



Giving Testimony and Witness



Exploration: Context and Mission

About this Setting

Mission is the practice of our faith in the world. In living daily practice we can grow our faith greatly by becoming open to the action of God in the larger context of life. We testify to our faith by living it openly and witnessing to the divine presence.

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

We live in circles of context, one of the richest of which is the local church. This Exploration investigates webs of relationships that call us beyond family, workplace, congregation, or community out to a mission of sharing and listening with all people. Testimony can be a tool for building justice when we engage in dialogue beyond our usual circles. The body of Christ is strengthened when our witnessing is intertwined with those whose situations are vastly different from our own.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Matthew 5:13–20

Romans 8:31–39

Individual and Personal Life

Exploring & Engaging Activity

1 Web of Life

Supplies:

- ball of yarn

We live in the larger context of community. There are many levels of connection. In these relationships we experience God’s mission in the world.

Have one person take the ball of yarn, hold the end of the string, and toss the ball to another person in the room. While doing this, consider those who come to mind when we say the word “mission.” Say aloud one way we are connected to others in our lives. For example, you might say, “those who are hungry” or “the kids in my school.” When you get the yarn, wrap the yarn around a finger and toss it to the next person. After everyone has held the ball of yarn at least once, continue this activity randomly until you have touched the yarn at least three times (if you have a small group). Have the last person hold the ball after securing the yarn. What do you see? Talk about the result.

This is a nice representation of our interconnectedness. Have one person pull on the yarn. What happened? Try it again in another place. Now, have one person let go of a connection. Then pull on the yarn. What happened?

How is this like the body of Christ? In what ways do you feel connected to one another? What are some of the relationships in your life? Consider your family, people in the church, people in your school or workplace, and people in your community. Think of ways you can reach out to others, to care for those in need, to share your faith and make witness to God’s love in the world. Think of ways they represent Christ to you.

We are the body of Christ. “If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it” (1 Cor. 12:26).

Discerning & Deciding Activity



2 Justice

Supplies:

- “Justice Scenarios,” Attachment: Activity 2

Too many people believe that in order to look good or successful they need to put down other people. Contrary to this belief, as Christians and members of the body of Christ, we are interconnected so that when one person's rights are not protected we cannot be whole. When a village suffers from hunger, we cannot be whole. When racism leads to inequities, we cannot be whole. It is our duty, our task to speak out against injustice. The story of Jesus' ministry is full of his work against the injustices he encountered. Every person has worth simply because each is a child of God and God created her/him. We are called to uphold this truth.

Look at the justice scenarios on the attachment and decide what a Christian response might be. Give everyone an opportunity to say how to respond to the situation. There is no one right answer. Talk about the different ideas. In what ways are they in keeping with the mandate from Jesus: "Love as I have loved you"? What risk is involved? How do these responses show witness to the faith?

What can you do to live out your faith? How can you work together to live out your responses in daily living?

Say a prayer asking God to help you do these things.

Sending & Serving Activity



③ Basic Needs

Supplies:

- Bible
- "Assemble a Care Kit," Attachment: Activity 3
- place to shop or get items for the activity ahead of time
- weblinks: [Global Ministries requests](#), [Church World Services kits](#)

When we care for those in need, we express the love of God and witness to our faith. Read Romans 8:31–39. In the hardest times it can seem like God is absent, but God is present in suffering and sends help in the form of compassionate caring brothers and sisters in Christ.

Collect and package various items for those in need. The attachment includes lists for hygiene kits and baby kits. Kits may be sent to Church World Service all year. The contents of each kit have been selected with care based on years of experience to make them as useful as possible, wherever and whenever they are sent.

There are many mission opportunities for persons who want to help people in need. Your denomination's Global Ministries may have recommendations. The United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Global Missions have several additional possibilities for collected and shipped material gifts. You can find out more about these projects by going to the Global Ministries or Church World Services (CWS) websites (see links above). This provides an opportunity to teach the young ones about relief and how they can do something that will help someone who can't get the basic items we take for granted. Make sure that everyone is involved in the shopping and in putting together the kits.

Your participation helps to ensure kits are available for immediate response after a disaster in any part of the world. Local shelters will also welcome this kind of

kit. You may have to do some homework to locate the best place and what to send to local ministries.

Individual and Personal Life

Exploring & Engaging Activity

④ Missionaries

Supplies:

- articles [Missionary stories](#)

Mission is the work we do as a result of our love for God. Often when we think of mission, we think of missionaries in far-off places. The mission field includes places as near as our own family and as far as the other side of the world. In this activity we will consider the work of those who serve outside their country of origin.

Go to the website by clicking on the link in the supply list. This page will lead you to many articles written by the missionaries in the field. Read one or more of the articles. How are these people witnessing to the faith? One point made again and again is the power of faith displayed by the persons they serve. Some of these people are suffering terribly. How do you think you would be changed by such testimony? Could you do the same given those conditions?

If you could go anywhere in the world to serve, where do you think you would go? Why? Where would you not want to go? Why? How can you participate in this particular form of mission even if you can't go yourself? Pray for those who choose to serve as missionaries on our behalf. How can you be a missionary in your own community? Pray for God's guidance in ways to do mission in your own particular setting.

Discerning & Deciding Activity

⑤ Prayer Shawls or Hats

Supplies:

- materials for knitting, sewing, crocheting, or weaving
- <http://www.shawlministry.com/>
- charity guide: <http://tinyurl.com/3d2aw8o>

Witness and testimony take many forms. We are all given gifts, and some of us are good with knitting or crochet needles or other forms of sewing. There are many occasions where a shawl would provide comfort. There is a special ministry (see link) where the loving production of shawls is combined with prayer for the recipient.

The second link above is a site that talks about knitted hats for people undergoing chemotherapy. There are additional links on that page that give instructions. Some women prefer a turban style or other soft material. Men also benefit from the warmth a head covering provides. Hat patterns can be found at the fabric

store. Check at hospitals to see if they might be able to use these. Many cancer centers are happy to be able to offer a nice hat to their patients when they begin treatments. Perhaps you know persons in your community or congregation who could use this special comfort. Remember to pray for the one who will receive the shawl or hat.

Sending & Serving Activities

⑥ Salt and Light

Supplies:

- Bible
- paper and pen
- (optional) calculator

Read Matthew 5:13–20. There are many opportunities to serve the homeless and hungry in the world. Wherever you are there are people who simply do not have the assets to provide shelter or food for themselves or their families. Charitable agencies around the world are providing food, clothing, and shelter for those in desperate need. Two important international groups are [Habitat for Humanity](#) and [Heifer International](#). You may also find local agencies you can support financially or by volunteering.

The following information on homelessness is taken from the current Homeless World Cup website. (For more information about that group go to <http://www.homelessworldcup.org/>.) There are 1.3 billion people living in poverty around the world; 70 percent are women and girls. The problem is not just homelessness.

Additionally, a UN source stated that there are at least 600 million who live in shelters that are life threatening or health threatening in developing world cities. The following information on hunger is taken from the UN website from a press release from December 2009. (For more information about the UN go to <http://www.un.org/en/>.)

The Sixty-fourth General Assembly of the United Nations unanimously reaffirmed that hunger constituted an “outrage” that required urgent measures for its elimination. The Assembly adopted an updated text on the right to food, which described as “intolerable” the fact that, partly due to the food crisis, an estimated 1.02 billion people were now malnourished despite the planet’s ability to produce enough food to feed the world.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau World Population Clock (<http://www.census.gov/main/www/popclock.html>) there are 6,868,585,956 people in the world as of this writing. Using the preceding statistics, do the math. How many homeless persons per 1000 are there? What percentage of the world population lives in life threatening or health threatening conditions? What percentage of the world population is malnourished?

Make a graph that shows this. Tell people about it. Remember, you are the salt of the earth; you are the light of the world. Maybe people will be moved because, as salt enhances the taste of food, as light illuminates, you have revealed the problem.

Work Place and Communal Life

Exploring & Engaging Activities

7 Talk to People as People

Supplies:

- Bible
- song “Siyahamb’ ekukhanyen’ kwenkhos’” (tune: Siyahambra, irr. South African song) <http://tinyurl.com/fp-siyahamb>

Read Matthew 5:13–16. Then sing or look at the words to the song “Siyahamb’ ekukhanyen’ kwenkhos’.” There are two components in giving testimony and witness. We share the good news of God’s abiding love, and we receive it. By giving testimony we can be light to someone else, and by witnessing to the faith we can also walk in God’s light by seeing God’s active presence in others.

An important part of caring for others in mission is restoring their dignity as persons. People who live in poverty or suffer through some crisis or who are considered “lower class” are often treated as subhuman. Many of those who have lower paying jobs are treated poorly, almost as invisible. A “thank you” for their work is, unfortunately, a rare occurrence. One very simple way to lift them out of that status is to speak to them with respect and kindness, using a person’s name if you know it. A greeting with eye contact can lift the spirits of a person usually treated as part of the furniture.

Acknowledge the people you encounter throughout your day, such as the parking lot attendant, the maintenance person, the cleaning person, the cook. Greet them, ask them how they are, and listen when they respond. At the end of the day reflect on the number of people with whom you made contact. Was it more or less than usual? Did you meet people you had never noticed before or ignored? What was their reaction? What was yours? Where was God in these encounters? Pray for them and for your continued openness to the whole family of God so we all will be walking in the light of God together.

Discerning & Deciding Activities

8 What Do They Need?

Supplies:

- phone numbers or e-mail addresses for charitable organizations in your area
- list of community groups

A good way to witness to God’s amazing love is to share that love with those who are less fortunate. The first step is recognizing that all persons are our brothers and sisters in Christ. Step two is finding out what they need. Step three is helping satisfy those needs.

Create lists of needed donations. Ask God to guide you. Select an organization in your community that aids those in need and ask what supplies they need on a regular basis. Make a list for that organization, along with its address, telephone

number, and the name of a contact person. Then contact community organizations to which you belong or have some association that may wish to help with donations. This could be at your workplace. Distribute the lists and encourage donations. In this way your efforts can be multiplied.

Sending & Serving Activities

9 Food Glorious Food Crop Walk

Supplies:

- website: [CROP WALK FAQ](#)
- information from the Church World Service website
- materials obtained from Church World Service

As we try to live out our faith we are reminded that we live in a global village and that we are all part of the body of Christ. As such we are affected by the suffering and the joys of all our parts. If we pay attention it becomes very clear that hunger is a major problem in our world. While there is enough food to feed everyone in the world twice over, people are still starving. Doing something to make a difference is testimony to the faith. It is a loving response to Jesus, who said, “If you love me, feed my sheep.” There are many ways to be fed, but it is hard to experience the other ways if you are hungry.

Many churches and individuals participate in CROP Walks each year. Originally, in 1947 when CROP originated, the acronym stood for Christian Rural Overseas Program. Plan to organize a CROP Walk at your office or in a community group. The weblink in the supply list takes you to the CROP Walk site, where many questions will be answered.

You will need to talk to your boss or community leader about planning. You might want to share how this is part of your faith.

Reflect

Sometimes it is a challenge to see oneself as a missionary. When we accept Christ and the awesome, incredible, and all-encompassing love of God into our lives, the only response is to love. This is God’s mission on earth, to share the divine love through our love of one another and all creation. Mission, or the work that comes from faith, is a testament to that faith.

Attachment: Activity 2

Justice Scenarios

A group of kids is teasing one child about clothes. Each has something to say. They are saying mean things, and the child looks as if about to cry.

You are at work or at school and you hear someone telling an ethnic joke.

A homeless person asks for a handout, and you overhear someone say, "Things like that shouldn't be allowed here."

A woman tries to make a comment at a meeting and is interrupted by a man saying, "How like a woman."

You see an adult in a public place violently hit a child.

Someone throws trash out of a moving car on the highway.

You read about a company that is dumping waste material into the river.

You find out that the working conditions of the people who make your favorite shoes are terrible.

Attachment: Activity 3

Assemble a Care Kit

To assemble a Hygiene Kit you will need:

- 1 hand towel measuring approximately 16" x 28" (no fingertip or bath towels)
- 1 washcloth
- 1 wide-tooth comb
- 1 nail clipper
- 1 bar of soap (bath size in wrapper)
- 1 toothbrush (in original packaging)
- 6 Band-Aids®

Please do not add toothpaste to the Hygiene Kit. Toothpaste that has an extended expiration date will be added to Hygiene Kit shipments just prior to shipment. Seal all items in a one-gallon plastic bag with a zipper closure.

To assemble a Baby Kit you will need:

- 6 cloth diapers
- 2 T-shirts or undershirts (no onesies)
- 2 washcloths
- 2 gowns or sleepers
- 2 diaper pins
- 1 sweater or sweatshirt
- 2 receiving blankets (one can be a hand-knitted or crocheted baby blanket)

All items should be new. Wrap items inside one of the receiving blankets and secure with both diaper pins.

Go to the Church World Service website for information about shipping costs and shipping addresses: [Church World Services kits](http://www.cws.org)