

# Loving People into Fellowship



## *Instructor's Guide*

Church Renewal Resource  
Evangelism Ministries USA/Canada Region  
Church of the Nazarene

# Acknowledgments

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Rewrite– Welcoming Newcomers into the Family: Leading Through Love Not Fear 2011

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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 insure the following materials are available:
    - ◇ PowerPoint presentations/transparencies (transparency masters can be produced from the PowerPoint slides)
    - ◇ Participant booklet (copy as needed)
  - ◇ Gather the following materials:
    - ◇ Transparency markers
    - ◇ Pens and/or pencils
    - ◇ Other material you want to use
  - ◇ Make copies of the following material (one for each participant):
    - ◇ Participant booklet
    - ◇ Handouts (if used with this module)
  - ◇ Check the classroom for:
    - ◇ TV/VCR (if necessary)
    - ◇ Overhead projector
    - ◇ Chalkboard or flip chart
    - ◇ Sufficient number of tables and chairs for the participants
- ⇒ Arrange the room so that each church team sits around an individual table and you have ample room to move among the teams.

# I. Module Introduction

Notes



(5 Minutes)

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

- Purpose
- Objectives
- “Fill in the blanks” for the lecture
- Application exercises

## **The purpose of this module is to:**

Encourage the church to love people into fellowship; to lead through love and acceptance

## **The objectives for this module are:**

- To recognize the human need for belonging.
- To identify the obstacles that tend to prevent us from freely loving newcomers into the fellowship of the church.
- To strategize on ways to improve the biblical hospitality model in our church.

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## I. Introduction

### Notes

Acts 9:26-28

*“When he came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus. So Saul stayed with them and moved about freely in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord.”*

Bringing Saul of Tarsus into the fellowship of the church was no simple ask. He was a feared Jew who was known throughout Palestine for persecuting the followers of Jesus. His conversion to Christ made little impact on the willingness of the Christians to open their arms to him.

“Barnabas,” the Scripture says, “took him...” Barnabas loved enough to risk bringing Saul into the fellowship of the church.

Research shows:

- If people, who attend church for a month, don't make four friends, they will not return (Kenneth Hauk).
- Visitors make up their minds whether they will come back to our church in the first eleven minutes (Kenneth Hauk).
- Newcomers to town will try to find a church that will treat them like their home church treated them. If they do not find what they are looking for in six weeks, they will not return to church for ten years (Charles Arn).



## I. Introduction

### Notes

What helps newcomers remain in a church?

An answer to that question might be biblical hospitality. Hospitality communicates love and acceptance to all.

### Illustration

In the early 1970s, the church was full and the service had already begun. From the back of the church, a man in his early twenties entered the foyer. Bare feet, long hair, and colorful clothes, he looked the part of a traditional hippie. It was obvious from the dress of the normal church attendee, this man did not belong in this church.

Upon entering the sanctuary and finding the worship service very full, he made his way to the front of the sanctuary. When he reached the front of the sanctuary, he sat on the floor, Indian style, in the center aisle.

Immediately, a man who appeared to be in his eighties began the walk down the center aisle toward this colorful dressed young man. The congregation could feel the tension in the church as this head usher moved toward this stranger in the church. When the usher reached the first pew, to the utter shock of the congregation, he gingerly sat down beside the newcomer for the remainder of the service.

That is biblical hospitality in action!



## II. Lesson

### Notes

If our church is to become more effective in meeting the needs of worshippers, we must know that:

1. We are called to meet the human need for **BELONGING**.
2. We will inevitably face obstacles in loving newcomers into the fellowship.
3. We can improve in the area of biblical hospitality within our church.

A. We are called to meet the human need for **BELONGING**

1. Churches tend to be **INCLUSIVE** in evangelism but exclusive in relationship.
  - a. Most evangelical churches **RECOGNIZE** God's call to reach all mankind with the Gospel (John 3:16; 2 Peter 3:9).
  - b. While they might desire **EVERYONE** to come to faith, many churches would not want just anyone to come to their church.
  - c. Christ was **RADICALLY** inclusive in relationships and was criticized because of it.

Luke 5:27-32

*After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. "Follow me," Jesus said to him, and Levi got up, left everything and followed him. Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and 'sinners'?"*

Jesus answered them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

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## II. Lesson (cont.)

### Notes

- i. The people by whom the Pharisees were repulsed, were the same people to whom Jesus was **ATTRACTED**.
  - ii. While the Pharisees thought the tax collector would make Jesus dirty, Jesus made the tax collector **CLEAN**.
  - iii. Jesus spent time **RELATIONALLY** with these “sinners” before they became disciples.
2. When people accept Jesus, they enter a community theologically and **SOCIALLY**. Scripture supplies two metaphors to describe this community of believers:
- a. The **BODY** of Christ

1 Corinthians 12:27-28a, “Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles...”

    - i. Each and every **CHRISTIAN** is a part of the body of Christ.
    - ii. Each person has his/her special **PURPOSE** within the body.
  - b. A **HOUSE**

Hebrews 3:6, “But Christ is faithful as a son over God’s house. And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which was boast.”

    - i. The Christian church represents the **HOUSE** of God’s family.
    - ii. We are therefore **BROTHERS** and **SISTERS** in Christ.
3. We are to **BRING** people into the life, fellowship, and ministry of the church.



## II. Lesson (cont.)

### Notes

### Illustration

Jolene had only been a Christian for one year. She was studying, however, in a class with a number of well-established Christians on the topic of evangelism and discipleship. The question came from the teacher. How do we help the new convert to become established in his/her newfound faith?

Jolene, with simplicity and clarity, spoke of her own experience of being enfolded into the local church. She talked about being involved in a small group, meeting new people who became her close friends, and finding a job in the church. “It doesn’t have to be anything big, but each person must have something to do to make them feel a part of the big picture,” she reminded the class.

4. We must spend time and **ENERGY** with new people
  - a. New people are **SEEKING** relationships.
  - b. People are not as interested in a friendly church as a church where they can have **FRIENDS**.
  - c. **TWENTY-THREE** times in the New Testament epistles, the author refers to the recipients of the letter as “friends”.
5. We are to create a climate of love.
  - a. In 1 John 3-4, John **ENCOURAGES** fellow believers five times to “love one another.”
  - b. Love is the **CENTRAL** characteristic of the Christian individual (1 Corinthians 13:13).
  - c. With **LOVE** comes patience, kindness, protection, trust, hope, and perseverance (1 Corinthians 13:4-7)



## II. Lesson (cont.)

### Notes

B. We face a number of obstacles in loving newcomers into the fellowship.

1. Resistant family **NETWORKS**

- a. Some family networks within the church are **CONTROLLING** and do not allow for others to become fully assimilated into the life and ministry of the local church.
- b. Family networks generally resist **CHANGE**.

2. Traditions comfortable to us but unfamiliar to others.

- a. Some newcomers feel that the church speaks a different **LANGUAGE**.
- b. Sometimes traditions evolve into rules, and rules without reason are difficult for **NEWCOMERS** to understand.
- c. Tradition without **FEELING** is unacceptable to most newcomers.

3. Strife, friction, or diversity

- a. At times the highly committed volunteers of the church feel a level of **BURNOUT** and complain that no one helps, while at the same time others are frustrated that they cannot be more involved.

Acts 15:1-2,

*Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the brothers: "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved." This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question.*

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## II. Lesson (cont.)

### Notes

James spoke up...

*“It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. (Act 15:13, 19)”*

b. Conflict ended by consensus...

*It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: you are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things. Farewell (Act 15:2-29).*

- Differences in opinion can divide the church and stunt the growth of the congregation.
- We should let Scripture be our final guide in disputed matters.
- When disputing matters of doctrine, love should prevail.

4. A no-growth attitude

- This attitude can be heard in a number of comments:
  - a. “Our church is big enough already.”
  - b. “I don’t want our church to get too much bigger.”
  - c. “We already can’t keep up with the people we have attending.”
  - d. “I want to do outreach as much as anyone, but what about us?”



## II. Lesson (cont.)

Notes

### 5. Differences among people

- a. Economic, ethnic, and educational **DIFFERENCES** can be obstacles to assimilation.
- b. Sunday morning at 9 AM has been called the most **SEGREGATED** hour in the week.
- c. People tend to **GRAVITATE** to others who are similar to them.

### C. We can improve our ministry.

1. **IDENTIFY** newcomers in non-threatening ways.
  - a. The church must walk a **TIGHTROPE** between being overbearing to a newcomer on one side and appearing cold and callused on the other.
  - b. Newcomers generally don't like to be **SINGLED** out in a crowd.
  - c. Newcomers tend to want to be **ANONYMOUS** to the whole but known on the individual level.
  - d. Be **FRIENDLY**, but not overbearing.
  - e. **Greet** newcomers, but don't corner them.
2. Look at our church through the eyes of the first-time visitor.

### Illustration:

Mark was an executive for a growing company. He had been asked by an employee to visit his church for a special Christmas musical. Mark had not been to church for years. His previous experience in church had convinced him that church was outdated and unprofessional. Because he appreciated the hard work of his employee in the marketplace, he accepted the invitation.

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## II. Lesson (cont.)

### Notes

Mark's visit to this church was totally different than any he had experienced before. While the church was small, the grounds were cleaned and well cared for. The musical was well done and demonstrated many hours of practice. Mark was impressed and continued to attend in the weeks following the special service.

3. Welcome newcomers before greeting our friends.
  - Practice the Five-Person Rule. After worship services, attempt to have a friendly conversation with five people you don't know or don't know well before you go to your friends.
4. Help new worshipers find a group and start new groups as often as possible.
  - a. McIntosh and Martin describe a small group as any group that...
    - i. Is small, less than 15
    - ii. Meets on a regular basis, at least once per month.
    - iii. Creates a sense of accountability—people are missed if they are not there.
    - iv. Assures assimilation, for people are missed if they are not there.
  - b. Small groups provide a place for individuals to...
    - i. Be open and vulnerable in a safe environment.
    - ii. Learn and grow.
    - iii. Gain support during life's difficult times





## IV. Module Wrap-Up

Notes

This section provides an opportunity to close the module.

- Ask participants from each small group to share the findings from their discussions.
- Encourage the participants to continue to dialogue about these important issues of loving people into the fellowship.
- Answer any questions and provide encouragement.