

Multiplying and Mobilizing Witnesses

Lesson 4 Designed Ministries for Witness Mobilization

**Instructor's
Guide**

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One of the needs of today's church is to think in terms of interrelated systems rather than quick fixes. Please note the following illustration.

Imagine you are a zookeeper charged with raising tortoises. Tortoises need lots of calcium to grow. This is because of their protective shells. To metabolize calcium, tortoises need vitamins A and D3. If they do not have enough of these two vitamins in their diet, it doesn't matter how much calcium they ingest. If you feed your tortoises great quantities of calcium and vitamin A but not enough D3, your tortoises will fail to develop healthy growth. So, you add D3, and they start to develop. You now say D3 is the answer and others agree, as they too add D3 to their tortoises' diets and get similar results. After a while, the D3 reaches a maximum level, and now there is a lack of vitamin A. No matter how much added D3 is applied to the diet, the tortoises won't grow until vitamin A is now supplemented (*The Church on the Other Side* by Brian D. McLaren).

The point being it takes all ingredients monitored and added at varying points to maintain a healthy growing tortoise. Too much of one at the exclusion of the other results in poor health.

I. Connect ministry and witnessing for effective mobilization.

In designing the church to mobilize its witness force, we need to recognize that every person is unique. Let's not keep trying cookie-cutter approaches to witnessing. Let's encourage people to utilize their God-given talents, passions, and interest to become their witness fields.

We do this by connecting life ministry and interest with witnessing. Jesus modeled this by not only giving testimony (witness) in the synagogue, but also while eating a meal, walking down a road with friends, or entering into the everyday activities of life with others. To Jesus, witnessing was basically connecting with others and revealing God's love and grace to them and for them.

To help mobilize witness potential, you will want to design life and interest ministries that allow the committed followers of Jesus to engage in sharing their faith.

II. Programmed Designs for Witness Mobilization.

One of the basic principles of development is to start with what you have. The first place to start in mobilizing a witness force is to use what the church already has available, but retool to a witness format.

A. Sunday School

This is one of the most underused ministry arms of the church that is ready-made to mobilize the church's witness force.

1. Redesigned possibilities for Sunday School.

- Classes quarterly adopt a community project: Clean Neighborhood Day; the class meets to pray and select an area to help pickup trash along common walkways, roadsides, parks, etc.
- Special servant weekend: Hand out water during a summer day, wash windshields (with permission) in a busy shopping area, etc.
- Classes sponsor bring your friend event: This is a low-key event for fellowship. Examples: Super Bowl Party, Monday Night Football, Games and Goodies, etc. The idea is to connect with your class and their circle of unchurched friends' interest.
- There are an unlimited number of ideas to tap into through the Sunday School as a mobilizing witness force. Ask a class for ideas and be ready to let them go for it.

B. Specialized ministries that provide for witness opportunities

1. Recovery support groups offer hope, help and healing for crises or addictions.
2. Sports: Churches can sponsor karate classes, exercise classes, sports camps: baseball, basketball. Those involved as instructors and players develop opportunities to share their faith.
3. Disaster follow-up: Network individuals with local assistance agencies in the wake of natural disasters. Ministering in practical ways to the needs represented with Christian grace and words of hope can be a powerful witness.
4. Educational mentoring: This allows for instructional need as well as presents opportunities to develop relationships of appreciation and respect, which can open the door to sharing your faith.

In creating specialized opportunities, you allow people to become involved in their interest area with others of similar interest. Then, encourage Christians to develop a relationship that allows for witnessing to occur directly and indirectly.

C. Open the door for creative small groups that give rise to a mobilized witness

“We are in a lifelong process, and no one curriculum, teaching series, or teacher/pastor can competently walk any one of us, much less a large, diverse group of people, into maturity in Christ. This demands variety, diversity, a multiplicity of gifts, personalities and experiences. It is not the church’s job to dictate who should connect with whom, but rather help them find the people they think they need as they go through the various processes of life” (*Dog Training, Fly Fishing, and Sharing Christ* by Ted Haggard).

We are designed by God for relationships. As we encourage friendship-building in and outside the church, we increase the opportunity to share God’s love. We can tell how faith in Christ has helped in the midst of life’s circumstances and crises.

The key to a multiplying and mobilized witness force within the church is to let ministry develop from the ground up. Here are a few models of small groups that promote witnessing.

- Sponsor leadership training that helps leaders develop and lead small groups based on their interest.
- Allow for the small groups to have both a beginning and ending time that helps people move in and out as their interest or circumstances change.
- Develop a system structure that allows for encouragement, accountability, and continuing improvement of leaders and witness force.

Find what model or models work for your particular setting and people. Help the church then discover ways to connect with each other. Connect with the pre-Christian through loving acts of caring and service. In living life together with the unchurched, we will see some respond to God’s grace, love, and forgiveness.

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**Participant
Booklet**

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Small Group Training Exercise

Opening Conversations with Questions

The following opening questions were designed by Joseph Liberman, M.D. in his book, *The Fifteen Minute Hour*. The book was written to teach physicians through the acrostic BATHE how to learn about patients in a short time. I believe this sensitive approach can be used effectively to witness.

Background ~ Start BATHE by asking a question such as:

- “What’s been going on in your life?”

If the person begins to open the door, you could ask:

- “Could you give me some more background?”
- “Tell me about this.”

Affect ~ Instead of quickly giving advice, an answer, or a Bible verse, ask:

- “How is this affecting you?”
- “How is this affecting your family?”
- “How do you feel about what’s going on?”
- “How is this affecting your mood?”

This gives your friend an opportunity to go beyond the facts and to report how he or she is really feeling.

Trouble ~ Next ask, “What is troubling you the most about this?”

This is the start of getting to the problem and allows the door to open wider.

Handling ~ The question, “How are you handling things?” gives you a sense of how the person is coping with life; it may give you a key as to the direction you can suggest for help.

Empathy ~ This allows you to demonstrate Christlike compassion, to say:

- “It must be an incredibly difficult thing to face.”
- Or, “I can’t imagine how tough this is for you.”

Legitimizing the person’s feelings gives him or her support, yet also allows you to then ask, “May I pray with you (or for you) in this matter?”

Set up a role-playing module where the participants can practice using the BATHE model for gathering information.

In the following week, identify a pre-Christian friend and use these five principles of BATHE to encourage conversation.

1. Proceed slowly! Most have a tendency to want to “fix” things. We are therefore tempted to rush in, give advice and share scriptural principles, without having a clear understanding of the depth of the issues. Let’s not get ahead of the Holy Spirit.
2. Ask permission to speak further about the issues. With permission, we can confidently share faith stories.

3. Be sensitive to the listener. Watch for verbal and nonverbal cues that indicate the person is opening or closing the door. Also, be careful of the use of religious terminology. Be considerate of people's time. Don't overstay.
4. Regulate the amount of data. Keep in mind, a baby doesn't start out running. Intriguing people with a little truth leaves them desiring to know more. Also, keep in mind we simply sow the seed. The Holy Spirit is the only one who can bring forth fruit.
5. Refuse to react negatively to objections or refusals. We cannot always know the emotional or experiential circumstances that may cause someone to react negatively to our witness. We are, however, able to leave him or her with a sense of genuine caring and love.