

Welcoming Newcomers Into Fellowship



Instructor's Guide

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

Acknowledgments

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Evangelism Ministries

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

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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.

| SECTION | TIME | PAGE | BRIEF DESCRIPTION |
|------------------------------------|----------|------|---|
| I. Module Introduction | 5 mins. | 5 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce module, objectives, and outline. |
| II. Lecture | 25 mins. | 6 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitator presents information to encourage participants to love people into fellowship; to lead through love and acceptance. |
| III. Small Group Exercise | 20 mins. | 14 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants work in teams to reflect on the information presented in the lecture and begin applying the concepts. |
| IV. Discussion | 5 mins. | 14 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants share thoughts about the information presented and insights about how the information will assist in their leadership. |
| V. Action Planning/ Reporting | 15 mins. | 15 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants work in small groups to determine how to become more hospitable toward newcomers. |
| VI. Module Wrap-up | 5 mins. | 15 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Close the module with your final comments regarding the topic. |
| Total Module Time: 75 mins. | | | |

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I. Module Introduction

(5 Minutes)

Notes

Distribute participant material. 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.***

The objectives for this module are:

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

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II. Lecture

(25minutes)

I. Introduction

A. 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.”

1. To bring Saul of Tarsus into the fellowship of the church was no simple assimilation task. He was a feared Jew who was known throughout Palestine for persecuting the followers of Jesus.
2. His conversion to Christ made little impact on the willingness of the Christians to open their arms to him.
3. “Barnabas,” the Scripture says, “took him....” Barnabas loved enough to **RISK** bringing Saul into the fellowship of the church.

B. Research shows:

1. If people, who attend church for a month, don’t make **FOUR** friends, they will not return.
2. Visitors make up their minds whether they will come back to our church in the first **ELEVEN** minutes.
3. 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 within six weeks, they will not return to church for **TEN** years.

C. What is it that helps newcomers remain in a church?

1. An answer to that question might be biblical **HOSPITALITY**.
2. Biblical hospitality communicates love and **ACCEPTANCE** to all strangers.

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 culturally 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 surprise of the congregation, he gingerly sat down beside the newcomer for the remainder of the service.

That is biblical hospitality in action!

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

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

1. We will inevitably face **OBSTACLES** in loving newcomers into the fellowship.
2. We can improve in the area of biblical hospitality within our church.
3. Churches tend to be inclusive in evangelism but **EXCLUSIVE** in relationships.
 - a. Most churches recognize God's **CALL** to reach all mankind with the Gospel (John 3:16; 2 Peter 3:9).

II. Lecture (cont.)

- b. While they might **DESIRE** everyone to come to faith in Christ, some congregations will not open their friendship circles to the new Christian.
- c. Christ was radically **INCLUSIVE** in relationships and was criticized because of it.

“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”

(Luke 5:27-32).

- 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.
- 4. When a person accepts Jesus, he enters community theologically and hopefully **SOCIALLY**.
 - 5. Three metaphors describe this community of believers:
 - a. The **BODY** of Christ.

“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 ...” (1 Corinthians 12:27-28a).

II. Lecture (cont.)

- 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 part of the **HOUSE**
 - “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 we boast” (Hebrews 3:6).
 - i. The Christian **CHURCH** represents the house of God.
 - ii. Each member represents a **STONE** in that house.
 - iii. Christ is **CONTINUALLY** building this house (Matthew 16:18).
- c. A member of the **FAMILY**
 - “Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:12).
 - i. Receiving Jesus makes one a **PART** of God’s family.
 - ii. We are brothers and **SISTERS** in Christ.
- 6. We are to bring people into the life, fellowship, and **MINISTRY** of the church.

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

II. Lecture (cont.)

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.

7. 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 much as a church where they can have **FRIENDS**.
 - c. Twenty-three times in the New Testament epistles, the authors refer to the recipients of the letter as “friends”.
8. We are to create a climate of **LOVE**.
 - a. In I 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)—qualities needed with newcomers.
- B. We face a number of **OBSTACLES** in loving newcomers into the fellowship.
 1. **RESISTANT** family networks
 - a. Many 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 may be comfortable to us but **UNFAMILIAR** to others.
 - a. Many 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.

II. Lecture (cont.)

- 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 they cannot be more **INVOLVED**.

“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. “James spoke up...‘It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God’” (Acts 15:1-2, 19, 28-29).
 - 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” (Acts 15:28-29).
 - c. Differences of opinion do not divide churches; attitudes stunt the growth of the congregation.
 - i. We should let **SCRIPTURE** be our final guide in disputed matters.
 - ii. When disputing matters of doctrine, **LOVE** should prevail.

II. Lecture (cont.)

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 differences can be obstacles to assimilation.
 - b. Sunday morning 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

II. Lecture (cont.)

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 clean 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.
 - a. Practice the **FIVE-PERSON** Rule.
 - b. 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 worshippers find a group and start **NEW** groups as often as possible.
 - a. A small group is any group that...
 - i. Less than 15 in attendance.
 - ii. Meets on a regular basis – at least **ONCE** per month.
 - iii. Creates a sense of caring – people are missed and contacted 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.

III. Small Group Exercise

(20 Minutes)

Notes

The small group exercise portion of the module provides an opportunity for the teams to discuss the information presented and how it applies to their church.

Turn to the Small Group Exercise portion of your participant booklet. Let's take the next 20 minutes to answer three questions about jobs in your church and how people are often recruited.

The questions are:

1. Identify the areas of our church that enable people to be assimilated into the church. In what areas do we do well?
2. What in our church hinders people from being loved into the fellowship? What area of improvement do we need to concentrate on most?
3. What fears would you identify as being associated with numerical growth of a local church? Why do new people bring fear to established members?

Remain available during the exercise time to answer questions. Announce to the group when five minutes remain. Again announce to the group when two minutes remain.

IV. Discussion

(5 Minutes)

The discussion portion of the module provides an opportunity for people to share their thoughts about the material presented.

Open the floor for discussion. If the group is hesitant to discuss, refer to the small group exercise.

If you're ahead of schedule, the discussion can go a few extra minutes. However, it's easy to lose track of time so watch the clock.

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V. Action Planning/Reporting

(15 Minutes)

This section gives the participants an opportunity to discuss their plans for implementing this information.

Refer back to the answers to the questions in the Small Group Exercise. What ways you can implement the thoughts of this discussion into your congregation? Three examples:

- a. Since people enjoy participating, who new to our church could be invited to serve on a committee, worship team or discipleship class?
- b. How do we address the fears our established people have?
- c. Who needs us to phone and to encourage them? How can we assure this personal interest in others is sustained?

Move among the groups to answer specific questions. Listen for discussions that are not focused on developing a plan and guide them into developing a plan. Let the groups know when there are five minutes.

VI. Module Wrap-Up

(5 Minutes)

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.