

Prayer Ministry

Small Group Study Guide

Lesson 7. Role of Witness

“Did you see that?!”

This spontaneous question calls for a witness. It can be prompted by any amazing event or circumstance, such as a bright meteor streaking across the sky or a fleeting glimpse of a majestic animal. It can also be a response to something startling, such as a near miss accident or logic defying athletic performance. It is a request for truth because the observer wants support for his opinion.

A witness is a person who is present at an event and can say that it happened. An eye witness makes a statement about what he or she knows or has seen, and that statement is considered reliable. One of the roles of an intercessor is to act as a witness during a prayer appointment.

Instruction

“You’re saying: ‘Your life will not go unnoticed because I will notice it. Your life will not go un-witnessed because I will be your witness.’” - Beverly Clark, Shall We Dance (2004).

In the movie *Shall We Dance*, Beverly Clark defends marriage as a commitment to care about another’s life. She suggests that the meaning of one’s life and all its experiences can get lost without a witness, but that changes when some cares about those things, and by extension cares about us.

The sentiment has some truth to it. We are created for relationship, and each of us responds fully as part of a community. Our perspectives, opinions, feelings, and values enhance the same responses in others. We validate and confirm the truth, and we act as a reminder of even the most fleeting moments. They are captured and shared.

In a prayer appointment, the intercessor has the privilege of playing that role for the person receiving prayer. We do not set the direction or objective of the prayer time as much as we sit in attendance and witness the work that goes on between the Holy Spirit and the person. We are there to give credence to the supernatural, and to answer “yes” when they exclaim: “Did you see that?!”

Play-by-Play Announcer

My aim in a prayer appointment is to introduce a person to the Holy Spirit. I facilitate the conversation to get the ball rolling, but all the supernatural work of healing gets done through the Spirit’s direction not mine. The role of witness is to initiate the conversation and then give credit where credit is due.

I have conducted many prayer appointments and have been witness to the amazing power of God. Miraculous healing happens through mind renewal, and it manifests in the spiritual, emotional, and physical realms. People are transformed when they interact with God and His Truth, and being a witness to those events is precious.

One day an overjoyed man praised me for the freedom he received through prayer. I gently corrected his thinking by exclaiming that it was nothing I could do. I was just the witness to verify what God had done.

Prayer Ministry Small Group Study Guide

“In a way, I’m like a play-by-play announcer.” I explained. “I’m here with you as you pray, ask God questions, and listen for answers. You are taking every thought captive and making it obedient to Christ. I’m watching and listening as you interact with God on the matter. Then, I give the running commentary about what is happening.”

As witness, and play-by-play announcer, we do not take credit for the great plays. We simply call them as we see them. In fact, our experience allows us to bring out the nuances of the events as they happen. This brings greater appreciation and praise for the One doing the work. The role of witness is to act as this commentator for the benefit of those around.

Witness for Truth

In your Law it is written that the testimony of two people is true. - John 8:17

God gave Moses very specific instructions about the use of testimony in the matter of law. It is stated (Deuteronomy 19:15) that a single witness shall not suffice against a person for any crime or wrong that he has committed. Only on the evidence of two or three witnesses shall a charge be established. This principle of law was practiced even in the time of Jesus. When He was being charged before the High Priest the multiple witness test failed and no charges could be brought against Him.

The witness for truth requires agreement between different people. One person may be misled, or intentionally bear false witness, but it is less likely that two or more would agree to lie. When two testimonies agree it increases the credibility, it attests to the truth.

Sometimes we are called to act as a witness for the person receiving prayer. The ‘accuser of the brethren’ is the devil, and he makes accusations against mankind (Revelation 12:10). If one of these brethren believes the accusation and reports it as true, my job as witness is to stand up for that person and declare God’s truth. For instance, a man may experience deep feelings of shame and regret for a sin, and the accuser will try to convince him that he is too evil to be redeemed. I will stand up for that man, and declare that all who confess their sin will be forgiven and cleansed from all unrighteousness.

Sometimes we are called to act as a witness for the character and nature of God. When the person we are praying with has a jaded or distorted view of God, he may accuse Him of things that are not true. For instance, that man may experience such deep feelings of rejection that he comes to believe he is utterly unlovable. I will stand up for God in this case and declare that He is love. A distorted view does not change the eternal character of God.

Many times I have been a witness to a mighty work of God. When He reveals a profound truth it can be overwhelming to the person receiving prayer. It may be considered “too good to be true.” This is where the role of witness is very important. We confirm the word of God and add our testimony to His. Then we are able to say with Jesus: “the testimony of two people is true.”

Court of Heaven

For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. - Romans 8:2

The devil is a deceiver, intent on destroying any possible relationship between man and God. He uses the law of sin and death to condemn and disqualify, and he is a master at its use. If there are any advantages to be gained through loopholes or interpretations, he will

Prayer Ministry Small Group Study Guide

use them against the elect of God. Rather than be bullied and bruised by the law, we are able to use the law of the Spirit of life to be set free instead.

One of the important roles of witness is to verify a spiritual transaction. When a couple get married, they sign a marriage certificate in front of two or more witnesses. In our culture, the Best Man and Maid of Honor are given the privilege of acting as witness to the event. Their signatures verify that they were there at the time of the giving of vows, and by implication they are willing to attest to the historical fact of the marriage.

The same is true when we sign contracts or make a promise. The witness declares that the signors are legally competent and have chosen to enter into the agreement. If the signature is disputed, or the historical event questioned, then the witnesses can be called to testify. Every charge, and every spiritual transaction, may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses.

One of the most common examples of this is when a person confesses a sin and asks God for forgiveness. As intercessors we can act as witnesses to this spiritual transaction. I have the person confess the sin to God in prayer, and by doing it aloud I can act as a witness. After they have confessed and asked for forgiveness, I am able to proclaim God's promise according to 1 John 1:9. God is ready to forgive and cleanse from all unrighteousness.

If after this prayer the person wonders whether God has truly forgiven him, then I can be called as witness. I will attest to the event, the truth of the confession, and the veracity of the promise. The devil may try to discredit the process or introduce questions into the mind of the young believer, but he does not stand a chance against the testimony of two or more witnesses. In this case, God is the primary witness, and I am the auxiliary one.

Every spiritual transaction can be done in the presence of witnesses. The benefit of the witness is for the one engaged in the transaction, and the antagonist is the devil. He may try to pervert the truth, introduce a lie, and smear the character of God, but he has no legal ground to stand on. He is defeated.

When we practice being forgiven in this way, the truth lasts. When we practice extending forgiveness to others, the truth lasts. When we break off soul ties, curses, rash vows, and oaths, the truth lasts. When we surrender our rights to God and ask Him to be Lord of our life, the truth lasts. When we proclaim blessings, the truth lasts.

For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free.

Witness for the Defense

Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. - 1 Timothy 5:19

Imagine being in the court of heaven where the devil is acting as the prosecution bringing a charge against your brother. He has put together an ironclad case against this sinner, with a mountain of evidence. You are called to act as a witness, and you have sworn to tell the truth and nothing but the truth.

The prosecuting attorney is smooth, powerful, and wicked-smart. Even though you want to have mercy on your brother, the direct examination is cleverly designed to make your testimony agree with the accuser. Your deep desire for justice cannot be squelched and you feel judgment rising up within you.

Prayer Ministry Small Group Study Guide

“Did you see the accused engage in this activity?” he challenges.

You cannot dodge such a direct question. Your brother is dead to rights, and guilty as charged. You are a witness for the prosecution; you are compelled to add your judgment against him.

But what if you can be cross examined by the Defense Attorney? He is the advocate that offers a path toward mercy and grace. You are called to act as a witness, and you have sworn to tell the truth and nothing but the truth.

“Did you witness the accused confess this sin and ask for forgiveness?” He rebuts.

You are quick to answer this question. You know for a fact that your brother has received complete remission for this sin and been cleansed from all unrighteousness in this matter. You are a witness for the defense; you are invited to add your compassion and mercy for your brother.

This is the opportunity we have in the physical realm whenever we pray with another person. We are engaged in spiritual pursuits, and making a difference to the judgment and grace being meted out. It is our privilege to be on the winning side, and to act as a witness for the defense.

Prayer Ministry

Small Group Study Guide

Exercise: Role of Witness

#1: Listening Exercise

Pair up and sit facing each other. One person takes the role of speaker and tells about one formative event or circumstance in his or her life. Share briefly about the event, and then explain how it affected you. The other person takes the role of listener to hear the account but does not speak. The listener may encourage with nods, smiles, or other nonverbal expressions. The speaker will share his or her story for two minutes (timed), and then the pair change roles and repeat the exercise.

Discussion:

How did it feel to be heard?

What was it like to listen without being able to give verbal response?

#2: Listen and Feedback Exercise

Pair up again for another listening exercise. You may choose different partners, or stay with the same as in the first exercise. The speaker tells about one formative event or circumstance in his or her life (it may be a continuation of the one begun previously). This time the listener provides feedback by affirming the emotions and responses, and asking clarifying or encouraging questions. Do not give advice or offer solutions. Rather, you may state: "That must have been a sad time," or other appropriate comments. You may ask: "How did you feel at that moment," or other simple questions to draw them out. The speaker will share his or her story for three minutes (timed), and then the pair change roles and repeat the exercise.

Discussion:

How did your experience as speaker change when feedback was allowed?

How did your interaction as a listener change when you could affirm and ask?

What difference does it make for a person to be truly heard?

Who controls the direction, tempo, and content of the story?

What risks are there for the role of listener?

Sharing: Role of Witness

In this exercise you will act as a witness for God. Get into groups of 5 or 6 and sit in a circle facing each other. Pray silently. Ask God to give you a word or message to share, and then pray for each person in your group. Listen to what He tells you. Use a timer to keep this step to no more than five minutes.

Next, take turns to share the word or message you heard. Look at the person for whom the word is given. Address them by name and share the message that the Lord gave you for them. Do not embellish or explain; simply report.

Discussion (large group):

How did it feel to receive a word from the Lord from a witness?

How did it feel to deliver a word or message?

Prayer Ministry Small Group Study Guide

Who provides meaning to the message?

What has this exercise done to increase your confidence as a witness for God?

How will this experience change the way you pray with people?

Caring: Role of Witness

We use a stone of remembrance as a physical reminder of a spiritual transaction. Samuel, the priest, anointed a rock and named it Ebenezer as a memorial to an act of God. Joshua commanded a representative of each of the twelve tribes to bring a stone up from the middle of the Jordan River as a lasting memorial to their crossing.

Discussion:

What are some of the ways you benefit from a physical witness to a spiritual event?

What have you used as a testimony in the past?

How have you seen important events commemorated?

Brainstorm different ways to use physical things to act as a witness in your prayer times.