

# Lesson 1: Being a Witness, Part 1

Jesus told His earliest disciples that they would be His witnesses (Acts 1:8). Congratulations! As a follower of Jesus, you also are called to be His witness. Today let's consider four critical aspects of our calling to be His witnesses: 1) The prediction of our witness; 2) the goals of our witness; 3) the audience for our witness; and 4) the methods of our witness.

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## The Prediction of Our Witness

After His resurrection, Jesus shared these words with His disciples:

- **Acts 1:8**  
You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.
- What does it mean to be a “witness”? What do witnesses typically do?
- How do we know from this verse that Jesus intended that modern-day disciples (like us) would be His witnesses also?

## The Goals of Our Witness

Around the same time He spoke the words recorded in Acts 1:8, Jesus gave His disciples what we call the “Great Commission:”

- **Matthew 28:19,20**  
And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

When we are considering the goals of being a witness, that is, what witness is all about, there are three critical things to note about this passage.

### **JESUS SAID “GO,” NOT “COME”**

- How would the impact of the verses above be different if Jesus had left out the word “Go”?

The call to make disciples fundamentally involves going to people and teaching them to go to others. It is an outwardly oriented call. This means that if we are to be effective witnesses, we must take the onus upon ourselves to share the message with those around us, not waiting for them to come to gatherings of people who already believe.

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## **JESUS SAID “ALL,” NOT “SOME”**

- What indications do you have in the Great Commission that the mission in view is broad?

From the beginning, Jesus was clear about the huge scope of His mission. The good news (Gospel) of Jesus is not intended for specific ethnic groups, age groups, or generations. We do not know ahead of time whom Jesus has called to trust in Him, nor is there a specific profile of a person who will respond positively to the Gospel. As a result, we must share the Gospel broadly, always alert for opportunities to be a witness for Jesus.

## **JESUS SAID “MAKE DISCIPLES,” NOT “MAKE CHURCH MEMBERS”**

- The main idea of the Great Commission is that Jesus’ followers should make disciples. Based on Jesus’ instructions to “baptize” these disciples and “teach them to observe all that” He commanded, what is a disciple?

The goal of our witness is that individuals will trust in Jesus, be baptized, and grow as they learn to obey what Jesus commanded. This growth will include their making other disciples, as this is part of what Jesus commanded.

Note that this is a different goal from simply seeking converts or church members. Because of the Great Commission, our desire is never to stop at conversion and simply get people to become passive members of our “club.” We’re looking for new conversions that lead to new growth, new leaders, and new churches. This means that we are in the business of training people who will train people, who will train people, and so on (2 Timothy 2:2).

## **The Audience for Our Witness**

If God has called us to be witnesses for Christ, then a very important question arises: “To whom should I testify?” Stated another way: “Who is the audience for my witness to Jesus?” The answer is simpler than we might think.

### **OIKOS LIST**

To begin to answer this question, we will create an *oikos* list. *Oikos* is the Greek word for “house” or “household.” For our purposes, one’s *oikos* is the network of his preexisting relationships. The most fruitful Gospel witness usually comes from sharing with those with whom we have existing relationships.

- Take a moment to list the “spheres” in which you already have relationships, such as family, work, hobbies, recreation, etc.
- Now that you have done this, take a few minutes to list within those spheres the names of several people you know who are far from God.
- Lastly, stop and pray that God would show you, through His Holy Spirit, five people with whom He wants you to pursue Gospel witness.

## FISHING CHART

Now take the names of the five people God laid on your heart and add them to the FISHing chart on page 5. The FISHing chart is a tool you can use to track your progress in witness with these individuals. You'll notice that the chart has four sections, which together create the acronym **FISH**:

**FIND**: Suggests various ways you can assess the person's life situation and spiritual state.

**INTEREST**: Gives next steps for whetting a person's spiritual appetite.

**SHARE**: Lists ways in which you can introduce the Gospel message.

**HELP**: Presents two options for helping those who have heard the Gospel but have not yet trusted in Jesus.

**Important note**: Be attentive to God's Spirit leading as you approach people for witness. You needn't cover all the steps on the FISHing chart if an opportunity arises to present the Gospel—and it often will, “out of sequence.” God will also give you opportunities to be a witness to many other people as well. The purpose of the chart is to help you focus on witness to specific individuals and consider what next steps in your witness might look like.

## The Methods of Our Witness

Having looked at the “what” and “whom” of being a witness, let's now consider the “how”—that is, specific tactics you should consider as you reach out to those on your FISHing chart and others God brings across your path.

### BE A WITNESS BY SHARING YOUR TESTIMONY

One of the most effective ways to present the Gospel, “Jesus' story,” is to precede it by telling your story. People find stories interesting because they contain drama and suspense. Furthermore, your story is *your* experience, and as such it isn't the sort of thing most people will try to contradict or disagree with.

Witnesses generally prepare for what they will say on the witness stand. In the same way, it's good to develop a version of your story, your “testimony,” that takes no longer than three minutes to tell. Your testimony should include three basic elements:

- What your life was like before you trusted in Jesus
- How you came to trust in Jesus
- What your life is like now that you have trusted in Jesus

Take about five or ten minutes right now and put together a version of your testimony that you can tell in three minutes or less.

**Question**: What if my testimony isn't “dramatic?”

**Answer**: Don't feel the need to make your story something it isn't. If, for example, you trusted in Christ at an early age, you aren't likely to have had a dramatic change in the course of your life at the time when you trusted in Him. However, you can emphasize how Jesus impacts your life now, and perhaps even speculate based on your past struggles what your life might look like without Jesus. If you only recently came to know Him, emphasize the changes He's already made in your life and outlook.

## **NEXT STEPS**

Soon, we'll take a look at an effective way to share Jesus' story, which we call the Gospel, or the "good news." In our next lesson, you'll learn how to bridge to the Gospel in conversation. Part of your Gospel bridge will include questions designed to draw out a person's current spiritual state and direct them toward the uniqueness of the Gospel.

## **Looking Forward**

### **PRACTICING YOUR TESTIMONY**

In the meantime, you need to practice your testimony so much that you're comfortable sharing it quickly, without looking at notes. Give each person in the group the opportunity to practice his or her testimony several times. Be sure to give one another some feedback on ways in which their testimonies could be clearer or more compelling.

### **SET GOALS AND PRAY**

Think back through all you've accomplished in Lesson 1. First, you learned about Jesus' prediction that we would be His witnesses to those around us who are far from God. Second, you learned about the goals of our witness, namely, that we would go, not come; that we would reach all, not some; and that we would make disciples, not church members. Third, you investigated the audience for our witness as you identified the individuals in your *oikos* list, and you listed five of them on your FISHing chart so you can focus on them and follow up with them. Last, you wrote out and practiced your testimony, which you can now share in three minutes or less. This begins our investigation of the methods of our witness.

There's only one thing left to do today, and that is to set goals and pray for success. Take a moment and ask God what He would have you do in light of today's lesson. Be specific, as in the following examples:

- "I'm going to share my testimony with Nancy on my FISHing chart."
- "I'm going to ask Dave why he enjoys baseball so much."
- "I'm going to help my spouse write her three-minute testimony."

Once you have set your goal(s), tell them to the others in the group so you can check in with one another at your next meeting about how it went. Then close the meeting by asking God to empower you through the Holy Spirit to accomplish the goal(s) you shared with one another. Don't rush this final prayer time; we are dependent on God to accomplish the things He finds pleasing, so we need to ask His blessing before we get moving!

# FISHING CHART

FIND				INTEREST				SHARE				HELP		
#	Name	Interests	Felt Needs	Attitude Toward Jesus	Testimony	Answered Prayer Stories	Community	Prayer for Their Needs	Jesus Story	Discovery Bible Study	Gospel Presentation	Something to Read	Ask for a Decision	Deal with Barriers
1														
2														
3														
4														
5														
6														
7														
8														
9														
10														