

Giving Testimony and Witness



Exploration: Discovery

About this Setting

Most people go to church to experience God, but our encounters with the Holy are in the very fabric of our lives. We live as individuals and in relationship to others as family and friends, at work and in the community. Our faith can be nourished in these relationships by becoming aware of God's action and learning how to give witness and testimony to it.

The activities designed for the individual will help a person gain some comfort in sharing one's faith and living out that faith in daily life. The activities designed for the home and family are suggestions for family groups, however you define that, or for small groups who wish to gather to learn more about faith practices. In these suggested activities the participants will practice sharing their experiences of God and the way their faith informs their life with one another. This may help provide greater comfort for venturing out to share those thoughts with others.

The activities for the workplace and community are ways you can witness to your own faith in the larger sphere of daily life. They may help you have more confidence sharing your faith beyond the comfort of home or church.

As with all faith practices, giving testimony and witness require discipline. Some of the activities are low-risk, while others will require more courage. You have to be willing to accept resistance or flat out rejection. Sharing is a two-way street; if you are also willing to listen to others the rewards are great.

About this Exploration

We are a people of story, built on the witness of our Bible and rooted in the testimony of our communities. Discovering the power of giving witness and testimony means recognizing that we each have a valid story, indeed, many stories, and that we can identify God's work within those stories. It takes courage to share one's own story; it takes openness to fully listen to the stories of others. Claiming this practice involves shaping a common language. Sharing our testimonies celebrates enriching traditions of communities and the particularity of personal experiences of grace.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:
Genesis 24:34–67
Acts 16:16–34

Household and Family Life

Exploring & Engaging Activity



1 Faces of Witness

Supplies:

- artwork: "Blind Feeling" by Diana Ong <http://tinyurl.com/fp-apdo>
- way to display the poster: easel, wall, or computer screen

Giving witness and testimony is about relationships. You can use artwork as a way to understand the faith practice. Look at this picture. Let your mind go and just experience it. What do you see? What does it bring to mind? What smells, sounds, tastes, or sensations do you recall when looking at it? What colors have meaning for you?

Look again. This time consider how the art might speak to you about being a witness. Think of faces in your life. What faces come to mind when you think of God in your life? What faces would you rather not see? What do the eyes say to you? What good news might you share? For younger children: What do you think the face of God might look like? Spend time, and let your mind go where God takes it.

When you are ready, share your experiences with one another. Even small children can remark on what they see. Encourage one another. There are no wrong answers or comments.

Prayer: Thank you, God, for art and for the ways that color and image stir the imagination, the memory, and the heart. Please continue to work in me as I recall this experience in the days ahead. Amen.

Discerning & Deciding Activity

2 Where Did I See God Today?

Supplies:

- paper and pens or pencils
- (optional) colored pencils, markers, or crayons

This activity is better when done on a regular basis. In doing so, it becomes easier to recognize and share experiences of God in daily life. Gather together around the table or in any comfortable setting.

This activity invites each person to think about how God is present in everyday life. Small children can relate a story of a happy time at school, seeing a bird fly, or sharing a toy, for example. Older children might move toward their human interactions. Hopefully, adults will be open to seeing God in the mundane.

You might find it helpful to draw a picture or write about the experience before sharing. Question: Where did you notice God today? God comes to us in many ways. Remember to consider all the senses, including sight, sound, taste, touch, and smell or perhaps a feeling of joy or comfort.

Allow each person to share the God moments, and affirm each one by saying something like “God is good.” After a while this exercise will become natural, and sharing will be easier. Recognizing God in our world is the first step. The act of sharing it is our witness.

It may be helpful to share where you felt God was absent or not in evidence. Teens, in particular, will develop a better understanding of God’s presence when they contrast it to a feeling of absence.

Prayer: (You may use this prayer or one of your own.) *God of all, we are so grateful for your presence in our lives. Thank you for helping us to be open to your many ways of reaching out to us each day. Amen.*

Sending & Serving Activity

③ Take a Walk

Supplies:

- appropriate dress for the setting you choose

Gather together to take a 5–15 minute walk. Choose any location. It may be indoors or outdoors. Before you begin, tell everyone to pay attention to how God is very much active in our world. Pray the following prayer, or one of your own, before starting out.

Prayer: *Loving God, please help us to know you better. We know you are with us, but sometimes we don’t take time to pay attention. We ask for your leading as we do so now. Amen.*

Take a walk and notice all the signs of God in our surroundings. Remember to listen, to touch, to experience aromas, to look in all directions, including up and down, and to experience the moment. After two minutes, you may want to share with one another some of your observations and discoveries. Make sure all get a chance to share if they wish. Continue the walk, and repeat until you are back to your gathering spot.

Each person’s experience of God is special and unique. Children may be the ones who find God in more places. Let your adult minds think like a child’s mind. God is everywhere. Notice.

Close with the following or a prayer of your own.

Prayer: (Hands held up to the sky) *God in the heavens,*
(Hands held down to the ground) *God on earth,*
(Hands hugging self) *God here with me,*
(Hands reaching to another) *God here with you,*
thank you for showing yourself to us in so many ways,
and thank you, God, for the chance to share it with one another. Amen.

Individual and Personal Life

Exploring & Engaging Activity

④ Review of the Day

Supplies:

- Bible
- (optional) journal

In order to witness to and testify to God's amazing grace, one must become aware of the ways God reveals divine love. Waking up to that truth is part of the process. In the review of your day, you will spend 10–15 minutes looking back over what happened in the past 24 hours. Bedtime, morning, or any time you can quiet yourself and spend some undisturbed time in prayer is good.

Be still. Read Acts 16:16–34. In this passage Paul and Silas made testimony through song and prayer. The prisoners and jailer witnessed and came to believe.

Ask God to guide you as you reflect on your day. Think about when you felt God's presence and when you didn't. Consider how God has been active in your life over the course of the day. If you have a journal, write down thoughts as they occur to you or at the end of your reflection. Imagine sharing one of these experiences with one other person. How would you say it? What other ways could you use to express what it means to have God in your life?

This process of recognizing God's grace takes some work. You might try it over the course of a week or month and see what you discover.

Thank God for the time spent.

Discerning & Deciding Activity



⑤ Taking Inventory: Ways To Make Witness

Supplies:

- "The Nine Intelligences," Attachment: Activity 5
- (optional) journal
- (optional) paper and writing instruments
- Bible

There are many ways to witness; not all testimony is verbal. In 1983 Howard Gardner proposed that there are multiple intelligences. In his theory, intelligence is not measured only by verbal or mathematical abilities, but can also be measured by musical, bodily, interpersonal, or other abilities. Consider Gardner's nine multiple intelligences (see the attachment) and then make a list of how you might be able to offer testimony using these different intelligences.

Which of these might be most comfortable for you to share your faith? Certainly one difficulty in giving a testimony is discerning how to go about it. As you look at the list of intelligences, in how many categories do you find that you fit?

Read Acts 16:16–34. How did the people in the story witness? In your list, did you recognize the ways people you know witness to their faith?

Sending & Serving Activity

Consider trying one of the ideas you listed. Remember to ask God for guidance and the courage to share and listen to others.

6 Free to Be Me

Supplies:

- Bible
- (optional) mirror
- (optional) journal
- (optional) paper, pens, art materials

Describe yourself. If you have one, use a mirror or other reflective surface. Look at the person in the reflection. Who is this person? Take a little time and use words, pictures, or whatever you find helpful to express who you are. Who am I in relation to others? To the world? To myself? To God?

If you are like most people, your description did not include being a Christian. Why do you think this is so? Is it avoidance, a reluctance to share this even with yourself, or a base assumption that doesn't get named? If you did include being a Christian, what did you mean by that? Why was it important for you to include that?

How often do you identify yourself as a Christian outside the church setting? Most of us describe ourselves differently depending on our surroundings. For example, at the workplace we might name our profession, job title, marital status, education. At a church meeting we might share where we are from or our family relationships. Maybe at a social gathering for the community you might share where you live, where you work, who is in your household, if you are pet owner, or other pieces of information. Over the phone or via the Internet we might also offer a physical description. When it comes to religious beliefs, many of us tend to keep it secret until we can trust that we will not be judged. We wait until we can gauge the reaction of the recipient. Is this true for you? Why do you think this is (or is not) the case?

Read Matthew 3:13–17 and John 1:1–13. Just as God called Jesus “the Beloved” at Jesus' baptism, so are we called beloved of God through our baptism. Similarly, we read in John that we are called children of God through faith in Jesus. Reflect

on what it means to be a beloved child of God. Then, describe yourself again. Making this witness to yourself is an important step in being able to share with others.

Repeat this activity in different settings such as at school, the grocery store, or a restaurant. How do you describe yourself in this context? Is being a Christian or a child of God part of your self-description? How does claiming this change your view of your relationship with others in these different settings? How does claiming this change affect your attitude and behavior? Reflect on how you make witness to God's love when you are more aware of and are able to claim it in your own life.

Prayer: Father, Mother God, I am your beloved child. Help me to acknowledge it openly so that I may more freely be the me you created me to be. Amen.

Work Place and Communal Life

Exploring & Engaging Activity



7 Make a Mandala

Supplies:

- 10" paper circle
- piece of paper with circle drawn on it
- art and craft supplies
- photographs or other items to be used
- "Making a Mandala," Attachment: Activity 7
- (optional) <http://tinyurl.com/3aw3srl>

Creating a mandala is a way to express one's faith outwardly. A mandala is a circular art form. In Hindu and Buddhist tradition the spiritual art often took this form. A very simple mandala is a circle divided into halves, but you can make it more complex. See the attachment for ideas. You might also check out the website in the supply list for examples.

Don't feel obligated to stick with the kind of mandalas you find in your web search. These are just intended to give you a background on mandalas and some ideas and inspiration to get started. The most basic framework you should work with is something within a circle and/or other such basic geometric pattern (or combination of patterns). This framework represents you. Most mandalas are built on a pattern that expands in all directions from the center with no clear top and bottom. Whatever you choose to put within this framework might represent various aspects of your life past, present, and future. It can be as complex or as simple as you like.

Be creative. You might want to try putting down where you are now and where you would like to be. You could divide your mandala into sections representing you, your family, your church, your community, and the world. Your sections might overlap. Remember to put God in the picture. God might be center, all encompassing or some other expression of how the Holy exists in your world. Whatever is at the center of the mandala is thought to be the most important in one's spiritual life, while things further from the center are increasingly less important.

Discerning & Deciding Activity

Display your mandala at the office or other visible place and when someone asks about it you will have the opportunity to share your faith.

8 Just Thinking of You

Supplies:

- paper and pen and envelope
- note card or greeting card
- addresses and postage

One way we witness to the great love of God in our lives is to share that love with others. A simple note card, greeting card, or little note sent to someone can lift a person from a bad day, help someone through a challenging time, or just give a verbal hug.

Pay attention to the people around you. Select someone you think might benefit from a greeting. Almost anyone will appreciate it. Choose one or more and write a note of encouragement. When you sign the note, say your brother/sister in Christ, or blessings, or praying for you. Then say a little prayer for the person.

Sending & Serving Activity

This is a good activity for someone who is unable to get out or who is having difficulty having enough time to commit to large activities, but wants to be involved. This can be a daily activity.

9 How Do Others Witness?

Supplies:

- Bible
- (optional) small notebook and pen
- (optional) personal journal

Reflect

In giving testimony and witness, the discovery is in the very nature of the relationship of one or many to God. Giving testimony can be challenging and risky. One must be able to self-reflect and then share that with others. It can make one vulnerable. You can find you are not well received, but more often you will find that others are just waiting to find someone they can talk to about how the Holy has affected their lives. In these activities we hope you can discover what it means to be aware of your own relationship with God and see how others experience it.

As you try to discover more about this faith practice, it would be helpful to observe how others give testimony and witness to their faith. Begin with prayer asking God to make you open to God's presence in the world. As you go through your day pay close attention to people as they share. You may be surprised at how many times you hear, "I have been blessed." Make a note of any Christian symbols you see. Do you hear references to the scriptures? What actions, comments, or ways of living are evident that make you think God is at work?

At the end of your day reflect on these things. Read Genesis 24:34–35. What was the servant's witness? Write in your journal if you have one. Remember to talk to God about your discoveries.

Copyright ©2011 The Pilgrim Press. Permission is granted for use by a single congregation for one (1) year from the purchase date of the subscription. No part of this download may be reproduced or transmitted—beyond the group using these materials—in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, or by any information storage or retrieval system, without the written permission from the publisher.

Attachment: Activity 5

The Nine Intelligences

Howard Gardner first identified and introduced seven different kinds of intelligence in his book *Frames of Mind*.

- *Linguistic intelligence*: a sensitivity to the meaning and order of words. It is the capacity to use language to express what's on your mind and to understand other people. Good with words.
- *Logical-mathematical intelligence*: ability in mathematics and other complex logical systems. It is the capacity to understand the underlying principles of some kind of causal system, the way a scientist or a logician does; or to manipulate numbers, quantities, and operations, the way a mathematician does.
- *Musical intelligence*: the ability to understand and create music. Musicians, composers, and dancers show a heightened musical intelligence. It is the capacity to think in music: to be able to hear patterns, recognize them, and perhaps manipulate them. Good with music, tone, and rhythm.
- *Spatial or Visual intelligence*: the ability to "think in pictures," to perceive the visual world accurately, and recreate (or alter) it in the mind or on paper. Spatial intelligence is highly developed in artists, architects, designers, and sculptors. Good with art and design.
- *Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence*: the ability to use one's body in a skilled way, for self-expression or toward a goal. It is the capacity to use your whole body or parts of your body (your hands, your fingers, your arms) to solve a problem, make something, or put on some kind of production. Mimes, dancers, basketball players, and actors are among those who display bodily-kinesthetic intelligence. Good at action, movement and sports.
- *Interpersonal intelligence*: an ability to perceive and understand other individuals—their moods, desires, and motivations. It's an ability we all need. Political and religious leaders, skilled parents and teachers, and therapists use this intelligence. Good at communicating with others.
- *Intrapersonal intelligence*: an understanding of one's own emotions. It is having an understanding of yourself: knowing who you are, what you can do, what you want to do, how you react to things, which things to avoid, and which things to gravitate toward. We are drawn to people who have a good understanding of themselves. They tend to know what they can and can't do, and to know where to go if they need help. Some novelists and counselors use their own experience to guide others. Good at self-reflection.

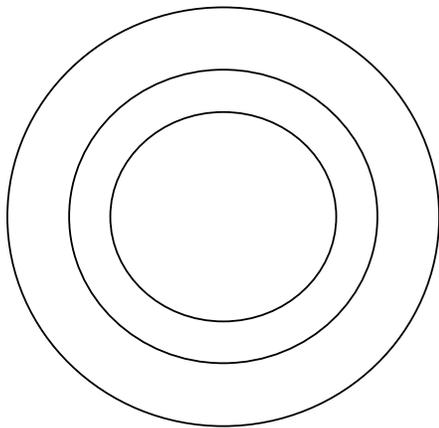
Gardner later added these.

- *Naturalistic intelligence*: Good at appreciating the world and nature. It is the ability to discriminate among living things (plants, animals) and sensitivity to other features of the natural world (clouds, rock configurations). This ability was clearly of value in our evolutionary past as hunters, gatherers, and farmers.
- *Existential intelligence*: the ability and propensity to pose (and ponder) questions about life, death, and ultimate realities.

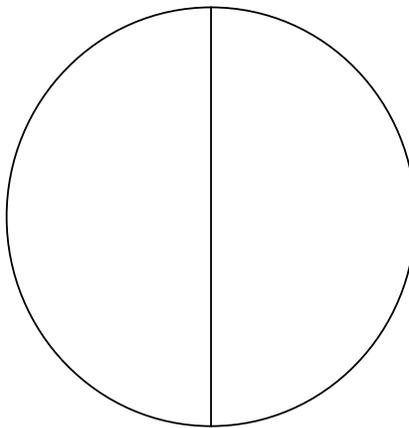
Attachment: Activity 7

Making a Mandala

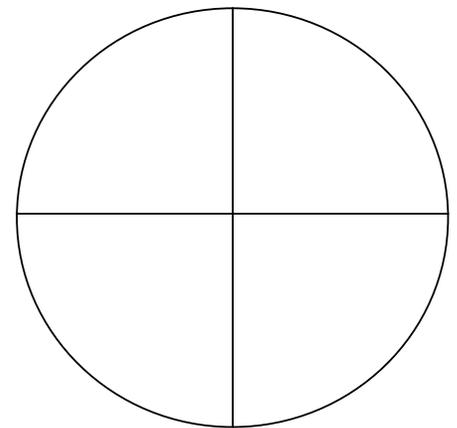
1. Gather your supplies. Decide what size you want to make, and get appropriate paper or a piece of poster board. The circle in a pizza box is a nice size. A 10" circle on standard paper is adequate. If you want to use photographs or picture from magazines, you may want a little larger work space.
2. Begin with the circle.
3. You may add concentric circles or divide into sections



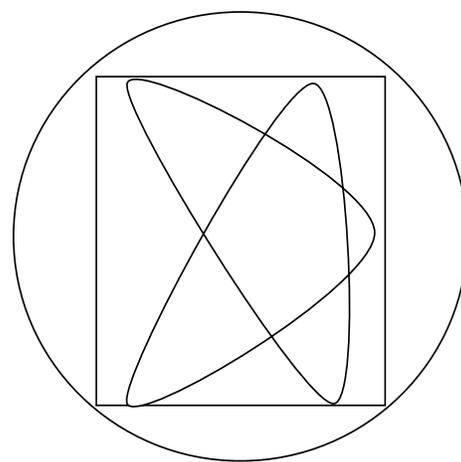
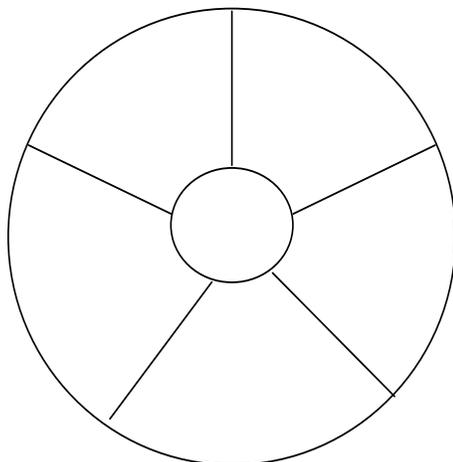
Combination



or



whatever works for you



4. Fill in each space with words, designs, pictures, symbols, or whatever has meaning for you. This artwork is a representation of your own experience, feelings, and self expression.