



Giving Testimony and Witness



Exploration: Christian Tradition

About this Setting

The activities in this setting will help highlight how the traditions of our faith inform our daily living. We will consider several of our Christian traditions and how we can make testimony and witness through them.

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 may practice sharing their experiences of God and the way their faith informs their life with one another. This may help to provide greater comfort in 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 and 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 requires 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

In addition to the witness of scripture, our faith story continues to be told through the holy and imperfect journey of the Christian church. From the day of Pentecost to the current day people have testified to God's work in our lives and in the world. In this exploration, we will look at how the varied expressions of the Christian tradition over time and around the globe shape our testimony and witness today.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Isaiah 52:7–10
2 Peter 1:16–21

Household and Family Life

Exploring & Engaging Activity

1 I Experienced It Myself

Supplies:

- roll of aluminum foil
- [Bibles](#); this link takes you to a site with multiple versions of the Bible

One very important tradition of the church is sharing through our own stories. Read 2 Peter 1:16–18 from *The Message*. In this version the writer says, "We were there . . . we saw it with our own eyes." Do you think that hearing from someone who actually experienced something is more convincing than just reading or hearing about it secondhand? This is what testimony and witness brings to others. When you share your own experience of God, there is a deeper meaning to another.

Spend time remembering a time when you felt certain that God was with you. Use the aluminum foil and shape it into something that represents that time for you. Use your prop to aid you in telling the story. Take turns sharing.

Discerning & Deciding Activity



2 Let Us Bake Bread Together

Supplies:

- "Recipes," Attachment: Activity 2
- ingredients for the bread or cookies
- oven

The sharing of bread is common in most Christian traditions. People share food when there is a death, a birth, or an illness. We also have a tradition of giving bread in greeting and in saying goodbye. We share bread in communion. This is a direct reflection of the table ministry of Jesus. It is a strong witness to the importance of community and our connectedness with God and one another. The gift of food says, "I care about your well-being, and I recognize that you are part of the body of Christ."

Bake bread or cookies to share with someone. If the bread seems too complicated, try something simpler. The attachment contains as examples a recipe for basic white bread, a simple recipe for biscuits, and one for cookies. Choose a recipe that will work for your family/group. While bread is one of the staples of diet common to many cultures, there are many kinds of bread. Baking can be a great time

of fellowship as you prepare the food together. Persons of all ages can participate.

While you prepare your bread, take time to talk about why sharing bread shows Christian love. Consider someone who may be lonely or could use a visit. Choose your recipient and pray for that person. Then take the bread (or whatever you have prepared) to that person and tell the person that you have been thinking about him or her.

Sending & Serving Activity

③ Praying Out Loud

Supplies: None

Prayer is an important tradition in the life of the church. One way to make testimony to your faith in God is to show thanksgiving. Saying grace before meals is a simple way to remember the gift of life God provides through food. Thanking God in a public place may seem awkward, but the act may remind others to give thanks. Consider using the prayer below or one of your own before your meals every day.

Thank you, God, for the gift of food. Please bless all those whose hard work made this meal possible. May we be nourished both physically and spiritually as we share this meal together. In Christ's name we pray. Amen

Individual and Personal Life

Exploring & Engaging Activity

④ Baptism

Supplies:

- artwork: "Baptism" by Hullis Mavruk <http://tinyurl.com/fp-aphm>
- bowl of water
- hand towel

The act of baptism is an open declaration of belief in God. This activity uses art and water as a way to consider how baptism is a testimony and witness to God's great love and grace.

Study the painting "Baptism." Allow yourself to experience the colors, the images, the people and objects. What might the various persons in the scene be thinking? Imagine you are there, too. Why are you there? Where are you? What do you feel, see, smell, or hear? What does it take to step into the river?

If you have been baptized, recall that event. Have you witnessed the baptism of someone else? Was the baptism of a baby or child or of an adult? Sprinkled or immersed? Baptismal font or river?

Put your fingers into the bowl of water. What does water symbolize? Think about baptismal water.

What does it mean to say to the world “I accept Jesus as my personal savior”? Are you willing to say that every day by living your life as if you mean it? Think of ways you might do this in everyday life.

Look at the Mavruk painting again. How does it speak to you? As you go through your day, remember the ideas you considered and try them out. At the end of the day reflect on how you show that you accept Jesus. Take time to pray and thank God for your baptism.

Discerning & Deciding Activities

5 Field Trip

Supplies:

- transportation to a church
- book of Christian symbols or [Christian Symbols](#)

Historically, the uneducated masses were taught about the faith by the symbols, sculptures, and paintings in the churches. Many of the symbols are still seen today. These are an outward witness to God and our faith. Plan to spend some time in a church building. You may go to your own church or visit another church such as a cathedral or basilica in the area. Before going to the church, you might want to call ahead to be certain the building is open for visitors.

Take a walk around the building and note the symbols you see on the outside. Are there statues, words, pictures? Go inside and tour. Make sure you look at the ceiling and floors. Are there stained glass windows? What stories do you see depicted in some way? Which ones do you recognize? Are there some you have not seen before? Look up the symbols in the book, or ask someone who can give you a tour. If you are unable to go to a church, there are many pictures of famous cathedrals/churches on the Internet. Look at some of them and complete the activity. You can even close your eyes and do a mental tour of your church or a church you have visited in the past. By viewing these storytelling artistic symbols you participate in the witness and tradition of the past.

Sending & Serving Activity

6 Wear a Cross

Supplies:

- cross necklace, pin, or button
- types of crosses: [Crosses](#)

The cross is a well-known symbol of Christianity. For some, it is a reminder that Jesus died on the cross. For others, it is a reminder that Jesus was resurrected. One way to witness to your Christian faith is to wear this symbol. There are many ways to wear a cross. You may have jewelry shaped as a cross. Pins or buttons are easily attainable at Christian supply stores. The link in the supply list is an online store, but you might be interested in the informational piece about various crosses and their meanings.

People often wear a cross without thinking about it. Spend time considering what your wearing of the cross means. What is a cross? What does it represent? What is the importance of this to you? Does it make you feel nervous? What will you say if someone comments on your cross?

Take time to thank God for the cross and for all it represents. You may want to reflect on the encounters you had with others because of the cross.

Work Place and Communal Life

Exploring & Engaging Activities

7 Visiting the Sick

Supplies:

- card with envelope and postage
- list of those who are sick or need some special encouragement

Another tradition of the church is visiting people who are sick. Being present to those who are sick can take many forms and is another way of making testimony to your faith. One need not be physically in the same room to be present to another. Cards, phone calls, or letters let people know they are cared for and that they have support in their difficult time. Pray for the person and those caring for them. You may want to create the card yourself.

If someone or a member of their family is ill or having a difficult time, you can make your work group or neighborhood group aware of the situation. It might be a nice gesture to send a card from the whole group. This activity requires that you identify the person or persons in need, make the needs known to the group, and organize the sending of cards. This might spur the members of the group to decide to send flowers or provide some food or run errands for the person or people in need.

Discerning & Deciding Activity

8. Faith on Display

Supplies: None

Not all testimony is verbal. What symbols of the faith do you have with you in your public life? Consider how your possessions reflect who you are spiritually.

Think about your desk, your workspace, or wherever you have your public life. What do the things there say about your faith? What do your possessions say about what you value? What would you be embarrassed to have your pastor/church family see? What reflects who you are as a person of faith? Possessions are not intrinsically bad or evil. How you use them determines what they say about you.

Spend time in reflection about how you use what you have and how some of those things possess you. Would anyone who saw these things know you were indeed a person of faith? Then pray about it, having a conversation with God or with Jesus, and remember to listen as well as talk.

Sending & Serving Activity

9 Reclaiming Religious Holy Days

Supplies:

- Bible

A great tradition of the church is the celebration of the birth of Jesus. This is also a secular holiday celebrated around the world. Think about the ways that the secular and religious expressions are different. Consider how they are the same. Read Isaiah 52:7–10. What do you think it means to spread the good news? What good news can we share at Christmas? Reflect on possible things you can do or say that might give witness to your faith in Jesus Christ during the holiday season. How might you celebrate Christmas differently as a testimony and witness to your faith? Try to put your ideas into practice this year. This is also true for Easter or other church holy days. How can you let others know what these days mean to you?

Reflect

Over the history of the church there have been many ways within the tradition to bear witness to the love of God. Tradition, in addition to scripture, helps us to know how to live out our faith as Christians. As we go through life, many new possibilities will find us, and we will change over time. However, there are many traditions that are worth keeping and through which we can make testimony about God's constant presence.

Attachment: Activity 2

Recipes

Biscuits

Prep time: 15 minutes
Cook time: 12 minutes
Total time: 27 minutes

Ingredients:

¼ cup shortening
2 cups self-rising flour*
¾ cup (approx.) milk

Preparation:

Preheat oven 450 degrees F. In large bowl, cut shortening into flour until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. With fork, stir in enough milk to form a soft dough or until dough pulls away from the bowl. Turn dough onto floured surface. With floured hands, knead until smooth, ten to twelve times. Roll dough to ½" thickness. Cut with floured 2" round cutter. Place biscuits, lightly touching, on ungreased baking sheet. Bake for 10–12 minutes. Makes 12–14 biscuits.

*Self-rising flour is all-purpose flour with added salt and leavening (baking powder). Recipes that call for self-rising flour do not call for baking powder.

You can buy self-rising flour, or make your own self-rising flour. For 1 cup self-rising flour use:
1 cup all-purpose flour, 1¼ teaspoon baking powder, and a pinch of salt.

Snickerdoodles

Prep time: 30 minutes
Cook time: 10 minutes
Total time: 40 minutes

Ingredients:

1 cup shortening
1½ cups sugar
2 eggs
2¾ cups flour
2 teaspoons cream of tartar
1 teaspoon soda
¼ teaspoon salt
cinnamon-sugar mixture (1 tsp cinnamon in a ¼ cup sugar)

Preparation:

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Lightly grease a cookie sheet. In a large bowl, cream shortening and sugar. Add eggs, one at a time. In a small bowl, combine flour, cream of tartar, soda, and salt using a wire whisk. Gradually add flour mixture to shortening mixture until completely combined. Roll dough into balls about the size of walnuts. Dip into cinnamon sugar mixture. Bake 2" apart for 8 to 10 minutes. Makes about 3 dozen cookies.

Attachment Activity 2 (continued)

Recipes

Basic Two-Loaf White Bread

Prep time: 3 hours

Cook time: 45 minutes

Total time: 3 hours, 45 minutes

Ingredients:

- 1 cup milk
- 2 tbsp butter
- ½ cup warm water
- 2 packages active dry yeast
- 2 tbsp sugar
- 1 tbsp salt
- 1 cup of warm water
- 6–7 cups of unbleached bread flour

Preparation:

1. Heat 1 cup of milk and 2 tbsp butter in a small saucepan over medium heat. Remove from heat when the butter is melted. Set aside to cool.
2. Pour ½ cup of warm water into a small bowl. Slowly pour yeast into bowl while stirring. The constant stirring while adding the yeast will prevent the dry yeast from clumping. Set the bowl of yeast water aside for about 5 minutes while you work on the next two steps.
3. In a large bowl, add sugar, salt, and 1 cup of warm water. Mix.
4. Check the small saucepan of milk and butter. If the contents are warm to the touch, pour the liquid into the large bowl and mix.
5. Pour the yeast water into the large bowl. It is important that the batter is warm, not boiling hot. Hot liquid, such as the milk you heated up, will kill the dry yeast and prevent the bread from rising.
6. Begin mixing in the unbleached bread flour, one cup at a time. By the fifth cup of flour, the dough will begin to get stiff and it will be difficult to mix it with the wooden spoon. Turn dough out onto a floured board and begin to knead the dough. Continue adding more flour and kneading the flour into the dough until the dough is smooth, not sticky.
7. Next, grease a large bowl with butter. Put the bread dough into the bowl and then turn the dough over so that the top of the dough is now buttered. Cover the bowl with a damp kitchen towel and let the dough rise at room temperature until double in size, about 1 hour.
8. Punch down dough. Turn it out onto a floured board and knead out all the bubbles for about 5 minutes. Divide the dough in half and form each half into a loaf by rolling the dough into a rectangle. Roll the dough up like a jellyroll. Pinch seam closed. Pinch and tuck edges under the loaf.
9. Preheat oven to 375 degrees F. Butter two loaf pans. Spread a light layer of yellow cornmeal on the loaf pans, if desired. Set loaves in pans, cover with kitchen towel, and allow to rise until double in size, for about a half hour.
10. Bake bread for about 45 minutes or until golden brown. Remove bread from oven and turn out loaves onto a rack or a clean kitchen towel. Allow to cool before cutting.