

# STUDY SEVEN: BIBLICAL CONSEQUENCES OF WITNESSING

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## A. BIBLICAL CONSEQUENCES OF WITNESSING AND EVANGELISM

As we engage in witness and evangelism we need to be realistic. The One who was absolutely perfect in compassion and absolutely perfect in truth and doctrine had witnessing 'failures' if we are to understand 'success' only in terms of conversions or conversions that 'stuck'. People rejected even the best of teachers, the best of 'evangelists' – the 'evangel' embodied in a person.

Christ himself did not convince everybody of the truth. And Christ himself both warned of and personally experienced rejection and mockery because of the message he communicated.

**Complete #1 in the Study Seven Worksheet now.**

As we read through the Scriptures we find that the human heart is much more inclined to reject than to receive God's truth. Those who follow the Lord Jesus, and with him proclaim God's truth, will experience the same consequences as he did, as the prophets did before him, and as the apostles did after him. There will be the few who believe; there will be the many who don't. There will be those who respond with indifference, with ridicule, with rejection and persecution.

We also learn as we study the Scriptures that in our proclamation of God's truth we are not simply up against human hardness of heart: our battle is against the enemy of both God and man, the Devil (Ephesians 6:10-13). He does not want us to proclaim Jesus Christ. He does not want us to give glory to God. He wants to turn disappointments into discouragements. He wants to use persecutions to prevent proclamation. For this reason it is essential that those who engage in the act of witness are supported by the act of prayer (Ephesians 6:18-20; Colossians 4:2-4).

## B. BIBLICAL SUCCESS IN WITNESSING AND EVANGELISM

### B.1 "What is 'witnessing' and 'evangelism'?" revisited

**Return to Worksheet One, Section #2.**

If you answered 'no' to any of the activities listed, think again. Could your 'no' answers actually all be changed to 'yes'.

Each of the activities listed in Worksheet One Section #2 are 'witnessing' or 'evangelistic' activities if they communicate the truth that we have seen and heard about Jesus Christ, that is, if they communicate part or whole of the good news about who Jesus really is and what Jesus really did.

As we saw early in these studies:

Our witness is the truth about Jesus.

The 'evangel', the 'gospel', is the good news about Jesus – not just about his death; everything about him is 'good news'.

### B.2 What is successful witnessing or successful evangelism?

It is common for people to think that they have failed in witness and evangelism if they did not lead a person to saving faith in Christ. Frankly, that is not the role of the witness or the evangelist. Their role is to communicate the truth about Jesus.

Success must not be measured in numbers of observable or immediate conversions. To do so is to identify Jesus as a failure. The 'saving of xxxxx souls' must never be seen as a measure of spirituality.

Success in witness and evangelism is in this:

That we have told the truth about Jesus Christ

That we have brought glory to God

As we saw earlier, it is the role of the Spirit of God to convict and convert a sinner. Only the power of God can

Bring sight to the spiritually blind

Find the spiritually lost

Regenerate the spiritually dead

Turn God's enemies into his friends

The Spirit of God takes the Word of God about the Son of God, and men and women become children of God as a result of this divine activity.

God, in his grace and wisdom, has entrusted to us human beings the responsibility of communicating the truth about his Son – by our life, action and attitudes, and by the spoken and written word. In this cyberspace, digital age new vehicles of communication are constantly opening up – the whole world is potentially only a few button clicks away from us. Let us grasp the amazing opportunities for communicating Christ that are literally at our fingertips and use them to this glory, trusting him to work in hearts right around the world.

### **C. SHOULD WE URGE PEOPLE TO RESPOND?**

If we follow the example of Jesus – sometimes he did, sometimes he did not.

**Complete Section #2 in the Study Seven Worksheet now, checking out every reference.**

The aim of Jesus and the apostles was to get people to repent and believe. Repentance and faith were the goal to which everything contributed. It is obvious however that this command to repent and believe was not present in every personal conversation, or every personal encounter; nor was it present in every public message. In some encounters Jesus simply helped people on a physical level. That was part of their journey towards faith and repentance, part of his message of both his authority and his compassion.

In this the person engaged in personal witness or evangelism needs to be sensitive to both the person engaged in conversation, and to the Spirit of God.

### **D. THE ROLE OF PRAYER IN PERSONAL EVANGELISM**

At this point it is appropriate to look at the significance of prayer in personal evangelism and witness. We have already seen two significant things:

God is the One who brings a person out of spiritual death into spiritual life. Our role is to be faithful in communicating his Good News.

We need to be sensitive to the person we are talking to, and to the leading of the Spirit of God, to know when it is appropriate to directly challenge people to repent and believe. There were times when Jesus and the apostles gave no such challenges. Indeed there were times when they put no 'gospel content' into their encounters with people.

Because of these two factors we need to trust God

To do his saving work

To overrule and direct our relationships, encounters and conversations with unbelievers so that we are sensitive to his moving, his timing.

This calls for personal prayer, and for a network of prayer support asking the Lord to watch over his Word and over those who are engaging in personal evangelism, and to work in the hearts and minds of those who are being evangelized.