

DECLARE: TRAINING GUIDE

Abiding Practices for Missional Communities

Declare: Disciples bear witness as we declare the majesty of the Father to ourselves, our family, our unbelieving neighbors, and to the ends of the earth for the worship of our Supreme God.

WHY WE DECLARE

We declare the goodness of the Father to a broken and dying world around us because we have experienced his ability to restore and remove the sting of death. This is not simply a Great Commission call either; the biblical theme of bearing witness is one that is rich throughout the Old Testament. The call to bear witness was solidified in the Exodus from Egypt as they were commanded to declare their salvation as God's people by his might - his mighty hand and his outstretched arm.

There are also many laws and words from the Father to bear truthful witness. Though it may seem these are about honesty - and yes, they certainly are - they are also a glimpse of a people called to declare their wonderful redemption. Some of the Old Testament laws held accountable those who had even witnessed an act of violence. God later declares in Proverbs that a false witness is one of the things he hates most ([Proverbs 6:19](#)). A more full picture of God's desire for witnesses comes in [Isaiah 43](#). When seeking for some to testify to the world that Israel's fall to the Babylonian empire was not a defeat amongst the gods, the One True God responds with these words:

*8 Bring out the people who are blind, yet have eyes,
who are deaf, yet have ears!
9 All the nations gather together,
and the peoples assemble.
Who among them can declare this,
and show us the former things?
Let them bring their witnesses to prove them right,
and let them hear and say, It is true.
10 "You are my witnesses," declares the Lord,
"and my servant whom I have chosen,
that you may know and believe me
and understand that I am he.
Before me no god was formed,
nor shall there be any after me.*

The very people being marched out of their land into judgment for their treacherous life against the God who redeemed them and one another, are the very people whom God desires to bear witness to him being God alone. This is astounding! Better still, this plan comes with a better chosen Servant who will only do and speak what he sees his Father doing. This perfect witness, Jesus Christ, continued the call to his disciples as he breathed on them this promise in [John 20:21-22](#), "Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.' And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'"

Jesus has given his disciples the Holy Spirit along with his promised return. We can take confidence declaring what we have heard because we know that the Holy Spirit is the primary instrument in both the one speaking and the one receiving. We can also take confidence in knowing that there isn't a quota to hit to find favor. Mark Dever writes in his book, "[The Gospel and Personal Evangelism](#),"

"We do not fail in our evangelism if we faithfully tell the gospel to someone who is not subsequently converted; we fail only if we do not faithfully tell the gospel at all."

DECLARE IN COMMUNITY

In the Abiding Practice of Declare, we need our brothers and sisters to remind us of these truths often. We also need one another to rehearse the truths of the gospel such that it changes our lives and becomes the natural outflow of our hearts. Sharing the gospel with the lost can feel like something only the A-Team, superstar Christians do, but our Missional Communities can be a place where we remind each other just how every-day this practice can be. And in each of these rhythms, our witness should first be soaked in prayer. Let's look at some ways this can play out in the three rhythms of a Missional Community.

Family Gatherings

One of the easiest ways to declare the gospel to others could be through the medium of your Family Gathering. Your unbelieving friends and neighbors might not readily come through the doors of our church, and might even feel intimidated by a one-on-one dinner, but a Family Gathering with a few other couples could be a very easy door for hosting them in your home. From there, you could walk through "The Story of God" with them, making clear the depravity of our sin and the need for a Redeemer.

Another way to grow in declaring the gospel would be to use your Family Gathering time to write out and practice your testimony. Again, this is our opportunity to bear witness to the great and costly salvific act we have received in Christ Jesus. A great way to do this is by writing a [Fifteen-Second Testimony](#). Southeastern Seminary has a great video series titled "[Who's Your One Training](#)" to quickly show you what this looks like.

15 Second Testimony

“There was a time in my life when...”

A. _____

Away From Christ
Describe your life before Christ came to change you.

B. _____

Because Of Christ
Describe what Christ has done for you.

C. _____

Change Christ Made
Describe the personal changes Christ has made in you.

D. _____

“Do you have a story like that?”

DNA Groups

The Abiding Practice of declaring the gospel begins and is continuously soaked in prayer. What better way to begin praying for the lost in our close circles than through your DNA Group? Have each member of your DNA Group write out one name from each of the four main spheres of influence: family, friends, coworkers and neighbors. From there you can begin praying as a group for each person by name. DNA is also a great way that we can “Act with Accountability” as we check in with one another throughout the week. Set a reminder to reach out midweek to see how each person is doing as they seek opportunities to declare the gospel to at least one of the individuals in their sphere of influence.

Neighborhoods to Nations

This is where we put our metaphorical and physical boots on the ground. One great way to get out and declare the gospel is by going to community events with one another. There is nothing wrong with enjoying good music, food trucks, or a scenic view with friends as you look for opportunities to share the gospel with others. For those with kids or parents who stay home with kids, you could get a membership to the Botanical Gardens. There are many new families coming to our city who are eager to connect with other families who also spend time at the gardens.

Another option would be to partner with a local ministry that pairs demonstrating the gospel through acts of service with opportunities to declare what leads us to serve. Community of Hope, through their Restoration Works events, provides opportunities for Missional Communities and families to craft small art pieces while they interact with our homeless neighbors. This is a great opportunity to make a new friend and share the wonderful revelation we have received in Christ Jesus.

Finally, you and your group can spend time praying for our missionaries and the specific people groups they are going to reach. We can pray that they would find favor with the people God has called them to and that their hearts would be ready to receive the gospel.

SAMPLE COMMITMENT

Below is a sample commitment that you can use as an example for planning your time together. Again, failure is not that your group doesn't look exactly like this example; failure is to not faithfully declare the gospel at all.

DECLARE COMMITMENT

Missional Community Leaders: The Shakers and The Movers

Date of Commitment: March 2023

Date to Reevaluate Commitment: March 2024

Commitment

Our Missional Community is committed to write and practice our 15-Second Testimony and then share the gospel with at least one person in our sphere of influence per month.

Family Gatherings

We will encourage and coach one another through writing out our 15-Second Testimony during our first Family Gathering. The second gathering will be devoted to listing out and praying for those in our four spheres of influence. Next month we will share stories and encouragements of how God worked through our witness

DNA Groups

Our DNA Groups will close their time together asking for updates and setting achievable goals for sharing with those in their sphere of influence during the week. We will then close our time together praying for the Holy Spirit to move powerfully and open doors for gospel conversations. We will pray for boldness for one another and encourage one another throughout the week. We will also check-in each day via the group chat.

Neighborhoods To Nations

On the fourth week of the month our group will host a "Come and See" night where the host home will invite the homes on their street to come and hear a gospel proclamation, share a 15-Second Testimony, and then ask questions. We will meet early to pray for the families and to work together to ensure a very hospitable atmosphere is felt in the home. We will then make ourselves available if some neighbors have additional questions they would like to ask outside of the group meeting time

CONCLUSION

If you have made it this far then congratulations on not being totally overwhelmed and crippled by fear. There is no doubt that this is - on the surface, at least - one of the more difficult Abiding Practices to engage. As your staff, we feel the weight and challenge this brings even as we write and edit these words. We have felt fear, shame and guilt as we created the Declare resources. But we are also compelled to continue to call ourselves, one another, and the people of God to declare the goodness of the Father and the witness we have received to a dying world around us.

DECLARE RESOURCES

We would encourage you to engage with the following resources as you discuss how to implement the Abiding Practice of Declare.

Recommended Sermons

[Declare - Life in the Vine: Practices for Abiding in Jesus](#) - Patrick Johnson

[Following Jesus: 2022 Spring Break Mission Trip](#) - David Platt

Recommended Books

[Spiritual Multiplication in the Real World](#) - Bob McNabb

[Study Guide: Spiritual Multiplication in the Real World for Missional Communities](#) - Bob McNabb

[The Gospel and Personal Evangelism](#) - Mark Dever (quoted above)

[What If I'm Discouraged in My Evangelism?](#) - Isaac Adams

Recommended Digital Resources

[Evangelism Made Simple: The Key to Overcoming Your Fear \(Desiring God article\)](#) - Glen Scrivener

[The Story Of God \(multimedia resources\)](#) - Saturate

[Who's Your One Video Training Series \(YouTube playlist\)](#) - Southeastern Seminary (quoted above)

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