

# Witness

John 5:16; Acts 1:8



## Bearing Fruit

- ❑ Jesus told his disciples, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit.” (*John 15:5, NIV*) He also said, “I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last” (*15:16b, NIV*).
- ❑ “Bearing fruit” has different aspects (see Lesson 1). In John 15:16, “bearing fruit” probably includes leading others to faith in Jesus Christ. In particular, Jesus’ followers are called to share the gospel. Fruit is the seed-bearing part of the plant. Fruit is designed to reproduce. Believers are to “reproduce” fruitful believers so that the church grows.

## Jesus' Witnesses

- ❑ After Jesus’ death and resurrection, he “presented himself to [the apostles<sup>1</sup> he had chosen] and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive” (*Acts 1:3*). Before his ascension, Jesus told them to wait for the Holy Spirit (*1:4-5*).<sup>2</sup> Then he said...
  - 📖 “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” (*1:8*).
  1. What do you think Jesus meant by telling his disciples “you will be my witnesses?” (What is a “witness”?)
- ❑ In verse 8, “witness” refers to those who would declare as fact the things they knew about Jesus. These first disciples were “eyewitnesses.” They had been with Jesus and seen his life, ministry, suffering, and resurrection appearances. They were uniquely qualified to be his witnesses.<sup>3</sup>
  2. Can the phrase “you will be my witnesses” apply to Christians today? Explain.<sup>4</sup>



<sup>1</sup> ‘apostles’ (*apostolos*) – in this context, the twelve (or eleven, minus Judas) disciples (Luke 6:13; 9:1-2, 10). The word ‘apostle’ generally means ‘commissioned, sent agent.’ While the twelve, after adding Matthias (Acts 1:21-26), were the core group of apostles; Paul, Barnabas and James were also called apostles (Acts 14:14; Galatians 1:19).

<sup>2</sup> The Spirit would be sent to indwell, guide, and empower the disciples for their assigned mission (Acts 1:8; 2:1-4).

<sup>3</sup> A ‘witness’ (*martus*) is a person who has personal knowledge of something, and can attest to the truth concerning it. Jesus’ disciples knew the truth about Jesus, and the book of Acts is full of their testimony. They personally knew the facts concerning Jesus’ life, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. The words ‘we are witnesses of these things’ (or something similar) are repeated throughout Acts (2:32, 3:15, 5:32, 10:39, 10:41, 13:31).

<sup>4</sup> We might not be witnesses in a physical sense. But we do not have to *physically* see to ‘know the certainty of the things we have been taught’ (Luke 1:1-4). Otherwise Luke’s purpose in writing Luke and Acts would be doomed to failure. Jesus himself said to Thomas, who doubted his resurrection, ‘Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed’ (John 20:29). We too can attest to truths about Jesus.

3. Believers today should be telling others what they *know to be true* about Jesus. But how can we be certain about these things? (*Luke 1:1-4, John 20:30-31*)?<sup>5</sup>

4. Being a “witness” certainly involves telling others, but what else is important? How can Christians be more effective in their witness for Christ?<sup>6</sup>



- ❑ Jesus told his disciples that their witness would extend to “the ends of the earth” (*Acts 1:8b*). Earlier, he said that “repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations” (*Luke 24:46-47*). He also said, “Go and make disciples of all nations” (*Mt. 28:19*).
  - ❑ Likewise, today’s disciples are to be witnesses at home and throughout the world. We are to share the love of Christ, and the good news of Christ, across cultural and national boundaries.
5. Why do many Christians fall short in their role as Christ’s witnesses?<sup>7</sup>

### *Reflection & Application*

- If you are *not* a believer, identify the reasons why you have not accepted the Christian message. What can be done to address your concerns? If you have questions, seek answers.
- Do you know the basic content of “the gospel”? (See *The Good News* on the ICF website.)
  - *Our problem:* In our natural fallen condition, our relationship with God is broken. We are under the controlling power and consequences of sin, and subject to God’s judgment. We cannot rescue ourselves from this condition. (See *Romans 3:10-18, 23; 6:23; Eph. 2:1-3*)
  - † *God’s solution:* In his love and grace, God sent His Son to rescue us. Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead, defeating sin and death, providing *the way* to a relationship with God and eternal life. (See *John 3:16; Rom. 3:24-26; 6:23; Eph. 2:4-7*)
  - ✚ *Our response:* If we believe in the crucified and risen Christ, and receive Him as Savior and Lord, we will be saved. We will be connected to “the Vine” – in whom we have eternal life and every spiritual blessing. (See *John 3:16; Rom. 10:9-10; Eph. 1:3; 2:6-10*)
- If you would like to talk about becoming a Christian, talk to Jay or another mature believer.
- If you are a believer, are you being a “witness?” Is your life consistent with the Christian message? Make specific commitments to prepare for and to communicate the good news.

<sup>5</sup> Certainty involves both objective and subjective factors. Luke provided an orderly account of Jesus’ life ‘so that’ we could be certain (*Luke 1:1-4*). Likewise, John wrote his gospel ‘that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name’ (*John 20:30-31*). The Bible provides a trustworthy written record of the life of Christ. See *The Reliability of the New Testament* on the ICF website. Subjectively, God reveals the truth to us by his Spirit, who enables us to accept and understand the Bible, and apply it to our lives (see *1 Corinthians 2:6-14*). Also, the Spirit convicts the world of sin (*John 16:8*); and ‘testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children’ (*Romans 8:16*).

<sup>6</sup> It should be emphasized that ‘effectiveness’ comes from God. He is the one who convinces people of the truth. But certain characteristics are important, like credibility (believability). A witness of Christ proclaims a life-changing message, and his/her life should not contradict that message. Actions can speak louder than words. If a believer bears ‘the fruit of the Spirit’ (*Galatians 5:22-23*), he/she is much more likely to bear fruit in leading others to Christ. Characteristics include love, sincerity, understanding, wisdom, patience, humility, kindness, readiness to give reason (see *1 Peter 3:15*), and total dependence on God. As Jesus said, “apart from me you can do nothing” (*John 15:5*).

<sup>7</sup> If a so-called ‘Christian’ is not a genuine believer, we would not expect him/her to be a ‘witness.’ However, many believers also fall short. Reasons vary, but may include: fear of rejection, failure, or persecution; assumptions of disinterest; doubts about the actual necessity of others believing and receiving Jesus as Lord; laziness; lack of love.