



Session 2
The Power of a Witness
LEADER'S GUIDE

INTRODUCTIONS & OPENING

If there are new people in your group, take the time to go around and introduce yourselves before the opening question. Remember, for a new group, building relationships is the most important thing you can do. The quality of Bible study and personal application will largely be determined by the quality of the relationships.

FOLLOW UP

For those of you who did the Personal Growth exercise encourage others by briefly sharing what you've learned or experienced this week.
How is everyone doing in praying for the people whose names were shared with the group last week?

Although the Personal Growth exercises each week are voluntary you can encourage people to try them by asking people to share their experience. For these questions set the example by sharing your experiences first. If no one else shares, or if they report that nothing happened, tell the group not to be discouraged. Just like physical exercise strengthens our body over time, these things will build spiritual strength over time as well. Remind people that the goal is not just to learn the Bible but to live the Bible.

BIBLE STUDY

Read Acts chapter 1:6-9

1. *What does it mean to be a witness? What are the disciples a witness to? (also see 1:22)*

Many answers are possible for the first question. A witness is somebody who speaks up and says I saw/experienced this. The disciples are not just being a witness of Jesus but particularly of his resurrection. A good follow-up question to this would be, "Why is being a witness to the resurrection so important?"

2. *What was going to make the disciples' witness effective?*

Verse 8 tells us that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit comes and then they would be witnesses. The Holy Spirit is what makes our witness to the resurrection effective, not our eloquence, persuasiveness, charm, skill or vast theological knowledge.

Read Acts chapter 2:1-15, 22-24, 32-41

3. *How were the disciples changed by Pentecost? What caused the change?*

Before Pentecost, the disciples were firm believers in Jesus and devoted to practicing their faith, but they stuck to themselves. They may not have been fearful anymore, but they were shy. After Pentecost they were energized, bold, excited and couldn't be held back. What made the difference was the power of the Holy Spirit that they received while they were praying.

4. *How was the world changed by Pentecost? Do you think the disciples were aware of the long term significance this moment would have?*

Before Pentecost there was no Christian movement, only a hundred or so believers who prayed together every day. On Pentecost that all changed. The believers were empowered to have a bold and effective witness. The Holy Spirit used that witness to add 3,000 believers to the group on that one day. From that point on the book of Acts records how the witness to the power of the resurrection kept spreading. In just a few years there were churches throughout the Roman Empire and the church has never looked back. It's doubtful that on the day of Pentecost the believers could have grasped all that was going to unfold. Oftentimes, we don't grasp or appreciate the long term domino effect our witness will have. Sometimes we don't witness because we doubt it will have any effect. In Acts 2 we learn that our witness can have a history-changing impact.

5. *Acts 2 tells us that Peter's message caused the crowd to be "cut to the heart" and that 3,000 people immediately became believers in Jesus. How do you explain this enormous change of heart? What made Peter's message so compelling?*

Seek and accept a variety of answers to this question. One compelling answer is that the witness of Jesus' resurrection from the dead forced people to realize that Jesus was the Messiah and they had been culpable in his crucifixion. Other answers could include the work of the Holy Spirit, the miracle of speaking in different languages, the passion in which the believers preached, etc.

6. *According to Acts 2:38, who has the Holy Spirit? What difference does having the Holy Spirit make?*

People who receive the Holy Spirit are those who have repented of their sin and committed themselves to Jesus. There are many possible answers to the second question and the discussion should be rich and interesting. One difference is that we now have the power of God in us. Jesus is not just a historical figure we can know about. Through the Holy Spirit, we experience the resurrection power of the living Jesus at work in our lives.

Read Acts 1:14

7. *What were the disciples doing during the days prior to Pentecost? Is this significant?*

The disciples were meeting together regularly for prayer and worship. This is significant because through these actions God was building into their lives. As a result, they were prepared when God was ready to move.

APPLICATION

1. *Do you think the disciples could possibly have imagined what was about to happen to them when the Holy Spirit came? Were they prepared for the Holy Spirit to come?*

The disciples had no reference point from which they could imagine what was about to happen. The disciples couldn't have imagined thousands of people believing and being baptized at once, and it's doubtful that they pictured themselves traveling the world as witnesses to the resurrection. Their peaceful, sedate lives were about to be upset by the power of God. Because of the time they had spent meeting together for prayer the disciples were prepared when God acted even though they didn't know what to expect.

What about you? Does the possibility of experiencing God like this excite you or make you fearful? Explain. Is it hard to imagine that God can do something similar in your life through this study on the book of Acts?

These questions are designed to help people personally connect with what's going on in Acts 2. Hopefully through these questions people will begin to recognize that God can turn their lives around at a moment's notice and suddenly propel them in directions they never imagined. The book of Acts is not an aberration of history. What God did in the believers then, He wants to do in us now. The possibility of our life being changed like this can be frightening. The things that currently make us comfortable and give us security will change but what God plans to do is uncertain. It's an adventure. On the other hand it is exciting adventure because experiencing the power of God is far more exciting and fulfilling than living a safe, sedate life.

2. *What will you do to prepare for whatever God wants to do in your life?*

Concrete steps of action are what this question is looking for. You have seen how the disciples prepared themselves by meeting together and praying every day. Spending time each day in Bible Study and prayer is an important example of a concrete action step that will prepare you for the exciting surprises God has planned for you. Each session, starting with this session's Personal Growth section, will help equip people to take this step by providing a daily Bible study and prayer guide.

Practicing confession and repentance, taught in last session's study, is another valuable way to prepare ourselves for the work of God by clearing out the garbage in our life that blocks that work.

There are other answers possible for this question as well. It is a personal application but push people to be specific about what they will do, when they will start and how often they will do it.

3. *Share how comfortable you feel about being a witness for Christ? In what ways can you be a witness to the resurrection?*

Accept answers to the first question with empathy and without judgment. Sometimes the first step to overcoming a fear of witnessing is to be able to verbalize that fear.

Many answers are possible for the second question so encourage creative thinking. We can be witnesses by: our changed lives, our changed attitudes and outlooks, sharing about what Jesus has done in our own life, etc.

4. *In what ways can your witness for Christ be enhanced and made more effective by belonging to a small group and a church?*

The ways in which a group shows love and support for each other helps us to stand out from the normal relationships people experience making your group life a witness to the world. Where the changed life of an individual can make an impression the changed lives and relationships of a group can make an even bigger impact. As a group and a church we exponentially strengthen our witness to the resurrection. Further, we draw strength and encouragement to be a witness from our friends and they gain strength from us.

PERSONAL GROWTH

Developing the Strength to Change Your Life & Then Change the World

If you want to help the members of your group grow and experience life-change, the best thing you can do as a leader is to motivate them to pray and study their Bible daily.

Before going into your prayer time take a moment to point out this section. Encourage people to use the daily devotions that are offered at the end of their Study Guide as a way to allow God's life-changing power to work in their lives. If we want to experience God doing in us what He did in Acts, then we must be as devoted as the believers in Acts were to practicing the means through which the Holy Spirit works. Prayer and the Word of God are the two foundational ways through which the Spirit works.

PRAYER

For this week's prayer time you will guide the group in prayer. Using the outline given in the Participant's Guide, explain that you will begin each section with a short prayer of your own and then you will be silent allowing others to pray or loud or silently about the topic for that section.