

BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

Witness to the World
Acts 2:47b; 11:19-26; Philippians 1:12-18

Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.

Leaders' Responsibilities:

Important: Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a Unit of sessions needs to have access to the "Basic Information for Leading the Unit of Study". That information is often provided at the beginning of that Unit of sessions. The weekly session "Background" located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day's study.

1. **The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.
2. **The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)
3. **The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the **Worship Time** that can aid in participatory worship.

Prior to this Coming Session:

Gathering Time Leader:

Bible Study Leader:

Bring one or more birth or adoption announcements

Bring a roll of about 5 feet of inexpensive brown or white "wrapping" paper on which the words: WITNESS TO? are hand painted in very large bright colours.

Worship Time Leader:

Bring a CD or cassette tape player with enough volume available for the group to clearly hear the words and music.

CD or tape of “**Sake of the Call**” by Stephen Curtis Chapman; CD or tape of “**The Mission**” by Steve Green. If this is not practical for your church, simply divide up your singing time and conclude the worship time with one of the suggested hymns about witnessing in the world.

Also, the **Worship Leader** may wish to copy the Responsive Reading on sheets of paper and the final prayer of commitment on separate smaller sheets. Hand these out at the appropriate time to be read by the group. If you have hymnals, you could place them in the hymnals at certain pages and have the group take them out to use them.

Please note that, in the Sharing Time, the following materials are mentioned as possibilities for training the youth and adults of the congregation in how to witness to persons who do not yet know Christ as Saviour and Lord.

Share Jesus Without Fear can be purchased online at: www.lifeway.com

CROSS Training can be purchased online at: www.bgco.org

Also see www.mostimportantthing.org for online testimonies and other helps (relates to **CROSS Training**).

Music Sources:

“Jesus Loves the Little Children” *The Worship Hymnal*, #651 (with different words than are suggested in this session).

“Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life” *Hymns for the Family of God*, #665 or *The Baptist Hymnal* (1975) #311

“Why do I Sing About Jesus” *The Worship Hymnal*, #561.

“Set My Soul Afire” *The Worship Hymnal*, #533.

“People Need the Lord” *The Worship Hymnal*, #359.

Gathering Time: (Suggested time: 15 minutes)***Witness to the World*****Focal Text**

Acts 2:47b; 11:19-26; Philippians 1:12-18

Background

Acts 2:42-47; 11:19-26; Philippians 1:12-18

Main Idea

A New Testament church seeks to witness to all people about Christ.

Question to Explore

How important is evangelism to our church?

Teaching Aim

To lead the group to identify steps they will take to witness about Christ.

Gathering together:

Call the congregation together for worship by singing “Jesus Loves the Little Children” two times. We suggest the following words. The tune can be found in many hymnals and chorus books:

Jesus loves the little children,
All the children of the world.
Every colour, every race,
all are covered by His grace;
Jesus loves the little children of the world.

Ask the children if they would like to sing the song to the teens and adults.

First thoughts:

(Your Gathering Time leader may wish read this one to the group).

He transferred from Utah State University with a degree in agriculture to pursue a graduate degree at New Mexico State University. As he neared the completion of that degree he became interested in the new program of an international mission board. So he applied for the Journeyman program and agreed to spend two years in a mission field overseas.

We eagerly awaited the response to his application, and on the day it arrived he immediately came out to my house on the north side of Las Cruces. I was riding my son's horse in an open field nearby. I saw him coming in the distance, and reined Frosty in his direction. I noticed he was waving a piece of paper in his hand, and realized why he was running my way. He had received notice that he had been selected for the program.

During his ministry in Africa, he met the daughter of the missionary family with whom he was working. When his two years were up, he returned to the states and later married the "missionary kid" (MK) whom he had met in Africa. After marrying, they entered a seminary to get a year's work in the theory and practice of teaching the Bible and church matters. When he completed seminary they, Lynn and Suzanne Groce, were appointed as career missionaries to East Africa where they lived in the remote highlands of Ethiopia. After fifteen years, they had to return to the United States because of the health of one of their five children.

The end? Not quite. They set about establishing a ministry to the needy people of Gainesville, Florida, and began enlisting Christians in the community and around the state, and beyond the state, in their project. They called it "Christians Concerned for Community". It was a means by which the physical needs of people could be met along with a witness to their spiritual needs.

A witness to the world? Not entirely, but a witness to East Africa in the early part of life, then a witness to Gainesville, Florida in mid-life. Doing what? The first witness was through helping native farmers learn how to grow the food they needed with enough left over to take to market. The latter witness was through collection of discarded items of furniture and household appliances still in usable shape. Such mundane things as building a ramp into the house of a wheel-chair patient, providing a used refrigerator for an elderly couple trying to make it on their own, or simply providing a used sofa to make a home a little more comfortable provided a witness just as important.

Closing the Gathering Time:

Close the devotional period by singing "Where Cross the Crowded ways of Life." (#665, HFG or #311, BH, 1975 Ed. Public domain). Your group may not know this hymn. If not, you may want to copy the words and read it in unison or in a more creative way – with different people reading each phrase or verse to each other. Perhaps use two people to read some of it separately and some of it together. A practice together would be a great activity.

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won't need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note-taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

2

Copy this section for the Bible Study leader.

Note to the Bible Study Leader: Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the “Teacher Preparation” for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the “Bible Study Plan” for the actual session.

Teacher Preparation

Witness to the World

Focal Text

Acts 2:47b; 11:19-26; Philippians 1:12-18

Background

Acts 2:42-47; 11:19-26; Philippians 1:12-18

Main Idea

A New Testament church seeks to witness to all people about Christ.

Question to Explore

How important is evangelism to our church?

Teaching Aim

To lead the group to identify steps they will take to witness about Christ.

Introduction to your personal study:

Important note to the teacher for this week: Locate and read the “Plan Ahead Note” near the end of the “Teaching Plan” several pages ahead. It gives you options to use in applying this lesson to life if you have persons in attendance who do not yet know Christ as Saviour.

Eat more beef! I recall the chairperson at a meeting of cattle producers encouraging the members to spread the word about the benefits of eating beef. “Look for opportunities to work ‘eating beef’ into your daily conversations,” she said, “You can promote the beef industry in the grocery store or at the ball field or talking with your neighbours.” As she passed out a nutritional fact sheet she said, “Have your facts in hand and be ready.”

What good advice for supporting the beef industry. What great advice for the witnessing church. Let's look for opportunities in our daily conversations to give credit to Christ. Sharing our faith in the grocery store, at the ball field or talking with neighbours is known as "lifestyle evangelism." Let's have our facts in hand and be ready.

Focusing on the Meaning:

Acts 2:47b – Sharing the Good News

The new community of believers formed on the day of Pentecost rejoiced in their new life in Christ. Together they worshipped, broke bread, and met needs. God continued to move among the people in Jerusalem. His saving power continued to change lives. Each day He added to the body of new believers. A key lesson from this passage is that it was not the believers themselves who were adding to their number, but God. Believers are called to live their lives for Christ in such a way that others see Christ in us. We are to share the Good News of Christ, and encourage other believers, but it is God who redeems the lost and helps those who already follow Him to grow in their faith (See 1Corinthians 3:6).

Acts 11:19-26 – Sharing Across Boundaries

This passage begins with a reference to "the persecution in connection with Stephen." Acts 6 records the selection of seven men, full of the Spirit and wisdom, to assist in distributing food to the widows within the fellowship, so the apostles could focus on prayer and the ministry of the word. One of these was Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit (Acts 6:5). As a result of this delegation of duties, the word of God spread. Both the number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith (6:7). Stephen, characterized as a man full of God's grace and power, performed great wonders and signs among the people.

However, a group known as the Synagogue of the Freedmen, Jews from Cyrene and Alexandria, and provinces in Cilicia and Asia, opposed him (6:9). His wisdom and Spirit overpowered their arguments so they developed a scheme to falsely accuse him before the crowd and religious leaders (6:10-11). They seized him and brought him before the Sanhedrin, the Jewish governing body, accusing him of blasphemy against Moses and God (6:12-14).

Stephen's defence before this body is recorded in Acts 7. He outlined a history of God's work among His chosen people from Abraham to Jesus Christ. He ended by confronting his accusers, calling them stiff-necked with uncircumcised hearts and ears, always resisting the Holy Spirit (7:51). He charged them with betraying and killing Christ and disobeying the law. Incensed, they rushed at him, dragged him out of the city and stoned him (7:54-58).

On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem (8:1). Everyone, except the apostles, fled the persecution, preaching the word wherever they went (8:4).

Picking up the focal text in Acts 11:19, we find fleeing believers preaching to Jews along the coastal area of Phoenicia, north to the Island of Cyprus and on to Antioch, the capital of Syria. Additionally, some believers from Cyprus and Cyrene went to Antioch and began to tell the good news about Jesus to Greeks. A great number of people believed and turned to God (Acts 11:19-21). This crossing of the cultural boundary between Jews and non-Jews was significant.

Acts, chapter 10, records the conversion of Cornelius, a God-fearing Gentile and his household. God gave Cornelius a vision telling him to send for Peter (Acts 10:1-7). At the same time God gave Peter a vision showing him that God defines what is “clean” and what is “unclean” (10:9-16). While Peter was still trying to figure out what his vision meant, Cornelius’ men arrived and invited Peter to Cornelius’ home in Caesarea. When Peter entered the home and saw the large gathering he said, ***“You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him. But God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean”*** (10:27). While Peter was telling the story of Jesus, the Holy Spirit came upon all who heard (10:44). The circumcised believers were astonished that God sent His Holy Spirit to Gentiles (10:45). When Peter saw that the Holy Spirit had been given to these Gentiles just as to the Jewish believers, he ordered that they be baptized (10:47-48).

So it was that when the church in Jerusalem received the reports of Gentile believers in Antioch, they sent Barnabus to investigate (Acts 11:22). They had just absorbed Peter’s report of the conversions in Cornelius’ house and had concluded that God was granting to the Gentiles repentance unto life (See 11:1-18). Barnabus was an excellent choice to send to Antioch, since he was of Cyprian birth and had been named by the apostles, “Son of Encouragement” (4:36). Upon his arrival, he rejoiced in the evidence of the grace of God. True to his name, he encouraged these new believers to remain faithful to the Lord with all their hearts. Barnabus’ ministry reached even more people (11:22-24).

With the church in Antioch growing rapidly, Barnabus journeyed over to Tarsus to recruit help from Saul, who was later called Paul (11:25). Barnabus was well acquainted with Saul and his dramatic conversion on the road to Damascus. After that life-changing encounter with Jesus, Saul had gone to Jerusalem and tried to join the disciples. The disciples were skeptical of his claims until Barnabus stepped in and told them Saul’s conversion story (See 9:1-27). Saul preached boldly in Jerusalem for a time then was sent home to Tarsus (9:28-30).

Barnabus successfully enlisted Saul to help with the ministry in Antioch. Together they taught the large church there for an entire year. It was during this time in Antioch that the disciples were first called “Christians” (11:26).

Philippians 1:12-13 – Sharing in All Circumstances

As discussed in Session Ten, Paul had a special affection for the church at Philippi. This was the community of believers that Paul had founded on his second missionary journey (See Acts 16). The letter to the Philippians was written at a time that he was imprisoned. Paul had been arrested in Jerusalem and had appealed his case to Caesar (See Acts 23-25). He was sent to Rome and was allowed to stay under house arrest, guarded by a soldier (Acts 28:16).

The phrase “Now I want you to know,” emphasizes Paul’s first point. We would say, “Now listen up!” Paul is a prisoner. Yet instead of ending his ministry, his current imprisonment actually served to advance the gospel. Both his own ministry and that of others were expanded. In Acts 28:20, Paul refers to the chain with which he is bound. The Roman guards bound themselves to their prisoner by a short length of chain. For two years Paul stayed in his rented house bound to Roman guards (Acts 28:30). The whole palace guard came to understand that his imprisonment was a direct result of his service to God (Philippians 1:13).

Even if Paul had not witnessed to his guards directly, they could not have helped overhearing the story of Jesus. Paul began to preach just three days after arriving in Rome to the local Jewish leaders (Acts 28:17-28). Although they had never received any reports of him they wanted to hear his story, so they chose a day and came to hear him in large numbers (28:23-28). All that day Paul explained the gospel to these Jewish leaders ending with the startling proclamation, “God’s salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen” (28:28). Throughout the two years he was under house arrest, Paul preached boldly and unhindered to everyone who came to see him (28:30).

As influential as Paul’s spoken words were, the messages God inspired him to write during this time have multiplied his ministry. Paul refers to his chains or imprisonment in several of his letters to the churches (See Ephesians 3:1; Philippians 1:7, 13,14; Colossians 4:3,18; Philemon 9,13). God inspired him to use his time of captivity to instruct and encourage both individuals and specific churches. Even today God continues to speak through these letters to reach people for Christ.

Another result of Paul’s imprisonment was the impact it had on the ministry of other Christians. Rather than discouraging the spread of the gospel, “most of the brothers in the Lord” were encouraged to speak more boldly and fearlessly (Philippians 1:14). God can use the example of a faithful witness to inspire others to share their faith as well.

Philippians 1:14-18 – Sharing from Spiritually Pure Motives

Some were inspired to share their faith out of a spirit of good will. They were motivated to lead others to Christ and to build up the fellowship. It was as though they knew the best way to minister to Paul while he was in prison was to expand the ministry. However, Paul warned that disciples of Christ are not immune to envy and rivalry. Greed and jealousy had prompted some to preach Christ, hoping to cause Paul more

trouble. Apparently they wanted to undermine Paul's ministry and build up their own positions of influence and leadership. Paul was able to distance himself from such competition and manoeuvring. In Paul's view the essential thing is that Christ is preached. He warned against impure motivations for the sake of the preachers. However, the most important thing was that the Gospel be shared. The disciples must concentrate on their own motivation for preaching. They must not get bogged down in worrying about the motivations of others for preaching.

Teaching the Passage:

God in His wisdom determined to entrust the life-saving message of the gospel to His children. Each of us in turn, regardless of our circumstances, is charged with entrusting that same message with others who will continue to share the message (See 2 Timothy 2:2). Our mission is not to make just disciples, but to make disciple makers. We have not finished the task until we have taught the new followers of Jesus how to share their faith with others.

The power for witnessing comes from God, Himself. Before He ascended into heaven Jesus promised to send His Holy Spirit. "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Witnessing is not an optional activity for the believer; it is an integral part of who we are as followers of Jesus. Peter admonishes us to always be ready to give an answer for the hope that we have. But, he cautions, do this with gentleness and respect (1Peter 3:15). If our lifestyles demonstrate joy, peace, love, and hope, others will want to know why. We need to be ready to explain that the source of our joy, peace, love, and hope is Jesus.

For Personal Reflection:

1. **What have I learned from this study?**

2. **What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?**

3. **What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?**

Bible Study Plan (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

Witness to the World

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc. Children who stay with their parents in the Youth/Adult study should have the material on worship as suggested in **The Children's Corner** at the beginning of this **Unit** of studies. (Ask your leader who downloads the studies for those suggestions).

Begin by helping the group locate the Focal Text in their Bibles. Also, share with them the Main Idea to be learned from the Scriptures, and the Questions to be Explored by the group.

Focal Text

Acts 2:47b; 11:19-26; Philippians 1:12-18

Background

Acts 2:42-47; 11:19-26; Philippians 1:12-18

Main Idea

A New Testament church seeks to witness to all people about Christ.

Question to Explore

How important is evangelism to our church?

Teaching Aim

To lead the group to identify steps they will take to witness about Christ.

Connect with Life:

Unroll the roll of brown paper with the big, bold words WITNESS TO? written on it. Ask two people to place or tape the banner in a place where everyone possible can see it. The best place would be on the floor in the middle of the group if they are more or less in a circle.

Hand out study sheets or blank sheets of paper to each youth and adult.

1. Show the class a birth or adoption announcement. Share these thoughts: Proud parents want to share their excitement when a new child comes into the family. Loved ones and friends are called or e-mailed with the wonderful news. Discuss other occasions that call for announcements. Say: Today we are going to study how early believers shared the best news in the world.

Guide the Study:

2. Say: Open your Bibles to the book of Acts, chapter 2. We are going to look at the second part of verse 47. Have someone read Acts 2:47b. Share this information: The miraculous growth of the church in Jerusalem didn't end on the day of Pentecost. As the community of believers worshipped together, met needs and prayed, God continued to add to their number. Emphasize that our responsibility is to be faithful to live our lives for Christ and to share the good news with those around us. God will take care of adding to our number. Share 1 Corinthians 3:6.

3. Say: Please turn to Acts 11:19. Ask a volunteer to read Acts 11:19. Share the background information on Stephen and the persecution in connection with him as recorded in Acts 6-7 from the Study Guide. Note that Acts 7 is a good review of God's work through His people beginning with Abraham.

4. Say: Yet what was meant for evil God used for good. Let's look at how God worked through those who fled from the persecution. Read Acts 11:19 again. If you have a map available, locate Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch. Explain that Phoenicia was the region northwest of Jerusalem that bordered the Mediterranean Sea; Cyprus is an island off the coast of Israel; and Antioch, the capital of Syria, was approximately 300 miles north of Jerusalem.

5. Ask a volunteer to read Acts 11:20-21. Discuss the fact that these believers reached across cultural boundaries to witness to non-Jewish people and God honoured their efforts. Use the background material from the **Study Guide**. Mention that Jews interpreted their law to prohibit any association with Gentiles. Relate the story of Cornelius' conversion from Acts 10.

6. Have someone read Acts 11:22-24. Say: Barnabus means "Son of Encouragement." Ask: Why do you think he was a good choice for this assignment to the church in Antioch?

7. Have a volunteer read Acts 11:25-26. Talk about the relationship between Barnabus and Saul. Ask someone to read Acts 9:26-27. Ask: What gifts do you see in these two men that make them a good ministry team? Then ask: What gifts has God given to our fellowship for ministry?

8. Have the class turn to the book of Philippians. Share the background material about this book from the ***Bible Study Guide***. Ask someone to read Philippians 1:12-13. Ask the class to identify several ways God used Paul's imprisonment to spread the gospel. Invite individuals to share how God has used any of the letters Paul wrote while in prison to speak to them.

9. Ask someone to read Philippians 1:14-18. Ask the class to identify the different motivations for preaching. Ask: Why do you think God allows people to preach from impure motives? Emphasize that we may have to look beyond the messenger and focus on the message. Ask: How can we guard against competition and envy in our fellowship?

Encourage Application

Helping Youth Apply the Bible Truths:

This week, you will want to include the youth with the adults in the small group activities. You may, or may not, want to share any extra specific lesson applications for those youth.

Plan Ahead Note:

Bible Study Leader: If you have persons attending today's Bible Study who do not yet know Christ as Saviour, you will need to modify the following application exercise. You may choose to have them in a group which answers questions about what it means to accept Jesus as Saviour and Lord. Or, you may choose to postpone this application time so that they are not made ill at ease. Or, you may choose a less threatening way such as writing out the verses for each of the five Great Commission passages in the Gospels in very large print and having each group place them in an order in which each passage builds an activity (command) on the previous – and then share why they placed them in that order. See:

Matthew 28:18-20

Mark 16:15

Luke 24:47-48

John 20:21

Acts 1:8

If all the group of youth and adults are Christians, that is, spiritually born-again believers in Christ, then:

10. Say: "Our church needs to plan to study how, as individuals, to share our faith with others. We need to consider a course such as ***Cross Training, Share Jesus Without Fear***, or some other good resource. Knowing what to say and knowing scriptures to

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give authority to what we say will help enormously when God gives us the opportunity to share the Good News of Jesus.

11. Say: "We need to explore practical ways to witness openly about Christ. Lifestyle evangelism means sharing about Christ as we live our lives. Divide the congregation into three groups. Give each group one of these assignments. Allow each group time to discuss their assignment then ask each group in turn to demonstrate how they would share in these situations:

- 1) Demonstrate how you could share Christ with a neighbour who has a new baby.
- 2) Demonstrate how you could share Christ with a co-worker who is facing major surgery.
- 3) Demonstrate how you could share Christ with a classmate whose parents are getting divorced.

Thank each group as they participate. Ask: How can our church help each of us to share more effectively? Make a list of responses.

12. Pray, thanking God for the gift of His Son and the opportunities He gives us to share that gift with others. Ask God to help each individual to make sharing Jesus a part of his or her lifestyle.

Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time. Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.

Youth!!! Take Ten

Bible Study Application for Youth

You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.

Witness to the World

Acts 2:47b; 11:19-26; Philippians 1:12-18

A youth will lead the following activity and comments. No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.

This week you may want to remain with the adults for the lesson application time. The situation for teens to witness to fellow students and friends may differ, at least in context. However, learning **how** to share your faith is much the same at any age or situation in life.

If any youth are present who do not have a personal faith in Jesus, you will want to let the teacher know – in order that the alternative activity can be used. It is designed to not make pre-believers uncomfortable in the group.

Worship Time (Suggested time: 30 minutes)***Witness to the World*****Acts 2:47b; 11:19-26; Philippians 1:12-18****Beginning the Service:**

Call the congregation to worship by singing such songs as:

“Why do I Sing About Jesus

“Set My Soul Afire

“People Need the Lord”

Leader: Have the congregation read “responsively” the following. The leader reads the light print and the group reads together the dark print. (Use copies made from the final page of this session):

(Leader reads) For, everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard?

*And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?
And how can they preach unless they are sent?*

As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day,

and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem.

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

(Romans 10:13-15; Luke 24:46-47; Matthew 28:19-20, NIV)

Praying for the World:

Share (or ask beforehand for someone else to share) briefly about a current event from somewhere else in the world. Ask someone to mention what difficulties a missionary who works for the Lord in that part of the world might face. Ask a person to pray for missionaries serving in that area of the world.

Remind the congregation that the only way in today's world that most missionaries can serve God where He has called them is to depend on offerings from churches where there is freedom of worship and the offerings are organized to be passed on to those missionaries.

Offering:

Have the preschoolers and/or children receive the offering. Ask them to place it on the poster that says: **WITNESS TO?** if it is still on the floor in the middle of the group.

Sharing Guide:

This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God's call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.

GIVING A WITNESS WHERE YOU ARE Philippians 1:12-18

Introduction:

This business of witnessing to the world is a scary thing. It's scarier for some than it is for others. Learning a plan by which to witness is not always the thing that calms us down. A pastor tells his story. In his first year at the Seminary (a school for training pastors and other church leaders) he took a course in evangelism, and the textbook was entitled, ***With Christ After the Lost***. It was basically a book with a lot of Scripture quotations arranged according to a plan for winning someone to Christ. There are other plans to help someone share his/her faith with another person. ***The Roman Road***, for ©2001-2007, Eternal Interactive, LLC, All Rights Reserved. www.homechurchonline.com 18
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example, consists of memorizing a series of verses of scripture in a particular order. “**Life Style Evangelism**” is a concept that is advocated by some. This term means that Christians should always be aware that their life-style makes a witness, either positive or negative. Also, the kit, **Sharing Jesus Without Fear**, would be a great study. **CROSS Training** is another new and exciting witness training study. But the pastor learned, as have many others, that learning a plan is no assurance that we will make and take opportunities to share our faith with another. That sharing comes from the overflow and passion of our hearts.

[Leader, see purchase information at end of session].

The church at Philippi was concerned for Paul because he was in prison, perhaps in the capitol city, Rome. He wanted them to know that being in prison was not the end of his witnessing to Christ. He does this easily and naturally, and they undoubtedly learned a great deal about witnessing from his few words. We can learn also by following him through Philipians 1:12-18.

The Christians at Philippi needed to know, and we need to know, that witnessing is not a matter of going some place special and saying certain things that have been memorized. Paul said to them that wherever he was, in Philippi, Jerusalem, or Rome, people knew what he was about, what he was doing.

1. Witness where I am

My world consists of where I am at this moment, and all those places and people I am willing to carry in my heart or mind. I can enlarge the scope of my world by letting my heart become broken, or touched, by the condition of someone other than myself. I can bring into my world as many people and as many different kinds of people as I have the courage to bring.

There may not be many people in my world because I am afraid they will demand too much of my time and my effort. But there is no escaping the fact that I can witness to my world if I choose to do so.

2. Witness in all circumstances

Paul announced to his friends at Philippi that what had happened to him had really served to advance the gospel. One way by which this was accomplished was for people to know why he was in prison: “I am in chains for the gospel.” This effect was produced even in the most unlikely places, such as the whole palace guard. Even men stationed at the emperor’s palace came to know the reason for Paul’s imprisonment. This must have been highly irregular: men were in prison for many different reasons: treason, insurrection, robbery, murder, theft – but never before had anyone been in prison because of Christ.

Paul's imprisonment had an even greater impact. It resulted in a greater amount of preaching of the gospel. "Most of the brothers in the Lord (that is, fellow Christians) have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly."

Paul's world had become drastically diminished, circumscribed by his arrest and imprisonment, yet he found reasons to rejoice because of the good that was coming from it. His world changed almost daily, yet he saw good coming from his faithfulness.

The world of Lynn and Suzanne Groce changed radically and geographically and they didn't miss a beat – they created a ministry in a large, university town in the southern United States almost before the dust settled from their long move from east Africa.

3. Witness in spite of what others may do to make it difficult

Finally, we can witness to our world even when the outcome seems to be distorted or diminished by the conduct of others. Some thought they could make Paul's situation more miserable by preaching the gospel from the wrong motives. But for one who is genuinely concerned about the preaching of the gospel, when that is what matters the most for him/her, the question of why people become engaged in the process is immaterial to them. Some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of good will. Paul was of a singular mind-set about the good news of God. It didn't matter to him who got the credit or even why others were engaged in the process. It only mattered that the gospel was preached. ***"What does it matter? One way or the other, in pretense or sincerity, Christ is set forth, and for that I rejoice"*** (Philippians 1:18 NEB).

Call to Commitment:

We can witness to the world, and our world may be changing from day to day. It may be peopled by folk who are only concerned with making it difficult for us, or those who give a wrong message. But we can witness without changing locations, climates, geography, or situations. God used a young man with a degree in agriculture and a young woman who was the daughter of missionaries. They witnessed through their interest in helping African farmers improve the output of their land. God is still using them in helping those in need in the state of Florida, U.S.A. He can use you where you are.

Leader: Have the group sing "People Need the Lord".

Prayer: Our father in heaven, Lord of my life and Lord of all life, I place my life in your hands, to be used in any manner, at any time, in any place on earth. I ask for the words to share the Good News of your Son, a heart to love, and a voice to sing your praises in my world today. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Concluding the Service:

An appropriate alternative to the following conclusion would be to have the congregation sing “People Need the Lord” or another of the songs that calls us to serve God and share the gospel.

Or, ask the congregation to listen carefully to the song, “For the Sake of the Call” by Stephen Chapman – or “The Mission” by Steve Green.

Play the CD.

When the song is finished, ask if there is anyone who would like to share with the church any new decision they may have made in regard to committing their lives to Christ or witnessing for Christ.

Dismiss the church.

Enjoy fellowshiping or eating a meal together.

This would be a good opportunity for someone to prepare a meal in the style of another country or culture.

* Note: Purchase **Share Jesus Without Fear** materials at {www.lifeway.com}
Purchase **CROSS Training** materials at {www.bgco.org}

Leader: Have the congregation read “responsively” the following. The leader reads the light print and the group reads together the dark print:

(Leader reads) For, everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard?

And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent?

As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day,

and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem.

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.