

SESSION 03

Partner with the Holy Spirit



Overview

The invitation to witness to the good news of Jesus can give rise to many different emotions — excitement and expectation, but also anxiety and, at times, overwhelm.

Often, that particular feeling of overwhelm can come from feeling like: “It is *my* job to bring God to people.”

Now, if that were true, we would have good reason to feel overwhelmed. But what if the practice of witness isn’t about bringing God to people, but about joining Him where He’s already at work in a person’s life? What if it’s about growing in our ability to hear and listen to the Holy Spirit’s nudges in our everyday interactions with others?

The most faithful witnesses to Jesus are those who see witness primarily as joining *with* God; they are the ones who regularly pay attention to how he might be gently moving those he loves toward him, and who take the next step in partnership with him.

It’s in this kind of partnership that we are able to move beyond reliance on the power of our own capabilities, and into a way of relating to God and others that is filled to the brim with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Reflection Questions

When instructed, circle up in triads (smaller groups of 3-5 people) and discuss the following questions:

- 01 Who did you invite over for a meal this week, and how did they respond? If they said yes and already came over, share what that experience was like.

- 02 What emotions did you experience before or during the invitation? How about during the meal?

- 03 What drew you to invite the person you did? What are or were you hoping would happen through this meal?

- 04 What reflections do you have on ordinary hospitality as a way to share your life in Jesus?

Teaching

Key Scripture

Acts 8v26-39

Session Summary

- Our practice of witness is often built on a false assumption that we need to bring God *to* people.
- When we realize God is already at work in all people, our job becomes slowing down and seeing where the Father is already at work, so we can join in.
- From the story of Philip witnessing to Ethiopian eunuch, we see four movements:
 - **Listen:** Spending time listening for God's voice and direction.
 - **Look:** Paying attention and inviting God to give us his eyes for others.
 - **Ask:** Asking a question to start or move the conversation deeper.
 - **Risk:** Taking a practical step of faith to participate in what God is doing in another's life.
- As we depend on the person of the Holy Spirit, our witness may take the form of words, or even signs and wonders.
- The starting place of us learning to partner with God's Spirit is to ask: God, what are you doing? And how do I join in?

Discussion Questions

Now it's time for a conversation about the teaching. Pause the video for a few minutes to discuss in small groups:

- 01 How does reframing witness as joining God in what He is already doing, rather than bringing people to Him, shift your perspective or approach to sharing Jesus with others?

- 02 Which of the four movements from the story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch do you most want God to strengthen in your life — listening, looking, asking, or risking? Why?

- 03 What has your experience been like in learning to discern and pay attention to the Holy Spirit's promptings? What are you learning through that process?

- 04 When was the last time you found yourself in a position where you needed God to show up in power? How did He show up, or how do you wish He had?

IN COMMUNITY — LEARN

Closing Prayer

End your time together by praying this liturgy:

Help us, Holy Spirit, to live sensitive
to you, to trust you when you speak
and to have the courage to act,
that in our learning to live our lives
in you, we may experience the
power of your love for our world.

Amen.



Exercise

Active listening

This week, get together with someone who is not a follower of Jesus, and practice listening to them as deeply as you can.

This can be a coffee or a lunch break or a conversation on the porch; it can be scheduled or impromptu, but find at least one time this week to listen.

Follow the SLANT method:

- 01 Sit up:** Lean toward them, and be fully engaged.
- 02 Look and listen:** Put your phone away, and be fully present.
- 03 Ask and answer questions:** You can say things like, “Tell me more about ...” and “How did ... make you feel?”
- 04 Nod your head:** Show them you are engaged through non-verbal communication.
- 05 Track the speaker:** Eye contact is very important, track with them for the whole time.

As you listen to them, also listen for where God is already at work in their life.

As they talk, ask the Holy Spirit to show you what he is up to.

But the main goal is just for them to feel loved. As the Mennonite educator David Augsburg put it, “Being heard is so close to being loved that for the average person they are almost indistinguishable.”

Reach Exercise

Ask to pray for someone who is not a Christian

This too could be scheduled or impromptu, but it will likely be unplanned. When you see someone who is sick, or has a need, just gently ask if you could pray for them. Then pause, go slowly, and pray what God puts on your heart ...

We put a liturgy in your guide for you to pray daily this week, just asking the Holy Spirit to lead you, and empower you when the moment comes.

As you prepare this week to pray for someone who is not a follower of Jesus, we invite you to pray the following liturgy daily — ideally in the morning before you go into your day.

Find a place quiet and hidden away for 3 minutes each day to prepare your heart for witness through this reflective prayer meditation. To begin, posture yourself how you like for prayer and take a few slow, deep breaths, becoming aware of God's loving presence in and around you.

Then pray:

Father, help me to see every need
around me as a holy opportunity,
to reveal your love, to be hospitable,
to speak your word, to pray for
miracles. In the name of Christ, the
hope of the world.

Amen.

IN COMMUNITY — LEARN

Then, taking just a few minutes, walk through in your mind some of the small but holy opportunities that might present themselves in your day — a conversation with a co-worker, a friend, someone at the shops, at the gym, or your neighborhood where you live.

As you imagine, think about your heart being postured toward witness in God's love. What would that feel like? How would you be listening to God? How might you be bold in introducing them to Him or inviting them more into your world?

As you're looking ahead, ask the Spirit for wisdom, love, courage, and compassion to follow him if and when those moments arise.

At the end of this time, you may like to finish with this simple prayer:

Holy Spirit, I am willing,
help me to see, and act,
in love toward my neighbor.

Amen.



ON YOUR OWN — REFLECT

Practice Reflection

Before your next time together with the group for Session 04, take five to ten minutes to journal out your answers to the following three questions:

01 Where did I feel resistance?

02 Where did I feel joy?

03 Where did I most experience God's nearness?

Note: As you write, be as specific as possible. While bullet points are just fine, if you write it out in narrative form, your brain will be able to process your insights in a more lasting way.

Keep Growing (Optional)

The following resources were created to enhance your experience of this Practice, but they are entirely optional.

Read

The Gospel Comes with a House Key by Rosaria Butterfield
(Chapters 07-09)

Listen

Rule of Life Podcast on Witness (Episode 03)

Continue the discussion

If you would like to slow down this four-week Practice to give your community more time to sit in each week's teaching and spiritual exercise, you can pause and meet for an optional conversation in the Appendix.



