

Lifestyle Witnessing

• Lesson Six •

Adapt

1. Apostolic adaptability
2. Divine adaptability

Worship

Read responsively the hymn “Come, Follow Me, the Savior Spoke” (CW 453:1,3).

A: “Come, follow me,” the Savior spoke, “All in my way abiding.

B: Deny yourselves; the world forsake; Obey my call and guiding.

A: Oh, bear the cross, whate’er betide;

B: Take my example for your guide.

A: “My heart abounds in lowliness, My soul with love is glowing,

B: And gracious words my lips express, With meekness overflowing.

A: My heart, my mind, my strength, my all

B: To God I yield; on him I call.

Prayer: Then let us follow Christ our Lord And take the cross appointed
And, firmly clinging to his Word, In suff’ring be undaunted.
For those who bear the battle’s strain
The crown of heav’nly life obtain. Amen. (CW 453:5)

Witnessing Activity Report

Spend a few minutes talking about witnessing joys and frustrations, triumphs and failures.

Introduction

Think of a person with whom you have a difficult time communicating. List the consequences of your lack of communication.

After you’ve made your list, answer these two questions.

1. Am I willing to accept those consequences?
2. Is it worth my effort to communicate more effectively?

Most of the time poor communication stems from differences. We tend to believe that others see things the way we do. That's wrong. A key to communicating effectively is to discover the other person's perspective.

This principle is also true when we're communicating our faith. For example, how would you respond if a coworker said to you, "I could never believe in God the way you do"? On the one hand, you could become defensive and argue with him. You could tell him he's lost and quote a Bible passage or two.

Or you could reply, "That's interesting. Tell me what you think about my God. Maybe, based on what you believe about him, I wouldn't believe in him either!" Which response do you think will help you gain the other person's perspective and, perhaps, trust?

We have the most important news in the world. It demands the best possible communication. Such communication can be difficult and frustrating. It demands that we adapt to other people's communication styles or needs. It means, as Paul said, "We put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ" (1 Corinthians 9:12).

Studying God's Word

Apostolic adaptability

Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-23.

Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

1. In your own words, state the principle Paul followed when ministering to others.
2. Review the passage again, and state why Paul followed this principle.
3. How did Paul follow this principle in the following places:
 - in Lystra? See Acts 16:3.
 - in Corinth? See Acts 18:18.
 - in Jerusalem? See Acts 21:26.
4. How did Paul become like a non-Jew (those not having the law) in the city of Athens? See Acts 17:22,23.

5. Read the section from 1 Corinthians below. How did Paul become like “the weak” (Christians easily offended or lacking knowledge)?

Some people are still so accustomed to idols that when they eat such food [leftover from idol sacrifices] they think of it as having been sacrificed to an idol, and since their conscience is weak, it is defiled. Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak. For if anyone with a weak conscience sees you who have this knowledge eating in an idol’s temple, won’t he be emboldened to eat what has been sacrificed to idols? So this weak brother, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge. When you sin against your brothers in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause him to fall (1 Corinthians 8:7,9-13).

His Word in My Life

Learning to adapt is not easy. First, we have to know when it’s necessary to adapt. Second, we must overcome our natural aversion to changing our way of doing things. Imagine someone of a different generation, culture, or personality. How might you have to adapt in order to better share the gospel?

Paul teaches us how important it is to adapt, but he also reminds us that there are limits. “I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law” (1 Corinthians 9:21). How might Paul have been tempted to sin in adapting his methods to reach others?

Paul’s goal is the Spirit’s goal: to win the lost. When that becomes our goal, we’ll be more eager and able to adapt to others.

Divine adaptability

Scan John chapters 3 and 4.

Jesus knows what is in a person’s heart. He also knows the unique needs of individuals. Three conversations in John chapters 3 and 4 demonstrate Jesus’ ability to deal uniquely with different personalities. His goal was the same: to bring each person to faith. But he varied his approach. He adapted his witness.

1. What was unique about Jesus’ communication with each of these people? Consider their ages, life situations, hurts, family lives, cultures, and burning questions.
 - Nicodemus (John 3:1-21)
 - The Samaritan woman (John 4:4-26)

- The royal official (John 4:49-53)

His Word in My Life

Jesus never said, "Write down this piece of information. Someday you'll need it." Sometimes we're accused of having all the right answers to questions people aren't asking. How might that happen?

Discuss practical ways you may need to adapt to communicate Christ to each of the following:

- a stressed-out manager
- a new mother
- a teenager

Jesus didn't waste his time blaming age, gender, or personality differences for an inability to communicate God's love. He adapted. So can we.

Summary

Take each witnessing situation as you find it. Don't force the person to fit into your mold. Rather, adapt your approach and presentation to the person. Be flexible. Try to think like the other person. Don't do or say things that would turn him or her away.

Life with God

Read the gospel of Mark this week, and note how Jesus communicated differently with various individuals.

- Day 1: Read Mark chapters 1 and 2.
- Day 2: Read Mark chapters 3 and 4.
- Day 3: Read Mark chapters 5 to 7.
- Day 4: Read Mark chapters 8 to 10.
- Day 5: Read Mark chapters 11 to 13.
- Day 6: Read Mark chapters 14 to 16, and plan your witnessing activity report for the group.