

Bearing Faithful Witness



Facilitator's Guide

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



Developed by **Dan Sheffield** and **Jared Siebert** for The Free Methodist Church in Canada

PRINTING INSTRUCTIONS

This Workbook is meant to be printed double-sided
(with this page appearing on the opposite side of the cover)



Bearing Faithful Witness INTRODUCTORY THINGS ...

Leaders Guide

“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

Who is this study material for? What are we thinking?

Extensive research indicates that many, otherwise committed, Christians find it hard to communicate their faith to friends and neighbours.¹ Live a certain kind of life? Yes. Communicate why or what they believe in the spirit of 1 Peter 3:15? No. The reason? 80% of Christians in a close relationship with Jesus said they do not *“feel fully equipped to share my faith with non-Christians.”*²

Most intentional disciple-making processes include learning how to communicate a person’s faith story early on in their development as a disciple-apprentice. However, the research indicates that many, otherwise committed Christians have never entered into an intentional disciple-making process.

This study material is designed for just those kinds of Christians. They have been in the faith for many years, but do not feel equipped to communicate their faith story appropriately. This material **is not directed** toward Christian believers who are new to the faith.

VIDEO CLIP WITH JARED & DAN: INTRODUCTION

Key insight: Jesus and Paul didn’t teach evangelism classes! Jesus told his disciples to talk about (“proclaim”) the Kingdom of God – a certain way of living as God-fearers – and to help with the real needs of people. He sent his disciples out in pairs (“don’t do this alone!”) for a few practice runs, then gave the final word after his resurrection – *“What you have learned from me, go out and teach/do everywhere.”* In Acts 1:8 Jesus used the word **martyrion** (English translation-“witness”) to describe what he was asking of his followers.

Then, the earliest Christians were so taken up with Jesus’s death and resurrection that their friends and families couldn’t help but respond in one way or another. That historical fact served as proof that the Kingdom had, indeed, come on earth. So they just began to live the Kingdom life and people all around them joined in. A couple disciples, Peter and Stephen, give us examples of the content they were sharing with their neighbours. That content and audience touch-points were all specific to the Jewish religious and cultural background of their listeners. But don’t think all the other Jesus-followers were clear, sharp communicators just like them. Much (maybe ‘most’) of the expansion of belief in Jesus came about through Jesus-followers just telling their friends and family about what they had come to believe – as best they could. Those are the stories we find about the first Christians in Acts 1-13.

As time goes by, communities of Jesus-followers expanded throughout the Roman Empire and the challenge of Christian “witness” had to morph and adjust to the surrounding religious and cultural environments. In Acts 14-28 we see Paul noticing and paying attention to the differing responses he is getting as he travels farther and farther from the Jewish home ground. His message and his method begin to adjust; he makes mistakes, has limited results,

¹Greg Hawkins and Cally Parkinson, **Move: What 1000 Churches Reveal About Spiritual Growth**, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011, 80.

²Move, 157.

then picks up his stride again as he finds what connects with the people he is living and working amongst.

In 1 Peter the author is speaking to early Christian believers in settings where they are marginalized, even persecuted, for their beliefs and practices. Our attention is directed to the notion that the family of God in Christ is a chosen people, a set-apart, distinctive, nation of priests, who are called to mediate the presence of God – even in challenging circumstances, like they find themselves in. This set-apart, called-out community is part of God’s intention – so that we may declare God’s praises as light-bearers in a dim, broken world (2:9-10). We are urged to live such good lives in our neighbourhoods that we will be noticed and God will be glorified (2:12). We are called to be a certain kind of community – living in harmony, sympathetic, loving, compassionate and humble with one another (3:8-9). All of these with a view toward the watching world around us. They are observing, the writer assures us (3:13-16).

It is in this context that our theme Scripture is stated: “remember Jesus Christ is your Lord (not Caesar) – and your neighbours, the authorities, are looking for slip-ups so they can accuse you. So be ready with a good response to everyone who asks you – *“Who are you people? Why do you act like this? Why are you a hopeful, joyful group of people? Why do you not revere Caesar as Lord?”* And please, be gentle and gracious in the way you share your answers, be respectful of their opinions, don’t denigrate them or their beliefs, speak with integrity, with a clear conscience, not manipulating the Jesus story for your own purposes” (3:15-16).

That’s what we are thinking in the development of this study guide. We want to work at exploring what it means to bear faithful witness (in deed and word) in our time, in our context, in our neighbourhoods.

VIDEO CLIP WITH JARED & DAN: 1 PETER 3:15

Background Reading

The Logic of Evangelism, William Abraham

Everyday Church, Tim Chester & Steve Timmis

True Story, James Choung

Patient Ferment of the Early Church, Alan Kreider

Truth to Tell, Lesslie Newbigin

Making Room, Christine Pohl

For the Life of the World, Alexander Schmemmann

Evangelism After Christendom, by Bryan Stone

“Evangelism & the Kingdom of God,” Howard Snyder

The Meaning of Sunday by Joel Thiessen

Simply Christian by N.T. Wright

Simply Good News by N.T. Wright

Certain assumptions are foundational to evangelization.

For one thing, **evangelization is understood as a personal journey** that calls for creativity, flexibility, and adaptability. It is not an institutional program that is identical for everyone. It is a person, with a personal story and life history, who is being evangelized. Evangelization, therefore, is a process that needs to be made relevant to each person.

For another thing, **evangelization is a process that takes place in a community of faith**, a community that is continually being renewed and reformed. A community of faith orders and organizes its life around a common story and ritual. It has a common understanding of authority that informs its life of faith. It has a common purpose beyond its own life and survival. And it has a common life that is more like a covenanted family than a contractual institution.

Further, **evangelization assumes that its primary concerns are *faith*** understood as perception, character understood as identity and behavioral disposition, and consciousness understood as subjective awareness.

Lastly, **evangelization assumes that conversion is a process and not an event**, which involves, over a period of time, transformations in a person's faith, character, and consciousness, in a person's loyalties, convictions, and commitments. Evangelization intends to aid persons to repent, that is, to change the way they see things and therefore change the direction of their lives.

(pgs. 241-242, John H Westerhoff, in **The Study of Evangelism: Exploring a Missional Practice of the Church**)

KEY OBJECTIVES

What will you learn?

Participants will...

- understand the role of healthy Christian community as the locus of God's good news taking root in our neighbourhoods;
- develop practices that enable relational discernment of friends, neighbours and colleagues who may have hearts prepared for engagement;
- be able to connect their own story of coming to faith in Jesus with the Jesus Story, in a manner that communicates good news to friends, family and colleagues;
- gain insights into the manner and place of Christian witness in a pluralistic and post-Christian society.

Practices that Shape our Witness

This material will introduce participants to a set of faith-sharing disciplines or practices, alongside the reflection content. If “bearing faithful witness” is a wholistic lifestyle of word and deed, but we haven’t been doing very well at it, we probably need to do some things differently. These practices call us to shift our attention to “*the other*,” away from ourselves. We don’t do that easily in our culture and time.

These practices are built upon the notion that God the Holy Spirit is already at work in the world drawing people toward the healing and restoration to be found in relationship with Jesus. If we are listening for, and discerning, what the Spirit is saying to us as we interact with family, friends, neighbours, and colleagues, we are very likely to hear the Spirit directing us to people who are wondering about the grace radiating from our lives.



Noticing is about learning to pay attention to where our friends and neighbours are spiritually situated. It’s about discerning the prevenient action of the Spirit in the lives of people around us.



Praying encourages us to give focused intercession for those we have ‘noticed.’



Listening calls us to a new way of hearing our friends and neighbours



Loving calls us to be intentional, rather than passive, in our engagement.



Telling helps us ‘proclaim,’ or communicate, the Jesus story as it has intersected with our own, and in a way that resonates deep in the souls of our friends.



Be Communion 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.

VIDEO CLIP WITH JARED & DAN: BFW PRACTICES



The Empty Chair asks the group to physically set aside an empty seat in the room, and identify a friend that someone would like to see in that chair one day

VIDEO CLIP WITH JARED & DAN: THE EMPTY CHAIR?

VIDEO CLIP WITH JARED & DAN: LOGISTICS

Background Antioch – full of Good News

In the book of Acts there is a story about the birth and growth of a Christian community in the city of Antioch (11:19-30). Antioch was a large, cosmopolitan city in the north-east corner of the Mediterranean Sea – at the crossroads of trading routes on land and sea. It connected people from locations in Africa, Europe, the Middle East, Asia and China.

Into this city came a straggling group of Jesus-followers who had been scattered by persecution back in Jerusalem. But this straggling group had been transformed by their encounter with Jesus – and it showed! In fact, it says they were “*telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus*” (11:20). And as a result, “*a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.*”

As we read through this story, we note several factors:

- These were committed followers of Jesus (in the face of persecution, they remained true to their relationship with Jesus) (11:19)
- They were ‘spreading the word’ (speaking about Jesus seemed to be a natural overflow of their experience) (11:19)
- They were spreading it to those who might be receptive (whatever their background) (11:19-20)
- There was a God-dynamic at work (“the Lord’s hand was with them” (11:21); “what the grace of God had done (11:23)”)
- Observers were “glad” for the spiritual dynamic in the congregation (11:23)
- The new believers needed teaching (11:26)
- This community of Jesus-followers were noted for being “the Christ-ones” (11:26)
- They were a generous bunch of people (11:29)

Today many Christians have not experienced the dynamic of sharing their own good news story and seeing someone ‘turn to the Lord’ as a result. Let’s face it, at the present moment there is a legacy of “bad news” when it comes to Christians speaking of their faith to family, friends, neighbours and work colleagues. Many non-believers have preconceived notions about the Christian faith, and many Christians don’t really know how to communicate what it means to be a Jesus-follower. Impasse.

In this study material our desire is to come to terms with that ‘impasse.’ We will be discussing the legacy of “evangelism” and why it leaves a bad taste for both Christian and non-Christian alike. We will spend time discussing what an “overflowing” Christian community looks like – how it “walks,” how it “talks!” We will discuss our own journeys to faith in Jesus and how understanding that process might help us in knowing how to “overflow” with our family and friends. We will explore God’s part in drawing people into relationship with Jesus. We will begin to practice the disciplines of “bearing faithful witness.”

Session Overviews

Session One	Session Two	Session Three	Session Four	Session Five	Session Six
<i>Christian Community as Witness</i>	<i>Christian Community before a Watching World</i>	<i>Putting the E-word on the Table</i>	<i>Evangelism – we’ve come a long way, baby!</i>	<i>Journey to Faith in Jesus</i>	<i>Making Sense of our story</i>
Goal: the Lord’s Supper; connecting the Story, the practices, the community	Goal: Christian community as summative testimony of witness	Goal: Bad evangelism. Is not proclaiming a biblical option?	Goal: history of Christian witness	Goal: understanding salvation as a process, a journey	Goal: situating storytelling and witness
	Practice review	Practice review	Practice review	Practice review	Practice review
Telling our stories	Telling our stories	Telling our stories	Telling our stories	Telling our stories	Telling our stories
Read Luke 24:13-35; the two inquirers on the road to Emmaus	Read Acts 2:40-47, 11:19-30 Athenagoras, Snyder,	Read Resource #3; Antioch church	Read Vid clip: Early Church witness Resource #5 BFW in the Early Church	Discover Francis Collins’ video clip	Read Resource #7 “Reasons we don’t tell our stories”
Activity: Meal & Communion together; conversation; Resource #1 Explore:	Explore: Rhythms & practices; Resource #2 open systems diagram	Explore: Video clip Resource #4 Stone, reclaiming the E-word	Explore; Vid clip: Evangelism Legacies	Explore Resource #6 Journey to Faith in Jesus (Engel/Wesley)	Explore Ephesians 2:1-10 Activity: Plotting our own stories
Connecting word & deed: NOTICE	Connecting word & deed: NOTICE	Connecting word & deed: PRAY	Connecting word & deed: PRAY	Connecting word & deed: LISTEN	Connecting word & deed: LISTEN
Sara Miles, “Bread & wine” TWoTP	Brian Zahnd, “A Society Around Jesus” TWoTP				Resource # 8 What kind of witness are you?

Session Overviews

Session Seven	Session Eight	Session Nine	Session Ten	Session Eleven
<i>Making sense of His story I</i>	<i>Making sense of His story II</i>	<i>Making sense of their story</i>	<i>Sharing 'truth' in a pluralistic society</i>	<i>Bearing Faithful Witness</i>
Goal: understanding His story and my witness	Goal: telling the Story simply and clearly	Goal: learning to connect his Story to what our friends have expressed	Goal: How do we situate the Jesus Story among many other stories?	Goal: remembering the Story as a community, sharing The Story
Practice review	Practice review	Practice review	Practice review	Practice review
Telling our stories	Telling our stories	Telling our stories	Telling our stories	Telling our stories Activity
Read Resource #8 "What kind of witness are you?"	Explore James Choung's TRUE STORY, telling a good news story Resource #9 True Story diagram	Discover Discuss Kirsten Power story; video clip	Discover Resource #12 Plausibility Structures Religion in Canada vid clip: Shawna, etc	Share a meal together; tell personal stories around the table; celebrate Lord's Supper
Activity: What's the Good news in a nutshell; <i>group exercise</i>	Activity James Choung video clip: Telling a Good News story; <i>exercise</i>	Explore Acts 10:23-48, Peter at Cornelius' home; listening. What are you hearing? How are we responding? Jared S video clip	Explore Do we <i>possess</i> truth or <i>bear witness</i> to truth?	Explore Resource #11 Belong, Believe; Conversion; Culminating discussion; Resource #13 BFW Practices
Connecting word & deed: LOVE	Connecting word & deed: LOVE	Connecting word & deed: TELL	Connecting word & deed: TELL	Connecting word & deed: BE COMMUNION
Hauerwas, "Jesus is God" TWOP	Resource #10 Kirsten Power story	Resource #11 Belong, Believe... Recap personal story	Resource #11 Belong, Believe... Recap personal story	Hauerwas, "What is a Christian?" TWOP



Session One: Christian Community as Witness

Getting the whole study series going...

This first session sets up some of the key thoughts and rhythms of these study materials.

We are seeking to root Christian witness at the heart of Christian community – the Family of God. We have designed at least two of the sessions around potluck meals together as a group – where we share our own stories. We will discuss the Emmaus road meal with Jesus; we will take Lord's Supper together (**Resource #1: The Great Thanksgiving Communion liturgy**)

Who and what we are as a faith community is essential to Bearing Faithful Witness. The medium is the message – the Lord's Supper, the core practice of corporate worship, the sacrament of the Christian faith. Everything about the Jesus story is summed up in this activity. It is a practice that distinguishes what we believe and how we choose to live as exemplars of what it means to follow Jesus.

VIDEO CLIP WITH JARED & DAN

Jesus said: “This is how everyone will recognize that you are my disciples—when they see the love you have for each other” (John 13:34,35). That is, our life together as a Christian community is our witness/testimony that we are Jesus-followers. A key element in this discussion series centers around how this group – learning together in this study – can demonstrate a communal life that is “magnetic.” When our friends and family, who are outside relationship with Jesus, notice our life together, will they be inclined to ask us “the reason for the hope that we have?” (1 Peter 3:15)

We use stories of people coming to faith as a teaching element in this series. Sarah Miles story of coming to faith through the power of the Lord's Supper speaking to her, is helpful. She talks about conversion as a process over time as she came to engage with the congregation and the practices of the community. [The video clip can be stopped at 5:59 as this makes the main points for our purposes, or you can watch the whole thing which adds other dimensions; 11:40 total] <http://www.theworkofthepeople.com/bread-and-wine>

Connecting Word & Deed introduction

This first session sets up the rhythms that help focus our attention outwards. These may be new thoughts and suggestions for people in your group – take time to clearly explain expectations for actively engaging in these practices in the weeks to come. We have found that disciplined attention to these practices and then reviewing what we are learning, has been one of the most helpful aspects of this discussion series.

The First Practice: Notice

Noticing is about learning to pay attention to where our friends and neighbours are spiritually situated. It's about discerning the prevenient action of the Spirit in the lives of people around us.

This practice turns us outward – rather than focusing on our own “church” friends. In experience, this has proven *energizing* for some – a fresh way of seeing the people in their lives; it has been challenging for some – paying attention to the other long enough to really see them; for some it has been disheartening – they realize they have very few people in their lives who are not already Jesus-followers.



Session Two: *Christian Community before a Watching World*

In this second session we start sharing what we have been learning from our Noticing. We need to get in the rhythm of sharing the Practices at the beginning of each session.

After sharing stories from **Practice Review**, **Telling Our Stories** directs us to reflecting on close relationships that we have sustained over time.

Through focusing on the character of the earliest church community in Acts 2:40-47, and then the Antioch church, we want to pay attention to the aspects of their lives that were attractive or “magnetic” to those around them.

The quote from Athenagoras gives a picture of how the early Christians saw their testimony as a community. The quote from Howard Snyder helps us to see that a Christian community, being all it should be, is the best testimony we have – no strategy necessary.

The quote from Bryan Stone situates evangelism at the heart of Christian community – how we live and function together is the witness – no evangelism committee is necessary. These quotes lead into a discussion of what this looks like in practice.

VIDEO CLIP WITH JARED & DAN

This discussion of the quotes leads into an examination of **Resource #2**, a diagram that describes the Rhythms and Practices of Christian Community. We have found this to be a helpful visual. A healthy church pays attention to these dimension of the Christian way of life. God, by the Spirit, is drawing people to himself and we, as Christian communities, are called to faithfully live out a certain way of life incorporating public worship, caring community life, intentional disciple-making and generously serving and caring for those in our spheres of influence. The sum total of these healthy church practices amounts to Bearing Faithful Witness. Take the time to thoroughly discuss the diagram and descriptors, reflecting on implications for your own community.

A video clip by Brian Zahnd can be played at this point – “A Society Around Jesus.” This is a helpful reflection on some of the thoughts discussed in this session. [3:15]

<http://www.theworkofthepeople.com/a-society-around-jesus>

The Practice: Notice

Take time to go over this practice again. It is foundational for all the other practices to come.



Session Three: *Putting the E-word on the Table!*

Practice Review: Second week reviewing stories of those whom group members are noticing.

Telling our stories: what criteria do we have for evaluating “good and bad” anything? As we move into a discussion about good and bad evangelism in this session, we are looking for markers about how people evaluate things in general.

Resource #3 leads into a brief discussion of the characteristics of the Antioch Church – what did “good” witness look like in this situation? How does this differ from our present situation?

Bad evangelism

This video clip featuring Kirk Cameron is like a “worst nightmare” of the caricatures that both Christians and non-Christians imagine in the name of personal evangelism. Our goal is to put our worst case scenarios on the table – but let’s make sure the discussion centers around situations that we were first party participants in. What has “our experience” been? Some will have examples of their own experience, some will just be repeating “stories” they have heard. Make sure to clarify the “real” from the “imagined.” Most Christians have NO experience of doing, or receiving, something like what is pictured in the video clip. Perception, however, has power.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gqNDdCzOGTI>

VIDEO CLIP WITH JARED & DAN

Resource #4, the example from Bryan Stone – reclaiming the E-word. Take the time to read the article in the group, going around the circle.

Is a bad track record sufficient to toss out the word or the practice?
Explore “rethinking and reconstructing” evangelism for our time.

Wrap up this discussion with visiting Romans 10:14-21. What is the relationship between faith/belief and proclaiming/hearing? What is our part; what is God’s part?

Connecting Word & Deed

The Second Practice: Prayer

Now we are moving a bit beyond “noticing.” Praying encourages us to give focused intercession for those we have ‘noticed.’



Session Four: *Evangelism – We’ve come a long way, baby!*

Practice Review – make sure to highlight the connection between who we have been NOTICING and how the Spirit directs our PRAYING for them

Telling our stories – since we are seeking to encourage story-telling as part of the overall learnings from this discussion series, getting people talking about their own experiences of the impact of those who have spoken into their lives is very important.

Video clip: *Witness in the Early Church*

This short video [3:45] discusses how the first followers of Jesus lived out what they understood of Jesus’ notion to “go and make disciples”? In a world that had never heard of Jesus, why did people attach themselves to this fledgling new religious community and their beliefs?

Following the video have the group read through **Resource #5** that focuses on factors which were particularly attractive about Christians to their neighbours. The group discussion then focuses on how these factors played a role in their own faith journey – or not. And what does that say about the present witness of our “church” communities?

Video clip: *Evangelism Legacies*

This video [6:15] looks at evangelism through the ages, giving some historical context to our present situation. The legacy we live with today is different from the Early Church.

The purpose of this discussion is to dig out personal concerns and fears from group – put this stuff on the table – name it, so we can move on. If some are encouraged to do a bit more personal historical digging to explore this theme, rather than just take the caricatures presented by anti-Christian sentiment, all the better! The good, the bad and the ugly are all there to be found. But where do we pick up from this point? Hiding our heads in the sand is not an option.

VIDEO CLIP WITH JARED & DAN

Connecting Word & Deed

The Second Practice: Prayer

You may want to consider a bit more time to name and pray for some of the people who have been mentioned in the opening sharing time.



Session Five: *The Way of Salvation*

Telling our Stories – We are working at getting people to understand their own stories of conversion as a process that often happens over a period of time; we want them to recognize points of illumination and growth.

Video clips: Francis Collins shares his story of coming to faith in Jesus. It describes a person's journey to faith in Jesus from unbelief, even antagonism to Christianity; a story not unlike many we meet in our Canadian context. Choose which clips work for your group and time available.

CNN interview clip gives an overview of his journey to faith [3:48] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kcZS1R5ddC8>

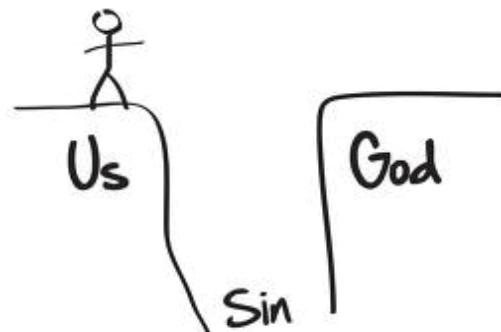
Clip #5 tells of an encounter with a Christian woman on her deathbed [1:37] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xhN-YJbD2CQ>

Clip #6 speaks of his reflections and steps following that encounter [2:12] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1T_AiXjoBlc

Clip #7 encountering Jesus as the one who makes sense [3:12] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bjboVRLdaoY>

Have the group start to identify specific points of movement or shift in Collins' relationship with God/Jesus.

On the right side of the page you see what is commonly called The Bridge Illustration. The script that goes along with this illustration is often used to describe the steps to relationship with Jesus. It assumes the "seeker" is pondering relationship with God and just needs to be introduced to Jesus.



Ask the participants to extend the line on the left (the ground under the stick figure – all the way across to the left hand side of the page. Say something like: “we imagine people at the chasm, when in fact they may be a long distance away from that point or even headed in the opposite direction.” Now, place some of Collins' steps toward his conversion as x-marks on the timeline. He said this process took more than 2 years, once questions started to be raised in his mind. Identifying these points is a good lead-in to Resource #6.

Resource #6 – “Journey to Faith in Jesus.” Take the time with the group to examine this chart; thoroughly explain it, as it becomes a flash-back resource for later sessions. Then make the comparisons back to Collins' story. Getting people to break down this “big hairy giant” of evangelism and conversion into recognizable, understandable, do-able points of connection with the people they have been “noticing” and “praying” for.

VIDEO CLIP WITH JARED & DAN

The Third Practice: Listen

Take a bit more time on this piece to discuss “how” we listen, what we are “listening for.” Make the connections to the Journey chart and the things we listened for in Collins' story.



Session Six: *Making Sense of Our Story*

This picks up on the notion that we need to break down our own stories to see the points and places where God worked in us to bring us to himself, and the other persons, faith communities, who played a role in that process. We want to place the emphasis on sharing our stories, rather than a set of beliefs or propositions.

Practice review: What did “Listening” look like? Maybe just refresh, from last week’s sheet, what they were to be listening for.

Resource #7 The article in this session aids with some reflection on “why” telling our stories is important for us as well as those with whom we might share it. The article is somewhat self-evident, so just a brief opportunity to touch on the 3 feedback questions is suitable. These questions “prime the pump” for the work we will do in the Activity.

There is a significant **Activity** in this session – to start sharing with a partner about their own story, answering questions that explore “why are you a follower of Jesus?” We are trying to articulate a preliminary short form of their story to share with a friend – just a few point form thoughts from each of the suggested bullet points in the session worksheet. Not so much “how” they came to faith in Jesus, but “why.” Getting their stories on the table.

It will take 5 minutes or so, to set up expectations for the activity and then release the group into partners, giving them at least 15 minutes for sharing and taking notes.

When you come back together have each person share their preliminary short answer to the question: “why are you a follower of Jesus?” Then have their partner share something that stood out to them from their partner’s story. This helps to clarify aspects from each person’s story that resonates with others – not just our own “take” on our own story.

They need to hang onto their notes because they will be fleshing this out more, as we go along over the next couple weeks.

VIDEO CLIP WITH JARED & DAN

The Third Practice: Listen

Review again the bullet points – what are we listening for? Listening becomes an important skill for helping craft our stories in a way that connects with our friends’ stories.

You will be sending a homework assignment: **Resource #8** “What Kind of Witness are You?”



Session Seven: Making Sense of His Story (I)

Many Christians struggle to speak of the Good News, the work of Jesus' life, death and resurrection, in a way that makes any sense to people who are not believers, with no understanding of Christian "insider" language and terms.

Telling our stories – how we talk/explain something to people at different ages, or life situations – we vary the story to fit the context.

Why then do we think we can tell "*packaged/one-size-fits-all*" evangelism presentations?

Resource #8 "What Kind of Witness are You?" discussion – recognizing that each of us will engage with friends and colleagues through our own unique giftings and personalities

Major Activity – examining various short summaries of the Good News in Scripture; then attempting a simple summary of your own -- "in a nutshell." Seeking to compose a narrative, not a set of propositions. Watch for the use of "insider" language. Don't discourage this, because some may have no other language. But gently direct conversation around "how will our non-believing friends understand this?" The goal at this moment is not to correct, but to surface what the group knows or doesn't know. Often self-awareness begins to dawn on the group, because we have been focusing our attention outwards over the past number of weeks. Plan to take about 30 minutes for this activity.

VIDEO CLIP WITH JARED & DAN

A **video clip** by Stanley Hauerwas: "Jesus is God" is a good focal reflection at the end of this session. Is Jesus really God's answer to the world's rebellion?

<http://www.theworkofthepeople.com/Jesus is God>

Connecting Word & Deed

The Fourth Practice: Love

This practice is focused on some tangible actions that demonstrate love and care for the people that the group have been noticing, listening to and praying for. Try to encourage toward practical demonstrations, perhaps even several persons in the group might work together with one or another of the friends they are praying for.



Session Eight: Making Sense of His Story (II)

As we continue working on how we communicate the Good News, we will spend a good amount of time investigating the story-telling approach of InterVarsity staff worker, James Choung.

Telling Our Stories – We are using the personal discussion time to recap the work we did last week regarding the Jesus Story; while also digging a bit deeper into our own stories as they relate to the idea of “journey” and process.

True Story Activity – help to frame this exercise as an example of someone taking the basic Jesus Story and crafting it in a way that connected with the people he was regularly interacting with.

Make sure to work your way through all the content indicated. **Resource #9** diagram gives illustrations that go along with the content for Parts 1-4. Have different people read through the paragraphs and questions as outlined. You will note that this material doesn't use the word “sin” but consistently uses selfishness or self-centredness as language for describing the break in relationship with God. “Falling short of expectations – mine, God's” is another phrase that is helpful to replace sin – a term which is so loaded in contemporary society that conversation may come to a standstill when used.

Once you have worked through True Story content, then take the time to watch the video of James Choung sharing this story. After watching the video once, have participants take out a sheet of blank paper and then draw the diagram along with James as you watch the video again.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kCVcSiUUMhY>

VIDEO CLIP WITH JARED & DAN

Connecting Word & Deed

The Fourth Practice: Love

This practice is focused on some tangible actions that demonstrate love and care for the people that the group have been noticing, listening to and praying for. Try to encourage toward practical demonstrations, perhaps even several persons in the group might work together with one or another of the friends they are praying for.

Homework reading – Kirsten Powers' journey to faith **Resource #10** These stories we are sharing help us to recognize the various ways in which the Spirit draws people into relationship with Jesus.



Session Nine: Making Sense of Their Story

Understanding where our friends are located in their life journey as regards faith, belief and the Jesus Story, is crucial for communicating a story that connects.

Telling Our Stories – deeper reflection on the people we have been Noticing, Praying for Listening to, and Loving. Are our lives “questionable” in the sense of 1 Peter 3:15?

Looking at Kirsten Powers’ journey to faith (Resource #8) is like a case study for applying what we have been learning. Explore her story in relationship to the Journey to Faith diagram (Resource #6) as well as making connection points to participants’ personal stories and the lives of the friends they are noticing. The video clip has some helpful clues on how she tells her story to skeptics.

We want to go a bit deeper into the posture of Listening (one of our practices). The quote from William Stringfellow always generates some thoughtful discussion.

Explore - The story of Cornelius and Peter reveals a Listening posture that was required for both of them, to hear/see God at work by the Holy Spirit, and then Peter as he listens actively to Cornelius’ journey and then explains what he is missing.

So we come back to **what we have been hearing** from our friends and colleagues. This is Week Nine of our study, we have been giving our attention to people in our lives in perhaps a new way. What are we hearing? Do they correspond in any way with the four movements in True Story, from last week? The rest of the material for this session calls for discussion and reflection in light of the experience participants are having with the people they are noticing and listening to.

VIDEO CLIP WITH JARED & DAN

This content looks at some of the common themes/refrains that seem to emerge from conversation with friends. Then the question is, “how do we respond, simply, in ways that are sensitive but encourage further conversation?” Rather than conversation that is shut down, either by us or by them?

We have the video of Jared Siebert explaining how he made some connections between his friends’ stories – the things they hold in common – while introducing some Jesus/God “food for thought.”

Video link to Jared Video

Connecting Word & Deed

The Fifth Practice: Tell Your Story

Some people may be in a position to tell some of their story to one of the people they have been paying attention to; others are nowhere close to such communication. The key message here, is that our Personal Story is probably what we are going share with a friend first – telling the Jesus Story may be needed at some point, but let’s focus on telling our own stories in ways that connect with the stories of our friends.

Homework – “Belong, Believe” article by Stuart Murray **Resource #11**

Also, ask participants to go back to their Personal Story and reflect on its content and structure, in light of these further sessions. Everyone will be asked to share their Personal Story with the group during the last session (11)



Session Ten: Sharing “*truth*” in a pluralistic society

Telling Our Stories – a discussion regarding motivation. What would/should motivate us to “*bear witness*” with our friends? Just to raise the flag about how Jesus shows up in your life? Why do this in the first place; why not just keep it to ourselves?

A preliminary look at the “Belong, Believe” article. (**Resource #11**) What grabbed your attention? Brief discussion. You will spend a lot of time with **Resource #12** this week. Two diagrams with some explanation.

Plausibility structures is a fancy word for the worldviews, meaning systems, or “*crap*” filters, that each of us have regarding what makes sense and what doesn’t. It usually takes some time for participants to digest this content. You, as leader, will need to be conversant enough with the different perspectives to answer questions. Our goal here is to help participants gain some understanding of the range of plausibility structures their friends are coming from. Different starting points, means we need to tell our Personal Story and the Jesus Story in ways that make sense to our friends, rather than creating “*blank stares*.”

The second diagram is a way of looking at the same kind of concerns through the lens of how people in Canada self-identify on the national census and in social research. A lot of Canadians still identify as some sort of “*Christian*” – but what do they “*mean*” by that? Does that mean they are open to our Personal Story, the Jesus Story, or just their own version of spirituality?

“*Other religions*” is still only a fraction of the Canadian population. Why such great concern? Persons with “*No Religious Affiliation*” is the fastest growing portion of Canadian society. Do we know what they “*mean*” by that?

VIDEO CLIP WITH JARED & DAN

Going back to the Collins’ and Power’s stories as case studies helps the group to discern where people place themselves in their own words.

The **video clip** that features Shawna & Christine gives a glimpse into the faith journey of a woman from Niagara Falls and the simple friendship and interactions that led her to relationship with Christ.

The quote from Lesslie Newbigin prompts interesting discussion at this point – the focus is on “bearing witness.” It is not our job to convict or persuade people of their need for Jesus, that is Holy Spirit work.

Connecting Word & Deed

The Fifth Practice: Tell Your Story

The key message here, is that our Personal Story is probably what we are going share with a friend first – telling the Jesus Story may be needed at some point, but let’s focus on telling our own stories in ways that connect with the stories of our friends.

Homework — Review “Belong, Believe” article **Resource #11**

Come prepared to share your Personal Story; it should be shared as if you were addressing it to one of the people you have been noticing, praying for, listening to, and loving, over these past weeks.

Make plans for potluck meal together again.



Session Eleven: Bearing Faithful Witness

Telling Our Personal Stories becomes the major focus this session.

The **activity** of sharing a **meal** together, again, and celebrating communion together, again is the culminating session for the study series. As part of the table experience each person should share the Personal Story that they have been developing over the last number of weeks. Remember, it should be shared as if they were with one of their friends that they have been paying attention to over the past weeks.

Discuss further **Resource #11** “Belong, Believe.” How does the changing landscape for Christian witness impact how we live as a faith community, how we tell The Jesus Story, what we invite people to consider?

VIDEO CLIP WITH JARED & DAN

There are a couple of summarizing paragraphs to help pull the pieces together.

Video clip of Stanley Hauerwas – What is a Christian?

<http://www.theworkofthepeople.com/What is a Christian>

This is often a good spot to have an **evaluation** conversation of learnings from the study sessions – what are the takeaways? – what were the a-ha moments? This also leads into a conversation about continuing the Practices in the weeks to come...

Can we make a commitment to continue the **Practices** in weeks, months, to come; as part of the regular things we do together? That we will regularly share together about those we Notice, Pray for, Listen to, Love, and Tell our story to?

Connecting Word & Deed

The Sixth Practice: Be Communion

This practice relates to the idea of living among, incarnating, becoming the flesh and blood presence of Jesus among our spheres of influence. Can our “*body of Christ*” feed our friends, families and colleagues?