

Season of Invitation - Background

If needed, review that framework and context of why we're having this dialogue of invitation in our groups. We have a good transition from the first session in how everyone shared their personal conversion experience last time. In this second session, the discussion will focus around what our understanding or perspective of conversion might be.

Session 2 Objectives

These objectives might be helpful in shaping and guiding the discussion to a healthy landing spot by the end of the night.

- a. understand and affirm diversity of conversion
- b. healthy perspective that it's the beginning of the process and not an event
- c. recognize our own continual conversion is tied to inviting others into the conversion process (larger framework of spiritual formation and discipleship)
- d. importance and involvement of the Spirit in the ongoing conversion process

Conversion

Listen to each other's experiences of being invitational. We want to be careful not to turn this session into a rehashing of negative experiences and deconstructing the process and expressions of evangelism.

1. What emotions or thoughts come to mind when you hear the word "conversion"? What has been your understanding (or what have you been taught) of conversion?

How might our misconceptions of conversion affect our ability or desire to be invitational and engage those conversations?

Readings

Divide the group up to have everyone read one of the 4 passage/excerpts (so that all the passages are covered). Each of these readings are in a separate PDF (so remind your group to bring their laptop or phone and you can email them the documents to read during the group). We thought this would be a helpful exercise to have the group read different sources and let them become the various input for the discussion (question 2).

Scriptural examples of conversion

a. Paul vs Thessalonians (Acts 9:1-22 & 1 Thessalonians 2:7-13)

These are opposite examples of conversion - Paul being a miraculous event and turnaround, the Thessalonians being exposed to teaching and lives over time (possibly belonging before believing paradigm)

McLaren's Book - More Ready than You Realize

b. Event and Process chapter (McLaren)

McLaren highlights the diversity and process of conversion (not an event).

c. Reaching Christians for Christ chapter (McLaren)

Our own spiritual formation is incomplete without evangelism and we're also converted through the process of inviting another into conversion.

McSweeney's Blog

d. Reflections on Conversion (DLM)

The idea we're all being converted to something at all times.

Discussion

It would be helpful for people to understand that being invitational is core to our spiritual formation and it's not something that's outsourced to those in leadership or those who are "gifted in evangelism"). We may think there's a certain "way" that evangelism is done, but that's simply not true. We need to embrace the gifts and uniqueness in how each of us can be invitational.

2. How does your reading define or shape the idea of conversion? What or how does this understanding affect our ability/desire to engage invitational conversations?

How has it changed your perspective of what it means to have an invitational conversation with someone?

3. How do you view the relationship between conversion and discipleship and how it impacts our approach to being invitational?

(i.e. What's the relationship between Evangelism/ Conversion/ Discipleship?)

Statistically, people's interaction drops off after the "conversion" moment - there's a lack of followup and focus on development after the "conversion event". Maybe a healthier understanding and framework is viewing the entire process as discipleship. The only instruction Jesus really left us with was "making disciples" (not evangelizing or converting people) and so instead of isolating each component as a step in the process, it should all really be considered discipleship.

Perhaps a reminder would be helpful that conversion and discipleship is all facilitated and empowered through the Holy Spirit. God is the one who ultimately causes conversion and change. Our role is be available to simply be one step in the entire process of who someone experiences conversion and discipleship.

Exercise

The hope with this exercise is that there's a practical component of reflecting on our conversion and the reality of a continuing conversion that we hope to experience. It should help in our conversations with others knowing that we are also very much still in the conversion process ourselves as we invite others into that as well.

This could look like a scaled-down version of the Rhythm of Life, but with the intent on thinking through different areas of our lives that have experienced or need to experience conversion.

Give some time for people to write down their reflections on the following:

4. In what ways have you been growing or experiencing conversion in the past?

5. In what ways and areas do you currently need to experience ongoing conversion?

Spend some time sharing your reflections with the group.

Prayer

Close your time in prayer for any reflections that came from this time of dialogue and also allow space for any personal areas that require care.