

CHAPTER 8

WITNESSING - SHARING GOD'S MESSAGE

ASSIGNMENTS:

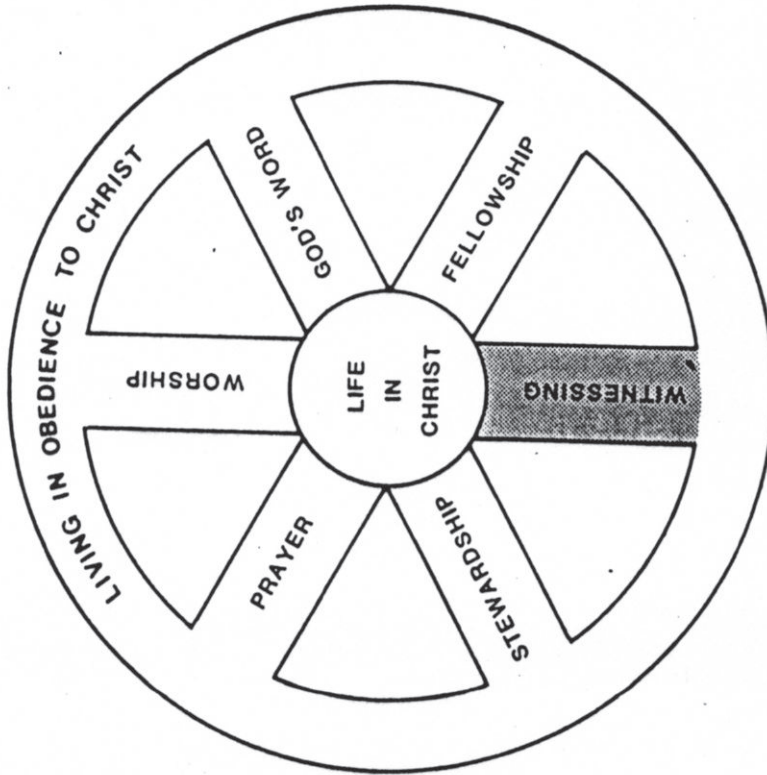
1. Scripture Reading - Acts 1-7  
Read one chapter each day.
2. Prayer - Use the prayer list page to record your requests and answers.
3. Memorize - 1 Peter 3:15  
Additional verse - Matthew 4:19
4. Study and complete the material in the chapter.
5. Outline the pastor's Sunday sermon.

Outline your daily progress below:

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat

CHAPTER 8

WITNESSING - SHARING GOD'S MESSAGE



As Christians, we have knowledge of what salvation is since we have experienced God's grace and forgiveness. This is a great truth which God desires all mankind to know and experience. It should be our desire then, to share this marvelous message with those around us. Sharing our faith and salvation in Christ is known as witnessing - for we are witnesses of salvation and can testify about His grace.

Witnessing is one of the by-products of a rich and abundant life in Christ. As the Lord reveals new truths, personal applications and challenges to our lives, we will want to pass them on to others.

Witnessing involves three basic areas. First, it is being a living testimony of God's power in us. That power transforms us from old ways of life into new life. Living in obedience to Christ gives credibility to our words - the second area of witnessing. This spoken word is simply telling what God has done for us, and leading someone to the Saviour. Effective witnessing also involves skills. Skills give us confidence and can be learned and sharpened. We will become sharpened instruments in God's hand as we receive training and gain experience in witnessing.

WHY WITNESS?

Christ's first instructions to His new followers were: "Come follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19). His last instructions on this earth to his disciples were: "And you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Christ thus began and ended His ministry with the command to be witnesses and fishers of men!

In the Great Commission, our Lord told His church to go into the world and make disciples of all nations, to baptize them, and then to teach them all things that He had commanded. The witness for Christ is the driving power which moves the church along just as the engine in a ship drives it along. We know that God's Holy Spirit is the true power of the church, but it is the witness of the Spirit through the individual life and through the corporate life of the church which brings power and life to the congregation itself. It is safe to say that the only truly



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happy church is a witnessing church.

Why does witnessing for Christ make people in the congregation happy? First we must say that we use the word *happy* in the same way that our Lord used it in the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12). A witnessing congregation is a happy congregation because they are doing what their Lord told them to do. All too often the church is virtually without a witness except for the preaching and teaching on Sundays and perhaps at some point during the week. Christians get caught up in the bureaucracy of the church and thus fail to be on the firing line with a witness for Jesus Christ in the face of the enemy. It should be carefully noted that a disobedient, and therefore, defeated Christian cannot in any way be happy.

Witnessing for Christ requires dedication and the willingness to face rebuke as well as acceptance. It is a well established fact that disobedient Christians usually say, "Witnessing is not my gift." Evangelism is a spiritual gift, but witnessing is the responsibility of each and every Christian and the congregation as a body. Where would the church be now if Stephen and Philip, who were members of the first Board of Deacons, had said, "We are serving tables and witnessing is not our gift." The defeated Christian is certainly not happy. The shield of faith is intended to quench the fiery darts of the wicked one. Note that in the Christian armor there is no armor plate or defensive equipment for the backside (Ephesians 6:11-19). When we turn our back to the enemy and refuse to be a witnessing church, we are going to be hit by the fiery darts in the most unprotected and embarrassing place.

Often Acts 8:4, which states, "Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went," is used out of context and is believed to mean the apostles were the ones that went everywhere spreading the Word and preaching the Word. The significant context of that verse is found in Acts 8:1, which states, "... and all except the apostles were scattered ...". Now we know that the apostles

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did their share and more than that. But the point that is emphasized here is that everyone besides the apostles also went and evangelized.

This is how the Church of Jesus Christ in 300 years accomplished the most amazing results. The whole pagan Roman Empire was undercut and overthrown by the power of the Gospel of Christ which, on the lips of Christ-conquered disciples, crossed seas and deserts, pierced the darkest jungles, scaped into every city and town, and finally into the senate and the very palace of Rome itself -- until a "Christian" caesar was placed upon the throne. How? Everyone was preaching the Word. The Christian Church was burgeoning with such rapidity that by the middle of the second century one of the great apologists could say, "We are everywhere. We are in your towns and in your cities; we are in the senate; we are more numerous than anyone." Constantine knew very well that he had no chance of unifying the Roman Empire or holding power in that empire without the help of the Christians.

By A.D. 300 the church had shown such tremendous strength and virility, and was spreading so swiftly, that it appeared the entire civilized world could be evangelized by A.D. 500. But something happened. Emperor Constantine, supposing to do a favor to the church, declared the whole Roman Empire to be Christian. Thus millions of barbarians flooded into the church, bringing with them all of the pagan superstitions and heresies. They didn't even know the Gospel. They had never experienced its transforming power and, of course, they could not go out and tell others about it. Thus, little by little, the idea arose that there was a division between the clergy and the laity, and that this task of evangelism was a job for professionally trained individuals. Consequently this responsibility was left up to the clergy. The Dark Ages followed! With only a few bright spots in the history of the church since that time, this deplorable condition has continued down to our day.



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In the fourth chapter of Ephesians we are told that Christ has given pastors and teachers to the church, "to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" (Ephesians 4:12). The pastor, every member of the staff, and every member of the congregation should be a witness for Jesus Christ.



Which approach do you think is best?

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We should be equipped and willing to lead others to Christ as the church reaches out in the power of the Holy Spirit and with the authority of the Word of God to make Christ known throughout the world. Think of what would happen if all of the churches across the U.S. and around the world were to become truly witnessing congregations!

What impels the Christian to be active in witness? The basic motive is plain obedience. Every Christian is a servant of Christ. We have been *bought with a price*. So we do not overlook any of His commandments.

1. Obedience is the fruit and proof of our love for Christ, and it is an honorable privilege to be sent by Him to share in His own mission in the world.
2. Loving concern for others is also our incentive. To love my neighbor, is to seek and to serve their highest good. We cannot claim to love them if we leave them alone to die without Christ. In Romans, Paul writes that his mission to all the nations is "for the sake of the name." It was the preeminent name of Jesus.
3. Love for His name is a concern for His honor in the world, an ardent desire for the fulfillment of our prayer: "Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to Your name be the glory" (Psalm 115:1). It is a recognition that God the Father has "exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, ... and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, ..." (Philippians 2:9-11).

Witnessing

BEING A LIVING TESTIMONY

*A witness in the courtroom is expected to tell what he knows about a given situation. The Christian witness is to tell others what he knows about Jesus Christ and what it means to personally trust Him.*

1. What was the first thing Andrew did after he met Jesus? John 1:35-42

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2. What did Peter say about speaking of Jesus Christ? Acts 4:20 (Underline the correct answer.)

- 1. He didn't speak unless asked.
- 2. He was compelled to speak.
- 3. He found it difficult to speak of such a personal matter.

3. What was Paul to tell people? Acts 22:15

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4. Of what did Paul say he was not ashamed? Why? Romans 1:16

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Witnessing

WITNESS BY LIFE

*Show me your redeemed life and I'll believe in your Redeemer.*  
-- Voltaire

1. Since we are God's children living in a warped and wicked age (Philippians 2:15).

a. What kind of lives should we live?

\_\_\_\_\_

b. How should we appear to the world?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. In Matthew 5:16,

a. What do people notice about a Christian whose life shines?

\_\_\_\_\_

b. What can be the result?

\_\_\_\_\_

Witnessing

*You are writing a Gospel,  
A chapter each day,  
By the things that you do  
And the words that you say.*

*Others read what you write -  
Distorted or true;  
What is the Gospel  
According to you?*

LEADING SOMEONE TO CHRIST

1. Who are the ones who should openly speak of their salvation? (Psalm 107:2)

2. The blind man whom Jesus healed had little or no theological training, but he could give a simple and effective testimony. What two facts did he relate? (John 9:25)

3. In 1 Peter 3:15,16

a. What precedes telling others about Christ?

b. What is the hope that is in you?

Witnessing

c. What would stimulate someone to ask you about the hope that is in you?

d. What should be your attitude when witnessing?

*I cannot, by being good, tell men of Jesus' atoning death and resurrection nor of my faith in His divinity. The emphasis is too much on me, and too little on Him.*  
-- Samuel Shoemaker

Dr. James Kennedy, pastor of Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church, relates that before he knew Christ, and while in high school, he had greatly admired a young man in his school who had character and many fine qualities. Sometime later after high school years, Dr. Kennedy became a Christian and discovered that the fine young man had been a Christian but had never shared his belief with him. The emphasis in this situation was on the young man. Because of his goodness, the glory that should have gone to Christ went to him instead.

*Witnessing is taking a good look at the Lord Jesus and then telling others what you've seen.*

-- Lorne Sanny

1 John 1:3 states, "We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ."

A Christian businessman confessed how he had unknowingly discouraged a business associate from coming to Christ for years. One day the friend told the Christian businessman he had met the Lord the night before through



a Billy Graham meeting. The long-time Christian was elated and said so, but the new Christian replied, "Friend, you're the reason I have resisted becoming a Christian all these years. I figured that if a person could live a good life as you do and not be a Christian, there was no need to become one!" This businessman had lived an exemplary life, but he had not revealed the Source of strength for living it.

Since Jesus came to seek and to save the lost and since He lives within us, even though we may not find it easy to talk to others about Christ, we can simply ask Him to give us the courage to speak forcefully for Him. Whenever we are alone with a person for a few minutes we can assume that we are there by divine appointment to share the good news of God's love and forgiveness. Though we should always seek to bring those who are interested to a definite commitment to Christ, we should not feel discouraged when some refuse to receive Him as their Savior and Lord. That is God's responsibility. It is our responsibility to tell them the good news in love and with genuine concern. Sharing Christ should be a way of life for every Christian. When we waken each morning we should thank the Lord Jesus that He lives within us and ask Him to use our lips to speak of His love and forgiveness at every opportunity throughout the day.

PRESENT CHRIST

1. What was the subject of Paul's witness?  
1 Corinthians 1:23,24

Ephesians 3:8

2. Why is it important that we present Jesus Christ to people who are lost?  
John 14:6

Acts 4:12

Witnessing is presenting a Person not a plan. The power is in the Gospel. "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of every one who believes..." (Romans 1:16).

Sharing the gospel can be done in a number of ways. Some people choose to take a person through the Bible, showing them Scriptures that pertain to God's salvation plan. Others incorporate illustrations or diagrams to clarify Scriptural ideas. There are also a variety of resources in tract form that can aid in sharing God's message of salvation. Two good examples are:

The Four Spiritual Laws,  
by Campus Crusade for Christ

and

Steps to Peace with God,  
by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.

Consult with your discipler or church on learning and using these methods.

THE IMPORTANCE OF OUR TESTIMONY

God doesn't need us to argue His case, but simply to tell others what He has done for us. He hasn't engaged many of us as lawyers, but He has summoned all of us as witnesses.

Read Acts 26:1-29. Notice in Paul's testimony that he included the following:

- a. What life was like before he met Christ.
- b. How he met Him.
- c. How it changed his life.

Using these points, write out your own one-minute testimony, and ask God to give you the opportunity to share your testimony with at least one person this week.

Before I received Christ I lived and thought this way:

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How I received Christ (be specific)

After I received Christ, these positive changes took place:

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Favorite or pertinent verse with which I might close:

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KEEPING THE CONVERSATION FOCUSED ON CHRIST

Today, an ever-increasing number of Christians are constantly being used of God to introduce others to our Savior because they have been trained to talk about Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. They do not get sidetracked to discuss nonessential matters. That is why it is important to keep the conversation focused on the salvation message and the person of Christ. People may have questions or comments about irrelevant subjects. They may want to argue with us or get into philosophical discussions. But it is up to us to guide and maintain the conversation on the essentials of salvation, Christ, and His work.

There are many people who express antagonism toward God - they want nothing to do with religion. But when we tell them about Jesus, they are responsive. Bill Bright of



Campus Crusade for Christ tells of a taxi driver in Australia who told him, "I gave up all religion in World War II. I want nothing to do with a God who allows people to kill each other." Bill Bright's answer was, "Wait a minute. You are accusing God of something for which man is responsible. It is the evil in man, his sin that causes him to hate and steal and kill." He explained the difference between *religion* which is man's search for God, and *Christianity* which is God's revelation of Himself in Christ to man. The man's attitude changed as he heard about the Person of Christ. Soon he said that he would like to pray and receive Christ.

DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE SKILLS

1. Successful way of life witnessing may be defined as simply taking the initiative to share Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and leaving the results to God.

"We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me."

-- Colossians 1:28,29

"Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season;"

-- 2 Timothy 4:2a

2. There are three important ingredients to consider when sharing Christ as a way of life.
  1. **Be available:** It is not your ability that counts, but your availability. Let His power work through you.
  2. **Meet People:** That person standing there whom you do not know may be the divine appointment God has for you today.
  3. **Turn the conversation to Christ:** Though the use of simple transitions you can easily turn the topic of conversation to Jesus Christ.

3. Pray in the Spirit

It is our responsibility to pray for people to come to Christ and to share Christ with them. God is the One who by His Spirit can produce faith in the hearts of others and change their lives. *Talk to God about men, before you talk to men about God.*

4. Go.

A. We are not to wait for people to come to us. Rather we are to go to them with the good news of Christ. One of the greatest problems we all face - one of the great barriers in witnessing - is taking the initiative. There are all kinds of excuses: "I am too busy," or "I am waiting for the Holy Spirit to lead me to someone." We need not wait for the Holy Spirit to "lead us." Our Lord Jesus has already commanded us to go tell the good news to all.

B. We need to arrange our priorities so that we can take time every day to share Christ with someone. As Christians, we should share our faith as a way of life with those whom the Lord brings across our paths. In other words, we should meet people. We should ask God for His

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agape love and interest in everyone we meet.

1. Generally, we will initiate contact with those of the same sex, unless God obviously directs otherwise.
2. We meet people by being friendly and by asking questions. Questions of *where, who, how, what, when, and why* will develop into a conversation. For example:
  - a. Jesus with the woman at the well, John 4:7: "May I have a drink?"
  - b. Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch, Acts 8:30: "Do you understand what you are reading?"
  - c. To a neighbor: "Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ . I just wanted a chance to meet you. How long have you lived here?"
  - d. To a fellow traveler: "Hello, where are you going?"
  - e. To a waitress, service station attendant, or other sales person: "How do you like working here?"
  - f. Others: "Do you live in this city or area?" "What do you do for a living?" "May I help you?" "Who, in your opinion, are the three greatest men who ever lived?"

5. Turning the conversation to Christ:

- A. We have opportunities to meet people and share our faith all around us. We are a unique people and have a sphere of influence not duplicated by any other person. If we have our eyes open for opportunities and are available, we will find them everywhere. It only takes a few minutes

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to establish a rapport with an individual by asking questions. Once rapport has been established, a simple transition allows us to share our testimony and the Gospel with another person.

B. Nearly everyone responds to love.

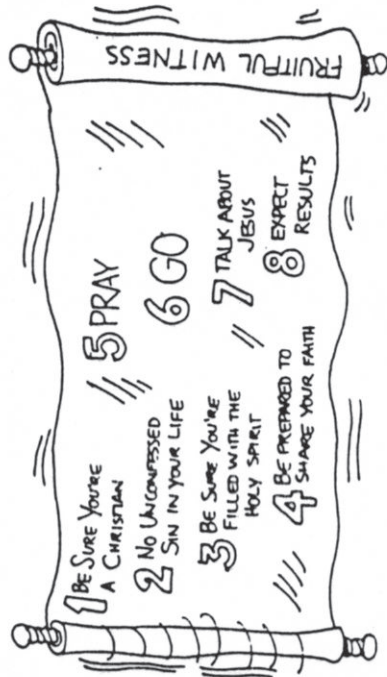
1. Represent Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit.
2. Be sensitive to the other person's interest and response. Watch facial expressions.
3. Be casual, friendly and warm, yet speak with confidence.
4. Share - do not preach. Be yourself and others will be themselves too.

## EXPECT RESULTS

When we talk about Jesus, we can expect people to respond - not on the basis of positive thinking, but because of our confidence in God, His love, His sovereignty, His power, and His promise that He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.



This drawing illustrates what a fruitful witness involves:



We can expect people to respond because our Lord who came to seek and to save the lost has commissioned us to go tell everyone the good news and make disciples in all nations. He claimed all authority in heaven and earth and promised that He would always be with them. We are assured of that same presence and power with us today as in that first century. On the basis of such claims and promises of our Lord, it is inconceivable that He would not honor the faithful witness of all who place their trust in Him.

It is interesting to note that while the disciples met with strong and often bitter opposition, the Christian movement experienced phenomenal growth, as was expressed in Paul's letter to the church in Thessalonica: "... your faith in God has become known everywhere" (1 Thessalonians 1:5).

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think so few Christians ever lead others to Christ?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What impels the Christian to be active in witnessing?  
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\_\_\_\_\_
3. How does sin affect one's witness for Christ?  
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\_\_\_\_\_
4. Why is it important to learn how to share your faith in Christ with others? Are you prepared to share the gospel with others? If not, what do you feel that you should do to become better prepared?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Witnessing

5. What is the role of prayer in introducing others to Christ?

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6. What is your responsibility in witnessing?  
What is God's responsibility?

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7. If fear keeps you from witnessing to others about Christ, what is the remedy for fear?  
(See Acts 4:5-13)

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8. Why is it important to talk about Jesus, His person, His work, and His claims on our lives, and not to talk about secondary issues.

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9. What does it mean to be a fisher of men in Matthew 4:19?

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Witnessing

10. Read Matthew 5:14-16. Why is it important to have a life that "shines" when it comes to sharing our faith?

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11. Robert Coleman once said, "Evangelism is not an optional accessory to our life. It is the heart beat of all that we are called to be and do." What does that mean to you?

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Lifestyle Evangelism, Joseph Aldrich

Evangelism as a Lifestyle, Jim Peterson

Out of the Salt Shaker, Rebecca Manley Pippert