

BECOMING EFFECTIVE WITNESSES

7

GOD CAN USE ALL OF US

**Selected Texts from
Mark, John, and Acts**

By Elizabeth B. Crawford

“Evangelism is for all of us. I know introverts who have led more people to Christ than I have as an extrovert. Each of us has a style, giftedness and passion that can help the church in witness. ... Each of us can help...reach people today.”

Rick Richardson

“Evangelism is not complete until the evangelized become the evangelists.”

Billy Graham

AIM OF STUDY

- To examine different styles of evangelism seen in New Testament figures so our group members realize that God can use all of us with our different approaches rather than leaving “witnessing” to those with obvious gifts of evangelism.

KEY VERSE

“But you (all) will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you (all) will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Acts 1:8

PREPARATION

Read over the notes on “**how to teach the Bible in small group**” and “**some practical suggestions for leading a small group discussion**” in Vineyard Church of Columbus’ *Small Group Leadership Training Manual*. Before you read over the Scripture, pray that God would give you direction for leading your group and teach you something relevant. Then read through the passage and the Bible study below. **You will need to go over the questions and choose which ones you want to emphasize and which you could eliminate if your time is limited.** Note that the application questions are marked with an asterisk (*). Rather than leaving these to the end of the study, ask one or two as you work through the passage so people are being confronted by Scripture’s truths and applying them to their own lives. If you find you are falling behind schedule and need to move ahead, you could summarize some of the passage and then go to the final questions.

These studies contain more background material and information on the passages than any group will cover in a meeting. The authors are providing this for the leaders’ benefit—to help reduce your study and preparation time; to help resource you for possible questions group members may raise; and to clarify some gray areas of doctrine that may be in your mind as you prepare. Obviously we cannot exhaust any one subject in a document like this, so you may want to do further reading and discuss doctrine with your pastor. We highly recommend *The New Bible Dictionary* or *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* as excellent resources for study.

Note: This study follows a different format than most of ours. It’s a lengthy study, and you will probably want to **divide** it into two weeks or divide the preparation with another leader. Because you are looking at seven different characters in separate portions of Scripture, each passage assigned will have its own background material on the “**interview sheets.**” Your group members will get to read this during the meeting. However, the leader should read through each of the background sections, too. And, you should read each Bible passage several times making brief notes on the main characters discussed in this study.

Before the meeting, the leader needs to **make copies** of the “interview sheets” to hand out. (The “interview sheets follow this introductory material and have the background information and questions for each main character.) You will assign two or more people in the group to read one passage and fill out the “interview sheet” on the main character in

that text. After ten minutes or so, you will reassemble the whole group. The main emphasis should be on revealing this person's evangelistic **style** and recognizing no one style is "the right one." Then, taking turns, have one person share the findings on behalf of the group or have two from each group conduct a mock interview with the Bible character talking primarily about the witnessing incident.

Especially if the group is small, you could try one of these **options**: divide the study into two separate meetings so you cover only half of the characters in the first week and begin the second week with a summary of the styles already discussed; or, if your group consists of secure individuals, assign each group member one Bible character apiece to report on.

For fun, you could give each group a prop to help suggest the character. For example, Peter could have a fishing pole that symbolizes his previous livelihood but now points at folks when he "confronts" them. Matthew could have a wealthy man's smoking jacket to symbolize the money he made as a tax collector, which he then exchanges for a chef's apron, referring to his hosting friends for lavish meals. The Samaritan woman could have a pitcher and ladle for water while Dorcas might have a sewing kit with needle, thread and fabric samples. And, bringing a **visual aid** (i.e., dry erase board, chalkboard, overhead, or easel with a large paper pad and some markers) would be useful, too.

In each study, one predominant evangelistic style is prevalent. [Most of this material was adapted by Rich Nathan from *Becoming a Contagious Christian* by Bill Hybels and Mark Mittelberg.]

Peter—**confrontational**, i.e., directly addressed the crowd with their guilt and need for salvation.

Philip—**power evangelism**, i.e., miraculous signs caused people to pay attention to the gospel message.

Paul—**intellectual**, i.e., reasoned, explained, proved the gospel message; and hearers were persuaded.

Matthew—**relational or hospitable**, i.e., welcomed friends to his home so they could meet or hear Jesus.

Samaritan Woman—**invitational**, i.e., invited people to come to a place where they could meet Jesus and decide for themselves.

Dorcas—**servant evangelism**, i.e., did acts of charity that gained acceptance or an opening for the gospel message.

Man Born Blind—**testimonial**, i.e., told others what Jesus said and did for him.

Your group members may use different names for these styles, and as long as they are similar, that's fine. One way to clarify for the group would be to repeat their choice of words and add your own, or weave the above labels into the conversation

as you summarize the discussion. Utilize a dry erase board or other visual aid to help them grasp these categories.

OPENERS

Have you ever met someone famous? How did you feel when you were introduced? Did he or she seem larger than life or a lot like you? How many people have you told about your encounter with a celebrity? Did that meeting have a lasting effect on your life? If so, in what way?

Allow one or two people to share their experiences, but try to keep this brief.

Today we'll meet some folks who spent time with one of the most famous men of history, Jesus of Nazareth. Because of Him, their lives were dramatically changed and they, too, have been remembered for almost two thousand years. Let's find out what impact Jesus had on them and how they tried to introduce others to Him.

Pray together that God would make His Scriptures and these people come alive.

STUDY THE PASSAGES: Acts 2:14-17, 22-24, 36-41; 8:4-13; 9:36-43; 17:1-4.

The Gospel of Luke and Acts are companion volumes of history. Luke, the beloved physician and traveling companion of the apostle Paul, wrote both. Because of Luke's care in research and style of writing, these two books provide us with a chronologically and historically accurate account of the life of Christ and the early years of the Christian church. It's been said that Acts (short for "The Acts of the Apostles") could be more accurately entitled "The Acts of the Holy Spirit," since the Spirit plays such a major role throughout the book. Some of the themes of Acts include the spread of the gospel to the gentiles, the growth, leadership and government of the early church and the lives of the apostles. [Marlene Nathan contributed this material.]

STUDY THE PASSAGES: Mark 2:13-17

Mark probably was the earliest Gospel written and contains details an eyewitness to the life of Jesus would have told. Also known as "John called Mark," the author worked with both Peter and Paul and was a cousin of Barnabas. His mother, Mary, belonged to the early church in Jerusalem and believers used to meet in her home. It is thought that Peter was the main source of Mark's material, which would explain the unflattering stories and details about Peter, and the rest of the Twelve disciples. Mark emphasizes the coming of the kingdom of God evidenced in the message and miracles of King Jesus, and a future aspect not yet realized until King Jesus returns. He focuses on Jesus' death on the cross and states all those who follow Jesus must live the sacrificial lifestyle of the cross. Mark seems to have written for a non-Jewish audience in Rome after the deaths of Peter and Paul.

STUDY THE PASSAGES: John 4:25-30, 39-42; John 9:1-11,18-25, 30-39.

The apostle John wrote this book, although he is never specifically mentioned by name anywhere in the gospel (see John 21:20-24). It is very different in content, style and organizations than the other three gospels (the accounts of Jesus' life, known as "The Synoptics"). John's facts are historically correct although his order of when events took place may not be precise. He includes no parables, no demon expulsions, only two healings, no story of the infant Jesus, no story of Jesus' temptation, no Sermon on the Mount, no Transfiguration, and no communion meal instructions. He contrasts Jesus' conversation with a Pharisee, Nicodemus, with a Samaritan woman of ill repute to show Jesus came to save all kinds of people. John uses poetic language, includes the seven "I am" sayings, and records long teachings. His purpose for writing this book is found in John 20:30-31. [Marlene Nathan contributed this material.]

DIRECTIONS

After I assign a Bible character to each subgroup, you are going to read some background material and a Scripture passage that will familiarize you with that character. Your job is to come up with some brief answers as if you had interviewed this Biblical celebrity and either report your findings to the group or conduct a mock interview in front of us. However, we need to work quickly so each group has a chance to make a presentation.

Assign two or more people in the group to read one passage and fill out the "interview sheet" on the main character in that text. **Allow** ten minutes for this activity, and then reassemble the whole group. They will probably want more time, but try not to allocate much more to the investigation. The emphasis should be on revealing this person's **evangelistic style**, not on their entire history, so remind them of their main job. **Take turns** having one person share the findings on behalf of the group or have two from each group conduct a mock interview with the Bible character talking primarily about the witnessing incident.

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If the group is small, you could try one of these options: divide the study into two separate meetings so you cover only half of the characters in the first week and begin the second week with a summary of the styles already discussed; or, if your group consists of secure individuals, assign each group member one Bible character apiece to report on.

Expect interruptions and questions from others but try to **focus** on how God used a variety of temperaments, approaches and gifting in evangelism. Emphasize the final question of each "interview sheet"—**What approach was used in speaking about Jesus?** Periodically **summarize** what the group has discovered and move on to the next text.

APPLYING THE TEXT

At the end of the study, or at the end of each of the two meetings, ask your group members if they could select whose approach or approaches to evangelism best match his or her temperament, gifting, life circumstances, etc.

Some questions you might use are:

***Which character reminds you most of yourself? Why?**

***Which of the seven people shared the message about Jesus the way you heard it when you were deeply touched?**

***Which character do you think would have the most positive encounter with your family or friends? Why?**

***Which of the seven approached telling others about Christ the way you do?**

WRAPPING IT UP

God wants to use all of us, whether we are young or old, introverts or extroverts, new to a relationship with Christ or not. Each person in the kingdom has a unique story to tell of what God had done in his/her life. Let's ask God each day this week to give us someone with whom we can share Christ's good news. And let's pray for each other that we'll all have this joy and privilege. Jesus said, "you will be my witnesses," and by the power of the Holy Spirit, we will!

PETER

Acts 2:14-17, 22-24, 36-41

Setting the Scene

Peter was a married fisherman from Bethsaida in northern Israel where Greek culture had influenced even working class Jews. He had followed John the Baptist's teachings before Jesus called Peter into fulltime service. Peter left everything—wife, home, and family business traveling with Jesus for three years. He was privileged to be one of Jesus' three closest confidants, and swore he would fight to the death and never disown Jesus. But when Jesus was arrested and on trial for his life, Peter denied knowing His Teacher and hid in fear for several days. After Jesus rose from the dead, He appeared to Peter several times and re-instated his prominent position among the close followers.

In this passage, we find Peter and the other disciples filled with God's Spirit and miraculously able to speak about God's wonderful acts in foreign languages. At this time, there were many international visitors gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate Pentecost, a major Jewish festival. Hearing their native tongues, a multiracial crowd gathered and Peter was aided by God's Spirit to explain this miraculous event.

Investigation

1. Read aloud these selected verses: Acts 2:14-17, 22-24, 36-41.
2. Let's use our background knowledge and these verses to complete the interview with Peter.

Interview

1. Name?
2. Hometown?
3. Family?
4. Line of work?
5. Strengths? Weaknesses?
6. Main ideas about Jesus?
7. Audience spoken to or reached?
8. Audience's response to your message?
9. Approach used in speaking about Jesus?

PHILIP

Acts 8:1, 4-13

Setting the Scene

Philip was one of the seven men chosen by the early church in Jerusalem to oversee daily distribution of food to the Greek Jewish and Palestinian Jewish widows. His name is Greek, so he may have been a Jew who grew up in a Greek culture and would be sympathetic to the widows being overlooked. He also met the qualifications of being a disciple, full of the Spirit and wisdom. Stephen, another outstanding disciple who served along with Philip, preached boldly and worked signs and wonders. Stephen was falsely arrested, put on trial and stoned to death by an angry mob that felt he was perverting Judaism when he proclaimed salvation through faith in Jesus. Because persecution against the Jerusalem Christians increased, Philip and other believers were scattered outside Jerusalem in the regions of Judea and Samaria. We don't know much about his personal life until later in the book of Acts, when he was living in Caesarea and had four daughters who prophesied (Acts 21:8-9).

In this passage, Philip has traveled north to Samaria. He follows in Stephen's footsteps—preaching and working miracles in the name and power of Jesus.

Investigation

1. Read aloud these selected verses: Acts 8:1 and 4-13.
2. Let's use our background knowledge and these verses to complete the interview with Peter.

Interview

1. Name?
2. Hometown?
3. Family?
4. Line of work?
5. Strengths? Weaknesses?
6. Main ideas about Jesus?
7. Audience spoken to or reached?
8. Audience's response to your message?
9. Approach used in speaking about Jesus?

PAUL

Acts 17:1-4

Setting the Scene

Paul was born a pureblooded Jew but had the privileges of Roman citizenship. Though he came from Tarsus, an important center of Greek education, he was sent to Jerusalem to study his heritage—so that he too could be a Pharisee, a strict observer of the Jewish written and oral law, like his parents. After Jesus rose from the dead, Paul was a strong opponent of Jesus' first followers. He saw them as a threat to his ancient beliefs, so he tried to round up new Christians and prosecute them (Acts 22:2-5), even approving of their death (Acts 7:57-8:1).

While traveling to the city of Damascus to arrest some believers, Paul was blinded by a heavenly vision of Jesus who confronted him about persecuting Jesus Himself, not mere human followers. Paul humbled himself and learned the truth of salvation through faith in Jesus. He realized that only Jesus could keep God's law perfectly. He not only gained his natural sight back but also was given great spiritual insight into the life and message of Jesus Christ (Acts 9:1-31).

After years of ministry, we find him traveling with a small mission team throughout the Middle Eastern and Mediterranean lands spreading the news of Jesus to Jew and non-Jew alike. Rather than charging new believers for his preaching and teaching ministry, he worked hard as a tentmaker in order to support himself. In this passage, we see Paul's typical strategy to reach people in a new city with the gospel message.

Investigation

1. Read aloud Acts 17:1-4.
2. Let's use our background knowledge and these verses to complete the interview with Paul.

Interview

1. Name?
2. Hometown?
3. Family?
4. Line of work?
5. Strengths? Weaknesses?

6. Main ideas about Jesus?
7. Audience spoken to or reached?
8. Audience's response to your message?
9. Approach used in speaking about Jesus?

MATTHEW

Mark 2:13-17

Setting the Scene

Matthew, also known as Levi, the son of Alphaeus (Mark 2:14), was a Jew who collected taxes for the Romans. His home was probably in Capernaum, the major city on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee where Jesus spent a significant amount of time. Tax collectors were not popular for obvious reasons, but especially because they were seen by fellow Jews as agents of the occupying government.

We can guess that Levi saw and heard Jesus on several occasions before being invited to join Jesus' group of followers (Mark 1:21-34; Mark 2:1-12). The passage we will read tells us about the impact Jesus had on Matthew and how Matthew responded.

Investigation

1. Read aloud Mark 2:13-17.
2. Let's use the background information and this passage to complete the interview with Matthew.

Interview

1. Name?
2. Hometown?
3. Family?
4. Line of work?
5. Strengths? Weaknesses?
6. Main ideas about Jesus?
7. Audience spoken to or reached?
8. Audience's response to your message?
9. Approach used in speaking about Jesus?

SAMARITAN WOMAN AT THE WELL

John 4:27-30, 39-42

Setting the Scene

The Samaritan woman that Jesus met at a well was surprised that He spoke with her. Normally, Jews and Samaritans avoided each other, and a polite man did not usually speak with a woman in public. Jesus asked for a drink of water and then continued to probe her responses with questions. By her own admission, she revealed that she had no husband, and Jesus went on to reveal that she was right: she had been married five times and the man she now lived with was *not* her husband. However, He did not lecture her about her problems, but pursued her in spite of ancient theological arguments she used to redirect the conversation. Jesus knew that only He could offer her the acceptance that no man could give, so He spoke to her about how God the Father seeks worshippers because the real hunger in her heart was for Him. Finally, in an uncanny and direct way, He reveals to her that He is the Messiah long awaited by the Jews and her people (John 4:3-26).

This passage shows her response to these startling revelations about her false identity and Jesus' true identity. Let's see how she reported what she learned.

Investigation

1. Read aloud these selected verses: John 4:27-30 and 39-42.
2. Let's use this background information and these verses to complete the interview with this Samaritan woman.

Interview

1. Name?
2. Hometown?
3. Family?
4. Line of work?
5. Strengths? Weaknesses?
6. Main ideas about Jesus?
7. Audience spoken to or reached?
8. Audience's response to your message?
9. Approach used in speaking about Jesus?

TABITHA

Acts 9:36-43

Setting the Scene

Tabitha (or Dorcas in Greek) lived in the town of Joppa (modern day Jaffa, a suburb of Tel Aviv), an ancient seaport on the coast of Palestine. She was a follower of Jesus Christ and was known for helping the poor. How she first learned about Jesus is not clear, but a later meeting with the Spirit of God was unforgettable as this passage describes.

Investigation

1. Read aloud Acts 9:36-43.
2. Let's use the background information and this passage to complete the interview with Dorcas.

Interview

1. Name?
2. Hometown?
3. Family?
4. Line of work?
5. Strengths? Weaknesses?
6. Main ideas about Jesus?
7. Audience spoken to or reached?
8. Audience's response to your message?
9. Approach used in speaking about Jesus?

THE MAN BORN BLIND

John 9:1-11, 18-25, 30-39

Setting the Scene

Jesus and his disciples were in Jerusalem when they saw a blind man begging. After Jesus put mud on the man's eyes and told him to wash in a certain pool, the man could see for the first time in his life! His neighbors and the Jewish leaders questioned him about this miracle and the man's life was never the same—physically or spiritually. Let's read about both his encounters with Jesus and the people in Jerusalem.

Investigation

1. Read aloud these selected verses: John 9:1-11, 18-25, 30-39.
2. Let's use the background information and these verses to complete the interview.

Interview

1. Name?
2. Hometown?
3. Family?
4. Line of work?
5. Strengths? Weaknesses?
6. Main ideas about Jesus?
7. Audience spoken to or reached?
8. Audience's response to your message?
9. Approach used in speaking about Jesus?

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