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Disciplemaking 2 Being His Witness

WHY DON'T I WITNESS?

"Now no one after lighting a lamp covers it over with a container, or puts it under a bed; but he puts it on a lampstand, so that those who come in may see the light." Luke 8:16

SHIRKING OR SHINING? Jesus said, *"While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world"* John 9:5. Did you notice the phrase *"while I am in the world"* in that verse? He also said, *"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house"* Matthew 5:14-15. After He ascended, we became the light of the world. However, some Christians cover the light ... hiding it instead of displaying it. God passed the light on to you and to me to shine into the dark, lost world. He hasn't covered you with a basket or hidden you under the bed. If that has happened to you, who did it? Was it you, Satan, the world, or other Christians? This lesson will help you shine instead of shirk. You will learn how to overcome three common causes for not witnessing ... fear, spiritual imbalance, and lack of time. "Now no one

REASONS FOR SHINING. There are many reasons to shine ... reasons to witness. Each should motivate you to share the Gospel. Moreover, as a whole, they should irresistibly compel you to go to the harvest fields. You should witness because...

You are commanded to, Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 1:8.

You want to be pleasing to God, 2 Corinthians 5:9.

You want to be like Jesus ... seeking and saving the lost, Luke 19:10.

You want to follow Paul's example, 1 Corinthians 11:1.

It helps you become a disciple, John 15:8.

Jesus is the only way to God, John 14:6.

You should love lost people, Philippians 1:15-17, Romans 9:1-5.

It's too late after you are in Heaven, Luke 16:26-28.

Hell is an awful place, Mark 9:47-48.

Hell is forever, 2 Thessalonians 1:9.

You will be judged, 2 Corinthians 5:10-11.

You will be rewarded, 1 Corinthians 3:12-15.

It results in joy, Luke 15:6-7.

It improves your prayer life, John 15:16.

It helps defeat Satan, Revelation 12:10-11.

REASONS FOR SHIRKING

Reason # 1 ... Fear

"For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline." 2 Timothy 1:7

Fear is one of the most common reasons why believers don't witness. It causes many to hesitate. It immobilizes others. It can range from simple anxiety to something close to terror. God's words to Joshua seem to be appropriate for us. *"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go"* Joshua 1:9. God does not want you to be afraid. He wants you to be courageous.

Identify your fears from the list below ... then apply God's Word to them. Trust God. He is the source of your strength and courage. Fear subsides when you fix your eyes on Him. Common fears include:

Fear of people. This is the reaction that 10 of the 12 spies had when they returned to Kadesh from Canaan. God had commanded them to take the land ... but they were too afraid of the people in the land. Their fear of the people was verbalized as *"And we became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight"* Numbers 13:33. Their *grasshopper-vision* came from seeing God as too small ... seeing the enemy as too big ... and seeing themselves as too important in the process. The same is true of believers who are afraid to witness. First, understand that God is all-powerful. No person or circumstance is impossible for God. You have a great God ... have a great faith in Him. Do not be afraid. And don't look at those you witness to as impossible cases. Nothing is impossible for God. Jesus said, *"The things impossible with men are possible with God"* Luke 18:27. Your non-believing friend is no match for God. Moreover, remember that your friend is not the enemy. He or she is a captive of the enemy, 2 Timothy 2:26. And don't think too highly of yourself in the witnessing process. You are not responsible for the results ... God is. You are responsible to witness ... but you are not the Savior. You witness ... but God saves. The Israelites marched around Jericho, blew their trumpets, and shouted ... but God brought the walls down, Joshua 6. It is the same in witnessing. Don't be afraid. God is much bigger than any witnessing obstacle or impossible case. Do your part ... God will do His. Why should you be afraid?

Fear of the unfamiliar. Many people have apprehension about new challenges. Fear of the unfamiliar is common when you first begin to witness. Experience eliminates this fear. And when you timidly press on into the unknown territory of witnessing, remember that *"the Lord will protect you from all evil; He will keep your soul. The Lord will guard your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forever"* Psalm 121:7-8. Jesus is with you as you witness. That promise is built into the Great Commission ... as Jesus said, *"I am with you always, even to the end of the age"* Matthew 28:18-20. The Lord is protecting and guarding you. Jesus is with you. Why should you be afraid of the unfamiliar?

Fear of failure. As a right fear, it is based on our concern to be accurate representatives of God. We should help the lost ... not be stumbling blocks to them. If you are afraid to witness because you are unprepared, get prepared, 2 Timothy 2:15, 1 Peter 3:15. However, don't let your lack of preparation stop you from witnessing. While you are studying to be a better witness, don't say more than you know ... don't guess at answers ... and don't make up answers. If you can't answer a non-believer's question, say *I don't know, I'll get an answer for you*. Then do it! Tell them what you do know. Jesus healed a blind man who was then vigorously questioned by non-believing Pharisees. Unable to answer their question, he said, *"I do not know; one thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see"* John 9:25. Don't hesitate to tell how Jesus has changed your life. Fear of failure can also be a wrong fear. It is wrong if it is based on pride. Don't worry about what non-believers will think of you if you can't answer all of their questions and challenges. You are not on trial ... they are. The Gospel is true. You are defending and representing truth. In addition, when you need to get an answer for them, it gives you a chance to show that you care for them. Get the answer and then give it to them. Make a commitment to never be asked the same question twice without knowing the answer.

Fear of discovery. Some believers don't witness because they are afraid that others will discover their ignorance, doubt, or dirt. If you are afraid that someone will discover your ignorance or doubt, then the answer is the same as above ... grow in your knowledge. Maturity produces conviction. Conviction authenticates the Gospel, 1 Thessalonians 1:5. However, it seems more common that people don't witness because they are afraid that others will see the inconsistency between their words and their deeds. They are afraid to be seen as hypocrites. Too many believers tolerate sin in their lives ... and consequently don't witness. However, the cure for hypocrisy is not silence. Don't bring your words down to your deeds. Bring your deeds up to your words ... the words of the Gospel. Purity, not silence, is the cure for hypocrisy. Jesus said, *"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven"* Matthew 5:16. Witnessing is show *and* tell time. The cure for ignorance and doubt is maturity. The cure for hypocrisy is purity. Take action to eliminate this fear. If fear of discovery is your fear, then pursue maturity and purity.

Fear of rejection and persecution. This is the fear of how others will treat you if you are serious about the Gospel ... and concerned about their eternity. To start with, don't worry about *fitting-in* with the world. Your citizenship is in Heaven ... not here, Philippians 3:20. You are to be in the world, but not of the world, John 17:14-18. Don't let the world squeeze you into its mold, Romans 12:2. You *will* be rejected and persecuted if you are obedient to God, 2 Timothy 3:12. Don't be surprised by it, 1 John 3:13. The world rejected Jesus ... they will treat you in the same way, John 15:18-21. The good news is that rejection and persecution are good for you. You will be blessed because of it, Matthew 5:10-12. It builds your character, James 1:2-4. Moreover, when you suffer for doing right, you find favor with God, 1 Peter 2:20. Rejection and persecution will happen as you witness ... they go with the territory. Don't be surprised. Don't be afraid.

Fear of offending. There can be a right offense or a wrong offense in witnessing. The message of the cross is offensive to some, 1 Peter 2:8. However, the messenger should not be offensive, 1 Corinthians 10:32-33. The offense of the message may legitimately result in rejection and persecution. But if the messenger is rude, crude, and offensive ... the resulting rejection and persecution should be expected as well. That is of no benefit to the messenger, 1 Peter 2:20. You must learn to give the message in a non-offensive way. Your delivery, in life and words, should be a gracious demonstration of the love of God ... then the fear of offending goes away.

Fear of judging. Some Christians fear being judgmental. They think it is wrong to judge someone as a non-believer ... believing that such judgment is sin. This fear comes from a misunderstanding of the Word. Jesus did say, *"Do not judge so that you will not be judged"* Matthew 7:1. Based on that verse some believers refuse to witness because witnessing requires first judging someone to be lost. However, people *are* either saved or lost. It is wrong to assume that everyone is saved ... or that everyone is lost. The Bible instructs us to look at people with spiritual discernment ... not according to the flesh, 2 Corinthians 5:16. God commands us to treat the saved and lost differently. The context of the words of Jesus about judging is about hypocritical judging ... pointing out the speck in someone else's eye, while ignoring the one in your own, Matthew 7:2-6. Jesus instructed us to judge others as we judge ourselves. He continued in verse 6, *"Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine"*. How could we obey this without judging that someone is either a dog or not a dog ... a swine or not a swine? Understand the words of Jesus, and the fear of judging disappears.

Fear of Method. Wrong methods of evangelism are offensive. In addition, some right methods of evangelism when misused are offensive. Be afraid of wrong, offensive methods ... discard them ... don't use them. Be afraid of right methods used in wrong ways or in wrong situations. No single method is right for every believer or every non-believer. Be ready to use a variety of right methods ... and use them appropriately based on your gifts and on the needs of those to whom you witness. Then the fear of method disappears. Several right methods are described below ... described in exaggerated and negative ways to emphasize their limitations and potential misuse. However, each of these methods can be good if done appropriately and sensitively.

Secretarial evangelism involves the average believer as no more than an appointment maker ... connecting a non-believer with a professional Christian worker. This may be appropriate in some cases. However, the Great Commission commands us to make disciples ... not appointments.

Aquarium evangelism involves inviting, bringing, or sending non-believers to scheduled meetings of the church. The believers' hope in this is that the professional fisherman will catch their non-believing friends in the stained-glass aquarium. This can work for non-believers who are very interested and ready.

However, most non-believers are not interested in attending religious services or buildings. In general, fishermen go to where the fish are ... fish are seldom brought to the fisherman. God's evangelists are given to evangelize *and* to equip believers for their own work of evangelism, Ephesians 4:11-12. Over-emphasis on evangelists doing all the evangelism effectively steals this ministry from individual believers.

Ambush evangelism is a caricature of confrontational witnessing. It is good to make preemptive strikes with the Gospel. It can be appropriate to share the Gospel with strangers after only a few moments of contact. However, this must be done with skill and sensitivity. Paul did so in Athens. He didn't mug them ... he reasoned *"in the market place every day with those who happened to be present"* Acts 17:17. We should be open to such market-place opportunities given by God. Make preemptive strikes ... but never mug someone with the Gospel.

Safari evangelism involves a trek into hostile territory ... hunting for prey as you go. This caricature of door-to-door visitation illustrates how those visited may feel like prey. Visitation can be good when done with great love and sensitivity.

Landmine evangelism involves leaving printed Gospel messages in public places to catch people unaware. Such depersonalized forms of evangelism include such things as leaving tracts in phone booths and restrooms ... leaving tracts made to look like generous gratuities for waitresses ... and forgetting a book or tract at a neighbor's home. Littering for Jesus may have its place ... but be very careful in your choice of what you leave and where you leave it. Examine it through the eyes of the nonbeliever. Will it look like a booby trap? Will it be hurtful or helpful?

Friendship evangelism can be a sensitive and inoffensive means of evangelism. Sharing the Gospel over bridges of friendship can be very effective. However, it is wrong if it is all friendship and no Gospel. Are you really a friend if you don't tell them about Jesus? In addition, friendship evangelism is wrong if it is at the expense of purity. You do not have to sin to be a friend of sinners.

Applying God's Word to your fears. Fear is very real ... but it dissolves when you trust God and His Word. *"Blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it"* Luke 11:28. When Jesus faced Satan's temptations in the wilderness, He responded with God's word, Matthew 4:1-11. When you are afraid to witness, identify its source. Then apply God's Word to it. Check off your fears on the next page ... then memorize and meditate on the verses that apply to those fears. *"This is my comfort in my affliction, that Thy word has revived me"* Psalm 119:50.

Fear of people.

"The Lord is for me; I will not fear; what can man do to me?" Psalm 118:6

Fear of the unfamiliar.

"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." Joshua 1:9

Fear of failure.

"The steps of a man are established by the Lord, and He delights in his way. When he falls, he will not be hurled headlong, because the Lord is the one who holds his hand." Psalm 37:23-24

Fear of discovery.

"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." Matthew 5:16

Fear of rejection and persecution.

"Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you." Matthew 5:10-12

Fear of offending.

"A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city, and contentions are like the bars of a citadel." Proverbs 18:19

Fear of judging.

"Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest." John 4:35

Fear of method.

"I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some." 1 Corinthians 9:22

Reason # 2 ... Spiritual imbalance

"Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit."
John 15:2

Jesus said that bearing fruit is very important. He warned us of the consequence of not bearing fruit. Spiritual sterility can come from spiritual imbalance ... doing good things out of balance. Each and every believer should bear the fruit of new believers. However, imbalance can cause anything from slightly diminished effectiveness to total sterility. Surgery is needed when that happens. Correct spiritual balance is like a three-legged stool. The legs are *spiritual input*, *output to believers*, and *output to non-believers*. If one or two legs are too short or too long, the stool is out of balance. Although any one leg may be short ... it is most often *output to non-believers* that is short or missing. Are any of the following symptoms of imbalance present in your spiritual life?

Symptom #1: Gathering instead of scattering. Gathering is man's natural tendency. Scattering is God's command. Becoming inward is a symptom of spiritual imbalance. Noah and his descendants were commanded to *"be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth"* Genesis 9:1. However, at Babel they wanted to build for themselves a city, a tower, and a name ... *"otherwise we will be scattered"* Genesis 11:4. Commanded to scatter, they sinfully wanted to gather. Even the Early Church needed persuasion to scatter them in obedience to the command of Christ, Acts 1:8 and 8:1. Gathering without scattering is wrong for believers. Hiding in inward, holy huddles is not the goal of Christianity. You're missing the point of the Christian life if your greatest concern is how to decorate your foxhole. You are out of balance if you are not scattering with the Gospel.

Symptom #2: Isolation and malnutrition. The Christian life is not to be lived alone, 2 Timothy 2:22, Hebrews 10:25. Isolation brings weakness. Unity produces strength, Ecclesiastes 4:9-12. Being together with other believers, serving and being served, is important. And good teaching (rather than weak or false teaching) is necessary for believers to be all that God wants them to be. You can't give more than you have. If your output exceeds your input, then your upkeep will be your downfall. A balanced believer is not isolated. Are you? A balanced believer is spiritually well fed. Are you?

Symptom #3: Spiritual obesity and atrophy. Too much spiritual food without exercise produces spiritual obesity and atrophy. God feeds us through many sources. Moreover, He expects us to apply what we have learned. We should not sit, soak, and sour. Paraphrasing Hebrews 5:11-14 ... *use it or lose it*. Learning plus time does not equal growth. Learning plus practice plus time does equal growth. Balanced believers are hearers and doers of the Word, Luke 11:28. Balanced believers put what they learn into practice ... serving believers and non-believers. A believer should be spiritually well exercised. Are you?

Achieving spiritual balance

Complete this worksheet to help restore your spiritual balance. And periodically re-evaluate yourself with it to maintain your balance.

1. List your present activities in each category below.
2. Carefully and prayerfully consider if the distribution of those activities represents sufficient balance.
3. Add new activities in any deficient category.
4. Cross off excess activities that contribute to imbalance ... the good can be an enemy of the best. Surgery is painful ... do it anyway.
5. Adjust your overall number of activities to achieve balance.

Spiritual input

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

Spiritual output to believers

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

Spiritual output to non-believers

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

Reason # 3 ... Lack of time

"Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil." Ephesians 5:15-16

Time seems too short to accomplish all that we need to do. The clock seems to be our enemy. The day often ends before we finish. In addition, days, weeks, months, and years seem to go by faster each year. But in each day of our lives on earth, each of us is given an equal amount of time. No one gets more time in a day than anyone else does. The real issue is not quantity of time ... it is our stewardship of time. Jesus gave stern warnings about the stewardship of our gifts, Matthew 25:14-30, Luke 19:12-27. Time is one of His most valuable gifts. How are you doing with your stewardship of His gift of time? God has given you all the time you need to do all that He wants you to do. If you are too busy to do all He wants you to do, then you are too busy doing the wrong things ... or too busy doing nothing. Lack of time comes from your own bad priorities, someone else's bad priorities imposed on you, no priorities at all, or simple lack of discipline. Does your life match God's schedule for you?

Everyone seems to have enough time to do what he or she really wants to do ... time to follow his or her passions. Maybe you need to adjust your passions to match God's passion. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. Have you? His food was to do the will of the Father. Is yours? We all have a considerable amount of discretionary time each year. If you sleep 8 hours a night and work 40 hours a week (job, school, raising kids, etc.), you will spend 33% of your year sleeping ... that's four months per year. You will also spend 22% of your year working ... a little more than 2 and 1/2 months. During the other 45% of your year you will be awake and not working ... almost 5 and 1/2 months ... about 3,920 hours. That equals ninety-eight 40-hour workweeks each year. That's the equivalent of two full-time jobs. It is the stewardship of those hours that is important. Consider the three types of time usage described below.

A. Little pieces of time add up. A few minutes given to routine activities each day are hardly noticed. However, they become significant when measured over a few months, years, or a lifetime. Two 10-minute coffee or tea breaks a day at work may be needed ... but added up over a year they total 2 full workweeks. A relaxing extra 10 minutes a day in the shower, bathtub, or bed may seem insignificant ... but by age 75 that adds up to six extra months in hot water or between the sheets. Why not insert two-10-minute prayer breaks into your daily schedule ... or pray as you have your coffee or tea. Pray for your friends who need Christ. That would add up to 120 hours of prayer each year. Or maybe you could pray for them during that daily extra 10 minutes in the shower, bathtub, or bed.

B. Wasted time is costly. Obviously, a reasonable amount of time given to relaxation and recreation is of great value. Everyone needs some downtime to stay productive in the uptime. However, many routinely waste significant amounts of time ... thoughtlessly throwing it away.

A certain amount of TV or Internet surfing may be of value. However, one hour of mindless activity a day adds up to the same as two work-months a year. Three hours a day adds up to a half-year of full time work. Is it time for some discipline in your life? Identify and eliminate 3 hours of wasted time a week from your schedule. Replace it with meaningful contact with a non-believer. That will give you 156 hours of witnessing each year.

C. Low utilization wastes time. Many routine activities require little concentration. The time spent on such necessary and unavoidable activities of life can be improved. A 30-minute commute to work (5 days per week) adds up to 240 hours per year. Forty-five minutes of exercise or recreation each day (6 days a week) adds up to another 234 hours a year. And time eating meals adds up to even more ... maybe as much as 526 hours per year. Why not witness, memorize witnessing Scriptures, or study witnessing while commuting? Or why not exercise or recreate with a non-believer? And why not share some meals with those who need to hear the Gospel? Maybe you could do some of each. The three examples in this paragraph add up to 1,000 hours per year ... the equivalent of 25 workweeks. Couldn't you double-utilize *some* of this low utilization time for witnessing? Maximizing just 12.4 % of this time would recapture 124 hours per year for witnessing.

Being a better steward of time. Think of what could happen if you were a better steward of your time. Think about the possible redirected and recaptured time described in A, B, and C above ... 120 hours of prayer for non-believing friends + 156 hours of meaningful time with the lost + 124 hours of memorizing, studying, or witnessing. That totals 400 hours ... the equivalent of 10 weeks of full time work. In five years that would equal one full year of work. Think of it ... that's one full year of witnessing ministry every five years.

Take this challenge very seriously. Review A, B, and C above. Make the effort to be a better steward of your time. You have the time to do your part of the Great Commission. Decide what you will do in each of these categories ... and write your commitments below.

A. Little pieces of time.

B. Wasted time.

C. Low utilization time.

A PERSONAL REVIEW WORKSHEET

1. Which three reasons to shine (page 2-1) are especially meaningful or particularly convicting to you?

- a.
- b.
- c.

2. Which of the fears (pages 2-2 to 2-5) are your fears in witnessing?
Write the appropriate verses (from 2-6) next to them below.

a. The fear of _____.

Verse:

b. The fear of _____.

Verse:

c. The fear of _____.

Verse:

3. Is your life out of balance spiritually?

Which symptom(s) of imbalance (page 2-7) do you experience?

Page 2-12

4. If out of balance, which of the following is weakest in your life ...
spiritual input, spiritual output to believers, or output to non-believers?

What are you going to add to that area?

5. If out of balance, which of the following is overloaded in your life ...
spiritual input, spiritual output to believers, or output to non-believers?

What are you going to eliminate to that area?

6. Do you believe that you have been a good steward of time?

7. What commitments did you make about improving your use of
time (page 2-10)?

a.

b.

c.

8. This lesson can help you be a better witness ... by helping you deal
with fear, spiritual imbalance, and your stewardship of time. But you
need to be more than a hearer ... you need to be a doer. That takes
effort. And it takes prayer. Pray regularly about the commitments you
have made in this lesson. And share your needs in these areas with
your witnessing prayer partner. Pray for one another.