christ, he should maintain daily Bible study for two reasons: to feed his own spiritual nature, and to know scriptural answers which, on occasions, will be helpful in meeting the problems of the lost.

The witness should not permit pride to cause him to pretend to know more about the Bible than he really does. During the course of witnessing, if the person to whom he is speaking asks a question which he cannot answer from the Bible, the witness should admit his lack of information and suggest that he will study the question and try to find an answer. If the witness encounter remains positive and does not degenerate into an argument, admission of the lack of knowledge will be acceptable to the lost person.

The study of the Bible must be a continuous endeavour. The Bible contains such a wealth of spiritual information that the student will be unable to master its contents during a lifetime. To depend on accomplishments of past biblical studies is inadequate since a person tends to forget Scriptures and teachings which he needs as a well-prepared witness.

Various plans for studying the Bible can be followed. Usually some help in understanding the meaning of Scriptures and their applications to his daily life is needed. Laymen's Bible commentaries give brief and clear explanations of the meaning of Scriptures. Several self-study approaches to Bible knowledge are available. Although each student will likely need some books which interpret the Bible, he should not substitute books about the Bible for the study of the Scripture itself. Reading the Bible in a contemporary translation of clear English and following a system of marking it will prove to be of great value. As the Bible is read, those important verses relating to atonement or salvation may be underlined in red; verses relating to the promises of God and the Holy Spirit could be underlined in green; and verses referring to sin and its result might be marked in blue. Other colours could be used for other important subjects. Using different coloured pens and writing brief notes in the margins will be of valuable assistance in locating desired Scriptures.

Two approaches are generally followed in the study of the Bible. Both are valuable and should be included. *The most common approach* is to select a book of the Bible and read through it. Some students begin with the first book of the Old Testament and systematically read through all of the Bible. Others select a book in the New Testament and read through it before moving to another section. The Bible student should select the procedure most suited to his situation and plan a definite time for daily Bible study. If he begins with the New Testament, he might first read

Two necessities in a Christian's life gained through daily Bible study are:

1. _____
2. _____

(Personal spiritual growth; Scriptural answers in meeting problems of those to whom one witnesses)

An aid in Bible study is a good Bible _____ .

(commentary)

Reading a _____ translation of the Bible aids in Bible study.

A system of _____ Scripture will prove to be of great value.

(contemporary, marking)

The most common approach to Bible study is _____

(Compare your answer with the text.)

the Gospel of Mark to get acquainted with the life of Jesus. Next, he might like to read the Gospel of John which parallels Mark at points but adds certain teachings and doctrines not in Mark. John gives special attention to the divine nature of Jesus and the meaning of salvation. Its simple terminology makes it a favourite with beginners, and its profound thoughts make it a favourite with biblical scholars.

The Book of Romans sets forth in a more systematic manner the doctrines of salvation and the Christian life. First Corinthians gives insight into the life of the early Church and some of the problems encountered and suggestions for facing the problems. The Acts of the Apostles gives a summary of the evangelistic work of the early disciples and their victories through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Because of the antiquity of the historical background of the Old Testament, beginning students are more likely to need guidance as they study the Old Testament. A number of denominational groups have made Bible study guides available at various levels of interest.

A *second common approach* to Bible study is topical or doctrinal. The student selects a topic or subject and traces the subject through various parts of the Bible. Instead of focusing his study on one book, the student might select the subject of the nature of God and seek to find out what the Bible says about God. Subjects of significance to the soul-winner include: sin, repentance and faith, the holiness of God, the redemptive work of Christ, the nature of the Church, the ordinances and their meanings, man's responsibility to God, and how to grow and mature in Christ. Some of these subjects will be given further attention in the last section of this study guide.

A Christian will likely not continue to be an effective witness for Christ if he neglects to read and study his Bible. Bible reading and study in an attitude of prayer provide opportunity for the Spirit of God to speak to and challenge his heart. The periods in history marked by spiritual vitality are also noted as times of interest in Bible reading and study.

<p>Is New Testament or Old Testament study more difficult for beginning students? _____</p> <p>(Old Testament)</p>

Home Study Exercise

Basic activity (Levels 1, 2, and 3). After reading the study guide, answer the following questions.

1. What commandment of Jesus does the contemporary Church neglect the most? _____

2. Give three reasons most Christians fail to witness. _____

3. What prevents a person from receiving the fullness of the Spirit for witnessing? _____

4. List four Scriptures which indicate the Spirit gives boldness for witnessing. _____

5. Name a biblical experience which shows that God's Spirit guides the words of His servants when they are on trial. _____

6. Name three things of which the Holy Spirit convicts the lost. _____

7. Even if a Christian knows very little Scripture, what message can he share? _____

8. Name two experiences in which the Holy Spirit effectively used the words of a witness. _____

9. List the steps in daily preparation for being ready to witness at all times. _____

10. Why should the witness read his Bible daily? _____

11. List three aids for Bible study. _____

12. Name two approaches generally followed in Bible study. _____

13. Why is the Old Testament difficult to understand? _____

Suggested supplementary activity (Levels 2 and 3). Do one of the following reading assignments, make a summary or brief outline of what you read, and be prepared to share the significant points with the seminar.

Bright, *Revolution Now*, pp. 115-141
Taylor, *The Key to Triumphant Living*, pp. 91-102
Paxson, *Life on the Highest Plane*, vol. 3, pp. 152-182

Seminar Discussion

1. Why do more new Christians not become Bible students and what can be done about it?
2. Why is a meaningful prayer life difficult to maintain? What helpful habits would you suggest to a person desiring a more constant spiritual life?
3. Give reports of helpful information from your supplementary reading.
4. Why do 95 per cent of the Christians fail to witness even though all have been commanded to do so?
5. In what ways is the Holy Spirit a helper to the witness?
6. What activities must a Christian pursue daily to be prepared at all times?
7. Suggest a plan of Bible study for new Christians.