

Season of Invitation - Background

If needed, review that framework and context of why we're having this dialogue of invitation in our groups. For those who haven't been part of the first two sessions, you can summarize the discussion and conversation your group has had in regards to invitation and conversion.

Session 3 Objectives

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

1. develop more clarity to the narrative of God's story
2. process through what aspects of God's story stand out and connect with you and your story
3. create a tool (55-word gospel) that will allow you to distill God's story in your mind in a compact form
4. the exercise is more about the process than it is the final product

55-Word Gospel Framework

Guidelines

- Make this as personal as possible - this should be a reflection of you and you communicate
- Don't feel pressure in "missing something"
- This won't be the perfect answer to the question "What is the gospel?"
- Although both are important, it's not so much about the final product as it is about the process
- Through the process of distilling thoughts down to 55 words, your words will be carefully chosen, but you should be able to expand on why you said what you said

NOTE: For those in your groups who may not know where they are in their own journey in following God, be sensitive to how this exercise may impact them. Maybe frame the context around, "What's your understanding of God's story?" or "How has God's story been communicated to you before?". Give them freedom to interact from a different perspective. This might be a helpful exercise from both perspectives.

The goal is to have a near finished product (at least a first draft) done by the night, but people can continue to tweak and edit their 55-word gospel until the next meeting.

55 Word Gospel Exercise (30 min)

For this exercise, stagger the resources that you provide. Provide the scripture context first and then after 15 minutes provide the examples.

a. Scriptural context for gospel narrative

Read through the Scripture passages for some context of for what to articulate. Give them freedom to also use other Scripture that are meaningful to them. Encourage them to write some initial thoughts.

55-Word Gospel examples

After 15 minutes or so, provide the examples to show the diversity of how it can be articulated. The hope is that each person will reflect and capture their 55-word gospel in their own way that reflects who they are and how they communicate.

Discussion

After the exercise, spend some time dialoguing through the experience and talk through some of the questions below.

1. How was the gospel communicated to you?

What were the things that provided you with an understanding of what God's story was and what did you connect with?

2. How might our understanding of the gospel be limiting or incomplete? Are there things that tend to get left out or added on to the gospel?

A couple of examples: The gospel has unfortunately been communicated as something you gain (personal salvation) and it's simply a transaction to receive a ticket to heaven. Or maybe there's a missing connection between what we do here and now in living out the kingdom of God.

3. How has our western individualistic society influenced what we communicate as the gospel?

In western culture, a lot of what's communicated centers around how we benefit or what we gain instead of what we give up and what we lay down. The call to model Christ's sacrifice and servanthood doesn't fit within our culture. God's story and the life of Jesus will always be at odds with the Empire that we currently live in (and pretty much every Empire throughout history)