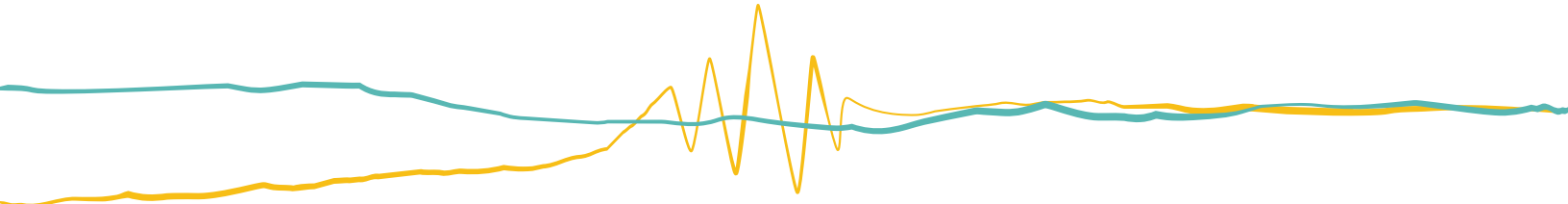
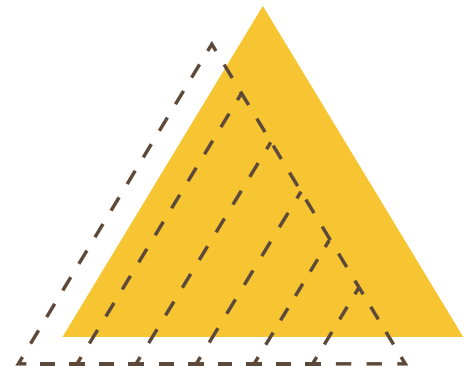


WITNESS



**EQUIPPED TO SHARE
THE GOOD NEWS**

INTRO



INTRODUCTION BY REV. JON HUIZENGA

When I started out in ministry, I thought it was my job to “dream a big dream for God” and to convince people to follow him. Those assumptions got me off on the wrong foot. I spent my energy trying to convince God and people to do things. As you may have experienced, that is not so easy! After one particularly disappointing Sunday, I told God, “I quit! If you want this church to grow and be fruitful, you’re going to have to do it.” Gently and kindly, God replied: “Jon, I’ve been waiting six years to hear you say that. Just watch what I will do when you get out of the way and let me.”

That turnaround in expectations changed my experience of sharing faith. Before, I felt like I was imposing my agenda. Now, it was more like a discovery of where God is already at work. Before, I felt I was not being myself. Now, it felt more natural—like pointing to God when I would see him. I was being what the Bible calls a “witness” who can point and say, “I think I see God right there.”

In my work as a church planter, this posture is leading me to surprises and adventures. For example, a year ago, I was asked to become the co-president of our local Chamber of Commerce. I wasn’t looking for that or expecting it, but it seemed like God was in it, so I said, “Yes.” I have now conducted ribbon cuttings for new businesses, attended retirement parties, stopped in to see how business owners are doing, and have had multiple conversations about faith. I rarely push it. I just keep my eyes open for where God might be working and, when it seems right, I say something.

Here is another example. One Friday night my wife was working, so I decided to go to the gym. It didn’t seem like a very exciting Friday night activity, but I sensed God might be there somehow. When I arrived, the gym owner was there and he introduced me to a new customer. He added, “He’s a Pastor” (which is code language for “don’t swear”). The gentleman said, “Oh, I’ve been thinking about going to church.” I invited him and gave him some details.

Sure enough, at church this past Sunday, somebody tapped me on the shoulder and said, “Your friend is here.” And there he was.

This quote is popular in the missional church conversation: “It is not that the church of God has a mission. Rather, it is that the mission of God has a church.” (A slight paraphrase from Jurgen Moltmann and Lesslie Newbigin.) God is on mission all day, every day. Our invitation is to journey together to see where he is working so that we can join him. It requires attentiveness and daily submission to his lordship. It is not easy, can sometimes be intimidating, and takes some learning. But this course provides excellent insight, teaching, and practical steps you can take.

Thank you for taking this training.

**REV. JON HUIZENGA,
RISE UP CHURCH, CEDAR SPRINGS, MI**

PREPARE



▶ WATCH the *Prepare* video, found at: resonateglobalmission.org/witnessvideos

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

ICEBREAKER QUESTION: What is your earliest memory of knowing God?

SCRIPTURE: Mark 1:9-15

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Jesus was baptized around the age of 30. What do you think he was learning about his context before the start of his public ministry?
- How is Jesus' baptism part of his preparation for ministry? What did Jesus receive?
- After Jesus endured temptation, he proclaimed the good news of God. What do you think might have been good news to those who were listening?
- What has been, or would be, good news in your community today?
- How has God been preparing you to receive the good news of the gospel?
- How has God been preparing you to share the good news?

PRAYER LITURGY

Loving God,

Thank you for sending your son, Jesus Christ, who reveals to us your character and the plan of redemption you have for the world. Thank you for sending your Spirit, the gift of God's presence with us, as we go into the world.

By the grace of God, we receive your Spirit.

Thank you for the blessing you gave to your son, Jesus, and that you give to us as your adopted children of God: that you love us and are well pleased with us.

By the grace of God, we receive your blessing.

Thank you for the good news that your son, Jesus, came to proclaim: that the kingdom of God is near, a reign and realm where God's way of doing things upends our selfish, idolatrous, pride-filled ways.

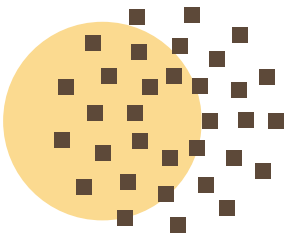
By the grace of God, we receive this good news.

This message is not just for us—it is for the whole world.

Loving God, send your Spirit, your blessing, and your good news into our neighborhoods, communities, and world.

Amen.

The **gospel** is the good news of God's reign, grace, and love in and through Christ for the redemption and the renewal of all things: personal, communal, and systemic.



PERSONAL JOURNAL


READ MARK 1:9-15. SLOWLY. REFLECTIVELY. Believe that this is God's word to you today. Before you read, pray: *Lord, what would you have me receive from your Word today?*

✕ What words or phrases capture your imagination? What might God be saying to you through them?

✕ The word *gospel* comes from the Old English *god*, meaning *good*, and *spel*, meaning *news, a story*. Being a gospel witness means sharing the good news that Jesus proclaimed in his ministry. What good news does Jesus bring in these passages?

- Matthew 8:1-3
- Matthew 9:1-8
- Matthew 9:35-36
- Matthew 19:13-15
- Matthew 20:29-34


✕ Are there similar examples of good news in your own life today?

 The places you see God's good news in your own life connects you to the gospel story. By knowing your place in the gospel story, you can bear witness to this good news. How would you finish these three sentences that tie your story to God's story?

Recently I've been grateful for God's blessing of . . .

I sense God is . . .

God is slowly shaping me to be . . .

 This good news in your own life is a reflection of the **kingdom of God**. In Mark 4, Jesus describes the kingdom of God using parables. In Luke 10, Jesus tells his followers that they are to proclaim that the kingdom of God is near. The kingdom of God is reflected in how God is working in our own lives, and also how God is working throughout the world—redeeming the lost, healing the sick, restoring the broken, reconciling the divided. Finish these sentences:

Recently, I've seen God blessing my community . . .

I sense God is at work in our community . . .

God is slowly shaping our community . . .

“When you enter a town and are received, eat what they set before you, heal anyone who is sick, and tell them, ‘God’s kingdom is right at your doorstep!’”

—Luke 10:9, *The Message*

A DEEPER LOOK

The Kingdom of God

What is the kingdom of God? Although this phrase is used over 100 times in the gospels, it isn't a phrase that translates easily into today's context. If we break it apart into its smaller parts, we can understand it better.

Kingdom: Although we don't use the word or idea of "kingdoms" much in our current context, there are "kingdoms" in our narratives all the time. Kingdoms indicate that there are power dynamics—who is in control? Who makes the decisions? Who is being oppressed? Inherent in a kingdom is that someone (or something) is on the throne and their values, beliefs, and priorities lay the foundation for those in this kingdom. If the person (or thing) on the throne is a good king, then the kingdom reflects those positive traits. However, if the person (or thing) on the throne is not a good king, those negative traits bring brokenness into the kingdom.

Of God: The kingdom that Jesus talks about in the gospels is not just any kingdom, but the kingdom of *God*. With God on the throne, we have a victorious king who enters into the suffering of others and has the power to do something about it. In God's kingdom, all of creation is under the rule and reign of God. In God's peaceable kingdom, the founding trait is "shalom." In *The Very Good Gospel*, Lisa Sharon Harper describes *shalom* as:

Shalom is what God declared. Shalom is what the kingdom of God looks like.

Shalom is when all people have enough.

It's when families are healed.

It's when churches, schools, and public policies protect human dignity.

Shalom is when the image of God is recognized, protected, and cultivated in every single human.

Shalom is our calling as followers of Jesus's gospel. It's the vision God set forth in the garden and the restoration God desires for every broken relationship.

Shalom is what our souls long for.

Shalom is the "very good" in the gospel.

Shalom is the peace we feel in our own hearts, but it's also found in the relationships between all of creation.

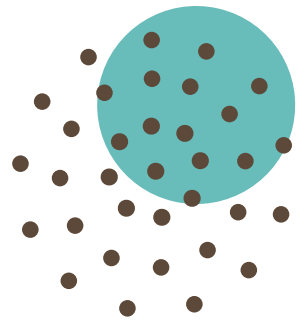
Of all of the kingdoms that we chase after, of all the people and things that we try to put on the throne, God's peaceable kingdom is actually the kingdom for which we long. The community in which nothing is broken and nothing is missing.

Is Near: In Luke 10, when Jesus sends out his disciples on a mission trip, he tells them to share the news that the kingdom of God is *near*. Sometimes we may perceive this as judgement—a warning to be afraid. But, given what we know about the characteristics of the kingdom of God, this is actually good news! The kingdom of God emphasizes community over individuals as it calls the church to be peacemakers. As the church, we live in the kingdom of God. As we seek shalom in our relationships, communities, and the world, we are embodying God's way of living and being.

We are showing the world what happens as a result of God being on the throne.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION/NEXT STEPS

Where do you see the good news of where God is working in your community and in the world? Keep a journal or running list on your phone when you see evidence of God's kingdom coming near. Try to list at least 10 observations this week.



PRAYERS FOR OURSELVES AND NEIGHBORS

Set aside five minutes every day this week to be present with God as an offering of your willingness to be a gospel witness. Take a physical posture of being willing to receive what God has for you. Instead of filling the silence with your own words, consider one of these options:

- Listen to a song that invites God's work in your life, such as "Breathe on Me Breath of God."
- Simply ask God, "How do you want to prepare me, Lord?" When your thoughts wander, return gently to this question.
- Try a breath prayer. When you inhale, pray: "Your love fills me." When you exhale, pray: "Let your love flow through me."

What are the ways you're hoping to grow in the gospel witness practice of preparing? In the back of this journal, there's a place where you can keep a prayer journal for yourself and those who need to receive the gift of Jesus Christ and his good news. This week, consider adding prayers for how you want God to prepare you to be a witness to the gospel.