

What Do You Have to Say?

Leader's Notes and Bible Passages

*(Please do NOT use the "if time permits" sections when your study session time is limited.
These sections could possibly be done by the participant in private.)*

Describe a time in your life when you have been involved in an extraordinary event. Perhaps it was at the scene of an accident or at a joyous occasion like a wedding or a baptism. Share with a partner or your small group.

Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share. Make it clear that everything confided within the group stays within the group throughout the study.

During this study of God's Word, we will consider what a witness is; look at Biblical examples of witnesses; and discover our role as witnesses to the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Opening Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, we praise and worship You. Thank You for sending Your Son Jesus that we might be forgiven and receive the promise of eternal life in heaven. Empower us through the Holy Spirit to be Your witnesses and share the message of salvation in Jesus with people we meet every day. Bless our study of Your Word. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

What is a Witness?

The word "witness" is one that can be defined as both a noun and a verb. As a group work together to define the word "witness" as a:

noun
verb

The Greek word for "witness" is *martus* or *martur* (noun). Thus, in English a "martyr" is one who bears witness (*martureo* – verb) by his death. [W.E. Vines M.A., Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, 1940. Public domain.]

Scriptures quoted are from the English Standard Version

For this passage, identify what God's children are witnessing directly and what they have witnessed in the past.
Exodus 19:1-8; 16-19

The Children of Israel witnessed all that God had done for them; saw the glory of the Lord

¹On the third new moon after the people of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that day they came into the wilderness of Sinai. ²They set out from Rephidim and came into the wilderness of Sinai, and they encamped in the wilderness. There Israel encamped before the mountain, ³while Moses went up to God. The LORD called to him out of the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: ⁴You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. ⁵Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; ⁶and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel." ⁷So Moses came and called the elders of the people and set before them all these words that the LORD had commanded him. ^{8a}All the people answered together and said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do."

¹⁶On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled. ¹⁷Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they took their stand at the foot of the mountain. ¹⁸Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the LORD had descended on it in fire. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled greatly. ¹⁹And as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him in thunder.

For the remaining passages in this section, identify the witness(es) and what was witnessed.

Judges 7:19-22

Gideon and the 100 men; witnessed the Midian army's defeat

¹⁹So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outskirts of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, when they had just set the watch. And they blew the trumpets and smashed the jars that were in their hands. ²⁰Then the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the jars. They held in their left hands the torches, and in their right hands the trumpets to blow. And they cried out, "A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!" ²¹Every man stood in his place around the camp, and all the army ran. They cried out and fled. ²²When they blew the 300 trumpets, the LORD set every man's sword against his comrade and against all the army. And the army fled as far as Beth-shittah toward Zererah, as far as the border of Abel-meholah, by Tabbath.

2 Kings 2:1, 11-12

Elisha; witnessed Elijah being taken into heaven

¹Now when the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. ¹¹And as they still went on and talked, behold, chariots of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. ¹²And Elisha saw it and he cried, "My father, my father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" And he saw him no more.

Luke 2:8-16

Shepherds; saw and heard the angels and saw Mary, Joseph, and the baby in a manger

⁸And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. ¹⁰And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹²And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ¹⁴"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!" ¹⁵When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger.

Luke 8:22-25; John 20:19-20

Jesus' disciples; witnessed His power over the wind and the waves and the Risen Christ

Luke: ²²One day he got into a boat with his disciples, and he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side of the lake." So they set out, ²³and as they sailed he fell asleep. And a windstorm came down on the lake, and they were filling with water and were in danger. ²⁴And they went and woke him, saying, "Master, Master, we are perishing!" And he awoke and rebuked the wind and the raging waves, and they ceased, and there was a calm. ²⁵He said to them, "Where is your faith?" And they were afraid, and they marveled, saying to one another, "Who then is this, that he commands even winds and water, and they obey him?"

John: ¹⁹On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." ²⁰When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.

John 19:26-27

Mary and John; witnessed the death of Jesus

²⁶When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" ²⁷Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.

Mark 9:2-8

Peter, James and John; saw Jesus transfigured and saw Elijah and Moses, heard the voice of God

²And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, ³and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them. ⁴And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. ⁵And Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." ⁶For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified. ⁷And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is my beloved Son; listen to him." ⁸And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only.

Acts 7:58; 9:3-5

Saul; witnessed the stoning of Stephen, heard the voice of Jesus

7: ⁵⁸Then they cast him [Stephen] out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul.

9: ³ Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" ⁵And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.

According to **John 5:36** and **39**, what two things bear witness to Jesus?

The works He was doing; the Scriptures

³⁶But the testimony that I have is greater than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me.

³⁹ You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me,

In **John 8:18** who bears witness to Jesus?

Father; Jesus Himself [Father mentioned in v. 18 – see below]

¹⁸[Jesus said]: I am the one who bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness about me."

Who else witnesses to Jesus in **John 15:26-27** and **John 20:21-22**?

The Holy Spirit, those who received the Spirit (the disciples, us)

²⁶"But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. ²⁷And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.

²¹Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." ²²And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

By the power of the Holy Spirit, who are Jesus' witnesses today? See **Acts 1:8a**.

All believers in Jesus

⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses ...

Faith Talk: Summarize in your own words what Jesus' story is. Write it in the space provided.

Faith Talk: What situation have you been in recently where you have witnessed the love and care of the Lord? Share with a partner or in a small group. **Answers will vary. Encourage sharing within the group.**

If time permits: How many disciples were martyred for their witness about Jesus Christ? (*Discuss the information provided in these Leader's Notes, pgs 6-7.*)

Witnesses Bear Witness

Witnesses of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior become witnesses to others. Jesus' story becomes our story. What do we have to witness about? See **Romans 5:8-11; 1 Corinthians 1:4; Colossians 1:11-14**.

Justified, faith, grace, hope of eternal life, Christ died for us, given the Holy Spirit, salvation, reconciliation

Romans: ⁸but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. ¹⁰For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. ¹¹More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Grace in Christ Jesus

1 Corinthians: ⁴I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus.

The inheritance of the saints, eternal life, forgiveness of sins

Colossians: ¹¹ May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. ¹³He has

delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son,¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

How does the Holy Spirit engender and nurture our faith and witness?

John 20:30-31

Word and Sacraments; Word of God

³⁰ Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹ but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

The Lord's Supper

²³ For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵ In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Galatians 3:25-27

Baptism

²⁵ But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, ²⁶ for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. ²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Name the witnesses in the following passages who in turn bore witness to Jesus Christ. What was their witness?

Luke 2:18, 20

Shepherds; told others what they had seen regarding Jesus

¹⁸ And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. ²⁰ And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Matthew 16:15-16

Simon Peter; confession of faith in Jesus

¹⁵ He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" ¹⁶ Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Acts 4:13; 18-20

Peter and John; spoke of what they had seen and heard about Jesus

¹³ Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus. ¹⁸ So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. ¹⁹ But Peter and John answered them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, ²⁰ for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard."

Acts 7:55-56

Stephen; described heaven

⁵⁵ But he [Stephen], full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ⁵⁶ And he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

Acts 9:20-22

Saul/Paul; proved that Jesus was the Christ [Saul/Paul might be helpful to beginners in class.]

²⁰ And immediately he [Saul/Paul] proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God." ²¹ And all who heard him were amazed and said, "Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem of those who called upon this name? And has he not come here for this purpose, to bring them bound before the chief priests?" ²² But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ.

John 20:28

Thomas; proclaimed who Jesus was

²⁸ Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"

Acts 17:6

The followers of Jesus, including Paul and Silas; these men have turned the world upside down with their message about Jesus

⁶And when they could not find them [Paul and Silas], they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also."

What is the [geographical] "blueprint" for witness given in Acts 1:8?

Home (Jerusalem); Nation (Judea, Samaria); the World (end of the earth)

⁸[Jesus said:] But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

How important is verbal witness? Why or why not? (Reread Acts 4:20. ²⁰"for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.") What about actions?

Discussion could include the fact as evidenced by Acts 4:20, that the spoken word is truly important. It is imperative that we verbalize our witness. Actions will then reinforce and strengthen that verbal witness.

Read the LWML Pledge by Rev. Harry Fricke below. What phrases indicate witness both with words and with actions? **[bolded in red]**

In fervent gratitude for the Savior's dying love and His blood-bought gift of redemption we **dedicate ourselves to Him with all that we are and have**; and in obedience to His call for workers in the harvest fields, we pledge Him our **willing service** wherever and whenever He has need of us. We consecrate to our Savior our **hands to work** for Him, our **feet to go** on His errands, our **voice to sing** His praises, our **lips to proclaim** His redeeming love, **our silver and our gold** to extend His Kingdom, **our will to do His will**, and **every power of our life** to the great task of bringing the lost and the erring into eternal fellowship with Him. Amen.

How is every Christian's witness the same? How is it different?

Answers will vary. Direct the discussion to include similarities of the message of the witness about the Good News of Jesus, but differences because everyone's faith story is different.

Faith Talk: What do you have to say? What is *your* story? Who needs to hear your witness? Share with a partner or in a small group.

Answers will vary. Encourage sharing within the group.

Faith Walk:

1. Consider what Jesus has done for you. Write down your faith story and thank Him for the gifts of salvation and eternal life.
2. Rejoice daily that you are a baptized child of God.
3. Thank the Holy Spirit for giving and nurturing your faith in Jesus and the ability to share that faith.
4. Pray for opportunities to share your faith story. Watch for those opportunities and take advantage of them.

Closing:

Leader: In fervent gratitude for the Savior's dying love and His blood-bought gift of redemption

Group: We dedicate ourselves to Him with all that we are and have;

Leader: And in obedience to His call for workers in the harvest fields,

Group: We pledge Him our willing service wherever and whenever He has need of us.

Leader: We consecrate to our Savior our hands to work for Him, our feet to go on His errands,

Group: Our voice to sing His praises, our lips to proclaim His redeeming love,

Leader: Our silver and our gold to extend His Kingdom,

Group: Our will to do His will,

All: And every power of our life to the great task of bringing the lost and the erring into eternal fellowship with Him. Amen.

Sing together *Hark, the Voice of Jesus Crying* (LSB #826; LW #318, TLH #496) or *Listen, God is Calling* (LSB #833).

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www.ccel.org/bible/phillips/CN500APOSTLES%20FATE.htm

3.1 SIMON, GIVEN THE NAME PETER or CEPHAS, 'THE ROCK' - A FISHERMAN

Peter worked among the Jews before he eventually reached Rome, where he was traditionally the first bishop. Along with the Apostle Paul, he may have been executed around AD64 during the persecutions of Emperor Nero, or later in AD67. Apparently he was crucified, head-down, at his own request. Later traditions claim that St. Peter's in Rome was built over his grave.

3.2 ANDREW, BROTHER OF SIMON PETER - A FISHERMAN

Andrew was originally a disciple of John the Baptist. After the death and resurrection of Jesus, claims are that Andrew preached in Achaia (southern Greece) and Scythia (Ukraine and southern Russia - St. Andrew is the patron saint of Russia), and was crucified at Patras in Achaia. A later tradition describes him as being crucified in a spread-eagled position - hence the St. Andrew's cross of Scotland.

3.3 JAMES, SON OF ZEBEDEE - A FISHERMAN

During the persecutions of Herod Agrippa I, King of the Jews, in c AD44, the apostle James was beheaded - 'put to the sword' (Acts 12:1-2 following). Before his death, James the Greater as he is known to distinguish him from James, son of Alphaeus, preached in Jerusalem and Judea, modern Israel. A later Spanish tradition is that James preached the Gospel there sometime before his death.

[Acts 12:1-2](#) - "It was at this time (of great famine, possibly around AD44) that King Herod laid violent hands on some of the Church members. James, John's brother, he executed with the sword"

3.4 JOHN, BROTHER OF JAMES and SON OF ZEBEDEE - A FISHERMAN

According to John's Gospel (19:26-27), it was probably John who took Mary, the mother of Jesus as his adopted mother. He preached in Jerusalem, and later, as bishop of Ephesus, south of Izmir in western Turkey, worked among the churches of Asia Minor. During the reigns of either Emperor Nero (AD54-68) or Domitian (AD81-96), he was banished to the nearby island of Patmos, now one of the Greek islands in the Aegean Sea. He was subsequently freed and died a natural death at Ephesus c AD100.

3.5 PHILIP

Philip preached the Gospel in Phrygia (west central Turkey) before dying or being martyred there at Hieropolis.

3.6 BARTHOLOMEW, also NATHANAEAL

The missionary work of Bartholomew is linked with Armenia (present day Armenia, eastern Turkey, northern Iraq, north western Iran) and India. Other locations include Egypt, Arabia, Ethiopia and Persia (Iran). Traditionally he met his death by being flayed or skinned alive, and then beheaded. Derbent, north of present day Baku on the Caspian Sea may have been his place of martyrdom. Alternatively he may have suffered this cruel fate in what is now India.

3.7 THOMAS DIDYMUS - 'DOUBTING THOMAS'

Thomas may have laboured for the Gospel in Parthia (including modern Iraq and Iran), but stronger traditions link him with southern India. Indian Christians from the west coast Kerala area claim they were evangelized by Thomas, who was later speared to death near Madras on the east coast. Mount St. Thomas, close to Madras is associated with his name.

3.8 MATTHEW, also LEVI - TAX-COLLECTOR/PUBLICAN

Nothing definite is known of Matthew's career. After preaching in Judea, different traditions place his missionary work and possible martyrdom in Ethiopia or Persia.

3.9 JAMES, SON OF ALPHEUS

Tradition claims he first worked in Palestine (Israel) before preaching and martyrdom in Egypt.

3.10 JUDE, also THADDAEUS

Jude may have preached in Assyria (eastern Iraq) and Persia (Iran), before joining with Simon the Zealot and being killed with him in Persia.

3.11 SIMON THE ZEALOT or PATRIOT

One tradition is that he first preached in Egypt, before joining Jude and travelling to Persia, where both were martyred. Simon may have been crucified or hacked to death.

3.12 JUDAS ISCARIOT

[Matthew 27:3-10](#) - "Then [as Jesus was being handed over to Pilate] Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that he was condemned and in his remorse returned the thirty silver coins to the chief priests and elders, with the words, "I was wrong - I have betrayed an innocent man to death."

"And what has that got to do with us?" they replied. "That's your affair."

And Judas flung down the silver in the Temple and went outside and hanged himself. But the chief priests picked up the money and said, "It is not legal to put this into the Temple treasury. It is, after all, blood-money." So, after a further consultation, they purchased with it the Potter's Field to be a burial-ground for foreigners, which is why it is called "the Field of Blood" to this day. And so the words of Jeremiah the prophet came true: 'And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the value of him who was priced, whom they of the children of Israel priced, and gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord directed them' ([Zechariah 11:12,13](#); [Jeremiah 32:6-9](#))."

[Acts 1:18-19](#) - "[After his crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus ascends to heaven. The disciples meet to choose a successor to Judas Iscariot, and his fate is briefly described by Luke in his Acts of the Apostles ...] This man [Judas] had bought a piece of land with the proceeds of his infamy, but his body swelled up and his intestines burst. This fact became well known to all the residents of Jerusalem so that the piece of land came to be called in their [Aramaic] language Akeldama, which means 'the field of blood'."

4. MATTHIAS

As a disciple from the time of Jesus' baptism through to his death and resurrection, and possibly one of the 72 sent out to preach and heal, Matthias was chosen by prayer and the drawing of lots to replace Judas Iscariot as the twelfth apostle, [Acts 1:15-26](#). No more is heard of him in the New Testament, and the various traditions are made more confusing because of the similarity of his name to Matthew's. He may have preached and been martyred in Ethiopia. Other traditions place him in Judea, and later Cappadocia (eastern Turkey) and the Caspian Sea area.

5. PAUL OR SAUL OF TARSUS

Paul travelled widely, made at least three major missionary journeys, wrote many letters, and his life and work is touched upon in a variety of ways in his letters. On returning to Jerusalem after his third journey, he was arrested and during his subsequent trials, as a Roman citizen "appealed to Caesar" for judgment - all covered by [Acts 21-26](#). Chapters 27 and 28 then describe Paul's voyage and journey to Rome in fascinating nautical detail. Thereafter his life, and death, is a matter of conjecture and tradition. For some two years after his arrival in Rome, he was under house-arrest, before possibly being executed in the persecutions of Emperor Nero that followed the burning of Rome in AD64.

However, there are strong traditions that on appeal to the Emperor on what was a Jewish religious charge, he was acquitted. He remained free for perhaps three years, revisiting Ephesus and other churches, and even going as far as Spain, before being re-arrested and sentenced to death. In his cell, he wrote his last letter - the Second Letter to Timothy - before execution around the year AD67.

Tradition is he was beheaded at a place now called Tre Fontane in Rome, and that the church of St. Paul stands over his grave.