

# STUDY TWO: THE BIBLICAL CONCERN IN WITNESS AND EVANGELISM

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When we study the Scripture we discover that the dominant concern is the glory of God – not if or how many people are ‘getting saved’ but whether or not God is being honoured. The texts in the research questions in the Worksheet indicate this over-riding concern.

## A. THE GLORY OF GOD

The dominant concern of the Bible is the glory of God. This is the primary reason for witness.

**Complete Sections #1 and 2 in the Study Two Worksheet now.**

## B. WHERE DOES REPENTANCE FIT IN?

Both John the Baptist and Jesus Christ called people to repentance as the appropriate response to their messages. This repentance was on the basis of the nearness of the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 3:w; 4:17).

Repentance is commonly understood to be *feeling sorry for your sins*. The biblical understanding of repentance goes far deeper. Biblical repentance is a turning from sin to God. The sin from which we turn in biblical repentance is not primarily the multitude of individual sins which we might try to itemize, but the one foundational sin of rebellion against the biblical God. This one sin of refusing to let God have the right of authority in our lives, this sin in which we see ourselves as god of our own lives, this sin in which we believe in any other god concept than the biblical God, is the sin from which we are turning when we repent.

In this repentance we are acknowledging that God is God, not we ourselves, not our own ideas of ‘god’, nor any man-made god. Repentance is essentially changing our mind, letting go of our own concept of god, of right and wrong, and accepting God and what he says. It is in this repentance that the soul is saved.

Repentance is a real concern; it is the hoped for end along with faith, of all witnessing.

This is not to deny what has been said above concerning the glory of God as the biblical concern in witnessing, but rather to affirm it. **When a person repents, in the true biblical sense of the word, then God is glorified. If a person refuses to repent, that person is refusing to give God the honour and obedience which is his right. In his/her persistence in rebellion, he/she is refusing to glorify God as God.**

## C. GOD'S ROLE IN EVANGELISM

John Chapman rightly points out [p75-77 *Know and tell the Gospel*] that it is God who initiates mankind's response to the gospel:

‘Sinful people left to themselves are unable to turn back to God. They exercise their will by refusing to obey Him. All the adjectives used to describe sinful man demonstrate his inability to respond positively. He needs God to change him. He is ‘blind’ and cannot see the way [2Corinthians 4:4]. He needs to have that blindness dealt with [2Corinthians 4:6]. He is ‘lost’ and cannot find the way. He needs someone to find him [Luke 19:10]. He is ‘dead’ in spiritual matters and needs to be brought back to life [Ephesians 2:1,5]. He is ‘powerless’ in dealing with his dilemma. He needs to be saved [Romans 5:6]. He is an enemy of God and needs to be made a friend [2Corinthians 5:20].

‘God initiates the gospel and it is He who chooses us and calls us back to Himself, changing us [John 15:16] and giving us the gift of repentance [Acts 5:31; 11:15-18] and faith [Acts 14:27; Eph 2:8].

‘It is God through His Holy Spirit, who convinces us of sin and righteousness and judgment [John 16:8-11].

It was God who opened Lydia's heart to respond to Paul's message [Acts 16:14].

It is by the work of the Holy Spirit that we are able to say “Jesus is Lord” [1Corinthians 12:3].

It is God's work to regenerate us and give us new life [Titus 3:4-7].

He calls to Himself those He has chosen to live to His glory [Romans 8:28; Eph 1:11,12].’

## D. MODERN CONCERNS IN WITNESS AND EVANGELISM

Our attitudes have been coloured by the theory of evolution, the teachings of secular humanism, and the mentality of relativism.

All of these take the focus of attention off God and onto the human. *I* am seen as the centre of my existence, *not God*. It is *me* who is of primary significance, not God. It is *my* destiny that is the important issue, *not God's glory ... I* must look out for *myself*.

**Much modern witnessing, unconsciously taking on board this mentality of our age, focuses on the human rather than on God.** When Christians engage in the activity of witness and evangelism, instead of their primary concern being the glory of their God, it is the 'salvation of souls'. Sadly, unless God is glorified in their 'witness', the fate of those 'souls' they believe they have 'saved' is an open question.

As we will see in the next study, the biblical concept of witnessing is focused on our knowledge and communication of the truth about Jesus Christ. If we remember this, our witnessing will be in line with the biblical concern in witnessing. The biblical witness knows and tells the truth about Jesus Christ. If we remember this our witnessing will be in line with the biblical concern in witnessing. The biblical witness knows and tells the truth about Jesus Christ. In doing this he/she glorifies God. **Whether or not a soul is saved, if I have stated the truth about Jesus Christ, then I have successfully witnessed. I have communicated the good news.** The conversion of a person from unbelief to belief, from rebellion to repentance, is not the work of the witness or the evangelist. Such belief and repentance can only result when the Spirit of God takes the truth that I have communicated to a person and with it convicts and convinces that person.

If I, the witness, take on the role of the Spirit of God, then I abort the process of spiritual birth. The result of such abortive witnessing, apart from the intervention of the sovereign grace of God, which is greater than our mistakes, produces human decisions in which the Spirit of God has had no part, and which with the passing of time prove empty. We cannot save ourselves; we cannot bring ourselves to new birth. Nor is it the role of the witness to do so. 'Saving souls' is not the primary biblical concern in witnessing: rather the primary biblical concern is glorifying God by communicating the truth. It is this truth the Spirit of God takes hold of in his work of saving souls.

**Complete Section #3 on the Study Two Worksheet now.**