

11. Power To Witness

Opening question

What things do you never want to leave the house without?

Fact check: the Spirit is vital if we are to be Christ's witnesses

Many of us see evangelism as a lonely task, but the New Testament tells us something releasingly different. Read aloud these three famous passages:

- Matthew 28:18-20
- John 20:21-22
- Acts 1:4-8

Discussion

What do all three of those passages tell us about God's involvement in our witnessing? What has your experience been of the Spirit's presence when you tell people about Jesus?

Case study: Paul, empowered by the Spirit, witnesses in Corinth

The book of Acts repeatedly highlights the work of the Spirit in giving God's people boldness and power to witness (Acts 2:1-41, 4:8-12, 8:5, 13:9-12). We would be crazy to try to do this without Him, but often we do!

He does even more than giving us power: read Acts 5:30-32. This passage says that the Holy Spirit Himself witnesses to the truth of the resurrection and victory of Jesus. Acts shows us that He does this through signs and wonders, the message of the gospel, and the transformed lives of believers.

Let's get a sense of what this might look like for us by seeing how the Spirit worked with the apostle Paul's when he went to Corinth (the story is told in Acts 18:1-18). Read the following sections aloud:

- 1 Corinthians 1:17-25
- 1 Corinthians 2:1-5
- 1 Corinthians 2:10, 12-13
- 1 Corinthians 3:5-7

Discussion

Paul told the Corinthians that he came to them "in weakness and in fear and much trembling" (1 Corinthians 2:3). In 2 Corinthians 4:7, he tells them, "we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us". How does this biblical principle help us to understand what may be happening as we witness to people whilst feeling nervous and powerless?

When you love something or someone, you want to tell other people. How can the Spirit help us to know and love Jesus more, so that we're happier to tell others about Him?

Some people never expect the Spirit to move in miraculous power, some people think He doesn't work in any other way. What do you think may cause Him to work differently in different situations? How can we eagerly expect the Spirit to witness in a variety of ways and be ready to follow His lead?

Fact-check: the Spirit is at work in salvation

The Spirit doesn't just empower us to witness, He is the one who makes our witnessing effective because He is at work in the transformative moment of salvation. Jesus said that anyone who is "born again" has been born "of the Spirit" (John 3:3-8). Paul agreed with this, putting it in another way: "no one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except in the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:3).

Discussion

What is the difference between having responsibility to "plant and water" and having responsibility to cause "growth" (1 Corinthians 3:6)? Is this how you think about your evangelist efforts? How could Paul's perspective on this impact what you do and how you do it?

Praying for fresh grace to tell people about Jesus

Hopefully this session has stirred your faith that the Spirit can work through you and with you as you tell people about Jesus. Spend time praying for each other to believe this and act on it this week. You can use the prayer in Acts 4:29-30, and believe that God will answer it today in the same way that He did then: "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness" (Acts 4:31).

To reflect on during the week

Jesus promised to send us out to tell people about God in the same way that the Father sent Him. What do you find encouraging about this, and what is scary? Be honest with God but also look to take steps of faith this week with renewed confidence.