

The Heights Baptist Church

EVANGELISM • SESSION THREE: AWARENESS OF MY STORY •

REVELATION 12:10-12; JOHN 4:39-42; 1 PETER 3:15; PSALM 71:15-18 • 8/8/2021

MAIN POINT

Every believer's testimony is at the same time both similar and unique. God brought each of His people to life through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, but He uses different experiences to reveal that to us.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Share about any experiences you've had with a well-known figure (i.e., a celebrity, athlete, or recognized leader).

What emotions did you feel when you realized who you encountered? Who was the first person you wanted to tell about your encounter?

When we encounter a celebrity, athlete, or leader, most of us are quick to tell a trusted friend or post on social media. We want others to know about our brush with fame. If we have come into relationship with Jesus, then we have met the most important person ever to live. As believers, we should be telling everyone we meet about our encounter with Jesus. We have a story to tell that opens the door for others to meet Jesus.

How comfortable do you feel sharing your story of coming to faith with others? How often do you have the opportunity to do so? How eager are you to do so?

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ REVELATION 12:10-12.

Consider the following words and phrases from Revelation 12:10-12: salvation, power, kingdom of God, authority, conquer. Do you struggle to believe any of these words relate to your testimony? If yes, discuss which one(s) and why.

Do you think about conquering Satan “by the word of your testimony” as something you need to do or something that has already been done for you? Explain.

In verse 10, Satan’s accusations are present tense. What are some ways Satan uses our stories to accuse us (i.e. makes us feel unworthy of God’s love and of acceptance, makes us question our salvation, makes us think we have to try harder for God to love us, makes us think there is a better way than to follow Jesus)?

In these verses, Satan’s defeat is past tense. What does this tell you about the meaning of the word “testimony” here? When you share your testimony, is it primarily about your own personal experiences or what God has done?

Not every testimony is dramatic, in an earthly sense. But in a spiritual sense, every testimony is equally important and shares the same dramatic elements: We were dead in our sin, and God brought us to life through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Remembering our encounter with Jesus, then, protects us against Satan’s accusations.

Even more, sharing your encounter with Jesus impacts other people in life-changing ways. It is important to remember that God is actively at work in you right here, right now. In Christ, you overcame the world. In Christ, you get to take part in changing it, too.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 4:39-42.

Read John 4:28-29. What might have kept this woman from sharing her story with the people who knew her?

Considering those factors, why do you think the woman decided to be so honest and forthright with the townspeople about her encounter with Jesus?

What keeps you from sharing your spiritual story with others? How can you overcome those roadblocks?

The Samaritan woman rushed to town to inform the townspeople about her encounter with Jesus. She challenged them to go see for themselves to determine if Jesus was the Messiah. She did not know all the answers, but she shared what she did know. We may not know all the answers either, but we can tell what we do know.

How would you describe the impact this unnamed woman had on her city?

Why does a person’s testimony often have such profound impact on others?

Who is someone whose faith story has impacted your own walk with the Lord?

Explain.

Many of the townspeople sought out Jesus and believed in Him after they encountered Him for themselves. The woman's story functioned as an invitation for the people she encountered to examine what she had discovered, which led them to believe in Jesus. The Holy Spirit uses a variety of means, including the testimony of believers, to draw people to faith in Jesus.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 PETER 3:15; PSALM 71:15-18.

What does it mean, practically, to “be ready at all times to give a defense to anyone who asks you for the hope that is in you”? Does this mean if no one asks, then you don't need to share your testimony? Explain.

The psalmist confessed God's righteousness and salvation were too magnificent to sum up. He had known the Lord his whole life. Still, like the Samaritan woman who had just met Jesus, he didn't know all the answers. How can you be ready at all times to tell people about Jesus (1 Pet. 3:15) if you don't know everything about God's righteousness and salvation?

How much time do you spend reflecting on God's faithfulness in your life? How might doing so more often impact how or how often you share your testimony?

If you are a follower of Jesus, then you have a testimony, or faith story, that tells how God has worked in your life. Your faith story is a great opportunity to tell people the difference that Jesus Christ has made in you. Chances are some aspect of God's work in your life will connect with others. Your testimony should clearly tell the story of how you became a follower of Jesus Christ and what God is doing in your life now. When we follow Jesus and live on mission for Him, our faith story continually has chapters added to it. Each chapter can be used by God to bless others.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What experience with God has had the most influence on your life? How has that experience affected your life? How would your life be different if you had not had that experience?

What hangups or difficulty do you have in sharing your testimony? How can your small group help? How can personal Bible study help? How can prayer help?

PRAYER

Ask God to help you see your life circumstances as special opportunities for sharing the gospel. Invite Him to show you how your testimony matters, and that your testimony is continuing even now.

COMMENTARY

| REVELATION 12:10-11

Sometimes what looks like defeat is victory, as when believers die for their faith. Satan has killed them, but they are the ultimate victors because of the blood of the Lamb (Christ's death on the cross) and the word of their testimony.

| JOHN 4:39-42

4:39-41. We already know the woman had a change of heart and mind that indicated new birth. She had gone back to town to announce her meeting with Jesus. John reported that many Samaritans believed that day because of the woman's testimony. But since this is one of John's key words, he wanted to emphasize what actually happened in that town. Preliminary faith that rested on the woman's testimony became solid faith after the Savior had stayed there two days and proclaimed his message.

How did Jesus witness? He was friendly; He asked questions; He showed concern for human need; He faithfully explained the Scriptures; and He emphasized good news for thirsty people. Witnesses aren't responsible for converting people; their task is to tell the truth about what they know.

4:42. The corporate announcement at the end of the passage is nothing less than dramatic: we know that this man really is the Savior of the world. "World" (kosmos) is one of John's key words, appearing 185 times in the New Testament, 105 of those in John's writings. Earlier the discussion centered on two sites of worship, Jerusalem and Mount Gerizim. Then the talk turned to the coming Messiah, surely still a localized expectation related to Samaritan theology. Now, after two days with Jesus, these new converts understood the gospel very well.

| 1 PETER 3:15

3:15. Instead of running away, Christians need a renewed allegiance. Set apart Christ as Lord means “to treat as holy or to regard with reverence.” Christians are to acknowledge Jesus Christ as the Holy One and also as Lord. “Lord” is the New Testament term for the Old Testament personal name for God (see Exod. 3:14-15; 6:2-3), often transcribed as “Jehovah” but more properly as “Yahweh.” The New Testament applies the Old Testament title for God the Father to Jesus Christ, thus celebrating the deity of Christ.

The believer is to view Christ as holy, as worthy of reverence because of who he is. To reverence Christ as Lord means to believe that Jesus Christ is in control and that those who come against the believer are not. To have such reverence is to maintain a deep-seated confidence in Jesus Christ as the reigning Lord of the universe (see 3:22). When our lives are centered on Christ, who is in control of the universe, then we are able to respond properly to the uncertainties and inconsistencies of life.

When we have made this commitment, we can respond to harm by communicating a positive word regarding our hope in Christ rather than running away. Even while suffering unjustly, Christians are able to go on because of their hope in the future.

From the opening words of chapter 1, Peter has emphasized the living hope of the believer (see 1:3). The unbeliever does not enjoy this hope but is connected only to an empty way of life, and a life of spiritual darkness (see 1:18; 2:9). One of the distinguishing marks of believers in Christ is their possession of hope. Christian hope is to be so real and distinctive that non-Christians will be puzzled by it and ask for an explanation. We should seize the opportunities of witness presented in these kinds of situations. Our response should be characterized not by smugness or vindictiveness but by gentleness and respect.

| PSALM 71:15-18

71:15-16. Righteousness and salvation are often paired in testimonies of God’s mighty acts toward His people (40:10; 51:14). Public praise is the responsibility of a person who experiences deliverance by Yahweh.

71:17-18. The instruction of Yahweh in the psalmist’s life is passed on to other generations. This was part of his vow to the Lord for delivering him from suffering.