

Series: Living to Be a Witness

Lesson 5: “Living with a Gentle Spirit”

***Announcements, encouragement to invite people and opening prayer.**



Connect: an opportunity for people to immediately interact and connect with each other; icebreaker/attention getters. **Icebreaker:** If your life were suddenly and unexpectedly put on hold for 2 years due to health or job loss, what would you do with your time?

Background: Sometime between AD 57-59, Paul is arrested, imprisoned and tried in Caesarea, Philippi. He is then transferred to Rome and spends 2 years under house arrest. This was during the time Nero was Emperor. Nero started out a good guy, but when Rome caught on fire in AD 64, which Nero may have been responsible for, he shifted the blame to the Christians. It is said that he burned Christians alive and used them as torches for his circus races. This was the beginning of a policy of persecuting Christians that would continue by Rome until the fourth century. Fortunately, Paul is imprisoned while Nero is still friendly to Christians. Otherwise, there would have been no house arrest for Paul. His life has been put on hold for 2 years. So, what does he do? He teaches all who visit him under arrest and writes this incredible letter from God to the Philippian Christians.

Bottom Line: Paul makes a very important truth stand out in this letter. Gentleness, the Holy Spirit's fruit in us, should be evident to all. It is critical if the church is to have a witness to the world. That is why Jesus would pray in John 17, “Father, make them one as We are one so the world can believe...”

LESSON PLAN

Read Philippians 3:10-11

1. How intimate does Paul long for His relationship to be with Jesus?

To know meant to have intimacy, a loving relationship. Paul wants to intimately know his Jesus. He wants to fully grasp the power of Jesus' resurrection from the dead, to embrace the impossible. He wants to share in suffering for mankind just as Jesus suffered for mankind. He wants the same mission and purpose on earth. He wants to have the boldness and focused ministry of Jesus even to the point of death, never looking away from the mission. I believe that also can mean that Paul longs for his ministry of the truth to never stop teaching and transforming long after he is gone from this earth. Finally, he wants all these longings to be fulfilled in his resurrection from the dead to join his Lord forever.



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Question: On a scale of 1 (interested) to 10 (madly in love/can’t get enough), how would you rate your hunger for intimacy with Jesus and His mission on earth?

Read Philippians 3:12-20

2. How does Paul describe his Christian walk and goals at this time?

3. Why would refusing to dwell on the past be an important part of Paul’s spiritual plan?

Instead Paul strains, pushes his limits, to be everything God called him to be in his life and ministry. You might say he pushes past the runner’s wall. He knows God will give him strength to go beyond his own abilities.

Questions:

*How does the past slow down or stop God’s plans for ministry in Christians today?

*What can we do to go beyond our comfort zone?

4. If we are not living up to what we have learned from God in our spiritual life, what does Paul imply?

5. What does Paul teach us about being mentored?

Read Philippians 4:1-9

6. In view of our citizenship being in heaven, but our witness is in the here and now on earth, what does Paul call his dear friends and us to do?

Question: How can we sometimes stand a little shaky and moveable in the Lord as Christians?

7. What seemed to be the problem with two of Paul’s fellow workers in the church at Philippi?

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Two ladies, Euodia and Syntyche could not come to some kind of agreement. These were important workers with Paul and a man named Clement and some others. Paul is asking someone there, possibly one of the Elders, to help the two ladies get this dispute resolved. It was obviously serious enough that it was brought to Paul’s attention while he is under arrest in Rome. For some reason, no one is dealing with the issue.

Question: What are some of the reasons conflict between workers in the church do not get addressed quickly?

8. What is God’s formula, His positive action steps, for standing firm in the Lord?

- a. _____ in the Lord _____; _____
- b. Let your _____ be evident to all.
- c. Do not be _____ about anything.
- d. Present every request to God by _____ and _____ with thanksgiving.

9. What promise is given to those who follow God’s formula for standing firm in the Lord?

Question: How does the peace of Christ guard your heart and your mind?



Interactive Teaching Ideas: ideas for learner-focused teaching. (*Have the people at each table discuss the following: Paul says God wants us to focus on what is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, anything excellent or praiseworthy and to learn from those who are walking an intimate life of faith with Jesus. If we do this, the God of peace will be with us. Share at your table how to accomplish this discipline of faith. Then share together if you like.*

Final Questions: What is the one idea that stands out to you most from this lesson?