

# YOU ARE A WITNESS

*Sponsored by Lutheran Hour Ministries as a six-month study to use prior to the 2008 convention in Lexington, Kentucky.*



LUTHERAN HOUR  
MINISTRIES

*People Of Christ With A Message Of Hope*

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# **YOU ARE A WITNESS**

## **LESSON ONE**

### **YOU ARE A WITNESS ~ PUBLIC SERVANT**

(Daniel 6: 1-28)

## **LESSON TWO**

### **YOU ARE A WITNESS ~ THE YOUNGEST**

(I Samuel 17: 16-51)

## **LESSON THREE**

### **YOU ARE A WITNESS ~ A CHECKERED PAST**

(John 4: 1-42)

## **LESSON FOUR**

### **YOU ARE A WITNESS ~ SOCIAL OUTCAST/HEALED WITNESS**

(Mark 5: 1-20)

## **LESSON FIVE**

### **YOU ARE A WITNESS ~ A BLIND MAN WITH A SIMPLE MESSAGE**

(John 9: 1-41)

## **LESSON SIX**

### **YOU ARE A WITNESS ~ THE CONVERSATIONALISTS**

(Acts 8: 26-40)

As always, these lessons come to you in two packets. One is the Student Bible Study Guide, and the other is the Leader's Bible Study Guide. Each lesson is designed to be covered in approximately one hour. However, the degree of discussion may shorten or lengthen that time. Ordinarily these Bible studies would follow the convention theme. However, in an effort to get the convention theme Bible studies on the same cycle as the convention itself (July to June), this edition is meant to fill the gap from January through June. A new set of 12 studies on the convention theme will be available in June to be used from July, 2008 until June of 2009.

This study has been designed for use in small groups, led by someone from within the group. Spiritual growth and increased knowledge will take place through discussion and Bible study. The leader may be the same person throughout the study, or the leadership role may be shared within the group. Whomever the leader, it is important that the leader be an attentive listener, ensuring that all participants have the opportunity to share.

We encourage the leader to consider the following before leading the session:

- DO choose the lesson most appropriate for your particular situation.
- DO NOT assume that you need to go through the lessons in any particular order.
- DO assign the lessons in advance. Participants will be better served if prepared.
- DO begin with a prayer.
- DO NOT force anyone to read out loud. Ask for volunteers.
- PLEASE DO NOT merely read the material word for word. These lessons are intended to guide your discussions.
- If your group is pressed for time, PLEASE DO GIVE OUT the Leader's Guide. By doing this you will facilitate discussion more quickly.

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# You are a Witness

wit-ness - [wit-nis]

**to bear witness; testify; give or afford evidence.**

Someone once said that a Christian does not choose whether or not to be a witness to the faith and to Jesus Christ. Every Christian, by virtue of their baptism, already is a witness. It's just a matter of what kind of witness you will be.

Peter said much the same thing in Acts 10:39-42 when he wrote, *"We are witnesses of everything He did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem ... He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that He is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead."*

Now, to be sure, we are not the eyewitnesses Peter spoke of almost 2,000 years ago. Nonetheless, we are witnesses because we have been given the eyewitness accounts about Jesus through the writings of Holy Scripture, and we have all been encouraged to testify to these things (2 Timothy 1:8-9). The only question is, what kind of witnesses will we be?

The Scripture gives countless examples of ordinary laypeople who are powerful witnesses to the things God has done, not only for all of mankind, but for them, individually. Some of these laypeople held positions of authority. Many had humble roots. Still others were considered outcasts in their own community. But regardless of the position given to them, they witnessed to the powerful things God had done in their lives.

This Bible study will examine six such witnessing examples. Each is a unique individual who witnessed in different ways. But the common denominator is that they were all laypeople. These were not clergy, or church officials. They were shepherds, government officials, men with afflictions, women with checkered pasts. But they were all laypeople.

My prayer is that you find these Bible studies to be encouraging in your life of witness. May you learn something from each individual about the witnessing God has called us to do. May you identify with one of these six individuals as someone "like me". And, by God's grace, may you also witness powerfully to the great things He has done for you.

# You are a Witness

## Public Servant

### Lesson One:

In this lesson we will read about the well-known, Old Testament personality, Daniel. In particular, we will look at a witnessing story from early in Daniel's career while serving in the court of Darius the King: Daniel in the Den of Lions.

### Background:

Daniel is not only a layman, he is serving in the court of Darius the King, a pagan. Daniel was respected by the King for the gifts and talents given to him. So impressed was Darius, that he made Daniel one of only three administrators who oversaw the kingdom. And then, Daniel distinguished himself so much while serving in this capacity that Darius made plans to put Daniel in charge of the entire kingdom. As you might imagine, this sparked some controversy among the other rulers and candidates for the position. Yet throughout this trying period, Daniel had the opportunity to witness to the power of his God.

Read Daniel 6: 1-9.

1. Based on verses 1-3, what type of position do you think Daniel would have had if he lived today?

A high-ranking political position of power, perhaps a Senator, Governor, or Secretary of State.

2. Would this be a religious position? Or a secular one?

Secular.

3. What distinguished Daniel (set him apart) from others in his position according to verse 4?

He was not corrupt or negligent, but completely trustworthy.

4. Do you think that a Daniel-type character would stand out in a similar occupation today? What attention would he/she get?

Answers will vary, but I imagine most would answer that a politician known for trustworthiness, and a complete lack of corruption and negligence would stand out like a sore thumb!

5. Was King Darius being given all the correct information in verses 6-8? What important piece was missing?

No. The other rulers said that we "all" agreed to this new law. They neglected to mention they had never spoken to Daniel about it and, in fact, designed the new law to entrap him.

Now, Read Daniel 6: 10-16.

1. How did Daniel change his behavior in light of the new decree that had been issued?  
Verse 10.

He didn't change it at all. He did what he always did.

2. If Daniel's enemies had not gone lurking about his house, would they have even known what he was doing?

No. Daniel was not splashy about it. He simply went about his normal routine of regular prayer.

3. After Darius heard the news (and discovered he had been tricked) what was his reaction? Why did he care so much about Daniel?

He was distraught and tried to save him. Daniel was a valued member of King Darius' administration. It was like taking his right-hand man away.

4. What clue is given in verse 16 that Darius is at least curious about Daniel's God?

He hoped the God Daniel served would do what he could not: rescue him!

Now finish the story by reading Daniel 6:16-28.

1. What would prove to Darius that Daniel's God was the true God? (verse 20)

If Daniel was delivered from the mouths of the lions.

2. What did King Darius have to say about Daniel's God after this incident? (verses 25-28).

Darius issued a decree that everyone should fear and reverence the God of Daniel because He is the living God whose kingdom will never be destroyed. Quite a statement!

21<sup>st</sup>-century application:

Daniel was a faithful, trustworthy, public servant. He performed the duties of his job with integrity and efficiency. This exemplary service in the court of the king caused Darius to take notice, appreciate, and even form a bond of friendship with Daniel. This bond was the context around the spiritual conversations that followed. Daniel was not splashy with his faith. He didn't shove it down anyone's throat. He didn't make a spectacle of himself. He simply worshipped his God. Yet, he didn't do it locked in a closet. Everyone knew of Daniel's faith and his God. In other words, Daniel had an active faith that he exercised regularly without forcing others to follow. This was his witness. Discuss the following conclusions as a group:

1. We can bear witness to the God we worship while doing our job. Like Daniel, serving in a trustworthy manner, not giving in to corruption and negligence is a witness to the God we worship and can open doors to spiritual conversation.

2. Performing your job in a competent, trustworthy, God-pleasing manner will help to form bonds of friendship and commitment with co-workers and even management. Within these relationships conversations of faith have the opportunity to take place and blossom.
3. No one can predict how another person will respond to our words and actions with certainty. However, it is safe to say that, generally speaking, people are more open to our words, ideas, and even convictions if there is first established a relationship of trust.

Encourage a free and open discussion. Ask how this applies to each person individually? To the church? To our own congregation?

4. How do Jesus' words in Matthew 5:16 apply to this story? To you?  
Our behavior is a witness that can open the doors of communication.

**Closing Prayer:**

Heavenly Father,  
Give to me the wisdom and the courage of Daniel. May I serve You in all that I do, not just at church, but also at my job, my home, and in my community. Help me to understand how even my ordinary life of service can be a witness to the love You have shown me in Jesus, just as Daniel's life was a witness to the love You had shown him. When the opportunities arise, may I follow You boldly and may that witness be blessed by Your Spirit so that more may come to know You, the one and only God, who has sent His Son, Jesus, to save us all. Amen.

# You are a Witness

## The Youngest

### Lesson Two:

In this lesson we will read about another well-known, Old Testament personality: David. But this won't be King David or even the general of Saul's army, David. No, instead this story is about the youngest of the siblings, an unappreciated, scrawny shepherd, David. The story is the familiar David and Goliath.

### Background:

At this time in history David was still a very ordinary, young man. He was the youngest of eight siblings. He, like many youngest siblings, was stuck at home doing the menial chores like tending the flock while his older brothers went off to participate in more glamorous endeavors. By now the older brothers and all of Israel's army had been engaging in a war of words and taunts with the Philistine army for 40 days. Rather than have both armies fight and lose hundreds or thousands to fatal injuries, it was sometimes agreeable to have one representative fight on behalf of the nation. In this case, it was the giant, Goliath, who challenged the army of Israel to a dual. Israel had been busy killing time while they looked for a willing soldier to accept Goliath's challenge. Meanwhile, David's father, Jesse, asked the young shepherd to take some provisions to the older, more experienced boys up at the front lines of battle. Only, by the time David got to the front lines, God put more in his mind than just delivering some snacks.

Read I Samuel 17:16-31.

1. What do you think David thought of his big, brave brothers after he saw their reaction to Goliath in verse 24?

He probably didn't understand why they were so fearful. Some of it may have been youthful brashness, but to David, it was simple. God promised to give us victory. What are you afraid of?

2. To what power does David appeal in verse 26? Why would he believe that he or the armies of Israel would be successful against Goliath?

Ultimately, it is God's promise David appeals to. God will give the victory because He said so!

3. Just for fun, read verses 28-30 in the context of a sibling rivalry. Can't you just hear those brothers sniping at each other!

Continue reading I Samuel 17:32-40.

1. David reminds Saul that he is not a completely defenseless youth. He has defended the sheep from the lion and the bear. (No small task, I might add.) No doubt these past experiences added to his confidence. Yet, to what does he appeal, ultimately, for his confidence and power? (See verse 37.) To whom do you look for your ultimate confidence and power in witnessing?

David's ultimate confidence and power is in God who delivered him from the paw of the bear and the lion and will also deliver him from Goliath. He had experiences to back him up, but he was not arrogant enough to think he had fought all those wild animals under his own power without God!

2. Notice what King Saul tries to do in verse 38. What would this scene look like if this were David preparing to make an evangelism call as opposed to fighting a battle? King Saul tries to put David in a box –the box of traditional soldier with traditional tools and armor. It is a role David is not suited for. It's not him. In terms of an evangelism call it might be like wanting someone to go out with a pre-determined speech, or formula for witnessing that may not fit the person's personality at all.

3. Why didn't David want to use Saul's armor? What did he decide to do instead? Again, if this were an evangelism call instead of a battle, how might this conversation have gone?

David didn't want to use Saul's armor because it wasn't what he was used to. He decided to do what he was comfortable with. In terms of being a witness or doing evangelism, God does not ask us to be someone we are not. We are called to share the story of salvation through faith in Jesus by using our own story, our own experiences, and in our own way. There is no cookie-cutter approach to be used by everyone. In the end, we have all been touched by God's grace and Spirit in a unique way.

Now finish the story by reading I Samuel 17:41-51.

1. What does David want people to see as a result of this victory? (See verse 47.)  
He wants everyone to see that it is the Lord who saves, and not David!

2. Again, why is David confident as he approaches this intimidating task? What is his witness?  
He is confident because God is his power and strength. His actions are a powerful witness to God's promise.

21<sup>st</sup>-century application:

Okay, this may be a bit of a stretch, but think about David and Goliath with a 21<sup>st</sup>-century evangelistic slant. David approached an intimidating, difficult, scary task in taking on the giant Goliath in battle. For many today, witnessing and evangelism could be just as scary! Perhaps some would even rather go to battle than do an evangelism call! So what can we learn from David? Discuss the following conclusions as a group and what they might mean for you.

1. When faced with an intimidating task, David did not fall back entirely on his own experience, but instead looked to God for his ultimate strength.
2. The promises of God were a sure and certain hope for David and he acted accordingly. (Compare Isaiah 55:10-11 for an evangelistic context.)

3. David did not try to be something he wasn't. He acted in a manner consistent with who God made him to be. (See verses 38-40.)
4. The goal of any and all victories is to give glory to God, not ourselves.

Encourage a free and open discussion. Ask how this applies to each person individually?  
To the church? To our own congregation?

**Closing Prayer:**

Gracious Father,

The privilege of sharing Your Word of promise with others can make us feel intimidated and fearful. We may feel inadequate, unprepared, or simply not qualified for the job at hand. And yet, we have all been given that privilege. Help us to recognize, as David did, that we are not on our own. We go forward with Your mighty promises. They are sure and certain. Help us to act accordingly with confidence and zeal. Help us to relax and not try to be something we're not. Instead, let us share the faith in our own unique way as the person You made us to be. Finally, let us always give glory and honor to You and Your Son, Jesus, who died and rose that all may have life. Amen.

# You are a Witness

## A Checkered Past

### Lesson Three:

In this lesson we will read another familiar story about a most unusual witness with a checkered past: the Samaritan woman at the well.

#### Background:

Today we will concentrate on seeing this unnamed Samaritan woman as a bold witness to Jesus Christ. Samaritans and Jews had a long-standing dispute with each other. In summary, Samaritans were re-located individuals from other ethnic groups. The King of Assyria as part of a strategy to maintain control placed them in Palestine. (see 2 Kings 17:24 ff for more) Tensions between Samaritans and Jews were high and they generally did not associate. This makes Jesus' encounter with the woman doubly interesting. Not only is she a Samaritan, but she is a FEMALE Samaritan. (Women did not have nearly the rights of citizenship they enjoy today.) So, to top it all off, not only is this individual a female *and* a Samaritan, but she has personal issues.

There is much theological material to mine from this story, however, today we will concentrate on seeing this Samaritan woman for the unique person she is and examine what she does and doesn't do as she shares the Savior with her community.

Read John 4: 1-15.

1. Drawing water during the hottest time of the day was normally avoided. Why do you suppose this woman was here now?  
*To avoid personal contact with others. The well would be deserted at this time of the day.*
2. Think about that in 21<sup>st</sup>-century terms. Why do people pick odd times to make appearances in public places? What are they trying to avoid?  
*Usually they're also trying to avoid personal contact. They might just be busy and hate crowds, or they might truly be trying to avoid personal contact on purpose for reasons of guilt, embarrassment, or shame.*
3. Notice that in verse 9 the woman is surprised that Jesus would ask her for a drink, not because it was condescending, but because Jews do not normally associate with Samaritans. How do you think that request made her feel?  
*She was probably surprised, intrigued, and confused. The gesture also may have been quite an honor and opened the door to more conversation.*
4. The woman is not quite getting what Jesus is talking about with his "living water," at least not yet. Given her lack of understanding, what do you suppose she meant in verse 15? Why didn't she want to have to keep coming back here to this well?

Even by going to the well at odd times she was still encountering others. No doubt she wanted to avoid people altogether for reasons that become clear later in the story.

Continue reading John 4:16-18.

1. Read this short section through the eyes of a woman who lives in ancient Israel, not 21<sup>st</sup>-century America. A woman divorced five times in 2007 will certainly be looked upon with judgment in today's culture where there is a certain amount of free choice. However, women in these times had no such choice. A husband could divorce his wife very easily with no reason and with no legal protections for the wife. Afterwards, the divorced wife would be forced to marry again simply to survive. Women were, for the most part, not allowed to hold significant positions of employment. There was no alimony, and no child support. Does this knowledge change how you think about this Samaritan woman's situation?

Answers will vary. It will be important to remember the context of this Biblical story and not try to force the situation on 21<sup>st</sup>-century American culture. This woman could easily be seen as an unfortunate victim of a society that gave her very few options for survival.

2. Take a moment, at this point in the story, to describe this woman. What is her situation? How does she feel? What has she gone through?

Answers will vary. She is in a very difficult situation trying to survive. She is shamed by her past with other men, but, at the same time, was probably a victim of easy divorce and no legal protection. She's gone through a lot and probably doesn't have much hope.

Continue reading John 4:19-30.

1. I imagine it was a rather awkward silence in verse 27!
2. What did the Samaritan woman do after this encounter?

She immediately went back into town to invite everyone to see this man.

3. What did she tell (and ask) the townspeople?

She said this man knew everything she had done and then asked if this could be the Messiah.

4. How difficult do you suppose it was for this woman to talk to these townspeople about anything?

Because of her personal situation and feelings of shame, it was probably quite difficult. She had been spending her time trying to avoid them. Now, she was seeking them out!

Finish the story by skipping ahead to John 4:39-42.

1. What was the woman's "testimony"? Did it say everything about Jesus? Or did it say just what she knew for sure about how Jesus affected her life?

It said what she knew about Jesus from her own encounter with Him. She didn't try to tell or share that which she didn't know, only what she did know.

2. What did that "testimony" cause the townspeople to do?

It caused them to go see Jesus and find out more.

3. What do you suppose they learned in those two days?

No doubt they learned much more about who Jesus was, why He had come, and what He had to offer. They learned the whole story over time. The Samaritan woman's testimony served as an invitation to this deeper, more detailed conversation with Jesus.

4. Was the Samaritan woman's "testimony" the do-all and end-all of witnesses? Or was it just one part of a journey for these townspeople? Or, just one step in the path?

It was an invitation, a first step.

21<sup>st</sup>-century application:

This Samaritan woman was on the fringe of society for many reasons. Yet this did not stop her from telling people what she knew about Jesus. Neither should it stop us, and neither should we stop anyone else from doing the same! Discuss the following conclusions as a group and what they might mean for you:

1. God can and does use anyone to share the Savior. One does not need special training, a certificate of ordination, or even years of Bible class training to share the Savior.
2. The witness of the Samaritan woman told of how Jesus affected her life. It was her testimony. Of this she could speak with authority. Anyone can do this, no matter how old or young, whether you are male or female, the cream of society or from the ordinary rank and file (or below).
3. Just because you believe you are not important or have a checkered past, does not mean others will not listen to what you have to say about Jesus!
4. In witnessing you don't have to tell someone everything about Jesus all at once. One step at a time is plenty. The Samaritan woman shared what she knew. She invited them to come see Jesus and learn more.

Encourage a free and open discussion. Ask how this applies to each person individually? To the church? To our own congregation?

**Closing Prayer.**

Gracious God,

You make all lives precious through the blood of Your Son, Jesus. Help me to see that through faith in Jesus, I am worthy to share the Savior. I am worthy to share my story of how You have changed my life. And, help me not to discourage others from sharing how the Savior has changed them, even if they are from unusual circumstances. Help me to remember that none of us is worthy to share the Savior on our own. It is only through faith in the life, death, and resurrection of Your Son, Jesus, that we are worthy. Help me to share my story of how You have changed me with regularity and with enthusiasm. Amen.

# You are a Witness

## Social Outcast/Healed Witness

### Lesson Four:

In this lesson we will read another familiar story about an unusual social outcast who received healing and restoration from Jesus and became a powerful witness: the healing of a demon-possessed man.

#### Background:

The coming of Jesus to earth in the flesh brought resistance from the devil. His demons were busy trying to derail the work of the Messiah. In fact, in the Gospel of Mark, much of the early activity of Jesus consists of the casting out of demons. Mark chapter 5 details one such unusual exorcism. The demon-possessed man was unable to be subdued and, as a result, lived a lonely life among the tombs in a cemetery. The community was afraid of him. He was, truly, an outcast. And then came Jesus ...

Read Mark 5:1-5.

1. Discuss what life must have been like for this unfortunate man.

*Lonely. Frustrating. Painful. Hopeless.*

2. What type of person, living in 2008, might be experiencing the same kind of existence?

*Outside of demon possession itself, others are forced to live in similar circumstances due to mental illness, communicable diseases such as Aids, or imprisonment.*

Continue reading Mark 5:6-10.

1. Who is speaking here? The man? Or someone else?

*The demons are speaking. Legion, for they are many.*

2. Do these demons know who Jesus is? (Compare James 2:19.)

*Yes. They know exactly who He is, and they are shuddering. As an interesting aside, read the verse from James above. It is not enough to simply "know" who Jesus is. Even the demons know who He is and shudder. Faith involves trusting that what Jesus did (died and rose again to forgive sins) is for me and my personal benefit.*

Continue reading Mark 5:11-17.

1. Why would the townspeople be afraid to see this man healed? (See verse 15.)  
Shouldn't they have been more afraid when he was possessed?

*Perhaps the sudden change made them uneasy, wondering how it all happened.*

2. Why would the people want Jesus to leave? (See verse 17.) Didn't He do a good thing?

Yes, He did do a good thing. But He disrupted the status quo. He changed everything, and at a cost as well. See next question.

3. Discuss: Might the people have been angry because they just lost a large amount of money? (2,000 pigs. These were farmers after all!) Do you think maybe they would have preferred the man to stay possessed rather than for him to be healed and them lose a lot of money? Are these issues/situations still relevant today?

Encourage discussion. These issues are very modern.

4. How do you think the formerly possessed man felt?  
Relieved. Excited. Peaceful. Hopeful. Perhaps, he even felt caught in the middle. After all, it was because of his situation the community temporarily lost their livelihood.

Finish the story by reading Mark 5:18-20.

1. The man wanted to follow Jesus. What did Jesus tell him to do instead?

Go tell the family what the Lord has done and how He has had mercy on you.

2. Did he do it? Where?

Yes, but he didn't stop with this family. He went out into the Decapolis (grouping of ten cities) to tell the story.

3. What was the reaction from the people?

They were amazed. He had their attention and they listened.

4. God still heals people today. Sometimes he does it in quite ordinary ways through doctors, hospitals, surgery, and medication. Others times it is quite miraculous and dramatic. Might we, who have been healed, have the same privilege this man did in telling others all that the Lord has done for me?

Absolutely!

21<sup>st</sup>-century application:

This man received healing by the hand of Jesus himself. It was nothing short of miraculous, yet not everyone was pleased. After all, there was a cost to his healing, the cost of 2,000 pigs and the revenue it would bring the town. I imagine he may have felt put "in the middle", but this did not matter. Jesus told him to share with everyone how much the Lord had done for him –nothing more and nothing less. He was not asked to lead a Bible class, preach on Sunday, engage in a theological debate, or even have all the answers on how this amazing thing happened. Instead, he was told to simply share what the Lord had done and how He had mercy on him. Discuss the following conclusions as a group and what they might mean for you:

1. This man received a unique gift from God, one that people would stand up and take notice of. He was told to share this with others in order that they might come to know the Lord. In other words, this was not to be kept a secret, rather it was to be used to

bring attention to Jesus in order that people may come to know the Lord. Has there been a similar experience in your life that the Lord may want you to share?

2. He was not told to have all the answers, or engage in theological debate. He was only told to share what God had done for him. Have you ever been stopped from sharing what the Lord has done for you because you felt you needed to say more than that, or have all the answers?
3. The man did what the Lord said. He didn't study it, procrastinate on it, or form a committee. He simply did it!

Encourage a free and open discussion. Ask how this applies to each person individually? To the church? To our own congregation?

**Closing Prayer:**

Loving heavenly Father,

You have healed me in so many ways. Countless times You have healed me from sickness and disease. But You have also healed my spirit from sin and death. Help me to recognize Your work of healing in my life, and also to boldly tell the story. If Your healing has been particularly dramatic, even miraculous, give me the encouragement to share that story in order that all may be amazed and know what You have done and how much mercy You have to share. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

# You are a Witness

## A Blind Man With a Simple Message

### Lesson Five:

In this lesson we will read a familiar story about another witness who received healing from Jesus and had a simple story to tell. Unfortunately, the people around him wanted to make it far more complicated than it really was. Jesus heals a man born blind.

### Background:

You wouldn't think healing a man of blindness could cause so many problems. But in this story from John 9 it most certainly did. Specifically, the Pharisees became defensive over this incident and questioned not only the authority of Jesus to do such miracles but also the credibility of the man who was healed. Somehow, the obvious (a miracle) was lost in a bitter debate over the finer points of proper authority, following procedures, and keeping the Sabbath. The story is filled with cutting sarcasm and an almost comical interaction between the Pharisees and the man born blind. The entire incident becomes a living metaphor illustrating the reality of spiritual blindness. In the end, the irony is that the blind man sees (Jesus), but the ones who could see (the Pharisees) are now blind (to Jesus). Look for the sarcasm as you read the story and see how one witness kept the message simple and refused to be sucked into meaningless debate.

Read John 9:1-12.

1. What did Jesus say was the purpose for this man being born blind? (See verse 3.)  
It was that the work of God might be displayed in his life. Powerful isn't it, to have so much purpose for an affliction we consider a handicap?
2. Do you find it odd that the people no longer recognized this man once he could see? (See verse 8-9.) Or could it be that as a blind beggar he became almost invisible to everyone else?  
Some of it may be that the people took offense at Jesus' healing on the Sabbath and didn't want to recognize him for fear of giving Jesus too much credibility. It is also quite possible that, as a begging blind man, he was invisible –until now!
3. Does it seem to you that his neighbors were actually annoyed he could see again? Shouldn't they be rejoicing with him?  
They do truly seem annoyed. They should be rejoicing, but somehow the unorthodox nature of his healing rubbed them the wrong way.

Continue reading John 9:13-23.

1. Why did the Pharisees get so wrapped up in the procedures (healing on the Sabbath, debating whether a “sinner” could do miracles, etc.) and miss the obvious? The man can now see!

We may never know but it is possible they felt threatened and defensive. Jesus was gaining too much popularity and interest. They had to defend their turf. This miraculous healing became problematic.

2. Note the sarcasm in verse 21. The Pharisees had already asked him.

Continue reading John 9:24-34.

1. What is the formerly blind man’s simple message? (See verse 25.)

I was blind, but now I see!

2. Note the sarcasm again in verse 27.

3. How did the Pharisees respond to the man’s playful sarcasm?

With anger and accusations.

4. Note the continuing sarcasm in verses 29-30. They knew exactly where He came from. They just didn’t want to believe it!

5. What did the Pharisees do to the man? Have they rejoiced yet over the fact that this man can now see? Why not?

They threw him out. They have not yet rejoiced with the man, perhaps because his healing represents a threat to their authority position.

Finish the story by reading John 9:35-41.

1. Who went looking for the formerly blind man?

Jesus!

2. What was the result of seeing Jesus?

The man believed in Him.

3. The ironic metaphor of blindness is summarized in verse 39.

4. By the end of this story, are the Pharisees still dissatisfied?

Yes. They won’t let it go!

5. Did the formerly blind man’s story ever change?

No. He remained steadfast in telling the simple facts of how Jesus had blessed him.

21<sup>st</sup>-century application:

The man born blind received healing by the hand of Jesus and it got him into trouble! Who would think that such a miraculous gift could cause such controversy? The Pharisees simply could not accept that God had come in Jesus Christ to heal. They examined and cross-examined. They called in witnesses (the parents). But it was all in vain. The story never changed. The formerly blind man refused to be dragged into theological and political debates. Instead, the man never wavered from this simple witness in verse 25: "One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see." Discuss the following conclusions as a group and what they might mean for you:

1. Sometimes people just don't want to hear how God has been good. In fact, they might be downright antagonistic. That is no reason to be silent. Tell the story anyway.
2. Keep it simple. A witness doesn't have to answer questions for which he/she feels unprepared or unqualified to answer. Many will try to drag a witness into examinations and cross-examinations, theological nuances, and disputes. But do not feel compelled to go there, if you feel unqualified. Stick to the simple story. I was blind, but now I see! In the end, that simple witness may communicate the Spirit's power far more than an argument over other details.
3. In your witness, don't lose sight of the main thing. Don't major in minors as the Pharisees did. I was blind, but now I see!

**Closing Prayer:**

Loving Father,

We were all blind, but now we see! Your Spirit has enlightened us through Your Word and Sacraments. May we never lose sight of that simple miracle. As we are going through life, may our witness never waver from that one simple truth: *I was blind, but now I see!* Don't let us get so tangled up in arguments and positions we lose sight of the miracle of salvation. May we be as simple and confident as the man born blind that we, too, may bear witness to Your son, Jesus, and how He opened our eyes. In His name, Amen.

# You are a Witness

## The Conversationalist

### Lesson Six:

In this lesson we will read a familiar story about another witness who actually ran down his evangelism prospect! He came alongside the chariot of an inquisitive soul and smoothly entered the conversation already taking place. It was between Phillip and the Ethiopian eunuch.

#### Background:

Phillip was one of the seven chosen in Acts 6:5 to assist the apostles in the more practical, day-to-day needs of the ministry. Although this was his start, it is obvious that Phillip continued to grow in the Word and became quite a witness. By the time of Acts 21:8-9 for instance, Phillip is called, Phillip the Evangelist. In this story, an angel came to Phillip and told him to take a trip. The angel didn't say what for, or why, just "take a trip". So Phillip did. On the way he encountered a curious Ethiopian eunuch who was, apparently, the "what" and "why" of his journey.

Read Acts 8:26-29.

1. Note that the Ethiopian had come to Jerusalem to worship. He follows the Jewish faith and the Old Testament.  
What he's missing is the knowledge of the fulfillment of the Old Testament, Jesus.
2. What is Phillip told to do?  
Go take a trip on the road to Gaza.
3. Would you have trouble following those vague instructions?  
Answers will vary. But most of us want to know where we're going and what for.

Continue reading Acts 8:30-35.

1. As Phillip ran up alongside the chariot what did he do first?  
He listened.
2. What did he do next?  
He entered the conversation very naturally. He seized the opportunity God had given him.
3. Did Phillip begin this conversation out of the blue? Or did it seem to flow naturally from what the Ethiopian was already doing/reading?  
It flowed from what the Ethiopian was already doing/reading.

4. “Coming alongside the chariot” might be a good metaphor for our own witnessing moments. What kind of conversations are out there, already going on, that you could enter and share Jesus?

There are probably far more conversations taking place than we are aware of. We often think conversations have to be “religious” or about “church.” But there are so many other opportunities including:

- i. discussions about movies or TV shows that have religious references.
- ii. discussions about anything that causes pain, disease, or disappointment. All these things are caused by sin and the ultimate answer to sin is Jesus and the hope, love, and forgiveness He gives.
- iii. discussions about anything that brings joy and blessing since all good things come from God.

5. What topics might those conversations be covering?

Birth, death, health, divorce, loneliness, depression, confusion, anger, frustration, Christmas, Easter, prayer, etc.

6. Is it really necessary to artificially begin a faith conversation? Or are there enough conversations already taking place that give you openings to share Jesus?

I believe there are enough conversations already taking place that we can easily and naturally enter in order to share Jesus that it isn’t necessary to artificially begin one.

Finish the story by reading Acts 8:36-40.

1. How did Phillip respond to the eunuch’s request to be baptized?

He honored his request immediately. No delays!

2. How does this story dramatically show it is God who is in charge of conversion?

The angel’s message, the “convenient” conversation, the “convenient” water, the whisking away of Phillip to Azotus.

3. How does the story show how God chooses to use sinful men to carry out His will?

Phillip still needed to heed God’s call and make the trip, come alongside the chariot, enter the conversation, share the Word, and honor the Ethiopian’s request to be baptized.

21<sup>st</sup>-century application:

Phillip was a willing witness to the love of God in Jesus Christ. Although this incident contained some rather unusual circumstances (being spoken to and whisked away by an angel!) it also illustrates several witnessing principles to consider. Discuss the following conclusions as a group and what they might mean for you and your life of witness:

1. God is in charge of conversion. He directs it through the sharing of the Gospel.
2. God also chooses to use sinful men and women to share that Gospel.

3. The Gospel can be shared very effectively in natural conversation. Phillip came alongside the Ethiopian's conversation just as he came running alongside his chariot. He did not have to invent a reason to speak to him. He did not have to knock on his door and ask: "If you died tonight would you go to heaven?" The reason to speak was already there in the conversation taking place. Phillip just needed to take the opening God provided.
4. "Come alongside" moments exist in abundance for us too.

**Closing Prayer:**

Dear Jesus,

I am Your willing witness. If You so desire, whisk me away and direct me to whatever circumstance You desire in order that I might share the Gospel. But if You choose to operate in more conventional ways with me, grant that my eyes and ears will be open to the conversations taking place around me in order that I may enter them in a very natural way to share Your message of hope. In fact, gracious God, I humbly ask that You would place before me, today, tomorrow, every day, an opportunity to enter another's conversation in a very natural way and share the message of hope that has saved me. Amen.