

Witnesses of His Majesty

Did you ever think back over your life and seek to identify some of the influences that worked together to make you the person you are today? Do this prayerfully and it can be quite revealing.

My dad, for instance, taught me to work with all sorts of tools and instilled within me the “you can fix it and build it yourself” mentality. That has saved me lots of money over the years and, on occasion, gotten me into some deep do do. My dad is the reason there are Studebakers in my garage. My dad taught me how to talk to people and to show hospitality to strangers.

My dad and mom influenced me to read and to pursue a good education. My mom and dad taught me to judge people on their merit, rather than by the color of their skin, ethnic background, or standing in society. My parents taught me to believe in God, to have compassion for people, respect for nature, love of country, submission to authority, and to cherish and protect family.

Bill Wagner, who was my pastor when I was a teenager taught me to love Jesus and impressed upon me the conviction that everybody needs to know Him as Savior and Lord. Professor and Mrs. Smith at IUP introduced me to the person and power of the Holy Spirit. Dozens, if not hundreds, of other people have been used of God to speak His truth into my life and to shape my soul as a person and as a Christian.

Betty Jane has loved me and encouraged and supported me in more ways than I can possibly count. God’s “still workin” on me through her, even as we near our 50th wedding anniversary this May 27th.

What I know for sure is that I was not shaped in a vacuum and neither were you. God has made Himself known to us and caused us to pursue a relationship with Him through the influence of many witnesses. Without these witnesses, where would we be today?

In our Scripture passage from Exodus 24 we read the familiar account of Moses going up Mt. Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments. But I wonder how many people know that Moses didn’t go up that mountain alone. Look at Exodus 24:12-13: *“The Lord said to Moses, ‘Come up to me on the mountain and stay here, and I will give you the tablets of stone with the law and commandments I*

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have written for their instruction.’ Then Moses set out with Joshua his aide, and Moses went up on the mountain of God.”

I was curious about this. Did Joshua go all the way up with Moses to the top of the mountain? Was he there the whole time? The Bible doesn’t exactly tell us that. But Exodus 32:17 gives us an important clue. Moses has been on the mountain 40 days and 40 nights. While he was gone the people he left back at the camp got restless and turned to idolatry. When Moses came back down the mountain, the people were having a wild party, an orgy, in celebration of the golden calf idols Aaron had made for them. Exodus 32:15-17 say:

“Moses turned and went down the mountain with the two tablets of the covenant law in his hands. They were inscribed on both sides, front and back. The tablets were the work of God; the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the tablets.

When Joshua heard the noise of the people shouting, he said to Moses, ‘There is the sound of war in the camp.’”

What this tells me for sure is that Joshua was with Moses going up the mountain and Joshua was with Moses when he came back down. What this further suggests to me is that Joshua, along with Moses, was a witness to the majesty of God that Moses encountered on God’s mountain. II Corinthians 13:1 says *“Every matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.”*

Thus Joshua is provided to back up the story and the law Moses brings down from Mt. Sinai. Would you say: **“The word of Moses” “plus the word of Joshua” “equals two witnesses.”**

When we fast forward to our Gospel reading in Matthew 17:1-9, we find a parallel experience. Jesus goes up a mountain to meet with God, leaving the bulk of His followers behind. But, like Moses, Jesus doesn’t go alone. Matthew 17:1-3 say:

“After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.”

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In the giving of the Ten Commandments there were two witnesses. In the Transformation and revelation of the true identity of Jesus Christ there were three witnesses: Peter, James and John.

In II Peter 1:16-18, Peter says:

“For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.’ We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.”

There is one phrase in these words of Peter that particularly catches my imagination: Peter says,

“but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.” There is yet another scripture passage that connects with these we have already visited. It’s found in Acts 1:8 & 9, which say, *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.’ After He said this, He was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.”*

Then, in Acts 4, we read a fulfillment of Jesus Promise to His disciples given in Acts 1, Peter and John were arrested and held in jail overnight for telling the story of Jesus’ resurrection from the dead. The next day they were brought before the Jewish high council—the Sanhedrin—to be interrogated.

Peter and John’s answers to the questions they were asked were impressive. So much so that Acts 4:13 says, *“When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.”*

Now the questions I have for us today are these: “Is it possible for us today to be “eyewitnesses of His majesty?” Even if we too are obviously unschooled and ordinary people, can it become evident to

the people around us, that we have been with Jesus? What does it mean for us today to be with Jesus? How can we be with Jesus?

This past Tuesday Betty Jane and I were in Bedford buying a camping trailer. We decided that for our 50th wedding anniversary we would buy each other the camper and go AWOL or at least KOA!

So while the people at East Coast RVs were rigging the proper tow hitch to our pickup truck, another member of their staff was with us explaining the operation and maintenance of our trailer. Our camper guide was named Matt and he had a hard time staying on script, especially when he discovered that we were also Christians. Matt was so full of the Lord that he was much more interested in talking about what he has seen Jesus do than telling us what our camper would do. It was obvious to us that Matt—though unschooled and just an ordinary young man-- was someone who has been with Jesus.

So the answer is yes. We too can be witnesses of His majesty. And, not only can we be His witnesses, but it is to this that we are called. As stated in the Westminster Confession: "The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever." Jesus called His followers to be fishers of men and to go into all the world to make disciples of all nations.

But the secret to success in carrying out this ministry is the same as it was from the beginning. It must be seen that we have been with Jesus. Where there is no passion behind our words and deeds, our words will fall on deaf ears and our deeds will go unnoticed. Being with Jesus is prerequisite for bringing the good news of the gospel to others. We cannot be witnesses of His majesty unless and until we have encountered it. We can't give away what we do not possess.

So now the question is: How can we be with Jesus; how can we experience His majesty? There are at least three venues for being with Jesus and for experiencing His majesty. The first is worship. We need to keep in mind that there is a big difference between going through the motions of worship and true worship. And, the onus for true worship falls more on the worshipper than on the worship leader. For, what we need for worship is to get over ourselves and into God. John 4:23 says, "*Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of*

worshipers the Father seeks." To worship truly is to focus on God to the exclusion of everything else. It's to rid ourselves for a time of all distractions and to make ourselves completely available to God. It's to praise God for all that He is and for all that He has done with all that we have, holding nothing back. Worship like that leaves an imprint. When we worship like that, those who meet us afterwards will sense that we have been with Jesus. They may not know exactly what it means but they will not be able to escape the glory of His majesty which overflows from those who have been in worship.

A second venue for being with Jesus is meditating on the Word of God and entering into conversation with that word through prayer. The same thing is true with regards to reading the Bible as we noted about worship. We can go through the motions of Bible Study and come away with almost nothing. But when we engage the Scriptures with meditation and prayer, allowing the word of God to dwell in us richly, as Paul tells us in Colossians 3:16, once again this leaves a lasting imprint. When we soak in the Scriptures like that, those who meet us afterwards will sense that we have been with Jesus. Having been in true conversation with the Lord, we will be witnesses of His majesty.

The third venue for being with Jesus is being with Him in service to others. In Luke 2:27, Jesus said, "I am among you as one who serves." Visiting the sick, feeding the hungry, taking care of orphans and widows in their distress, coming along side those who are lonely and those who are afraid, offering God's forgiveness to those burdened with the shame of their sins—this too is where we get the chance to be with Jesus. But once again, it is possible to do the right things for the wrong reasons and miss the blessing. If we serve others for the praise of men or for some other personal gain, we won't come away glowing with the glory of God. On the other hand, if we keep our focus on Jesus and follow Him into fields of service to others, this will leave an indelible mark of joy upon our weary faces. People will know we have been with Jesus. As witnesses of His Majesty, we will have a heavenly influence on the lives of all who encounter us.

The chief venues for being with Jesus are true worship, engagement with Scripture through meditation and prayer, and joining Jesus in service to those in need. Would you say, "**Thus we are called to be**" "**witnesses**" "**of His majesty.**"

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Witnesses of His Majesty

Exodus 24:12-18, II Peter 1:16-21;
Matthew 17:1-9

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