CORE VALUE 6 OF 10 · WEEK 6

ANABAPTISH

Witnessing to the World

We value an active and loving witness for Christ to all people.

John Dixon | Sunday, October 18, 2026 | Crest Community Church

For the Nightstand

THE TEACHING

Of all ten, this is the hardest one. Sharing something so deeply personal means being deeply vulnerable. And the culture has shifted. In a world that thinks your faith might be the problem, how do you share it? Notice the word our tradition chose. Not evangelize. Witness. A witness is simply someone who saw something and tells what they saw. You're not the judge. You're not the prosecutor.

In John 18, Peter warms his hands at a charcoal fire. A servant girl asks, "Aren't you one of his?" "I am not." Inside, Jesus tells the high priest, "Ask those who heard me." At the exact moment Jesus names his witnesses, his witness is swearing he never met him. But Jesus doesn't recruit a better witness. On the beach there's another charcoal fire. He makes Peter breakfast.

Thirty years later, the man who froze by a fire writes, "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks." And love is the only motive that works. So write down three names. Ask, where is this person, and how can I help them take the next step?

KEY SCRIPTURES

John 18:17–18
Peter freezes by a charcoal fire.

John 21:9
Another charcoal fire. Breakfast, not shame.

Acts 4:20
We can't stop telling what we've seen.

1 Peter 3:15
Be ready to tell the reason for your hope.

A PRAYER

Jesus, you are the faithful witness. Thank you that you didn't go looking for better witnesses than us. You came looking for us. Holy Spirit, where we've frozen, give us courage. Where we've been angry, give us gentleness. Father, put three names on our hearts, and give us the next step. In Jesus' name, amen.

PART TWO

For Your Home Church

Gather together. About 60 minutes, after your meal or around it.

FOR LEADERS

This is shared language, not a script. Everyone in the room can see these notes, so feel free to read them out loud. The times add up to an hour. Hold them loosely. If a conversation is alive, stay with it and trim somewhere else.

Check In

5 min

Start by hearing how last week actually went.

LEADER NOTE

Go around the room. **How did last week's practice go?** Three were offered: read Isaiah 56:3–8 each day with your own name in verse 3, ask "Who is on the outside of my table?" and make one move of welcome, or take one step to make right what you wrote under "Where have I done the leaving out?" and tell someone from home church.

Some people will not have done it. That is fine, and it is worth saying out loud so nobody performs. Ask them instead what the week was like. No fixing and no follow-up questions. Just receive it.

Take Communion

5 min

Every witness starts with a before and an after. Bring yours to his table.

LEADER NOTE

Share the bread and the cup, before, during, or after your meal. If your group doesn't have its own words yet, have someone read this psalm out loud first.

PSALM 40:1–3

1 I waited patiently for the LORD;
he turned to me and heard my cry.

2 He lifted me out of the slimy pit,
out of the mud and mire;
he set my feet on a rock
and gave me a firm place to stand.

3 He put a new song in my mouth,
a hymn of praise to our God.
Many will see and fear the LORD
and put their trust in him.

Read This Overview

5 min

LEADER NOTE

Ask someone to read this out loud.

Of all ten core values, this might be the hardest one. For a lot of us, sharing our faith feels risky. What if they ask something I can't answer? What if it gets weird? What if they think I'm one of *those* Christians?

So notice the word our tradition chose. Not evangelize. Witness. In the New Testament the Greek word is *martys*. It's where we get the word martyr, because so many of the first witnesses paid for their testimony with their lives.

A witness is simply someone who saw something and tells what they saw. Think of a courtroom. You're not the judge. You're not the jury. And you are not the prosecutor. Erica and Jonathan Lloyd, who wrote this chapter of *Compelling Convictions*, say it plainly. We don't have the responsibility or the power to make anyone follow Jesus.

The Brethren in Christ, the family of churches Crest belongs to, learned this the hard way. Our early families figured if they lived distinct enough, with plain clothes and a separate community, people would come and ask. Then they read Jesus' words in Matthew 28, "go and make disciples," and realized waiting on the porch wasn't enough. Between 1890 and 1910 they started city missions in Chicago, Philadelphia, Buffalo, and Des Moines, and sent missionaries to southern Africa and India.

That's why our value says active. And it's why it says loving. You can have the right words and airtight arguments, and without love it's just noise. A clanging cymbal.

Witnessing to the World

We value an active and loving witness for Christ to all people.

Active and loving. Both.

Go Deeper in the Scripture

20 min

Watch the man who froze by one fire become the one who writes, "Always be prepared."

LEADER NOTE

Have someone read John 18 out loud. John tells it like a filmmaker, cutting back and forth between the courtyard and the high priest's house. Then have someone else read 1 Peter 3. Peter wrote it about thirty years later. You won't get to every question. If time is short, start with the three marked START HERE

JOHN 18:15–27 · NIV

15 Simon Peter and another disciple were following Jesus. Because this disciple
was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the high priest's
courtyard, 16 but Peter had to wait outside at the door. The other disciple, who
was known to the high priest, came back, spoke to the servant girl on duty
there and brought Peter in.

17 "You aren't one of this man's disciples too, are you?" she asked Peter.

He replied, "I am not."

18 It was cold, and the servants and officials stood around a fire they had made
to keep warm. Peter also was standing with them, warming himself.

19 Meanwhile, the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and his
teaching.

20 "I have spoken openly to the world," Jesus replied. "I always taught in
synagogues or at the temple, where all the Jews come together. I said nothing
in secret. 21 Why question me? Ask those who heard me. Surely they know
what I said."

22 When Jesus said this, one of the officials nearby slapped him in the face. "Is
this the way you answer the high priest?" he demanded.

23 "If I said something wrong," Jesus replied, "testify as to what is wrong. But if
I spoke the truth, why did you strike me?" 24 Then Annas sent him bound to
Caiaphas the high priest.

25 Meanwhile, Simon Peter was still standing there warming himself. So they
asked him, "You aren't one of his disciples too, are you?"

He denied it, saying, "I am not."

26 One of the high priest's servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had
cut off, challenged him, "Didn't I see you with him in the garden?" 27 Again
Peter denied it, and at that moment a rooster began to crow.

1 PETER 3:13–16 · NIV

13 Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? 14 But even if you
should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear their threats; do
not be frightened." 15 But 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, 16 keeping a clear
conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in
Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

BACKGROUND NOTES

Inside and outside. John tells two stories at the same time. Outside in the courtyard, Peter (verses 15–18). Inside, Jesus on trial (19–24). Then right back outside to the fire (25–27). At the exact moment Jesus says "Ask those who heard me," the one who heard him is saying "I am not."

A servant girl. Not a soldier. Not the high priest. A few hours earlier Peter had told Jesus, "I will lay down my life for you" (John 13:37). That same night he had swung a sword in the garden (18:10).

"I am" and "I am not." When the soldiers came for Jesus in the garden, he said, "I am he." In Greek, *egō eimi*. They drew back and fell to the ground (18:5–6). Peter's answer at the fire is *ouk eimi*. "I am not." Jesus tells the truth when it costs him everything. Peter lies when it would have cost him a little embarrassment around a fire.

Two charcoal fires. The word for this kind of fire, *anthrakia*, shows up only twice in the whole New Testament. Here in John 18:18, and in John 21:9, after the resurrection: "When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread." The same smell as the worst night of Peter's life. Jesus doesn't shame him. He makes him breakfast. Three denials. Three times, "Do you love me?"

Exiles. Peter wrote to Christians "scattered" across what's now Turkey (1 Peter 1:1). Their neighbors "are surprised that you do not join them," Peter says, "and they heap abuse on you" (4:4). A world that was against them, long before ours.

Peter is quoting Isaiah. "Do not fear their threats" comes from Isaiah 8:12. The next verse says, "The LORD Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy, he is the one you are to fear." Peter takes that line and puts Jesus right where Isaiah has "the LORD." "In your hearts revere Christ as Lord."

Respect is a fear word. In verse 16, the word for "respect" is *phobos*. Fear. The same root as "do not fear" in verse 14. Peter never says, "Stop being afraid." He says fear the right Person. And when you do, everybody else gets your gentleness.

WHAT DOES IT SAY?

1. Follow the camera. Where is Peter in each part of John 18? Where is Jesus? What is each one saying at the same moment? START HERE
2. In 1 Peter 3:14–16, what does Peter tell us not to do? What does he tell us to do instead?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

3. Is *Witnessing to the World* challenging for you? If so, why do you think that might be? Do you agree or disagree that this value is necessary, and why? START HERE
4. Peter froze in front of a servant girl. Thirty years later he writes, "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks." Look at the notes on the two fires. What do you think changed in him?
5. Are there moments when we are a less-than-loving witness? What encouragement did you find in the teaching to help you position your heart as a *loving* witness?

WHAT DOES IT ASK OF US?

6. Identify the types of resources you use (time, money, skills) to intentionally be an *active* witness.
7. Considering your personal relationships and your involvement in your community, how are you being called to be a witness to the people around you? START HERE

Practice for the Night: Three Names Together

20 min

Bring the people God has put in your life to him, by name, together.

LEADER NOTE

Have paper and pens on hand. The silence will feel long. Don't fill it. When it's time to pray, go first, and keep it simple.

First names only, and the names stay in this room. This is spiritual friendship, not a project. Some people may not follow Jesus yet themselves. That's welcome here. Invite them to write down the names of people they love and simply listen while others pray.

1. **Get quiet** · 3 min
   Phones face down. A couple of minutes of silence. Then the leader prays: **"Father, put three names on our hearts tonight. Help us see them the way you see them."**

2. **Write three names** · 5 min
   Each person writes three first names. People God has put in your life who don't know him yet. Next to each, make your best guess at where they are right now: **trusting a Christian, becoming curious, opening to change, seeking after God,** or **entering the kingdom.**

3. **Pray in pairs** · 9 min
   Share your names with one other person, and only as much as you want to. Then pray for each other's names, one at a time, with the prayer on the card below: **"Lord, what would it take for them to explore you for themselves? And how can I help?"**

4. **Read it together** · 3 min
   Come back together. Read 1 Peter 3:15 out loud, all at once, from the box above. Then go around the room. Anyone who wants to can name one small next step for one of their names, in a sentence.

KEEP THIS

"Lord, what would it take for them to explore you for themselves? And how can I help?"

Where is this person, and how can I help them take the next step?

Cut this card out and keep it with your three names.

Practice for the Week Ahead

3 min

Choose one small, honest step. Start where you are, not where you think you should be.

IF YOU'RE STILL EXPLORING

Read Luke 15 this week, three stories of the lost and found. Then ask, **"What if God is looking for me like that?"** You don't have to find your way home. You just have to let yourself be found.

IF YOU'VE FOLLOWED JESUS A WHILE

Pray for your three names by name, every day. And try one of three simple practices. **Minister at the place of pain:** listen for the hurt underneath the hot take. **Offer to pray:** "Can I pray for you?" **Practice hospitality:** set a table.

IF YOU'RE READY FOR MORE

Take one next step with one of your names. When Jesus called Levi, Levi threw a party so his friends could meet Jesus (Luke 5:29). Invite someone to dinner, or bring a friend to home church. And get your own two-minute "before and after" ready. "I was blind but now I see!"

Next week, we'll start by checking in on how it went.

Close in Prayer

2 min

LEADER NOTE

Gather everyone and close your time in prayer, however the Spirit leads.

COMING UP · SUNDAY, OCTOBER 25

Core Value 7: Serving Compassionately

We value serving others at their point of need, following the example of our Lord Jesus.

WANT TO GO FURTHER?

Compelling Convictions, the companion book to this series, is free to borrow from the church library. Chapter 6 is on this week's value. Just ask John.