

MODULE 6
FRIENDSHIP AND RELATIONSHIP SKILL DEVELOPMENT
LEADER



AS THE FATHER HAS SENT ME, SO I AM SENDING YOU
AMBASSADORS
fostering a new generation of spiritual leaders



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AMBASSADORS

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AS THE FATHER HAS SENT ME, SO I AM SENDING YOU

AMBASSADORS



Welcome to Ambassadors.

Ambassadors is a new level of youth ministry designed to equip leaders with resources to train a new generation of youths to be the hands, feet, and voice of Jesus in their local churches and communities.

An ambassador generally represents a country or a cause. A Christian ambassador is a representative of another kind; they represent the values, principles, culture, and laws of the kingdom of God. They stand for the character and purpose of the King of this kingdom—Jesus Christ, Himself.

This Youth Department resource is based on seven foundations that are considered as essential to meet the developmental needs of our young people between the ages of 16–21. They include:

1. A Christ-centered discipleship plan
2. Leadership development
3. A personal, public, and small group based mission lifestyle
4. Character and personality development, including outdoor, high adventure programming
5. Lifestyle and vocational training
6. Nurturing godly relationships
7. Community outreach development through service projects and emergency preparedness training

Each of these seven foundations will be presented in modules, with participants gaining certification for each module completed. While each module has a specific focus, there are FOUR elements that will be common throughout the curriculum. Leaders **MUST** ensure that all these elements are embraced to make the experience meaningful, attractive, and challenging.

- First, the concept of a spiritual companion. At the beginning of each module, each participant will choose a friend who will be their companion for the duration of the module. They will meet during each session to encourage and support each other in their role and growth as an Ambassador. Groups of spiritual companions will also come together for specific activities. This builds the concept of interdependence and accountability into the Ambassador experience.
- Second, an Individual Discipleship Plan (IDP). At the beginning of every module, each participant will make a simple plan of how they would like to grow spiritually and acquire practical competency in the area of the upcoming module. Their spiritual companion will be there throughout the module to help and encourage them to accomplish their plan. The IDP helps to emphasize the continuing nature of discipleship and that learning is a continual part of life. By linking spiritual companions together for this work, it stresses the need for interdependence on each other as we learn, grow, and work for God. (See guidelines for creating the IDP on page 11. Participants have their IDP pages in their Guidebook.)
- Third, projects. Each module will have a project that will integrate the core concepts from the module into a service learning activity focused on helping others. This will be an opportunity for the Ambassador class to work together as a whole. You will

- find INSTRUCTIONS for setting up your project in the back pages of this Leader's Guide. You might have to plan for multiple projects, depending on the size of your group.
 - The main objective is to incorporate service as a way of life, rather than an occasional activity.
 - Aim for projects that would call for regular involvement over a period of time.
 - Make contact with your Volunteer Service organizations, the local Council, and other entities that could assist you.
 - If your group settles on a particular medium/long term project, there is no need to change the project when the time comes to engage with a new module. Use your discretion.
- Fourth, social activities. Ensure that you plan for a social activity at least once a month. Make sure that you always provide opportunities for good and wholesome fun for that age group.
 - You do not have to conduct all your sessions in a building. As appropriate, conduct some in nature, in the context of a camp, in someone's home, etc.
 - In the back pages of your Leader's Guide you will find a list of websites where you can access 'Ice Breakers' or brief fun activities that you can inject into all your sessions.

Of course, CONDUCT ALL YOUR ACTIVITIES PRAYERFULLY.

RECOMMENDATION

It is highly recommended that you set aside your first meeting as a fun ORIENTATION to share the Ambassadors concept, share the Participant's Guides, give an overview of the first module, discuss the FOUR elements and their implementation, discuss the frequency of meetings, organize calendars, etc.

Participant's Guide


A participant's guide for each module has been prepared for each participant.

- The Participant's Guide is essentially the workbook containing all the sessions of each module that the participant will engage with.
- In the back pages of each module there is a page for creating the IDP. There is also a list of the sessions for that module that the leader will date and sign upon the participant's completion.
- Each participant will be required to complete 75 percent attendance and participation to receive the certification or award at the end of each module. Participants can make-up for missed lessons to achieve the required 75 percent at the discretion of their leader.

Fostering togetherness is at the heart of a model for discipleship, which the General Conference is focusing on; it is known as "Together Growing Fruitful Disciples." This model emphasizes understanding, connecting, equipping, and ministering—but doing all of this "together." For God did not design us to grow or minister alone, but in community. Paul writes that growing in Christ is achieved as everyone uses the gifts God has given to them, "until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13).

Thank you for helping to educate our young people to become Ambassadors of Jesus Christ and His kingdom.

General Conference Youth Ministries Department



Gilbert Cangy
GC Youth Director



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CREATING YOUR IDP

As a human being with a nature that naturally tends to move away from God, growing to reflect Jesus as an Ambassador will rarely happen by chance or without much thought. That's why for each of the Ambassador's modules, you will be creating your own IDP. The focus of each IDP will relate to the theme of your current module and last for the duration of that module.

Here is an example of what an IDP will look like. Fill in your own IDP on the form provided.

1. IDP Module Name:

CHRIST-CENTERED DISCIPLESHIP

2. Spiritual Companion: Who is the spiritual companion who will encourage and support you in the next stage of your spiritual journey of growing as an Ambassador of Jesus? They will remain your spiritual companion throughout the current module.

JOHN WILCOX

3. Personal vision statement: This includes two parts: (a) What do you see in your life today that you would like to change in order to become more effective as an Ambassador for Jesus? (b) Describe how you would like to see yourself in the future. Before you start writing, take a moment to pray for God to guide your thoughts.

- CURRENTLY, I DO NOT HAVE A REGULAR OR VERY MEANINGFUL DEVOTIONAL LIFE.
- I WOULD LIKE TO DEVELOP A DEVOTIONAL LIFE THAT CAN EQUIP ME SPIRITUALLY TO BE AN EFFECTIVE AMBASSADOR FOR JESUS.

4. Expected evidence of change: After looking at your personal vision statement, list the evidence you might expect to see that reveals you are growing in Christ.

- I THINK AN EFFECTIVE AMBASSADOR IS SOMEONE WHO IS ALWAYS PRAYING FOR OPPORTUNITIES TO REVEAL THE CHARACTER OF JESUS WHEREVER THEY GO. THAT IS WHAT I WANT FOR MY LIFE.

5. Next steps: List the practical steps you will take to accomplish your personal discipleship vision. Think about how these steps will also shape your daily devotions with God.

- SET MY ALARM CLOCK FOR 7AM TO START MY DEVOTIONS
- SPEND 30 MINUTES IN PRAYER AND BIBLE READING
- REPEAT BEFORE I GO TO SLEEP
- FIND A BOOK TO READ THAT TEACHES DIFFERENT WAYS TO STUDY THE BIBLE
- PRAY EACH DAY FOR OPPORTUNITIES FOR GOD TO USE ME AS HIS AMBASSADOR

6. Reflection: How did I do? This is completed at the end of the module. It gives you a chance to reflect on what worked well and what you would like to improve in the future. You can compare your expected evidences of change to what actually happened.

- I REALLY ENJOYED THESE LAST FEW WEEKS. THE MORE I READ AND UNDERSTOOD, THE MORE CONFIDENT I BECAME TO PRAY FOR OPPORTUNITIES FOR GOD TO USE ME. I THINK I WILL EXPAND THE TIME FOR DEVOTIONS I HAVE IN THE EVENING, AND NOW THAT I HAVE READ A BOOK ON BIBLE STUDY, I WOULD LIKE TO READ ANOTHER ON INTERCESSORY PRAYER. I HAVE FOUND THAT I REALLY ENJOY PRAYING FOR OTHERS.

basic template for teaching sessions

This template will be used during most in-house teaching sessions. There will be variations in the format depending on the focus for the day.

welcome & activity

2+ min

1. General welcome and opening prayer.
2. A short getting-to-know you activity. As friendships continually deepen, so the ability to encourage and support each other spiritually deepens.

did you know?

13 minutes

An activity that introduces the theme for the day.

mission briefing

10 minutes

A simple Bible study that gives the biblical foundation for the theme done in groups of two or three. It will be helpful for leaders to circulate around the room to listen in on conversations to see that participants are going in the right direction and to answer questions.

thinking it through

5 minutes

A personal reflection time where each participant writes down what they have personally learned from the Bible study and how this applies to their own life as an Ambassador. To be shared briefly with their spiritual companion who will be a spiritual encourager during the curriculum.

reflecting Jesus & His kingdom

40 minutes

An activity that expands on the main theme for the lesson. This section is called “reflecting Jesus and His kingdom” because an ambassador’s main task is to represent who Jesus is to others, as well as what the kingdom of heaven stands for.

next steps

15 minutes

An ambassador for Jesus will grow spiritually and will witness in everyday life beyond the training sessions. Therefore, each participant will develop an individual discipleship plan that will help them grow as an ambassador for Jesus when they are outside of the learning environment.

At the beginning of each module in the curriculum, participants will develop an individual discipleship plan (IDP) that will guide their personal spiritual journey during that section. Each IDP will focus on the theme of that section. “Next Steps” is a time for participants to reflect on how their IDP is working and to pray for each other in what they aim to do next. This will be done with their spiritual companion. A spiritual companion is a friend who prays for and encourages their own companion over a set period of time.

summary

5 minutes

As a whole group, this is an opportunity to summarize what participants have learned during the session. It is a time for the leader to generally review what has been done and to ask for volunteers to briefly share what they have learned.

SESSION 1

won one by one

leader's guide





1: won one by one

session overview

- leader notes**
1. This lesson introduces a module that challenges the followers of Christ to participate in the reconciling work of humanity to God. This ultimately begins with God modeling this work then incorporating His followers to cooperate with Him to restore what is broken.
 2. Ambassadors reconcile disconnected people to God and lead them to a living walk with Him.

- materials**
1. Chalk/marker board or large pieces of paper to display
 2. Handouts
 3. Paper and Pens
 4. Dictionary (if available)

learning outcomes

| | Outcomes | Evidence of learning |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Head Participants will know... | 1. Understand the source of what causes the rift between God and mankind | 1. Discussions, Bible study |
| Hands Participants will be able to... | 1. Connect the brokenness that plagues humanity to their relationships | 1. Reflection during the Thinking It Through section |
| Heart Participants will be able to... | 1. The compelling need to draw another person to wholeness in relationship to Christ | 1. Formation of IDP (identifying the relationships in their life that are most troubled) |

- extra resources**
1. <http://growingfruitfuldisciples.com/framework>
 2. <http://www.adra.org/site/PageServer>
 3. <http://www.thejusticeprojectkc.org/>

1: won one by one

teaching plan

welcome

5 minutes

1. Welcome the participants and begin with prayer.
2. Transition from prayer to introducing the direction of the first lesson in this module on reconciliation and human relationships.

introduction to theme

? minutes

1. In the participant's guide, under the "Did You Know" section, there are a list of words that start with the prefix "dis." This prefix tends to show how something is not the way it should be or stands in opposition to the idea of the part of the word that follows. For example, the word "disapprove" conveys the opposite of approval.
2. The activity simply challenges them to consider the words we use to describe the brokenness in our relationships—to God and each other. By discussing the words they will open up to the various ways in which God can heal and restore people through His powerful love.
3. In groups of 2-3, ask the participants to: Add more "dis—words" that further shows the broken human predicament. Then, when the groups have had time to share and add words, collect the words all the groups have added and put them on a large piece of paper or on a chalk/marker board.
4. Once all the "dis" words are in full view, cross out (with the symbol of a cross) the "dis" portion of the word and then have the participants read the words that show what "should be." Ask them to discuss what it looks like in real life to "cross out" the part of words that break down our relationships—with God and others.

thinking it through

10 minutes

1. Ask the participants to reflect on their relationship with God. Even as disciples/believers they are plagued with insecurities and doubts about where they stand with God.
2. As they also consider their human relationships, remind them that: "as we learn about God's restoring work for us as individuals we also learn how to bring healing to our relationships with each other" (1 John 4:7, 11).

mission briefing

20 minutes

1. Invite the participants to divide into groups of 3-4 and complete the questions in their Mission Briefing handout.
2. The Bible story of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3) portrays the dawning of sin's effect on humanity, beginning in the heart of Lucifer, and infecting the lives of God's creation. It is imperative to remind Ambassadors that the central issue of effective discipleship, personal relationships, and overall impact on the world is



related to the reality of sin and God's salvation for people. World peace. Ending hate. Fostering healing and justice. Respect. Acceptance. Goodness. All these attributes that even sinful humanity attempts to address are fruitless if not understood against the backdrop of the plan of salvation. Here are a few items in the biblical story with some commentary that might be helpful.

- God comes looking for Adam and Eve; prompted by the reality of their sin—their choice—Adam and Eve hide. Avoiding, hiding, lying, and even ignoring and excusing the sin is a common response of humans (3:8).
 - Adam and Eve hid because of shame: Shame is the fear of accepting or facing the truth about yourself. It grows out of the feeling that we have done something or are someone inferior. Note that this is the opposite of what Lucifer promised. The snake promised enlightenment and an exalted position, but their disobedience created a separation from God (3:5,8).
 - God asks the question, “Where are you?” This question requires an inward look and an outward response (3:9).
 - How does God begin the work of reconciliation? Notice what God curses: The serpent (3:14) and the ground (3:17). Notice what (or who) God covers: Adam and Eve (3:21). He curses the snake and covers His children (Galatians 3:26,27).
 - The skins came from an animal—an animal that had to die. Someone had to pay and the sacrifice made in the garden was a promise of the sacrifice to be made at Calvary.
3. Gathering the participants together, summarize this section by reviewing the above points. Complete this section by inviting them to embrace the reconciliation God provided long ago. This dis-connection with God is the truth about sin. The truth about reconciliation is that someone has to bridge the gap and make a way. What did God do? He cursed the snake. He cursed the ground. He covered Adam and Eve. While the promise of salvation and restoration is given, it is the work of God's people to believe it, live it, and expand it beyond.

next steps

15 minutes

1. Invite the participants to meet with their Spiritual Companions and take a few moments to pray together for wisdom and openness to meet the challenge of living out a ministry of reconciliation. Perhaps they might share what some of their hopes and uncertainties are at this time.
2. Pray and discuss the development of their IDP for this module. In what ways will this emphasis challenge their relationships at home, church, and beyond? What skills in communication and connecting do they need to strengthen and develop?



reflecting Jesus & His kingdom

30 minutes

1. Ask the participants to gather in groups of 4–5 to work on the Reflecting Jesus and His Kingdom activities. In the first question they are challenged to consider Paul’s words on how the death of Christ unifies ALL who would desire to become disciples. The question posed to them is based on the way humans and believers choose to include insiders and “dis” include outsiders. Be sure to challenge them to be specific and honest in their descriptions (10 min).
2. In the second activity there is a graphic showing four directions and disciples who connected with Christ as followers. They all come from drastically different experiences. The women mentioned are outsiders by gender, but even Mary becomes one of the supporters among other women known as disciples. However, the Syro-Phoenician woman is culturally and religiously as despicable to Jews, if not more, than someone like Mary of Magdala. Paul and Nicodemus are both religious leaders but Paul converts by experience and Nicodemus seems to think his way into discipleship over time. The participants are challenged to add to these samples as many as they can think of. The more, the better. The greater the diversity the more possible it is for disciples to be agents of reconciliation because they do not choose who is eligible—they seek to include those who are available (15 min)!
3. The third section of Reflecting Jesus and His Kingdom actively connects to the growing disciples framework under “Ministering” (<http://growingfruitfuldisciples.com/framework>) because one of the key features of Jesus’ ministry with all of these examples is His willingness to spend time, energy, and trust in the examples given in the graphic (10 min):
Nicodemus—Jesus willingly meets him at night and offers a lengthy discussion.
Mary—She is included in His band of believers and Jesus receives from her generosity.
Syro-Phoenician Mother—The Lord crosses boundaries for what would be an impossible conversation.
Saul/Paul—God calls upon the enemy of His movement to become a primary voice for the cause.
4. Question #4 challenges the participants to rank and order the priorities of the life of a disciple. Since everyone’s journey with Christ is unique, the young people are going to have a different emphasis. This is to be expected. Affirm the focus and urge them to continue to shape the IDP along the lines of their convictions.

summary

1. In Ephesians 6:10–12 the Bible says we do not wrestle against flesh and blood... The work of a disciple is not with people, but for people. Challenge the participants to look carefully and reflectively at the relationships in their life today. The power to change a life is displayed in the history and work of believers throughout the centuries. We know that Christ will transform the lives of believers throughout the world.



SESSION 1

won one by one

participant's guide



SESSION 1

won one by one



did you know...

While there are many words that describe the broken relationships that grow out of human life, which words below capture the work of sin the most? What words would you add?

dis

| | |
|---------------|---------------|
| Dis able | Dis favor |
| Dis advantage | Dis grace |
| Dis agree | Dis honor |
| Dis connect | Dis qualify |
| Dis appoint | Dis join |
| Dis approve | Dis like |
| Dis solve | Dis obey |
| Dis band | Dis own |
| Dis regard | Dis order |
| Dis claim | Dis integrate |
| Dis cord | Dis count |
| Dis figure | Dis respect |





mission briefing

1. Read Genesis chapter 3 and identify what you think are the main ideas in this story.

2. What type of temptation does the snake offer Eve?

3. As a result of this disobedience, what “dis-words” seem most appropriate to describe the effects of their actions? Why?

4. What does God do: to the snake, to Adam and Eve?



reflecting Jesus & His kingdom

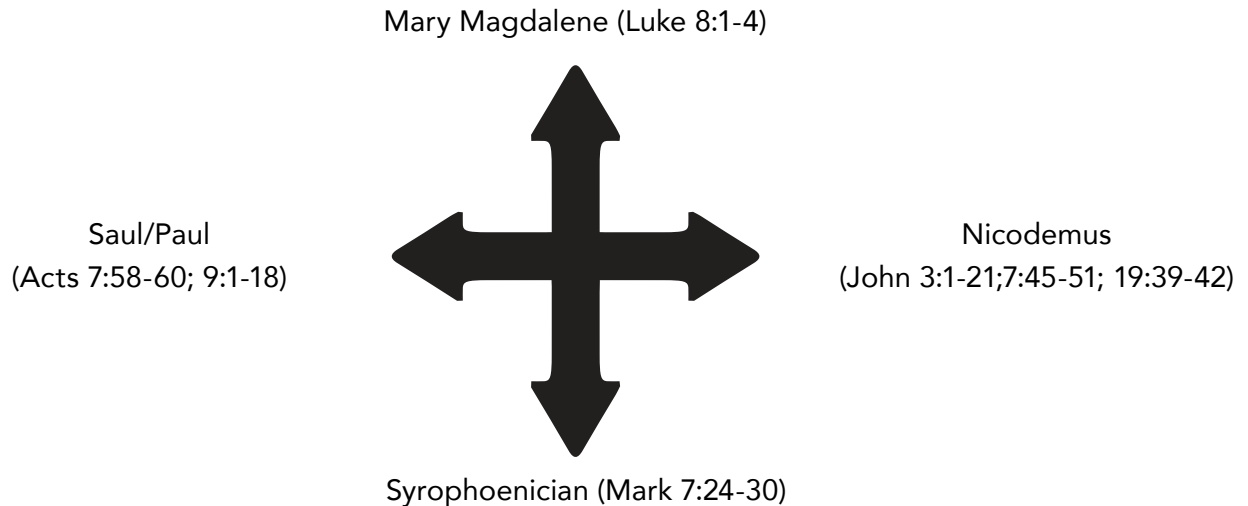
1. Read 2 Corinthians 5:14–21 and answer the following questions:
- What should be a follower's/disciple's attitude toward humanity?

 - Who are the hardest people you know to love?

 - Who are the hardest people you don't know to love?

- How does this message from Paul shape the way you approach people you know and don't know?

2. The graphic below shows how disciples were brought into fellowship and follower-ship with Christ from diverse walks of life, culture, religion, and gender. Pencil in names of other “followers” of God from the Old and New Testaments that might share similar experiences of reconciliation. Also, there are those you might think of who are vastly differently than what is shown below. List those as well and why you chose them.



3. In the examples of individuals given above, in what way are they “re-connected” or brought into discipleship with Christ? Refer to the “dis” statements in the Did You Know portion of the participant’s guide. What can learn about the relationship between being a disciple of Christ and an Ambassador committed to the work of reconciliation?
-
-
4. As Ambassadors committed to engaging others in a life of discipleship, rank the following activities according to the most urgent need to the least and share the results with other’s in your group.
 - a. ____ Building meaningful relationships with people you disagree with
 - b. ____ Fostering an open mind to people who are different in gender, race, and religion
 - c. ____ Sharing your time, energy, and trust with people in your local community
 - d. ____ Deepening your knowledge and sensibilities to those who are dis-connected to God because of sin
 - e. ____ Becoming a disciplined, passionate follower of Christ in a way that shows in your relationship with members of the opposite sex
 - f. ____ Helping those who are not believers experience the truth that God loves them
 - g. ____ Increasing the awareness of sin and its impact on how humans treat each other





SESSION 2

leader's guide

agents of reconciliation and
growing disciples





2: agents of reconciliation and growing disciples

session overview

leader notes

1. Over the next four sessions there will be a focus on the work of reconciliation given to God's people for the salvation of the world. The word reconcile is a particularly significant word in that it literally means "to exchange" or to "bring into a changed relationship." This conversation will survey various applications such as relationships with enemies, forgiveness, divisions and hatred, unity in the church, and the challenge to put it all into practice.
2. This session begins with God's plan to make His appeal to the world through His people, as stated in 2 Corinthians 5:17-20:
"So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation."

materials

1. Participants Guide
2. Pen and paper
3. Local Newspaper

learning outcomes

| | Outcomes | Evidence of learning |
|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Head Participants will... | 1. Understand the role of believers in the overarching work of reconciliation/salvation | 1. Mission Briefing study of 2 Corinthians 5. 2. Did you Know activity. |
| Hands Participants will be able to... | 1. Accept the responsibility of being an agent of reconciliation. | 1. Thinking it Through reflection questions and prayer. |
| Heart Participants will be able to... | 1. Sense the love of God through His conciliatory work in people. | 1. Reflecting Jesus and His Kingdom study as well as the activity in the Introduction. |

extra resources

Poverty and Justice Bible, American Bible Society

(More than 2,000 references on God's concern for the poor and injustice are highlighted.)

www.reconciliationnetwork.com

<http://www.spu.edu/depts/perkins/>



2: agents of reconciliation and growing disciples

teaching plan

welcome

10 minutes

1. Welcome and Opening Prayer (2 min).
2. After reading the notes in the overview, share a few words to introduce the range of the topic of reconciliation.

did you know?

10 minutes

1. In the Did You Know portion of the participant's guide there are a few challenging statements about whether Christians should "get involved" to speak to or stop injustice in the world. Clearly, doing nothing is not a viable response and sometimes the initiatives for justice have mixed motives that are also evil in the name of good. So, in between this tension is where the Ambassadors of Christ must choose to live, work, and serve.
2. Invite the participants to respond to the initial question. When it comes to the challenge of misdeeds or missed deeds, ask for examples of both so that people understand what this conversation is about.
3. Another way to address the problem is with the tension between hate and indifference. Again, which is worse? To hate something or someone requires a level of emotional commitment that expresses value. Indifference declares there is no value.
4. Under any circumstance, those who are professed believers in Christ should not be overtly evil or indifferent, but agents of reconciliation. Ask: Where in your life, church, school, town, country, or world do you see examples where reconciliation is needed the most?

mission

briefing

10 minutes

1. Divide the participants into groups of 4-5 and ask them to begin answering the first question in the Mission Briefing handout.
2. The first question: What is the bottom line problem? Why is there racial hatred? Why do some starve when there is plenty in the world to eat? Why are women treated less than human in some parts of the world? The answer: Sin. According to the Bible "all have sinned" and sin has "separated us from God," making us "enemies with God" (Rom. 3:23; Is. 59:1,2; Rom. 5:10). But since the problem is so far beyond a human solution, there is a tendency to ignore such an enormous challenge. But Christ calls His believers to participate in the process of reconciling others to Him for at least two reasons:
 - a. He has chosen to work through people (John 14:12).
 - b. It is by participating in the work of reconciliation that we experience being restored.
3. Question #2 addresses the biblical meanings of the words for reconciliation. As the participants consider some of the key passages having to do with God's work of bringing humanity to Him, ask: When have you



ever had to initiate reconciliation? Or, when has someone sought to reconcile with you? In your groups, discuss the nature and outcome of that experience.

4. Invite participants to share in their groups which verse speaks personally to them and why.

**thinking
it through**
10 minutes

1. As you think about your own personal experiences with division and enmity between yourself and others or yourself and God, what approach works well with you? Confrontational? Compassionate? Collaborative? Compromise?
2. What role do you see yourself having in the reconciliation of others to Christ and to each other?

**reflecting Jesus
& His Kingdom**
40 minutes

1. Divide the participants into groups of 4–5 to answer the questions in the Reflecting Jesus and His Kingdom section. The first question surveys a story in the Old Testament about lepers who happen upon good news and decide whether they should share it or keep it to themselves. Another question to ask is: Why do you think they have suspicions that evil will befall them if they behave selfishly or unethically? (10 min)
2. The next part of this activity surveys the New Testament examples of Ambassadors in action working towards the reconciliation of others. Note: Disciples are participants in the salvation process. Although Jesus had not yet gone to Calvary, the promise was sure. (15 min)
3. Allow the participants to share their responses to make a list of those participating in reconciliation (most obvious and the most overlooked). Invite them to share why the individuals from Scripture were selected. (10 min)
4. Hand out the local newspapers and give each group a full paper or a portion that has news. Their task is to quickly survey the headlines and the stories and find the articles that convey the worst news. They are to re-write a new headline that resonates with what the story would be if God's people actively sought to be reconciling people to God. This is not meant to be a guilt prompter but a vision/dreaming of the way it could be. Invite the groups to share samples of their reconciliation stories.

next steps
10 minutes

1. Ask the participants to meet with their Spiritual Companions and review the progress they are making on the IDP for this module.
2. Give them time to pray for each other and the other participants as they imagine and set goals for being agents of reconciliation for Christ.
3. You might take time to see if there are any questions, comments, or suggestions about the IDP process. This particular module has everything from the essence of salvation to what to do on a date with a member of the opposite sex, so you may want to open the floor to clarify.



summary

5 minutes

The work of Christ saving humanity becomes a collaborative process for believers. God has chosen to involve His people in bringing about wholeness, help, health, equity, grace, restoration, joy, security, forgiveness, confession, commitment, mercy, and more. As Ambassadors, we are representatives of God's saving work. You are examples and extenders of His grace to broken situations and divided people.



SESSION 2

participant's guide

agents of reconciliation and
growing disciples



SESSION 2

agents of reconciliation and growing disciples



did you know...

Agree or Disagree?

If Christians are content to be passive bystanders to the violent conflict in the world, they will be regarded by history as guilty of destructive behavior.

A choice to be inactive toward human suffering and injustice is a choice to own some of the responsibility.

Misdeeds or Missed Deeds, which is worse?

“... And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.”

2 Corinthians 5:19, 20





mission briefing

1. What is the bottom line problem? Why is there racial hatred? Why do some starve when there is plenty in the world to eat? Why are women treated less than human in some parts of the world? What is the primary source of the horror of child trafficking?

2. The word for reconciliation in the Old Testament had to do with atonement—a legal response to alienation or incompatibility. The New Testament idea involves an exchange that creates understanding and restores right relationship. (Knowing that the Greeks did not conceive the idea that gods could have a personal relationship with humans, the idea of reconciliation was foreign). Read the following verses and discuss how the message of God reconciling us would be received.
Romans 5:10, 11 2 Corinthians 5:18–21 Ephesians 2:14–17 Colossians 1:19, 20
3. Which verse speaks to you personally about God’s plan for reconciling the world to Himself?

4. What do you think God is saying to you in this passage?



thinking it through

1. As you think about your own personal experiences with division and enmity between yourself and others or yourself and God, what approach works well with you? Confrontational? Compassionate? Collaborative? Compromise?

2. What role do you see yourself having in the reconciliation of others to Christ and to each other?



reflecting Jesus & His kingdom

This session focuses on the responsibility of believers to participate in the reconciliation of others who are separated from God. Read the following questions and respond to the Bible stories and texts.

1. In 2 Kings 6:24–7:10 there is an ancient story of a handful of people who received good news and were faced with a dilemma. Read the story and discuss the dilemma they faced.

Answer the following questions about the story in your groups:

- What was their ethical/moral dilemma or problem?

- What were the implications for others if they acted or chose not to act?

- What does this story teach Ambassadors today about their role, responsibility, and sense of right versus wrong in the world today?

2. There are two stories where Jesus deploys Ambassadors for the work of reconciliation. Read the two stories (Matthew 9:35–10:20 & Luke 10:1–24) and answer the questions below in your group:

- Describe the state of the people in Matthew's story compared to the one in Luke. Is their gross need? Hostility? What challenges are both groups sent out to meet?

- How are the needs of people today similar? How are they different?

- What "authority" is given to the disciples? Is that the same authority as you and I have today?

- In Luke, why do you think Jesus tells them to rejoice not in the power they asserted, but in the relationship they had to God in heaven (names were written in heaven). What is the lesson for Ambassadors in that reminder?



3. Who in Scripture experienced cooperating with God for the reconciliation of others—individuals or whole groups of people? Consider the two categories.

Most Obvious

Most Overlooked

4. With a local newspaper, scan the pages and look for the situations that call for reconciliation. What would the headlines read if Christian brothers and sisters persisted in making a difference in their communities? Re-write the headlines to see what it might look like and be ready to share with others.



SESSION 3

leader's guide

reconciliation and relating to enemies





3: reconciliation and relating to enemies

session overview

leader notes

1. This session examines the work of reconciliation with enemies—people who we are at odds with, people who have caused us harm, hurt, or disadvantage. It is likely that there are those who may not want or ask for forgiveness or reconciliation in their lives, nonetheless, healthy Ambassadors for Christ must practice reconciliation.
2. It is possible that this session will be more challenging for some than others because of the circumstances of their life and history—be sensitive and thoughtful to those who may have good reasons to resist or struggle with this session.
3. Everyone needs to consider this truth: What God did to reconcile humanity, humans also need to mirror with enemies. Selflessness is the chief attribute that brought Christ to the broken, rebellious children of God. Selflessness is also the quality that will draw others back into a right relationship with us and with God.

materials

1. Lesson Handouts
2. Paper/Pen
3. Several containers of clear tape

learning outcomes

| | Outcomes | Evidence of learning |
|-------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Head Participants will... | 1. Understand the relationship between forgiving others and how God forgives us | 1. Discussion and Bible study in groups (Mission Briefing). |
| Hands Participants will be able to... | 1. Practice a lifestyle of grace so that reconciliation can happen in our relationships with others. | 1. Prayer time/Reflection and the practical applications in Mission Briefing section. |
| Heart Participants will... | 1. Experience the freedom from anger, hatred, and resentment. | 1. Discussion and study in the Reflecting Jesus/Kingdom section. |

extra resources

The book and the website are really helpful:

<http://www.asweforgivebook.com/>

<http://divinity.duke.edu/initiatives-centers/center-reconciliation/media/resources-reconciliation>

Testimonies about forgiveness and reconciliation:

<http://theforgivenessproject.com/about-us/testimonials/>

<http://www.wmf.org/blog/answers/ethics/how-do-i-forgive-my-enemies/>



3: reconciliation and relating to enemies

teaching plan

welcome

5 minutes

1. Welcome and Opening Prayer (2 min).
2. Introduce the overarching theme of reconciliation and human relationships: We are redeemed and brought into a right relationship with God because of the grace of Christ. Believers are commissioned to bring this reconciliation to the world. Christians ought to be doing relationships well. Today, we launch into one of the most difficult relationships of all—reconciling with enemies.

did you Know?

10 minutes

1. Divide the participants into groups of 2-3 and invite them to read and consider the claims made in the Did You Know section of their participant's guide. Ask: Have you ever heard of a connection between a forgiving spirit and physical and emotional health? Are these claims really true? (Invite them to respond.) Read or summarize the following report:
"In a study conducted by Dr. Frederick Luskin, a Senior Advisor in Health Promotion at Stanford University, and Director of The Stanford Forgiveness Projects, he showed that financial advisors who were given training in interpersonal forgiveness as a healthy response to the normal difficulties of business produced an average increase in sales between 18-46% over a reference group of advisors who produced average increases of only 5-14%. He also showed that their (the financial advisors who received training) level of productivity increased by 24% as well as their ability to experience positive emotional states like happiness, better focus, better night's sleep. They also showed a 23% decrease in physical symptoms of stress."
"Research has now found the physiological link between negative emotional states such as prolonged anger, hostility and depression and heart disease. It has also been known for some time that prolonged stress lowers the immune system leaving you more vulnerable to illness. Holding onto hurts, grudges, annoyances, pet peeves or old wounds that get re-opened by life events are a stressful event to your body."
<http://www.forgivenessasanactofpower.com/>
2. Ask the participants this discussion question for their groups: Who are some people you know of, personally or in history, who have experienced the freedom of forgiving their enemy? Describe what you know about this person and their situation. How is this possible?
3. When they have shared some examples of heroes of forgiveness, invite a few to briefly share with the rest of the gathering.



mission

briefing

30 minutes

1. The statement from Jesus about forgiveness is one of the hardest sayings spoken in Scripture. Invite the participants to look the passage up and read the context. Ask them to answer two questions:
 - a. Does God withhold forgiving us when we don't forgive others? (There are some who have been hurt severely, innocently, and without any provocation. Forgiving their enemy may be the most difficult thing they ever do. Is Jesus really saying that forgiveness is only available when you are capable of forgiving?)
 - b. How does the experience of forgiving others enable us as believers to value and appreciate the forgiveness God extends to us?

Commentary: Note that the context of Jesus' words is in teaching people to NOT be hypocritical with their spiritual life. There is teaching about prayer and giving alms. These hypocrites (Pharisees in this context) were so callous to others in their piety. Jesus was teaching against the senseless piety of religious people challenging HIS DISCIPLES to go deeper. Yes, forgiving others deepens your own appreciation and experience with God's grace to you. When you practice giving grace to someone who does not deserve it, you are transformed by that experience in ways you would not be if you had not.

2. Another powerful statement Jesus makes about reconciling with our enemies is in Matthew 5:43-48. Invite the participants to go back to their groups and discuss this particular statement Jesus makes. Question: Is Jesus saying that forgiving our enemies is what distinguishes His followers from the world? How does this relate to doctrines and theological teachings?
3. Question 3 is an activity for the individuals to fill out and share amongst themselves.

thinking

it through

10 minutes

1. Invite the participants to take a moment to reflect and respond to the two questions in the Thinking it Through section.
2. Urge the participants to pray as individuals for the people they need to forgive.

reflecting Jesus & His Kingdom

40 minutes

1. Divide the participants into groups of 3-4 and answer the first question in the Reflecting Jesus and His Kingdom portion (6-8 min).
2. The focus of question #2 is to get participants to refine their definition and understanding of biblical reconciliation with their enemies. Remind them that this includes people you have perhaps mistreated or even people who annoy you. After the groups have had ample time to develop their list and write them down, have them post the piece of paper on a wall so all can quickly see or pass them around for them to survey quickly (10 min).
3. Urge the groups to try and come up with 3-5 reasons why reconciliation is a pivotal part of the journey of a disciple. Question #3 is a challenge to look at the text and answer the "why" question before they practice the "how" question in #4. Below are some potential answers to share as they debrief.



Answer: God is the only One wise enough to judge all our thoughts and motives; let Him be God.

Answer: Because when we hate our enemy we become hateful—the very thing that hurt us in the first place.

Answer: Goodness to enemies offers more than punishment or blame, but it also has power to teach people to be different.

Answer: The enemy loses a foothold in your heart.

Answer: You act and live the way sons and daughters of God should live.

4. The six steps are suggestions. There is no real science to the process except that these elements suggested are components of enduring reconciliation. Have them read and commit to following through all the steps with one person as part of their IDP plan.

next steps

10 minutes

1. Invite the participants to meet with their Spiritual Companions and integrate some of the lessons learned in their IDP.
2. Invite them to pray specifically for the challenge to initiate healing between themselves and another.

summary

5 minutes

Feel free to share any of the following quotes about forgiveness.

“The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong.” Mahatma Gandhi

“To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you.” C.S. Lewis

“Forgiveness is not an occasional act, it is a constant attitude.” Martin Luther King, Jr.

“When you forgive, you love. And when you love, God’s light shines upon you.” Jon Krakauer

“We don’t forgive people because they deserve it. We forgive them because they need it—because we need it.” Bree Despain

“Not forgiving is like drinking rat poison and then waiting for the rat to die.” Anne Lamott

Reconciliation with our enemies is not for the spiritually elite; in fact, it is one of the primary ways we distinguish ourselves as children of God. It’s what God and His people do.



SESSION 3

participant's guide

reconciliation and relating to enemies



SESSION 3

reconciliation and relating to enemies

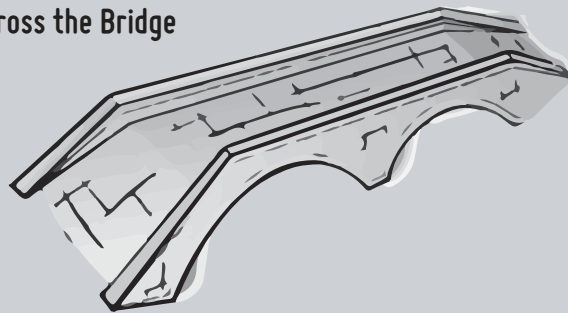


did you know...

What if you discovered that forgiving your enemies could significantly prevent or cure a disease—would you be interested?

Did you know that those who practice a forgiving lifestyle are likely to be more productive at work than those who harbor bitterness and resentment against others?

Cross the Bridge



What do you think you will discover on the other side of forgiving one another?

“For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

Matthew 6:14–15, ESV





mission briefing

Throughout His life and ministry, Jesus made statements and taught truths that are hard to imagine. Consider one of the hardest sayings Jesus ever spoke.

1. In Matthew 6:14, 15, Jesus makes a seemingly impossible statement about forgiving your enemy in order to be forgiven by God. Read the passage carefully once through as individuals. Then read the whole context together as a group and answer the following questions:
- a. Does God withhold forgiving us when we don't forgive others? Explain.

- b. How does the experience of forgiving others enable us as believers to value and appreciate the forgiveness God extends to us?

2. In Matthew 5:43-48 Jesus makes a similar challenge. Read this passage as a group and again check the context of the passage. What is Jesus saying to His followers? What is He saying to you today?

3. Where do you rank on the scale below?

Forgiving my enemies is something I practice

| | | | | | |
|--------|---|---|---|---|------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| rarely | | | | | faithfully |

Forgiving our enemies is something I witness other believers practice

| | | | | | |
|--------|---|---|---|---|------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| rarely | | | | | faithfully |

Imagine. If this kind of reconciliation were widely practiced, what might be the effects on how our world perceives this church?





thinking it through

1. When you think about forgiving the people who have hurt you, misunderstand you, or disrespect you, how do you feel? Is there a resistance? Reflect on the words of Christ and your own need for forgiveness.

2. Write down a few symbols that represent people (so as to protect their identity) that you harbor resentment or anger towards. Name what they did to you or you did to them and begin the reconciliation process by praying earnestly for them. As hard as it may be, it may be the only pathway to reconciliation.



reflecting Jesus & His kingdom

1. Read Luke 23:13-47 carefully and underline every phrase or sentence that describes how Christ treated His enemies. List as many examples from this passage that describe the way Christ treats His enemies.

2. Reconciliation with your enemies involves many attitudes and actions of you as an Ambassador of Christ. It helps to flesh out some of the details in the form of what reconciliation is and what it is not. Begin writing your ideas about what it is and is not below, then share



the ideas with your group. Create a master list you all can agree on and be ready to present it to the rest of the participants. Below are two examples:

Reconciliation with your enemies is...

- Taking the first steps to cross the bridge and initiate a new relationship
- Choosing to forgive and treat the other with respect, hope, and good will
- Mirroring the mercy of God for all sinners (including yourself)
- Taking responsibility for being in a broken relationship with another

Reconciliation with your enemies is not...

- A compromise or an agreement to disagree
- Always an admission of fault or responsibility to the act that caused the division
- Losing your dignity or personal control of your life
- An immediate feeling of relief but an ongoing experience to foster

3. The big question in response to this challenge to reconcile with your enemies is “Why?” “Why should I respond this way?” Read Romans 12:19–21 and Matthew 5:43–48 and identify some good reasons:

Answer: God is the only One wise enough to judge all our thoughts and motives; let Him be God.

Answer: Because when we hate our enemy we become hateful—the very thing that hurt us in the first place.

Answer: Goodness to enemies offers more than punishment or blame, but it has power to teach people to be different.

Answer: The enemy loses a foothold in your heart.

Answer: You act and live the way sons and daughters of God should live.

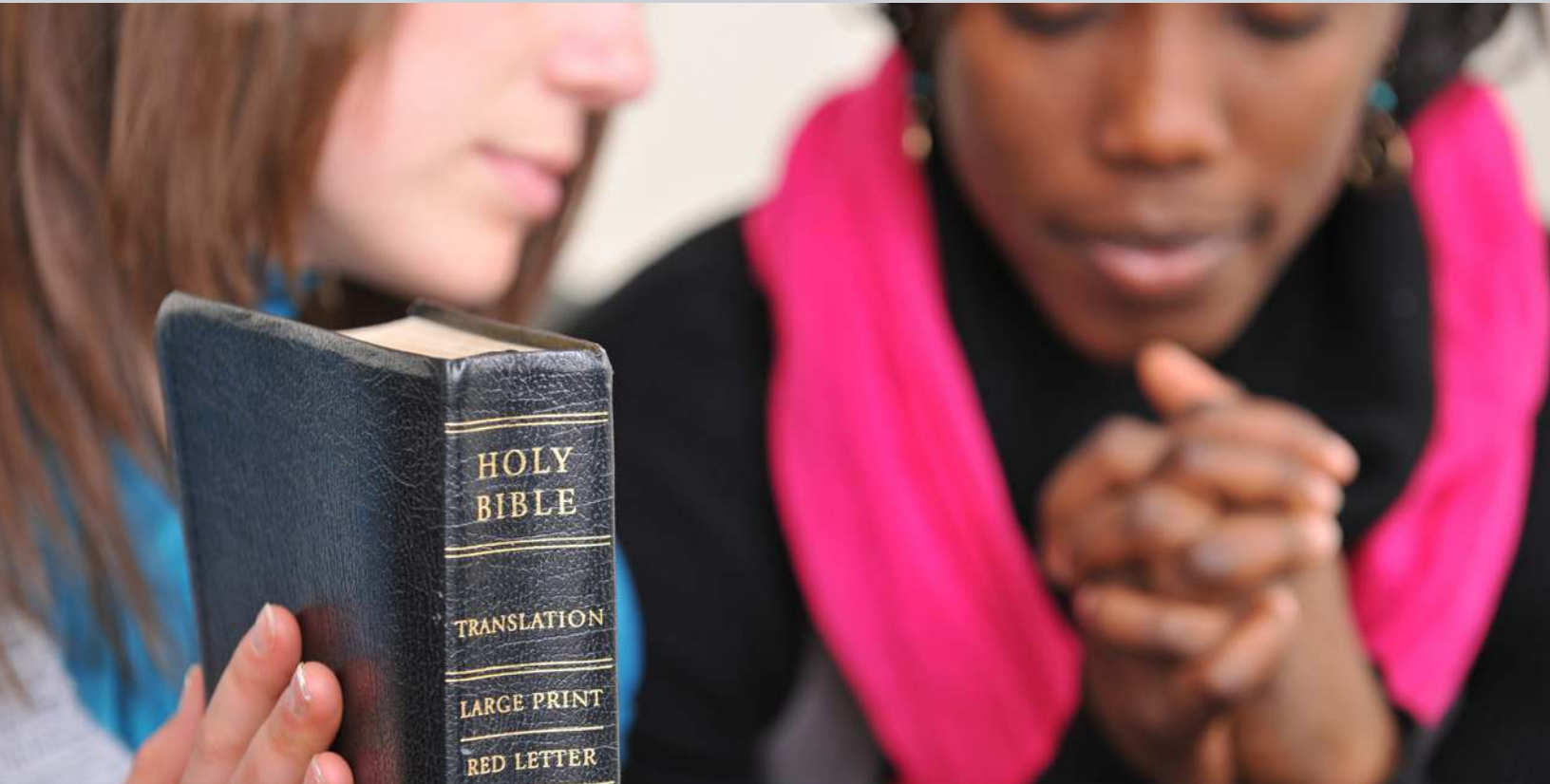
-
4. Read and discuss the six steps toward reconciliation to move from “why” we reconcile to “how” we reconcile.



SESSION 4

leader's guide

reconciliation and the fellowship of believers





4: reconciliation and the fellowship of believers

session overview

leader notes

1. This lesson targets the unique work of reconciliation among Christian brothers and sisters. One might assume that reconciliation in the church or among Christians is not necessary, but there is more conversation in the Bible about this reconciliation between believers than among non-believers.
2. The overall hope for participants is that they adopt the biblical values of grace-filled communication in their conflict with believers.

materials

1. Piece of paper
2. Pen/Pencils
3. Lesson Handouts
4. 3X5 cards for each group

learning outcomes

| | Outcomes | Evidence of learning |
|-------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Head Participants will... | 1. How to recognize healthy and unhealthy conflict resolution within and among believers | 1. Bible study and discussions |
| Hands Participants will be able to... | 1. Practice the principles and procedures for redemptive resolution | 1. Reflecting Jesus and Mission Briefing section |
| Heart Participants will... | 1. Compelled to live hopefully in the tension between unity and diversity | 1. Thinking it Through portion |

extra resources

Respectable Sins, Confronting the Sins We Tolerate, by Jerry Bridges.
<http://www.christianitytoday.com/le/1981/summer/8113076.html>
<http://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2002/October/church-discipline-the-redemptive-way.html>
http://www.peacemaker.net/site/c.aqKFLT0BlpH/b.1315141/k.480C/God_Disciplines_Those_He_Loves.htm

4: reconciliation and the fellowship of believers

teaching plan

welcome

5 minutes

1. Welcome and Opening Prayer (2 min).
2. Introduce the topic for this session as an extension of the overarching work of making disciples through our relationships. As relationships go, the nature of how we connect as people is fragile. Given the brokenness due to sin, we compound the problem when our methods of communication are ineffective or our efforts to reconcile are not biblical.

did you Know?

10 minutes

1. Invite the participants to take out their handout and consider the symbols on the front, which represent certain ways of thinking about relationships and conflict. Ask them to discuss each symbol in a group of 3-4 and answer the questions listed at the head of the symbols. Debrief each question with the whole group, asking: 1) Describe what the symbol represents, 2) share what you may know about their view of reconciliation and conflict, and 3) what is the Christian view and how is it different than the others?
2. Invent your own symbol in your groups that depicts a biblical view of how the church should be a model of reconciliation among believers. Be willing to share your symbol and why you created it the way you did.

mission

briefing

15 minutes

- Divide the participants into groups of 3-4 and answer the questions given in the Mission Briefing Handout.
1. The first activity considers the areas of human life that need reconciliation the most. Each view is equally valid in the exercise. It is meant to get participants to discuss the various ways in which reconciliation needs to occur in the church (5 min).
Where do you see a need for reconciliation the most?

| | | |
|----------------|------------------------|------------------|
| Young/Old | Gender Equality | Leadership/Laity |
| Families/Homes | Social/Cultural Issues | |
| Racial Hatred | Political Parties | |
 2. The second activity involves reading the passages of Scripture given that describe the mindset and the manner that believers ought to reconcile in a biblical way. Ask the participants to read the passages and share amongst each other (10 min):
 - What verses, phrases, or ideas arrest your attention as you think about the work of reconciliation with fellow believers?
 - Is it surprising that believers in Christ would experience serious conflict? Why or why not?
 - What principles, attitudes, or actions emerge from these verses that should be primary guides for believers to bring healing to their broken relationships?
 3. Invite the participants to debrief and share their insights with the rest of the group if time allows.



**thinking
it through**

5 minutes

1. Give time for the participants to answer the reflection questions in the Thinking It Through Section. There are two questions and a challenge to pray individually about the opportunity for proactive reconciliation.
2. Create a quiet time for them for a few minutes and then invite them to share generically what they hope God will do in them.

**reflecting Jesus
& His Kingdom**

40 minutes

1. The first activity in the Reflecting Jesus and His Kingdom section has to do with the chief qualities of reconcilers in the church. Each participant may rank these qualities in a different order according to their own personal experience. It is likely that there may be some qualities that resonate with the majority of those participating. Feel free to debrief by saying: “Courage as the first priority?” or “Who would like to share what they indicated was most important?” As they share, affirm the importance of each quality.
2. The next activity is an analysis of a passage that often gets misused in relationships within the church. Below are a few comments and suggestions to share as they break down the passage in Matthew 7 phrase by phrase.

What does it mean to “judge” something or someone? Note: The word means to discern or test, it does not squarely mean to never question or examine because other places in the Bible openly command that it is important to do so.

A question to ask is: Are you confusing judgment with condemnation? Based upon the definition of the word, we judge or test/discern everything and everyone in some way. If someone is trustworthy, kind, or someone we should be suspicious about—we judge. We judge whether the pasta is over-cooked or the vegetables need more salt. The difference is that we are not to ever condemn someone for their behavior; that is God’s work, not ours.

To better understand what Jesus is asking, read the rest of the passage. When Jesus says, “First...” what does this imply? That there is a second or next step that follows.

If we are to be agents of reconciliation we are to “first” take the log out of our own eye. In other words, bath deeply in God’s mercy and grace that He has forgiven you with.

“Then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye” (v. 5). The meaning is much clearer: Only those who see their own absolute need for grace are of the right mind to help others see their need as well. The work to help them become restored to clear vision is something that a “brother” or “sister” does nonetheless. We are not meant to leave each other at a distance because of sin, but gracefully walk each other back to wholeness.

3. As the participants read the next set of passages, they will see a process by which they seek to reconcile believers who are in conflict with them (Galatians 6:1–5 & Matthew 18:15–20). Invite the participants to read this passage and discuss the procedural approach to restoring the rifts between believers.



4. **Case Study Question.** (If you have time.) This activity requires careful instruction. Each group is instructed to create a case study—a brief scenario or dilemma that poses a problem that requires believers to respond according to the principles discussed in this session, and especially found in Scripture. Each group writes the dilemma on a 3X5 card with as much detail as needed. Arrange the groups in a large circle of groups and have the groups pass their card (dilemma/scenario) clockwise. Each group is then meant to read and discuss the most biblical response to bringing reconciliation to the people of faith. Use the procedure in Matthew 18 and principles of Matthew 7 in your response.

Warnings: Please don't use well-known problems or names in the community. These are hypothetical scenarios. Also, be careful not to get bogged down because you don't have all the details. Many situations that require reconciliation are based on very little real information.

next steps

10 minutes

1. Allow time for the participants to meet with their Spiritual Companions and discuss the progress they are making on their IDP. It is likely that setting goals for a module on relationships is a fluid experience. Encourage them to continue to practice and refine their plans in a prayerful way.
2. Give them time to pray for each other and their work.

summary

5 minutes

If we are to heed the call of Christ to be agents of reconciliation in the world, we must first start with the church (Gal. 6:10). The first step is yours. We all have problems and relationships in the church that are not healthy. The first step is to “remove the plank from your eye” or bath deep in the well of grace before confronting anyone else. To begin the process of reconciliation, one rule must be observed: “I can't change or fix others, but by God's grace I can be changed.”

Next, we must seek reconciliation and forgiveness with the person we have a conflict with, no matter who is to blame. Even though we may feel wronged, our work is to initiate reconciliation, not institute justice.

Again, if you hesitate to do this because you did not do anything wrong, you are operating from the wrong framework—you are operating from a blame and punishment model that isolates people in their brokenness. The model for believers is based upon commitment to understand and restore the relationship to wholeness. You are not saying: “I am innocent—you are wrong.” You are saying: “Forgive me for allowing this relationship to become a festering conflict. As a selfish person I want to admit my need for God's mercy. I am coming to you to try and restore what is broken. Would you be willing to walk with me before God?”

If you hold back, waiting for an apology, you are on the wrong track. Own the broken relationship without assuming responsibility for the behavior that caused it.

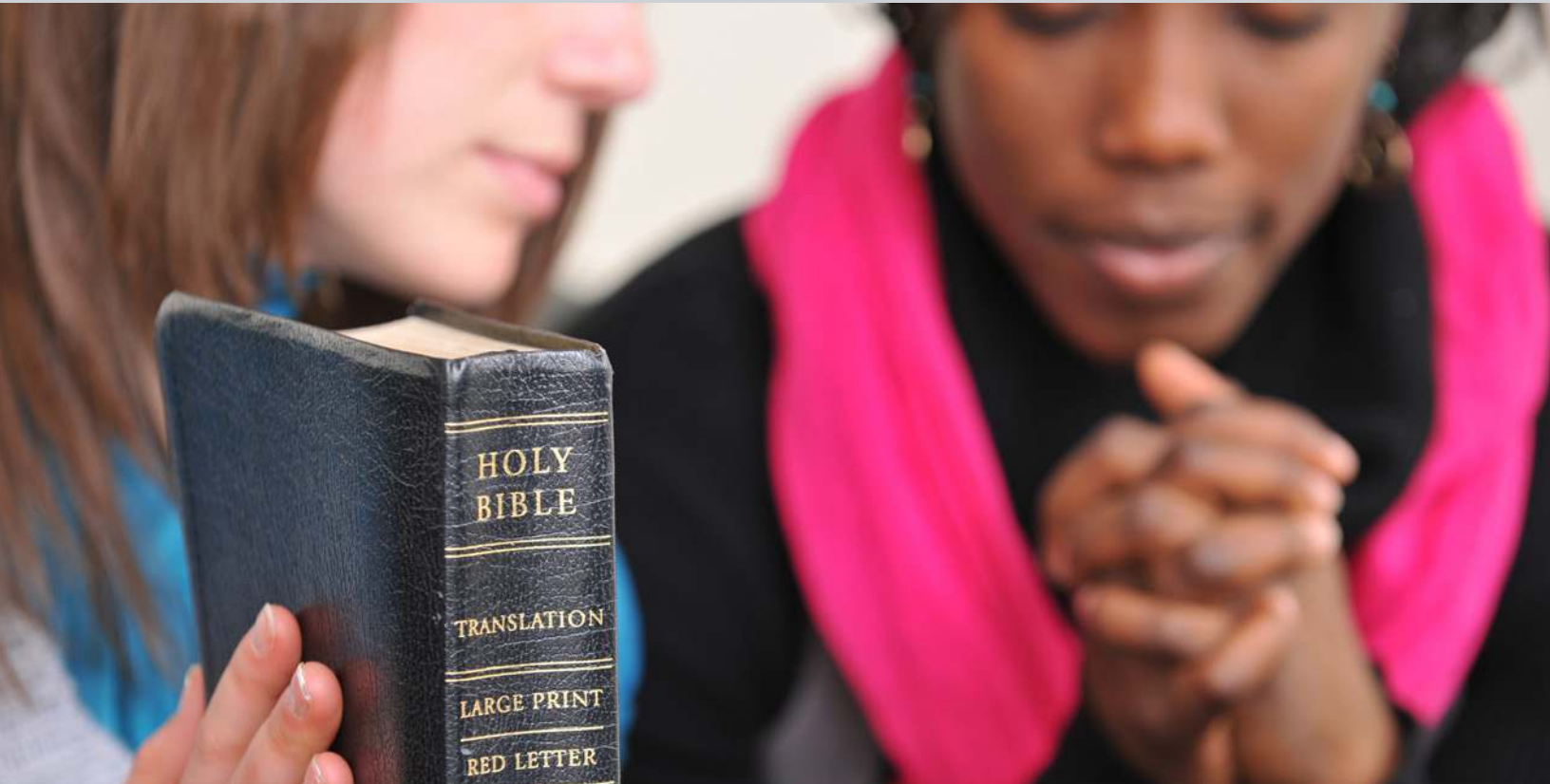
If this is possible in the church then we will make God's grace to the world unmistakable.



SESSION 4

participant's guide

reconciliation and the fellowship of believers



SESSION 4

reconciliation and the fellowship of believers



did you know...

Symbols of the World



Peace Movements—argue for human rights (mostly political)



Yin and Yang—view of the universe that everything is related



Race and Ethnic Equality—works to achieve equality



Humanistic Inherent Goodness View—there is good in all



The Cross—Christ redeems and reconciles people to Him through sacrifice and love

“Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble”

1 John 2:9–10





mission briefing

1. As you look around at the needs and problems in your world, where do you see a need for reconciliation the most? (Rank in order of importance, 1–most and 7–least.)

- _____ Young/Old
- _____ Families/Homes
- _____ Racial Hatred
- _____ Gender Equality
- _____ Social/Cultural Issues
- _____ Political Parties
- _____ Leadership/Laity

2. Read the Scriptures given below and share from the texts with what mindset and manner believers should practice reconciliation. Ask the following questions of the texts:

- What verses, phrases, or ideas arrest your attention as you think about the work of reconciliation with fellow believers?

- Is it surprising that believers in Christ would experience serious conflict? Why or why not?

- What principles, attitudes, or actions emerge from these verses that should be primary guides for believers to bring healing to their broken relationships?

- a. 1 John 1:8–9
- b. 1 John 2:9,10
- c. Proverbs 18:17
- d. Matthew 5:23, 24
- e. Ephesians 4:14–16
- f. 1 Cor. 6:1–5





thinking it through

1. What are some relationships you have among believers that are fractured because of behaviors and attitudes that have been ignored? Are you at a place where you believe you can initiate reconciliation?

2. What might reconciliation look like in your mind at this time?

3. Take time to pray privately about this relationship and ask God to begin stirring your heart and mind to action.



reflecting Jesus & His kingdom

1. What qualities do you think are most needed in bringing healing to the broken relationships in the church?

| | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| _____ Courage | _____ Prayerfulness | _____ Integrity |
| _____ Gentle Spirit | _____ Selflessness | _____ Clarity in Communication |
| _____ Wisdom | _____ Good Listener | _____ Positive Attitude |
| _____ Discretion | _____ Long Term Commitment to Growth | |

Why did you prioritize the qualities this way?

2. A common response to people who are in disagreement is that we should not stand in judgment of each other. It is true that the Bible says, “Do not judge, or you too will be judged” (Matthew 7:1-3, NIV).
 - Does this mean that Christian believers ought to leave each other alone?

- If we are not able to point out where our relationships go wrong, how can we reconcile when conflict arises?

Read the whole section in Matthew 7:1–5; pay careful attention to every word and phrase Jesus uses. List the phrases below and discuss how each phrase plays a part in the work of reconciliation.

3. Read the advice given in Galatians 6:1–5 and the counsel of Christ in Matthew 18:15–20 about restoring other believers with ourselves to Christ. As you read these two passages you will discover a process for reconciling fellow believers. Read this passage and discuss the procedural approach to restoring the rifts caused by the behaviors and attitudes of believers.
4. Case Study. Write a case study or a scenario that another group could read and discuss on how to apply the principles studied to bring about reconciliation.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

SESSION 5

leader's guide

communicating the story of reconciliation—the Father's joy





5: communicating the story of reconciliation—the Father’s joy

session overview

- leader notes**
1. This module covers a wide range of applications to one concept—the value of relationships. God demonstrates His relationship to humanity. Humanity seeks to mirror God’s relationship to us through forgiveness and openness. There are human relationships that need to grow on a biblical foundation.
 2. This particular session transitions from the message of reconciliation to how Ambassadors communicate that message in life and story.

- materials**
1. Student Handouts
 2. Pen and Paper

learning outcomes

| | Outcomes | Evidence of learning |
|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Head Participants will... | 1. To understand the whole story of reconciliation as a church | 1. Mission Briefing Study |
| Hands Participants will be able to... | 1. Internalize the story of reconciliation in a way that stretches our worldview | 1. Mission Briefing study, discussion, and Thinking it Through Activity |
| Heart Participants will... | 1. Sense a new love and energy for lost and disconnected people to become part of the family | 1. Mission Briefing Study/Commentary and Reflecting Jesus and His Kingdom |

- extra resources**
1. Article on storytelling in the Middle East: <http://www.beyondintractability.org/bi-essay/narratives>
 2. Ambassadors of Christ Choir: Join their Facebook page and hear the stories and follow their ministry across Central and Eastern Africa: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Ambassadors-Of-Christ-Choir-Remera-SDA-church-Kigali-Rwanda/265054440224386?sk=info#!/pages/Ambassadors-Of-Christ-Choir-Remera-SDA-church-Kigali-Rwanda/265054440224386>
 3. http://www.adra.org/site/PageServer?pagename=ntwk_stories
 4. <http://www.asianaid.org.au/>
 5. <http://www.asweforgivemovie.com/involved/rwanda/>

5: communicating the story of reconciliation—the Father’s joy

teaching plan

welcome

5 minutes

- 1. Welcome and Opening Prayer. (2 min)
- 2. As you introduce this session remind the participants that the central work of those who follow Jesus is to be an agent of reconciliation. This session is a challenge to make a choice to a part of telling that story.

did you Know?

10 minutes

- 1. Divide the participants into groups of 4–5 and share whether they are a firstborn, middle child, or youngest sibling. Invite them to react to the brief descriptions given in the handout. (3–5 min)
- 2. How many would agree that the birth order descriptions are more true than false? (2 min)

mission

briefing

15 minutes

- 1. The participants can remain in groups of 4–5 for this Bible study. The very familiar story of the lost items and the prodigal son, when looked at from the perspective of those living in the Middle East, paints a wonderful picture of reconciliation. Invite the participants to answer the questions as a group.
- 2. The following commentary might fill in some of the blanks and help add to the story:
 - a. The complaint: “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”
In Palestine and anywhere in the Middle East, to welcome people and eat with them involves so much more than a meal. In that part of the world to eat together is to bind yourself to your guests. If someone invites you to a meal they are inviting you to be a part of their community. Jesus is accused of “binding himself to sinners.”
 - b. How many parables are in this chapter? (15:3,8,11)
Actually, the word parable in verse three is singular, and the following verses indicate that the whole range of stories (sheep, coin, son, brother) is, in fact, one story.
 - c. Who do the characters in the story represent?

| God | Sinners—the lost | The Pharisees | Heaven Rejoicing |
|--------|------------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| Owner | Sheep | 99 Sheep | Friends (celebration) |
| Woman | Coin | 9 coins | Friends (celebration) |
| Father | Younger Son | Older Son | Friends (celebration) |



- d. What is the message for the sinners?

The sheep and the coin are simply found. They do nothing but accept the truth that they are reconciled. They don't earn it, struggle for it, find it—in fact they are found by it. In this parable there seems to be a new definition of repentance—accepting the truth that you have been found.

The message to the Son is simply: God comes for him. This is scandalous behavior for a grown man. They don't run. But God runs, and in the embrace of love the son finds that he has been reconciled to the Father by no work of his own.

- e. What is the message for the Pharisees?

This entire parable is told for them. It is a little strange that the prodigal son gets most of the attention (the younger sibling always does) because this parable is told as a result of the Pharisees' complaints. The older son is left with an invitation to come join the celebration: lost people are found! And the parable ends with the elder brother facing the decision to stay outside (a shameful and rebellious act in that culture) or go in.

- f. What does this parable declare about the message of reconciliation?

It is mostly about the role the Pharisees (People of Israel) had been charged with: to share the good news of God to all people. Jesus comes and does what they should have done—bound themselves to sinners in order to bring them to God.

2. If this parable were written today, what people group would the younger brother represent? What people group would the older brother represent?

Younger brother= “The world” or those who don't know God's grace.

Older Brother= The church or those who have been commissioned to share this message with the world.

3. What should be the overall attitude toward reconciliation? (Luke 15:6,7,9,10, 22–24)

Celebration. It is no accident that the whole parable wraps around the Father's joy. It's not about a sheep, coin, son, or brother—it's about a Father and His joy!

thinking
it through

5 minutes

1. Ask the participants to respond to the following questions privately first, then perhaps share with a group or individual.
2. For those who struggle to dream up ways to respond to this parable, here are a few starter ideas:
 - a. Write gratitude letters to new believers.
 - b. Get an SDA Yearbook and randomly choose a region of the world to praise God for the people working in that part of the world.
 - c. Celebrate baptism days. The whole idea is to create an atmosphere and an attitude of joy around people who are reconciled to God.



reflecting Jesus & His kingdom

40 minutes

1. The first activity in this section involves defining a crucial concept of the Bible entitled, “The Kingdom of God.” The work of reconciliation is Kingdom work. Throughout the Gospels Jesus refers to everything He does and will do as being about “the Kingdom” or “The Father.” The participants are challenged in this first part to try and define or describe the Kingdom of God. Let them take about 4–5 minutes trying to organize a definition in 20 words or less and then have the groups report.
2. Question #2 involves refining the definition, or expanding it, depending on how the participants responded. The only place where the “definition” of the Kingdom is hinted at is in the Lord’s Prayer (Matthew 6:9, 10). You might even have them repeat it: “Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name...Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” This is how the Hebrews wrote poetry: The first phrase starts an idea; the second phrase amplifies and expands it to its broader meaning.
“Thy Kingdom come, [which means] or [more specifically] your will is done on earth the way it is done in heaven.”

Make sure all the participants understand that God’s kingdom—the territory of His rule—is in the hearts and minds of people who live on earth as they do in heaven.

It’s no wonder the work of reconciliation on earth is “celebrated in heaven” (All heaven rejoices when something listed is found).

3. Question #3 leads the participants to the moment where Jesus announces the nature and presence of His kingdom in a formal way.

Attributes of the New Kingdom

- Proclaim good news to the poor (compare this with the beatitudes)
- Freedom for prisoners
- Sight for the blind
- Set the oppressed free
- Proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor

What Jesus did not read/say from Isaiah 61:

- 61:2 the vengeance of God
- 61:3 those who grieve in Zion (Zion are those who are Jews)
- 61:5 “aliens” will shepherd your flocks and “foreigners” will work your fields
- 61:6 you will feed on the wealth of “nations”
- 61:7 no more “shame” or “disgrace” for “God’s people”
- 61:9 your descendants will be known among “the nations”
- 61:11 glory will spring up “before all nations”



Commentary: This passage from Isaiah 61 was a well known, often read passage about the day of glory when Israel would return to power. What they failed to understand was that Israel was not meant to be an ethnic nation, but a faith nation. The power was not a worldly power but the power of God among His people. When Jesus stopped before getting to “the good part” (the gentiles becoming their slaves and the Jews getting their deserved glory), the people reacted adversely to Jesus.

How does Jesus reply to their challenge?

- In verses 24–27 Jesus reminds them that gentiles were chosen and blessed above Jews (Naaman the leper gets healed, the Widow of Zaphenath (Sidon) receives God’s blessing—instead of Jewish people).
- This message delivered a direct blow to the narrow, nationalistic mindset of the Jews. Jesus struck hard at the foundations of elitism, exclusivism, racism, and gender inequality. The message of Jesus and His Kingdom is a call to live on earth as in heaven. That unity, love, equality, justice, grace, goodness, selflessness, and reconciliation are the foundation of how children of God live.

* Notice the reaction of the Jews when they heard this message! They tried to throw Jesus over the cliff. This is theologically thick, but the parables of the lost and found items in Luke 15 and this announcement in Jesus’ home town church is central to understanding how reconciliation is THE MESSAGE of the Bible.

4. Give the groups time to discuss and share/process what they have read and heard.
5. Question #4 moves to the more practical side of this discussion: What do we do? Invite the participants to answer personally, share their response with their group members, and then pray as a group for courage and faithfulness to follow through.

next steps

15 minutes

1. Invite the participants to meet with their Spiritual Companion and discuss how their spiritual life is growing and how it is being challenged.
2. Urge the pairs to pray fervently for opportunities to fulfill the goals written in the IDP.

summary

5 minutes

God’s work with humanity is all about reconciling us from our brokenness brought on by sin. This loving work of connecting back to Him is done in and among other people—all people. The work of reconciliation includes our enemies, our families, our fellow believers, as well as unbelievers who do not know. The effects of sin have born the fruit of division, hatred, selfish pride, slavery, prejudice, slander, murder, rape, poverty, and so on. The effects of God’s kingdom bring hope, salvation, joy, meaning, sonship, daughtership, love, forgiveness, compassion, growth, goodness, and so on. So, on we go. Perhaps some of you today have not fully committed to being an agent of reconciliation—a part of this kingdom. Today is the day!



SESSION 5

participant's guide

communicating the story of reconciliation—the Father's joy



SESSION 5

communicating the story of reconciliation—the Father's joy



did you know...

Birth Order Specialists Say...

- Older Siblings: Independent. Responsible. Natural leaders. Strive for perfection. Need approval from authority figures.
- Middle Child: Typically the most rebellious. Compromisers. Love to please people. Excellent at working in groups. Make friends easily.
- Youngest Sibling: Usually the most artistic of siblings. Likely to be the class clown (they are used to getting attention). Typically, the youngest gets bored easily.

“There was a man who had two sons.”

Luke 15:11





mission briefing

1. Read the parable in Luke 15 and pay careful attention to the following parts of the story as listed below:
 - a. The complaint: “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”
 - b. This chapter contains how many parables? (15:3, 8, 11)
 - c. Who do the characters in the story represent?
 - d. What is the message for the sinners?
 - e. What is the message for the Pharisees?
 - f. What does this parable declare about the message of reconciliation?
2. If this parable were written today, what people group would the younger brother represent? What people group would the older brother represent?
3. What should be the overall attitude toward reconciliation? (Luke 15:6, 7, 9, 10, 22-24)



thinking it through

1. Think of the different ways in which the church/believers/Christians could celebrate the joy of reconciliation more than it does currently. How often do you praise God for those people who are “found” or celebrate those who “come home”?



2. What are some practical ways that you and other Ambassadors can tangibly practice joining with heaven in celebration? Share your ideas.



reflecting Jesus & His kingdom

What would make the most significant change in the human experience today?

1. As Ambassadors for Christ and His Kingdom, have you reflected on what “the kingdom” of God really is? Take a few moments in your group to flesh out a preliminary definition or description based upon what you know already. Strive to write your definition in 20 words or less.

Some questions to prompt your thoughts:

- Is the kingdom a present reality or a future hope?

- Is the kingdom of God a physical aspect or is it spiritual?

- Why is repentance the first challenge of entering the kingdom?

- In what way is the kingdom like human kingdoms? How might it be different?

- Why are most of the parables about the kingdom?

- Is the kingdom something a person should be “in” or “out” of as well as “at” or “near”?

- Many parables of Jesus start out with, “The Kingdom if God is like...” Why is it described but not really defined?

Kingdom Definition (20 words or less)



2. Read Matthew 6:9, 10 and apply what Jesus says about the kingdom to your definition.

3. Based on what you now know of the “kingdom of God,” read Luke 4:14–30 individually and answer the following questions:

- From verses 18 and 19, list and name the attributes of the new kingdom

- Why did the people seem confused? (Read the parts Jesus left out in Isaiah 61).

- What does Jesus say in reply to the challenge of the people to His handling of Isaiah 61?

4. As Jesus described His mission from Isaiah 61, which part or target ministry resonates with you today?

- Proclaim good news to the poor
- Freedom for prisoners
- Sight for the blind
- Set the oppressed free
- Proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor

SESSION 6

leader's guide

communication: say what you mean





6: communication: say what you mean

session overview

leader notes

1. Growing relationships effectively is grounded on a few pivotal principles: one is a grace-filled worldview where other humans have value. Another principle has to do with the way people grow and discover their place in God's kingdom. This lesson begins to consider how communication affects the relationships we have—earthly and heavenly.
2. More specifically, the process of communicating with words has tremendous power for good or evil. This lesson will focus on the art and skill of saying what you mean.

materials

1. Lesson Handouts
2. Pen/ Blank Paper
3. Scissors
4. Clear Tape

learning outcomes

| | Outcomes | Evidence of learning |
|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Head Participants will... | 1. The power of words, for good or evil | 1. Bible study in Mission Briefing |
| Hands Participants will be able to... | 1. Develop a personal commitment to better communication | 1. Small group discussions and Reflecting Jesus and His Kingdom application |
| Heart Participants will... | 1. More courage to say what is uncomfortable and more discernment not to say what comes so easily | 1. Introduction and reflective activity |

extra resources

1. Here is a huge list of “feeling” words: <http://eqi.org/fw.htm>

6: communication: say what you mean

teaching plan

welcome

5 minutes

1. Welcome and Opening Prayer.
2. Introduce the topic as a practical experience with the power of words. Speech is one of the most life changing forms of communication, for good or for evil.

did you Know?

15 minutes

1. Invite the participants to look at the Did You Know graphic on the front of the handout. In addition to the passage from Psalms and the pictures of thoughts moving to speech, there is a list of words and a corresponding line for a number/percentage value. Have the participants assign a percentage to what they mean by that particular word, for example, "When I say 'sometimes' I usually mean 24 percent of the time."
2. After they have assigned percentage values to the words, invite them to get into groups of 4-5 and share their results. They are to describe the collective range of percentage values for each word. So, if someone in the group had 15 percent but the highest number in the group was 34 percent, the range would be 15-34 percent (19 percentage points). List the range for each word and share with the rest of the groups.
3. Point: The words we use are powerful. But our words can miscommunicate if we are not careful. This lesson addresses how the power of speech is a God-given mode of communication and is to be refined and consecrated to our Creator.

mission

briefing

15 minutes

1. In groups of 4-6, gather in a circle and on a white piece of paper draw a figure of a person/stick-man. It does not have to be precise, but simply a symbol of a person with arms, legs, head, and a body. If you want to draw the pictures and cut him/her out ahead of time in order to save a few minutes, then hand each group a paper person and some clear tape.
In your group, speak a criticism or a put down to the paper person and, when you do, tear a piece of the body off and hold on to it, then pass it on to the next person in your group who will do the same, except they will make up their own criticism.
After everyone has gone around the circle, ask the participants to say something kind or good to the paper person. When they speak positively to it have them tape the piece they tore off earlier back on. When the paper person is all back together, say: "How does he/she look?"
Ask: What lessons can you draw from this activity about the power of words, good or evil?
2. Read Ephesians 4:29-32 in your groups and ask: What is God saying to me in these verses? What would it be like to be in a community of faith that faithfully obeyed this challenge?



**thinking
it through**
5 minutes

1. Invite the participants to take some time alone to reflect on question #1 in their Thinking It Through activity. It is important to own the words we have spoken.
2. The second question is a challenge to pray as a group for each other and the words you will say, or choose not to say.

**reflecting Jesus & His
kingdom**
40 minutes

1. Divide the participants into groups of 3–4 for this activity. You can read out loud the introduction in the Reflecting Jesus and His Kingdom section or let them read it aloud in their groups. Urge them to share their insights in their groups and make a list of five to ten insights about the value of speech from this text. You may invite the groups to share or move on the next question.
2. Ask the participants to answer question #2 individually and then share suggestions as to how to remember this principle when it is hard to remember.
3. As the participants answer questions 3–5 allow them time to discuss freely what they are reading and sharing.
4. Question #6 invites the participants to put it into practice. It is important that you organize this activity in a way where everyone gives a good word and receives a good word as well. One option is to have each group number off. Each group will collectively make a brief list of words to speak about the individuals of another group. The words are to be true, positive, and edifying (Ephesians 4:29). If there are four groups then group #1 will affirm publicly group #2, and group #2 will affirm group #3, and group #3 will affirm group #4, and group #4 will affirm group 1. The point is to practice saying things that are good.
5. After the groups have completed the activity, invite each person to pray in their groups for the courage to refrain from speaking when it will be destructive, negative, or hurtful.

next steps
10 minutes

1. With their Spiritual Companions, ask participants to share a few true words of encouragement for each other and pray for discipline to pay careful attention to their words.
2. Discuss how the work on the IDP is progressing.

summary
5 minutes

Some of the sternest warnings from Scripture are about the darkness our communication with others can become.

1. Warning #1: Perhaps the most dangerous thing you can ever do with your mouth is to deny the existence of the one who made you (Psa. 14:1; 53:1).
2. Warning #2: To distort the truth and to lie with your mouth is a road to darkness (Psa. 59:12; Prov. 6:19; 12:22).
3. Warning #3: Filthy, subversive, rude talk is becoming so commonplace, but Ambassadors of Christ ought



to guard well their words be proactive with thanksgiving instead of suggestive talk (Ephesians 5:4-14; Colossians 3:8).

4. Warning #4: Speech that is abusive is warned against strongly. Oh how God must weep when His children chose not to strike with hands but do more damage with words than any slap could ever deliver. Sometimes it comes as a dig or a sarcastic remark, but no less damaging (Psa. 22:7, 8; Matthew 27:39; Luke 23:35 describe an abusive style of verbal assault on Christ while He died).

For Ambassadors of Christ: Our communication with each other and the world must be beyond reproach.

Consider what Peter said:

- “Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. For, “Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech. He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it” (1 Peter 3:9-11).

Close with prayer:

Father, may their words carry grace and goodness to others. Amen.



SESSION 6

participant's guide

communication: say what you mean



SESSION 6

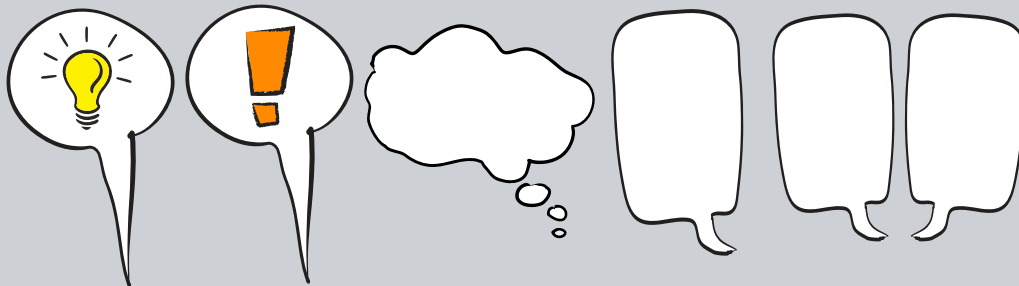
communication: say what you mean



did you know...

say what you mean

| When you say... | What do you mean... | % |
|-----------------|---------------------|---|
| a. Sometimes | _____ | % |
| b. Often | _____ | % |
| c. Always | _____ | % |
| d. Never | _____ | % |
| e. Usually | _____ | % |
| f. Occasionally | _____ | % |
| g. Rarely | _____ | % |
| h. Consistently | _____ | % |
| i. Regularly | _____ | % |



“May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer”

Psalms 19:14





mission briefing

1. Paper Person Activity. What are some observations you gained from doing the exercise with the paper person. What can you say about the power of words?

2. Read Ephesians 4:29 in your groups and ask: What is God saying to me in these verses? What would it be like to be in a community of faith that faithfully obeyed this challenge?



thinking it through

1. Reflect on your conversations recently. It is likely that you can remember conversations where you have said something that was destructive and not helpful. Conversely, you may recall things you have said that were good, right, and true. Also, think of occasions where you said nothing, but should have said something. Which are easier to remember?

2. Without sharing details about what you said—good or evil, or what you failed to say—pray with your group for wisdom to use the power of speech and words well.





reflecting Jesus & His kingdom

God created speech. In fact, it was the Creator's words that gave life and substance to matter. Genesis 1 declares, "And God said..." no less than ten times in that one chapter. The Psalmist wrote, "He spoke and it was done; he commanded it, and it stood fast" (Psalms 33:9). The whole world was framed up by "word of God" (Hebrews 11:3). There is no question—the gift of speech is intentional and valuable. As Ambassadors of Christ our words carry power, for good or evil. Even the words we don't speak but should have are precious opportunities for good. Learning to measure and be careful with the gift of speech will bear good fruit in your relationships with others, and especially with God. Consider the light and dark side of speech.

1. Read James 3:1–12 and make a list of five to ten points or illustrations you think are important about the power of speech.
2. Read James 1:19,20. Why do you think the first step mentioned in this passage is to be "slow to speak"? Think of times when you have spoken quickly and regretted it. What can you do to develop the habit of thinking before speaking? (Share with your group.)

3. How does 1 Peter 3:9–11 speak to popular culture and media today? How many movies, commercials, videos, talk shows, political ads, and news reports completely violate the advice from Scripture? Is there a danger of being drawn into a pattern of speech if we mindlessly immerse ourselves into this culture?

4. If we struggle to know what to say to others, consider the value of sharing Scripture, Bible promises, and hope and encouragement for the future. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 and imagine how hearing these words would resonate with the hearts and lives of people you know.
5. Consider a few more insights about the positive power of good speech.
 - Psalm 40:10
 - Psalm 78:1–8
 - Proverbs 12:22
 - Isaiah 50:4
6. Put it into practice.



SESSION 7

leader's guide

communication: mean what you say





7: communication: mean what you say

session overview

- leader notes
1.

Growing relationships effectively also grows into backing up the words you say with unmistakable action. In the previous lesson we discovered that what we say is crucial. However, adding to that principle the idea that talk is empty without action is needed for today's Ambassadors.
2.

This lesson is a challenge to mean what you say.

- materials
1.

Lesson handouts
2.

Pen/Paper

learning outcomes

| | Outcomes | Evidence of learning |
|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Head Participants will... | 1. Explore what actions contribute to effective communication | 1. Examine the biblical stories of effective communication |
| Hands Participants will be able to... | 1. Communicate through specific deeds, actions, or body expressions | 1. IDP and the Mission Briefing section |
| Heart Participants will... | 1. Feel a unified message coming from their life to others in effective communication | 1. Reflecting Jesus and His Kingdom Section. Activities and Application |

7: communication: mean what you say

teaching plan

welcome

2 minutes

1. Welcome and Opening Prayer.
2. Introduce the session with a review of the power of information through speech—the non-verbal or the action side of communication.

did you Know?

10 minutes

1. Divide the participants into groups of 3–4. In the lesson handout there is a graphic representing the way information is communicated by percentages. Ask the groups: In what settings or scenarios have you experienced this description of communication being especially true?
2. If time allows, practice this principle with the following statement: “_____ (name), it seems as though you are late.” Have them try saying it differently, using different body language and expression to communicate the simple phrase as differently as they possible can.
3. Direct the participants to the pictures of the hands presented in the handout. Invite each participant to write a few words around the message the hand conveys. Then have them share their perceptions with the rest of their group.
4. Ask: How accurate were your perceptions?
5. Summarize and transition: As Ambassadors we are called to communicate the content of a message effectively. Effective communication involves the right words, but as much, if not more, the right actions and expressions. This is true in our basic communication every day and in our communication as a church.

mission briefing

15 minutes

1. In groups of 3–4, direct the participants to answer the questions in the Mission Briefing section of the participant’s guide.
2. It is always good to get the participants to share how the Scripture spoke to them in a special way. It values their ability to search, analyze, and sense that God is speaking to them.
3. Reminder: This lesson applies to our relationship to the world corporately or as a local church, as well as to our communication with others in our practical, everyday life.

thinking it through

5 minutes

1. Have the participants read and reflect on the questions in the Thinking It Through portion of this week’s lesson (5 min).
2. After a few moments, invite them to share where they feel they want to be more deliberate about how they communicate non-verbally or in their actions towards others.

reflecting Jesus & His kingdom

40 minutes

1. In Groups of 4–5, invite the participants to begin the activities in the Reflecting Jesus and His Kingdom handout. Start with the open discussion about their experience with communication with and without words.
2. In the parable of the man who gave instructions to two different sons (Matthew 21: 28–32), discuss the positives and negatives of both responses to the Father’s command. Clearly, this parable is a direct challenge to the Pharisees (the son that said he would go but did not) and the Jews who said they would obey, but failed to reconcile the world to God. Instead, they created rules and traditions that made getting to know God more difficult rather than accessible. The temple is a good example: The temple services were meant to create a dwelling between God and people. It was meant to tell the story of God’s redemption to ALL who come before Him trusting in the blood of the Lamb. The temple became a place for mindless religion and exclusivism. Again, the actions and deeds spoke volumes to the surrounding culture of Jews in the days Christ came.
3. In Matthew 21:28–32 the story is told of a father who commands his sons to work in the vineyard. One says, “yes” but does not go to work. The other son says “no” but changes his mind and goes to work. What is the lesson? Why do you think this story is told? What is the context of the story? Note: The word repentance (metanoeo) means “to change your mind.”
4. In the parable of the wise and foolish builders (Matthew 7:24–27) there is another challenge to be “doers” rather than just “hearers.” Again, this parable rails against the idea of “just hearing” and values the hearing and doing. There is a challenge to listen (next session) and respond to complete a wise way of living.
5. Question 4 is a personal question that does not need to be answered in groups but still needs to be answered.
6. The last part is simply some advice for how our communication in other cultures or settings could be improved.

next steps

10 minutes

1. Ask the participants to get together with their Spiritual Companions to discuss their progress on their IDP.
2. Invite them to pray together to be more effective communicators in word and deed.

summary

5 minutes

There is a dual lesson about communication: 1) action and what communicates beyond our speech, and 2) Ambassadors, the church, and the Seventh-day Adventist church are sending a message to the world beyond our speech; what message is being sent? Who we are and what we do speaks as much as anything we will ever say.



SESSION 7

participant's guide

communication: mean what you say



SESSION 7

communication: mean what you say

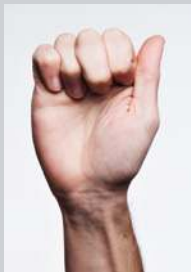


did you know...

Researchers report about communication:

- 7% of meaning is in the actual words that are spoken.
- 38% of meaning is in the way that the words are said.
- 55% of meaning is in facial expression.

A



E



F



I



K



M



“Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions”

1 John 3: 18





mission briefing

1. What do these verses say about relationships or value of actions or expression in Christian relationships/mission?

a. 1 John 3:7-10, 16-18

b. 1 Peter 1:13

c. James 2:14-20

d. James 3:13-18

e. 2 Corinthians 3:2

f. Colossians 4:5
2. Which passages above speak to you about your relationships with others?
3. Again, how do these verses affect our normal, everyday communication interaction with others? How do these messages of wisdom affect our communication with the world we are called to reach?





thinking it through

1. As you reflect on your own strengths and weaknesses as a communicator, write what you think is your chief strength in communication, as well as your weakness.

2. What are some things you can do be more aware of your non-verbal communication to the world and to those around you?



reflecting Jesus & His kingdom

The focus of this portion is on how Christ emphasizes actions and going beyond simply speaking with words. This is true in our communication as well as in our mission to reconcile humanity back to God. Our words and speech matter, so we are careful about what comes out of our mouth. Also, we are dutiful to express that same message with our actions. Below are some powerful parables used by communicators (Christian and even non-Christians) to teach and support the challenge to do what we speak.

1. Answer and discuss individually or in groups.
 - When in your life have actions resonated nicely with your words/speech?

 - Perhaps you can think of a time or two when your actions were not in line with your words, which conveyed a different message.

 - Are there times you can recall when good actions were able to communicate effectively without words?



2. In Matthew 21:28-32 you can read the parable of the father who commanded two sons to work in the vineyard. Discuss the parable and the positive and negatives of both son's responses. Ultimately, which son did the Father's will?

3. In Matthew 7:24-27 read the parable of the wise and foolish builders. What distinguishes success from failure?

4. There is a saying in the world of communication: "Promise less, deliver more." What are some promises you need to deliver on?

Tips for communication in Multi-Cultural or unfamiliar settings:

Often, as Christians we find ourselves in unfamiliar settings where the culture, values, and traditions we are accustomed to are not practiced. Especially in such settings where words, language, and speech are already problematic modes of communication, your actions, expressions, and manners can say more than words will ever communicate. Below are only a few prompts: expand and add to the list with your group!

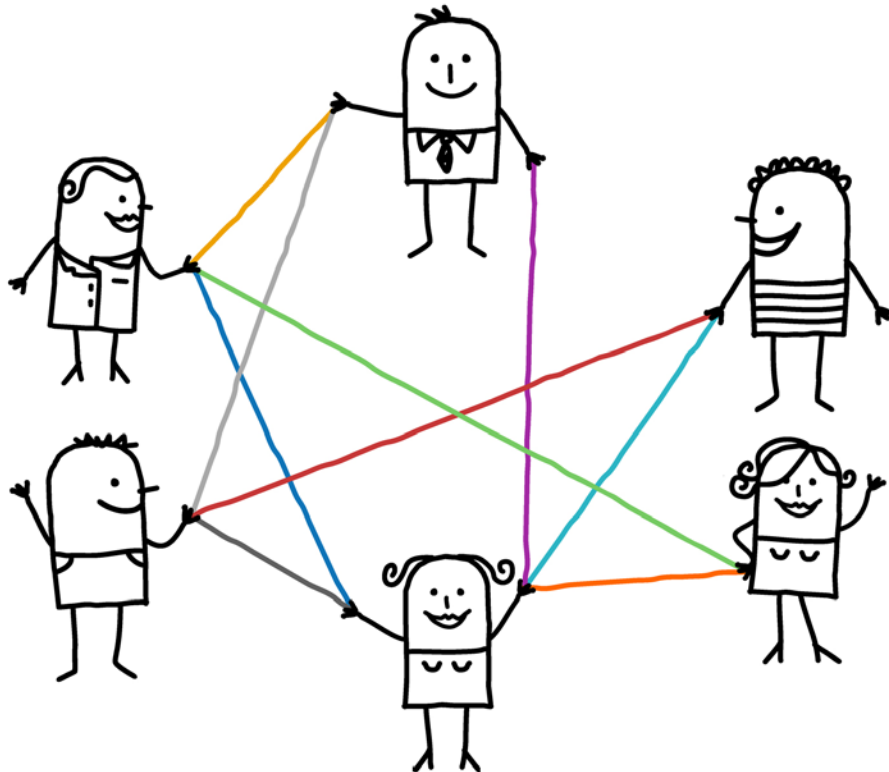
- a. When going into a new community, the word to shape your attitude is "incarnational." It means "to make yourself a part of their world." Immerse yourself with them. Not in their depravity or sin, but with them as they live and struggle. Walk with them. Listen to them. Be concerned about them. Incarnational immersion is to understand, value, and celebrate the attributes of their culture that are honorable.
- b. Learn to communicate in their language. Even if you can't be successful at it, trying will demonstrate that you value who they are.
- c. Listen to them and observe them extensively to see and hear their stories. Every culture, group, or community has a story—what is it?
- d. Where morals and ethics are not involved, be flexible and teachable. If women wear long dresses, so should you. If men never talk to women publicly unless related or married, you should follow that example.
- e. If you don't know what to do, ask a leader, elder, or someone in authority who knows well your questions. Of course, be respectful by saying, "I don't want to be offensive or disrespectful, but could you explain..." or "help me understand..."
- f. Learn all you can about their history, culture, good moments, and sad moments. You might ask, "Tell me more about..." or "Share with me some of your favorite stories..."
- g. Elevate what is good, beautiful, and true about them instead of the things that inconvenience or annoy you. You might notice the way they involve their children or take care of their neighbors or share hospitality. Perhaps you could say, "I noticed that people are often..." Be positive and specific about what you see, hear, and feel in their world.
- h. Listen. Listen. Listen. Someone who listens demonstrates the other person has value.



SESSION 8

relationships

leader's guide



8: relationships

session overview

leader notes

1. Communication is at the heart of growing relationships. Everyone is related in one way or another. Developing friendships and growing enduring relationships is perhaps the most meaningful task that humanity achieves. This lesson considers the nature of friendship, developing as a mentor, and choosing relationships that will cause you to grow in Christ.
2. Above all, this lesson will challenge Ambassadors to develop the skills to deepen, treasure, and multiply their influence in the world through collaboration and genuine love.

materials

1. Lesson handouts
2. Pen/Paper
3. Large paper/poster board/chalkboard if available

learning outcomes

| | Outcomes | Evidence of learning |
|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Head Participants will... | 1. Explore how relationships fit into the plan of God for humanity | 1. Bible study and group discussions |
| Hands Participants will be able to... | 1. Describe and affirm the relationships they have and seek to develop the friendships they desire | 1. Activities that demonstrate where they need to grow: Mission Briefing and Reflecting Jesus & Kingdom |
| Heart Participants will... | 1. A deeper joy in who they are as a child of God and how they fit into God's family | 1. Prayer and reflection |

extra resources

1. Check out some of the ideas in the Growing Disciples framework under equipping—building Christ-like relationships: <http://growingfruitfuldisciples.com/framework>
2. <http://www.smallgroups.com/articles/2011/relationalevangelism.html>
3. From Debate to Dialogue, by Deborah Flick
4. <http://www.experiencinghope.org/reconciliation/>

8: relationships

teaching plan

welcome

4 minutes

1. Welcome and Opening Prayer (2 min).
2. It can be said that people are the most precious value in the universe. If God would empty heaven because of His love for humanity then it stands to reason that relationships are critical to the plan of salvation. This session will build on the previous conversations about communication but focus on listening, learning about others, and fostering friendships that are godly and productive.

did you Know?

10 minutes

1. One of the most basic communication skills in a relationship is the ability to listen. Which fact in the Did You Know section caught your attention the most? Why?
2. Ask two participants if they would be willing to read Proverbs 18:13 and Isaiah 50:4 out loud. After reading the passage, ask the participants, without looking at their Bible, to recite each verse. If they cannot recite the verse then ask them to volunteer the key words or phrases. Chances are that many will not have absorbed what they heard. Now try reading the passage again, but this time prompt them to listen, saying: “Now, listen to each word and phrase because I will ask how much you will remember.” See how much more they understand and retain.
3. The challenge to deepen our relationships with others and with God by sharpening our listening skills is crucial. Under the facts is a challenge to listen **better**, **more**, and listen **first**. Ask the participants: Which of the three do you need the most practice with?

mission

briefing

15 minutes

1. Having focused on the topic of communication over the last three sessions it is time to transition from how we communicate to who we communicate with. Humans are hard-wired for relationships. In fact, man and woman are made in the image of God—together they comprise a human that has some of the attributes of God. Independently they form incomplete representations. In the Garden of Eden, God said, “It is not good for man to be alone...” The fallout with Cain and Abel is indicative of how we are meant to function well in relation to each other, and when we don’t, it is dysfunctional. Throughout history, relationships are at the very core of the plan of salvation. It is difficult to think about anything without thinking about it relationally.
2. Divide the participants into groups of 3–4 to answer the questions in the Mission Briefing handout.
3. The first activity is something the groups can discuss for 1–2 minutes.
4. The bulk of time should be spent on reading, marking, and evaluating the “one another” verses given in

the Mission Briefing handout. In groups they are to make their own response and then explain why they answered the way they did.

**thinking
it through**

10 minutes

1. Give participants about five minutes to read, reflect, and respond to the two questions given (5 min).
2. Ask the participants to share in their group of 3-4 their responses and comment on what they learned from each other (5 min).

**reflecting Jesus & His
kingdom**

40 minutes

Divide the participants into groups of 3-4.

1. The first activity in the Reflecting Jesus & His Kingdom section is a simple pictorial description of the relationships that each participant currently has. It is a way to “see” opportunities for growth and for gratitude. Give them about five minutes to make their stick figure representations and draw the appropriate connections. Then invite them to share what their observations are of their relationships. What do they value about their current relationships? What do they wish was better? (7 min).
2. As the participants survey and discuss the three snapshots of relationships in the life and ministry of Jesus, consider a few comments or notes to share if necessary:
 - Mark 2:1-5: The paralytic was carried by “four.” Four friends chose to do whatever was necessary to bring their friend to Christ. Verse five indicates that when Jesus saw “their faith” He extended forgiveness, then healing. It was the faith of “four friends” that moved Christ.
 - John 1:43-51: The one to one work of Philip and Nathanael is an interesting dialogue of mutual friends who are earnestly trying to follow the true Messiah. Their conversation is not an example of coercion but an example of “come and see” collaboration.
 - Acts 4:31-37: The dynamics of the New Testament church are often heralded as a model, but the church was filled with racial division and suspicion (Acts 6) and serious problems organizationally and theologically (Acts 15), but this snapshot shows the unity even though they did not all “like each other” or always agree.
3. Roam around and listen to the conversations about the Seven Attributes of Christian Friendship. Invite them to add characteristics to the seven examples if they have suggestions.

next steps

10 minutes

1. As the participants meet with their Spiritual Companions, allow time for them to share their progress on their IDP.
2. Urge them to pray for the relationships they currently have that need God’s guidance and grace the most.

summary

5 minutes

How do we know God? He reveals Himself to us in a variety of ways. We pay attention to what He says, what He does, and what we think about Him. We listen. The same is true for how we learn to relate to one another—we pay attention and participate in each other's lives. This session is an earnest challenge to refine and renew our commitments to each other as a way of honoring our commitment to God.

Throughout Scripture we find people who are not perfect in relationships, but pursue a righteous desire for deeper growth.

David fostered relationships with Jonathan, Abiathar, Nahash, and Hushai.

Elijah and Elisha forged an enduring connection in ministry together.

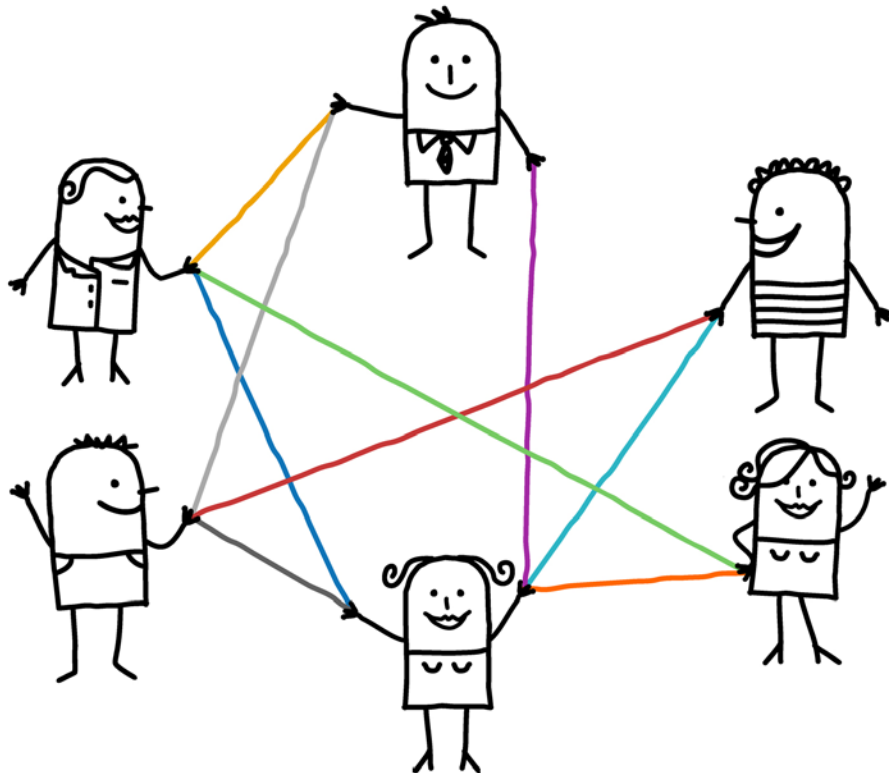
Ruth and Naomi formed a timeless relationship that has become a model of loyalty, beauty, and providence. Paul had numerous relationships with fellow believers as listed in Romans 16, not the least of which with Timothy.

Pay attention to the ties you have. Pay the cost of strengthening them with your time and energy.

SESSION 8

relationships

participant's guide



SESSION 8

relationships



did you know...

Facts About Communication

1. Seventy to eighty percent of our time awake is engaged in some kind of communication. Of that, we spend...
 - 9% writing
 - 16% reading
 - 30% speaking
 - 45% listening
2. Most of our formal communication training is in writing, reading, and speaking, while very little training is given to developing the skill of listening.
3. You can think faster than anyone can speak. Most speak at the rate of about 125 words per minute. Yet our brains are fast enough to understand 400 words per minute if it were possible to communicate language that fast.
4. When you listen to a public speaker you use only 25 percent of your mental capacity.

We can listen **better**

We should listen **more**

We need to listen **first**

“My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak
and slow to become angry”

James 1:19





mission briefing

1. What human relationships have the most impact on your:
- | | |
|--------------|-------|
| Faith | _____ |
| Family | _____ |
| Education | _____ |
| Occupation | _____ |
| Social Life | _____ |
| Eternal Life | _____ |
2. The following passages show the height, depth, and breadth of how believers ought to relate to one another. Listen carefully to the verbs in the verses. You will notice that the action words challenge the Christian community to relate well to each other. Underline or circle the verb that describes the relational action we all must engage in and then...
- Write an “H” next to the verse that is comparatively hard to do.
 - Write an “N” by the verse that is something you feel you need to do more.
 - Write a “C” next to the verses would bring the most change to your lifestyle.
 - Write an “R” next to the passage that seems to offer the richest reward.

God-centered relationships are committed to...

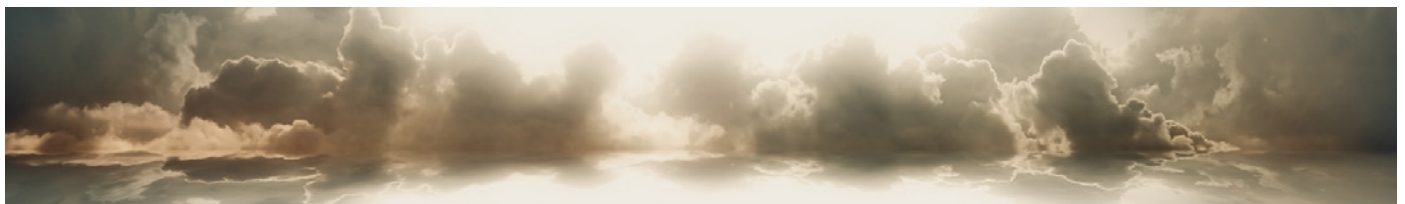
1. Love one another – John 13:34 & John 15:12,17
2. Forgive one another – Ephesians 4:32 & Colossians 3:13.
3. Be servants to one another – Galatians 5:13
4. Show hospitality to one another – 1 Peter 4:7-10
5. Pray for one another – James 5:16
6. Build up (edify) one another – Romans 14:19, 1 Thessalonians 5:11
7. Greet one another – Romans 16:16, 1 Peter 5:14
8. Forbear one another – Ephesians. 4:1-2 & Colossians 3:13-14
9. Do not judge one another – Romans 14:13
10. Do not speak evil of one another – James 4:11
11. Do not murmur against one another – James 5:9
12. Do not bite and devour one another – Galatians 5:15

13. Do not provoke and envy one another – Galatians 5:26
14. Have the same care for one another – 1 Corinthians 12:25–26
15. Receive one another – Romans 15:7
16. Teach one another – Colossians 3:16
17. Admonish (counsel) one another – Romans 15:14 & Colossians 3:16
18. Submit to one another – Ephesians 5:21–22
19. Confess your sins to one another – James 5:16
20. Do not lie to one another – Colossians 3:9
21. Be kind to one another – Ephesians 4:32
22. Comfort one another – 1 Thessalonians 4:18, 5:11



thinking it through

1. What “one another” verse do you sense God calling you to practice today?
-
-
2. Reflect and share with your group what you think might happen to a community of faith if they were to actively and faithfully obey the “one another” challenges.
-
-



reflecting Jesus & His kingdom

Opening Activity

1. On a page of paper, put a stick person in the middle of the page and write “me” under the drawing. Quickly draw as many stick people in your sphere of influence (people you come in contact with on a regular basis, i.e. classmates, co-workers, acquaintances in town, church

members, young people who look up to you). For this exercise there are three levels of relationships described by a:

- dotted line (acquaintances)
- thin line (know well)
- thick line (deep, enduring friendship)

2. Read three different snapshots of relationships that occur in the life and ministry of Jesus. Describe the nature, action, and effects of the relationships found in:

- Mark 2:1–5

- John 1:43–51

- Acts 4:31–37

3. Review individually the Seven Attributes of Biblical Friendship and then discuss in your group: a) Which do you think is most relevant to you today, and b) which would make the work of reconciliation more effective today.

1. Christian Friends are selfless and sacrificial: “Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15:13)
2. Christian Friends’ Love is Unconditional: “A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.” (Proverbs 17:17)
3. Christian Friends are reliable: “A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.” (Proverbs 18:24)
4. Christian Friends listen and advise well: “Listen to advice and accept discipline, and at the end you will be counted among the wise.” (Proverbs 19:20)
5. Christian Friends are committed to growth: “Wounds from a friend can be trusted” and “As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.” (Proverbs 27:6,17)
6. Christian Friends maintain healthy boundaries: “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy...” (1 Corinthians 13:4)
7. Christian Friends Believe in you: They believe the best about you even in your weakest moments. “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.” (Luke 22: 31,32)

SESSION 9

leader's guide

growing relationships—dating





9: growing relationships—dating

session overview

leader notes

1. The next few sessions will develop the Christian perspective of relationships with the opposite sex. Because young people in ancient history were married at a much younger age than today there is not a large body of direct instruction from the Bible on dating. Nevertheless, there is much in the way of biblical principles that could be applied as well as wisdom from various Christian sources.

materials

1. Pen/Paper
2. Lesson Handouts

learning outcomes

| | Outcomes | Evidence of learning |
|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Head Participants will... | 1. Learn principles for healthy relationships with members of the opposite sex | 1. Discussions in Mission Briefing and Opening activities |
| Hands Participants will be able to... | 1. Establish personal goals for relationships and setting personal boundaries | 1. Personal Reflection time and Reflecting Jesus and His Kingdom activities. Interviews |
| Heart Participants will... | 1. Value an openness to allow God to shape their friendships with integrity and wholeness | 1. Commitments in the Reflecting Jesus section |

extra resources

1. *A Call To Stand Apart*, Ellen White. Selected passages for Young Adults
2. *Boundaries in Dating: How Healthy Choices Grow Healthy Relationships*, Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend.
3. *I Kissed Dating Goodbye*, Joshua Harris. A book against conventional western dating and accepts the view of courting.

9: growing relationships—dating

teaching plan

welcome

5 minutes

1. Welcome and Opening Prayer (2 min).
2. This session will feature discussions on dating practices and principles as well as biblical values that will remind Ambassadors that there is no separation, difference, or distinction between their social and their spiritual life. It is possible that dating is such a culturally nuanced experience that this session should feature as much of a conversation about communication, expectations, and boundaries than the details of how, who, when, and if of dating.

did you Know?

10 minutes

1. The Dating Questionnaire is designed to get young adults talking about the nature of their relationships at this season in life. Many might be married, and so dating is seen in another light. Many are in the process of courtship, and so these conversations will affect them differently than those who are not. Be sensitive and nimble to the people gathered for this discussion. Most of the questions are really value based questions; seek to get them to discuss their perceptions at this time.
2. Divide the group into groups of 4–6, or, if the entire gathering numbers under 12–15, keep them together for this part. It is important that they be able to share their responses. Invite the participants to answer privately the Questionnaire on Dating and be ready to share ideas.
3. Go through each question briefly and discuss their ideas about people and dating. Feel free to affirm and encourage their responses—it is important that they feel confident in learning about relationships.
4. Read or summarize in your own words the following “History of Dating.”

Background/History on Dating

The idea of dating has emerged more in modern culture and was not really a function of society in ancient times. In the “old days” men and women entered into courtship if there was an interest. Adulthood arrived so much earlier in life, whereas today many young adults are marrying later.

Dating became a social phenomenon in the last 50–100 years depending on where in the world you live. And still much of the world believes in arranged relationships and dating is not even a relevant consideration.

Nevertheless, a man and a woman are designed by the Creator to be drawn to each other to experience intimacy and companionship in a committed, eternal relationship. So, how do you get there?

In some parts of the world this occurs through conversations with families and is already negotiated by the time young people are in their mid-teen years. In other parts of the world young people are constrained to go to school, get a job, and become independent and then consider finding a mate after their life is in order (dating is perceived by many to be what you do in the meantime to prepare for marriage).

On one end of the spectrum there are Christians who must become ready to relate as husband and wife at a young age, and on the other end of the spectrum are Christians who are older and learn to relate in less structured environments. Both are Christian.

Of course, there are advantages and disadvantages to both approaches. We are not going to evaluate the cultural norms of families in this session but it is essential to challenge young adults to deepen their sense of identity in Christ as a candidate for relationships with the opposite sex.

mission

briefing

10 minutes

Divide the participants into groups of 2-3 for this activity. Invite them to choose two verses each to read and report the central message in the passage. Then share among each other what they each read (this will increase the efficiency of the time). The Bible study is really about the believer's identity with God.

- 2 Corinthians 5:16, 17: New creation. For a purpose.
- 1 John 3:1-3: As children of God, we become like our Heavenly Father.
- Deuteronomy 7:6: God has chosen to operate this way.
- 1 Peter 2:9: The big difference between this holy priesthood that is set apart is that they belong to God and know it. The world doesn't yet.
- 1 Peter 1:16: This verse may challenge people the same way that it does when they read, "Be perfect, even as I am perfect." Humans are made in the image of God. They are meant to reveal God's character to the world.
- Leviticus 20:26: In choosing Israel God did not value them more than the nations, but simply knew that one group would have to take the mission of sharing. Who could do that? At that time—Israel.
- Romans 12:2: There are patterns, habits, and norms for the world and for believers. Just because it "seems normal" doesn't mean embrace it. Allow God's plan to orient all our endeavors.

Note:

The passages of Scripture offered all have one common theme—identity. Who you are in relation to God shapes and frames every other relationship you have. Your relationship with God clarifies your relationship with your parents (Honor them). Your relationship to God clarifies relationships with the church (Galatians 6:10 and all the "one another" verses studied previously). Your relationship with God launches you into the world to be salt, light, a sweet smell, a cup of cool water, and more. If you are in harmony with God, bathed in His grace, empowered by His Spirit, any relationship you have will be right because of where you start—with who you are as a child of God.

Invite the participants to discuss questions 2 & 3 in their Mission Briefing handout and conclude with a summary and paraphrase of the following:

"So dating is not really the central question or answer today. It is not whether or not to "date" or "how to



date” or “when and how long should young adults date.” The real issue is: Who you are when/if you date and who you are becoming in your relationships to others. “

**thinking
it through**
10 minutes

1. Invite the participants to reflect and respond to the questions in the Thinking it Through portion of their handout (5 min).
2. If they are comfortable, or if it seems helpful, invite them to share their thoughts and reflections (5 min).

**reflecting Jesus & His
kingdom**
40 minutes

Divide the participants into groups of 4–6.

1. The first question has to do with the difference between an integrated life or a compartmentalized life. Below is a brief summary with examples:

Think of the basic difference in how people integrate their life and compartmentalize their life.

Compartmentalize

- Spiritual life, beliefs, and walk with God all occur in structured activities (church, prayer, fellowship).
- Vocational or educational life is on its own, separate from your walk with God.
- Social life, friendships, and relationships are not directly connected or affected by faith.

Integrate

- Commitment and relationship to God is primary—the first, best, and most of your heart, soul, and life. (Deuteronomy 6:5)
- Work or School grow out of your identity in Christ and a desire to be responsible, productive, and helpful to the world you live in.
- Relationships, social life, and your interest in the opposite sex are driven by your understanding of how God made you to grow into a marriage one day.

2. The next section requires the participants to read Ecclesiastes 3:1–15 and discuss the relationship to dating and the information given on the difference between the compartmentalized life and the integrated Christian life. There is ample information given for them to discuss, agree or disagree, and even add to.
3. Question 3 involves responding to the advice from the prophets and apostles of Christ. In Ellen White’s counsel she gives such a warm affirmation of her identity and a direct, honest warning, as a prophet should.

Note: The full letter and book, A Call To Stand Apart, is online:

<http://whiteestate.org/godsmessenger/resources/A%20Call%20to%20Stand%20Apart.pdf>

4. Invite the participants to write three principles/commitments about how they will proceed in relationships.

next steps

10 minutes

1. As the Spiritual Companions meet together, invite them to discuss the highlights of the IDP thus far.
2. Encourage them to pray for each other and the relationships they have now and will have in the future.

summary

5 minutes

Overall, the idea of dating may be in front or behind you. The whole notion of dating may be irrelevant to some cultures, but the principles and character qualities that make us Christian also make great opportunities for rich, eternal relationships. First and foremost, who you are in Christ determines your role and relationship to everything else. When that part is settled, you will see the promise Christ gave unfold in your life: “Seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (Matthew 6:33).





SESSION 9

participant's guide

growing relationships—dating



SESSION 9

growing relationships—dating



did you know...

Dating Questionnaire

1. A date should be... (List three 1-2 word descriptors)

- _____
- _____
- _____

2. After how many dates do you think there should be a discussion about the status of the relationship?

3. Rank the following character qualities in order of what helps make a date a rewarding experience for both.

_____ Communication

_____ Selflessness

_____ Respect

_____ Creativity

_____ Integrity

_____ Simplicity

4. Do you think dating should be more of a group activity than an exclusively private occasion? Why or why not?

5. What do you think are some important ground rules for dating?

“Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I
press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me”

Philippians 3:12



mission briefing

1. Read the following passages and discuss what each passage declares about who you are in relationship to God.
 - 2 Corinthians 5:16, 17
 - 1 John 3:1-3
 - Deuteronomy 7:6
 - 1 Peter 2:9
 - 1 Peter 1:16
 - Leviticus 20:26
 - Romans 12:2
2. How does your relationship to God define your relationships to others?

3. What role do you see dating playing in the development of your identity with Christ?



thinking it through

1. First, reflect on who you are in Christ today. What has God done for you and brought you through?
-
-
2. Next, where do you want to be? What ultimate goals do you have as a believer about relationships and marriage? In light of these two questions, how do you think you should proceed in fellowship with the opposite sex?
-
-



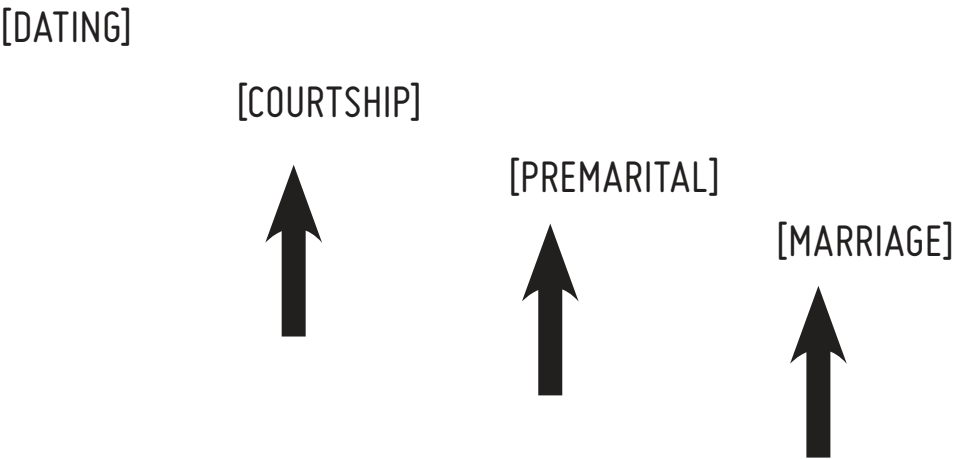
reflecting Jesus & His kingdom

1. What does it mean to live an integrated Christian life versus living a compartmentalized life?

| Compartmentalized Life | Integrated Christian Life |
|------------------------|---------------------------|
| <hr/> | <hr/> |
| <hr/> | <hr/> |
| <hr/> | <hr/> |

2. As a group or individually, read Ecclesiastes 3:1-15. Connect the message of Scripture to the follow comments.

Every season of relational growth has its own rules and boundaries. For example, there are activities, conversations, and behaviors that are appropriate for marriage but are not healthy for dating or courtship. The most obvious example would be sexual activity; it belongs healthfully in marriage but it is ultimately destructive in any other context. Even sexual activity does not begin physically, but much like the seasons of relationships below, moves on a continuum. Sex starts in the mind, in unspoken expressions and the nature of conversations that continue to build. Our relationships follow a similar progression.



The arrows represent the area where the boundaries experience stress. They are normal, not evil, but not to be ignored. As you progress in a season (all seasons progress because relationships are never static) you begin to press and stress the boundaries of where you are and where you are heading. Because of this, Christians must be grounded by biblically enduring principles of individual character.

- 3. Review the following advice from faithful apostles and prophets of God and determine what might apply to your practice of dating or how you relate to the opposite sex.
 - a. To the young adult Timothy, Paul declares:
“So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart” (2 Timothy 2:22).
 - b. Paul declares to those in the secular—even corrupt—city of Corinth a message of consecration (1 Corinthians 6:15–20).
 - c. To those going into a 70-year season of Babylonian captivity, God says, “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (Jeremiah 29: 11).
 - d. To a young lady in Australia named Nellie, Ellen White instructed:

Dear Nellie:
I am thankful to God that you love the truth and that you love Jesus... Let the Word of God be your guidebook that in everything you may be molded in conduct and character according to its requirements. You are the Lord’s property; He created you and He re- deemed you... You have a sacred responsibility, one that requires you to keep your soul pure by consecrating yourself to be wholly the Lord’s. Your friends who are totally opposed to spiritual things are not under the leadership of Christ but under the black banner of the prince of darkness. To associate with those who neither respect nor love God—unless you associate with them for the purpose of winning them to Jesus—will be a detriment to your spirituality. If you cannot change their attitudes, their influence will corrupt and taint your own faith. It’s good to be kind to these persons, but not good for you to continually try to be with them and do the things they do; for if you choose the atmosphere that surrounds them, you will forfeit the companionship of Jesus.”
(A Call To Stand Apart, Ellen G. White. Review and Herald, 2002. P. 74–75.)

- 4. What three principles will you use in shaping your interaction with the opposite sex?

SESSION 10

relationships: courtship

leader's guide



10: relationships: courtship

session overview

- leader notes**
1. Relationships are the backbone of the human experience. This session will take a step closer to marriage, the ultimate goal in relationships between men and women.
 2. During this session, attempt to get the participants to engage in discussions about the questions, challenges, and counsel for moving towards a purposeful and enduring relationship. The previous principle of Christian identity and boundaries in dating still apply to courtship; in fact, they become more of a non-negotiable expectation. The closer you get to marriage on the continuum the more your character and identity become critical.

- materials**
1. Lesson Handout
 2. Paper/Pens or Pencils

learning outcomes

| | Outcomes | Evidence of learning |
|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Head Participants will... | 1. Learn how to recognize the sacred opportunity to explore God's will for couples to grow together | 1. Bible study in Mission Briefing |
| Hands Participants will be able to... | 1. Flesh out a tangible description of where their character strengths lie in relationships as well as their weaknesses | 1. Reflecting Jesus & His Kingdom Exercises. Introduction activity |
| Heart Participants will... | 1. Feel a deeper sense of joy and trust in God's plan for their future | 1. God's will is... study in the Mission Briefing |

- extra resources**
1. *A Call to Stand Apart*, by Ellen White
 2. *Leave Dating Behind: A Road Map to Marriage*, by Christina Rogers
 3. *101 Questions To Ask Before You Get Engaged*, by Townsend and Townsend

10: relationships: courtship

teaching plan

welcome

10 minutes

1. Welcome and Opening Prayer (2 min).
2. Review any insights from the last session that you think are important to remember. One theme that recurs is moving young adults from focusing their attention on the “other” person in the relationship to first being about what God is doing in “me.” Whether you choose to date or how you date, even the question of “who” you date, is secondary to who you are in Christ.
3. This session is about the movement from exploring friendships to moving closer to serious conversations and commitments to someone you believe you might marry. If you are entering into exclusive commitments with people without the view of marriage in mind you will undoubtedly experience heartache and miss the mark. The natural progression of a relationship is a movement toward greater intimacy and commitment, and intimacy without rules or commitments without contracts eventually will dissolve. Our challenge will be to consider the best practices of courtship.

did you know?

10 minutes

1. Divide into groups of 4–5. In the “Did You Know” portion of the handout there are three statements. Invite the participants to evaluate the three statements and then choose the one that they resonate with the most. Have each explain their response.
2. Below the statements is a Venn diagram (used to compare and contrast—where the middle space is for characteristics that are held by both sides). The purpose is to show the difference between dating and courtship because many confuse them, and relationships get damaged as a result. Urge the groups to collectively come up with at least 1–2 goals for each and then 2–3 boundaries/rules for each and write them on a full size piece of paper. Display or report on all of the diagrams.
3. Read the passage from Philippians out loud and invite the groups to briefly discuss the idea Paul shares about goals and how we transition from one season to the next in our relationships. (The purpose of Paul’s message is about his relationship with Christ and his apostolic goals. Applied in a new context of relationships with each other there is definitely some wisdom.)

mission

briefing

10 minutes

1. Divide into groups of 4–5 to answer the questions in the Mission Briefing Handout. How do you know if someone is “the one” or “the right person” to pursue courtship with? Is there only “one”? First we should go to Scripture for insight and then we will address that question more fully. Read the following and discuss how each passage offers a skill for entering more fully into a relationship. Urge them to come up with “one word” answers.

Below are the verses and a few suggested one word answers to use when debriefing:

Honesty

Philippians 1:9 (“pure and blameless” evokes transparency and genuineness. No games, deception, or manipulation).

Effort

2 Peter 1:5-7 (“make every effort” indicates that the qualities for growth come not as a result of love, but love comes as a result of practice).

Discernment

Luke 6:43-45 (an analogy Jesus tells about observing and judging the truth about someone).

Grace

2 Peter 1:8-9 (Everyone who enters into a relationship needs grace, and to know that source of growth and success begins with an acceptance of what Christ has done for us).

Guidance

Philippians 4:8 (This list of markers functions as a guide for thoughts and actions).

2. Asking the question, “Are you the right one for me?” also includes asking “am I the one for them?” Even still, the whole thought is backwards. Instead of asking “are you the one for me” or “am I the one for you?” believers ought to ask:
 - Is the One in me?
 - Is the One in them?

“You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world” (1 John 4:4).

**thinking
it through**
10 minutes

1. Give participants about five minutes to read, reflect, and respond to the two questions given (5 min).
2. Ask the participants to share in their group of 3-4 their thoughts on how hard it is to have biblically Christian relationships in this era (5 min).

**reflecting Jesus & His
kingdom**
40 minutes

Quiz on Courtship

1. Defining courtship is complicated, but words are given to stir the conversation. Potential is by far the word in that every relationship has potential—for good or evil. Also, possibilities is problematic because it is obvious, of course many things are possible. Choosing what is best, right, good, or true is another matter. Compatibility is not a bad option but it is not what defines enduring relationships. You may have heard the saying, “Birds of a feather flock together”—which maintains that the more compatible you are the more likely the success. It is also true that “opposites attract”—but just because they attract doesn’t mean they grow together. Feasibility. This works little better because it seeks to choose what might work well.

2. Question 2 addresses the conversation of God's will and choosing someone to eventually marry. The discussion should be interesting, but the answers given are positioned at the extremes. The key is that God expects you to choose well and He has a will, but instead of it being about who you marry it is about how you relate to Him. Again, those who walk with God rarely stress out over this question because they have submitted themselves to Him first.
3. This value oriented question is designed to get them to explore how well we know each other and whether time or quality produces better relationships. The answer is "both." Time allows for better quality; although some can get to know each other in scenarios that are more intensive, those who take their time tend to endure.
4. Question #4. Invite the participants to answer individually first and then share with their group. Feel free to open up the conversation for all the participants. Ask: What do you think are the most troubling statements?
Note: most of the statements tend to make excuses for at-risk behavior. There is also the expectation or assumption that marriage or a commitment will change the person. Warning: If they are not trying, working, and surrendering to the work of change in their life now, it is dangerous to assume marriage will change that attitude.
5. Question #5. The statements take a more positive, proactive approach to relationships. Invite them to consider the questions individually, then with the group.
6. Finally, affirm each group for their responses. Next, invite them to add four statements that would be warnings and four statements that would be positive to the statements already given. If there is time, have them share a sample statement from both lists.

next steps

10 minutes

1. As the Spiritual Companions meet, invite them to share how they are progressing on the IDP. Take time to share what has been helpful about the series on relationships thus far and what you hope to learn.
2. Take time to pray for the relationships you are involved in.

summary

5 minutes

Courtship is that serious stage between a man and a woman where they are seeing each other exclusively and considering the feasibility of marriage. Again, the most crucial work to be done is NOT to change or alter another person, but the work God will do in you as you surrender to Him. Continue to recognize that every relationship has rules and that those rules define the nature and success of our relationships. Know that in the coming session we will consider the decision work of an engagement. What are the tasks for those who engage to be married?

SESSION 10

relationships: courtship

participant's guide



SESSION 10

relationships: courtship

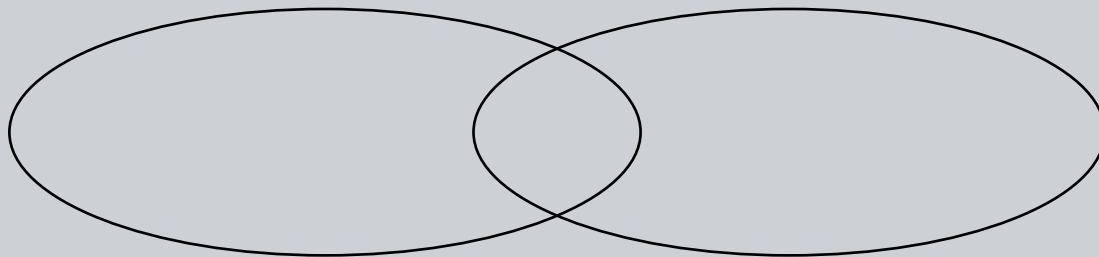


did you know...

- If you have no goal or objective then you will probably achieve it.
- If you have no expectations or ambitions about relationships then you will rarely be disappointed or grateful.
- If you have no standards for success or failure then you will never gain or lose anything.

Dating

Courtship



Goals & Boundaries (Dating)

Goals & Boundaries (Courtship)

“Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus”

Philippians 3:13, 14





mission briefing

This study will explore the tools needed to negotiate the growth and intimacy of our relationships.

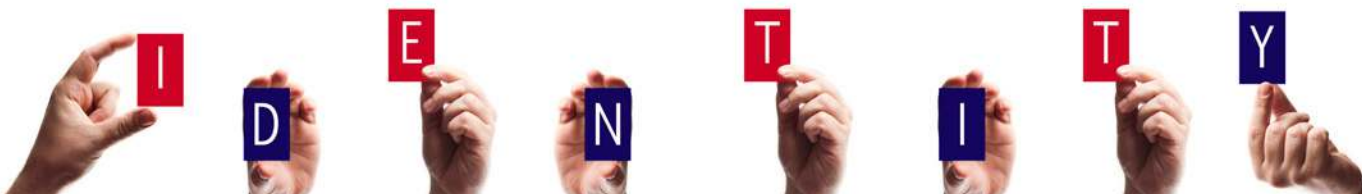
1. Read the following and discuss how each passage offers a skill for entering more fully into a relationship. Try to offer a “one word” answer (tool) for each passage.
- Philippians 1:9

• 2 Peter 1:5-7

• Luke 6:43-45

• 2 Peter 1:8-9

• Philippians 4:8
2. How do you know if someone is “the one” or “the right person” to pursue courtship with? Is there only “one”?



thinking it through

1. When it comes to relationships with the opposite sex, is my relationship to Christ the foundation of every thought and decision I make?
2. What commitments do you want to resolve today about your relationships?





reflecting Jesus & His kingdom

1. Definition of Courtship: Courtship is a committed friendship that considers the _____ of marriage.

- a. Potential
- b. Possibility
- c. Compatibility
- d. Feasibility

Which word corresponds best with the theme of this session? Why?

2. Do you believe God has a person who is the perfect match for you? If so:

What does it mean to match perfectly? Does it mean that there is no effort, no compromise, no struggle, no sacrifice, or growing faithfully through adversity?

If not:

What role does God play in our personal lives? Does it matter who we marry? Does God simply want us to choose well and make good decisions?

3. Either/Or: Choose one and explain your position:

The longer you know someone before marriage, the greater the likelihood of marital satisfaction.

Or

The better you know someone before marriage, the greater the likelihood of marital satisfaction.

4. During a courtship that is moving toward a formal engagement or betrothal, which attitudes should cause the most concern or warning?

- a. "He/she may not have the spiritual convictions or commitment I have, but if they did God would do great things with them."
- b. "He/she does not seem to have the ambition to finish what they start, but maybe they just need to find the right opportunity."
- c. "The person I am with seems to have emotional outbursts often, but he/she will get control of that anger as soon as things start to fall into place for them."
- d. "My partner tends to eye members of the opposite sex in a way that makes me feel uncomfortable, but that will go away when we are married; he/she will only have eyes for me once we are committed."

- e. "My partner doesn't communicate or share easily with me on a deeper emotional level, but once we are married it will draw them out and help them be more expressive."
 - f. "My partner constantly avoids social or fellowship settings and wants to spend time only with me. I appreciate it, but it feels like I have to choose. Perhaps when we are married, that will change."
5. 5. Which statement do you feel conveys the most encouraging attitude toward marriage?
- a. "I'm not always sure what he/she is thinking and feeling, but when I inquire we tend to understand each other."
 - b. "I will love her/him the right way if I focus on loving Christ first."
 - c. "Protecting the physical boundaries we have set in not a constant struggle."
 - d. "I feel free to state my opinion without fear or worry, even if I know my partner may disagree."
 - e. "Not only do I love him/her, I admire them for their courage and integrity."
 - f. "We have experienced sadness and disappointment, but with God there is no challenge we can't overcome."
6. Add your own hypothetical statements, four positive and four negative that would cause warning, to the lists given in questions 4 & 5. Try to come up with samples that are not represented already.

SESSION 11

leader's guide

premarital insights—counsel



11: premarital insights—counsel

session overview

leader notes

1. This session of the premarital season of a relationship assumes the couple is already engaged and has thoughtfully, prayerfully, and experientially practiced the personally grounding in Christ that makes people good marriage material.
2. Please note that a Bible study session/group lesson is not sufficient premarital preparation. The purpose of this conversation is to expose participants to the conversations and experiences they will find beneficial as they prepare for marriage.

materials

1. Lesson handouts
2. Pen/paper

learning outcomes

| | Outcomes | Evidence of learning |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Head Participants will understand that... | 1. The nature of marriage is not the end goal of relationships but the enrollment in a new learning relationship that glorifies God | 1. Bible study and discussion on the essential nature of marriage |
| Hands Participants will be able to... | 1. Make the decided shift in their approach to marriage from finding the right person to becoming a selfless, mature, child of God | 1. Initial introduction activities and Reflecting Jesus & His Kingdom discussion and sharing |
| Heart Participants will value... | 1. The hope and praise to God for the opportunities to develop eternal relationships | 1. Reflection and prayer during the Thinking It Through section |

extra resources

1. Brief Online Temperament Test. <http://www.humanmetrics.com/cgi-win/jtypes2.asp>
2. *Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts*, Les and Leslie Parrott
3. *A Call to Stand Apart*, Ellen White
4. *Five Love Languages*, Gary Smalley

11: premarital insights—counsel

teaching plan

welcome

2 minutes

1. Welcome and Opening Prayer.
2. Reconnect the participants to the continuum or the seasons of relationships: dating, courtship, engagement, and marriage.

did you know?

10 minutes

1. In groups of 2–3, read the Did You Know introduction in the lesson handout. The opening graphic displays several statistics, facts, and quotes that pertain to this session. Invite the groups to read the statements and discuss the following questions in groups.
2. If couples tend to spend more time and energy planning the wedding than the marriage, what do you think is the solution to changing that dynamic?
3. The statistic of young adult's perceptions on being in love is not surprising. However, what does it mean that young adults can't agree on the essential ingredients of love? When you say, "I love you," it is possible that two people express different meanings? Do you know how you and your partner define and experience "love"?

mission

briefing

10 minutes

Divide the participants into groups of 4–5 and answer the questions in the Mission Briefing Section.

1. The voting activity (agree or disagree) picks up the question from the introduction, "Is love all you need?" The data suggests that being in love is what everyone "knows" or believes to be what equips a couple for marriage.

Thoughts to Share:

- First of all, when we say "I love you" and mean many different things, how can love be "all you need"? There is so much more, but it helps to discover what the other person means when they say it or do it.
 - What are some of the words you would use to describe the essential qualities of love? List five of them now privately and let's see how we do. (Have them answer and see.)
2. The next question dives into Scripture looking for ideas about how two people can prepare well for marriage. The passages given are conceptual, but consider how they might help. After they discuss it amongst themselves, say:

If it is true that...

Marriage is the reason "a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh"(Genesis 2:24), then the question is not, "How do I find a soul mate?" but "How do I BECOME a soul mate?" A soul mate is not someone you find but someone you become over time.

If it is true that...

A good spouse is equal to finding true “goodness” (Proverbs 18:22), then the question is not, “How am I finding a good spouse?” but “How am I doing at becoming a good person?” You cannot control what others do and become, only what you can do and become.

If it is true that...

According to Proverbs 30:18–19, the dynamics between men and women are amazing—even a mystery—then the question is: “How will I treat this season with respect and wonder?”

3. For this question, perhaps you might share the following:

The phrase “bound together” carries the idea of two unequal animals, such as an ox and a donkey, being harnessed together to perform a task. The ox pulls against the donkey and the donkey works against the ox, resulting in constant friction and an ultimate stalemate.

Warning: Do not compromise or rationalize in this area. Everything we have studied up to this point leads to the union of two people starting with a deep, abiding relationship to God. It is too easy to say, “We both believe in God so that should be a good start...” Absolutely not. That is like saying, “He said he loved me, that should be enough.” It isn’t.

Your unique faith as a Seventh-day Adventist Christian living at the end of earth’s history is a unique opportunity to bond with those who are committed to the cause of Christ and His church. And create homes that are united in faith, doctrine, practice, and the future.

thinking
it through
10 minutes

1. Give participants about five minutes to read, reflect, and respond to the two questions given.
2. Ask the participants to share their responses in their group of 3–4. Comment on what they learned from each other.

reflecting Jesus & His
kingdom
40 minutes

1. The first activity in this section has to do with surveying God’s explicit will. If people are diligent to do what God has already said to do, rarely do they ever wonder, “Which person should I marry?” or “What should I do?” After the participants look up the passages and respond, debrief to help them with language, words, or ideas that they might have overlooked.
 - a. God’s will is that you: (Receive Salvation) All of these passages declare unmistakably that God wants to lose no one. So you can be charming, skilled, beautiful—but if you are lost, your marriage is forfeit.
 - b. God’s will is that you: (Grow) God wants us to change, transform, be sanctified in harmony with God’s plan, law, and love for people.
 - c. God’s will is that you are: (Filled with His Spirit) Those who walk with God are not lost or wondering which direction to go.

- d. God's will is that you: (Work with others with a servant's heart) Selflessness being the chief asset, no home can go wrong when partners serve each other selflessly.
 - e. God's will is that you: (Quiet the critics of faith with acts of goodness) People who extend grace, hope, and resources to those in need challenge all the lies and deceptions about God's plan and His Word.
 - f. God's will is that you: (Live with gratitude and enjoy an abundant, content life) People who are unflappable and resilient scream to the world and to their partners that there is an eternal goal worth giving everything for.
2. How are two people devoted to the explicit will of God better prepared for marriage than two people who were simply "in love"? The above principles make it clear that they are in God, and greater is the One who is in you than he that is in the world.
 3. What are the core questions young people should ask as they are engaged for marriage? "The seven key questions" (*Saving Your Marriage Before it Starts*, Les Parrott).
 - a. Have you looked honestly at the myths of marriage? Happily married couples have: Healthy expectations of marriage.
 - b. Do you know what love means to you and to your partner? Happily married couples have: A realistic concept of love.
 - c. Have you chosen to be happy no matter what comes your way? Happily married couples have: A positive attitude and outlook toward life.
 - d. Can you say what you mean and mean what you say? Happily married couples have: The ability to communicate their feelings in healthy, honest ways.
 - e. Do you really understand the differences and similarities between men and women? Happily married couples have: An understanding and acceptance of gender differences.
 - f. How do you practice negotiating through conflict and reconciliation? Happily married couples have: The ability to make decisions and settle differences/arguments.
 - g. Are you becoming a soul mate? Happily married couples have: A united spiritual foundation, practice, and goal.
 4. Which of the above questions seems to be the most relevant or important to you today? Why?
 5. This question is something couples can answer as well as good friends.
 - a. What do you admire about your partner/friend? What do you believe will be true about them whether you marry or not? In sixty years when they don't look anything like they do today, what will be true about them? (List three attributes.)
 - b. If you had to tell five stories that define who you are today, what five stories would you tell? Why?

next steps

10 minutes

1. Challenge the Spiritual Companions to meet and pray with each other. Share how this module has been helpful as well as what questions or themes still need further exploration.
2. Perhaps, if there is a moment or two, discuss how being married and getting married are ways in which God chooses to reconcile the world to Himself.

summary

5 minutes

As couples look toward preparing a wedding, they ought to look at preparing for the marriage. The best preparation is to be united with Christ first and allow the Savior to shape their thoughts and plans. Remember above all, a soul mate is not someone you find but someone you become over time. The work of becoming soul mates is a rich, purposeful walk in the same direction.



SESSION 11

participant's guide

premarital insights—counsel



SESSION 11

premarital insights—counsel



did you know...

- Eighty-six percent of couples tend to plan more for the wedding than formal preparation for the marriage.
- Question: What makes a good marriage? Ninety percent of young adults declared, “being in love.”
- “When over 1,000 university students were asked to list the essential ingredients of love, no single item was mentioned by at least one half of those responding.”

“And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.”

Philippians 1:9–11





mission briefing

1. Agree or Disagree: For marriage to succeed, love is all you need!
Explain your response.

2. The following are a few passages that shape the mind of marriage. Read the passages carefully and explore what it says about how we should prepare. It will not necessarily be explicit, but think “if this is true, then how should two people prepare?”
 - “For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24).

 - Proverbs 18:22: “He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the LORD.”

 - Proverbs 30:18, 19: “There are three things that are too amazing for me, four that I do not understand: the way of an eagle in the sky, the way of a snake on a rock, the way of a ship on the high seas, and the way of a man with a maiden.”

3. Read 2 Corinthians 6:14, 15 and discuss what it means to be “yoked” and what it means to be a “believer.”



thinking it through

1. What do you know you need to change about your walk with God and others in order to be oriented to being a soul mate one day?

2. What are some things you can do with fellow Ambassadors to make preparing for marriage a fully consecrated endeavor?



reflecting Jesus & His kingdom

1. So many young adults long for God to “show them” who they should connect with to develop an enduring marriage. If God has not opened the Red Sea to your future partner’s house, or He has not dropped plagues on every other option except the one you should marry, perhaps He has already spoken. In fact, below are specific things God has declared to be “His will for you.” Again, as you prepare for marriage, “be in God’s will” by doing the following:
 - a. God’s Will is that you _____
(Ephesians 1:11, 12; Matthew 18:12–14; 2 Peter 3:8, 9; Galatians 1:3–5; 1 Timothy 2:1)
 - b. God’s Will is that you _____
(Colossians 4:12, 13; Colossians 1:9–12; 1 Thessalonians 4:3–6)
 - c. God’s will is that you are _____
(Ephesians 5:17–21; Acts 1:7–9; Galatians 5)
 - d. God’s will is that you _____
(Ephesians 6:5–8; Philippians 2)
 - e. God’s will is that you _____
(1 Peter 2:15, 16)
 - f. God’s will is that you _____
(1 Thessalonians 5:16–18)
2. How are two people devoted to the explicit will of God better prepared for marriage than two people who were simply “in love”?

3. Below are seven key questions to ask when you are engaged first with God and then someone else. Read each question and discuss how this question is crucial in preparing for marriage. What Bible verses can you think of that support the thrust of these questions?
 - a. Have you looked honestly at the myths of marriage?

 - b. Do you know what love means to you and to your partner?

 - c. Have you chosen to be happy no matter what comes your way?



d. Can you say what you mean and mean what you say?

e. Do you really understand the differences and similarities between men and women?

f. How do you practice negotiating through conflict and reconciliation?

g. Are you becoming a soul mate?

4. Which of the above questions seems to be the most relevant or important to you today? Why?

Further Questions For Couples to Explore:

5. Every couple headed for marriage ought to reflect and share the following questions:

a. What do you admire about your partner? What do you believe will be true about them whether you marry or not? In sixty years when they don't look anything like they do today, what will be true about them? (List three attributes.)

b. If you had to tell five stories that define who you are today, what five stories would you tell? Why?

SESSION 12

marriage and parenting

leader's guide



12: marriage and parenting

session overview

- leader notes**
1. During the season of marriage couples experience stages of growth that grossly overshadow the seasons of dating, courtship, and engagement. The task for this session is to elevate the glory of what God chose to do with man and woman becoming husband and wife. Also, it is appropriate to discuss how those stages shape the broader task of raising children and serving the cause of reconciling sinners to a loving God.
 2. Moreover, this session involves activities that deepen one's knowledge of God and are repeated throughout the rest of eternity.

- materials**
1. Lesson handouts
 2. Pens/pencils
 3. 3 X 5 cards
 4. Stationary or paper, envelopes, a candle, and matches to melt wax

learning outcomes

| | Outcomes | Evidence of learning |
|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Head Participants will... | 1. The institution of marriage extends beyond their love and commitment to each other to a larger, worldwide fraternity | 1. Introduction activity and discussion |
| Hands Participants will be able to... | 1. Explore the biblical implications of marriage as well as the practical glory of relationships | 1. Mission Briefing study and discussion & Reflecting Jesus and His Kingdom study and discussion |
| Heart Participants will... | 1. Feel a sense of duty and commitment to honor the sacredness of God's plan for marriage | 1. A covenant or commitment to be what God has called us to be |

- extra resources**
1. Great books by Les and Leslie Parrott:
 - *Becoming Soul Mates*
 - *The Love List*
 - *The Complete Guide to Marriage Mentoring*
 - *51 Creative Ideas for Marriage Mentors*
 2. *Adventist Home*, Ellen G. White
 3. *Patriarch and Prophets*, Ellen White, Chapter 2
 4. *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*, John Gottman & Silver Nann

12: marriage and parenting

teaching plan

welcome

5 minutes

1. Welcome and Opening Prayer (2 min).
2. The overarching theme of this module is grounded in reconciliation, relationships, and communication. As this series concludes with the culmination of marriage and parenting, it bears repeating that healthy relationships are formed by healthy people. Some think that marriage has a way of fixing character problems and tendencies—even emotional hurts. But the truth is that marriage exacerbates individual brokenness rather than covers it up.

did you know?

10 minutes

1. Read the three statistics and research shared and individually write 1-2 comments or questions about each, then share in your groups your responses.
2. Of the three insights shared, what do you think would be the most important truth to share with the world about marriage? Why?

mission

briefing

10 minutes

1. Divide the participants into groups of 3-4 and ask them to begin answering the questions in the Mission Briefing handout. Invite them to devote two minutes to each question.
[For added resources on the institution of marriage in the Garden of Eden, read *Patriarchs and Prophets* and notice several insights into God's plan for the family in creation, pp. 46-47.]
2. In the question that contains the quote from Dietrich Bonhoeffer, there is a statement: "It is not your love that sustains the marriage, but from now on, the marriage that sustains your love."
Discuss this with the participants from the standpoint of: 1) Is love enough to sustain a marriage? 2) When people define, display, and communicate love differently, how can "love alone"—especially human love—ultimately sustain a marriage? 3) How is it that the divorce rate among arranged marriages are lower than in western, self-selected partnerships?
(Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "A Wedding Sermon from Prison," <http://preachingtoday.com/32781>)
3. If you were to describe marriage through a symbol of a plant, type of weather, or a particular animal, which would you choose and why? (This activity gets young adults to think conceptually about the institution of marriage using a metaphor, which creatively and effectively expresses certain aspects of meaning.)

thinking it through

10 minutes

1. Give participants about five minutes to read, reflect, and respond to the two questions about marriage from God's point of view.
2. Ask the participants to share in their group of 3-4 their responses and comment on what they learned from each other about the difference between cost and value in our relationships.

reflecting Jesus & His kingdom

40 minutes

1. Divide the participants into groups of 4–6 and invite them to answer the questions in Reflecting Jesus & His Kingdom. Begin with the first question where the young adults are challenged to look up and read the passages on parenting. They are to identify the three passages that resonate with them and seem to be most relevant for the world today.
2. Question #2 encourages the groups to study the Shema (Deuteronomy 6). It was the summary for educating children in the ways of God. It is loaded with practical advice as well as a conceptual challenge to love fully and completely. Invite the participants to explain what they think it means to “impress them upon your children.” Another powerful phrase in this passage is, “Let these words be upon your hearts.” How do these two phrases relate to parenting from your point of view?
3. The sample vows are for participants to explore the nature of promises, both the content and the sound and sacredness of a vow. Every home is based on the promises those who make up the home keep. Urge the participants to share which vow seems to convey their view of a Christian home the most.
4. The final activity is a challenge to write vows now to give to their future spouse. Give them paper and an envelope to seal with melted wax. Say: If it is your desire to prepare yourself for an enduring marriage relationship, write out your vows and seal them up for the future. Your commitments can start with, “Beloved, I promise to...” Use the envelope provided and save it until the day you commit to uniting your life to someone else.

next steps

10 minutes

1. As you debrief with your Spiritual Companion, share what you are grateful for in the relationships you cherish.
2. Pray specifically for the relationships that will flourish in the future.

summary

5 minutes

As you make your promises to God and to someone else, use this moment to consecrate your life to God. As God has reconciled you, enter into relationships that seek to bring others into the knowledge and grace of God.



SESSION 12

marriage and parenting

participant's guide



SESSION 12

marriage and parenting



did you know...



- Did you know people who stay married live four years longer than people who don't?
- Divorce and Mediation Project reports: "80% of divorced men and women said their marriage broke up because they gradually grew apart and lost a sense of closeness, or because they did not feel loved and appreciated. Only 20–27% of couples said an extramarital affair was even partially to blame."
- "In 2003, for every 1,000 people there were 7.5 marriages and 3.8 divorces filed." If this is true, does it mean that 50 percent of marriages end in divorce?

"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and the wife were both naked and were not ashamed."

Genesis 2:24, 25





mission briefing

1. Read the narratives that describe marriage in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 1:27, 28; Genesis 2:21–25). What are some observations you see about the nature of this relationship God instituted? Respond to the following questions and comments in Genesis. What are some questions that remain that are not explicitly answered by the text?

 - Mankind is the combination of male and female. What are the implications for understanding the biblical family?

 - What do you think it means to be made “in the image of God”? In what ways are we like God, and in what ways are we not at all like God?

 - Part of God’s original plan was to “be fruitful and multiply.” Obviously, this suggests that sexual intimacy was a part of the plan. How has this become the target of the enemy attack on humanity and the home?

 - How is the description of how Eve was taken from Adam a segue into a prophecy about marriage? God seems to set up the way men and women would leave their parents and become one flesh in marriage. Knowing that this happened prior to sin and part of God’s projected plan, what should be our attitude toward marriage?

 - What is the connection between being naked and not ashamed, but after sin being naked and feeling ashamed?

2. Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote about the relationship between love and marriage in a sermon while he was in prison:
“Marriage is more than your love for each other. It has a higher dignity and power, for it is God’s holy ordinance, through which He wills to perpetuate the human race till the end of time. In your love you see only your two selves in the world, but in marriage you are a link in the chain of the generations, which God causes to come and to pass away to his glory, and calls into his kingdom. As high as God is above man, so high are the sanctity, the rights, and the promise of marriage above the sanctity, the rights, and the promise of love. It is not your love that sustains the marriage, but from now on, the marriage that sustains your love.”
What is your response to the observation: “It’s not love that sustains the marriage but the marriage sustains your love”?



thinking it through

1. What do I believe is the purpose of marriage from God's point of view? How would marriage deepen my walk with God and broaden my understanding of His love?

2. Perhaps you have heard the statement, "Don't let the cost distract you from its ultimate value." How is this true about marriage? The Christian life? Children? Be ready to share your responses with your fellow participants.



reflecting Jesus & His kingdom

1. As you read the following passages of Scripture, identify the three key verses that you feel are particularly relevant to raising children today.
 - Ephesians 6:4
 - Colossians 3:21
 - Proverbs 29:15
 - 1 Thessalonians 2:7
 - Psalms 144:12
 - Proverbs 22:6
 - Deuteronomy 4:9, 10
 - 1 Corinthians 3:10-15
 - Luke 11:11-13
2. In Deuteronomy 6:4-9 there is an overarching message to the Israelites who were born in the desert. What words and phrases speak personally to you about how to raise children?

3. Read and discuss the key words and phrases in the most classic wedding vows:
 - a. “I, (name), take you (name), to be my (wife/husband), to have and to hold from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish; from this day forward until death do us part.”
 - b. “I, (name), take you, (name), to be my lawfully wedded (husband/wife), my constant friend, my faithful partner and my love from this day forward. In the presence of God, our family and friends, I offer you my solemn vow to be your faithful partner in sickness and in health, in good times and in bad, and in joy as well as in sorrow. I promise to love you unconditionally, to support you in your goals, to honor and respect you, to laugh with you and cry with you, and to cherish you for as long as we both shall live.”
 - c. “I, (name), take you, (name), to be my beloved (wife/husband), to have and to hold you, to honor you, to treasure you, to be at your side in sorrow and in joy, in the good times, and in the bad, and to love and cherish you always. I promise you this from my heart, for all the days of my life.”
4. What are the major promises being made? If a marriage consists of blessings and challenges, identify how the vows reflect the promise to be faithful in both.

5. The final activity is a commitment letter where the participants read and reflect on the sample wedding vows given. Consider all that has been studied and discussed about relationships, both to God and people. Begin this day a journey of consecration to God’s plan for your marriage and family.

On the piece of paper available, write vows—simple promises that you make to God privately in prayer—and to the one you will give it to when you are married.

It should begin with:

Beloved, I promise...

Whether you are currently in a relationship or not, the promise you make is much like a marriage vow. You are solemnly declaring a promise that you, and you alone, can keep. God has promised to strengthen you and guide you through His word and a community of faith.

icebreakers

The following icebreakers can be found at: <http://fervr.net/youth-group/top-13-youth-group-mixers-icebreakers>

Fongo Bingo

(from the famous
James Fong!)

Each person is given a piece of paper and a pen. Everybody is given about 5 minutes to go around the room and collect the names of 6 people in the room they don't know well. They must find out 3 things about each person on their sheet (i.e. name, school, family, pets, worst haircut, etc.). When everybody has 6 people on their sheet they take their seats again and we play Bingo! The leader up the front will have a list of everybody in the room and their names (if you don't have a roll, you will need to collect everyone's names as they enter). To play bingo the leader up front will read names off the sheet in a random order. People tick off the names on their sheet as they are read aloud. Whoever is the first to tick off all 6 of the names on their sheet and yell "Bingo!" wins the game. That person will receive a prize and should be asked to introduce all 6 people on their sheet and say what they found out about them.

People Pictionary

Split the group into 2 teams, A and B. Everyone has to write down some things about themselves and what they like on a card that can be used as clues in a game of Pictionary (i.e. For Mike – a motorbike, drums etc.). The leader of the game then calls up the first delegated drawer from each team and shows them a card from a person on the opposite team, they go back and try to draw the clues on a piece of paper so their team can guess who it is. When the team has guessed, another drawer runs up to the game leader to grab another card from the opposite team and so on until the team to guess all their cards first is the winner. It will be important for the cards to have a name on them so the drawer will know if their team's guess is the right answer.

Memory Match Card Game

(This game really only works with a small group, otherwise it takes forever...)

Each person is given 2 cards that they write their name and something unique or interesting about themselves. All the cards from the group are mixed up and put face down on a table. Each person in the group then takes turns trying to find a set of matching cards by selecting 2 cards and turning them up the right way. If a matching set is found, that set is taken off the table and that player gets another turn. If a matching set isn't found, those cards are returned face down to the same position and the turn moves on to the next player.

Variation: Each person is given 2 cards to write 3 unique things about themselves (the same 3 things on each card). Their name is not to be written on the card. All of the cards from the group are mixed up and put on a table face down. Each person in the group then takes turns at trying to find a set of matching cards by selecting 2 cards and turning them up the right way. When a set of matching cards is found the player who found them must guess who the set belongs to before taking the set off the table and having another turn. If they guess incorrectly the cards are turned back over and the turn moves on to the next player.

The following icebreakers can be found at: <http://voices.yahoo.com/five-fun-icebreaker-games-tweens-7962238.html>

Remember My Name

I love to use this fun icebreaker to help kids learn and remember everyone's names. Adults leading the youth activity or hosting the party will also benefit from participating in this one with the tweens and teens. I've found this game to be a great memory jogger to help me keep everyone name straight too.

Have the group form a circle. Choose someone to start the game by introducing herself, choosing a nickname that begins with the same letter as her first name, and telling the group why she selected that nickname. Move around the circle by the next person first repeating the nicknames of those before him, and then adding his own at the end. Continue until everyone in the group has a turn. If they make a mistake or forget one along the way, have them repeat them all again.

Here's an example: Her name is Crazy Carla, he's Funny Frank, she's Mellow Melanie, and my name is Jazzy Jo (because I love music and used to play the clarinet in a jazz band).

The Chair Game

The Chair Game is a hilarious, more grown up version of musical chairs. It gets tweens and teens moving, talking, and laughing together. It also is helpful for working off some of the rowdiness before sitting them down for calmer activities or discussions.

Set up the chairs (use one less chair than the number of players) to form a large circle and have all the preteens and teens sit in a chair, except for one person. The one teen without a chair stands in the center of the circle. He or she then makes one statement, such as "Anyone who did their homework today." Everyone who did their homework that day must get up and find a new seat, not directly beside where they already are. The person in the middle must try to sit in a seat before someone else does. The person left standing without a seat must then stand in the middle and call the next statement.

community service project planning

module 6: RELATIONSHIP

introduction

The goal is to identify a needy cause and devise a medium/long-term plan to meet that need in the community. The emphasis is on the project being local and the participation being sustained over a period of time.

1. Introduce the idea of an Ambassadors' community service project. Describe it as an integral part of the Ambassadors' experience that begins now.
2. It would be advisable to do some prior research before approaching your group with the following tasks or you can choose to begin the process with the participants.
 - a. Identify a needy cause in the community that would benefit from the Ambassador's help. You might come prepared with a list of services offered in your community that need volunteer help or start brainstorming with the group. At some stage, this will require some research and consultation with volunteer services and the city/village council. Examples might include:
 - Health services
 - Mentoring
 - Community clean-up
 - Vulnerable citizen help (e.g. children of prison inmates)
 - Vulnerable families support
 - Food services
 - Seminars and classes
 - Community events
 - Fundraising
 - b. Explore as many options as possible and do a realistic evaluation of each one on the basis of your resources, time, and personnel.
3. Choosing the Project
 - a. Vote/decide on a short list of three or four for closer evaluation.
 - b. It would be advisable to do a site visit of the short list.
 - c. Have a feed-back session after the visit.
 - d. Prayerfully, choose the final project.
4. Get ready to participate in the community service project.
 - a. Present the idea that serving others with a loving heart and without any conditions requires some self-assessment and re-consecration to God.

- b. Take some minutes to lead the participants in the following in the participant guide:
 - Write down your reaction to the idea that you will give away your time and effort for free.
 - Write down how you really feel about it, not what you think you should feel.
 - If you find any objections in your mind to giving time and effort to others, write those down too.
 - Apply the Golden Rule to the plans the group has made.
 - Write down your reaction to giving to others what you'd like to receive if you were in their "shoes" (their situation).
 - Write a commitment statement that expresses what you pledge to do for God through serving the chosen group in the community.
 5. Plan a field trip to the final project site.
 - a. Sign up participants so that all have a commitment to a time and place for the visit.
 - b. Make the visit a combination of learning the details of the organization's work and some time that the participants spend doing a sample of the work.
 - c. At the visit itself, ask participants to think about their experience and prepare to debrief at the next session when you will ask them to share their reactions to the community service visit.
 6. Assuming that the response is positive and the group seems ready to proceed, ask participants to assist you in planning the following:
 - a. Decide on overall goal
 - b. Define tasks involved
 - c. Determine time commitment and schedule
 - d. Assign volunteer positions and duties (a mix of leaders and participants)
 - e. Seek permissions if needed
 - f. Work on budget if applicable
 - g. Obtain insurance if applicable
 - h. Plan for equipment and supplies if applicable
 - i. Plan for regular evaluation of goals
 7. Arrange the bi-weekly or monthly project schedule and duration.
 - a. Get a clear list from the organization's representative that states expectations and requirements.
 - b. In situations that require background clearance, arrange for background checks.
 - c. Take time to coordinate participants and sign them up for particular times and dates of service.
 - d. Create and show a record in which you will log the main activities of the group.
 - e. Record the plans and share aspects of it and the progress at each session.

**mid-way through the
module**

1. It's time for a formal review of the initial community service efforts.
2. You can prepare a formal review form or simply record in the log the responses given by participants.
3. Take a careful look at how the activity is developing. Is the group truly meeting the needs identified at the beginning of the module? Does the activity seem to fit the group? What is God telling you about what has happened so far?
4. Take the participants through some minutes of free-flowing discussion of their experience.
5. Steer them toward the goals of serving the community without condition and for no reason but to give.

**at the end of the
module**

1. Celebrate what has been accomplished thus far.
2. Decide if the group will continue with the same project or choose a new one for the next module.
3. The designers of the Ambassador program would encourage continuity as much as possible.



AS THE FATHER HAS SENT ME, SO I AM SENDING YOU
AMBASSADORS