

session 4 study guide

being an effective witness

starter

THE WITNESS: Gather three people together to read the skit found at the end of this file (be sure to adjust the gender of the parts if needed). If possible, practice the skit several times before performing it. Adding props and wearing appropriate clothing will also add to the message of the skit.

message

The apostle Paul provides us with a great example of someone who boldly—but effectively—shared his faith with others. He never passed up an opportunity to speak about his faith, no matter who was listening. In Acts 26, we find an account of how Paul gave testimony of his faith in the city of Caesarea. He spoke to King Agrippa, the Jewish ruler in the region of Galilee (and great-grandson of Herod the Great of Matthew 2), and Festus, the Roman authority in the region.

Then Agrippa said to Paul, “You have permission to speak for yourself.”

So Paul motioned with his hand and began his defense: “King Agrippa, I consider myself fortunate to stand before you today as I make my defense against all the accusations of the Jews, and especially so because you are well acquainted with all the Jewish customs and controversies. Therefore, I beg you to listen to me patiently.

“The Jewish people all know the way I have lived ever since I was a child. . . . I conformed to the strictest sect of our religion, living as a Pharisee. And now it is because of my hope in what God has

promised our ancestors that I am on trial today. . . . King Agrippa, it is because of this hope that these Jews are accusing me. Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?

“I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the Lord’s people in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. I was so obsessed with persecuting them that I even hunted them down in foreign cities.

“On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. About noon, King Agrippa, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions. We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’

“Then I asked, ‘Who are you, Lord?’

“‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,’ the Lord replied. ‘Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen and will see of me. I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.’

“So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven. First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and then to the Gentiles, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and demonstrate their repentance by their deeds. . . . I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen—that the Messiah would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would bring the message of light to his own people and to the Gentiles.”

1. Based on the testimony that Paul gave of his life in this passage, what was his life like before he met Christ?

2. How did he meet Christ?

3. How did he say Christ changed his life?

4. Based on how Paul felt about Jesus before meeting Him, why is it significant that he called Jesus “Lord”?

5. Why do you think God chose Paul?

6. There are certain “defining moments” that forever change the identity and destiny of an individual, a movement and a nation. What was Paul’s defining moment? How did it change him?

dig

Jesus changed Paul’s heart first and then his life. From that point on, Paul was 100 percent sold out for Jesus and took seriously the job that Christ had given him to tell others the good news of salvation (see Acts 26:16). This is a job that Jesus has given to all Christians (see Matthew 28:18-20). Later, in his letter to the Colossians, Paul gives some great advice for how to share our faith with others:

We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me (Colossians 1:28-29).

Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone (Colossians 4:5-6).

1. In Colossians 1:28-29, what does Paul say our goals should be when we share Christ with others?

2. How should we go about doing this? Casually or fervently?

3. In Colossians 4:5-6, Paul instructs believers to make the most of every opportunity. What words should we use to engage a person in conversation?

4. What are some opportunities you might have to tell someone about Jesus?

5. Based on these verses, if someone asked why you are a Christian, how would you respond?

apply

Every Christian has a personal story to tell. Your testimony might not be as dramatic as Paul's, but God has given you unique opportunities and relationships in which to shine for Him. So today, consider writing out your testimony. Use the following steps based on Paul's testimony in Acts 26:1-23 as a guide.

1. First, record the key moments in your spiritual life. Describe a specific conversion experience (or earliest memory of knowing you belonged to Jesus), difficult or challenging

times when you sought God, special times with God, people who influenced you to grow spiritually, and what God is doing in your life right now.

2. Next, take a moment to organize what you have listed chronologically. Using Paul's testimony as an example, complete each of the following sections.

Before I met Christ:

How I met Christ:

How Christ has changed and is changing my life:

3. Now record the names of two people (who are not a part of your youth group) with whom you could share your testimony.

Finally, find three or four friends and work together to prepare a 60-second presentation to promote faith in Christ. You can use ideas from TV commercials or write a song or a skit. If you can, perform your presentation live or record it to share with others. Then, discuss the pros and cons of presenting the love of Christ in a 60-second presentation.

reflect

1. What makes it difficult for you to share your faith story?

2. In 2 Corinthians 5:17, Paul tells us that when we accept Christ, we become a new creation. In what ways have you become a new creation?

3. If you have repented of your sins and received Jesus as your Savior, then you have also accepted Him as your Lord. In what ways have you made Jesus the Lord of your life?

4. When those who have not yet accepted Christ look at your life, can they observe any differences in the way you conduct yourself? If so, in what ways?

5. Why does a personal testimony tend to have a greater impact on people than a theological discussion?

6. John Maxwell once stated, “People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.” How can that statement impact your testimony?

meditation



For I am convinced that neither death nor life,
neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future,
nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in
all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God
that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

ROMANS 8:38-39

the witness

characters

Joe

Nick

Mr. Applegate

scene

The scene is a typical college student union. Joe is seated at a table surrounded by several chairs. Joe is studying in preparation for an upcoming test. Nick, a super-straight-looking student, approaches and sits right next to Joe, ignoring all the empty seats around him.

script

Nick: Hi . . . how ya doin'? Do you live around here?

Joe: (Eyes still on books.) Yeah.

Nick: Where? Where do you live?

Joe: (Still reading.) In the dorms.

Nick: Really? I thought about living there once . . . what's it like? (Pauses. Joe doesn't answer.)

Do you study here a lot?

Joe: (Giving Nick a hard look.) Yes, I study here a lot, because over in the dorms too many people bother me and I can't concentrate!

Nick: Yeah, it must be really hard to study with people bothering you all the time.

Joe: Yes, it is!

Nick: (Begins talking faster and acting nervous and unsure.) Are you saved?

Joe: What?

Nick: Are you saved? You see, I belong to the Go with God Student Christian Club, and we are taking a survey to see who is going to hell. But, you don't have to go to hell. (Nick pulls out a booklet called "God Wants You!") Right here in this little book is a chance for you to have eternal life. Here, on page one, it says, "You are hiding from God in the wretchedness of your ugly sins. You must repent."

Joe: (Dumbfounded and speechless until this point.) Now, wait a minute . . .

Nick: Oh, please save your questions until I've read you the whole booklet.

Joe: (Obviously annoyed.) In case you haven't noticed, I'm trying to study here!

Nick: There are only three more pages. Now, this verse from the Bible . . .

Joe: (Louder.) Look, freak, I am not interested in your weird religious ideas!

Nick: (Pause.) What's your name?

Joe: My name isn't important. Will you please go away so I can study?

Nick: If you don't listen to me, then your name—whatever it is—won't be written in the Book of Life and . . .

Joe: (Exploding.) Look! I am trying to study! Are you too ignorant to see that?! What is it with you Christians anyway? Do you work on a commission basis? One more star in your halo for every soul saved! Well, I'm not interested!

Nick: (Pauses, dead serious.) He said we would be persecuted.

Joe: (Resigned.) I don't believe this! (He slams the book shut, rips booklet in half, throws it in Nick's face and storms off mumbling something about crazy fanatics.)

Nick rises and stands in center stage. From the darkness behind Nick, the deep, serious voice of Mr. Applegate can be heard.

Mr. Applegate: That was very good, Nick.

Nick: (His composure has changed—he now seems strong and determined.) That wasn't just "very good," Mr. Applegate.

Mr. Applegate: (Steps into the light with Nick. He wears a dark business suit, and there is something ominous about him.) How do you mean?

Nick: That was the best you've ever seen. I know it, you know it, and Number One knows it.

Mr. Applegate: That's why I have come to talk to you. Number One has a new assignment for you.

Nick: It's about time.

Mr. Applegate: There is a new church and coffee house that has just opened on the north side. The man who runs it has an intimate relationship with the Enemy. He is very dangerous and could change our whole standing there if we don't act fast. Number One seems to think that you are creative enough to come up with some good moves. We'll start you as a heroin pusher, but if you can't work with that, we can make other arrangements. Well, can you handle it?

Nick: I can.

Mr. Applegate: Good. Let me warn you, Nick, we don't usually let demons of your standing take a job like this. If you fail . . . well, you know what will happen.

Nick: I know.

Mr. Applegate: Very well. You'll start right away.¹

Note

1. Adapted from Ideas Number 21-24 (El Cajon, CA: Youth Specialties, 1984), pp. 109-111. Used by permission.