

SESSION 5

INVITE EVERYONE TO MORE

In this fifth session, we will explore Invite Everyone to MORE: how to be truly curious and open to the Spirit, and how to invite people to discover more with God. First, let us open with prayer.

Highlights to Remember

1. **Pay attention.** Look and listen for the Holy Spirit's prompting, and look and listen for moments when it might seem as if someone wants to be invited. Then you can share an authentic, generous invitation appropriate to the moment. It should be based NOT on a formula or predetermined "good" outcome, but rather on whatever God is up to in that moment and on your genuine desire to celebrate that moment.
2. **Be authentic.** Stay rooted in what makes your relationship with God in Christ unique. Stay tethered to that hope and joy, and share your invitation from that place. Remember that you're showing up with openness to whatever God wants to do in this person's life through you and your story.
3. **Be present.** Inviting does not have to be imposing. It's a ministry of presence. When we are in tune with others, we can offer a generous, non-imposing invitation. If someone says, "I lost my job and am so confused about where my life is going," don't respond with a generic invitation to church. Instead, share a story of how your faith has provided direction in your life. Share a scripture passage that helped you through a rough time or a book that God used to encourage you, or simply invite the person to walk or pray with you. Whatever being the loving presence of God with this person looks like, do that. Then wait for the Holy Spirit to open the door to MORE.
4. **Use your words.** If you're being authentic and present – to God and to the person you are with – the words will come in time. In our Baptismal Covenant, we do not promise to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through perfect words and deeds. Instead, we make these promises as we are –awkward and a bit flawed – with God's help. In Luke 12:11-12, Jesus promises his followers: "Do not worry about how you are to defend yourselves or what you are to say; for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that very hour what you ought to say." Evangelism is about simultaneously showing up and getting out of God's way.
5. **Know your motivation.** There's a good chance that many people you know and encounter are lonely. Only about half of Americans have daily meaningful in-person social interactions. In England, there is a cabinet-level position – a Minister of Loneliness – to combat an "epidemic of loneliness." When we invite people to MORE with God, then share our stories and invite theirs, and then celebrate God's loving presence in both, we help to remove the deep aloneness many of us experience. In Genesis 2:18, God says that it's not good for humans to be alone. Jesus lived, ministered, died, and rose again within the context of community. The truth is, human beings thrive when we are heard, wanted, and loved. Who doesn't want a life with more love, more connection, more liberation, more hope, more meaning? That life is possible with Jesus. Sharing about it might be the most powerful motivation for evangelism.

6. **Be brave.** Chances are you will experience rejection if you make an invitation. Some people don't want to connect with the Spirit or with faith. Or perhaps you will not be the one to unlock the door and draw them out. You can't force it, get attached to a particular outcome, or take the response personally. Create a hospitable space where people feel valued, heard, and held. Offer people the opportunity to taste and see for themselves the goodness of God. The rest is up to them and to God.

Exploratory Exercise: Invitation Matters

Use StorySharing in a circle to share a story about an invitation that made a difference in your life. Remember these helpful guidelines:

1. Listen deeply. Listen again. Then listen again.
2. Assume response-ability for yourself.
3. Speak only when it is your turn.
4. Give each person equal time.
5. Be a participant, not just an observer.
6. Get out of the information mindset and listen for feeling and experience.
7. Resist the temptation to use Prayer Book speak.
8. Never argue or debate another person's story.

Recall a moment when you received an invitation that made a difference in your life. Reflect:

- What was the invitation?
- What was happening in your life during that season?
- Why did the invitation matter?
- Who made the invitation?
- What lasting effect has that invitation had on your life?

Share your answers to these questions in the circle.

Brief Discussion

- Why did that invitation work for you? Maybe the invitation came in one of these ways:
- What would NOT have worked?

Discussion & Reflection Questions

You may not have time to discuss each question in depth, so consider taking time to reflect on these questions yourself.

Now that you have had a chance to reflect on an invitation that mattered, what would you say to the person who shared it with you?

How did this exercise and conversation shift the way you view and approach invitation?

Try It Out

Before the next session...

You know the difference an invitation has made for you. When you've got time on your own, create an index card invitation, naming the invitation you most hope to offer and the person with whom you want to share it.

Reflect on the following and then, when you're ready, write it on your card: With whom have you had a poignant spiritual conversation? What is the *more* to which you feel God calling you to invite this person?

Share what you wrote on your card: Speak your hoped-for invitation to a partner in the group, or if you're alone, offer it to God. Take the card around with you. Pray for the person and for God's blessing on you both.

Notes