



## FIRST CENTURY WITNESSING

**Different styles for different people.** The book of Acts records the First Century believers' obedience to the Great Commission. They witnessed in many ways ... in many places ... to many varied people ... and most often from the strength of unity with at least one other believer. And in just one generation they spread the Gospel from Judea to Samaria, Galilee, Africa, Asia Minor, Macedonia, Greece, and Rome. Studying their example helps us learn to be more effective witnesses throughout our world.

**How did they witness?** What style or methodology did they use? They used varying methods in varying circumstances. There was no one method used by all. They preached, proclaimed, and testified about the Good News. Sometimes when talking with Jews, they started from Old Testament history to lay a foundation for the message of Christ. To Gentiles in Athens, Paul began by referring to their idols and one of their poets ... then he explained about Christ. In other situations, they gave evidence ... reasoning, proving, persuading, and encouraging. They debated, taught, conversed, and wrote about the Gospel. They spoke boldly in all circumstances ... relying on the Lord. The lesson for us is that we should use a variety of methods based on our gifts and abilities ... adjusted to varying circumstances ... made relevant to the needs and knowledge of the individual or group to whom we are witnessing. The First Century believers witnessed in many ways. We too should use any appropriate means to communicate the Gospel.

**Where did they witness?** The simple answer to this is in their obedience to Acts 1:8. *"You shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."* They began where they were in Jerusalem ... then they took the Gospel into the surrounding area of Judea and Samaria ... and then continued out into the world. They witnessed in cities, in their travels, in the marketplace, and wherever persecution scattered them. They spoke of Christ in their court defense, in prison, and even at an execution. They witnessed in an upper room, at a riverside prayer meeting, in a school, in synagogues, in an open-air theater, and at a meeting of philosophers. The Early Church believers witnessed everywhere that God opened a door, Colossians 4:3, Acts 14:27, 1 Corinthians 16:9, 2 Corinthians 2:12. And when God shut the door, they moved on, Acts 16:6-7. The lesson for us is that we should pray for and seize every opportunity ... being sensitive to God's opening and closing doors. Start where you are. Look for opportunities everywhere ... witness to friends, acquaintances, and strangers. Follow God's leading where you live ... and out into the surrounding areas and into the world.

**To whom did they witness?** There is also no limiting answer to this question. There is no restrictive pattern found in the book of Acts. They witnessed to men, women, individuals, small groups, and large groups. They spoke of Jesus to Jews, Gentiles, Greeks, Romans, and others. They witnessed to interested people, non-religious people, idol worshippers, and people in false religions. They shared the Good News with Jewish leaders, Roman officials, guards, fellow prisoners, governors, and even a king. The First Century believers witnessed to anyone and everyone. The lesson for us is that we should witness to anyone and everyone. Look at every person as an opportunity ... as a possibility.

**Were they alone when they witnessed?** The basic pattern of witnessing in Acts follows the Biblical principle that *"two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up"* Ecclesiastes 4:9-10. Witnessing was done solo ... but it seems that more often it was done from the strength of unity with one or more other believers. Examples include Peter and John ... Philip and Simon ... Barnabas and Paul ... Barnabas and John Mark ... Paul, Silas, and Luke ... Silas and Timothy ... Paul, Priscilla, and Aquila ... Paul, Gaius, and Aristarchus ... Paul, Sopater, Aristarchus, Secundus, Gaius, Timothy, Tychicus, and Trophimus. Sometimes they were alone as they witnessed. Examples of those who witnessed solo include Peter, Paul, Philip, and Stephen. However, more often they were in pairs or small groups. We see this same pattern in Jesus sending out the twelve in twos, Mark 6:7 ... and in His sending out the seventy in twos, Luke 10:1. The lesson for us is that we should witness both alone and with other like-minded believers. There is strength in witnessing with others. In addition, witnessing as an extension of a band of disciples gives extra strength from additional prayer, encouragement, and accountability.

**Summary.** The believers of the First Century Church witnessed using many varied methods ... using whatever approach was appropriate. They witnessed everywhere where God opened a door of opportunity. They witnessed to anybody and everybody. They witnessed alone ... but they often witnessed with other believers. Today we should do the same. We should use whatever methodology fits our abilities, gifts, and circumstances. We should actively pursue every opportunity ... going through every open door. We should see anyone and everyone as possibilities for the Gospel.

## AN OVERVIEW OF WITNESSING

Witnessing is a process that takes many different external forms. However, there is a common basic pattern behind all the varied external forms. The basic pattern includes:

**Preparation.** Develop a sufficient spiritual life to produce and sustain your witness. Long-term witnessing is sustained by those who transition from being a believer to being a disciple. Disciples are rooted in (know and live in) the Word, John 8:31-32. *Disciplemaking 1* can help in understanding the Word ... and *Disciplemaking 2* in learning how to witness.

**Prayer.** There are many things to pray about before, during, and after witnessing. Pray for yourself ... and for your witnessing partner and co-laborers. Pray specifically for those who need Christ. Pray for boldness ... and for open doors.

**Partnership.** Co-laboring with committed, like-minded believers is very important. Recruit a witnessing partner or team.

**Planning.** Paul wrote, "*Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity*" Colossians 4:5. Jesus said, "*Be shrewd as serpents, and innocent as doves*" Matthew 10:16. Use your head ... think ... plan ... review ... strategize.

**Penetration.** There is no impact without contact. You must make meaningful contact with people if you are going to witness to them. You are the Gospel in flesh and blood. You must penetrate the world around you so that you can tell people about Jesus. Engage people with your life and words.

**Practice.** Put what you learn in *Disciplemaking 2* into practice. Prove yourself to be a doer of the Word and not merely a hearer, James 1:22-25. Study this course ... applying it as you learn.

**Presentation.** Presenting the Gospel (including the invitation to receive Christ) is only the tip of the iceberg ... but it is critically important. We have been given the ministry *and* word of reconciliation, 2 Corinthians 5:18-19. Paul said, "*How shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard?*" Romans 10:14. Give the Gospel to lost people ... and invite them to receive Christ as their savior.

**Perseverance.** Effective witnessing is exciting and joyful ... but it is also hard work. It is the result of God's work through you as you persevere. Witnessing takes effort ... continued effort. It requires perseverance, Luke 8:14-15, 1 Corinthians 15:58.

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### Disciplemaking 2 Being His Witness

## WHERE DO I BEGIN?

*"But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God." Acts 20:24*

**PRIORITIZE WITNESSING.** The Apostle Paul had a passion to witness. For him, witnessing was a high priority. His heart was broken for lost people ... especially for his lost Jewish kinsmen, Romans 9:1-5. Paul described his priority in Romans 1:14-16 as *"I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."* Jesus' priority was also clear. He came to earth for the specific purpose *"to seek and to save that which was lost"* Luke 19:10. Jesus and Paul saw beyond the temporal to the eternal condition of man. You and I must give witnessing the same high priority that they did. Sharing the Gospel should not be your program ... it should be your passion.

**SEE WITNESSING AS A PROCESS.** Witnessing is a process. It is a lifestyle based on the Word and lived out in your world. It is not a program. In some circumstances you may be a sower ... in others a waterer ... in others a cultivator ... and in others a harvester, John 4:36-38, 1 Corinthians 3:6-9. You may be a combination of some of these ... or occasionally all. You are more than a postman. You are an ambassador living in a foreign land, 2 Corinthians 5:18-20, 1 Peter 2:11. Being an ambassador is living among foreigners as a representative of your King.

**SEEK PROGRESS FIRST ... THE PRODUCT SECOND.** Desire to win others to Christ. Your specific objective should be their salvation. Paul used the phrase *"that I might win"* five times in 1 Corinthians 9:19-22 ... and concluded with the words *"that I may by all means save some"*. You should desire and seek the goal of their salvation. However, you must realize that although it might take only one or two conversations, it might also take weeks, months, or years. Keep your focus on the goal. Witnessing is a process. It is like building a wall one brick at a time. It takes time. But be prepared because you may be called upon to lay the final brick. Seek progress first ... the product will come on God's schedule.

**PAY THE PRICE OF OBEDIENCE.** Witnessing isn't easy. It is often difficult and costly. Paul paid a high price to spread the Gospel, 2 Corinthians 11:23-27. And Jesus paid the ultimate price on the cross. His suffering and death, motivated by His love for lost people, is your example, John 3:16, 1 Peter 2:20-24. Follow their example. Be willing to live a life of sacrifice to bring the Gospel to lost people. Pay the price!

## UNDERSTANDING THE GREAT COMMISSION

Several days before He ascended into Heaven, Jesus gave the Great Commission to His disciples, Matthew 28:18-20. It was their, and our, commission to take the Gospel to the whole world ... to make disciples ... baptizing and teaching those who come to faith in Him. Then in His very last words before He ascended, He detailed His expansion strategy, Acts 1:8. They were to begin where they were ... then move out into the surrounding areas ... and eventually into the remotest parts of the earth. All who are His disciples are included in this commission through His prayer in John 17:18-21. It is very important for us to understand how His Great Commission and expansion strategy apply to us today. We need to understand them both ... personalize them ... and then apply them as we witness and make disciples.

### The Great Commission spoken by Jesus...

*"And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.'" Matthew 28:18-20*

### and personalized for you today...

All heavenly and earthly authority has been given to Jesus. Therefore, based on that authority, go make disciples ... while you are going, make disciples. Baptize them and teach them to obey all that the Word commands (including the Great Commission). And as you go making disciples, Jesus is with you all the way.

### The expansion strategy given by Jesus...

*"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." Acts 1:8*

### and personalized for you today...

You received power at the moment you were saved ... and you are empowered as you are filled with the Spirit. You have already been commissioned to be His witnesses. Take His Gospel to your friends, to your acquaintances, and to the strangers in your life. Start witnessing where you are ... to your present contacts. Then progressively move out to other people and other places.

## PRAYER AND WITNESSING

Prayer is the starting point of witnessing. It is a non-negotiable, foundational ingredient in the continuing process of helping people come to Christ. Talk to God about people before you talk to people about God. Start with prayer ... or don't start at all. Continue praying as you continue witnessing. Study the prayer guidelines below ... and make them part of your witnessing prayer life.

### How to pray...

Pray devotedly and alertly, Colossians 4:2.

Pray continually, frequently, steadily, 1 Thessalonians 5:17.

Pray persistently ... keep at it, Luke 11:5-10, 18:1-8.

### Whom to pray for...

Pray for those who need Christ, Romans 10:1.

Pray for your witnessing partner(s), Ephesians 6:18-20, 2 Thessalonians 3:1.

Pray that more Christians will witness, Matthew 9:37-38, Luke 10:2.

Pray for your enemies who need Christ, Matthew 5:44.

### What to pray for...

Pray for the rapid spreading of His Word, 2 Thessalonians 3:1.

Pray for open doors for the Gospel, Colossians 4:3-4, Acts 14:27.

Pray for wisdom and the words to say, James 1:5, Ephesians 6:18-20.

Pray for clarity in presenting the Gospel, Colossians 4:4.

Pray for boldness, Ephesians 6:18-20, Acts 4:23-31

## FOCUSING ON LOST PEOPLE

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Obeying the Great Commission means focusing your attention, your time, and your life on lost people. This worksheet is designed to help you do that. Follow the directions below to identify specific people that need the Gospel. As you do this, pray for God's wisdom in identifying the lost people in your world.

Pray.

Write names in each of the following categories.

Pray for them by name every day ... pray for their salvation.

Initiate meaningful contact and conversation with them.

Review and modify this list as needed.

Recruit a witnessing partner or partners ... pray daily for each other and each other's list.

### FRIENDS (in your Jerusalem)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

### ACQUAINTANCES (in your Jerusalem and Samaria)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

### STRANGERS (in the remotest part of your world)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

## GOSPEL MEMORIZATION VERSES ... NASB

Memorize the following verses in the Bible version you normally use.

- Matthew 5:48 *"Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."*
- John 3:16 *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."*
- Romans 5:8 *"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."*
- Romans 3:23 *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."*
- Isaiah 59:2 *"But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God."*
- Romans 6:23 *"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."*
- 1 Peter 2:24 *"He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness."*
- John 10:11 *"I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep."*
- John 14:6 *"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.'"*
- John 1:12 *"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name."*
- Acts 10:43 *"Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins."*
- John 11:25-26 *"Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?'"*