

Livin' the Life
Witnesses to the Light, part 3
John 1:6-8
October 8, 2017

We are in the third week of our series on the Gospel of John, "Livin' the Life." To review, John's purpose in writing his gospel is that we *believe* that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that by believing we may have *life* in his name. Life is defined as knowing God and Jesus Christ (17:3). We are moving slowly through 1:1-18, then pick up speed through the rest of the gospel. I started the series with an overview, then Matt Early did a great job with "Livin' in the Light," covering 1:1-5. Today we look at "Witnesses to the Light," 1:6-8.

John introduces us to John the Baptist as a witness to Jesus Christ. Notice that he does so awkwardly and abruptly, look at verse five, "the light shines into the darkness" and then verse nine, "the true light which gives light to everyone was coming into the world." He does this to get our attention, to see the necessity of human witness to Jesus.

God Sends People (6)

John came¹ because God sent him. God is a sending God. God does not rely on human initiative to accomplish his purposes, he sends. The word "was" is the same verb used three times in verse three. The creative power of God in creation is the same power that guides and directs history, including God's purpose in the sending and the saving of people. God is establishing a New Creation with the coming of his Son to restore what was lost in the fall, light and life. In John's gospel, God sends John the Baptist (1:6); Jesus (3:16); His Spirit (14:26); and the disciples (20:21). God does not rely on human initiative in his sending and his saving; He sends and He saves. Why does God send humans at all? The God who created everything does not need our help. But God has chosen to use humans to display his great power to push back the darkness (5) by means of witnessing to the light. This has two implications for all of us. First, John was sent with a specific task. Maybe God is calling you to send you to some specific task. It may be some ministry, short or long term missions, maybe serving in our community. Maybe God would call some of you retirees to some specific task? God may call any of us into something else that we are not doing right now. Are you willing to go? Jesus says to each of us when we believe, "follow me (Mat 4:19)." Second, all of us are sent by God in a general sense. No matter how or why you are in Homer, ultimately you are here because God sent you here to be a witness to the light. Christians/disciples are not masters of their own destiny but follow where Jesus leads. God sends people, so we are a sent people. Are you living as sent person?

Sent People are Necessary Witnesses (7-8)

God loves to promote the light through human witnesses. A witness is someone with some knowledge and experience that can help establish the truthfulness of some fact that is in dispute. John's *experience* came when God called him in the wilderness and then he encountered Jesus when John baptized him. And his *knowledge* came when he reflected on the Old Testament and concluded that Jesus was the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (1:29). He witnessed about the light by pointing people to the light (See 1:15, 19, 32, 34). You have the experience and knowledge to point people to Jesus. How you witness depends on who you are as a person and the person you are sharing with. Some of us are able to witness by means of facts or arguments for the validity of Christianity. Others witness by sharing the way Jesus has transformed your life. Still others witness by sharing the way Jesus helps you through the difficulties of life.² But even with these questions, we need to be sensitive to where people are spiritually. How we share the gospel depends on where people are in their understanding of spiritual masters.

¹ The verb came is translated as was in the ESV.

² Here are five questions that are helpful in starting spiritual conversations. 1. Do you have any kind of spiritual beliefs? 2. To you, who is Jesus? 3. Do you think there is a heaven or a hell? 4. If you died tonight, where would you go? 5. By the way, if what you were believing is not true, would you want to know?

John was effective because he was a burning and shining lamp (5:35). He burned with a passion for Jesus. Jesus was the object of his affections and as a result he was shining with the light of truth. All of us should desire to burn with Jesus. We are described as lamps that point to the light (Mat 5:16; Acts 1:8; 1 Pet 2:9). It is the word which stokes the flame in our hearts. Get into God's word – read it, meditate on it, memorize it.

Witnesses Fulfill the Mission of Christ (7)

Why does God want us to bear witness to the light? We find the answer in the middle of verse seven, "that all might believe." John came as a witness so that we would believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah. And God sends each of us into our community, into our own little worlds, so that others would believe. God has sent us as witnesses to the light as the means by which the light overcomes the darkness. The light dispels the darkness through the spread of the gospel as the light overcomes the darkness within the hearts of men and women, boys and girls, and they believe. And in believing the light gives eternal life. We serve a sending and saving God who does not rely on human initiative to send and to save but does the necessary work to accomplish both the sending and the saving. So, God sends us into the community as witnesses and as we point people to Jesus, it is like flashing a light over people to see who is attracted to the light. If God is working in them, they will be drawn to the light. If not, we continue to invest in the relationship and wait for opportunities come up to point them to Jesus and see if they are drawn to the light. They may not be drawn to the light today or tomorrow but may six months or six years.

Take Aways . . .

- Live as Sent People – who has God sent you to?
- Live as Witnesses to the Light

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1. The introduction of John the Baptist in verses 6-8 is a bit awkward and out of place with the flow of the verses (see verses 5 & 9). Why does John introduce him this way?
 2. Why does God send human witnesses?
 3. David mentioned two implications of God sending John the Baptist. Do you remember what those implications are?
 4. What did David say was the definition of a witness?
 5. Have you ever witness about Christ by sharing the gospel?
 6. How have you shared the gospel? I.e. by sharing your testimony, the gospel message, the validity of Christianity, etc?
 7. Are you comfortable sharing the gospel?
 8. Do you think you are an effective witness when sharing the gospel? How could you improve your witness?
 9. David said that John the Baptists was effective because he burned with a passion for Jesus. David mentioned reading Scripture as a way to refuel our hearts. How often do you read and meditate on Scripture?
 10. Do you ever memorize Scripture? What is your experience of memorizing Scripture?
 11. Is there anything besides reading and meditating and memorizing Scripture that you can do to refuel yourself? How often do you this it?
 12. What does it mean to live as sent people? Who do you think God has sent you to specifically?

