



The purpose of this module is to challenge church leadership to build witnessing congregations that reveal God's grace to the world.

The objectives for this module are to:

- Identify the Biblical imperatives for representing Christ through our congregations.
- Acknowledge the church's ability to embody God's grace.
- Learn the importance of redemptive conversations, compassionate care and inclusive community.

## LECTURE

Fill in the blanks below as you follow along with the lecture.

- I. Witnessing helps all persons \_\_\_\_\_ holiness over a life of sin.
  - A. In John 3:16, Jesus declared God's purpose of \_\_\_\_\_ perishing people because of God's love for the world.
  - B. Jesus told a story about the shepherd who left the 99 to \_\_\_\_\_ for the one lost sheep, and the corner of heaven was pulled back to show the great rejoicing for the lost sheep that was found.
  - C. Rather than teaching among people who already believed and welcomed him, Jesus said "Let us \_\_\_\_\_ somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come" (Mark1:38, TNIV).
  - D. Jesus' behavior embodied his teaching that God reached out to \_\_\_\_\_ all persons into the community of faith.
- II. The witness of the church \_\_\_\_\_ God's kingdom on earth.
  - A. When Jesus taught his disciples to pray, they learned that God desires complete \_\_\_\_\_ of the earth and all that is in it: "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."
  - B. The good news is that God does not \_\_\_\_\_ for us to make it so. He is already at work even before any individual or organization gets involved.
  - C. God graciously \_\_\_\_\_ all persons into relationship.
  - D. When the Church \_\_\_\_\_ in what God has already started, the Church becomes a means of God's grace.

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- E. The church's \_\_\_\_\_ of God's grace includes: an incarnational presence, redemptive conversations, compassionate care, and inclusive community.
- III. God has called the Church to \_\_\_\_\_ the Gospel and to witness to God's reign through an incarnational presence.
- A. In the Church immediately after Pentecost, people took notice when they saw how the Christians \_\_\_\_\_ with each other, and they liked what they saw.
- B. The early Church \_\_\_\_\_ their witness in a 24/7 lifestyle just as Jesus did.
- C. We can allow our very \_\_\_\_\_ to witness to the beauty of living under the reign of God.
- IV. Both as individuals and as a community, Christian witnesses \_\_\_\_\_ in redemptive conversations.
- A. Christian witnesses know that prevenient grace is already at work, so they seek first to \_\_\_\_\_ God's nudges in another person's life.
- B. The effective witness begins a redemptive conversation by \_\_\_\_\_ with interest, discernment, and sensitivity.
- C. A missional congregation listens well in the \_\_\_\_\_ in which they live.
- D. In listening to others, \_\_\_\_\_ for evidence of broken trust.
- E. Listen to the stories of others to find a place where you can use shared hardships to \_\_\_\_\_ with others.
- V. The compassionate manner in which Jesus \_\_\_\_\_ to people must be the manner in which Jesus' followers—and his Church—witness to God's grace.
- A. James, in the discussion about the integral linkage between faith and deeds, said, "I will \_\_\_\_\_ you my faith by what I do" (James 2:18b, TNIV).
- B. Compassionate care which \_\_\_\_\_ the Gospel is a powerful witness.
- C. The message of God's love is to be \_\_\_\_\_ in our love for people.
- VI. A witnessing church community eagerly \_\_\_\_\_ any seeker of God into an inclusive community.
- A. In the past, many churches have \_\_\_\_\_ newcomers to believe in God and conform to church norms prior to beginning fellowship and belonging in the congregation.
- B. What happens if this is \_\_\_\_\_? The Celtic model of Christianity welcomes all persons and expects that the experience of fellowship and belonging to the faith community will help the individual commit to Christ.
- C. Welcoming pre-Christians into the life of a congregation could happen \_\_\_\_\_ the church facility.
- D. Paul urges Christians to be active in "making room" for others, to intentionally seek opportunities to \_\_\_\_\_ people into the fellowship of the saints.

## LISTENING EXERCISE

Take the next five to seven minutes to recall a time when you experienced God's presence in your life. Select an experience that you will be comfortable sharing with your partner for the activity. Additionally, be sure you will be able to tell your partner about this experience in the three minute time frame allocated to the activity. Use this space to make notes about the experience and plan how you will share this story with your teammate.

*I experienced god's presence in my life when...*

## EVALUATION AND PLANNING

Use the table below to evaluate your congregation's witness in the community and plan ways to increase your witness. Document your congregation's strengths in the first row and areas for improvement in the second. In the third row, brainstorm ideas about how your church can increase your witness of God's grace in the community. The questions in the table may help you get started with your evaluation.

WITNESSES OF GOD'S GRACE	STRENGTHS	AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT	IDEAS FOR FUTURE PLANNING
<b>An incarnational presence:</b> How does your very presence witness to the beauty of living under the reign of God?			
<b>Redemptive conversations:</b> How are you listening in your community and engaging in redemptive conversations with those beyond your congregation?			
<b>Compassionate care:</b> How is your congregation showing compassionate care to those who are new to your church and to those beyond your church?			
<b>Inclusive community:</b> What is the experience of a person from a different racial, ethnic, economic, political, or religious group when they interact with your congregation?			

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