



Session Seven: Making Sense of His Story (1)

“In your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect ...” *1 Peter 3:15*

GOAL

Understanding His story and my witness. The Good News in a nutshell. What do you believe about Jesus?

Practice Review

- Did you get a chance to move in close this week, and LISTEN to a friend or acquaintance?
- Was this someone whom you have already been NOTICING and PRAYING FOR?
- Was this a challenging process? Why?
- What were you hearing from your friend?

Telling Our Stories

- If a child asked you, “*how does the rain come from the sky?*” – how would you answer?
- If the child was 4 years old? If the child was 10? If the child was 15?
- Would some of us do a better job with the 4 yr old, and some with the 15 yr old?
- What if it was a 19 yr old in second year university, doing a physical sciences degree (obviously testing to prove to us that we know nothing!)?

Read/Discover

RECAP – WHAT KIND OF WITNESS ARE YOU? [RESOURCE #8]

Think about the shape of your own faith sharing through this matrix, keeping in mind what is unique to your gifting, personality, skills and relationships.

- Do you pull more in one direction than another?
- Are there aspects of “preparedness” that you still need to develop?
- How might your approach actually work together with other persons in your faith community, strengthening your collective witness?

Explore

“Christians do not know what they really believe until they publicly witness to their faith. In other words, faith is not something we possess and then hope we can express it, if and when the time comes to speak out. Faith is embodied when the confidence required to be a witness is experienced as a gift from God.” *Stephen Webb (2004:17)*

Activity: What's the Good News in a nutshell?

Divide out the following Scripture texts to pairs or groups. These are texts which give us insight into how early Christians tried to communicate what they understood about the Jesus story. In your group, identify key insights that you would include when asked "What do you believe about Jesus?"

- John 1:1-18: *"he came as a witness to testify"*
- Romans 10:8-10: *"the message concerning faith that we proclaim"*
- 1 Corinthians 15:1-11: *"I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand"*
- Philippians 2:5-11: *"have the same mindset as Christ Jesus"*
- Colossians 1:15-23: *"This is the gospel that you heard"*
- 1 John 1:1-7: *"we have seen it and testify to it"*

Back together, on a whiteboard:

- If we were to summarize the Good News "in a nutshell" what would that look like, sound like?
- As a group, compose a paragraph (3-4 sentences) in your own words that summarizes "What do you believe about Jesus?"

Connecting Word and Deed

We want to develop 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: 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?

How's it going with the idea of hosting a "*friend-mashing*" house party?

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, help me to find a practical way to love 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.