WITNESS

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We all need to spend more time with Jesus
Category: Observations

In Acts 1:8 Jesus says the following to his disciples:

> *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you;Â and you will be my witnessesÂ in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria,Â and to the ends of the earth.*

There is a lot tied up in just a few words. Two themes that are often picked up on are the importance of the Holy Spirit in mission and the geographical extent our call. However, I'd just like to spend a couple of minutes thinking about the word "witness".

To put it simply, a witness is someone who recounts what they have seen or experienced. It's not a complicated concept. Someone who saw a robbery taking place might be called upon to be a witness in court and to give an account of what they saw happening.

Said to his disciples that they would be his witnesses. In other words, in the power of the Spirit they were to tell the whole world about what they had experienced in the three years that they had spent with him. It's pretty straightforward order, though it was not without its tensions and difficulties (it is no coincidence that the Greek word for witness is also the root of our word for martyr). However, leaving the difficulties aside, what the disciples had to do was clear. They had spent significant time with Jesus and they had to tell people about what they had experienced.

So, what about us?

Our responsibility is exactly the same as the original disciples; we have to be Jesus' witnesses. However, unlike them, we haven't spent years with Jesus, walking the roads of Palestine, living with him and learning from them. So in order to be his witnesses, we have some work to do. If we are going to tell people about Jesus and recount our experience of him, we need to have some first hand knowledge to share.

If you are going to be a missionary (or a pastor, or a Christian) your priority needs to be to get to know Jesus and to deepen your knowledge of him. Cross-cultural training, and theology are important (I've spent a fair bit of my life involved in both of those), but a first hand experience of Jesus work in your life is the absolute key. All too often, we make a priority of things that are important, but which aren't at the centre of our faith and our witness.

We all need to spend more time with Jesus (and I'm speaking to myself first of all). Without this basic, we can never be his witnesses.