

Giving Testimony and Witness



Exploration: Discovery

About this Age Group

Some adults may be used to sitting in a circle and talking. This Exploration invites adults to be active participants in their own and others' faith journeys. They will be encouraged to sing, share, act, read, envision, calculate, walk, reflect, and pray. As they consider the role of testimony, adults may be surprised to discover the many ways in which they already bear witness to others. They may also be delighted by the discoveries they make when they try interacting in new (or almost forgotten) ways.

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 listen fully 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

Leader Preparation

You are about to open a door. Think of a time when you walked bravely through a door to a new experience. Perhaps you can recall your feelings when you first began school or started a new job. Did you feel some trepidation? Were you enticed by the adventure that awaited you? Bring all your feelings now to God, the one who knows your heart and who will walk with you in this new opportunity.

Prayer: *God of beginnings, I offer you my mind and soul. Speak to me as I ready myself for leading. Make your presence known as we gather. Amen.*

Session Development

For each session, leaders may choose from 9 activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from “Exploring and Engaging,” at least one from “Discerning and Deciding,” and at least one from “Sending and Serving.” The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation with supplies normally found at the church). Using all 9 activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose 3 activities using one activity from each category.
- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose 4 or 5 activities using at least one activity from each category.

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1 Circle Introductions (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Many people struggle to match names with faces. This activity helps participants make connections between people and small pieces of their lives. Even adults who know one another quite well can benefit from a gentle introduction activity—they may discover a new fact about someone they’ve known for years!

Supplies: None

Invite the participants to form a circle and to decide on one piece of information about their lives to share with the group. If the group is large, form more than one circle. Have each person summarize this personal tidbit in one sentence that uses his or her name and then share it with the person to the left. For example, “Mattea volunteers to hold babies at the hospital.” Begin the process by giving your own personal example, and then turn to receive the information from the person to your right. The person to your left will pass on your message to the next person in the circle. All will take turns receiving messages and passing them on until they receive their own message again.

Thank all for sharing and point out that this simple activity of sharing something about ourselves links people together. Testimony really is just about connecting our faith stories.

2 Woven Together

Leader preparation: Tossing a ball of yarn back and forth provides a visual representation of the effect of testimony. Our stories connect us. Tossing out the yarn and reaching forward to catch it are ways to symbolize the telling and hearing of stories. As we pay attention to one another, we become part of a network of witness.

Supplies:

- ball of yarn

Hold a ball of yarn, and ask all group members to think of a word that comes to mind when they hear the word “testimony” (or “witness”). Ask each person to say the word that comes to mind aloud whenever someone tosses the yarn to him or her. Words may be repeated. You begin. Say a word, hold the end of the yarn, and toss the ball across the circle. The person receiving the yarn will repeat the process. After the ball of yarn has been tossed to everyone, repeat the activity, this time responding to the prompt “faithful.” The end result will be a network of yarn. Note that the yarn is a visual image of testimony; it connects the speakers and hearers. Make sure that everyone receives the ball of yarn and is included in the network.

3 Walking Together

Leader preparation: Locate lyrics and music for “Siyahamb’ ekukhanyen’ kwenkhos” (tune: Syahamba, irr. South African song). Music forges connections between people the world over. This South African song has simple words, but its message is profound: We can walk together in the light of God.

Supplies:

- lyrics and music for “Siyahamb’ ekukhanyen’ kwenkhos” (tune: Syahamba, irr. South African song) <http://www.tinyurl.com/fp-siyahamb>
- rhythm instruments

Listen to “Siyahamb’ ekukhanyen’ kwenkhos” one time. Ask the following questions for reflection and response:

- How does a shared journey differ from a solo one?
- What images come to mind when you hear the words “marching in the light of God”?
- When have you shared a meaningful experience of joining forces with others for a cause?

Invite people to choose a rhythm instrument and sing the song together as a celebration that we can share our faith journeys with one another.

Discerning & Deciding Activities

4 This Is My Story (Easy Preparation)

 **Leader preparation:** Read Genesis 24:34–67 as well as Genesis 24:1–33 in order to gain the background to the scripture text. We are reading a story within a story. Abraham has sent his servant out to find a wife for his son. We begin the reading with the servant telling the story of how he met the wife he has chosen for his master’s son.

Participants are invited to think of the effects of the servant’s story and to share the effects of other testimonies they have heard.

Supplies:

- Bible
- paper and pens or pencils

Set the context for the scripture passage by saying that Genesis 24:34–67 is a story being told by the servant of a man named Abraham. As one person reads the text, everyone will pay attention to people who are part of the story the servant tells.

Distribute paper and pens or pencils. Ask participants to share names or categories of people who were part of this story and to note these names on their papers. Ask them then to draw a visual representation of the connections between these people that have been named. *How would you represent relationships among the people: A straight line? A circle? A branching tree?*

After a few minutes, invite volunteers to discuss their drawings. Ask: *How might*

this story have affected the hearers? When have you heard a story that affected you in a powerful way? How do our drawings differ? What do they suggest about the nature of testimony?

5 Colors of Life

Leader preparation: Gather watercolor paints, paint brushes, and heavy paper. Reflect on the type of artwork that moves you. Realize that many people have strong visual-spatial learning strengths, and they respond deeply when working with images. Assure everyone that their artwork need not look professional. The goal for them is to create something of personal meaning.

Supplies:

- Bible
- heavy paper
- watercolor paints
- paint brushes
- water
- newsprint

As a volunteer reads Acts 16:16–34, everyone will listen for the good and difficult times the characters experience. Then, ask participants to name these good and bad moments. Just as the people in the story suffered and rejoiced, so do we. Recognize the nuanced nature of human experience. Some mostly negative experiences may be redeemed by a positive factor. Very few good experiences have no slightly negative element.

Invite everyone to create a watercolor painting that symbolizes both the joys and sorrows of our lives. The artwork may be a realistic portrait or simply an abstract display of colors that are meant to convey various emotions. Once people have finished painting, offer them the opportunity to talk about their paintings. *How does the painting connect to your personal story? How does it reflect your faith journey?*

6 The Servant's Story

Leader preparation: Read Genesis 24:34–49. Write out the verses to be read by each volunteer, and give the appropriate slip of paper to each person. Volunteers may read one of the following sections of the text: Genesis 24:50–53, Genesis 24:54–61, or Genesis 24:62–67.

This story offers an excellent chance for the actors in the group to share their skills. Such a presentation can highlight details in the story not previously noted. As you read the scripture passage, imagine yourself in the roles of the various characters.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- props such as scarves, bracelets, a jug
- slips of paper with scripture written on it (Genesis 24:50–53, Genesis 24:54–61, and Genesis 24:62–67)

Prepare to read the story in sections. Find three volunteers to read the sections of scripture. Also ask for two volunteers to act out the story Abraham's servant is telling as Genesis 24:42–49 is being read. One person will take Rebekah's role, and another will act the part of the servant at the well. Those who observe should pay

attention to parts of the story that refer to God.

After the reading is complete, ask the actors how their experience of this text was shaped by acting it out. *What ways of relating to God were mentioned? How is this story an important part of this text? How central to the outcome is the servant's testimony of what happened at the well?* Invite people to share experiences of prayer, praise, guidance, or an awareness of God.

Sending & Serving Activities

7 Listening to Our Lives (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Be prepared to share your own answers to the two questions below. This activity uses colored construction paper, but it is very effective if you use beads instead. This exercise helps people reflect on the week to come in a prayerful way. The pieces of paper or the beads can serve as reminders of what people need from God and this faith community. Testimony is a vital part of a vibrant group. Sharing present concerns or hopes is an important part of building trust.

Supplies:

- 7 colors of construction paper, cut into small squares or circles
- (optional) beads of various colors, seven for each participant
- thread or string, cut into short lengths

Invite the group to silently consider the following two questions.

- What activities do you expect to shape the coming week?
- What do you need as you face the week ahead?

Give everyone an opportunity to choose from seven different colors of construction paper (or beads) and also pick up a thread or string. As people reflect on the two questions, they may place a colored circle (or bead) for each day on a string and then tie the ends of the string together.

Pray: *Connected to one another on this ordinary day, for this holy time, we attune ourselves to the stories of one another and to God's Spirit.*

Invite people to share what they anticipate for the week ahead. Thank everyone who was willing to speak. Encourage everyone to pay attention to the stories of their lives over the coming few days and to look for and share God's action in their lives.

8 In the Ordinary

Leader preparation: Locate the painting "The Blind Pedlar" by Robert Mcgregor. Think of some of the ordinary interactions you might encounter in a regular week. Do you chat with your neighbors? Hold the door open for someone at a grocery store? Chat about your family with a coworker? This painting depicts a tender interaction between a young child and a blind peddler.

Supplies:

- artwork: “The Blind Pedlar” by Robert Mcgregor
<http://www.tinyurl.com/fp-aprm>

Display the poster where everyone can see it. Reflect on the setting. *What are the characters doing? What does their dress suggest? Imagine yourself as the little girl in the painting. What do you notice about the man? What might you observe with the senses of sound, smell, and touch? Now imagine that you are the man in the painting. What do you hear? smell? touch?*

Ask people to form pairs. Have one person take the role of the girl and the other the role of the peddler. Ask each to describe this encounter to the other.

Bring the group back together. Despite the ordinary setting of the portrait, the two people portrayed are experiencing a moment of kindness. Ask people to share what this painting suggests to them about testimony. *What testimonies, given in ordinary circumstance, have affected your lives?* Encourage people to pay attention to the nature of their interactions with people over the coming week: *How are they representing the kindness of God?*

9 Untold harvest

Leader preparation: Locate seeds or small plants, a flowerpot, and soil. People who have a keenly developed sense of the natural world appreciate analogies that include nature. Seeds are a fitting parallel to the power of testimony.

Supplies:

- seeds or small plants
- flowerpot
- soil

Talk about how seeds hold immeasurable power, as do our testimonies. Seeds grow into plants that may then reproduce countless times. When we share our faith stories, we do not know how greatly they may inspire or encourage others. We can't measure the results, but we can faithfully pay attention to our own stories and give them as gifts to others.

Give everyone a seed or small plant, and invite each person to plant the seed or plant in a communal flowerpot, representative of the rich garden of testimonies in the group. (Seeds may also simply be placed near the pot to be planted later. The pot could be featured in other sessions as a visual reminder of growth. You may wish to send a seed home with each person as a reminder of the potential for good their stories hold.)

As people place the seeds near or in the soil, they may share one word or phrase that answers the following question: What is one positive effect of hearing an encouraging testimony?

Reflect

Picture a flourishing garden. Think of the elements of a successful garden: soil preparation, favorable weather conditions, planting, weeding, tending, harvesting. Gardeners operate on faith and perseverance. They know that their work matters. And they have hope.

Close in prayer: *God of immeasurable beauty and power, I place into your hands the seeds of my faith. Take my efforts. Bless our sharing. Bring fruit from this gathering of your people. Amen*

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.

Giving Testimony and Witness



Exploration: Scripture

About this Age Group

For some members of your group, the biblical stories may be like old friends. Other participants may be coming to them with fresh eyes. Your group may have a wealth of accumulated scriptural knowledge or be made up of people who have never formally studied the Bible. Begin where you are. Aim to experience testimony, not just talk about it. Draw deeply from the well of scripture and the group's gathered experience, knowing that every person brings the gift of a unique perspective.

About this Exploration

Our lives are part of the tapestry of God's larger story in the world. Scripture contains testimonies of people who aren't perfect, which invites us to tell our stories in response. In John's account of Jesus and the blind man, the man's witness sparked a process that touched on people's relationships, different understandings of God, the role of religious authority, and viewpoints within the community. The healed man's testimony inspired dialogue and, ultimately, transformation. Similarly, our stories may shape other people's response to scripture and draw out their testimonies. The experience of hearing scripture varies according to our experiences, situations, traditions, and settings.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:
Mark 9:30–37
Philippians 2:1–13

Leader Preparation

Take your Bible in your hands. It holds stories of generations of followers of Christ. Your life links to theirs. Pause to call to mind the faces of the members of your group. You are linked to these people as well. Encircling you all is God’s Spirit. Trust that God is at work in your lives.

Prayer: God of all generations, I bring to you my story, knowing it is enfolded in the larger saga of your work in the world. Thank you for the stories of others who have followed you. Show me the significance of scripture in my life. Give me the grace to share my experiences with others and to listen carefully to the lessons of others’ lives. Amen.

Session Development

For each session, leaders may choose from 9 activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from “Exploring and Engaging,” at least one from “Discerning and Deciding,” and at least one from “Sending and Serving.” The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation with supplies normally found at the church). Using all 9 activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose 3 activities using one activity from each category.

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 Links in a Chain (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Scripture provides a link to people from the past that have followed Christ. Picture a chain with the people in your group connecting people from the past to future followers of Jesus. The act of sharing their testimonies connects participants to one another and helps them link to the larger story of God’s work in the world.

Supplies: None

Invite the participants to stand or sit in a circle. Ask each person to name one formative experience from the past and one hope for the next generation. For example, someone might say, “I have special memories of visiting my grandparents’ farm. They always welcomed me, and I enjoyed experiencing life on the farm. One hope I have for the future is that children and young people will have strong, nurturing family connections.” After participants have shared, have them link arms as a symbol of connection to one another as well as to those of other generations.

Ask: How do we benefit from hearing other people’s memories and hopes? How do we grow from sharing our own testimonies?

Pray: God of all time, thank you that we are part of your story. Renew our hope when we read of previous generations of people who have followed you. Show us our importance to those who will follow us. Ignite our faith. Amen.

2 Connecting

Leader preparation: Think of your earliest memories of Bible stories. What images or names come to mind? Where did you learn about the Bible? Consider the variety of ways people in your group may have first heard of biblical characters. Write on index cards the names of various well-known people named in the Bible, such as Moses, Abraham, Sarah, Peter, Paul, John, Ruth, Mary, Martha, Joseph, Noah, Esther, and so on. Post these cards on a wall, leaving space in between the cards.

Supplies:

- index cards, each with a name of a well-known person from scripture
- blank index cards
- markers
- sticky tack or tape

Read aloud the names on the posted cards. Point out that these names are all found in scripture. Note that some people present may have been influenced in some way by the stories of these biblical characters. If you wish, ask people to indicate what they remember about the characters named.

Ask all participants to write her or his own first name on an index card and then to place the card near the name of one of the characters. Encourage people to, if they wish, write the name on an index card of a person (biblical, historical, or contemporary) whose story has affected them, and then post that card alongside their own card.

- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose 4 or 5 activities using at least one activity from each category.

Invite participants to tell why they chose to place their cards where they did, and to elaborate on how the biblical character or some other person named on the card nearest theirs has influenced them. See if any patterns emerge from the placement of the cards or throughout the discussion. What common threads do you discover, if any, in the group members' comments?

3 Postcards to the Future

Leader preparation: Imagine what life may be like several decades from now. If you could design a postcard that captured your life now and offered encouragement to future generations, what image would you choose? What would you say? This activity allows people to place their current situations into the larger context of generations to come. Their lives contribute to the creation of a world in which future children will live. Gather index cards and art supplies in preparation.

Supplies:

- index cards
- pens, colored pencils, markers, pencils
- (optional) magazines
- glue

Place index cards around your meeting space. Invite participants to imagine what life may be like one decade from now. People may respond with one word or a phrase. Then ask people to ponder what life may be like in 20 years, 50 years, and 100 years. Invite participants to create postcards for future generations. On the cards, participants might write wishes, words of encouragement, short testimonies, or pieces of advice. If they wish, they may also create art on the blank sides of the index cards, either by sketching or by pasting images on to the card.

Individuals may create their own postcards, or you may encourage everyone to circulate around the room and contribute to various postcards. Then have participants gather to discuss the activity. *Which parts of the cards did you appreciate? What was your reaction to writing to future generations? How does the idea of doing so affect our choices today?*

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Human Sculptures (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: The expression of human emotion crosses lines of culture, gender, and generation. As you read the following words, make the facial expression that each one prompts: tenderness, concern, pity, annoyance, peace. This activity invites people to reflect with their bodies the emotions expressed in a scripture text. In this way, participants may experience a deeper connection with the story.

Supplies:

- Bibles

Psalm 116 tells the psalmist's story of being comforted and rescued by God during a difficult time. Ask a volunteer to read Psalm 116 aloud. Point out that the text describes many emotions and actions. Invite each participant to find a partner. Explain that after you read a sentence, one person will take the part of a

sculptor and the other will play the role of a sculpture. The sculptor will, without touching his or her partner, give instructions to the person playing the sculpture. The goal is to create a human sculpture that effectively demonstrates the concept in the sentence. For the next sentence, have partners switch roles. Remind participants to be exquisitely aware of any physical limitations a partner may have.

Read aloud the following sentences one by one, and for each sentence give pairs about 3 minutes to get into position. After time is up, have everyone look around at the various sculptures. Then move on to the next sentence.

- I love the Lord.
- I suffered distress and anguish.
- O, Lord, I pray, save my life!
- O, Lord, I am your servant.

After the exercise, invite participants to describe how the activity influenced the way they experienced the passage.

Point out that the writer of the psalm says twice, “I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people.” *How are we helped by hearing the testimony of others who have endured difficulty?* Have volunteers name a specific example from her or his own experience.



5 An Astonishing Thing

Leader preparation: Imagining ourselves in a Bible story can bring new insights to familiar stories. This role play invites people to understand the complexities of what appeared to be a simple healing by Jesus. Note how important the man’s faithful testimony is to the story. Make copies of the Reader’s Theater entitled “An Astonishing Thing,” Attachment: Activity 5.

Supplies:

- “An Astonishing Thing,” Attachment: Activity 5

Set the context for the reading by saying that the Jewish religious leaders of Jesus’ day had clear expectations regarding what activities were acceptable on the Sabbath. Anything that was considered “work” was forbidden. Jesus’ healing on the Sabbath was considered work.

Distribute the Reader’s Theater, and ask for volunteers. Ask everyone to imagine themselves as one of the participants in the story, whether or not they are participating in the reading. After the Reader’s Theater is finished, invite people to answer the following questions:

- Which character did you imagine yourself to be?
- What did you notice as we read the story?
- What emotions do you think your character may have experienced? Why?
- What issues related to testimony does this story raise?



6 Seeing Clearly

Leader preparation: Locate a copy of Diana Ong’s work, “Blind Feeling.” Consider the questions below in preparation for the activity. Reflect on times you have “turned a blind eye” to a troubling or perplexing circumstance. When have you seen a situation clearly?

Supplies:

- Bibles
- artwork: “Blind Feeling” by Diana Ong [http:// www.tinyurl.com/fp-apdo](http://www.tinyurl.com/fp-apdo)

Invite all to observe the painting quietly for a minute or two. Then ask what they notice about the artwork. *What part of the painting attracts your eyes first? What effect do the overlapping faces have? What reaction do you have to Ong’s use of color?*

Invite volunteers to read aloud John 9:1–41. Then have everyone consider the following questions:

- What connections do you notice between the art and the scripture?
- The scripture passage deals with both physical blindness and spiritual blindness. What aspects of this painting speak to these themes? What do you observe about the eyes painted in Ong’s work?
- If you were to cast certain characters (such as the Jewish leaders, the healed man, the neighbors, the parents, and so on) from the biblical story as figures in Ong’s work, which figures would represent which Bible characters?
- The healed man’s story received a mixed response. What types of responses do you see represented by the faces in Ong’s work? What variety of responses might people give to our testimonies?
- What do you think helped the healed man to maintain a consistent testimony despite rejection from others?

Sending & Serving Activities

Loved People (Easy Preparation)

 **Leader Preparation:** The simple song “Jesus Loves Me” has been learned by hosts of children. Don’t assume, though, that all the adults in your group know the song. As we mature, our relationship with the Bible may become more complex. Scripture remains a touchstone for those who want to deepen their faith. Approach this activity and this song with respect for simple truths that are sometimes profound.

Supplies:

- hymnals with song “Jesus Loves Me”
- (optional) downloaded version of “Jesus Loves Me” as well as the means to play it

Ask everyone to turn to “Jesus Loves Me” in the hymnals. Read the words aloud. Invite participants to name songs that have been important to their faith journeys. The song speaks of scripture. *What role has the Bible played in the your spiritual lives? How does it connect to testimony for you?*

Invite participants to picture faces of people whom they want to know God’s love. Then sing the song together. As an option, you could listen to the song at <http://www.tinyurl.com/fp-jesus>.

8 Seeing Clearly

Leader preparation: Kinesthetic experiences often heighten the meaning of a learning experience. Some in your group may find it a powerful experience to actually hold covers over their eyes as they think about seeing clearly. Shared stories offer us one way to increase the ability to see the world in new ways. Be prepared to share your own answers to the reflection questions.

Supplies:

- rectangles of wax paper large enough to cover a person’s eyes
- blindfolds, one per person

Pass out blindfolds and pieces of wax paper, one each per person. Let learners know that after a time of silent reflection, people will be invited to share. Ask participants to place the blindfolds over their eyes. Then say, “One time that I did not see a situation clearly at all was . . .” [Pause] “What helped me was . . .”

Ask people to remove the blindfolds and place the wax paper over their eyes. Then say, “Something I’m not sure I’m seeing clearly is . . .” [Pause] “I need God to give me . . .”

Our stories can bring light to one another. Encourage people to share their responses to this activity with one or two people. *How does sharing our testimonies help us clarify our life decisions?*

9 It’s Like This . . .

Leader preparation: Similes are comparisons—using “like” or “as”—between two things that are not necessarily connected. For example, someone might say, “Testimony is like a block. It’s based on my solid experience. It connects to others’ experiences. Also, we can build on one another’s stories to create something significant and strong.”

Contemplate your own concepts of testimony as you set out a variety of objects that may be used in comparing to scripture or testimony. These objects might include a pen, a block of wood, a letter, a glass of water, eyeglasses, chain links, a filter, a cell phone, and seeds or bulbs—anything you think could be used in a comparison.

Supplies:

- objects that may be compared to scripture or testimony

Reflect

Both Bible passages for this Exploration involve stories of people who experienced transformation. Scripture offers examples of people who have suffered, triumphed, and experienced the range of human emotion. Reflect on the people in your group. What sorrows or joys might they carry? What is each concerned about? What is each celebrating? We can bring the whole of ourselves to God.

Set out the objects on a table. Allow participants to ponder them for a few moments and think of how the objects could be compared to scripture or testimony. For example, someone might say, “Testimony is like a filter. When I know other people’s stories, I can understand them better. Their testimony acts like a filter through which I sort their actions and words.”

Invite each participant to hold an object in his or her hands and suggest a comparison between it and scripture or testimony.

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

An Astonishing Thing

A Reader's Theater based on John 9:1-41.

Readers:

Narrator	Neighbor 1	Healed person	Mother
Disciple	Neighbor 2	Pharisee 1	Father
Jesus	Neighbor 3	Pharisee 2	

- Narrator:** As Jesus walked along, he saw a person who was born blind.
- Disciple:** Teacher, who sinned to cause this blindness? This person, or his parents?
- Jesus:** No one. As long as I'm in the world, I am its light.
- Narrator:** Jesus spat on the ground. He made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the eyes of the man who was blind. (*character playing Jesus mimes these actions*)
- Jesus:** Go, wash in the pool of Siloam.
- Narrator:** After the man went and washed, he came back able to see.
- Neighbor 1:** Isn't this the same person who used to sit and beg?
- Neighbor 2:** Yes, that's the one.
- Healed person:** Yes, that was me! (*excitedly*)
- Neighbor 3:** No, but he sure looks like that guy.
- Healed person:** It's really true. It's me!
- Neighbor 3:** Then how were your eyes opened?
- Healed person:** Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, "Go to Siloam and wash." Then I went and washed and I could see.
- Neighbors 1 and 2:** Where is he?
- Healed person:** I don't know.
- Narrator:** It was a Sabbath day when Jesus performed the healing. People brought the healed man to the Pharisees, who started asking how he had received sight.
- Healed person:** Jesus put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see.
- Pharisee 1:** This Jesus is not from God! (*angrily*) He doesn't observe the Sabbath.
- Pharisee 2:** But how can someone who is a sinner perform such miracles?

Attachment: Activity 5 (continued)

- Pharisee 1:** *(asking healed person)* What do you say about Jesus? It was your eyes he opened.
- Healed person:** Jesus is a prophet.
- Narrator:** The Jews did not believe this testimony. They called in the parents.
- Pharisee 2:** Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How can he see?
- Mother:** We know that this is our son who was born blind . . .
- Father:** . . . but we don't know how he can see now. We don't know who opened his eyes. Our son is of age. Ask him.
- Narrator:** The parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, who had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. The Pharisees called the healed man again.
- Pharisee 2:** Give glory to God! We know that this Jesus is a sinner.
- Healed person:** One thing I do know: I was blind, and now I see.
- Pharisee 1:** What did Jesus do to you? How were your eyes healed?
- Healed person:** I already told you. You won't listen! Why do you want to hear the story all over again? Do you also want to become Jesus' disciples?
- Pharisee 2:** *(jeering)* You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know God spoke to Moses. As for this Jesus, we don't even know where he comes from.
- Healed person:** What an astonishing thing! You don't know where Jesus comes from, but he gave me sight. We know that God doesn't listen to sinners. Never since the world began has anyone even heard that someone born blind could suddenly see! *(firmly)* If Jesus was not from God, he could do nothing.
- Pharisee 2:** *(voice raised in anger)* You were born entirely in sin! Are you trying to teach us?
- Narrator:** The Pharisees drove the man out. Jesus went looking and found him.
- Jesus:** Do you believe in the Son of Man?
- Healed person:** Who is he? Tell me, so I may believe.
- Jesus:** I'm talking with you now.
- Healed person:** *(reverently)* Lord, I believe.
- Jesus:** Those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind.
- Pharisee 1:** Surely we're not blind, are we?
- Jesus:** If you were blind, you wouldn't have sin. But you think you see, and your sin remains.

Giving Testimony and Witness



Exploration: Discipleship

About this Age Group

Most adults feel the weight of responsibility. They have people to care for, a living to earn, retirement to plan for, bills to pay, grandchildren to nurture. They need support. They also have much to share. The call to discipleship invites adults to open themselves to God and others with vulnerability and trust. In that process, they may discover sustaining relationships and rich joy.

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
Psalms 25:1–10

Leader Preparation

Those who lead, learn. As you prepare for this session, have faith that God, the great teacher, will tailor the experience to each person present. You do not need to have all the answers or even exactly the right questions. The gift of your affirming presence can model the unswerving love of the God who companions us throughout our lives.

Prayer: Caller of all disciples, guide me as I prepare to lead. Open the hearts, minds, souls, and ears of my learners that together we can be guided on the path you lead to discipleship. Amen.

Session Development

For each session, leaders may choose from 9 activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from “Exploring and Engaging,” at least one from “Discerning and Deciding,” and at least one from “Sending and Serving.” The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation with supplies normally found at the church). Using all 9 activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose 3 activities using one activity from each category.

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 Listening Carefully (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Some people learn well when the material has a musical/rhythmic component. They will likely enjoy this activity. In order to follow simple clapping rhythms, people must listen carefully. Their ability to follow grows with practice. As followers of Christ, we need to attune ourselves in a similar fashion to the movement of the Spirit.

Supplies: None

Clap a rhythm that corresponds to a short statement about the previous week. For example, you might say, “I had some challenges.” Use strong claps to emphasize strong beats (x) and softer claps for less-emphasized parts of the sentence (/). The clapping pattern might look like this: “I (x) had (/) some (/) chall- (x) en- (/) ges (/).” Have the group copy your rhythm.

Invite everyone to think of one brief statement about the previous week. Then participants may take turns sharing their statements while clapping a rhythm. After each statement, the group will echo the clapping pattern.

Briefly discuss what it was like to try to imitate others’ rhythmic patterns and what it was like to lead a rhythm. *What connections do you see between this activity and the topics of discipleship and testimony?*



2 Connecting

Leader preparation: Spend time gazing at the painting used for this activity. Ponder the impression it makes on you. What details do you particularly like? What overall mood would you say it suggests? Allow the meaning of the painting to grow as you imagine what it would be like to be a character in the scene.

Supplies:

- artwork: “Baptism” by Hullis Mavruk <http://www.tinyurl.com/fp-aphm>

Baptism is an important way Christians witness to their faith in Christ. Lead a discussion that considers the following questions:

- Follow the direction of the gaze of various figures. What are they looking at? What do their postures reveal about the focus of their attention?
- What would you say about who is giving witness and who is witnessing the baptism ceremony? What might the two young children in the distance represent?
- Why do you think the artist chose these colors? What associations do they hold for you?
- What is the overall mood of the painting?

Invite participants either to share something about an important formative faith experience or comment on where they would see themselves in this painting. *What does your perceived position in the painting say about your particular witness?*

- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose 4 or 5 activities using at least one activity from each category.



3 Faith Explorations

Leader preparation: Cut a copy of the attachment “Faith Explorations” into sections, and hide the sections around your meeting space. Analogies form the basis of this activity. Those who think in logical patterns will appreciate the comparisons between the words on the cards and the notion of a faith journey. Encourage participants to play with these comparisons. What nuances can you tease out from this seemingly simple activity?

Supplies:

- “Faith Explorations,” Attachment: Activity 3
- scissors
- (optional) star stickers
- (optional) tape or sticky tack
- markers

Tell participants that several cards are hidden around the gathering space. Invite them to search for the cards. Once all cards have been found, post them. Read aloud the words on the cards. Then ask each person to place a star on the card that best represents how she or he thinks of her or his faith journey. Encourage participants to place checkmarks on cards that describe some part of their spiritual experiences. Invite people to share which cards they chose and why. *How do the images on the cards portray your experiences of discipleship?* After sharing, name together some reasons why it is valuable to hear testimonies of other people’s faith stories.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Posturing (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Take time to read Psalm 25 and prayerfully make the accompanying gestures. Notice the way movement shapes your experience of the passage. What other gestures come to mind as you read the scripture? Ponder the role of our bodies in bearing witness to God.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- “Postures of Psalm 25,” Attachment: Activity 4
- podium or table to free your hands when you read and do the postures

Invite all to stand (if able to). Explain that as you read aloud the psalm, you will take certain postures to reinforce the words of the scripture. Invite everyone to imitate you. Read “Postures of Psalm 25,” making the suggested gestures as indicated. Allow time for the group to imitate your posture before continuing to read.

Talk about the reading. *How did the movements expand the meaning of the scripture? How might the experience change if you were following someone you knew really well?*

Note that people sometimes describe discipleship as following Jesus. Invite people to name a section of the psalm that spoke to them. *As we offer our stories to one another, we help one another better follow Christ.*

5 Modeling

Leader preparation: Try working with clay as you reflect on the scripture. Rather than being a distraction, such an activity can actually enhance our learning. Sometimes amazing discoveries emerge when we respond silently to scripture. Be prepared for surprises.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- modeling clay

Give some modeling clay to each participant. Invite them to work with the clay as the scripture is being read. The context of the passage is that Jesus' fame is spreading. Jesus and the disciples speak about who Jesus is and what lies ahead for those who want to follow Jesus.

Read aloud Mark 8:27–38. After the reading, give people a few moments to fashion the clay into symbols that represent the concept of discipleship. Some possibilities include feet for “following,” glasses for “clarity of vision,” a cross (as mentioned in the passage), or the numeral 1 (to represent prioritizing discipleship). Encourage people to show their creations to the group and to make a brief statement about the significance of what they chose to mold. *How do the objects or symbols bear witness to faith experiences?*



6 Stepping Out

Leader preparation: Make copies of the attachment “My Faith Journey,” one per participant. This activity allows participants time for individual reflection. Those who need such time to learn best will thrive in this environment. Be prepared to wait a bit for some of the quieter members of your group to share once everyone returns. They may be willing to speak up after having time alone to reflect.

Supplies:

- Bible
- “My Faith Journey,” Attachment: Activity 6

Ask volunteers to read aloud Mark 8:27–38. Emphasize that Jesus taught the disciples that there are costs to following God.

Give each participant a copy of “My Faith Journey.” Explain that everyone is invited to reflect individually on the questions on the sheet. Ideally, if your space allows, participants may spend half the allotted time walking away from your meeting area and the remaining half returning to the group. Alternatively, people may find a corner in which to meditate on the questions instead of actually walking as they reflect.

Once the group has gathered again, invite people to share thoughts and feelings about this experience. *What did you come to realize about your own testimony?*

Sending & Serving Activities

 7 In My Shoes (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Consider posting the “sentence starters” where people can see them. Try to offer a few options as participants think about choosing a topic. The goal of this sharing time is for people to practice giving testimony about how they are doing right now. How are you doing right now?

Supplies: None

Discipleship means following Jesus right where we are today. Have people form two lines. Ask them to imagine they are going on a hike, during which they will talk about the challenges and joys of their lives with the person across from them in the other line. Each person in a pair will share for a minute or so while the other person listens. After both have spoken, signal that one line of people should move—the participants in one of the lines move forward one person ahead (with the first person in the line moving to the back). In this way, new partnerships are formed. The process continues until everyone is back in the original formation.

Some sentence starters may be:

- A challenge I’m facing is . . .
- Some good news I recently experienced is . . .
- One thing that intrigues me about our study is . . .
- A way someone could really help me out right now is . . .
- One thing I think would help me grow spiritually is . . .

 8 Come to My Lakeshore

Leader preparation: The gentle song in this activity portrays Jesus seeking out someone. Rest in the knowledge that God knows each member of your group. God knows your concerns and your joys. Picture yourself being approached by Jesus. How would you answer the questions below?

Post these questions on newsprint or whiteboard:

- What would it be like to be searched out by Jesus?
- How would I feel if Jesus smiled at me and called my name?
- What is my place of work or service?
- What gifts do I have to offer God?

Supplies:

- recording of “Tú has venido a la orilla” (tune: Pescador de Hombres)
<http://www.tinyurl.com/fp-orilla>
- newsprint or whiteboard and markers

The song “Tú has venido a la orilla” speaks of Jesus coming to meet someone at the lakeshore. Encourage all to imagine Jesus meeting them in their place of work or a similar setting that is familiar to them. Read the posted questions. Invite everyone to reflect on the questions as the music plays. If they wish, they may close their eyes.

Offer time for people to share their responses to the music and the meditation time. *What images, if any, came to mind? What stories can people share of other significant times of sensing God’s presence?*

9 Breathing and Praying

Leader preparation: Bearing witness to God's work in our lives is not just about recounting past events. There is great power in sharing a simple prayer that reflects our present yearnings. Such sharing binds us to others and is part of God's work in others as well as in ourselves. Introduce this prayer activity gently, with respect for the vulnerability some may feel.

Post the following breath prayers on newsprint or a whiteboard:

- Lead me, faithful friend.
- Show me your good paths.
- You are always with me.

Supplies:

- newsprint or whiteboard and markers

Praying can be as simple and profound as breathing. Point out the breath prayers you posted. Explain that such sentences are often called “breath prayers”—short prayers that may be prayed as people slowly breathe in and out. Invite people to sit in silence for a minute while they read the prayers. Explain that you breathe in on the first part of sentence and breathe out on the second part. Then have volunteers read the prayers aloud. Participants may repeat a sentence that has already been read, or pray a new simple prayer. Encourage people to offer prayers that reflect a current request of or thanksgiving for God. After a suitable time, close with a final prayer and say “Amen.”

Reflect

The book is never closed on “discipleship” because we are always growing and learning. However, the conclusion of the discipleship Exploration of this faith practice is a wonderful opportunity for retrospection on what you, in spite of being the “leader,” have learned from the other participants.

Take a few moments to consider the insights that have been shared, the particular knowledge someone offered, the empathy shown to you, the assistance with the conversational dynamic, or the rescue at some moment when you were “clueless.” Offer thanks to God for the mutuality of wisdom in this small community of faith.

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 3

A long-distance run	A growth in friendship
A treasure hunt	A steady walk
A surprise twist	Climbing a mountain road
An uphill and downhill experience	Sunrise
Working a garden	Rapids
A peaceful stream	Sunset

Attachment: Activity 4

Postures of Psalm 25

To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul. (*extend arms up*)

O my God, in you I trust; (*cross arms over chest*) do not let me be put to shame; do not let my enemies exult over me.

Do not let those who wait for you (*cup hands with palms upturned*) be put to shame; let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.

Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths. (*walk in place*)

Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long. (*stretch arms out to the side*)

Be mindful of your mercy, (*place fingertips to temples*) O Lord, and of your steadfast love, for they have been from of old.

Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love (*clasp hands in front of you*) remember me, for your goodness' sake, O Lord!

Good and upright (*stand tall*) is the Lord; therefore he instructs sinners in the way.

He leads (*extend one arm and sweep it alongside yourself, palm open, as if guiding someone*) the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way.

All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness, (*place hands palms down in front of your abdomen and sweep them slowly to the side, as if smoothing a tablecloth*) for those who keep his covenant and his decrees.

Attachment: Activity 6

My Faith Journey

The walk away . . .

What are my questions about Jesus?

When have I focused on activities or goals that didn't have lasting value?

Have I placed too much emphasis on playing things safe?

The journey back . . .

What draws me to follow Jesus?

In what ways do I find spiritual nourishment?

For what or whom do I want to spend my life?

Giving Testimony and Witness



Exploration: Christian Tradition

About this Age Group

Many adults find meaning in long-held traditions. In some cases, adults are not aware of how profoundly their faith journeys have been shaped by the liturgy, music, prayers, and communities that have been part of their histories. A session like this one can help people value the traditions they may take for granted, while also reaching out to embrace new expressions of faith.

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

Exploring & Engaging Activities

Leader Preparation

Explore your relationship to traditions of the Christian faith. In what ways have you been blessed by them? Do any traditions feel overfamiliar to you? How can you reinvigorate them? What new experiences are you yearning for?

Prayer: *God of all time, I come to you with wonder. Enlarge my focus beyond the present day. Show me the riches of the past, and give me a glimpse of the future. As I prepare to lead, enliven my worship with a sense of your magnitude. Amen.*

Session Development

For each session, leaders may choose from 9 activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from “Exploring and Engaging,” at least one from “Discerning and Deciding,” and at least one from “Sending and Serving.” The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation with supplies normally found at the church). Using all 9 activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose 3 activities using one activity from each category.
- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose 4 or 5 activities using at least one activity from each category.

 **1 Word Splash (Easy Preparation)**

Leader preparation: The word “tradition” can conjure up many images. Some participants may immediately associate it with negative experiences. But our lives are often enriched by meaningful traditions. Sometimes we need prompting to recognize the value of the rituals we enjoy. This activity offers such an opportunity. Before the session begins, write the word “Tradition” on newsprint or a whiteboard where all can see it.

Supplies:

- newsprint or whiteboard and markers
- colored pencils or markers

Invite the participants to describe a tradition in their family. Ask people to share any negative associations they have with the word “tradition.” Then ask people to share the positive aspects of traditions. *How do traditions enrich our lives? How do they connect us to the past? What traditions do you currently enjoy? What traditions would you like to pass on to future generations?*

Invite each participant to choose a word or short phrase that connects with a positive association about traditions. Have participants use colored pencils or markers to creatively write the word or phrase on the newsprint or whiteboard near the word “Tradition,” which you posted. The effect will be a collage of words. Invite people to comment on the “word mural” they have created. What does it suggest about the importance to testimony of traditions?

 **2 Connecting**

Leader preparation: The participants in your group may have many faith-related traditions in common, or they may share few. This exercise gives people a chance to reflect on the diversity of traditions in the Christian church and to share what some traditions have meant to them. Make copies of the attachment “Tradition Bingo,” one copy per participant.

Supplies:

- “Tradition Bingo,” Attachment: Activity 2
- pens or pencils

Give each attendee a copy of “Tradition Bingo.” Ask each participant to find as many others as possible to sign a square on his or her “Tradition Bingo” page. The rules are that a person may sign a square only if he or she fits the description on that square and that no one is to sign more than one square on anyone else’s page.

Allow a few minutes for people to mingle. Then ask for volunteers to share brief stories related to squares they were able to sign. *What stories do you have about ways various traditions have shaped their testimony? What are some examples of various church traditions drawing people into faith?*

3 Scrap of Memory

Leader preparation: Fill a basket with scraps of different kinds of fabric. Pay attention to these swatches. How do they differ in color, texture, and pattern? Each participant brings a unique story to your group. Combined, these stories form a portrait of the contexts that shaped this community of faith.

Supplies:

- basket
- scraps of various kinds of fabric, with different colors, textures, and patterns
- fabric pens
- tape or needle and thread

Many quilts have been crafted from pieces of material family members no longer wear. Each scrap held meaning. Perhaps one was from a child's first school outfit and another was from a honeymoon dress. When the scraps were placed alongside one another, they told a family's history.

Invite each person to choose one piece of material from the basket, write his or her name on the scrap, and think of a fond memory. Allow time for people to share their recollections. These stories help us to remember the stories that have shaped us. Encourage people to reflect on how their remembering and sharing is of value to others in the group. *How might your words provide encouragement or hope to others? How is the tradition of giving testimony like the passing on of quilts?*

Either tape or stitch the scraps together to make a group quilt of stories.

Discerning & Deciding Activities

4 Break Forth into Singing (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Reflect on the role music has played in your faith development. What songs hold significance for you? For many people, music is deeply ingrained in their connection to significant milestones such as baptisms, confirmations, weddings, funerals, and so on. Allow people to draw from their experiences as they speak about hymns they love.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- hymnals
- (optional) keyboard to play the hymns

Ask for a volunteer to read aloud Isaiah 52:7–10. Mention the reference to singing. Music has been an important way Christians have testified down through the ages. Distribute hymnals. Invite each participant to choose a hymn she or he has found meaningful and to explain why the hymn is special. *How do the hymns connect to your faith stories?* Sing each hymn (or part of it) as a group, or allow people time to read aloud words or phrases that stand out to them from the hymn.

5 Cardboard Testimonies

Leader preparation: Locate pieces of cardboard. As an option, preview some Christian “cardboard testimonies” on the Internet. This new approach to giving testimony allows people to focus on one central idea and to share testimony in a nonthreatening way. Consider showing an Internet video clip of people showing cardboard testimonies. (One example can be found at <http://www.tinyurl.com/5wh29du>)

Supplies:

- pieces of cardboard or construction paper
- markers
- (optional) Internet connection

Read aloud Isaiah 52:7–10, which describes the beauty of people who bring good news about God to others. Mention that many church traditions have some way of including testimonies in their worship services. If you wish, show a video clip of Christian cardboard testimonies from the Internet.

Pass out cardboard or construction paper. Invite people to create a “cardboard testimony” of their own or to create a cardboard testimony they have heard about. The idea is to represent some area of spiritual growth in a simple way. Testimony need not be complicated!

One side of the cardboard should contain a word or sketch of the person before a change, and the other side should reveal growth in faith. For example, someone might draw on one side a picture of a person off in a corner, alone, and on the reverse side a person on a path surrounded by others. Accompanying words might be “Alone” and “Embraced by community of faith.” Invite people to show both sides of the newly created “cardboard testimony” to the group.

6 A Lamp Shining

Leader preparation: Locate a glass candleholder. Cut various colors of tissue paper into squares. Candles have been traditional symbols of testimony for centuries. This activity allows your group to create a group candleholder that may be used in future sessions.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- large glass candleholder (or smaller glass candleholders, one per participant)
- squares of tissue paper in various colors
- colored markers
- glue
- matches or lighter
- hymnals

Ask a volunteer to read aloud 2 Peter 1:16–21. Draw attention to the comparisons made to “the prophetic message”: a lamp shining and the morning star. Invite participants to choose a piece of tissue paper and personalize it. For example, a person might draw a Christian symbol, write words that are meaningful to his or her faith journey, or simply display his or her name. Apply paste to the back of the tissue, and glue it to the glass candleholder. When a candle is placed inside the holder and lit, the glowing candle will take on the hue of the colored papers.

Take a few moments to examine and read the squares of tissue paper. Encourage people to give testimony by sharing why they wrote or drew what they did.

Option: Provide enough small glass holders that each participant can have one to decorate and take home.

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Our Lives Flow On (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: The Passing of the Peace or other forms of greeting are traditions in many churches. This variation ties in the concept that we are connected not only to those immediately near us but also to the larger church. We are witnesses together.

Supplies: None

Ask everyone to stand in a circle. Explain that this circle represents Christian traditions we have received. Point out that participants are part of the ongoing formation of the Christian church. Encourage people to suggest greetings that one Christian could pass on to another, such as “The peace of Christ be with you” or “May you feel God’s love.”

Ask participants to ponder their role as witnesses of faith. Lead the participants as you move out to form a new loop and then turn back to create a figure eight. As the new loop crosses with the people who are moving forward in the original circle, people may shake hands and exchange greetings. (If your group is not large enough to form a figure eight, simply lead the line in a short walk and form a new circle.)



8 Eyewitnesses

Leader preparation: Post the painting “Hopi Virgin Mother and Child” by John Giuliani. Read the instructions for the activity. This exercise encourages people to experiment with a traditional form of art and make it personal, much as Giuliani’s altered traditional Byzantine icon painting. Traditions may be made anew, just as our faith stories are constantly emerging.

Supplies:

- artwork: “Hopi Virgin Mother and Child” by John Giuliani
<http://www.tinyurl.com/fp-uccr>
- tape or sticky tack
- blank paper
- pencils and colored pencils or crayons

Point out that 2 Peter 1:16–21 speaks of Jesus’ followers as eyewitnesses to Jesus’ life. The followers shared what they had experienced. John Giuliani, artist of the print “Hopi Virgin Mother and Child,” was trained in Byzantine icon painting. Giuliani wanted to take this traditional art form and portray people from twentieth-century America, particularly indigenous people. Here we see Mary and baby Jesus portrayed as members of the Hopi tribe.

Give participants paper and drawing instruments. Invite them to reverse the images in the picture by depicting Jesus as the larger figure and themselves as the smaller figure. Then encourage all to experiment and create their own prints.

They need not worry about their artistic abilities. The aim is to reflect on their personal connection to the painting. Some questions to consider include:

- What do you imagine Jesus to look like?
- How would you portray yourselves?
- What are the expressions on your faces?
- What are the figures wearing?
- What is the background?
- How do your pictures relate to your personal stories of faith?
- What witness might your pictures give to others?

Reflect

Like a slight turn of a kaleidoscope, sometimes the well-known becomes new again when viewed in a slightly different way. When did you sense sparks of life during today's session? What tradition of the Christian faith would you like to explore further? Allow yourself the freedom to experiment with new ways of expressing your faith.

Passing on a Blessing

Leader preparation: Create a simple baton by rolling paper into a tube and taping the tube closed. An empty paper towel roll also works well. Locate a song that speaks of the Christian church through the ages, such as "The Church of Christ, in Every Age," "We Are Your People," "Renew Your Church," or "We Love Your Realm, O God." Your group will symbolize the passing on of the faith by passing around a paper baton as they sing.

Supplies:

- paper or cardboard baton
- hymnals
- (optional) computer or CD player and CD

Give the baton to someone. A crucial part of a relay race is the passing of the baton from one runner to another. The team has to work together in order to complete the race. Each runner is significant. Similarly, each person has an important role to play in giving testimony. As we pass on our stories of faith, others are strengthened to continue their journeys.

Play or sing a song that speaks of the church throughout the ages. As people listen or sing, they will take turns holding the baton. Each person will hold the baton for a few moments before passing it to someone else.

Attachment: Activity 2

Tradition Bingo

Sign your name in a square if you can say “yes” to the statement.

I went to Sunday school as a child.	I have sung in a church choir.	I like to sing four-part harmony.	Someone in my family has served on a church committee.
I often attend church on Christmas Eve.	I have offered a prayer at a public function such as a church meeting.	I own a Bible.	I almost always eat a certain type of food at Easter.
I’ve taken communion.	I participated in confirmation or baptism preparation classes.	I have seen more than five baptisms or christenings.	I take sermon notes.
I have read scripture aloud.	At one time or another I’ve belonged to a small group Bible study.	I have a favorite hymn or worship song.	When I attend church, it’s usually at the same time and on the same day of the week.

Giving Testimony and Witness



Exploration: Context and Mission

About this Age Group

In order to effectively communicate with others, we must listen and look around. What pressures touch the lives of those we meet? How does our love for God intersect with the yearnings of others? Whether riding the elevator at work or viewing an Internet video clip produced across the world, adults need to know that they can make meaningful contributions to the world. Their stories are powerful, and they are needed.

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

Leader Preparation

How easy it is to become overwhelmed by the cares of the world. Our shrinking globe provides us with unmatched opportunity and unprecedented burdens. Ask yourself, as you prepare for this session, “What can I do, right now, right here, to be present to God and to those around me?” Let this be your guiding thought as you prepare this lesson.

Prayer: God, your Spirit surrounds me, even when I am not aware of you. Guide my thoughts as I prepare. Show me how to infuse all aspects of my life with a sense of mission. Amen.

Session Development

For each session, leaders may choose from 9 activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from “Exploring and Engaging,” at least one from “Discerning and Deciding,” and at least one from “Sending and Serving.” The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation with supplies normally found at the church). Using all 9 activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose 3 activities using one activity from each category.
- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose 4 or 5 activities using at least one activity from each category.

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1 A Week of Mine (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Faith practices are most likely to become natural when they are connected with our daily lives. This exercise offers people the opportunity to link the practice of testimony with their regular activities.

Supplies:

- paper and pencils or pens

Ask people to list the days of the week on a piece of paper, and, beside each day, to write their typical activities. After a few minutes, ask them to:

1. Place a checkmark beside activities they think of as being connected with their faith.
2. Draw a question mark beside activities they don’t often think about as actively connected with their spiritual life.
3. Draw a star beside those activities during which they would like to feel more connected with God.

Invite participants to name one observation they made as they worked through this activity. *What aspects of the list seem obviously connected to testimony or mission? In what one area do you want to increase your awareness of being a witness for God?*

Then ask participants to draw a line around all of their writing. The line symbolizes God’s presence, enfolding them during each activity. Encourage people to carry that sense with them through the coming week.

2 Too Young To Know Better

Leader preparation: Download and watch the video clip “Pitt and Wilberforce” from the film *Amazing Grace*. Arrange to be able to play the clip for the group. What is your reaction to this scene? What amazing things would you like to accomplish?

Supplies:

- video clip of “Pitt and Wilberforce” from movie *Amazing Grace*
<http://www.amazinggracemovie.com>
- a means of showing the video clip

Tell the story of William Wilberforce, who was a nineteenth-century British politician and a leader of the movement to abolish the Atlantic slave trade. After Wilberforce became a Christian, he became concerned with issues of social justice. William Pitt (known as Pitt the Younger) encouraged a long campaign to abolish slavery.

Play the video clip “Pitt and Wilberforce” from the movie *Amazing Grace*. Highlight the words of William Pitt after he says nobody as young as they are has ever become Prime Minister before: “We’re too young to realize that certain things are impossible, so we’ll do them anyway.”

Testimonies from the past, such as the fight against slavery, inspire Christians today. *What are the issues that concern us today? For what testimony would we like our generation to be remembered?*

Invite participants to comment on issues they see as being important to youth and young adults. *How do these activities connect with faith values? What good news stories do these members of faith communities have to share? How can the church honor the passion of youth?*

3 Infused with God's presence

Leader preparation: Gather coffee filters, one per participant. Locate food coloring. This activity may seem simple, but its meaning is profound. Encourage any reluctant adults to try the activity. Such an experience, which calls on the creative side of people and offers visual appeal, may be remembered long after a more predictable, comfortable discussion.

Supplies:

- coffee filters, one per participant
- colored markers
- food coloring
- container of water
- newsprint

Give everyone a coffee filter. Invite people to sketch with colored markers simple images that represent various aspects of their lives, such as family, work, or volunteer activities. Place a few drops of food coloring in the container of water. Suggest that sometimes we compartmentalize our lives. We think of some activities as connected to our faith and others as separate. Demonstrate how to hold a coffee filter so that the edges are bunched together, and then dip the center in the colored water. The color will travel up the filter. Invite participants to dip their filters in the water. Set the filters aside on newsprint to dry.

Lead a discussion in response to the activity. Suggest that the colored water is a symbol of how faith can permeate all aspects of our lives. *How can this perspective on our lives shape our priorities and testimonies?*

Discerning & Deciding Activities

4 Shining Together (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: This activity invites discussion about the broad implications of bearing witness to God. Learners will have an opportunity to contemplate metaphors for testimony. As an option, distribute simple musical instruments.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- hymnals
- tea-lights or other candles
- matches or a lighter
- (optional) simple musical instruments

Read aloud Matthew 5:13–20. Invite participants to finish the following sentence starters. As each person responds, he or she may light a tea-light as a symbol of testimony lighting the world.

- Light is a fitting symbol for testimony because . . .
- Something our culture longs to see is . . .
- A reason people might “hide their faith under a bushel” is . . .
- One way we can shed light that gives glory to God is . . .

Sing together a song that speaks of light, such as “This Little Light of Mine,” <http://www.tinyurl.com/fp-light>. Invite people to share with the group ways or places in which they want to see the light of Christ shine. Follow the sharing time by singing the song again. If available, use musical instruments to accompany the singing.

5 Adoration

Leader preparation: Spend time with the painting “The Adoration of the Kings” by Jan Brueghei, the Elder. What surprising images do you note? The nativity scene is the center of the painting. However, everyday scenes from the time of the painter are also incorporated into the painting. What an interesting concept—the birth of Christ as a connection point for all the people in this painting and for all those who view it.

Supplies:

- artwork: “The Adoration of the Kings” by Jan Brueghel, the Elder <http://www.tinyurl.com/fp-uCCR>
- newsprint or whiteboard and markers
- tape or sticky tack
- pencils and pencil crayons

Display the painting and give its title and the name of the artist. The painting was created in 1598. Invite participants to examine the artwork closely, beginning in its middle with the depiction of the Christ child. *What do you see? What kinds of people are represented? What interesting or surprising details do you see? What overall impression does the painting give?*

Post a large piece of newsprint on the wall, or use a whiteboard. Draw a simple outline or frame of a stable in the middle of the paper. Ask everyone to reflect on how the story of Christ’s birth has affected generations. The story stretches to today. Invite participants to sketch simple figures of themselves and people they know as if they are creating a modern version of this painting.

Just as the people in the painting are connected by their shared experience and consequent testimony, we are connected to others by our faith witness.

6 Never Alone

Leader preparation: Make copies of the attachment “Never Alone.” This attachment presents Romans 8:31–39 in a reading for three voices. Scripture passages can take on new emphases when read in a different way. Encourage the readers to speak clearly and with feeling. Don’t hesitate to leave room for silence after the reading in order to give everyone time to ponder the words on the page.

Supplies:

- “Never Alone,” Attachment: Activity 6
- pencils
- small stones, able to fit into a person’s palm
- permanent markers

Give everyone a copy of “Never Alone.” Explain that this reading is drawn from Romans 8:31–39. Ask volunteers to read aloud the parts of Readers 1, 2, and 3. Invite people to sit quietly and circle words from the reading that reinforce the idea that nothing can separate them from God’s love. After a few minutes, invite participants to share their observations.

Then ask each person to choose a stone and on it write a word or draw a symbol that reminds her or him of God’s presence. Encourage participants to place the rock somewhere she or he goes on a regular basis as a reminder of Christ’s love.

Sending & Serving Activities

7 Blessed and Blessing (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: This exercise looks at what it means to be blessed and to be a blessing. Think about the people in your life who have blessed you. What did they do, and what was your response? What if your response was to turn around and bless another in our midst? Many will be familiar with this concept from the movie *Pay It Forward*, but it really has its foundation in our faith. When we bless others, we are testifying to what our faith means for us.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- newsprint or whiteboard and markers

Take time reading aloud Matthew 5:1–12, which is commonly known as the Beatitudes. Compare this to Luke 6: 20–23. Point out that in Matthew the sermon is called the Sermon on the Mount, while in Luke it is called the Sermon on the Plain. *What are similarities and differences between the two? Within the context of these passages from Matthew and Luke, what does it mean to be a “Blessed”?*

Invite the participants to describe a time when they were blessed. *What was the circumstance? Who was involved? What was your response?*

Write the words “Blessing,” “Testimony,” and “Mission” on newsprint or a whiteboard where everyone can see them. *What connection do you see in these words? How are they related?* Allow the group to ponder these questions for a while, and ask participants to write their thoughts on the board or paper.

As a faith community, how can we be a blessing to others? What is something you can lead your faith community to do that would help you testify to your call to be a blessing to others? Ask participants to try not to make this just a “mind” exercise, but rather to come up with something someone could actually do and figure out how to implement the idea over the next few weeks.

8 Sharing Is Caring

Leader preparation: In many of our faith communities, the generations live separate lives, interacting very little. Even in places where worship is intergenerational, one can hear the adults say, “What is that child’s name? I just don’t really know the children in our church.” Or the children say, “You know that old lady with the gray hair? . . . No, not that one—the other one.” This activity may start to bridge that gap and start to make some connections for your community of faith.

Supplies:

- note cards or paper to make them
- pens, markers, stickers
- church directory

Open the conversation by asking folks to name some of the children in their faith community. If you are fortunate enough to be in a community where the names are known, this will take less time. Talk about testimony. *If we don't model testimony for our youth, how can we expect them to be able to testify to their faith? What does it mean for us to testify in a way that youth can hear it and be comfortable with it?*

Invite each person to choose one youth with whom he or she would like to share a form of testimony. This is not to be a relative like a grandchild or a niece or nephew. Allow the group to be uncomfortable with this and talk about why it is uncomfortable. As they are able, invite each participant to send a chosen youth a note, talking about how blessed we are to share a faith community. Suggest that each person invite a youth to continue in a conversation about what it means to testify to one's faith. In planning this exercise, be especially aware of your church's safe church policy and how the generations can get to know one another while keeping all safe.

9 You Are Salt for the Earth

Leader preparation: Locate the music for "You Are Salt for the Earth, O People" (tune: Bring forth, irr. with refrain). Consider the images in this song. Salt is known as a preservative; it also brings flavor to food. Light on a hill provides lit pathways for travelers. A seed has transformative powers. What other words could be used to describe the impact of testimony?

Supplies:

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

As a group, sing the song "You Are Salt for the Earth, O People." Then ask everyone to think of words that may be substituted for "salt." Write the words on newsprint or whiteboard. *What does testimony provide to others: hope, peace, courage, and so on? Name these gifts. Then repeat the first verse and incorporate your new words into the song.*

Reflect

If you can, watch a second hand tick through the course of a minute. Ponder the preciousness of time. Now picture a circle as wide as the room you are in. Let that space represent the people you are able to directly influence. Finally, imagine a globe. Even though you may never know it, your words and actions can affect people you will never meet. Think of the opportunity you have for bringing good to the world by simply living out your faith in your daily life. Rest in the knowledge that the God who is not bound by time or space can multiply your effect on the world more than you could imagine.

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 6

Never Alone

A reading based on Romans 8:31–39.

- Reader 1:** What, then, are we to say about these things?
All: If God is on our side, who is against us?
Reader 1: God didn't hold back his own Son, but gave him up for all of us.
Reader 2: Won't God give us everything else?
Reader 1: Who will bring any charge against us?
Reader 2: It is God who justifies.
Reader 1: Who is to condemn?
Reader 3: Christ Jesus, who died and was raised to life, who is at the right hand of God, prays for us.
Reader 1: Who will separate us from the love of Christ?
Reader 2: Will hardship,
Reader 3: or distress,
Reader 1: or persecution,
Reader 3: or famine,
Reader 2: or nakedness,
Reader 3: or peril,
Reader 1: or sword?
Reader 2: As Scripture says, "For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered."
Readers 2 and 3: No, in all these things,
Reader 2: in all these things,
Reader 3: we are more than conquerors
Reader 2: through him who loved us.
Reader 3: I am convinced that neither death,
Reader 1: nor life,
Reader 2: nor angels,
Reader 3: nor rulers,
Reader 1: nor things present,
Reader 2: nor things to come,
Readers 2 and 3: nor powers,
Readers 3 and 1: nor height,
Readers 1 and 2: nor depth,
All: nor anything else in all creation,
Reader 1: will be able to separate us
Reader 2: (*with gentle firmness*) from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Giving Testimony and Witness



Exploration: Future and Vision

About this Age Group

Adults begin to find meaning in generativity—what they will pass on to those who come after them. Some adults in your group may be overwhelmed with the tasks of raising children. Others may be feeling the pain of letting go as a younger generation begins to take the reins of leadership. Adults at various stages may share similar concerns and hopes for the future of the church. Your sensitive reception of the views of members provides powerful affirmation of their contributions.

About this Exploration

A glimpse of God's realm becomes possible every time we practice testimony and witness. In this Exploration, we move daily to express the presence of God through language, symbols, and rituals, as we increase our hope and vision for ourselves and future generations. By sharing our experiences of God's love day to day, we pass on the all-encompassing grace that sets a foundation for the church of tomorrow. Acknowledging that the practice of testimony and witness is an ongoing process, we focus our attention upon God's continuing revelation, as we move toward the future "kin-dom" (the realm of God where all are kin).

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:
2 Timothy 4:6–8, 16–18
Philemon 1:1–25

Leader Preparation

The artwork used in this session is van Gogh’s “The Sower.” In it we see a lively blend of colors, moving among earth, sky, and sower. Such is the work of God’s spirit—nurturing, growing, and surprising us. As you lead this group, you are part of the forward dance of planting and reaping that is God’s story in the world.

Prayer: God, I pause to consider the profound effect one person can have on another. Thank you for the group that will gather. Give each person hope for the future, an awareness of your presence, and gratitude for the gift of testimony. Amen.

Session Development

For each session, leaders may choose from 9 activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from “Exploring and Engaging,” at least one from “Discerning and Deciding,” and at least one from “Sending and Serving.” The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation with supplies normally found at the church). Using all 9 activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose 3 activities using one activity from each category.
- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose 4 or 5 activities using at least one activity from each category.

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1 Binoculars (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Sometimes we need to use the creative power of our imaginations to see past what is right in front of us. Take a few moments to imagine an enriching, safe group experience. Ask for the Spirit to nurture the creative vision of the participants who will gather.

Supplies:

- (optional) binoculars or telescope

Binoculars help us see objects that are far away in more detail. Invite participants to imagine they are looking through binoculars at the future. *What do you want to see in your own faith maturity in the near future? What feature of the Christian church do you hope is present in 10 years? In 20 years? In 100 years? How can your witness help shape the future?*

2 The Domino Effect

Leader preparation: Locate dominos. Each domino contains two patterns. Your group will divide into pairs to share ideas. You could consider using the patterns on the dominos to organize these pairs. For example, people could pair up according to color or number. Allowing people to speak in pairs fosters a lively discussion. Many who are reluctant to share in a large group will speak freely with one other person.

Supplies:

- dominos

Give each person in the group at least one domino. Ask people to form pairs according to the number on the domino and then talk with each other about one need in the world that Christian testimony could meet right now. Have the first pair to finish talking place their dominos next to each other, standing on end. Subsequent pairs should do the same, forming one line of dominos.

Point out that each person’s testimony is like a domino in a pattern, connecting one story to another. Say a simple prayer, such as: *God, bring blessing to the world through our stories.*

Tip over the first domino to cause them all to fall. Note that if no one starts the chain reaction, the dominos don’t connect with one another. *What implications does this parallel have for the importance of individual witness?*

3 Around the Globe

Leader preparation: Locate a globe or large map of the world. Find your geographical location. Picture the influence of your group members on their family members, friends, distant relatives, and connections through the Internet. Consider the incredible opportunities we have to share our faith.

Supplies:

- globe or large map of world
- small sticky notes

Invite participants to place small sticky notes on the globe or map to indicate either places on earth that interest them or places where they have connections. For example, someone may have come from another country, visited or lived in a different place, have family members or friends in lots of places, or have always been fascinated by a certain area.

Discuss the reasons why people placed their sticky notes where they did. Invite people to name one way they would like to influence the world for good. *How can our witness reach to places we have never been? Which is more difficult—to give testimony in a far-off place or right where we live?*

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Words of Affirmation (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Giving participants a focus helps them listen attentively to a scripture passage. The experience can be like seeing a familiar scene through a clearer lens. As group members look toward the future, they may need encouragement. This passage provides a model of how to offer kind words and praise to one another.

Supplies:

- Bible
- (optional) sticky notes and pens

Set the context for Philemon 1:1–25. Paul is writing to Philemon on behalf of Onesimus, Philemon's slave, who had run away. Then read the passage aloud. Ask everyone to take note of the words Paul uses to praise both Philemon and Onesimus. Invite people to name some of the words or phrases Paul uses to praise his friends. As a way of practicing testimony, encourage people to share stories of times when they have been encouraged by others. Discuss how we can encourage others in their faith.

Option: Write the words of praise from the biblical text on sticky notes. Give them to participants to place on themselves as visual symbols of encouraging words.

5 Links in a Chain

Leader preparation: Cut strips from construction paper that are long enough to be links in a paper chain. You and those in your group are all important links in the chain of Christian testimony. Each link is as significant as the others. Reflect on the inherent value of each contributor to your group.

Supplies:

- strips of construction paper, 1 × 6 inches
- pens
- tape
- Bibles

Give each person a strip of paper on which to write his or her name. Introduce the biblical text by saying that it is from a letter written by Paul, an early founder of the Christian church, to a younger worker named Timothy. Ask a volunteer to read aloud 2 Timothy 4:6–8, 16–18. Encourage everyone else to listen to the comparisons Paul uses to describe his faith journey.

Refer to the images of finishing a race, fighting a fight, and winning a crown. Ask people to identify which image they most relate to when they think of their own testimonies. Encourage participants to share their reasons.

Write the name “Paul” on one paper strip and “Timothy” on another. Mention that a strong motivator for Paul was devotion to the people who would follow him in faith. Tape the ends of the “Paul” paper together to form a circle. Thread the “Timothy” slip of paper through the first loop and tape the ends to form a second loop. Now there are two connected paper loops. Invite participants to add their links to the paper chain.

Gather in a circle, holding the chain in your hands. Ask people to read out the names on the links in the chain as a reminder that we are all connected to God’s story in the world.



6 The Colors of Growth

Leader preparation: Locate the painting “The Sower” by Vincent van Gogh. This painting has captured the imaginations of many people. This activity allows people to consider one metaphor—planting seed—as they think about testimony. Consider encouraging people to paint a response. The key is not to create a masterpiece, but to respond honestly to the painting. Proficiency with a paint brush is not a requirement!

Supplies:

- artwork: “The Sower” by Vincent van Gogh
<http://www.tinyurl.com/fp-uccr2>
- heavy paper
- finger paints
- water and towels
- newsprint

Display the painting “The Sower” by Vincent van Gogh. Note that colors often took on symbolic meaning for this artist. Yellow meant faith, triumph, and love. Cobalt blue meant the divine.

Read aloud 2 Timothy 4:6–8, 16–18 in light of this painting. Paul devoted himself to spreading the news of Jesus. *What evidence in the text do you see of faith, triumph, and love? How does the metaphor of planting relate to testimony? To the future? What comparisons exist between the qualities of a gardener or farmer and those who witness with their lives and words?*

Invite everyone to use finger paints to respond to the idea of God’s story being carried forward in joy through generations of people. A good response may be simply a wash of colors.

Sending & Serving Activities

 7 Walking Together (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Locate the song “Siyahamb’ ekukhanyen’ kwenkhos” (tune: Syahambra, irr. South African song). This joyful melody invites movement. As participants offer their action words to insert into the song, consider encouraging people to suggest accompanying motions. Adults, as well as children, learn well when their bodies—not just their minds—are engaged.

Supplies:

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

Invite people to sit silently for a minute and reflect on a way they want to bear witness to their faith in God. Then ask them to share an “-ing” form of a verb that captures that idea and to offer a short reason for the choice. For example, someone might say “canoeing” because that person deeply values her or his annual canoe trip with friends and wants to be candid with friends about her or his faith commitment.

Sing the song together once. Then sing the song a few more times, each time substituting a word someone named in place of the word “marching.”

8 Do the Math

Leader preparation: As you prepare to lead this activity, think of the contact you’ve had with others over the past week. What forms did the connections take? How did your conduct reflect your faith? How did you witness with or without words? Reflect on the many connections people in your group make with others. What powerful potential for witness!

Supplies:

- index cards
- pens
- (optional) calculator
- newsprint or whiteboard and marker

Facebook has proven the power of people’s desire to be connected in this modern time. Distribute the index cards. Ask participants to write numbers in answer to the following questions:

- How many people do you consider you know quite well?
- What number of people would you guess includes acquaintances you would see on a fairly regular basis?
- How many people do you suppose you have had at least one conversation with in the past month?

Count the people in the group. Write that number on newsprint or a whiteboard. Gather the cards. Add up the numbers for each category. Write these numbers on the newsprint or whiteboard.

Discuss the implications of your findings for the mission of the church. *What surprises you about the numbers in each category? What if talking about our faith was as natural as chatting about the weather? What might the impact be for the future of the church?*

Reflect

One selection of music for this session simply says, “We are walking in the light of God.” Think of the simple act of walking. Picture yourself placing one foot in front of the other. Now add the sounds of another person’s footsteps coming alongside you . . . and then the sounds of a gathering crowd—all walking together. Picture this group from above, bathed in sunlight. As you travel on your journey of faith, you are connected to all those who follow God. May you go in peace, walking in God’s light.



9 Words of witness

Leader preparation: Make copies of the attachment “Words of Witness,” one per participant. Cut apart the boxes on each page, and place each set of words into its own envelope. The words inside each envelope may seem disjointed, but they take form when arranged by someone. Similarly, each person’s life leaves a unique imprint on the world. Ponder the importance of connection times, such as those your group provides.

Supplies:

- “Words of Witness,” Attachment: Activity 9
- scissors
- envelopes

Distribute the envelopes. Invite everyone to experiment with the placement of the words inside to form abstract poems about witness. Encourage people to share their poems with one another as a form of testimony.

Attachment: Activity 9

Words of Witness

tell	speak	share	live	you
I	me	see	know	God
love	testimony	witness	listen	grow
risk	strength	Jesus	grace	peace
remember	prayer	faith	good	joy
encouragement	boldness	welcome	confidence	restore
a	the	or	because	of
and	if			