

Bearing Faithful Witness - Resources

Exploring what it means to become a community that responds to "our people" by living and communicating a good news story.

RESOURCE #13

Practices for Bearing Faithful Witness

Connecting Word and Deed

Developing habits and practices that help us to connect our desire to live as godly, loving Christians (deeds) alongside our desire to communicate to others the "good news" that we have found in Jesus (words). These practices are spiritual discernment exercises. We need to learn how to pay attention to what God the Holy Spirit is already doing in the lives of the people within our spheres of influence. Our task is not to "evangelize" our friends; our task is to bear faithful witness as we participate with what God is already doing in their lives.



The Practice: Notice

In our world of individualism, we have a very serious attention deficit disorder. We are so busy doing our own thing we rarely take the time to notice each other. We don't pay attention. The Kingdom practice here is to make enough time and space in our lives so that we can actually notice – pay attention – to other people.

Be generous with your attention. Give it away freely. Keep watch. Make sure that the people we come into contact with are 'ok.' This practice also helps us become familiar with the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Becoming sensitive to His guidance is vital!

Assignment: Who are the people in your life who probably need your generous attention? Will you take time for one person this week? Can you give them your generous attention? Observe them, pray for them, talk to them, listen to them, love them. Nothing overt is required. Be understated.

Prayer: God of the Universe, you noticed us, you sent us yourself in Jesus, you gave us your generous attention. Thank you for the beautiful feet of those who shared good news with us. Jesus, we revere you as Lord and Master of our hearts, help us to pay attention to others, as you did to us. Holy Spirit, lead us to those in our lives who need us to pay attention to them, in Jesus' name. Amen.



The Practice: Pray

We have begun Noticing – paying attention to the people around us. Do you have any inclination of needs or concerns in the life of the person(s) you have been noticing? The Kingdom practice here is to open up a dialogue with God about the people in your life – to pray for them.

Engage in unauthorized prayer. Think about this sad reality... there are literally thousands of people in our city or town who face all of life's challenges alone! They have no one taking them and their concerns to God! You may be the only one doing that. Take that responsibility seriously. Don't wait for permission. Be faithful.

This practice promotes action. Love is a verb. And praying for someone is the first step in loving them. This practice also promotes co-labouring with God. God seems to intentionally leave certain jobs undone in order to include us in the work that God is doing in the world.

Assignment: This week. When God brings someone to your attention - pray about what you see, what you sense. Don't make a big show of it. Take them to God.

Prayer: God of the Universe – who notices us – we come to you in Jesus' name, asking on behalf of our friends. Father, I would like to see _____ in this family circle one day. God, as we co-labour together in the life of my friend, will you continue to draw him/her to Jesus, and to the same renewal of spirit that I have found in relationship with You. Amen.

Bearing Faithful Witness - Resources

Exploring what it means to become a community that responds to "our people" by living and communicating a good news story.



The Practice: Listen

We often forget the fact that God gave us two ears and only one mouth for a reason. We are often more eager to talk to someone about Jesus rather than the equally important art of listening to them, in Jesus.

Move in close, lean in and say "How are you?" and actually mean it, and actually wait for a response, and then go as deep as they want to go. This practice promotes other-centered-ness. By listening to their story, by entering in on their terms you are learning that this life is not all about you. When you listen, try this, listen for the contours of the journey -- which we have been discussing -- in their story.

- What would good and whole, and "as it should be," look like according to them?
- What do you hear of their aching heart? What are they yearning for?
- How do they describe why they aren't realizing that? What is broken in them?
- How are they seeking to solve their discontentment?
- Does God-language ever show up in their story-telling?

The goal here isn't to find the weakness in their argument and worldview, it's to genuinely seek to understand your friend at their deepest levels.

You might want to try creating environments where you as a group create space where you can hear other people's stories. Groups can host dinner parties and BBQs and invite their small group friends and their friends from other social circles. We call this friend-smashing. It's a good practice. The goal is to listen. To host. To open up space in your life to include these others.

Assignment: This week. Move in close with a friend you have been noticing and praying for – lean in and say "How are you?" and wait for a response, and then go as deep as they want to go.

Prayer: God of the Universe, who notices us, who draws us to yourself, who listens to us; please give me ears to truly hear the stories of my friends. Father, prompt me this week to listen to my friend _____. God, as we co-labour together in the life of my friend, will you continue to draw him/her to Jesus, and to the same renewal of spirit that I have found in relationship with You. Amen.



The Practice: Love

Now if you are out there noticing people, engaging in unauthorized prayer, listening to people and their stories, something is going to happen to your heart. Look out. The fact that you have the God of love living his life in you, and now you are bringing your life into dangerously close contact with other people - you might find yourself loving people deeply. Don't be alarmed. Let it happen.

Love them with all you got and of course be deliberate about looking for opportunities to put this feeling into action. You'll want to consider how you can be of benefit to them in their life. Find ways to serve them. Find ways to let them know you care about them. Practice real and deep loving, as an intentional, active thing.

Assignment: Move in close with a friend you have been noticing, praying for, and listening to. Can you identify a practical way to "love on" them? Will you act on that this week? Is there a way other members of this group could help you with that?

Prayer: God of the Universe, who notices us, who draws us to yourself, who listens to us, who loves us unconditionally, please reveal to me a way to demonstrate your love flowing through me with my friend _____. God, as we co-labour together in the life of my friend, will you continue to draw him/her to Jesus, and to the same renewal of spirit that I have found in relationship with You. Amen.

Bearing Faithful Witness - Resources

Exploring what it means to become a community that responds to "our people" by living and communicating a good news story.



The Practice: Tell your story

The goal here is to not to intellectually tear them a new one. It's NOT to find just the right arguments to pound them into the dirt. It's NOT even to tell the Big Story of the universe and everything. The goal is to talk about you. To tell your story. (Look back at Session 6)

Talk about how God made peace with you. Nothing fancy.

Some of us have never thought much about our own story. Now is the time to start giving it some thought. This practice promotes gratitude in you by becoming aware of the many ways God has been present in your life.

Assignment: In the course of LISTENING to your friends and LOVING them, an opportunity may emerge to share your personal story of coming to faith (like Kirsten shared hers). You don't have to "tell the Gospel in a nutshell" – leave that for another day – just TELL your story.

Prayer: God of the Universe, who notices us, who draws us to yourself, who listens to us, who loves us, please open up an opportunity to tell my own faith story to my friend, _____. God, as we co-labour together in the life of my friend, will you continue to draw him/her to Jesus, and to the same renewal of spirit that I have found in relationship with You. Amen.



The Practice: Be Communion

Finally, you will need to prepare yourself for being communion for that person. God calls us to live like him. That means becoming broken bread and poured out wine for them.

We are the grace-radiating presence of God in the lives of our friends. We are their first impression of God incarnate, the first text that they read, the first Word that they Hear.

The truth about our faith is that we never really have it until we give it away.

Prayer: God of the Universe, who notices us, who draws us to yourself, who listens to us, who loves us, who gives us stories to tell, may your presence in my life encourage the birth of faith in Jesus in my friend, _____. God, as we co-labour together in the life of my friend, will you continue to draw him/her to Jesus, and to the same renewal of spirit that I have found in relationship with You. Amen.