

Di122 Essentials of Christianity

Lesson Di122-15 The Christian Life: Witnessing

Today's lesson is the first of four lessons on the topic of living the Christian life. Following the infilling of the Spirit and prayer, the four essentials in this section include witnessing, overcoming temptation, putting on the armor of God, and being victorious in spiritual warfare.

Jesus said that as a believer, 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). A witness is someone who has been changed by his experience with Jesus in such a way that it affects all areas of life. What a witness does is tell his personal testimony—his story—to anyone who will listen.

The apostle John wrote about the testimony God has given us about his Son. “And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life” (1John 5:11-12).

John began his Gospel talking about the Word—Jesus. “In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.” Then he introduced John the Baptist with these words, “There came a man who was sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world” (John 1:4, 6-9).

In the days just before Jesus began his ministry, John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near” (Matt 3:1-2). John the Baptist began his work in the desert near the Jordan River. He lived in the mountains close to Jerusalem with one thing on his mind—sharing his message. A rugged young man, he lived outdoors, gathering what he ate from the land. His meals were mostly locusts and wild honey. His clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. He was quite a sight for the people from Jerusalem. He was well known, not because of his clothes and eating habits, but for the testimony he proclaimed for all who would listen.

It was a message he had been taught from his boyhood. He was a miracle baby, conceived after much prayer by his parents, who were very old. His coming was announced by an angel of the Lord to his father Zechariah, as he performed his priestly duties in the temple. John was filled with the Holy Spirit while still in his mother Elizabeth's womb. As a child he had been dedicated to God's work by his parents. They taught him who God was and the promise of the Messiah's soon coming. John understood that people must first repent of their sins and listen to his message of forgiveness and reconciliation from God before being baptized. He had to testify to the truth God had shown him. God had given him the message of good news and freedom from condemnation. Urgency was growing in his soul. He knew God was asking him to deliver the message about the Messiah's coming. It was time to testify about the one coming to deliver the people from their sins.

Matthew tells us that John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: “A voice of one calling in the wilderness saying, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.’”

John himself testified to the crowds, “I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire” (Matt 3:1-3, 11).

John baptized people at a town called Bethany east of the Jordan River. Bethany was near where Joshua had led Israel across the Jordan to enter God’s Promised Land. This same location signified where God was beginning a new work among the Jews. The good news of the Messiah’s coming would change lives, bringing life and hope to the people.

When John began witnessing, hundreds of people came out to hear and see him. The rumor was that as a man of God his message changed lives. People wondered, “Is this man the Messiah who has finally come?” As they went to the river, they heard John testifying to the fact that after him was coming One greater than he. He had actually come before John; in fact he had always existed. John challenged people from many occupations to repent and turn away from sin to righteousness. With authority he baptized those who turned from sin in expectation of seeing the promised Messiah.

“Now this was John’s testimony when the Jews of Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, ‘I am not the Christ.’”

“They asked him, ‘Then who are you? Are you Elijah?’”

“He said, ‘I am not.’”

“‘Are you the Prophet?’”

“He answered, ‘No.’”

“Finally they said, ‘Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?’”

“John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, ‘I am the voice of one calling in the desert,’” to make straight the way for the Lord (John 1:19-23).

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). Some of John the Baptist’s disciples, including Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, heard what he had said, and began to follow Jesus.

This lesson is **important** because it teaches us that we are to be witnesses of the message God has given concerning Jesus Christ the Messiah.

The **main point** of the lesson is that like John, we should be faithful to obey God and testify to lost people about Jesus. God has asked us to tell others about our experience with Jesus, and that we have eternal life in his Son.

Review Questions:

1. Why was John witnessing in the desert about the coming of the Messiah? [Pause]

A. If you answered that John witnessed because he was doing the task God had given him, you have answered correctly.

2. What was the message John preached in the desert? [Pause]

A. If you said that John preached the message God had given him, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near. I baptize you with water for repentance, but after me comes one who is more powerful than I. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit,” you are right.

3. Consider carefully the testimony God has given you to share with others. What part of your story would you tell others about the Savior’s work in your life?

Your **assignment** is to listen to the lesson several times. Once you feel you have an understanding of the lesson, tell a believing friend the story. Make sure the person understands that John was a witness. Then, with your friend, speak to a nonbeliever and tell them the story of John the Baptist. Tell them that the Savior has come, and that he wants everyone to repent and believe in him. Practice witnessing to your unsaved family members, neighbors, and even strangers. The story of what Christ has done in your life is powerful and convincing!