

The GOSPEL of JOHN

SO THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE

Will We Do It?

Scripture

John 1:29–34 (ESV)

The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

³⁰This is he of whom I said, ‘After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.’ ³¹I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel.” ³²And John bore witness: “I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. ³³I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ ³⁴And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.”

Introduction

The expansion of the gospel in our time (as in all ages of the Christian church) depends in no small measure upon whether or not we will do it and, if we do, how well.

The episode on “the next day” is a continuation of John the Baptist’s testimony to Jesus. While previously John could only hint at the coming of Christ, now he identifies Christ plainly. Note how confidently the Baptist can speak of his knowledge of Jesus (1:33). “John’s knowledge of the coming one was not innate knowledge (1:31–33). It was knowledge that had come to him through revelation—when the Spirit descended on Jesus” (1:32).¹ This is John’s theology of revelation at work. True knowledge of God is beyond human reach: It is a gift of divine disclosure. John has several opportunities to speak directly of the identity and purpose of Jesus.²

Sermon Guide

The Principles of Witnessing

1. The first great principle for being a witness: the witness must recognize that he has no independent importance in himself. A Christian will never be an effective witness if he is placing either himself or his own needs first in his thinking.
2. The second great principle for witnessing is that we must bear witness to the Light, and this means that we must witness verbally. The living of the Christian life by itself is not enough for a *complete* witness; there must also be a verbal witness.
 - A nonverbal witness is at best merely puzzling to the non-Christian, and it can be totally misunderstood.
 - The second reason why a nonverbal witness is inadequate is that, if it is effective at all, it should lead to a verbal witness. That is, if you are attempting to honor Christ by the way you are living, the things you are doing should lead to conversation about Jesus Christ and what he has meant in your experience.

A verbal witness is a true witness. Thus, throughout the Gospel of John, the stories of those who are reached by Jesus Christ almost without exception end with a spoken profession of their belief.

The Message of the Witness

1) a witness to *who Jesus Christ is*; 2) a witness to *what he has done*; and 3) a witness to *how a man or woman can come to know him personally*.

1. We witness to who Jesus Christ is. John did this when he testified, “This is the one I meant when I said, ‘A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me’ ” (v. 30). Again, “I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God” (v. 34). This is where we begin in our witness, because most of the points of Christian doctrine gain their significance from the fact that Jesus Christ is God.

2. We witness to what Jesus Christ has done. The focus of Christ's work is to be found in his death on the cross. Hence, we want to share the meaning of his death when we try to tell others about him.

In his day, John the Baptist did this by reference to the Jewish sacrifices. He said, "*Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world*" (v. 29). He recognized that the sacrifices were to be fulfilled in Jesus and that he would bear our sin as Isaiah had said. "*Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows. . . . he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed*" (Isa. 53:4–5).

Do you believe that?

Jesus can deliver us from death today. There is that final death, the second death, which is the separation of the soul of the individual from God. He delivers from that. But there are also the little deaths that we experience daily because of our natural alienation from God.

3. We also witness to the way in which a person can come to know and trust Jesus for himself. John did it by pointing to the fact that Jesus is the giver of the Spirit. He said, "*I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit'*" (v. 33).

Recognition for John the Baptist came not from prior knowledge, but from supernatural revelation. John does not say how and when he had been given the sign, but he says that he had it from God, who had sent him to baptize that the Spirit would descend and abide on the one whom he awaited.

John the Baptist has completed his personal witness. In humility he has deflected glory and interest away from himself and drawn attention to Jesus, describing powerfully who he is and what he will do. This chapter is about testimonies, about men who meet Jesus, who recognize they will be changed forever, and who discover the true identity of Jesus.³

Receiving Jesus

John 1:12 (ESV) "*But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,*"

Receiving Jesus happens by faith as we "receive" him or "open" the doors of our lives to him.

We do this by praying. We say, "Lord Jesus Christ, I admit that I am a sinner and in need of the salvation that you bring to men. I believe that you died for me, so that my sin is atoned for and borne away forever. I now open the door and invite you into my life and ask that you will cleanse me and rule my life forever. Amen

The act itself is indispensable.

Have you received Jesus?

If you have not, you are not a real Christian. It is not enough merely to know about Christ; you must belong to him. On the other hand, if you have done that, then let me ask whether you have ever invited another person to make the same commitment.⁴

¹G. Borchert, *John*, 1:137.

²Burge, G. M. (2000). *John* (p. 73). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House

³Burge, G. M. (2000). *John* (p. 75). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

⁴Boice, J. M. (2005). *The Gospel of John: an expository commentary* (pp. 109–114). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.