

The Discipleship Wheel Illustration

Chapter Thirteen

Witnessing in Our Sphere of Influence—Part Two

Last Revised: 2/13/2012

Scripture Memory

Acts 1:8

...you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

Review

- Draw The Wheel Illustration
- II Corinthians 5:17
- Galatians 2:20
- II Timothy 3:16
- Joshua 1:8
- The Word Hand
- Philippians 4:6-7
- John 15:7
- The Prayer Hand
- Philippians 2:1-2
- Hebrews 10:24-25
- The Fellowship Tree and
The Scales of Community
- Romans 1:16

Witnessing in Our Sphere of Influence

I. ...both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.

- A. Consider the view of the world below. What would this command look like in the eyes of the Apostles? What aspects of the “remotest part of the earth” would they most likely be aware of when they thought of the application of this command?



- B. Now consider the earth as we know it today. In the command what aspects of the “remotest part of the earth” would have been lost to the Apostles but very real to God?



- C. Consider the claim of the Holy Spirit in the following verses.

Romans 10:17-18

17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

18 But I say, surely they have never heard, have they? Indeed they have; "Their voice has gone out into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world."

Colossians 1:6: *which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth.*

These are just two of the many passages which make a direct claim of the gospel spreading throughout the world during the lifetime of the Apostles. These passages were either debunked by modern scholars or explained away as referring to the “world as the Apostles knew it.” Many Christians have come to accept this liberal scholarly view of the Holy Scriptures without really thinking it through.

Consider if you will the following:

For many years scholars taught that Columbus “discovered” America. Then Scandinavians began to claim that hundreds of years earlier the first person to discover America was a Viking known as Eric the Red. Later, claims were made that a millennium before Columbus early Romans or Polynesians came to the Americas first. Native Americans point out that they were already there, they were not discovered, and they were the first to colonize America thousands of years before Columbus. Yet the people of northeastern Siberia and the Alaskan and Canadian northwest laid claim that their descendants crossed the Bearing Straights in search of game first and thus have a right to the title of the first discoverers and colonizers of the Americas over five thousand years before the time of the Apostles. In fact, modern scholars have come to accept all the above as fact.

Why is it that we believe that early Europeans, early Polynesians and early nomadic tribes can traverse the earth; but the Apostles were limited to the very narrow scope of the Mediterranean?

Given the protection and provision of the Holy Spirit coupled with the drive to obey the Word of God, the early church most certainly could reach out to the entire earth. Why is it that we believe this is possible by nomadic wanderers with no intention at all of traversing the earth or by merchants seeking new lands but not by the early church?

What spiritual traits would be necessary to be inherent in the early church to make this feat possible?

Today the church is much larger and much better organized. What spiritual traits must be involved in you as a member of this church to continue the fulfillment of this command in every generation?

D. In the project below:

1. First read the passages below the blank.
2. As you read underline, circle or highlight the areas which denote the spread of the gospel
3. Finally, fill in the blank as it pertains to the geographical spread of the gospel.

a. *both in* _____

Acts 2:14: *But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them: "All you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give heed to my words."*

Acts 5:28: *saying, "We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and behold, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us."*

Acts 4:15-20

15 *But when they had ordered them to go aside out of the Council, they began to confer with one another,*

16 *saying, "What shall we do with these men? For the fact that a noteworthy miracle has taken place through them is apparent to all who live in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it.*

17 *"But in order that it may not spread any further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to any man in this name."*

18 *And when they had summoned them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.*

19 *But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge;*

20 *for we cannot stop speaking what we have seen and heard."*

JERUSALEM

The record of the New Testament church indicates that Jerusalem continued to play a significant role in the early spread of Christianity. After the martyrdom of Stephen, the early believers scattered from Jerusalem to various parts of the Mediterranean world (Acts 8:1). But Jerusalem always was the place to which they returned for significant events. For example, Acts 15 records that when the early church leaders sought to reconcile their differences about the acceptance of Gentile believers, they met in Jerusalem. Thus, the city became a holy city for Christians as well as Jews.

(Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary) Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1986.)

b. and in all**JUDEA**

[joo DEE uh]--the Greco-Roman name for the land of Judah. Judea is first mentioned in Ezra 5:8 (Judaea, KJV), where it is used to designate a province of the Persian Empire. The word Judea comes from the adjective "Jewish," a term that was used of the Babylonian captives who returned to the Promised Land, most of whom were of the tribe of Judah.

Under the rule of the Persians, Judea was a district administered by a governor; usually this governor was a Jew (Hag. 1:14; 2:2). When Herod Archelaus was banished in A. D. 6, Judea ceased to exist as a separate district and was annexed to the Roman province of Syria. The governors of Judea, called PROCURATORS, were appointed by the Emperor; their official residence was at Caesarea. However, they were supervised by the proconsul of Syria, who ruled from Antioch (Luke 3:1). It was under this political arrangement that Jesus lived and ministered.

Judea extended from the Mediterranean Sea on the west to the Dead Sea on the east, and from a few miles south of Gaza and the southern tip of the Dead Sea north to about Joppa. Thus, Judea measured about 90 kilometers (56 miles) from north to south and from east to west. The region contained four distinctive types of land: the coastal plains along the Mediterranean Sea, the lowlands in the south, the hill country, and the desert. (Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1986.)

SAMARIA, REGION OF

In the time of Jesus, Palestine west of the Jordan River was divided into the three provinces of Galilee, Samaria, and Judea. Because of their intermarriage with foreigners, the people of Samaria were shunned by orthodox Jews. Situated between Galilee and Judea, Samaria was the natural route for traveling between those two provinces. But the pure blooded Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans (John 4:9). They would travel east, cross the Jordan River, and detour around Samaria. (Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1986.)

Acts 8:1, 4-5

1 And Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution arose...they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles...

4 Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word.

5 And Philip went down to the city of Samaria and began proclaiming Christ to them.

Acts 9:31: So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and, going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.

c. and even to the _____

Remotest Part

2078 *eschatos* (es'-khat-os); a superlative probably from 2192 (in the sense of contiguity); farthest, final (of place or time): KJV-- ends of, last, latter end, lowest, uttermost. (Strong's Exhaustive Concordance.)

LAST

A. Adjective.

eschatos ^2078^, "last, utmost, extreme," is used (a) of place, e. g., <Luke 14:9,10>, "lowest; "<Acts 1:8> and <13:47>, "uttermost part." (Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985.)

Acts 17:6: *And when they did not find them, they began dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have upset the world have come here also."*

Romans 1:8: *First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world.*

Romans 10:1: *But I say, surely they have never heard, have they? Indeed they have; "Their voice has gone out into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world."*

Colossians 1:3-6

3 *We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,*
4 *since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints;*

5 *because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel,*

6 *which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth;*

E. Identifying our spheres of influence

1. In accordance with the command of Christ, the witness of the early church went out in a systematic manner. When reading Acts 1:8 you can envision the ever enlarging circles of the witness of the early Christians. This continued until the entire earth had heard the gospel during the lifetime of the Apostles. This was accomplished in two ways—by those who faithfully shared Christ in their sphere of influence and by those who went out making disciples. Although it is exciting to read the stories of those who go out to

foreign lands, it is, nevertheless, those who faithfully share Christ in their spheres of influence who change the world one person at a time. These are the unsung heroes of the faith

2. There is no greater call than the call of the Christian layman to faithfully witness and minister within his sphere of influence. For many it is a daunting task. I can remember as a young Christian being challenged to witness, leaving the church, going outside and seeing the city stretch before me. I was swamped by the magnitude of the lost people around me. Again, I can remember looking out of my 12th floor dormitory window at the swarms of people beneath. Although I would pray and although I was deeply burdened for their souls, again the sheer magnitude of that giant state college swamped my faith and emotions.
3. Like so many tasks, it was when this one was broken down into manageable increments that I began to truly see the role God would have me play in the Great Commission to spread the gospel to all the world. What I did was break my relationships down into spheres of influence. From these spheres, I began to make a list of names and then systematically share Christ with those on my list. Suddenly, this mass of humanity became a simple list of relationships for which I could pray, plan and evangelize. I defined my sphere of influence as any social or personal sphere of relationships where I became acquainted with people on a first name basis.
4. In my sophomore year of college my sphere of influence looked something like this.
 - a. Work
 - b. Classes
 - c. Dorm
 - d. Clubs
 - e. Intramural team
 - f. Filling station
 - g. Market
 - h. Laundry Mat
5. I soon learned that I could increase my sphere of influence by developing some routines of life. For example, if I always did my shopping at the same market, I soon began to meet merchants and workers. If I always bought my gas at the same service station, I soon became friends with the owner. Thus, without too much trouble I could increase the names on my list.
6. My sphere of influence today looks something like this
 - a. Extended family
 - b. Work

8. Now go back and list names which you know from each sphere. These should be people who are non-Christians or so pagan you would not believe them if they told you they were a Christian. If you do not have names for any of the spheres, then one of your outreach projects will be to begin getting names in these spheres so you will have people to witness to during the coming months.
9. Next, turn to the Sphere of Influence (SOI) Chart on page 13. You will notice a number of columns.
 - a. Name – Write the name of the person to whom you are going to witness.
 - b. Date of Initial Contact – This is the date you first met. This contextualizes the time framework of your witness. If you put a date that indicates you have known the person a week or less, then there is valid reason for waiting as you develop a little more conversational rapport. If, on the other hand, you indicate you have known the person for months or perhaps years, then there is nothing holding you back. This is the reality check of the SOI chart.
 - c. Date to Share Christ – This is where the rubber meets the road. This is the date you set to share Christ with this individual. Set realistic time frameworks. For some, where the gospel can be shared in a casual reoccurring setting, the spacing of one each week is realistic. For others, where a dinner invitation must be given, one every other week is more suitable. Again, where travel is entailed, such as a family member, one or two a year may be pushing it. These then are interspersed on your chart to give you a balanced regular witnessing ministry.
 - d. Plan – This is your strategy. It may be as simple as, “Invite Phil to lunch Friday” or as complex as, “Plan to share Christ creatively at Christmas party in home.” You look at the list and come up with a plan.
 - e. Christ Shared – A minister with the Billy Graham Crusade once told me of a survey they did that revealed that most people who made decisions at the crusade had heard the gospel at least ten times before. This keeps us motivated. Just because they have heard the gospel once, you will not want to give up on them until they have been born again.
 - f. Now it is time to begin work on your own sphere of influence chart. This should become a regular part of your Christian experience—sharing Christ with those in your sphere of influence.

10. It may be helpful to you to have something a little more structured. Mike Daily, an engineer in my ministry, developed the sheet on page 14 for his personal use. Feel free to use this instead or come up with your own as Mike did.

F. How to reach the world

1. Can I really reach the world with a Sphere of Influence Chart? Can this really make a difference? Let's take time out to do a little mathematical project. (You may need a calculator to pull this off.)
2. Using your SOI Chart let's say you lead one person to Christ each year. During the next year you help that person grow to where they can share their faith. Now there are two of you. During the next year each of you do the same. Now there are four. Again the next year each do the same. Now there are eight. Continue this progression. How long will it take you to reach the world population of 4,000,000,000 (four billion). Use the space provided below to finish the numerical progression.

1,2,4,8,16,32,64,...

How many years does this represent? _____

Can you begin to see the power of the individual witness? We can indeed reach the world from our sphere of influence.

Earth

1093 *ge* (ghay); contracted from a primary word; soil; by extension a region, or the solid part or the whole of the terrene globe (including the occupants in each application): KJV--country, earth (-ly), ground, land, world. (Strong's Exhaustive Concordance.)

EARTH

1. *ge* ^1093^ denotes (a) "earth as arable land," e. g., <Matt. 13:5,8, 23>; in <1 Cor. 15:47> it is said of the "earthly" material of which "the first man" was made, suggestive of frailty; (b) "the earth as a whole, the world," in contrast, whether to the heavens, e. g., <Matt. 5:18,35>, or to heaven, the abode of God, e. g., <Matt. 6:19>. (Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985.)

3. The Three Fold Cord - Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 addresses an important principle: working together as a team accomplishes far more than what can be done with the same effort by and individual

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

9 *Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor.*

10 *For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up.*

11 *Furthermore, if two lie down together they keep warm, but how can one be warm alone?*

12 *And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart.*

4. The task of winning the world to Christ is indeed a Three Fold Cord operation. We are all commanded to be members of this team, and in so doing we expand our witness beyond our sphere of influence to the ends of the earth. In the project below, first read the passage and then record the responsibility of the persons in the verse.

Matthew 28:19-20

19 *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,*

20 *teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*

a. _____

II Corinthians 1:11: *you also joining in helping us through your prayers, that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed upon us through the prayers of many.*

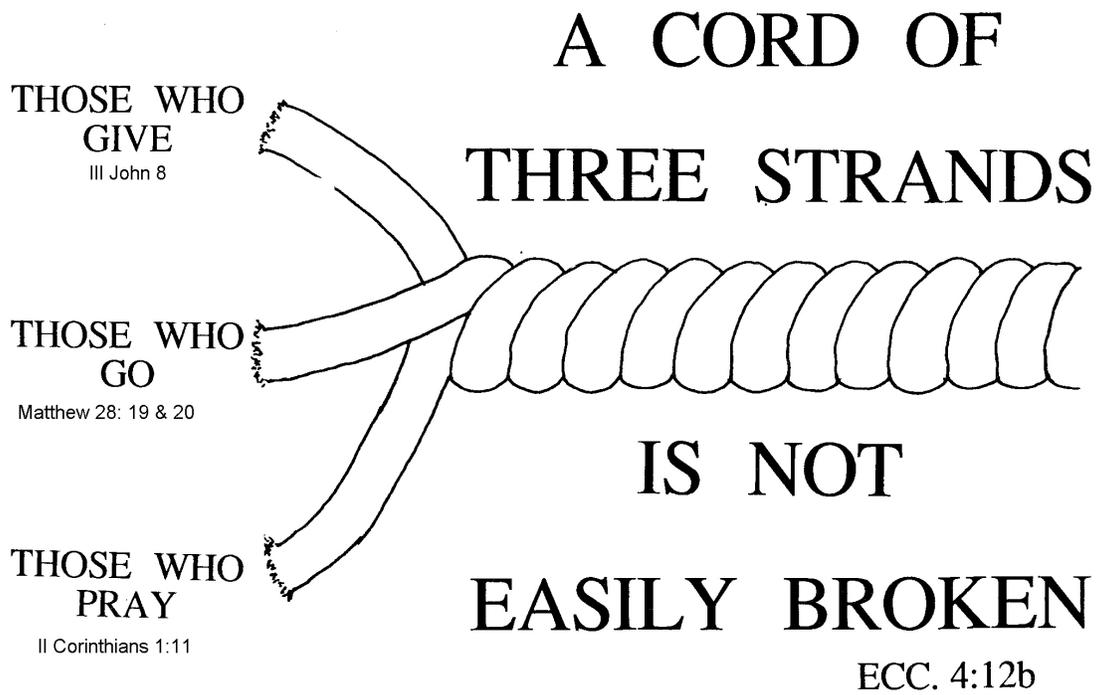
b. _____

III John 1:8: *Therefore we ought to support such men, that we may be fellow workers with the truth.*

c. _____

In the Christian life we cannot do it all, but we can all do something. As pertains to the harvest fields of the world, consider your membership on the team of the Three Fold Cord. Given your gifts, calling and station in life, what part can you play?

What are some action steps you can take to begin to implement your membership on this team?



Quiet Times Alone With God—Jeremiah 15:16—Chapter 13 Theme: Witnessing in Our Sphere of Influence—Part Two

Passage for Meditation: Matthew 28:19-20

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me?

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

Passage for Meditation: Romans 1:16

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me?

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

Passage for Meditation: II Timothy 4:1-5

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me?

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

Quiet Times Alone With God—Jeremiah 15:16—Chapter 13 Theme: Witnessing in Our Sphere of Influence—Part Two

Passage for Meditation: Mark 16:15

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me?

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

Passage for Meditation: Acts 10:40-43

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me?

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

Passage for Meditation: Hebrews 1:1-3

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me?

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?