

WC ENCOUNTER GROUPS CURRICULUM
WEEK FIVE: WITNESS
A MORE EXCELLENT WAY



A More Excellent Way: Witness

OPENING PRAYER:

Precious Lord, help us to boldly proclaim your Kingdom and the Love of Jesus to our families, friends, and the world. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen!

ENCOUNTERING GOD:

How have you seen God at work this week?

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WEEKLY SCRIPTURE READING:

Read Acts 28:30-31

“He lived there for two whole years at his own expense and welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.”

Paul was on house arrest in Rome for two years. Paul was a missionary who planted 14 churches. Therefore, being on house arrest prevented him from planting churches, which gave Paul great pleasure and helped spread the gospel. However, Paul did not give up. He did not allow his circumstance to prevent him from doing what God had called him to do. Paul continued to preach the Kingdom of God and teach about our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to those who came to him. When reading the text, we must be careful not to assume that we should only expect people to come to us to hear the gospel. If we make that assumption, we are simply ignoring all the preceding chapters in Acts and the Pauline Epistles. We should be prepared to welcome and share the gospel when people come to us, and we must be willing to go to them.

REFLECTION:

What is Witness?

Witness is sharing the good news of Jesus Christ by words and deeds in an active, insistent and loving way, encouraging listeners and observers to receive and respond to the grace of God. Social media was given us the ability to share or retweet news, some of that news is good, some is bad, and some of it false. The news can have profound affect on the people who read and share the it. It can lead to political upheaval like the Arab Spring or it can make us feel warm and fuzzy on the inside like the viral video of young man and his toddler watching television together as the toddler spoke in gibberish that only a parent could understand. The good news of Jesus uproots and transforms, but also warms our heart. What is the content of this good news? Jesus Christ the Son of God, died on the cross for our sins, and Jesus Christ is risen from the Dead. A pardon and freedom are available to all of humanity as a gift. However, it is up to us to accept the gift. We say yes to this gift when we say yes to Jesus. Likewise, death does not have the final say. Eternal life begins the moment we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior. Meaning that we can enjoy the benefits of salvation in the here and now, not just in the hereafter.

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WEEK FIVE: WITNESS

REFLECTION

Why Turn or Burn Doesn't Work

At least since the days of Jonathan Edwards in the 1700's, the scary "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" preacher, Christianity has tended to focus on salvation from the fiery depths of hell. Edwards only lived to be 55 years old and was considered an old man. The average life expectancy of a white male was 38 years old in the colonies. Since life was so short, there was an urgency among preachers to get as many people saved as soon as possible. The emphasis of the preaching was salvation from the fiery sulfur smelly pits of hell. You either turned to God or you burned.

Of course, life expectancy is much longer today than in the 1700s. People are expected to live well into their 70's or longer. Therefore, today, it is even more important to emphasize how God is active in our lives- now. Meaning, we need to share our stories about how Jesus has made a difference in our lives, not just the need to get saved to avoid hell. Avoiding hell isn't the goal of Christianity. The goal of Christianity is to live and love like Jesus demonstrated through our love of God and love for our neighbor. Heaven is real and those who love God and love their neighbor are heaven bound.

Therefore, the content of our witness has to do with how this radical love has changed, is changing, and will change our lives and the lives of those who respond to God's grace. When we share our personal stories about what God has done in our lives and invite others to experience what God can do for them, we are inviting them into the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is the love of God shed aboard in our hearts. Meaning, Jesus is enthroned as Lord over our hearts. Transformation occurs when we use the power Jesus has given us to overcome the sin in our lives. We are transformed from the inside out. When Jesus is at work on the inside of us, that loves flows out of us, demonstrated through the sharing of the good news and the pursuit of personal and social holiness. Therefore, transformed people transform the world. The Kingdom of God is wherever miracles are being performed, chains are broken, people are being healed, lives are being changed, and people are being saved.

What Should We Do?

We don't need to be biblical scholars, being able to perfectly recite and exegete scripture. Although, we should make studying scripture apart of our spiritual disciplines. We can tell our stories about the love of Jesus and the members of small group and/or the church have helped us through the darkest times of our lives; loss of loved ones, loss of jobs, divorce, illness, and bitterness. We can talk about how God has given us joy, peace, love, hope for the here and now and the hereafter.

GROUP REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

Encounter The Head:

What is 'witness?'

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What is the Kingdom of God?

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What does it mean for Jesus to be the Lord of your life?

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Encounter The Heart:

Share the name of one person that helped lead you to faith in Jesus Christ. Please share how this person helped lead you to faith.

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Share a time when you helped lead another person to faith in Jesus Christ.

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PRAISE AND PRAYER REQUESTS

Encounter The Hands:

Please go around the group and have each person share a praise for this week and a prayer request/concern.

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CLOSING PRAYER

Have a volunteer lead closing prayer: asking for prayer concerns and lifting up the needs of the group.

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DAILY REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

We encourage everyone to do a daily reflection. This can be done alone, as a couple, or with your family. This spiritual practice will help answer the questions you have and it will improve your ability to see where God is at work in your life, and in the lives of those around you. Please answer the following questions during your personal devotional time at the end of the day.

Where have you seen God today? For the children, we say, “what made you happy today?”

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What broke your heart or made you sad today?

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What good thing did you do for someone else today?

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What are you thankful for today?

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