

Inviting the Unchurched



Instructor Guide

Vibrant Church Renewal
USA/Canada Evangelism Ministries
Church of the Nazarene, International



Acknowledgments

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Preparation Checklist

The following information will help you prepare to instruct this module.

- ◆ Review the material and make notes of specific areas for special emphasis.
- ◆ Check to ensure the following materials are available:
 - PowerPoint presentations
 - Participant handout (copy as needed)
- ◆ Gather the following materials:
 - Pens and/or pencils
 - Other material you want to use
- ◆ Check the classroom for:
 - Projector
 - Sufficient number of tables and chairs for the participants
- ◆ Arrange the room so each team sits around an individual table and you have ample room to move among the teams.

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INVITING THE UNCHURCHED

The table below identifies each module section, the time allotted for each section, and a brief description of the section's objective. When you are familiar with this module, you may want to teach from this page rather than the detailed information.

MODULE AT A GLANCE

SECTION	TIME	PAGE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION
I. Introduction	5 mins.		Introduce module and purpose.
II. Lecture	25 mins.		Facilitator provides encouragement for church people to invite unchurched people from the community.
III. Small Group Discussion	15 mins.		Participants discuss potential methods of inviting which they can implement within their own congregations.
V. Action Planning/Reporting	10 mins.		Participants choose between two activities– using questions from Rick Warren to do a community poll or answering questions within a small group.
VI. Module Wrap-Up	5 mins.		Close the module with your final comments regarding the topic.
Total Module Time:	60 mins.		

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I. MODULE INTRODUCTION

(5 Minutes)

Distribute participant material. Let the participants know the material is theirs to keep and encourage them to take notes. The participant material includes:

- Purpose
- “Fill in the blanks” for the lecture
- Application exercise

(The **UNDERLINED** text represents the blanks in the participant booklet.)

In order to “Invite the Unchurched,” persons of faith must have both authenticity and enthusiasm in their hearts and minds about their “home church.”

The purpose of this module is to **encourage church people to invite unchurched people from the community.**

In reality unchurched people want to talk about **GOD** and wait to hear: “Would you come with me to my *home*— my home church? Would you come with me to [an event, party, movie, etc.].?” In fact, surveys report **82%**¹ of today’s unchurched will come to church if invited by a family member or friend. Throughout this seminar mention of the unchurched who may attend 2-3 times per year also includes the “formerly” churched and spiritually **WOUNDED**. Unchurched people are most impressed by **LOVING-KINDNESS**.

Leader/Student Share Time: Share a time when you experienced a fun, exciting time [movie, store, resort, etc.] and you told a friend about it, invited him/her to join you and s/he accepted your invitation. (Reveal emotions as you tell the story.) Ask if anyone wants to share a time.

II. LECTURE

(25 Minutes)

Invitation Insights: *People really want to talk about God!* **THIRTEEN** percent (13%) of unchurched Americans desire someone with whom to discuss their personal and spiritual needs. At the same time, Christians say they want to **WITNESS** effectively and to talk with people one-on-one about God.²

Remember the biblical story of Philip and Nathanael. Philip had just met Jesus. Jesus invited Philip: “Follow Me.” Philip immediately found Nathaniel? Nathaniel began to argue whether Jesus could be somebody based on the fact that he came from Nazareth. Philip didn’t try to argue the point. He just said, “Come and see.” In its simplistic format, this is the *Philip Principle*.

The woman Jesus talked to at the well did a similar thing. She didn’t give a lecture on 12 reasons to believe that Jesus is the Christ. She just said, “Come and see.” Of course, the response can be yes, no, or not now. Can you think of other responses to a straightforward question; “Would you come with me to my church [party, home, etc.].?”

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“Come and See” Bible Study Scenarios: In a group of four, read the assigned passages and discuss the following questions. John 1:35-39 (Andrew and Peter), John 1:43-50 (Philip and Nathaniel), John 3:1-5 (Nicodemus), John 4:1-44—note verses 29 & 39 (Samaritan woman), & John 4:46-53 (Royal officer and his ill son). Report insights to the group.

- Who came? To whom did they come?
- Why do you think they came?
- What was the result(s)?

Before You Invite

1. Get together with your church’s **“BRINGERS,”** those who invite outsiders to your church.³ Pray and brainstorm with them. They will provide some helpful insights into developing future ministries and special Sundays to which you can invite your unchurched family members and friends.
2. Developing a **RELATIONSHIP** with them is important. *Build Bridges of Friendship* by (1) Becoming personally acquainted with unchurched persons; (2) Cultivating friendships; (3) Praying for your friends; (4) Sharing your social life with them; (5) Complimenting rather than condemning; (6) Talking about your journey of faith at the level of unchurched person’s receptivity; (7) Believing God is at work in the unchurched whether or not you see progress.⁴
3. **PRAY** for the unchurched. Pray for perseverance and patience realizing ministry that demonstrates God’s grace is messy, time consuming and tiring. Pray that you will be sensitive for opportunities to share the gospel.
4. Ask the Holy Spirit to **STIR** your spirit with the truth of Romans 10:14-
“How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?”
5. According to Thom Rainer in *The Unchurched Next Door*, “Only 2% of church members invited an unchurched person to church.”⁷
6. Jesus said, *“And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men to Myself”* (John 12:32). When Christians become attracted to Jesus and thus attracted to the unchurched, Jesus will **DRAW** the unchurched into a relationship with him.

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The Heart and Mind of the Unchurched

1. The unchurched yearn for a **COMMUNITY** in which to belong.
2. Belonging leads to change in beliefs and **VALUES**.
3. Gallup's survey revealed that **52%** of unchurched Americans indicate they intend to return to worship services.⁸
4. The unchurched feel **GUILTY** about not attending church.
5. Church **INTIMIDATES** the unchurched.
6. The unchurched **FEAR** they will feel out-of-place.
7. Many believe church to be the most **RELEVANT INSTITUTION** in today's society.
8. Some unchurched report negative experiences from visiting churches (i.e. unfriendliness, unkempt facilities, poor signage, confusing worship moments) yet they are forgiving and view the church **POSITIVELY**.

Needs and Interests of the Unchurched

Unlike the typical church leader where personal and corporate spiritual growth, morality, values, salvation by grace, purity of worship, praising God, seeking forgiveness through Christ, and biblical knowledge are of spiritual importance. Few think of the quality of their relationship with God. They do not tie their **INVOLVEMENT** in a community of faith into their personal belief system.

The unchurched say that **FINANCIAL** needs are their most pressing concern. This perception is dismissed by churched people and leaders as a diversion. That conclusion by the churched is interpreted by millions of unchurched people as "They don't understand or they don't care about my struggles. They are into their own agenda—beliefs, values, morals—that is far from where I am. The church has nothing to offer me today."¹⁰

Methods of Inviting

1. Spiritual Network

Members of your spiritual network are people with whom you **SHARE** the routine of life. They meet these four criteria: (1) You know their first name and they know yours; (2) You have regular and consistent contact; (3) They are open and responsive to a relationship with you; (4) They don't currently enjoy a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Every Christian has a spiritual network. Acts 10:2, 24; 27:11-14 discuss this network principle.

2. Identify Your Network

Discover common ground and take the **INITIATIVE** in relationships prior to inviting the unchurched. The catalyst must be love. Without this love, all the preliminary network effort will appear manipulative.

3. Invitation Readiness Indicators

People are more apt to be ready to **ACCEPT** an invitation to the church and to Christ when (1) they have gone through an insecurity-producing situation; (2) they begin to discuss spiritual things; (3) they show signs of moving toward God instead of away from Him.

4. Trial Basis

*"Would you like to **COME** and see?"*

5. Friend Campaign

In *The Friendship Factor* McGinnis says, "It is no accident so many important encounters **OCCURRED** between Jesus and His friends when they were at the table. There is something almost sacramental about breaking bread with one another." Invite your friends to a special event you both enjoy. Helping your friends with a special project builds strong friendships.

6. Inviting Campaign

(What I call "The Philip Principle"). Make a wall with bricks or a paper chain with the name of one unchurched person on each brick or link for whom you are praying for and **ANTICIPATING** an opportunity to invite to church. Emphasize Reuben Welch's book theme "We Really Do Need Each Other" or "Everybody is Somebody" or "The Power of Everybody." Consider devotional/study material from Nehemiah's example of building the temple walls.

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7. Special-Day Inviting

Make a **LIST** of special Sunday possibilities.

Traditional church year, e.g., Advent, Palm Sunday, Easter, Pentecost;

Life of the Church, e.g., World Wide communion Sunday, National day of Prayer;

Local events, e.g., Back to School Sunday, Homecoming, Family Day, Friendship Sunday;

Other opportunities, e.g., Graduation, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Golden Wedding, Graduates, Mother's Day, Father's Day, and provide special events and services especially for the un-churched.

People want to know when it's a good time to bring their friends to church—not the morning the pastor speaks on stewardship.¹⁵

8. Educational Events

These events can include classes on almost any subject **DESIGNED** to teach concepts or skills. For example, Who is Jesus, Parenting Preschoolers, Caring for Your Aging Parents, How to Live on a Budget.

9. Matthew's Party and Other Social Events

Matthew's Party is **PATTERNED** after the biblical account of the call of Matthew who hosted a dinner party for his former colleagues to give them an opportunity to meet Jesus (Luke 5:27-32).

"God's desire is for us to value unbelieving friends the way Matthew did. I also think that He would want us to be wary of status quo techniques for evangelizing lost people, when in our hearts we know these aren't the best solutions for reaching the people we hope to help."

III. SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

(15 Minutes)

1. Which of the above suggestions would work for our church?

2. Which of these suggestions would be well received by your community.

3. Selecting two or three suggestions, which ones would you prioritize to implement first.

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IV. ACTION PLANNING/REPORTING

(10 Minutes)

Choose one of the following options:

Option #1- Dialogue Questions for Small Groups

1. Why are we members?
2. What is special about this congregation?
3. What might someone new to this congregation gain by being with us?
4. What might our congregation gain by inviting friends to visit with us for worship and other events?
5. How do we invite friends to visit our congregation?
6. How are newcomers welcomed and encouraged to become part of us?
7. Are we ready to invite people?

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Option #2– Community Poll

Discover the felt needs of the unchurched in your community. Take an opinion poll of at least 100 households in your area. Rick Warren, of Saddleback Community, polled his community before starting his church by using these questions:

1. Are you an **ACTIVE** member of a nearby church? (if yes, wish the person well and end the interview.)
2. What do you think is the greatest **NEED** in [your area]?
3. Why do you think most people don't **ATTEND** church?
4. If you were looking for a church in the area, what kinds of things would you look for?
5. What advice would you give me as a layperson in my church? What could I do for you?¹¹

A Bit More Food for Thought...

George Hunter III offers themes and strategies for reaching and inviting secular “unchurched” people, such as:

1. Provide ministries of instruction—“what is Christianity?”
2. Help unchurched people make sense of their lives and find meaning and purpose.
3. Engage them in dialogue. Often the very process of unthreatening dialogue with a caring nonjudgmental Christian is a liberating experience.
4. Address unchurched people’s doubts and questions.
5. Provide opportunities to meet credible Christians.
6. Provide opportunities for people to overcome alienation. The key to the problem of modern day agnosticism is fellowship.
7. Offer people hope in the Kingdom of God.
8. Provide support groups for people with addictions.
9. Identify and reach receptive people.
10. Reach across social networks.
11. Multiple “units” of the Church—new classes, new congregations, new groups.
12. Offer ministries that meet needs.

V. MODULE WRAP-UP

(5 Minutes)

This section provides an opportunity to close the module.

End the module by praying together. Based on your group, you may want the entire group to pray together with different people leading, or you may want to instruct the participants to pray in their teams.

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END NOTES

Notes

- 1 Pew Research Center from www.pewresearch.org, 2012.
- 2 “Unchurched People Want to talk about God,” VE-41 pamphlet, Evangelism Ministries, Church Growth Division, Church of the Nazarene, no date.
- 3 “Building Bridges of Friendship, Evangelism Resources for Your Church: Developing Your Church’s Evangelistic Strategy,” Printed Brochure from www.missionevangelism.org.
- 4 “Building Bridges of Friendship, Evangelism Resources for Your Church: Developing Your Church’s Evangelistic Strategy,” Printed Brochure from www.missionevangelism.org.
- 5 D. Alan Folsom, “Creating a Climate for Reaching the Unchurched Community,” from www.gabaptist.org, 10/29/11.
- 6 Thom S. Rainer, *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched and Proven Ways to Reach Them* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), p.42.
- 7 Greg Hanson, “Understanding the Unchurched” sermon, Part 1, Sunrise Wesleyan Church, April 24, 2005, [www.sunriseonline.ca/sermons/unchurched next door.html](http://www.sunriseonline.ca/sermons/unchurched%20next%20door.html) (accessed October 29, 2011).
- 8 *Unchurched People Want to Talk about God*,” VE-41 pamphlet, Evangelism Ministries, Church Growth Division, Church of the Nazarene, no date.
- 9 George Barna, *Evangelism That Works: How to Reach Changing Generations with the Unchanging Gospel* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1995), pp. 48-51.
- 10 *Ibid.*, pp. 54-5.
- 11 C. Peter Wagner, *Leading Your Church to Growth: The Secret of Pastor/People Partnership in Dynamic Church Growth* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1984), pp. 203-4.
- 12 Mike Barton, “Everyday Evangelism: Sharing Christ Where You Live and Work,” *Herald of Holiness*, April 1995, Nazarene Publishing House: Kansas City, MO, p.14.
- 13 Charles “Chic” Shaver, *The Bible Speaks to Me About My Witness* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1991), p. 46.
- 14 Win and Charles Arn, *The Master’s Plan for Making Disciples*, Edited by Bill Sullivan (Kansas City, MO: Nazarene Publishing House, 1984), pp. 86-7.
- 15 Calvin Ratz, Frank Tillapaugh, Myron Ausburger, *Mastering Outreach and Evangelism* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1990), p. 49.
- 16 Robert L. Bast, “Evangelism through Special Events,” *New Ideas in Evangelism and Church Vitality—Net Results*, December 1991, p. 23.

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