

▷ INTRODUCTION

During the last four weeks we have explored together basic ingredients of the discipleship journey with God. By this time, we have reviewed and affirmed our assurance of salvation. We have accepted Jesus as Lord of our lives. And we have begun to understand the wondrous truth of the indwelling Christ. These are all foundational to our spiritual journey with God.

This week, we will explore an area that is just as critical to our ongoing spiritual growth. God calls us to share what we are experiencing with others around us. They need to see Jesus. We need to share Jesus. We will continue to grow only as we focus outwardly. If we do not share what Christ is doing for us, we become like a stagnant pool losing its freshness and vitality. Thus it is important that we understand just what it is that God asks of us.

All around us people are hungering to know God. He has given to us the awesome privilege of being part of the salvation process. When Jesus first invited His disciples to follow Him, He promised that they would become “fishers of men.” In other words, we are the tools God uses to reach people around us. It is our task to help others know Jesus just as we know Him.

The most powerful tool in the witnessing process is the story of what God has done for us. Our personal testimony of what Christ has done for us has the ability to be used by God to draw others to Him. It really is not as difficult as we have thought. We don’t have to be able to answer all the questions people may ask. We can simply say, “I don’t know the answer. But I will find an answer for you.” All we need to do is to simply tell our story. Our greatest witness is the story of what Jesus has done for us.

Because we have experienced salvation, we have something to tell. Because we have accepted Jesus as Lord, we can help someone else accept Him too. Because we are experiencing the presence of God, we can help someone else find God also. In other words, the source of our witnessing is simply sharing our personal experience. What power there is in that sharing! Jesus promised that the uplifted Christ would draw others to Him.

Pause and think for a few minutes. Who has God placed around you that needs to experience what you have found? Who are the family or friends around you who have never known Jesus? Who are the people around you who are spiritually hungering? Now stop and think again. What do you have to share? Is it some doctrine or is it a growing relationship with Jesus? How can you tell them what you have experienced?

We need to catch a vision of just how much we really do have to share. Christ is real in our lives. We are growing in Him. He is changing us—making us more like Him. Out of this experience, we can tell others the simple truth of what God has done for us.

▷ OBJECTIVES FOR THIS WEEK

This week’s objectives for our study include the following:

- To understand the power of witnessing.
- To recognize that we are each called to the ministry of sharing Jesus with others.

- To commit ourselves to share where and when God provides opportunity.
- To prayerfully identify those God brings to us to learn about Jesus.

▷ HOLY HABIT—SPIRITUAL JOURNALING

Throughout the last four weeks of this study, we have had opportunity to reflect and write our thoughts about different passages as well as our own spiritual journey. In a sense, we have already begun to use elements of the spiritual discipline or *Holy Habit* of spiritual journaling. Now we want to understand this skill better in order to be more intentional in its use.

Spiritual journaling is the practice of maintaining a spiritual diary. Its purpose is to provide regular and systematic reflection on our walk with God, and a record of that walk and reflection. It helps us in two ways:

1. Journaling provides systematic reflection on God and our relationship with Him. Writing down what God has done for us and our thoughts about our journey with Him helps strengthen that journey.
2. Journaling also provides a review of how God has worked in our lives. Later, as we read our reflections, we are reminded of just how much God really is doing in our lives.

While there is no single way to journal, there are some hints which might be helpful in using a journal:

- Use a journal notebook or a computer file. For some, the act of physically writing our thoughts down on paper is helpful. For others, a computer is easier.
- Reflect on key points from our devotional time. This can include new insights from Scripture, impressions from God, or expressions of gratitude and praise to God. It can also include Bible passages which have been especially meaningful and why.
- Reflect on how God is working in your lives. We can make notes on different ways in which we see God at work, and how He is changing our lives.
- Write out some of our prayers or record answered prayers. This can be a special source of strength later on when we come back and review the journal.
- Record special experiences with God or events that have a meaningful impact on our spiritual journey.

Spiritual journaling is one of the powerful tools that helps shape our lives to be more like Jesus. We need to try this skill for several weeks and see how it works for us. It is not necessary to do it every day, but it is helpful if we do it two to four times a week.

▷ SUGGESTED PRAYER

Here is a suggested prayer as we begin this week of our **Steps to Discipleship** study process:

Dear Loving Father, I come to you today recognizing the wonder of your love and grace. You are changing my life, and I praise you for it. As I experience your power in my life, I recognize I need to share it with others. Yet I am afraid. I don't know where to start. So be with me. Give me courage and lead me to someone with whom you want me to share your love. Help me be aware of those around me who are ready to hear about you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

LIST BELOW THREE THINGS YOU WANT TO ACCOMPLISH IN YOUR DISCIPLESHIP WALK WITH GOD THIS WEEK:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

▷ TODAY'S OBJECTIVE

The purpose of our study today is to help us understand that people around us are spiritually hungry. They want to know God and are searching. That search is real, though it may not always be in the right place. God is working to meet them—usually through someone who has already experienced His grace.

▷ INVITATION PRAYER

Dear God, Help me to know you better today. Teach me your grace once again. Help me to be sensitive to those around me who hunger for You. Teach me to share what you have given me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

▷ MEMORY VERSE

This week we start memorizing memory verse #9. Once again, we will need to follow the process for memorization which we have used during the last four weeks.

2 Corinthians 5:18-19 (NIV)—"All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation."

2 Corinthians 5:18-19 (KJV)—"And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation."

▷ MEMORY VERSE REVIEW

We also want to review two verses today. The first is verse #2 (Psalm 34:8) and the second is #8 from last week (2 Peter 1:3-4). Use the cards to help you.

▷ BIBLE READING AND REFLECTION

Now it is time to go back to our Bibles and explore what God has to say about helping people know Him.

READ THE STORY OF CORNELIUS IN ACTS 10. Notice the key points that stand out in this story for you:

CONTINUE TO REFLECT ON THE STORY OF CORNELIUS. What points from this story point out that Cornelius was searching for something more in his spiritual journey?

What does this story tell us about what our attitude toward others can be?

READ LUKE 10:1-12—Who has the responsibility of providing more workers in the spiritual harvest field? What is our role according to this passage?

▷ **COMMITMENT PRAYER**

Dear Lord, Help me understand that there are people all around me who are hungering to know God. Help me be sensitive to their needs. Give me courage; give me the words to share at the right time. In Jesus' name, Amen.

▷ TODAY'S OBJECTIVE

Our objective for today is to understand the power of a life transformed by Jesus. We also want to see how Jesus worked with people who were hungry to know God.

▷ INVITATION PRAYER

Almighty God, You have touched my life in marvelous ways. I am experiencing your love and grace. Help me know how to extend them to others. Help me see that the greatest witness I can be is my own life touched by God. In Jesus' name, Amen.

▷ MEMORY VERSE REVIEW

Today we will review two memory verses, #6 (Matthew 11:28-30) from our third week, and #9 (2 Corinthians 5:18-19) from yesterday. Take a few minutes and reflect on these passages. What do they tell us about what God has done for us?

▷ BIBLE READING AND REFLECTION

Once more we go to Scripture to study and reflect. Let's ask God to guide our hearts and minds as we explore His Word.

READ THE STORY OF JESUS AND THE SAMARITAN WOMAN IN JOHN 4:1-42. We want to look at this story again. What are the key points you notice about how Jesus worked with this woman?

CONTINUE TO REFLECT ON THE STORY OF THE SAMARITAN WOMAN. What triggered her hunger to know more?

NOTICE VERSES 28-30—What do you think drove her to go back to her village and tell her story?

NOTICE VERSE 42—What do you think led the villagers to believe?

READ LUKE 12:8-9—Why is it important that we acknowledge who God is in our lives, and that we share that information with others?

▷ **COMMITMENT PRAYER**

Dear Lord, Help me see people around me the way Jesus did. Help me to be sensitive to their need. Help me know how to share what Christ has done for me? In Jesus' name, Amen.

▷ TODAY'S OBJECTIVE

Our objective today is to understand the power of the invitation to "Come and see." Each person must have a first-hand experience with God.

▷ INVITATION PRAYER

Dear God of Love, Help me understand that you are already at work in the lives of people around me. Help me know when and how to share your love. Lead me to those who are hungering to know you and teach me to share what you have done for me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

▷ MEMORY VERSE REVIEW

Our verse to review today is #9 (2 Corinthians 5:18-19). Let's review it with our memory verse card. Reflect on why we are given the ministry of sharing Jesus with those around us:

▷ BIBLE READING AND REFLECTION

Scripture once again will guide our study as to how to share our faith with those around us.

READ THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER IN MARK 4:1-20. What are the key points from this parable that help us know how to witness? What is the role of the sower who spreads the seed? How does this compare to our role?

READ THE STORY IN JOHN 1:35-50. Who did Andrew and Philip invite to know Jesus? What was the power of their invitations?

Why do you think they wanted to invite someone else to know Jesus?

READ JOHN 12:20-26—What were the roles and responsibilities of Philip and Andrew in this story? What does the metaphor of the kernel of wheat tell us about what must happen to us? How would this impact our ability to share Jesus with those around us?

▷ **COMMITMENT PRAYER**

Father in Heaven, Teach me to trust you to do your part. Help me to know that my role is to share what I have experienced. It is your responsibility to make the seed grow. My responsibility is simply to cast it out or share it with those around me. Help me know how. In Jesus' name, Amen.

▷ TODAY'S OBJECTIVE

Understanding our task in witnessing, or telling what Jesus has done for us, is our objective for today. It really is about God and not about us. The real focus is on preaching Jesus Christ as Lord.

▷ INVITATION PRAYER

God of Wonder and Grace, I come to you today aware of how blessed I am. You have saved me and invited me to share in the ministry of helping others find you. Teach me to focus on Jesus. Help me make Him real in my life. Help me understand that because I know you, I can share you with others. In Jesus' name, Amen.

▷ MEMORY VERSE

Today we start memorizing verse #10. By now, we are familiar with our method of memorization and review. Let's remember that it is important to reflect or meditate on the passage throughout the day. Our goal is to move beyond simply memorizing the passage. We want to make it part of our lives.

1 Peter 3:15 (NIV)—“But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect . . .”

1 Peter 3:15 (KJV)—“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear . . .”

▷ MEMORY VERSE REVIEW

Today we review memory verses #3 (Ephesians 2:8-9) from our second week, and #7 (Ezekiel 36:26-27). Spend a few minutes thinking about how these passages have helped us during the last several weeks:

▷ BIBLE READING AND REFLECTION

It is time to let God speak to our hearts and minds as we open His Word. We especially want to focus on the task that God has given us to do.

READ MATTHEW 4:18-22 AND 28:18-20—What do these verses tell us about our task as disciples of Jesus Christ?

READ AND REFLECT ON 1 PETER 3:15-16—What is “the reason for the hope” we have? Is it information or what?

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 4:1-15—What does this passage tell us about our task? What key points from these verses can help us as we work with others?

▷ **COMMITMENT PRAYER**

Dear Lord, Help me today to accept the task you have given me. Help me realize it is really more about you than about me. Teach me that the real power for witnessing is the story of Jesus and what He has done for me. Lead me to the person with whom you want me to share. In Jesus' name, Amen.

▷ TODAY'S OBJECTIVE

Our objective for today is to go deeper in understanding the ministry that God has given to us. We want to see that this ministry is at the core of our identity as Christians.

▷ INVITATION PRAYER

Loving Father, Help me to experience the fullness of your love today. Help me know just how much you have given to me in Jesus Christ. Lead me to accept the privilege of ministry in your name and in partnership with you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

▷ MEMORY VERSE REVIEW

Our verses for review today are #9 (2 Corinthians 5:18-19) and #10 (1 Peter 3:15). Spend a few minutes reflecting on what God has given us that is the foundation of what we have to share:

▷ BIBLE READING AND REFLECTION

It is now time to open our Bibles and spend time in study and reflection on the real meaning of the ministry God has given us.

READ ACTS 5:40-42—What gave the apostles the strength to witness in the face of opposition and even abuse? What was the essence of their ministry?

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 5:14-21—This passage is the clearest presentation of our identity and role as Christians when it comes to ministry. What key points from this passage speak to you?

Where does reconciliation begin? What do the phrases “ministry of reconciliation” and “message of reconciliation” mean to you?

READ 2 TIMOTHY 2:1-2—What does this passage tell us about sharing what we have received, and how far will that sharing go?

▷ **COMMITMENT PRAYER**

Loving God, You have reconciled me and brought me to your love. Help me have the courage to share that love with others. Teach me that I can share what I have experienced—that because I know you, I can help someone else know you too. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

▷ TODAY'S OBJECTIVE

Our objective for today is to explore the simplicity of and power for sharing. We want to realize that it is not about sharing information, but instead, it is about sharing what Christ has done for us.

▷ INVITATION PRAYER

Lord of Love, Help me remember just how much you have done for me. Teach me that because I know and love you, I can share you with someone around me today. Let your Word speak to my heart today. In Jesus' name, Amen.

▷ MEMORY VERSE REVIEW

Our memory verse for review today is #10 (1 Peter 3:15). Spend a few minutes reflecting on how you can “set Jesus apart as Lord” in your life today:

▷ BIBLE READING AND REFLECTION

It is now time to go back to the Bible and explore the power and essence of witnessing.

READ MARK 5:1-20—Put yourself in the place of this man. How would you describe his experience in your own words? What did Jesus ask him to share with others? What gave his message power?

READ THE STORY IN ACTS 8:26-40—What lessons can we learn from this story? How far is God willing to go to help someone know Him? How far is God willing to go to help us minister for Him?

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 9:16-23—What principles for witnessing can we gain from this passage?

How can you relate to those around you so that you build a relationship where you can share what Jesus has done for you?

▷ COMMITMENT PRAYER

Dear Father in Heaven, Help me remember how much you have done for me. Help me know who around me needs to hear what you have done for me. Help me live in your presence today and give me the courage to share. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Our subject for this week has been the ministry of reconciliation—discovering that God calls us to share with others what we have experienced in our walk with Him. This is the natural result of what we have studied during the first four weeks. Our relationship with God is what gives us power to witness. Spend the next few minutes reflecting on what this week’s study can mean to our spiritual lives.

How has your daily time with God affected your life this week? What difference is it making in the way you live?

Where have you experienced challenges to your discipleship during this past week?

How is what God has done for you starting to impact your life?

Who has God placed in your life with whom you can share what Jesus has done for you?

How would you like to see God work in your life during the next week?
