



Greater Things Message Series

Resource for Integrating Communal Acts of Witness and Testimony

In John 14:12, Jesus, shares his expectation of his disciples:

I tell you the truth: whoever believes in Me will be able to do what I have done, but they will do even greater things, because I will return to be with the Father.

(The Voice)

But Jesus never expects the disciples, then or now, to do this alone. Throughout the Gospel of John, Jesus offers us an example of how faith, trust, and belief are built on honest testimony and open relationships, and how the Holy Spirit helps us to continue to share the message of Jesus even 2000 years later.

The irony of doing “greater things” than Jesus is that they rarely seem great. With the aid of the Holy Spirit, we bear fruits that aren’t always flashy or fancy but that offer a deeper invitation to trustworthy relationships of love. By sharing witness and testimony, we help give a face to the “greater things” happening in the world today.

This resource offers a framework for incorporating communal acts of witness and testimony into the worship life of the community in two ways:

- You can incorporate one or more acts of testimony alongside the Greater Things Series;
- Or you can incorporate them individually or together as separate practices.

You may even find a unique way to integrate them into the life of your community! We recommend you work with a partner or team as you move through discernment and planning.

Though none of the suggestions here require the use of technological components, you could easily adapt any of these options to incorporate whatever technology and gifts for creating/sharing it that are present in your community. Consider these prompts as a jumping off point for exploring new ways of incorporating witness and testimony into the life of your community.



Act 1: Greater Things: Believing the Best

It's hard to believe in goodness sometimes. Whether because the challenges in our lives, communities and world feel so overwhelming or because we struggle with believing in our own personal capacity for good, we crave examples of goodness. But even more, we crave people in our lives who believe in us. For this act of witness and testimony, you will interview and celebrate a figure in your community who truly believes in and encourages those around them.

Timeline for planning and work: One month to one week before worship, depending on how quickly you can meet for an interview.

Discernment Questions

- As you decide who to interview, consider whether you want the person to be from your faith community or the wider community. What freshness might it bring to your community to hear about a teacher, coach, mentor, or elder who engages the community outside the church?
- Who in your community has a reputation for gifts of encouragement? For believing the best in people?
- Consider posing this question to your worship team, leadership team, or even in your church promotional material to get input from a wide variety of people.

Preparation for the Interview

- Reach out to the person you've selected and let them know you'd like to interview them because they are a person who believes the best.
 - Give them clear parameters about how you will be recording the interview (just notes, video, audio, etc.) and how it will be used.
 - Set up a time where you can meet them in an environment that's comfortable. If you've never met the person before, consider asking if you can shadow them as they engage in their work with others.
- Prepare your questions. Here are a few starters:
 - What does it mean to you to believe in people?
 - What gives you hope for the future?
 - As you think back on your life, who believed in you? What difference did this make in your life?
 - If you were to invite others into your work of encouragement, how would you tell them to get started?

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Sharing the Witness in Worship

- If using alongside Greater Things Message Series:
 - Be prepared to incorporate the interview into worship during Week 1: Accept these Truths.
 - From the interview, compose a short statement about the person's work, impact, spirit and hopes. Share this during a 5-minute Greater Things Happening moment during worship.
 - You may consider inviting the person to attend the service and presenting them with a certificate or memento that indicates your community believes they are Doing Greater Things for the community.
- If using separately from the Message Series:
 - Utilize the interview as a part of the message time, selecting a passage that highlights the fruit of the Spirit the person embodies.
 - You may consider inviting the person to attend the service and presenting them with a certificate or memento that indicates your community believes they are Doing Greater Things for the community.



Act 2: Greater Things: Go and See

Jesus always invites the disciples into his life, oftentimes taking them into communities and situations they might not have encountered otherwise. For this act of witness and testimony, members of your community of faith will go out into the community, visiting a place where they might not go otherwise. Then, they will have the opportunity to reflect on what Jesus invites them to see there and share in community about the experience.

Timeline for planning and work: 2-3 weeks

- **Planning:** Plan to spend at least one week figuring out the details of the visit location, sharing information, and deciding on the debrief.
- **Work:** Give at least a week between offering the invitation to Go and See and holding the debrief. You may need to plan another week to help prepare the person who will offer testimony in worship.

Discernment Questions

- As you decide what locations to visit, consider:
 - Where are people gathered who may not have a connection to the church?
 - Be sure the location is safe, accessible, and a welcome place to visit.
 - Get suggestions from community members.
 - Consider: youth sports events, a restaurant at a non-busy time of day, an assisted living facility, a shopping market that caters to ethnic communities, a non-profit agency's food pantry or thrift shop, etc.
 - Some people might have an idea on their own.
- What might be the best way to share this assignment with your community?
 - For some, taking a physical flier or a bulletin insert distributed in worship might be best.
 - For others, having a virtual sign-up option might be best.
- What are the best ways for community members to reflect and share about the experience?
 - For some communities, an in-person gathering of small groups may be welcome.
 - For others, coordinating a virtual or even asynchronous option may work best?

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Preparing to Go and See

- Regardless of how your community members decide where to go, offer them some brief instructions, including the following information:
 - Where they will go.
 - When they will go. Have the dates for the gathering to process the experience set, so folks can plan to Go and See prior to that gathering.
 - You may consider hosting the processing gathering before or after worship the Sunday after it is announced.
 - Or you may even organize certain groups to go together and set up a time to process after.
 - What they will do when they get there.
 - The goal of this act is simply to “Go and See.” To show up in a new environment and to observe what’s happening there. Community members are not expected to invite anyone to church. Instead, they approach the experience as if Jesus is leading them to this place, sitting with the following questions:
 - What might Jesus want me to Come and See here?
 - What kind of community is happening here already?
 - What do I notice about the people who are here and what is happening?
 - What can I learn about Jesus from being here?
 - Who might Jesus invite me into relationship with here?
 - Why this is a worthwhile exercise.
 - Jesus met people where they were in their communities, then met their needs. He never came in and decided their needs for them. As community members, we can stay in our comfortable routines and locations, but Jesus invites us to Come and See what’s happening.

Sharing the Witness

This will have two components:

- **Debrief:** Offer an opportunity for the people to communal reflect on their experience of Go and See. Remember that there’s no expected outcome other than people experiencing their communities alongside Jesus. You can use the reflection questions above to guide this conversation. Remember, it’s OK if this was not a welcome, generative, or exciting exercise for everyone.
- **Witness-Sharing:** After the debrief, decide whether there might be a person who could share a brief testimony in worship about what it was like to Go and See. If so, help them develop a short statement on what it was like to Go and See in their own community, as if Jesus had invited them there.
 - If using with Greater Things Message Series, plan to introduce Go and See and distribute details about location and process in sync with Week 2: Come and See. Offer debriefing opportunities during Week 3, and testimony in worship during Week 4.
 - If using separate from the message series, you can set your own timeframe for engaging this activity.



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Act 3: Greater Things: The Miracle of Relationship

Though it's easy to think of miracles as magic events that happen, well, miraculously on their own, the miraculous signs that Jesus performed during his ministry all stemmed from relationship: relationship with the people whom he helped and relationship with God. In those instances, Jesus embodied the miracle of relationship. For this act of witness and testimony, members of your community will have the opportunity to publicly name the miracles of relationship in their lives.

Time for planning and work: This act can be planned and carried out in the week leading up to a worship service.

Discernment Questions

- How might you create a “public” display, given how your community gathers?
 - For those whose community gathers for in-person worship, consider creating a physical display in your worship space or in a public area where you gather.
 - For those who gather asynchronous or online, consider using tools like [Google Jamboard](#) to create a virtual collaborative display space.
- If using a physical display, what type of materials and supplies will you need?
 - For example, rocks for each community member and a vessel to collect them in; a table set with unlit candles; a wall (blank or with the Greater Things image) that community members can affix a paper to.
 - Get creative as you incorporate this into your space and order of worship!

Planning

- As an act of worship, you will invite members of the community to name miracles of relationship in their lives, to write down that name on whatever object you have chosen (paper, rock, candle, virtual note, etc.), then add it to a collection of those objects (paper on a wall; rock in a vessel, candle on a table).
- Decide how to disseminate materials, invite the community to the activity, and how they can add their name to the gathered collection.
- Gather and prepare materials as needed.

Sharing the Witness

- Invite community members to think of a relationship that has been a miracle in their lives.
- Invite them to write down the name of the other person, then invite them to add that name to a display (physical or virtual) as an act of ritual.
- Then leave the gathered names on display as an object of contemplation, or for others to add to throughout time, making visible the collective impact of the miracles of relationships in our lives.
 - If using with Greater Things Message Series, plan to offer this act of witness as a response to the message during Week 3: Miraculous Signs.
 - If using separate from the message series, you can set your own timeframe for engaging this activity.



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SPIRIT-LED INNOVATION

Act 4: Greater Things: Statement of Belief

Perhaps one of the most remarkable aspects of Jesus' ministry was his capacity to communicate his faith clearly. He articulates his belief in God's power to those around him clearly and consistently, helping all around him to trust his words and actions. For this act, community members will write a Statement of Belief, articulating in their own words what they believe and trust in. They will be encouraged to share this Statement with someone in their lives and to experience how trust is built when we can share our beliefs honestly.

Time for planning and work: Planning and work can be done in the week leading up to worship.

Discernment Questions

- You can decide whether you want to invite someone to share a Statement of Belief during worship as an example of the practice or whether you simply want to introduce the practice. If you want to invite someone to share a Statement of Belief, consider inviting someone you have personally experience to be trustworthy.

Planning

- Decide whether you want someone to share a sample Statement of Belief during a worship service or not. If so, share the following exercise with them ahead of time, give them a deadline for completing it, and ensuring it is ready for sharing in worship.
- Decide how you would like to share the following instructions with your community (verbally, in print, via electronic communication, or all).
- Share instructions for creating a Statement of Belief:
 - What we believe doesn't mean everything we know for a fact. It means what we put our trust in. Some of these things can be observable facts ("I believe a rock will be hard."), while some might be invisible or intangible ("I believe that my friends like me."). A part of what makes Jesus trustworthy, or worthy of our belief, is that he is so clear about what he believes. By trusting Jesus, we learn to trust God. In the same way, as people experience us as trustworthy, they can also come to trust, or believe in, the things we trust.
 - To create a Statement of Belief, simply write out the phrase, "I believe..." and then complete the sentence in your own words. Try to be as honest as possible. What you write doesn't have to be profound, just true for you. Try to write at least 5 or 6 things you believe. But don't be surprised if you write more than that.
 - Once you've written your Statement of Belief, think of someone you'd like to share it with. Who is someone whose trust you'd like to have? It could be a friend, partner, child, coworker, pastor, or other person in your life. You can share it in-person, in a letter, or in an email.
 - You might even invite the other person to share what they believe back.
 - Your Statement of Faith could be humorous, silly, poetic, or solemn. What matters is that you tell the truth.
 - As you share your Statement of Faith, notice what opens up in the relationship between you and the person you've shared with, both right away and over time. What impact does sharing honestly have on your relationship?

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- Distribute instructions.
- Offer support for those who undertake the task, but remind your community that this is an invitation, not an assignment.

Sharing the Witness

It is optional whether you have someone share a sample Statement of Faith in worship as you introduce the practice. If this is the case, give the person time to construct their Statement of Faith, for you to look it over, and for them to practice it prior to worship.

- If using with Greater Things Message Series, plan to introduce this practice and/or share a sample Statement of Faith during Week 4: Believe.