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Power to Witness
Acts 1:8
April 29, 2018, Jeff Germo

There is a lot of confusion as to what Jesus meant when he told his disciples that they were to go to Jerusalem, wait for the gift of his Spirit and that they would receive power to be his witnesses.

Let's just set the scene before we read Acts 1:8. Jesus had just been crucified. He defeated sin, death, and Satan by rising from the dead three days later. Then he spent 40 days with various of his disciples teaching them what it means to follow him when he is gone.

They asked him if this was the time he was going to defeat the Romans and restore the Kingdom of Israel on earth. He told them that is really not their business, but they were to go to Jerusalem where they would receive the Holy Spirit.

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Acts 1:8 (NLT)

⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

“You will be my witnesses.” So, what does it mean to be a witness of Jesus?

Allison Trites wrote a book entitled, *“The New Testament Witness in the World Today”* (1983). Trites said that the key to Acts 1:8 is in understanding what it means to be a witness. So, we are going to spend the next few minutes taking a look at this idea.

When the Lord got hold of my life in my early adult years I took my faith very seriously. I went to Bible college and I studied evangelism and apologetics and theology, and thought I had all the answers. I was not afraid to give anybody a good debate – whether they wanted one or not. And I thought that it was my job to convince them of the truth of the gospel. So, I did everything that I could to convince them that I was right and they were wrong.

I learned how to share the Four Spiritual Laws, and the Navigators Bridge to Life, and I took a course to become an Evangelism Explosion trainer. And I did all this because I thought it was my job to convince. And, I thought that if I could just do a good enough job of my presentation people would have to fall on their knees in tears and repent. What usually happened is people would do whatever they could to avoid me.

Now, don't get me wrong. These are all very good things to know. If you don't know how to talk about your faith with someone you need to learn. But, is that what Jesus meant when he said that we are to be his witnesses? Are we supposed to try to convince or debate people into the kingdom?

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Allison Trites, in **his** book, asked **why we try so hard to be the prosecuting attorney, when God has equipped us to be the witnesses.**

So, we need to imagine a court room. Dr. Tim Geddert, one of my seminary professors, wrote an article in which he gave a picture of what this might look like. I'll read a short excerpt.

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“Jesus is on trial . . . well, at least people are making a decision about Jesus. Those still undecided . . . well that would be the jury... In this trial, there are attorneys at work.

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So who is it that plays the role of the defense attorney, the one seeking to lead people to think well of Jesus . . . to acquit him of all charges . . . to declare him innocent . . . to prove that when he was arrested and brought to trial, well it was all a mistake!?

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That would of course be God's Spirit. In fact Jesus even called the Holy Spirit an "advocate," using a word that both then and now can apply to an attorney-at-law.

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But there is also an accuser. Then, as now, the accuser seeks to bring a negative verdict, seeks to lead the jury to condemn and reject."

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So, the **jury** are those who are **undecided about Jesus**. They are your friends, your colleagues, your family members, and your neighbours who do not yet know Jesus.

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The **defence attorney** is the **Holy Spirit**. He is the one who is working in the hearts of those around you, and in yours as you live the life of Christ.

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The **prosecuting** attorney, or the accuser, is Satan.

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Trites then goes on to say that **our role as followers of Jesus** is to be his **witnesses** who are called upon by the defence attorney, the Holy Spirit. I've never seen a live jury in action, but I've seen plenty of them in movies, and I have never once seen the witness in the witness box turn to the jury and urge them to hurry up and make the right decision. The judge would very quickly put an end to that.

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"Their role", Geddert continues, "is to be witnesses, to respond to the leading of the attorney, to provide the information needed, so that the jury or the panel of judges can reach a correct conclusion.

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Their job is not to convince, but to bear witness . . . to say what they have seen and heard . . . to be honest and forthright. It is the lawyer's job to take what witnesses contribute, and use it to persuade the jury or the judge."

Who is the lawyer? The Holy Spirit! His job is to convince and convict. Ours is simply to bear witness to what has happened when called upon by the Holy Spirit. Each person here this morning who has met Jesus Christ personally will be called upon to bear witness to what Jesus has done in your life. We don't have to have all the answers. We simply need to allow the Holy Spirit to change our hearts, minds and characters so that we become like Jesus. The question for us is this:

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How can we as the church of Jesus Christ be the kind of loving community that gives credibility to the things that we say are true about Jesus so that people will ask where our hope comes from?

Remember, Jesus said, ***"You will be my witnesses."*** That does not mean that it is our job to convince people.

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It means that **we are the evidence**. Consider exhibit "A." The Advocate, the Holy Spirit will call witnesses to the stand as evidence that Jesus really is who he said he is.

Look at what God has done in and through the lives of his people, the church. Look at how they love each other. Look at how God has transformed their lives. See how they are becoming more loving and kind and gentle. Look at how they stick together. They don't criticize one another. They bear each

other's burdens. Just look at the evidence. Look at the fruit. They don't gossip about each other. They always desire the best for one another. They aren't judgemental and critical.

Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would come upon us and would give us his power to be his witnesses. That means that he will make us the kinds of people who live in such a way that people stand up and take notice of Jesus in us. He wants to convince the world around us, by the evidence of our transformed lives **in community**, that what he said is true.

Since the beginning, God has been gathering for himself a people who would be all about bringing the love of Jesus to those around them. We, at Campbell River Baptist Church, are called to be that people, that alternative society within your community, that points to the transforming power and love of Jesus Christ. Isn't that exciting?

"You will be my witnesses!" We are the evidence that points to Jesus. As followers of Jesus, we have the most awesome, exciting job. Let's go out be witnesses to the awesome power and love of Jesus.



Power to Witness
Acts 1:8
Week of April 29, 2018

Objective of this study: To understand what it means to be a witness of Jesus.

[Remember, the main goal of each Growth Group is to allow God's Word to change your heart so that others would see Jesus in you and be likewise changed to be like him. He wants to change the world through us.]

Worship (5 – 10 minutes)

1. Sing a song or two of praise and thanksgiving to God.
2. Spend five minutes in silence asking God to prepare your heart for how he wants to speak to you.
3. After the five minutes have someone interrupt the silence and read **Colossians 1:3-6** meditatively to the group. Pause after each phrase letting God speak to you. **Did anything “jump out at you”?**

Welcome (5 minutes)

Have you ever felt pressured to “be a witness” to Jesus? How did you feel?

[It's really important when doing this study that we each think about ourselves specifically and ways we need to grow, not how Christians in general need to grow. Do the hard work of letting the Holy Spirit speak to *your* heart.]

Word (30-45 minutes)

1. What stood out from the sermon?
2. Read Acts 1:1-11.
 1. What was Luke's purpose in writing the book of Acts? See also Luke 1:1-4.
 2. What was Jesus' purpose for the instructions he gave his disciples? (see verses 3-8)
 3. Notice the word 'kingdom' in verses 3 and 6. What was the confusion the disciples had about what Jesus meant by his kingdom, and how did Jesus clear it up?
 4. Notice the little word 'but' at the beginning of verse 8. Describe the contrast it sets up between verses 6 and 8.

Work (30-45 minutes)

1. Think of the courtroom illustration.
 1. Who do each of the following characters represent, and what is their role?
 1. The jury
 2. The defence attorney, or advocate
 3. The prosecuting attorney, or accuser
 4. The witnesses

Sermon quote: “Remember, Jesus said, *“You will be my witnesses.”* That does not mean that it is our job to convince people... It means that we are the evidence. Consider exhibit “A.”

2. Read the following verses. What does each passage have to say about being witnesses, or evidence, that Jesus is alive and is who he says he is? Colossians 1:3-6; Col. 3:17; Col. 4:5-6; John 17:20-23.

Sermon quote: “Who is the lawyer? The Holy Spirit! His job is to convince and convict. Ours is simply to bear witness to what has happened when called upon by the Holy Spirit. Each person here this morning who has met Jesus Christ personally will be called upon to bear witness to what Jesus has done in your life. We don’t have to have all the answers. We simply need to allow the Holy Spirit to change our hearts, minds and characters so that we become like Jesus. The question for us is this:

How can we as the church of Jesus Christ be the kind of loving community that gives credibility to the things that we say are true about Jesus so that people will ask where our hope comes from?”

3. Have you ever thought you had to have all the answers? How is this different?

Sermon quote: “Look at what God has done in and through the lives of his people, the church. Look at how they love each other. Look at how God has transformed their lives. See how they are becoming more loving and kind and gentle. Look at how they stick together. They don’t criticize one another. They bear each other’s burdens. Just look at the evidence. Look at the fruit. They don’t gossip about each other. They always desire the best for one another. They aren’t judgemental and critical.”

4. Have you ever had the experience of someone asking you why you have hope? Or someone noticing that you are part of a loving community, and wanting to be part of it? Or have you been in a conversation where you knew the Holy Spirit was helping you respond graciously to someone who was curious about your faith? Share experiences like that.

5. This week, ask the Holy Spirit any ways he’d like your life to change to provide better evidence that Jesus is real.

Prayer

1. Spend the rest of the time praying for each other. **Praise God together for how he works, and how he allows us to partner with him to accomplish things in his kingdom.**

2. Here are some things you can pray about for the church:

A. That, as a church, we would actively and purposefully engage in the mission of Jesus in Campbell River.

B. Our church board and staff as they lead us to live out the mission of Jesus

C. River Kids ministry as they reach out to kids in our community.

D. **Our missionary of the month:** Mark and Catherine Buhler

E. **Our missionary of the week:** Duane and Dawn Bakken

F. **Local CR church:** Church of the Way, Pastors Rick and Brenda Shuttleworth