

Why Witness?

or

Introduce Your Friends!

High in the Colorado Rockies, my parents own a redwood cabin sitting on a parcel of land surrounded by National Forest. Our family affectionately refers to it as *The Property*.

We first visited *The Property* in April. While exploring, we came across a grove of Aspen trees surrounded by ferns and tall grass. The soil was dark and damp. Wondering if digging would uncover a spring, we got tools from the cabin and prepared to find out.

We soon had a hole carved into the mountain side—a distorted circle about four feet across and two feet deep. The soil became more damp with each shovel full of earth we removed. Gradually the dampness changed to mud. Finally water bubbled up.

The puddle that formed was muddy. It seeped in so slowly that we decided to leave it alone for a while. After a couple of hours we were delighted to find the hole two-thirds full of cold, clear water. We took a drink and left, hoping that when we returned it would be full and overflowing.

Imagine our disappointment two hours later when we discovered the water level to be exactly the same as it had been earlier. We pondered the mystery and wondered why it had stopped filling. We probed about in the bottom to see if the seep spots had gotten clogged or covered, but we only made the water muddy again.

We wondered if the pressure on the bottom had increased (as the hole filled) to the point where it could no longer seep. To test that theory, we took an old pipe and pushed it through the soil from the downhill side. It penetrated our reservoir below the water line acting as a drain.

We watched as the reservoir drained lower and lower. Finally it reached the top of the drainpipe. Then an amazing thing happened. Water kept draining out, but the water line remained constant at the top of the drainpipe! We kept waiting for the water to stop draining, but it never happened. In amazement we watched a steady stream continue pouring from the end of the drainpipe.

We ran and got a six gallon container from the cabin. Placing the container beneath the stream of water, we clocked the rate of fill with a stop watch. We couldn't believe the results! The little "seeps" we had uncovered in the ground were producing water at the rate of 3 gallons per minute! We were pleased and drank deeply.

Later that year we returned to *The Property* in late October for another visit. The aspen leaves had turned to gold, falling like nuggets to the ground. I went for a walk in the forest and decided to check the spring. I was disappointed to find no water coming out of the pipe. The once clear water had become murky and stagnant with tiny insects swimming about.

At first I thought it was simply because the water source had dried up. Then I noticed leaves and debris clogging the outlet. Reaching through the muck, I cleared the drain. Water began flowing once again and before I left for home that week, the spring was clear.

Nature demonstrated this spiritual principle: As you share what you know and love about Jesus, you will receive more to share. Your experience with Him will continue fresh and new each day. If you don't "let it out," what was once new will become old, stagnant and undesirable.

The man who had been controlled by the unclean spirits kept begging Him that he might be with Him. But Jesus refused to permit him, but said to him, "Go home to your own [family and relatives and friends] and bring back word to them of how much the Lord has done for you, and [how He has] had sympathy for you and mercy on you." Mark 5:18-19 (The Amplified Bible)

How Do You Grow in Jesus

Before he left for Heaven, Jesus asked His followers to share with others the good news about Himself (see Matthew 28:19-20). He must have had good reasons for leaving us with these marching orders. In earlier lessons, we have compared prayer to breathing and Bible study to eating and drinking. The Christian witness has been compared to exercise—something essential to good health. In this lesson we will discover how witnessing not only improves your spiritual health, but benefits other and God as well!

1. Have you ever broken a bone that had to be set in a cast? What happens to the muscles that have to be inactive?
2. Give some examples that demonstrate the truth of the expression Use It Or Lose It.
3. In a legal courtroom, what is a witness and what are they expected to say?
4. According to the following verses, what is a Christian witness?
 - Psalms 66:16
 - Daniel 4:2
 - John 3:11
 - Acts 4:20
5. Explain the difference between sharing information and sharing an experience? What experience is being shared in the verses listed above?
6. Based on what you've read so far, define Christian witness.
7. In what ways is your definition similar to 1 John 1:1-3? In what ways different?
8. In a court of law, the person on trial hopes to benefit by the testimony of witnesses for the defense. What are some ways in which your witness could benefit God?
 - Matthew 5:16
 - Luke 18:43
 - John 15:8
 - 1 Peter 2:9
9. What is the value of your testimony to others?
 - John 1:36-37
 - John 1:40-41
 - John 4:42
 - John 12:32
10. Mark 5:19 and Luke 8:39 end the story of the healed demoniac. What did Jesus ask him to do?
11. Why would Jesus send a person to witness to people they already know? Does this say anything about what our first goal should be in regards to strangers?
12. How can sharing what Jesus is to you and what you are to Him, benefit you in the following areas:

- Make life an adventure
- Provide real purpose for living
- Give you fulfillment
- Spiritual confidence
- Your understanding & appreciation of Jesus

As you tell others the good things you are discovering about Jesus, it brings joy to Him, increases the opportunities for your friends to know Him, and brings you happiness as well. And one more thing-it keeps the spring clear!

Daily Bites

This week as you spend time with Jesus each day, getting to know Him better, look for things you could share with someone else. If Jesus is becoming your friend, it is natural for you to introduce Him to your other friends. Be prepared to share with them what your friend Jesus is doing for you and why you enjoy His friendship.

- *Begin each session with prayer* - maybe something like this: “Lord, help me to come to know you better as we spend time together...”
- *Read the passage* - several times noticing as many details as you can.
- *Imagine the setting* - put yourself in the picture. Try to imagine the sounds, smells, sensations.
- *Summarize the passage* - in your own words.
- *Apply the passage* - what message is God giving you?
- *Meditate and pray* - meditate on how this passage makes Jesus more real. Talk to Him about the passage and about using the information you have learned to deepen your friendship with Him. Listen for impressions He is giving you.

Passages for This Week

- John 11:1-16
- John 11:17-44
- John 11:45-57
- John 12:1-11
- John 12:12-19
- John 12:20-36
- John 12:37-50

My name is Jairus and I want to tell you what Jesus did for me, my wife Deborah, and our daughter—who we affectionately call Princess.

Princess brightens our home with her laughter, singing, and frequent smiles. Her zest for living is contagious. That’s why for us, the sun ceased to shine when she became deathly sick.

Her forehead burned with fever. She complained of severe stomach cramps. Nothing she ate or drank would stay down. In fact, she came to the point of vomiting bile and blood.

Deborah and I were frantic! Nothing we did seemed to make any difference and I ached to see her so sick. We called the doctor. The news he gave us was devastating.

I was overwhelmed with grief! I went to Princess and sat beside her bed. I bathed her brow and stroked her flaming cheeks. I asked her if there was *anything* I could bring her and her answer startled me. “Yes,” she said, “Jesus.”

Oh how I struggled with that request. I loved my daughter but I couldn’t ask *Him* for help. He was in opposition to much of

what I did and taught as synagogue ruler. Furthermore, I was haunted by the thought that *even if He could do something, He wouldn't do it for a doubter like me. He wouldn't come to my house.*

Her condition worsened. I pleaded with God for her life. My neighbor came over to ask if there was something he could do. Bitterly I told him he could arrange for hired mourners because we had no hope for her recovery.

I sat by her bed feeling desperate and helpless. I held her hand tightly, as if my grasp could keep her from slipping away. Her breathing began to rattle in her chest and suddenly my desperation pushed me past my pride. I bolted for the door and ran down the cobblestone street.

Tears blurred my vision as I stumbled recklessly toward the outskirts of Capernaum. My breath came rapidly, my throat burned, my muscles screamed but I couldn't stop. Then I saw Him and fell at His feet. I clutched at the hem of His garment and gasped, "Please ... please! My daughter is dying! I beg you, come and touch her, that she may be healed!"

"Let's go," He said, and we headed for home.

Then my worst fears came true. I saw friends and neighbors coming towards us. "She died," they said, "No use bringing Jesus, it's too late now."

I wished *I* could die! I had let her down. She had asked me to get Jesus, but I left too late. Then He took my arm and I heard Him say, "Don't be afraid. She's going to be all right!"

Before we got home, we could hear the mourners. Looking in their direction, Jesus held up a hand. "Why do you make so much commotion?" He said, "this little girl is only sleeping."

For a moment, there was silence, then one of the mourners spat at Jesus feet. "Who are you to come here at a time like this with your jokes. When someone stops breathing it is not because they fell asleep! We've seen her ourselves and she is **DEAD!**"

Jesus looked from one face to another. He spoke deliberately, calmly and quietly, "Please leave!" He said. Motioning for three of His disciples to follow, He took my arm, and moved me through the open door of my home.

Like a man in a dream, I led the way to my daughter's room. Deborah was kneeling beside the bed cradling Princess' head against her cheek. She was sobbing uncontrollably. Seeing them there loosed the fountain of my own tears. Regardless of what Jesus called it, my daughter *was* dead!

Then I looked at Jesus and realized that *He* was the one who was most saddened! His own eyes brimmed over as He gently helped Deborah to her feet. I reached for her and we clung to one another. Jesus moved towards the bed *and time stood still*. He stood looking down on our daughter's ashen face. Stooping slightly, He reached out with His right hand and gently stroked her cheek.

A silence came over all of us as we watched and wondered. I could feel my heartbeat in my neck and temples. Deborah's grip on my hand tightened. The room grew suddenly brighter.

Then Jesus took her hand and spoke. "Princess," He said, "Princess. I say to you arise." As if it were possible! And it *was!* A tremor passed through her unconscious form. Her lips unclosed with a smile and her eyes opened widely as if from sleep. She sat up and gave Jesus a hug, as our hearts overflowed with joy!

For a while, we were so overcome with happiness, that no one spoke. Then Jesus said, "Why don't you give her something to eat?"

Clinging to Princess, I turned toward Jesus and said, "Master, it is impossible for me to ever thank You enough!"

I will always wonder about His reply. "Please don't tell anyone what has happened here today," He said.

I would like to be able to honor His request, but let me ask *you*, could *you* keep quiet about what He has done?

And he went his way and proclaimed throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him. Luke 8:39 (NKJV).

Matthew 28:19-20 “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

Psalms 66:16* “Come and listen, all you who fear God; let me tell you what he has done for me.”

Daniel 4:2* “It is my pleasure to tell you about the miraculous signs and wonders that the Most High God has performed for me.”

John 3:11 “Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness.”

Acts 4:20* “For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.”

1 John 1:1-3* “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched--this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.”

Matthew 5:16 “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”

Luke 18:43* “Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus, praising God. When all the people saw it, they also praised God.”

John 15:8 “By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.”

1 Peter 2:9 “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;”

John 1:36-37* “When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, “Look, the Lamb of God!” When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus.”

John 1:40-41* “Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, “We have found the Messiah” (that is, the Christ).”

John 4:42 “Then they said to the woman, “Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world.””

John 12:32 “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.”

Mark 5:19 “However, Jesus did not permit him, but said to him, “Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you.””

Luke 8:39 ““Return to your own house, and tell what great things God has done for you.” And he went his way and proclaimed throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him.”

(Unless otherwise mentioned, all quoted scripture is from the New King James Version)

** New International Version*