



weekend

resource guide for the week of 4 March

Acts 1.8: You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Hebrews 2.1-4: Therefore we must pay greater attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it... How can we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? It was declared at first through the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him, while God added his testimony by signs and wonders and various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, distributed according to His will.

The primary purpose of the Holy Spirit is to empower you to be a witness to Jesus Christ and the salvation that comes in His name. In other words, to be a witness for Jesus Christ, we first need a witness. The New Testament describes this witness as the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the empowering of the Holy Spirit, or the filling of the Holy Spirit. You must not expect your experience of the Holy Spirit's witness to be identical with another nor should any single experience or manifestation be projected as normative for all. There are various and diverse experiences of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes He comes upon you gently and other times as a mighty torrent of conviction and strength. What is normative is that the Holy Spirit's coming is a tangible, albeit sometimes ineffable, experience in the life of a man because He comes to bear witness...

His witness brings a fresh awareness of the presence of God. The Holy Spirit makes real to us the things which we have believed by faith. His love, His grace, His majesty, and His strength are not merely the lyrics of choruses and hymns anymore. Faith is no longer merely the will to believe or a cognitive affirmation of doctrinal truth. Instead faith becomes, through the witness of the Holy Spirit, like a living umbilical cord between the seen and the unseen, nourishing and sustaining our life in Him.

His witness provokes in us a fresh sense of awe in the presence of God. Then men of Scripture who meet God never refer to Him tritely or in over-familiar terms. Their intimacy with Him is never an excuse for presumptuous speech or behavior. Instead men, in whom the Spirit bears witness, have a deep reverence for the Lord. They recognize the gravity of their sin, the duplicity of their ways, the great disparity between their humanity and His glory, greatness, and majesty.

His witness brings the assurance of God's love. The Holy Spirit's testimony gives to us the overwhelming knowledge of God's love through Jesus Christ. The Spirit powerfully proclaims to the soul of the believer what He said to His own son, "You are my beloved son, in you do I take pleasure." Paul simply described it this way, "The Spirit bearing witness with our Spirit that we are sons of God." (Romans 8.16)

Thomas Goodwin, a Puritan living in the 17th century described it this way:

A man is walking with his little child. The child knows that he is the child of his father; he knows that his father loves him; he rejoices in that love; and he is happy in it. There is no uncertainty about his relationship with his father but suddenly the father, moved by some impulse known only to him, takes hold of his child and picks him up. He lifts him through the air above him and then lowers him so that their eyes meet. He tussles his hair, squeezes his arms, embraces him, and then sets him down and they continue walking on together. The child knew before that his father loved him, and he knew that he was his child. Nevertheless this loving embrace, the serendipitous joy of being swung through the air, the meeting of their eyes, and the tussle of his hair all communicate this love in extraordinary ways. The relationship is unchanged and yet the child is assured in extraordinary ways.

Such is the witness of the Holy Spirit.

The witness of the Holy Spirit is not a once-for-all-time experience. It is his continuing gift to us for all time. He is our witness so that we might bear witness to Him. May we all be empowered by the Witness of God in Jesus' Name.

Enjoy your LifeGroup!

Getting to know one another better..

What is one of the most awkward conversations you can remember having? What made it awkward for you? Was it awkward for the other person? Did the other person recognize that it had become awkward for you?

John 4:1-29, 39-42: an “awkward spiritual conversation”...

Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John 2 (although Jesus himself did not baptize, but only his disciples), 3 he left Judea and departed again for Galilee. 4 And he had to pass through Samaria. 5 So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. 6 Jacob’s well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour.

John 4.7 A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.” 8 (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) 9 The Samaritan woman said to him, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?” (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) 10 Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.” 11 The woman said to him, “Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? 12 Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock.” 13 Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, 14 but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” 15 The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water.”

John 4.16 Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come here.” 17 The woman answered him, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’; 18 for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true.” 19 The woman said to him, “Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. 20 Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.” 21 Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. 22 You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. 23 But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. 24 God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” 25 The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things.” 26 Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am he.”

John 4.27 Just then his disciples came back. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, “What do you seek?” or, “Why are you talking with her?” 28 So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, 29 “Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?” 30 They went out of the town and were coming to him...

John 4.39 Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me all that I ever did.” 40 So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. 41 And many more believed because of his word. 42 They said to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.”

What? (does the Bible say)

What in this story would have seemed strange, unconventional or just plain wrong to people living in Jesus’ time and culture ?

What do these verses reveal about Jesus?

What is the “Gospel message” to this Samaritan woman? Is it different from how you think of the “Gospel”? Explain.

Now what? (how will I think based on what this passage says)

What one generation has called, “spiritual conversations”, a previous generation called, “witnessing”. Do you think these two terms are synonymous? Why or why not?

How can prejudice affect a Christian’s witness? How might a person feel put off by another’s background, nationality, or race?

What groups of people do you feel uncomfortable being around? Why?

So what? (difference will this passage make in how I live)

Do you feel equipped/ready to have a spiritual conversation? Why or why not?

What slows you down or stops you from sharing your faith with others?

Take some time to be still before the Lord... Who are people that come to mind that you can have a spiritual conversation with? List two or three steps you can take this week to begin facilitating an opportunity.

How can your LifeGroup foster an environment that encourages you to initiate spiritual conversations with those God has placed in your life?

Don't forget to listen to Rose Males talk on "How to Have Spiritual Conversations" and check out the online resources there. (<http://www.faithsandiego.org/sermons-catalog>)

My prayer requests (write in advance what you want your group to pray for...)

Praying for my group...