



Seeing Through the Eyes of an Outsider

Participant's Guide

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.

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

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.

Lecture

Fill in the blanks below as you follow along with the lecture.

- I. Are the _____ in the church genuine and sincere?
 - A. We show _____ for one another.
 - B. Outsiders _____ friendship with no strings attached.
 - C. Outsiders want to _____ God, not dry ritual
 - D. Our congregation _____ for the real needs of people.
- II. Is the church _____ to my daily life?
 - A. Relevant sermons are those that _____ the lives and feelings of people.
 - B. We _____ having rules without reason.
 - C. Church people _____ to bridge the cultural gap.

Permission to copy for local church training.

- III. Are the church and its _____ warm and inviting?
 - A. Can we make our building more aesthetically _____ to the outsider?
 - B. Is our congregation friendly and _____ to outsiders?
- IV. Is the church a _____ place for my family and me?
 - A. Are outsiders _____ to ask questions?
 - B. Is the environment safe and _____ for the children or youth of outsiders?
 - C. Are outsiders allowed to _____ at their own pace along their spiritual journey?

People who are new to our church will let us know we are “hitting the mark” by:

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION: PERSONAL EXPERIENCES AS OUTSIDERS

Think of a time when you visited a church or Sunday school class that was unfamiliar to you. Share your memories of that experience with your group members while you answer the three following questions:

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

2. What bothered you and made you uncomfortable?

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

Cultural Audit: What Do Outsiders See Here?

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 or Nonnegotiable	Action for Improvement