



Giving Testimony and Witness



Exploration: Discipleship

About this Setting

As followers of Jesus Christ the teacher, we are called to share the good news. Living Daily practices will help us become better equipped to testify to God's active presence in our lives in a variety of ways.

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

When giving testimony and witness, a disciple becomes both learner and leader. In response to God's prompting, disciples serve the community through speaking and acting faithfully.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Mark 8:27–38**Psalm 25:1–10**

Household and Family Life

Exploring & Engaging Activity

1 Follow the Leader

Supplies:

- room enough for everyone to see a leader
- Bibles

Being a disciple means following a leader who knows the way and from whom you will learn. In this activity you will play a game of “Follow the Leader” to give you an idea of what that might be.

Choose one person to be “the leader.” That person does some action and everyone else follows it exactly. You may walk around the room, do jumping jacks, or maybe stand on one foot. You need not stand. Have fun with it. When everyone has had a turn to be leader, ask everyone to talk about what it felt like to be the follower or the leader. *When were you happy to follow? When were you hesitant? What made the difference?*

What does it mean to follow Jesus? What in his life helps us to know how to be God’s children? What about when it comes to making testimony? In what ways did Jesus witness to God’s action in his life? As his followers, how can we do that?

Read Mark 8:27–38. Jesus tells his followers how hard it will be to follow him, but he also tells them that the rewards are great. Sometimes following Jesus is difficult, but trust in him helps us continue to do so. Compare your experience in the “Follow the Leader” exercise to the faith journey.

Pray, asking God to be with you on the journey even if it seems difficult at times.

Discerning & Deciding Activity

2 You Are the Salt of the Earth

Supplies:

- song: “You Are Salt for the Earth, O People” (tune: Bring Forth, irr. with refrain) <http://tinyurl.com/fp-salt>

Listen to or read the lyrics of the song “You Are Salt for the Earth, O People.” See the link above. The words are a call to actively show to the world that you are indeed a follower of Christ and that what you do and say makes a difference in the world. What stands out for you?

Why is salt important? How can you be salt to the earth? A light on a hill isn’t hidden. What does that mean for how we are to be witnesses in our lives?

What does it mean to be a seed? What is a pilgrim? What does it mean to be a blessed and pilgrim people? Our witness contributes to God's reign of peace, justice, and mercy.

Listen to the song again, or read it aloud. Amen.

Sending & Serving Activity

③ Feed the Poor

Supplies:

- canned goods
- nonperishable items
- website for Feeding America: Food Bank Locator

Following Jesus requires care for those around you in need. There are poor people everywhere. Recognizing poverty is the first step to ending it. Jesus told his disciples to feed the poor. Many churches hold collections for food pantries during Thanksgiving and Christmas, but the need is very great all year round. The website in the supply list has a food bank locator for the United States. To do an online search for Food Banks in your area, use your favorite search engine and type in "food banks" (your city, your state), or use the link above. If there are no food banks or pantries in your area, you might donate to Feed the Children, Bread for the World <http://www.bread.org>, Heifer International, or another international organization whose mission is the ending of hunger in the world. Your local church may know of persons in need of food.

Caring for the poor and those in need is a way to give thanks for your own gifts received and it is a testimony to your understanding of how to follow the Way of Jesus Christ.

Individual and Personal Life Life

Exploring & Engaging Activity

④ Modeling the Christian life

Supplies: None

Not all testimony is verbal. Perhaps the greatest effect you have on another person's life will never be known to you. God works through us in our living in God's grace. This activity helps you to put God at the center of your life so that in all your actions you live out the gospel.

Throughout your day begin all activities with a prayer. For instance, say a brief prayer before you step in the shower, before you prepare a meal, before you make a phone call. Even in the most routine activities when you try to live so that you give glory to God, your actions will more closely reflect your faith. A simple prayer will suffice. Make a decision to try this for one day and then to reflect on the process at the end of the day. Was it difficult? How did remembering that God

is with you affect your choices, your encounters with other people, how you did an activity, or your feeling about the activity?

As in all disciplines, it takes time. Don't be discouraged if you found this difficult to do. Any connection with the Holy is prayer and makes you aware of God's presence in your life. The more you do it, the more your life becomes a living expression of faith. It shows. In this you make testimony to what God can do.

Discerning & Deciding Activity

5 Random Acts of Kindness

Supplies:

- small change

One of the best ways to show your faith is simply to be kind to others. Help someone carry something. Pay for someone's coffee in line at the cafe. Put money in a parking meter. Smile. Hold the door for someone. Greet someone who is usually ignored. There are hundreds of random acts of kindness you can do.

As you get ready to leave your home for your daily activities, or perhaps the evening before, think about people you might encounter. Ask God to reveal ways in which you can share the grace you receive. Make a conscious decision to perform at least five random acts of kindness, and head out to start your day. Carry some change or a few small bills with you so that you are prepared.

If possible, at the end of the day share with one other person what you chose to do, what reactions you received, and how you felt. This, too, will help you practice your witness to how God works in your life. Thank God for the experience.

Sending & Serving Activity

6 Forgiveness

Supplies:

- (optional) paper and pen/pencil

A powerful act of witness to our faith is forgiving someone. When we forgive, we are following Jesus. Forgiveness is a key component in the prayer that Jesus taught, "Forgive us as we forgive those . . ." Colossians 3:13 (NRSV) says, "Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive."

Think of someone who has wronged you. Pray about it, asking God's help to let go of the anger or hurt. Tell that person that you forgive him or her. This may be very difficult, but with God's help you will be able to carry it out. Remember this is about you. You may want to write out what you would say. The person may or may not accept that forgiveness, but it is the act of forgiving that is important. As disciples of Christ we are called to forgive, and in doing so we offer our testimony to our faith.

Work Place and Communal Life

Exploring & Engaging Activity

7 Stand Up for Someone (Higher Risk)

Supplies: None

Perhaps one of the riskiest ways to witness to the faith is to put yourself on the line for someone else. In the workplace we are often witness to sexist, racist, or just plain mean comments, jokes, or actions. Speaking out, either for a wronged person or against an immoral or inappropriate act makes you vulnerable. However, to give expression to your faith in this way may be a learning moment for someone else. It could help improve a climate for others.

Before going to work, to class, on an errand, or to another situation, take the time to pray for God's guidance. Pay attention to the jokes, comments, and acts you see and hear around you. If they are offensive, make a point of saying so. Notice, especially, if someone is made uncomfortable. Sometimes people repeat jokes without thinking about who might be hurt by it. Many people are unaware of their hurtfulness until they are called on it. If you don't find any instances, thank God for that.

Discerning & Deciding Activity

8 Discipleship in Daily Living

Supplies:

- Bible
- notebook
- (optional) journal

When we take seriously the call to follow Jesus, we become disciples and bear witness to God. How do we do this in day-to-day living? In this activity we will take time to consider this calling to discipleship as we go about our work and existence in community.

Before going to work or to the community activity, read Psalm 25:1–10 and say a prayer for openness and attentiveness. Throughout the day as you go about your daily activities, make note of the ways you interact with others. Be aware of the moral decisions you make each day. In each instance ponder how God intersects this sphere. Write these down and place a check mark next to the encounters where you: 1. remembered that the person was a child of God; 2. treated that person as a child of God; and 3. made what you considered to be a good moral decision. Then consider what Jesus has to say about such things.

At the end of the day, reflect on your new insights and on how you can be a follower of Jesus while living your life in the secular world. Being a disciple is hard work. Jesus requires much of his followers. Figure out the percentage of time you act as a Christian versus the amount of time you don't. Repeat this exercise from time to time.

Sending & Serving Activity

9 Organize a Blood Drive

Supplies:

- Red Cross
- IFRC
- WHO

Belief in Jesus requires caring for others. We can put our faith into action and show our discipleship to others. One such witness is doing charitable work on a larger scale at the workplace or in a community group. Blood is always needed by the Red Cross and similar agencies worldwide. Giving blood can save lives. The links in the supply list are sites that give information about how one can donate blood anywhere in the world.

Most people look for ways to serve others. You can lead the way and give a gift of life to both donors and those who are recipients.

Reflect

We go to church and we read our Bibles and we say we want to follow Jesus. We are in earnest, but then we go about our day, and being a Christian rarely crosses our minds. Often the act of paying attention is the most powerful tool we have to make us aware of God in our lives and to see how we can live accordingly. Spending time in reflection about how we are walking the walk is an impetus to true discipleship. As in all disciplines, giving testimony and witness takes time and commitment. Following Jesus isn't easy, but if we try, our lives are made so much better.