



A Place for You- Go
Things You Must Know About Witnessing
Matthew 28:16-20
08/26/2018

LEADER TIP: Because this study has many points, encourage various group members to read the Scriptures associated with each point.

Main Point

Christ commissioned every church and church member with the task of making disciples.

Introduction

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What is the most important reason for being a part of a church?

What is the most important role of the church in the world?

How do you define witnessing? How is witnessing inviting people to Christ more than inviting them to church?

Our final part of our process is the call to “go.” Pastor Brady defines witnessing as “telling the truth of who Jesus is, what He has done and what He can do to those God has placed in my life.” The world needs to know who Jesus really is and what the benefits are of putting faith in Him. Jesus gave us—His church—the responsibility to make those truths known. God could have chosen to work in the world independent of His people, yet He chose to engage us in accomplishing His will. As the church, we represent God to people who need to know and understand Him. The potential impact of obedience to that calling is world-changing.

Transition: Today’s study will challenge you to allow Jesus to work through you as you “go and make disciples.”

Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

1. The mission to witness has been entrusted to us!

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ Matthew 28:16-18.

In this familiar passage, known as the Great Commission, Jesus first reminds us that everything He commands us to do is through the authority He was given from God the Father. God doesn’t make promises He won’t keep and doesn’t give commands we can’t obey. If He tells us to go and make disciples of all nations, then it must be possible to reach

the world by obeying His commands. As Brady says, there is no plan B, we are plan A according to Christ. Reference Esther 4:14 to see how the call to evangelize is not a time of being silent but our purpose TODAY!

Why is it important that we understand the authority of Jesus? How does this truth impact our mission?

Transition: Not only has the message been entrusted to us, but we have the call to make witnessing a part of our daily lives.

2. You are always witnessing!

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ Matthew 28:19-20.

Let's take a minute to reflect upon the magnitude of this passage. After each of the following, discuss 1) what each command means, 2) how the church can follow, and 3) what role you personally have in obeying: go; make disciples; baptize them; teach them; remember His presence.

Each one of these commands is an important component of the Great Commission. If you remove any one of these, then reaching all nations with the gospel of Christ is compromised. It is vitally important that the church actively participate in all of these commands on the corporate level. In addition, we as individual believers must help our local church fulfill this commission on the micro level. Each and every church, and thus each and every member of those churches, shares in the responsibility of taking the good news of Jesus to the world.

Why is it important for every believer to get involved in the Great Commission? What happens when you don't own your part of the effort?

The Great Commission reminds us that we truly can take the gospel to the nations. But to have that worldwide impact, we must first acknowledge that the world needs to know who Jesus is and commit to telling them. If we do this, not only will our personal faith grow, but the Christian faith will expand around the world (Matthew 12:30, Titus 2:7-8).

Transition: Witnessing is not so much about WHAT we do, but WHO we are. Then we remember who we were before Christ.

3. I witness because good people don't go to heaven, forgiven people do!

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 Corinthians 1:18

Paul began by explaining his straightforward manner of preaching in terms of the ways believers and unbelievers view the gospel. On the one hand, those who are perishing (unbelievers) live according to the standards of sinful human wisdom, and therefore wrongly conclude that the message of the cross is foolishness. On the other hand, the Holy Spirit changes the perspectives of those who are being saved. Those who follow Christ rightly

perceive that the Cross is not foolishness, but the power of God bringing salvation from sin and death (John 14:6).¹

Why is understanding what I have been saved from (eternal separation, hell, death) just as important in the act of witnessing as knowing what I will experience by being saved (eternal life, personal relationship with Jesus, heaven)?

Transition: I am called to seek and share the good news of Jesus with anyone that will hear and respond.

4. To follow Jesus is to become a witness for Jesus.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ Matthew 4:19

When Jesus said, “Come, follow me” (4:19), he was calling these men to a new career and new life. In keeping with his skill as a teacher, he used terminology that would inspire them because of its relationship to their life experience. These men knew how to fish—for fish. So they had some concept of the task to which he was calling them. However, even though they had some familiarity with the concept of fishing, Jesus would still need to transform them into fishers of men (Philemon 1:6).² Think about the movie “I Can Only Imagine” and the story of transformation that occurred for the father and how that relates to our call to follow Christ.

What does it mean in your life that when Jesus saved you that He gave you new desires and a purpose? How is it witnessing a part of that purpose? Are you experiencing your purpose today?

Transition: A part of following Jesus is sharing His story no matter what it takes.

5. Witnessing is storytelling.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ Acts 4:20

The apostles could only speak of what they had seen and heard (v. 20). They were the eyewitnesses of Jesus’ entire ministry (1:21f.), the witnesses to his resurrection (Acts 2:32; 3:15). Peter and John had no choice but to defy the court’s order, for it had “stepped in between the conscience and God.”³ They were also prepared to not be ashamed of the gospel (Romans 1:16). Then comes the realization that God’s story becomes my story when I place my faith in Christ and call on His name for salvation (Romans 10:9-10, 13).

¹ Pratt, R. L., Jr. (2000). *I & II Corinthians* (Vol. 7, p. 20). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

² Weber, S. K. (2000). *Matthew* (Vol. 1, p. 44). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

³ Polhill, J. B. (1992). *Acts* (Vol. 26, p. 146). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

Exercise: Consider your story: What is your life before Christ, how you came to know and surrender to Christ, and your life since? (If someone does not have a clear understanding of what it means to be saved (trusting in works or rituals), this is a great opportunity to share the gospel in your group).

Transition: Sharing your story is the greatest witnessing tool that is available because it speaks of the transformation you have experienced in your life that others can experience as well.

6. I witness because the situation is urgent.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ Mark 1:15

Jesus' message was that the kingdom of God is near. The kingdom of God was central to Jesus' teaching. The kingdom of God was simply the rule of Messiah on earth. This had been promised in the Old Testament (e.g., Exod. 15:18; Ps. 29:10; Isa. 43:15), and the Jewish people had longed for it. The kingdom "is near" because Jesus, the ruler of that kingdom, has now arrived. Yet, the only way into that kingdom is to repent and believe. John had already been preaching for the people to repent, but Jesus added the word believe. Only through "repentance" from their sinfulness and "belief" in the good news (i.e., the gospel of Jesus Christ) would they enter the kingdom. Jesus was presenting an urgency about the nearness of God's kingdom and the need to act decisively.⁴

What does urgency to share the gospel look like in your life today? Why is urgency as much about leveraging the influence we have to share the gospel as it is about the timing?

Transition: Finally, we share the gospel because the result for those that trust and those that refuse to believe are real.

7. I witness because the verdict is final.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 2 Thessalonians 1:9

The just penalty that must be paid by those identified in v. 8 is a terrible one: "everlasting destruction" (Luke 16- the chasm between heaven and hell). The phrase probably should be seen in contrast to the fate of the believer: everlasting life with "everlasting" indicating something that exists without end. "Destruction" is a term Paul used where he asserted that the "destruction" of those in darkness on the day of the Lord will be unexpected (by unbelievers) and unavoidable. Here the destruction is described as everlasting and as banishment "from the presence of the Lord." Though the term could be used of total destruction, the New Testament concept of the fate of the wicked is not that of annihilation

⁴ Cooper, R. L. (2000). [Mark](#) (Vol. 2, pp. 11-12). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

but of everlasting punishment as enduring as the everlasting life anticipated by the saved (Matt 25:46).⁵

Understanding the fate of those that reject Christ should be a part of the motivation we have to see those that are far from Christ come to know Him personally.

Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Spend time in personal reflection and ask the question of yourself: If I were to stand before God and he were to ask why He should allow you into heaven, what would my answer be? (If you need to experience salvation today through Christ, ask your group leader or go to the Cornerstone room to share of your need today).

What truth did you learn about witnessing today? Why do we struggle to personally share the story of Jesus?

What does God desire for you personally and the church corporately to do in response to the call to share about Jesus?

Why is witnessing more than standing on a street corner telling people about Jesus? What actions do you need to take for your witness to be verbal and expressive in your life?

Pray

Close in a time of prayer for the burden of responsibility that comes with knowing the Great Commission. Pray that everyone will take this charge seriously and see it as a vital role they have in being Jesus' church and allowing Him to work through them.

Commentary

Matthew 28:16-20

28:16-17. Some time during the forty days of Jesus' post-resurrection stay on earth (probably soon after they heard the news that Sunday), the eleven disciples and many more of Jesus' followers proceeded to Galilee, where Jesus had instructed them to go (26:32; 28:7, 10). Here Matthew's focus was back on the eleven, the foundation stones of his church. Jesus had apparently specified a particular mountain as their meeting place. At the end of the journey, presumably on the designated mountain, they saw him. Imagine their joy! It was only natural that they worshiped him. But some doubted (the word doubt means "to duplicate," "to be of two minds," or "to waver, hesitate"). All wanted to believe, but their faith was weak. Some experienced the internal tug-of-war between "two minds"—the one wanting to follow their fledgling faith and the other wanting to follow "reason." Even those presented with clear evidence for the truth can still have doubts. But the word some implied

⁵ Martin, D. M. (1995). [1, 2 Thessalonians](#) (Vol. 33, p. 213). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

there were others who believed everything they saw. These were the followers of the Messiah-King who would continue on into Acts, willing to take any risk in obedience to their master. This was true faith in action, living on the edge of “risky” obedience.

28:18. Matthew noted that Jesus came near or approached. Here was no case of mistaken identity. The disciples could look Jesus in the eye and see that this One was the same Person whom Pilate had arrested. They could hear the voice clearly and know it was the voice they had listened to for several years. Jesus’ claim made the need for decision even clearer: “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” The kingdom Jesus talked about (4:17) had been established. The King had received authority to reign. This kingdom far exceeded the size of the Roman Empire. Only God could make such a declaration. Only One who ruled in heaven as well as on earth could claim such power.

28:19-20. On the basis of His authority, Jesus issued the Great Commission. Disciples had to accept the authority if they were to accept the commission. The commission is intricately formulated in the Greek. Stated somewhat literally as translated from the Greek language, the Great Commission reads as follows: “Therefore, having gone, disciple all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to keep (or to persistently obey) as much as I commanded you. And look here, I am with you all the days, until the completion (or perfection) of the age.” The introductory “therefore” connects the Great Commission to Jesus’ authority established in verse 18. The phrase “having gone” assumes obedience to the Commission. This phrase is not so much a call to go as it is a command to do certain things on the way. Disciples who recognize Christ’s authority have one major task. The only imperative verb form in these verses formulates that task. Disciples under Christ’s authority disciple the nations. That is, they share the gospel and help believers grow in Christ. Building the church by discipling the nations expands the disciple’s journey. It sends them to the nations. Here is the universal nature of the gospel made explicit and clear. Disciples under Christ’s authority must leave their comfort zones and the people with whom they feel at home. They must expand their horizons to incorporate every nation of people on earth. The church must devise plans and strategies to use the talents, gifts, energies, and resources of every one of its members. Every member must be on the move, discipling the nations.

In addition to going, discipling involves two other actions. The first is baptizing, which is to occur only after a person has acknowledged Jesus, the risen Savior, as his or her personal Savior. Baptism incorporates the new believer officially into the church. Baptism is also one means of making a public confession of faith. Baptism pictures or symbolizes what Jesus did and what the new Christian is doing. Jesus died for our sins. He was buried in the tomb. God raised Him from death to life. Baptism also pictures the believer’s having died to sin and being raised to a new life in Christ, a life that is eternal through the ages.

The second action in discipling is teaching. This instruction reaches back to the earthly ministry of Jesus. It takes every parable, every sermon, every word Jesus said and teaches them to the church. It seeks to develop Christlike individuals. The teaching ministry begins with the New Testament accounts of the life and death of Jesus Christ. It expands to the rest of the New Testament and then incorporates the Old Testament as the foundation of who God is and what God planned long before He sent Jesus to fulfill Old Testament prophecies. This entire Word of God is the curriculum each disciple is charged to teach to new believers.