



When you hear the word, “witness” what comes to mind? A courtroom? LeBron James? Telling people about Jesus? Word of mouth advertising? Trying something new?

What’s the biggest event you’ve ever witnessed in real life?

[**Teacher Note:** Be prepared to share some examples of a big event you witnessed in your life. For example: I shared a significant sporting event I was at, a hurricane I lived through, and the birth of my children.]

A witness is present. A witness is someone who can tell you all about it. A witness is someone who knows because they have experienced something!

In the book of Acts, a big, bad man named Saul was set on getting rid of the followers of Jesus by throwing them in jail, beating them and even killing them. But then in chapter 9, while he was on his way to throw more Christians in jail, he has a miraculous encounter with Jesus. To his credit, Saul believed Jesus and decided to switch sides!

But not all the Christians were sold on his conversion! Can you blame them? It would be like Voldemort showing up to Hogwarts and saying, “He guys, I changed my mind! I want to be on your side now!”

But something amazing happened. Let’s read and see if you can catch it...

### **Acts 9:19-27 (NLT)**

*19 Afterward he ate some food and regained his strength. Saul stayed with the believers in Damascus for a few days. 20 And immediately he began preaching about Jesus in the synagogues, saying, “He is indeed the Son of God!” 21 All who heard him were amazed. “Isn’t this the same man who caused such devastation among Jesus’ followers in Jerusalem?” they asked. “And didn’t he come here to arrest them and take them in chains to the leading priests?” 22 Saul’s preaching became more and more powerful, and the Jews in Damascus couldn’t refute his proofs that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. 23 After a while some of the Jews plotted together to kill him. 24 They were watching for him day and night at the city gate so they could*

*murder him, but Saul was told about their plot. 25 So during the night, some of the other believers lowered him in a large basket through an opening in the city wall. 26 When Saul arrived in Jerusalem, he tried to meet with the believers, but they were all afraid of him. They did not believe he had truly become a believer! 27 Then Barnabas brought him to the apostles and told them how Saul had seen the Lord on the way to Damascus and how the Lord had spoken to Saul. He also told them that Saul had preached boldly in the name of Jesus in Damascus.*

Did you catch it? What happened so that the believers would accept Saul as one of them? The answer is that Barnabas stood up for him.

Barnabas became a witness to the apostles on behalf of Saul! And this helped the apostles, and all the other believers trust Saul. Why did Barnabas' testimony matter so much?

It mattered because up to this point, Barnabas had already proven that he was a trustworthy person. In Acts 4, he sold his field and laid all the money at the feet of the apostles to use to help the poor. He had a reputation for being an encourager, which is where he got his name.

You see, the apostles already trusted Barnabas. So, when Barnabas became a witness for Saul, he passed on the trust they had in him to Saul. So now, the apostles trusted Saul because they trusted Barnabas! Barnabas' witness gave Saul a foot in the door with the leaders of the church! That's something he would have had to work for months or years to get on his own, because of his previous behavior of persecuting the church!

That's what the power of a strong witness can do! It can change people's opinions about you! It can get your foot in the door!

This led to all sorts of great work done by both Barnabas and Saul, whose name was changed to Paul. You can read about them in the rest of the book of Acts. Or you can read many of Paul's letters that he wrote to churches that he planted all over that part of the world! Those letters make up the majority of the New Testament after the Gospels.

**[Teacher Note:** This is a great time to share a personal story about a time when you were able to advocate for someone or a time when someone

else advocated for you. I've included the following personal story as an example.]

I get a chance to advocate for people from time to time. In fact, I have an email waiting on me this week. A former student of mine needs me to verify to a company he wants to work for that he would be a good person to hire.

And so I get to think back on all the experiences I've had with that person, all the times he helped me serve our community, the hard work he did on our mission trips together, the times when he spoke up in Bible class and gave a thoughtful answer, showing me that there was something inside that head, the times when he was friendly to a visitor who wanted to be anywhere else but in a strange Bible class around strange people.

I get to think back on all those times and then write a letter of recommendation on behalf of this former student. I get to tell that company, "You would be making a huge mistake if you don't hire him because he will do an excellent job for you."

On the flip side, I could also write a bad letter for someone. I could tell the company about the times when he said they would show up and then backed out at the last minute because he realized his friends weren't going to be there. I could tell them about how he was on his phone nonstop and never paid attention. I could tell them about how he struggled with insecurities and really refused to try anything new or take any initiative at all when he was in youth group.

It's so important that you have a strong witness for you. A witness can get your foot in the door! A witness can get you to places you never thought were possible. A witness has power.

I can't stress enough how critical it is to surround yourself with people who will advocate for you! Who will be your witnesses? We all need a witness! We need someone who, when we are not around, will tell others that we are valuable.

And we have a responsibility to be a witness for others also. It's important for us to stick up for the good we see in other people! Gossip is out of control these days! All we want to do is tear people down and point out



**Main Point:** Let Jesus be your witness. He'll get you where you want to go.

- What's the biggest event you've ever witnessed in real life?
- How would you define the word "witness"?

**Read Acts 9:26-27**

- Barnabas got Saul's foot in the door with the apostles. The Bible doesn't say, but what do you think that discussion might have been like? Do you think any of them were worried? Why or why not?
- Have you ever been misunderstood because of your past? How does that feel?
- How do you think Saul felt when Barnabas spoke up?

Just like Barnabas got Saul where he wanted to go, Jesus can get us to where we want to go.

- What goals do you have for your life?
- Who are you surrounding yourself with to help you accomplish those goals?
- What if you accomplish all those goals? Then what?
- What is heaven going to be like? Do you want to get there?

**Read 1 Timothy 2:5**

- Why do we need someone to reconcile us to God?
- How is Jesus the perfect one to do that?

What's holding you back from putting your faith in Jesus today?

[Teacher Note: You might want to adjust the ending of this discussion however you see fit based on who is in your small group. If your students are already believers, move the discussion toward discipleship and away from salvation. If they have not made a commitment to Christ yet, you might spend more time discussing what that looks like.]

[Close in prayer.]

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