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“Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you” (John 20:21).

Reaching the Lost

Central Truth: Jesus sends us to witness to the lost.

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Topic: Evangelism; Witnessing.

Have you ever led a person to faith in Jesus Christ? The vast majority of Christians do not lead one person to Christ in their entire lives. That is especially surprising when we remember that He has assigned the great soul-winning ministry to us. The term witness is a key word in the book of Acts, for it was a primary ministry of the earliest Christians.

Would you like to lead someone to faith in Jesus Christ? I hope that is the desire of your heart. If you desire it and seek an opportunity to do it, God will give you that opportunity. And if you are faithful as a witness, He will give increasing opportunities for you to witness.

But how can you be an effective witness? John 4 gives you a case study of how Jesus witnessed to and won a sinful woman. From a review of His methods, you can identify guidelines that will assist you in witnessing. But before the study begins, offer this prayer: “Lord, show me the way and I will be a faithful witness of Jesus to the lost.”

A Case study of Personal Witnessing

Go where the need is (John 4:4). New Testament Palestine was divided into three districts: Judea on the south (Jerusalem as its center), Samaria in the center (the city of Samaria as its center), and Galilee on the north (Capernaum as its center). To pass directly from Judea to Galilee, one had to go through Samaria. But Jews did not follow the closest route. Because of prejudice against the Samaritans, the Jews went east to cross the

Jordan River, then north up the east side of the river and crossed back to the west into Galilee. Jesus was making the journey from Judea to Galilee, but He went through Samaria. It was there that he met the woman at the well of Sychar.

When the Bible says, "*He must needs go through Samaria,*" the "*must*" is not of necessity. He could have gone the other route. The "*must*" was of need — the need of a poor fallen woman in Sychar. As the Great Physician who came to "*seek and to save that which was lost*" (Luke 19:10), He "*must needs go through Samaria.*" So in witnessing for Jesus, you must go where the prospect is. Do not wait for him to come to you with questions. Seek out the person who needs Christ, and present the gospel to him.

Luke 15 tells parables of a lost sheep, a lost coin, and a lost son. In each parable Jesus emphasized the value of the lost one and the diligence with which the owner sought what was lost. Jesus is saying that you are to seek the lost with a like concern and diligence. That is why the Great Commission begins with the word "*Go*" (Matthew 28:19).

Initiate the conversation (John 4:7). Jesus sat on the edge of the village well resting while His disciples went into Sychar to get food. A woman of the town came to draw water. She did not speak to Jesus, because she was a Samaritan and He was a Jew. She thought that, if she spoke, He would not reply out of prejudice. How can a believer give his witness under such circumstances? Jesus started the conversation.

"*Give me to drink,*" He requested. The woman was amazed that He would speak to her. She was more amazed that He would drink from a vessel which she had touched. (Such was the prejudice in that day.) She could not restrain a response, "*How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans*" (John 4:9). Thus the conversation was begun.

Someone might say, "I do not speak of Jesus. I live my witness so people can see Jesus in me." A Christian lifestyle is essential, but there must be more than living. There must be a spoken witness which tells that Jesus is the reason for the honorable lifestyle. Live and speak for your Lord.

Do not be distracted (John 4:9, 11, 12). The devil does not want you to be a witness for Jesus. He will do everything in his power to disturb or distract you from the message. The woman of Sychar raised issues which might turn the conversation from spiritual issues, but Jesus was not distracted.

(1) There were **racial** distractions. "*The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.*" Maybe not, but Jesus had dealings with them. He was not concerned with racial issues. Here was a woman in deep spiritual need. Jesus

was concerned with her soul rather than her race. Have you permitted racial distractions to keep you from witnessing for Jesus? If so, confess it as a sin of neglect and be ready to witness to anyone whom Jesus loves. Do not let race keep you from obeying His command for you to be His witness.

(2) There were **physical** distractions. *“Thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep”* (verse 11). She was so concerned with the physical that her mind had not begun to grasp any spiritual element in the conversation. But why should she? Like every sinner, she was dead in trespasses and in sins. She had to be led to an understanding. That is what Christian witnessing is designed to do. The devil will turn aside the mind of the person to whom you witness. You have the opportunity to pass by interruptions and share your message. That is what Jesus did.

(3) There were **religious** distractions. *“Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship”* (verse 20). The subject was uncomfortable to this poor fallen woman and she tried to change it. But notice that Jesus did not change. He responded briefly to her complaint and continued with His message. Nothing must keep the message from being delivered.

Turn the conversation to God (John 4:10). Notice how Jesus continued the conversation but brought God into it without an abrupt change. He spoke of *“the gift of God”* and offered to her *“living water.”* There are three interesting elements to His change of the conversation.

(1) He quickened her interest by speaking of something she needed that God could give. *“If you knew the gift of God, you would ask Him, and He would give you living water,”* He promised. The woman was already “religious” after a fashion, but she knew nothing of what God had to give.

(2) He offered help with a problem she faced then. Many times she had made the laborious journey to the village well to draw water for household use. Jesus was promising *“living water”* which would make it unnecessary for her to come to the well. She was very interested. Let a lost person see how God can meet a need in his life.

(3) He opened the door to go further with the conversation. She wanted more. *“Sir, give me this water,”* she requested. She was almost ready for the heart of the message. But first, she had to face her sin and admit her need. So Jesus touched the marriage issue and brought her face to face with the deep need of her life. What an example that is for you to follow in your witness!

Present the message (John 4:13, 14). (1) Show the limitation of this world to satisfy. *“Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again”* (verse 13). Admit that this world can never satisfy. You can drink, but you will only thirst again.

(2) Show the offer of a free gift. Jesus spoke of *“the water that I shall give”* because *“the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ”* (Romans 6:23). God's free gift is still offered.

(3) Promise satisfaction to the one who receives. He will *“never thirst”* again. You can make that promise with assurance because *“he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness”* (Psalm 107:9). He satisfies for time and eternity.

(4) Promise sufficiency to the one who receives. *“The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life”* (John 4:14). The drink of water becomes a well of water which becomes rivers of living water (John 7:37-39). What a message to a thirsting soul! Tell others about it.

A Commitment to Reach the Lost

Romans 10:12-17 challenges you to become a witness for Jesus. It has five principles to guide you in doing what Jesus has commanded every Christian to do: witness.

Accept your commission. *“How shall they preach, except they be sent?”* (verse 15). The Great Commission is given to the church, but that does not excuse you from a personal responsibility to be a witness of the gospel. The earliest Christians felt impelled to be a witness, even to their deaths (Acts 4:18-20; 5:31, 32, 42). You have your marching orders. Be a witness for Jesus.

Declare your message. *“How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?”* (verse 14). The gospel of Jesus Christ is as powerless as the tales of Buddha if it is not spoken so people can hear it. But when declared, *“it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth”* (Romans 1:16). The message must be spoken. *“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”* (Romans 10:17). You are not a witness unless you are telling the message. The clearest way to give the message is by spoken word. Do not be intimidated. Declare your message.

Call for faith. *“The same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him”* (verse 12). Ask the sinner to believe. Read John 3:14-18 and notice that five times the word believe occurs. Believing is the way to salvation; refusal to believe is certain doom. Call upon the lost person to believe the message. **Ask for a response.** *“Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved”* (verse 13). It is our purpose to lead the sinner to the Savior. Our appeal is *“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out”* (Acts 3:19). The message is not complete without

asking for a response. The devil will try to divert you here. Invite the lost person to call on the Lord and be saved.

Leave the results to God. *“Faith cometh by hearing . . . the word of God”* (verse 17). If you have presented the message of the gospel, you have done all you can. The rest is up to God. You can continue to pray; you can ask questions; and you can encourage the person to trust Jesus. But you cannot force a decision. Trust God to take over and bring the sinner to the Savior.

Effective witnessing is sharing the truth of the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit and leaving the results to God.

Be a witness for Jesus. Ask the Lord to lay upon your heart some person who needs to be saved. Promise the Lord that you will witness to the person He calls to your mind. Then follow through (even though you are nervous) and witness. The power lies in the message, not in the skill of the person delivering it. Remember, *“He that winneth souls is wise”* (Proverbs 11:30).

Questions for Discussion

1. What does it mean to be “lost” in spiritual terms?
2. What does it mean to be “saved” in spiritual terms?
3. How can you know when a person needs to be saved?
4. How can you turn a conversation to spiritual things?
5. How can you handle a distraction while witnessing?
6. What is your personal responsibility to witness of Jesus?
7. What is the basic message of the Christian gospel?
8. How can you call for a sinner to respond to the Savior?
9. What does Proverbs 11:30 say about the soul-winner?
10. To whom will you witness this week?