

Seeing Through the Eyes of an Outsider



Instructor Guide

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



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Seeing Through the Eyes of an Outsider

Section	Time	Page	Brief Description
I. Introduction	5 min.	5	Introduce objectives, outline.
II. Lecture	30 min.	7	Facilitator presents information that will help participants assess their congregation and identify areas for growth and development.
III. Small Group Discussion	10 min.	12	Participants work in small groups to reflect on the information presented in the lecture and begin applying the concepts.
IV. Cultural Audit	10 min.	13	Participants plan how they will utilize the new concepts in their church.
V. Wrap-up	5 min.	14	Close the module with your final comments regarding the topic.

Total Time: 60 min.

The table above 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.

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Preparation CHECKLIST

Build enthusiasm for the training module. Vibrant Church Renewal requires buy-in from people in the church. Use announcements, fliers, posters, etc. to prepare participants for the topic and build their interest. Speak to key stakeholders in person to encourage their support of this initiative.

Review the material in this guide and make notes of specific areas for special emphasis.

- This guide includes notation of corresponding slides to help you facilitate the presentation.
- Make copies of the participant handout for each person. This handout includes “fill-in-the-blanks” sections. The appropriate answers are underlined in this instructor guide.

Check the classroom for:

- Computer/projector
- Chalkboard or flip chart
- Sufficient tables and chairs for the participants
- Copies of the participant handout for each person
- Pens/pencils for participants

Arrange the room so that each church team sits around an individual table and you have ample room to move among the teams.

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I. INTRODUCTION (5 MINUTES)

Prior to the beginning of the session, adjust the projector and show slide #1 (Seeing Through the Eyes of an Outsider) and #2 (Credits).

Distribute participant handouts.

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

Have you ever thought about the fact that the world is watching Christians? They want to see how we treat each other, how we treat the stranger, and how we treat the broken and hurting. In a very real way they want to find us faithful. They want us to prove true. They want to believe God is real, people can know Him, and He can change their lives. Too often, we let the world down.

Have you ever thought about what the outsider sees when they come to our church?

Slides 1-2

COLOSSIANS 4:5

Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity.

1 THESSALONIANS 4:11-12

Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.

HEBREWS 13:2

Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.

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Research has shown that the reasons for declining church attendance are as follows:

1. Sermons are boring and don't relate to everyday life.
2. Church members are unfriendly to visitors.
3. Churches offer very little for children and youth.
4. Churches are only interested in people's money.

The purpose of this module is to challenge us, the church, to take an honest look at ourselves to see if we are "being wise toward outsiders."

The objectives for this module are:

- To remind ourselves that we are the body of Christ.
- To sharpen our character and prepare for visitors in the church.

Review the schedule for this module:

Introduction	5 mins.
Lecture	30 mins.
Small Group Discussion	10 mins.
Cultural Audit	10 mins.
Wrap-up	5 mins.

Slides 3-4

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II. Lecture (30 Minutes)

Let's examine the four primary questions the world is asking about church people:

- I. Are the people of the church genuine and sincere?
- II. Is the church relevant to my daily life?
- III. Are the church and its people warm and inviting?
- IV. Is the church a safe place for my family and me?

I. Are the people of the church genuine and sincere?

- A. We show love for one another.
 1. Love for one another is the mark of all true disciples.
 2. The world will notice whether or not the people of the church truly love each other.
 3. Love for one another will attract the world to the church.

JOHN 13:35

By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

Slide 6

Slides 7-10

Illustration:

Marcos and Amelia drove by the intersection every day. The Church of the Nazarene on the corner was often busy with activity. From a teen car wash to an all-church workday, there were always representatives of the church on the grounds.

To Marcos and Amelia, that is what the people of the church were – representatives. How did they treat one another? Did they look happy? Did they truly love one another?

After months of watching from the outside, Marcos and Amelia visited the church. Their words to the greeter at the door were simple, "You passed the test," they said. "You all truly do care for each other. We have seen it with our own eyes."

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B. Outsiders **want** friendship with no strings attached.

1. The attraction of the early church was that they enjoyed fellowship together.
2. Their love and friendship for one another was one of the elements that led to an increase in those being saved.
3. This is a friendship with no strings attached.
4. Outsiders want to be viewed as people, not projects.

Acts 2:47

[The believers spent their time] praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

C. Outsiders want to **experience** God, not dry ritual.

1. Outsiders want to experience God, not just know *about* Him.
2. This does not mean that all ritual is dry. However, if a ritual of the church is empty and does not convey the presence of God, outsiders will be the first to notice.
3. Does our church have a passionate spirituality?

Illustration:

Alexis, a single, unchurched professional, lived next door to Owen and Maria, a young Christian couple. Alexis graduated from college in a small town and moved to the city. Her relationships were few because of her recent move, so Owen, Maria, and Alexis became friends.

Owen and Maria were planning a home Bible study, and the date for its start quickly approached. They invited Alexis, and she accepted. After six weeks of the Bible study, Alexis stopped Owen and Maria one evening to comment, "I had no idea there were people my age who really love God and follow Him during the week. I always thought it was simply a religion to be followed on Sundays." Alexis saw a passionate spirituality in her new friends which eventually led her to Christ.

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Matthew 25:35

For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in.

D. Our congregation cares for the real needs of people.

1. A Christian congregation will meet the needs of the disenfranchised in our world.
2. Meeting the needs of the weak is the same as meeting the needs of Jesus.
3. The unchurched are willing to follow a cause rather than a denomination. This is why many physical needs are met outside of the church today.

ILLUSTRATION:

Garrett and Latrice were recently married when a house fire destroyed nearly all they owned. They were unchurched. But because of the emotions this incident brought, they decided to attend a local Nazarene church. When the congregation found out about the incident, \$200 was raised to give some support to the couple.

II. Is the church relevant to my daily life?

- A. Relevant sermons are those that touch the lives and feelings of people.
1. Sermons and Sunday school lessons stay true to the Scripture from which they speak.
 2. Scripture is amazingly relevant to the lives of people.
 3. Pastors, Sunday school teachers, and small group leaders keep scripture relevant. They are challenged to bring the passage (written 2000 years ago to a group of people halfway around the world) to a contemporary understanding for people in their congregation.
- B. We avoid having rules without reason.
1. Scripture, as God's love letter to mankind, gives guidelines to godly living.
 2. These guidelines are based on love from God.
 3. Outsiders are not against guidelines for

Slides 11-13

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Christian living, but are against rules with no reasons behind them.

- C. Church people **work** to bridge the cultural gap.
1. Our world is becoming more and more secular. The church, in many ways, has a culture that is all its own. Because of this, the individual who is void of a church background may be unable to hear and understand the Gospel message even if he/she wants to participate.
 2. We cannot compromise our “nonnegotiables,” but for the sake of the Gospel being heard, we can make our negotiables relevant to the world in which we live.
 3. What are some of these negotiables?
 - Language: Our language is to be understandable to all.
 - Dress: Does our dress fit the culture in which the church finds itself, or does it create unnecessary barriers to participation?
 - Music: What does our choice of music preference say to the outsider?
 - Methods of communication (creative arts, worship, drama, media): In a day when visual learning is used more than lecture and reading, can the church adapt through drama, media, and creative worship arts?

III. Are the church and its people warm and inviting?

- A. Can we make our building more aesthetically **appealing** to the outsider?
1. How is the landscaping?
 2. Is the building clean?
 3. Does the building appear current?
 4. Is the building handicap accessible?

Slides 14-15

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B. Is our congregation friendly and **open** to outsiders?

1. Biblical hospitality is the call for the church to care for the stranger.
2. Elders and laypersons alike are to be providing hospitality to all who enter the church doors.

Titus 1:8

(Describing an elder...)
Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined.

Slides 16-18

IV. Is the church a **safe** place for my family and me?

- A. Are outsiders **free** to ask questions?
- B. Is the environment safe and **productive** for the children or youth of outsiders?

ILLUSTRATION:

Martha, a single mom of a four-year old, visited a local Nazarene church one Sunday. Before the service began, a greeter took her to the door of her child's Sunday school classroom. The teacher met her at the door and asked, "How old is your daughter?"

Martha responded, "Four."

"Oh," the teacher said, "we changed classrooms last week. This is the five-year olds. Four-year olds go to the room down the hall."

When Martha arrived, she was met again by a teacher. "How old is your daughter?"

"Four. We just came from the five-year old room. The teacher there said, my daughter was to come here."

"When does your daughter turn five, because that is what really breaks down our classrooms?"

In frustration, Martha, feeling as though she and her daughter were not wanted in either class, took her daughter with her to the service and never returned.

- C. Are outsiders allowed to **move** at their own pace along their spiritual journey?

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There are some signs that we might notice when our church is “hitting the mark” with outsiders. People who are new to our church will let us know by...

- Writing a kind message on a welcome card.
- Inquiring about church membership classes.
- Questioning the church’s teaching and history.
- Asking for further information.
- Asking questions about the message.
- Bringing a guest for the first time.
- Requesting prayer for themselves or others.
- Getting involved in a small group.
- Enrolling in their first Bible study.
- Asking to be baptized.
- Giving their first offering.
- Volunteering for a ministry task.
- Offering an idea for ministry.

III. SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION: PERSONAL EXPERIENCES AS OUTSIDERS (10 MINUTES)

This exercise provides an opportunity for participants to reflect on the information presented and begin to apply it to their local church and congregation.

Participants should break into small groups of three to five individuals. Instruct them to spend a few minutes reflecting on a personal experience where they attended a church, small group or Sunday school class that was unfamiliar to them. Then, they can read the three discussion questions in the participant guide and share their answers in the small group.

The three discussion questions are:

1. *What was it about the Sunday school class, small group or church you visited that made you feel welcomed and relaxed?*

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Slides 19-20

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2. *What bothered you and made you uncomfortable?*

3. *What caught your attention in either a positive or negative sense?*

Remain available to answer participants' questions during the discussion. Alert groups when there are 5 minutes and when there are 2 minutes remaining.

If time allows, follow the small group discussion by inviting groups to "report out" on commonalities or insights identified during the small group discussion.

IV. CULTURAL AUDIT: WHAT DO OUTSIDERS SEE HERE? (10 MINUTES)

Conducting a cultural audit provides an opportunity for people to share their thoughts about the lecture and to apply what they have learned to their local congregation. By identifying areas for improvement in the local church, leadership will feel empowered to make necessary changes. A shared perspective on the current experience of outsiders will help motivate any needed changes.

For this portion of the module, participants can work in the same small groups of three to five people as the discussion exercise.

Instruct groups to use the available time to begin completing the cultural audit worksheet in the participant guide. If the work is not completed in the session, it can be continued at a subsequent meeting set by the group.

The instructions from the participant guide follow:

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Use the table below to list elements of your church culture that outsiders see. Imagine that you are a newcomer walking into the building for the first time. What do you see? Who talks to you and what do they say?

Then, for each element of the church that you note, identify if it is “nonnegotiable” or “negotiable” for your local church.

Some examples of cultural elements might include: signage, fellowship events, language, written materials, music, entrance appearance, community service, worship experiences, greeting processes, etc. Refer back to the lecture notes to help you think about the four questions outsiders are asking about the church.

Elements of our church	Negotiable	Nonnegotiable	Possible Action for Improvement?

VI. Wrap-Up (5 Minutes)

This section provides an opportunity to close the module.

- Ask participants to share their thoughts about the module.
- If time allows, they may share the results of their “cultural audit” with other groups.
- Answer any questions and provide encouragement for the next steps and improvements groups have identified.

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