

Included in this Program....

Inviting Grace: Evangelism as Radical Hospitality

- Inviting Grace classes
 - An exploration of what is grace, how it manifests itself in our community, and how one can participate in it.
 - Grace at Work
 - Grace in Community
 - Inviting Grace
 - This component is designed to
 - help people identify their attitudes and preconceptions about evangelism
 - uncover their fears and negative stereotypes associated with the term
 - identify more helpful ways of viewing evangelism that are authentic to who they are
 - help the group identify the church's overall strengths and liabilities, to be utilized in other parts of the program
 - begin to think about what they might do to move toward working out evangelism in their own context
 - For use with
 - adult formation classes
 - church leadership board
 - functional committees
 - congregational groups
 - Three classes, three sessions each (total 9 sessions)
 - One day retreat (in-house or off site)

- Leadership Retreat
 - The goals of this retreat are to
 - develop and understanding of what evangelism is for their congregation
 - articulate that in a statement of belief by creating an Evangelism Charter
 - For use with church leadership board
 - Day and a half retreat setting; Friday evening through Saturday evening

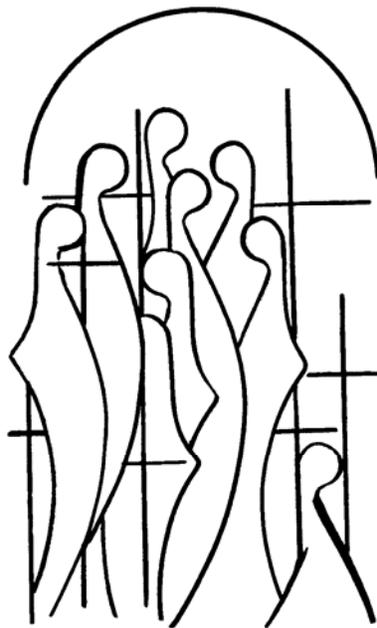
- Putting the Evangelism Charter into Action, Part 1
 - This component is designed to lay a foundation from which purposeful action around the Evangelism Charter may be built
 - communicating the Evangelism Charter so it becomes part of the fabric of the community
 - distilling key elements of the Charter that can frame further action
 - intersecting these key elements with the functional committees/task groups of the church, and brainstorming the possibilities for working out evangelism in these areas
 - For use with
 - church leadership board
 - functional committee/task group chairs and/or members
 - One day retreat (in-house or off-site)

- Putting the Evangelism Charter into Action, Part 2
 - Developing a strategic plan for implementing specifics around evangelism throughout the systems of the church
 - Training in a strategic planning sequence
 - Selecting initial goals
 - Identifying resources and obstacles, including implications for system changes to best facilitate the plan
 - Create a timeline for implementation
 - For use with
 - church leadership board
 - functional committee/task group chairs and/or members
 - One day retreat (in-house or off-site)

- Evangelism Tag Sale
 - An example of how to use a common church event as an evangelism tool.

Inviting Grace

A Way to Explore Evangelism



A Three Cycle Program for Adult Education

LeaderResources
Evolutionary Resources™ for a changing church



About this Adult Education Program

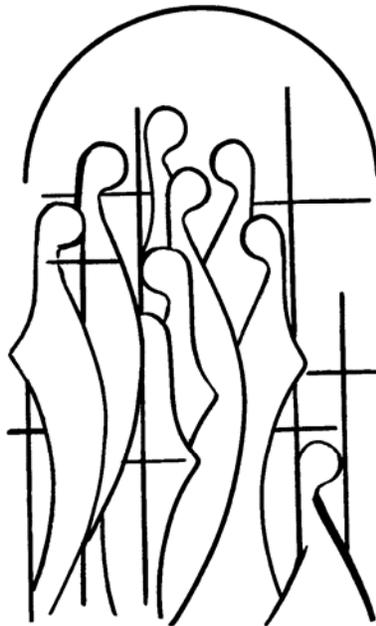
The adult education section of *Inviting Grace* is a program offered in three “cycles” each of which has three sessions. These cycles can be used individually in sequence or combined into a single nine session program.

Inviting Grace is designed to be used as a Sunday morning adult education experience or for evening gatherings. It was originally used on Sunday mornings as three separate “classes” that people attended for three weeks. The three cycles were spaced out over several months so attendees had time to implement what they learned before the next cycle. The advantage of offering it in three segments is that it is more attractive to those who are reluctant to sign up for more than 3-4 weeks of any program.

This program was originally developed by Gregg Morris and Linda L. Grenz for Trinity Episcopal Church in Towson, MD.

Inviting Grace

A Way to Explore Evangelism



Cycle One

Grace at Work

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Grace at Work

The focus of these sessions is around two questions:

- **Where is grace at work in our community, and how do we talk about it?**
- **What is our theology of conversion, and what language do we use to articulate it?**

Facilitator's Guide - Preparing for the Lessons

These lessons are written in a “scripted” style. Whenever you need to communicate something to the group, it will begin with the note, *Say, Ask*, or something to that effect. This is designed to give you an idea of what to say, but obviously you don't have to say the exact words as they are written. Read over the lessons in advance to become comfortable with the material, and feel free to put the content into your own words. The more comfortable you are with the material, the more at ease your group will be!

The instructions for the facilitator are printed in italics.

The plain text contains the content to be communicated.

Newsprint is the primary visual medium you will be using for these sessions, and you will be using it to take running notes of the sessions as instructed. If you are not comfortable writing on newsprint, ask ahead of time for a “scribe” who has clear handwriting to assist you in note-taking. This also will help you not to have your back to the group quite as much where a lot of writing is required.

You will also need to provide 3x5 or 4x6 note cards where noted. You will also need pens, markers and masking tape for posting newsprint on the walls (note: blue painter's masking tape is preferable, as it will not pull the paint off your walls!) You can tear off two-inch pieces of tape in advance and stick them to the easel or another place easily accessible to participants for their use when the time comes.

Whenever you see the  icon, this signifies material you will have to have written on newsprint before the session begins. When an instruction reads,  *Turn over the cover sheet to reveal the newsprint on which you have written*, it is a good idea to leave a sheet or two in front of the sheet you have written on so it will not be seen

until you are ready for it. It is also a good idea when preparing newsprint in advance to leave a sheet in between each one you write on. This will prevent the text from the next sheet from showing through.

Always keep the newsprint generated from the session. In many lessons, you will need it for a future session. When you see the 📄 icon, this indicates that you are to have this newsprint posted for use in this session. You will want to arrive in the room with enough time to do this before the participants arrive.

Some sessions require the use of handouts. These are provided at the end of each lesson, where needed. As you prepare, locate the handouts and remember to have enough copies made ahead of time for each participant.

In the end - breathe deeply, relax, and have fun! Remember that this is supposed to be about hospitality and putting people at ease! 😊

For the first session, you will want to borrow or purchase a copy of the children's book *Just the Way You Are* by Max Lucado (Crossway Books). For the second session, you will need *The Quiltmaker's Gift* by Jeff Brumbeau and Gail de Marken. You could find these at your local Christian bookseller or through www.amazon.com. Read the stories ahead of time to become familiar with them. You will be using these stories as part of the first and second sessions. Depending on how much time you have at the end of the sessions, you may read the stories in their entirety, or recap the stories for the participants.

The handouts for each session are included at the end of each lesson. In most cases they simply restate or summarize material covered in the session. They are to be distributed at the end as people leave, giving them something to reflect upon in the coming week.

Grace at Work

Session One

A Theology of Grace and Conversion

What do we believe about God's grace towards us, and what happens when we encounter that grace?

Identifying our Experience

10 minutes

Read the following aloud to the group:

- Think about a time when you felt deeply loved or totally accepted just as you were. *(Give people a minute to think.)*
- Now that you have that experience in mind, think about what happened that enabled you to know that you were loved and accepted. How did you know? *(Pause for a bit)*
- And then, what did you do in response? What happened to you because you were loved and accepted? *(Pause)*

Invite participants to find no more than two other people and share their experiences. Spend the remainder of the time allotted in discussion.

Understanding Grace

15 minutes

Gather the group together again, and say:

Whatever your story about being loved and accepted was like, the experience of being loved and accepted by God is like that but even more so!! God's grace is God, loving us with all of God's heart and soul...it is God totally accepting us without our having to earn that love and acceptance by being or doing anything! Let's look at the definition of grace.

✍ Turn over the cover sheet to reveal the newsprint on which you have written the essence of the following:

- The Catechism defines grace as “God's favor towards us, unearned and undeserved; by grace God forgives our sins, enlightens our minds, stirs our hearts, and strengthens our wills” *(Book of Common Prayer, p. 858, emphasis added).*

<p>This definition is from the Episcopal Tradition. If you are from another tradition, you would want to use the definition, or language and words, used by your own tradition as found in official documents.</p>
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- “In the Hebrew Bible [Old Testament] grace (*chen*) means kindness and graciousness between two strangers or acquaintances, or between a superior and inferior where the superior has no obligation to be kind.”¹
- “In the New Testament grace (*charis*) refers to God’s love, which constantly acts to restore sinners to full relationship with God. This is more like the Hebrew term “loving kindness” (*chesed*), which refers to God’s determination to continue loving the Hebrew people, no matter what. That love is given freely by God and is unearned and undeserved.”² (*Save this newsprint for use in the third session.*)

Read aloud what you have written on the newsprint. Conclude by saying:
Grace is God’s love that heals all the brokenness created by people and their actions. Christians believe that love is most clearly seen in Jesus Christ. The Church is a community where grace is recognized, affirmed and celebrated.

*Spend **10 minutes** having the group discuss the following questions. If your group is a large one, you may want to break into smaller units, so that all can participate.*

- What do we (as Christians, as Episcopalians [*or your own denominational affiliation*], as members of this church, as individuals) believe about God’s grace toward us, and what happens when we encounter that grace?
- How do we talk about that? What language do we use? Where can these conversations take place?
- How is it expressed in our liturgy? Sermons? Teaching? Music?

*At the end of **10 minutes**, say something like:*

OK, now after these definitions and reflections, let’s move on to our specific topic of discussion: Talking about our encounter with God.

Talking about our Encounter with God **15 minutes**

Say:

Christians use a variety of words to talk about their encounter with God. Some, especially those from evangelical or fundamentalist traditions, speak of being

¹Taken from *Doubleday Pocket Bible Guide*, p. 270, emphasis added.

²Taken from *Doubleday Pocket Bible Guide*, p. 270, emphasis added.

“converted” or say they have been “saved.” Others talk about being “transformed by Christ.” What does it mean to be transformed? Converted? Saved?

 Turn over newsprint on which you have written the following:

- **Transform/transformation**: to effect a marked change in nature, form or appearance (dictionary definition)
- Do not conform to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds (Romans 12:2)

- **Convert/conversion**: to change in form, character or function (dictionary)
- Paul was converted from a persecutor of Christians to one who proclaimed Jesus as Lord (Acts 9:1-19)

- **Save/salvation**: to keep safe or rescue from harm or danger; (in Christian use) to preserve a soul from damnation (dictionary)
- For by grace you have been saved through faith; this is not your doing but it is a gift from God—not the result of works, so that no one may boast (Ephesians 2:8-9)
- God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through Jesus Christ (I Thessalonians 5:9-10)

Read aloud to the group what you have written on the newsprint. Spend **10 minutes** leading the group in discussing the newsprint in light of the following questions:

- Which of these words best fits your personal understanding of what happens to us when we encounter God’s grace?
- Why do you think many are more comfortable with words other than “saved” while other Christians talk comfortably about being “saved”?
- What do you think is the language more comfortable to the Episcopal Church [or your own denominational affiliation]?

Summarize

3 minutes

Summarize or explain (depending on what the discussion was!) by saying:
Our theology, our understanding of who God is, who we are and of the relationship between God and us, determines how we talk about our experience of encountering God.

- If we see people as “fallen” sinful creatures damned to “hell” and if we see God as the One who can rescue us from that damnation, then we will talk about being “saved” from that which we fear
- If, however, we see ourselves as the children of God, created by and loved by a God who constantly seeks to be in relationship with us, then we are more likely to talk about being “transformed” by our encounter with a loving God. The Episcopal Church’s theology is found in the catechism. (*Or state where your tradition’s theology on the nature of people and their relationship with God may be found.*) We believe that:
 - people are made in the image of God (BCP, p. 845; #1)
 - that the universe is good (BCP, p. 846 #2)
 - that God is love (BCP, p. 849, #7) and that
 - nothing, not even death, shall separate us from the love of God (BCP, p. 862, #8)

These references are from the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer. If you are from another tradition, you will want to look up your official theology for use in this section.

Much of this is a matter of emphasis. The Episcopal Church also talks about salvation, but the emphasis is not on the terrible damnation from which we must be saved. Rather the emphasis is on a grateful response to the love of God. (*If your tradition differs, you might want to adjust this section accordingly.*) This difference determines how we talk about our experience with others. Next week we will be talking about Grace and Our Church, entertaining the following questions:

- If God’s grace is abundant, how is grace evident at our church?
- How do we as a community encounter God’s grace, and how do we know it is God’s grace?
- How do we share the grace we experience with one another? How do we talk about it? Act on it?

Closing

2 minutes

Read:

In closing, I’d like to read a story *Just the Way You Are* by Max Lucado (Crossway Books).

If time is limited you can read the following description instead...although the impact will not be the same.

An announcement is made in the village: the king is coming to adopt orphans. The children all start projects to show their considerable skills...except one girl who feels she has no great skills. When the king arrives, she greets and talks to him as she does to all strangers who come to the village. The other children are eager to show off their projects. But the king adopts the girls who welcomed him because he accepts her “just the way you are” while the other children are all too busy with their projects to be available to the build a relationship with the king.³

Do not comment on or discuss the story afterwards; just let it sink into silence for a few seconds and then close with a prayer of your own, one you choose, or the following:

Almighty God, you have given your only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him, and to be born of a pure virgin: Grant that we, who have been born again and made your children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by your Holy Spirit; through our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom with you and the same Spirit be honor and glory, now and forever. *Amen.* (BCP, p. 213)

Say:

Thanks for being here this morning. I look forward to seeing you next week. Here is a handout of the material we covered today. Have a great week!

Distribute handout as people leave.

The third sheet of the handout is “Episcopal Theology.” If you are from a different tradition, you may want to prepare a handout of the materials you covered earlier in this session based on your official theology regarding God, people, conversion, and salvation.

³ From *Just the Way You Are* by Max Lucado (Crossway Books).

Class Handout - Grace at Work: A Theology of Grace and Conversion

Understanding Grace

Whatever your story about being loved and accepted was like, the experience of being loved and accepted by God is like that but even more so!! God's grace is God, loving us with all of God's heart and soul...it is God totally accepting us without our having to earn that love and acceptance by being or doing anything!

Grace is defined as:

- “God’s favor towards us, unearned and undeserved; by grace God forgives our sins, enlightens our minds, stirs our hearts, and strengthens our wills.” (The Catechism in the *Book of Common Prayer*, p. 858)
- “In the Hebrew Bible [Old Testament] grace (*chen*) means kindness and graciousness between two strangers or acquaintances, or between a superior and inferior where the superior has no obligation to be kind.”⁴
- “In the New Testament grace (*charis*) refers to God’s love, which constantly acts to restore sinners to full relationship with God. This is more like the Hebrew term “loving kindness” (*chesed*), which refers to God’s determination to continue loving the Hebrew people, no matter what. That love is given freely by God and is unearned and undeserved.”⁵

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Talking about our Encounter with God

Christians use a variety of words to talk about their encounter with God. Some, especially those from evangelical or fundamentalist traditions, speak of being “converted” or say they have been “saved.” Others talked about being “transformed by Christ.” What does it mean to be transformed? Converted? Saved?

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Episcopal Theology

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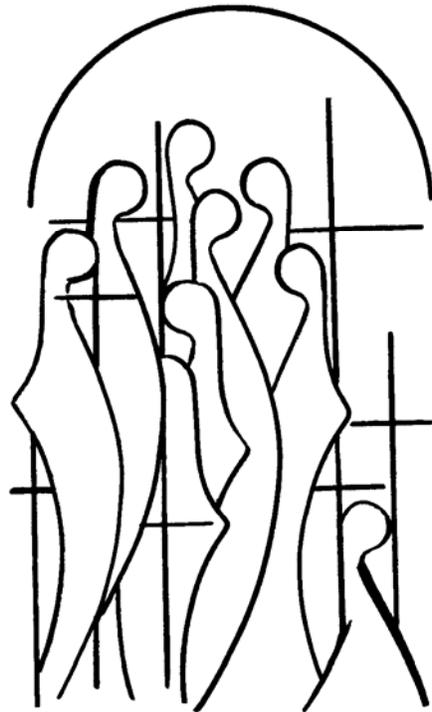
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Because we see salvation as an ongoing process we speak of a lifelong spiritual journey. Because we see conversion as an ongoing process we speak of a “conversion of life” in which God’s love constantly, consistently and persistently sanctifies us, makes us the holy people of God. Sometimes we have mountaintop religious experiences, but our emphasis is that even that experience is not determinative – even if we had a dramatic “moment” in which we experienced God in some powerful way that was life-transforming, we still are on a journey. God still “isn’t finished with us yet!”

Inviting Grace

A Way to Explore Evangelism



Sharing the Good News

An Evangelism Retreat

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Sharing the Good News: **A Retreat for Exploring the Myths and Realities of Evangelism in Your Parish**

This program originally was developed by Gregg Morris
for Trinity Church, Towson, MD

Many Episcopalians view the term or activity of evangelism with some suspicion – that is what other types of Christians do, not us! We have tended to believe that our faith is a private matter, and that sharing our faith with friends, colleagues or even other family members is something that we are uncomfortable with or just isn't done. We can even view it as proselytizing; trying to convince others that our way of believing is the right way – and this is a very un-Episcopalian thing to do!

This program was developed in an Episcopal setting. If you are from another tradition, you may wish to reflect upon your norms and experiences regarding evangelism.

At the same time, we would have to concede that Jesus compels, even commands us to share the Good News with others. We feel caught in this tension between Jesus' instruction and our reluctance. What can be done?

This one day retreat is designed to help a group of people begin exploring the topic of evangelism – what it is and what it is not – and it's implications for themselves and for their parish. It can be used with church leadership boards, functional committees, or congregational groups who wish to explore evangelism. This retreat is specifically designed to:

- help people identify their attitudes and preconceptions about evangelism
- uncover their fears and negative stereotypes associated with the term
- identify more helpful ways of viewing evangelism that are authentic to who they are
- help the group identify
 - their church's overall strengths and how these can be considered in light of evangelism
 - their own personal stories of God's activity in their lives and how they can share these with others
- begin to think about what they might do to move toward working out evangelism in their own context

The retreat has two afternoon options – *A* and *B*. The morning is the same for both options. *Afternoon Option A* is a “softer” take on evangelism, and has the group identify their church’s overall strengths and how these can be considered in light of evangelism. The focus is place more on sharing the good news (small “g” and “n”) of their church with others.

This option may be best suited for a group to which evangelism is a very foreign or frightening concept, and the idea of them actually sharing their faith in a personal way with others is almost beyond the pale. The thought behind this option is to get them take one small step toward true evangelism by having them talk about “us” – the church – instead of “me,” and that once they are comfortable with and have some experience doing this, they may be more open to sharing their faith more personally. We also trust that if they are successful in sharing their passion for the church, that these people they share with may indeed come to church and there experience the Good News first hand!

This option could also be employed with groups in the church focused on outreach, newcomer welcoming, or even as part of a stewardship program – anyplace where the goal of the group is to encourage people to actually invite others to church.

Afternoon Option B is more truly in line with evangelism as sharing the Good News (capital “G” and “N”) of Jesus as experienced in the participants’ lives. It focuses on having the group identify and reflect on experiences or moments of God’s activity in their lives and how they might share these experiences with others. This option would be suited to a group who may be a little squeamish about evangelism, but is willing to stretch in this direction. Ultimately, you as the facilitator or leader of this retreat will need to decide which option best fits your group. Or, you may choose to do the retreat with *Afternoon Option A* first, and then follow it up later with a half-day retreat and do *Afternoon Option B*. The program is designed to be flexible to best meet your needs.

You will want to look at the retreat schedule and contents well ahead of time in order to prepare the event. There are several places in the materials that instruct you to “reveal a sheet of newsprint on which you have written...” Identify these items and prepare them ahead of time. You will also want to reproduce the handouts for use during the retreat. These are found at the end of the materials.

Here are some suggestions for what you will need to do in order to make this event as successful as possible.

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- Review the retreat materials thoroughly, and think about who may be ideal to lead this retreat, if you choose not to do so yourself.
- Get the retreat on the calendar and publicize it well ahead of time. Last-minute events tend to be poorly attended.
- Reserve a space either in the church or off-site (a parishioner's home is acceptable, too), where the participants will be comfortable and which is conducive to learning. If possible, select a room that is right-sized for the group – neither too crowded nor too large. Comfortable chairs for sitting are preferable, as the old adage is quite true that the mind can only absorb as much as the seat can endure! Space for moving about, breaking into small groups and pairs is also required.
- Provide nutritious refreshments for a light breakfast, lunch and breaks. Food is one very important way we can show hospitality and it makes people feel cared for and appreciated. You can have another group in the church provide the food for this event if it would offer others a meaningful way to serve and help with expenses.
- Make sure you have nametags, markers and a couple of easels well stocked with newsprint. You can use one for the prepared newsprint for the retreat, and the other to write on. Several Bibles are needed for one of the small group sessions. You will also need 3x5 cards – two per person – for use at the end of the retreat.

Please use this retreat in a manner which best suits your needs.

- It may be used as an introduction into a longer parish process of exploring evangelism, the resources for which are offered in the rest of the “Inviting Grace” program.
- It can also be used as the program for a day as part of a longer parish or leadership retreat.
- It may also be used as a stand-alone event.

Retreat Schedule

Morning

9:00-9:30	<i>Continental Breakfast and Welcome</i>
9:30-9:55	Introduction and Activity
9:55-10:15	Activity Debrief
10:15-10:30	Stereotypes of Evangelism Exercise
10:30-10:45	<i>Break</i>
10:45-11:45	Seeking a Real Definition of Evangelism
11:45-12:00	Recap of the Morning
12:00-1:00	<i>Lunch</i>

Afternoon Option A

1:00-2:15	The Good News of Our Church
2:15-2:30	<i>Break</i>
2:30-3:30	Evangelism: Sharing the Good News
3:30-4:00	Wrap-up
4:00	Closing Prayer and Dismiss

Afternoon Option B

1:00-2:15	The Good News of Jesus in My Life
2:15-2:30	<i>Break</i>
2:30-3:00	Sharing the Good News of Jesus
3:30-4:00	Wrap-up
4:00	Closing Prayer and Dismiss

Continental Breakfast and Welcome

9:00-9:30

Have refreshments available when people arrive. Near the refreshments, make nametags and a schedule for the day available. At about 9:25, encourage people to fill out a nametag and pick up a schedule. If off-site, announce where the restrooms are and where lunch will be served. Let people know that you will begin in 5 minutes.

Introduction and Activity

9:30-9:55

Say:

Welcome to the Inviting Grace retreat on exploring evangelism. Our goal today is to unpack and discuss our preconceptions around evangelism, and to see how we as a congregation could embrace evangelism in a way that makes sense to us. But first, I'd like you all to find a partner.

The facilitator may or may not participate, depending on whether there are an even or odd number of participants. When everyone has found a partner, resume by saying:

Now, here's the scene: you are sitting next to this person on a bus or an airplane, and they are chatty. You have time to spare, as the trip will not be over for an hour. The topic of religion, faith or church comes up. You have an opportunity to share with this person some part of your faith, beliefs, or church involvement, and why it is meaningful to you. Spend 10 minutes in discussion – sharing, listening, asking questions – around this topic. After 10 minutes, you will reverse roles. I will let you know when it is time to switch.

After 10 minutes, have them switch roles

After 10 minutes in the second discussion, have the group reconvene.

Activity Debrief

9:55-10:15

Lead them in a discussion around the following questions, allowing for several responses. (Make note of what people share and capture the essence of it on newsprint.)

- How comfortable was this exercise for you?
 - If it was comfortable, why?
 - If it was not, why not?
- What was the easiest part of the conversation to have? The most difficult?
- Did you feel like you had very much to say, or were you at a loss for words?
- Have you ever found yourself in this situation? What did you do and how did you respond?

Say:

Now, let's go through the list and identify what was comfortable and what was not. *(Use two different color markers to put a star next to what was comfortable and what was not).* This may give us some useful information to use as we move through our day. *(complete marking the list)*

Now I would like us to turn our attention toward looking at what the word "evangelism" brings into our minds.

Stereotypes of Evangelism Exercise

10:15-10:30

Place the word "Evangelism" in large letters at the top of a page of newsprint.

Say:

Evangelism may be a loaded term for many of us. Like many words, it may conjure up images that are accurate or inaccurate, helpful or not helpful. So let's spend a few minutes getting everything we think when we hear the word "evangelism" out in the open. They can be serious or silly, rational or irrational – let's just get them out there.

Allow people to share whatever comes to mind in response to the term, and record it on newsprint. Ask for clarification or explanation if you feel it would be helpful to the group, so that everyone has a common understanding of what ends up on the newsprint. (For example, if someone says "tele-evangelists," ask them describe that a little.)

[Facilitator's note: In our experience, many of the examples offered have a negative slant to them. We look at these things – tele-evangelists, for example – and it reinforces our negative view of evangelism. After all, we don't want to do that or be like them. What we are trying to do is to help people separate their

negative stereotypes of evangelism from what evangelism truly is, which is the topic of the next session.]

Say:

How many of these stereotypes or impressions of evangelism have what you would call a negative slant to them?

Put a star next to all the ones that apply. If most of them are negative, ask:

If this is truly what evangelism is, then is it any wonder that we shy away from it?

If there are positive things on the list, ask:

If these positive things are what we really think about evangelism, then why do we have such a hard time doing it?

Say:

After the break, we are going to try to discover what evangelism really is, not just rely on our perceptions and stereotypes about it.

Break

10:30-10:45

End of Sample Pages
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