

Small Group Guide: The Word Witnessed

Based on John 13-17 (Upper Room Discourse)

Opening Prayer

Begin by praying that God would help your group understand how the Word has been faithfully passed down through the apostles and how to apply this truth to your lives today.

Ice Breaker (5-10 minutes)

Question: Have you ever played the game "telephone" where a message gets passed from person to person? What happened to the message by the end? How is the transmission of God's Word different from this?

Sermon Summary

This sermon explores how Jesus prepared His disciples to carry on His ministry after His return to the Father. The "chain of revelation" flows from: **Father** → **Son** → **Apostles** → **Spirit-empowered witnesses** → **Us**. Jesus didn't leave us without access to the Word made flesh—He commissioned eyewitnesses, promised them the Holy Spirit to help them remember accurately, and prayed for all who would believe through their testimony (that's us!).

Key Scriptures to Review

- John 14:26 - The Spirit will help them remember
- John 15:3 - Clean because of the word spoken to them
- John 17:20 - Jesus prays for those who believe through the apostles' word
- 1 John 1:1-4 - What we have seen and heard, we proclaim to you

Discussion Questions

Understanding the Text (15-20 minutes)

1. **The Foot Washing Scene:** How does the sermon's interpretation of the foot washing (as preparation for mission rather than just servant leadership) change or deepen your understanding of this passage?
2. **The Chain of Revelation:** Can you trace the "chain" of how God's Word has been passed down? (Father → Moses → Prophets → Jesus → Apostles → Us) Why is each link important?
3. **The Role of the Holy Spirit:** According to John 14:26, what specific role does the Holy Spirit play for the apostles? How is this different from how we sometimes think about the Spirit's work today?
4. **Jesus' Prayer in John 17:** What does it mean that Jesus prayed specifically for "those who believe through their [the apostles'] word"? How does this connect you to the upper room?

Personal Reflection (15-20 minutes)

5. **"I Just Want Jesus, Not the Bible":** Have you ever heard this sentiment expressed (or felt it yourself)? After hearing this sermon, how would you respond to someone who says this?
6. **The Pharisees' Mistake:** The Pharisees claimed to know God but didn't recognize Jesus when He stood before them. What warning does this provide for us today? How can we avoid constructing our own version of Jesus?
7. **Spirit vs. Scripture:** Why is it dangerous to separate the Holy Spirit from Scripture? How do they work together rather than independently?

Application (15-20 minutes)

8. **The Joy Connection:** Jesus said in John 17:13 that He spoke these things "so that they may have my joy made full in themselves." John echoes this in 1 John 1:4. How does knowing Scripture lead to fullness of joy?
9. **Being Witnesses:** Just as the apostles were witnesses to Christ, we are witnesses through their word. How does understanding this chain of witness affect how you share your faith with others?

Key Takeaways

✓ **The Word didn't die with Jesus**—He commissioned apostles as eyewitnesses to carry it forward

✓ **The Holy Spirit's role** was to help the apostles remember and understand what Jesus said, not to give new revelation apart from Scripture

✓ **We cannot separate Jesus from Scripture**—to know Jesus, we must know the apostolic witness to Jesus

✓ **The Bible is not optional equipment**—it's the essential, God-appointed path to knowing Christ

✓ **Our faith is anchored** in the words of those who were there, saw Him, and faithfully passed it down

Closing Reflection

Question for Silent Reflection: If someone asked you, "How do you know Jesus?" what would you say? Would your answer include the essential role of Scripture?

Closing Prayer

Pray together:

- Thanking God for preserving His Word through the apostles
- Asking for hunger to know Scripture more deeply
- Requesting the Holy Spirit's help to understand and apply God's Word
- Committing to be faithful witnesses of what has been passed down to us