



Loving People into Fellowship

Participant Handout



Purpose:

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

Objectives :

- 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 ways to improve the biblical hospitality in church.

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

1. We are all 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 in our church.

Lecture:

A. We are called to meet the human need for _____.

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

Luke 5:27-32

- i. The people by whom the Pharisees were repulsed, were the same people to whom Jesus was _____.
 - ii. While the Pharisees thought the tax collector would make Jesus dirty, Jesus made the tax collector _____.
 - iii. Jesus spent time _____ with these "sinners" before they became disciples.
2. When people accept Jesus, they enter a community theologically and _____. Scripture supplies two metaphors to describe this community of believers:
 - a. The _____ of Christ
 - i. Each and every _____ is a part of the body of Christ.
 - ii. Each person has his/her special _____ within the body.
 - b. A _____
 - i. The Christian church represents the _____ of God.
 - ii. We are therefore _____ and _____ in Christ.
 3. We are to _____ people into the life, fellowship, and ministry of the church.

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

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

1. Resistant family _____
 - a. Some family networks within the church are _____ and do not allow for others to become fully assimilated into the life and ministry of the local church.
 - b. Family networks generally resist _____.
2. Traditions comfortable to us but unfamiliar to others.
 - a. Some newcomers feel that the church speaks a different _____.
 - b. Sometimes traditions evolve into rules, and rules without reason are difficult for _____ to understand.
 - c. Tradition without _____ is unacceptable to most newcomers.
3. Strife, friction or diversity- At times the highly committed volunteers of the church feel a level of _____ and complain that no one helps, while at the same time others are frustrated they cannot be more involved.
4. A no-growth 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?”

5. Differences among people

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

C. We can improve our ministry.

1. _____ newcomers in non-threatening ways.
 - a. The church must walk a _____ 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 _____ out in a crowd.
 - c. Newcomers tend to want to be _____ to the whole but known on the individual level.
 - d. Be _____, but not overbearing.
 - e. _____ 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.

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.

Small Group

Break into groups of four or five individuals and answer the following questions:

1. Identify the areas of our church that enable people to be assimilated into the church.

1. In what areas do we do well?

1. What in our church hinders people from being loved into the fellowship?

1. What areas of improvement do we need to concentrate on most?