



Equipment:

You will need - DVD player, TV, pens, leaders' guide and course members' sheets for everyone in the group.

NOTE: You will also need some sheets of flipchart paper and marker pens



Timings:

This session is timed to run for 75 minutes.



Session Aims:

- Exploring the great commission to GO and make disciples
- Recognising the number of people we connect with as churches and individuals
- Creating a culture of Invitation



Welcome and introduce the theme: (4 minutes)

Welcome people to the session and briefly recap what was covered in Session Three.

Ask people to share any experiences they have had of dropping faith bait into conversations and also to share the reactions of other people to the things they said.

You might also like to see if anyone has been able to identify a way of helping someone take the next step, based on last week's 'Staircase to Heaven' exercise.

Introduce the theme which is 'The Importance of Invitation'



Prayer: (1 minute)

Hand out the course members' sheets and invite everyone to join together in praying the Blackburn Diocese Vision 2026 prayer, or another suitable prayer.

Heavenly Father, we embrace Your call for us to make disciples, to be witnesses and to grow leaders. Give us the eyes to see Your vision, ears to hear the prompting of Your Spirit and courage to follow in the footsteps of your Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.



Exercise: You are invited... (5 minutes)

Ask the group to give examples of an invitation they were pleased to receive or to share some examples of invitations they would like to receive.

**DVD 4:1 (1 minute 30 seconds)**

Watch the first of the DVD programmes. Remember a subtitles menu is available on the DVD. ***Pause the DVD when the screen goes black***

DVD content

- Longing for empty seats to be filled
- Why don't they come?
- Jesus call for us to 'Go'.
- The need to connect with the world

**Bible: Matthew 28:16-20 (13 minutes)**

Ask a member of the group to read out the passage, you may like to ask someone in advance to avoid putting someone on the spot!

After the passage has been read, ask the group for any immediate comments or thoughts about the passage. Then consider the following questions:

- What is your reaction to seeing empty pews or chairs in church?
- Jesus gave his disciples a clear instruction to "go and make disciples"; why do you think churches have an attitude of waiting for people to come to us?
- Jesus' great commission is to go and make disciples of *all nations*, or sometimes this is translated as *all people*. Are there groups of people or age groups that your church finds it hard to reach? What steps could your church take to better equip it to reach all people?

**Exercise: Our Networks (15 minutes)**

Working together as a group, ask the group to list on a sheet of flip chart paper, all the different ways in which their church connects with the local community. Ask them to list the groups and contacts and if possible try to add to the list the number of people in each category. Tell them not to forget to include connecting with people through websites and social media. Add up the total number of people that the church connects with on a regular basis.

Points for discussion as a whole group:

- Ask the group to comment on their reactions to the exercise.
- How many different points of contact does their church have with the local community?
- Were they surprised by the numbers?
- In what ways has the church tried to share the Christian faith with these contacts?
- Has the faith sharing been through actions or words or both? Get some examples from the people in the group.

**DVD 4:2 (3 minutes 30 seconds)**

Watch the second of the DVD programmes for session 4, *pause the DVD when the screen goes black.*

DVD content

- Connecting through community activities
- A heart to share Jesus with others
- Ideas for outreach events

**Exercise: Jolly hockey sticks (6 minutes)**

Briefly comment that not only does the church have a range of contacts in the community but each of us also has an individual set of contacts. In the DVD, Penny spoke about wanting her friends in the hockey team to discover more about Jesus.

Ask the group to list or draw their personal network of connections with people who are not yet committed Christians. Encourage the group to think about work, leisure activities, hobbies etc. Invite the group to discuss in threes what steps they could take to share Jesus with their contacts.

**Exercise: A bit of a do! (14 minutes)**

Encourage the group to think of some of the social and outreach activities organised by your church. In what ways could these activities be used to communicate some aspect of the Christian Faith? If your church isn't currently doing any outreach events that share the Christian faith, would any of the ideas listed on the course members' sheet (the list is also at the back of these notes) be a useful starting point?

Using the list of potential outreach ideas, consider as a group which events might work well in your setting. You could encourage group members to circle the ideas that interest them.

Invite the group to suggest two outreach activities that would help people find out more about Jesus. Consider together the best way of getting your church to put on these events.

**DVD 4:3 (1 minute 15 seconds)**

Watch the last section of the DVD and then turn off the DVD

DVD content

- The fear of invitation
- People want to know more
- I'm going, it's going to be good, would you like to come?



Exercise: I'm going, it's going to be good, would you like to come? (7 minutes)

Get someone in the group to read out the passage on the course members materials.

40 Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. 41 The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). 42 And he brought him to Jesus. John 1:40-42

Comment briefly about Andrew taking the opportunity to invite Peter to come and encounter Jesus.

Encourage the group to think about the people they have committed to praying for. Ask the group to think of any activities organised by your local church or some other Christian group that they would feel able to invite them to. Get the group to discuss their thoughts in pairs.



Prayer: (2 minutes)

As a group, spend some moments in silence praying for the people on your prayer list. You may wish to have some quiet music playing in the background. Then ask God to help you to identify outreach events that you might be able to invite them to. Pray that your church would feel able to put on some outreach events.

Pray together the 'Being Witnesses' prayer:

*Lord, help us to be witnesses through our actions and our words.
May we be faithful in prayer, gracious in service and more confident in speaking.
We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Amen*



Take away activity: (1 minute)

Encourage the group to consider inviting someone to a church based outreach activity in the near future.

Outreach Ideas

Presence events:

Most churches already have an on-going presence in their local community and are well practised in running presence events such as:

- Spring fairs • Harvest festivals • Garden parties • Social events • Trips

Suggestions for presence events

- Coach trip outing
- Christmas Fair, Springtime garden party
- Community Action Day (litter picking, bulb planting, gardening, community celebration event...)
- Church open day, stalls, trip up the Tower, cream teas
- Memories and moments – afternoon for older folks
- Film nights
- Valentine's dinner
- Mums', Dads' and kids' football tournament
- Beetle drive with food
- Crazy Olympics for families

This experience gives us a good foundation to build on by either incorporating a proclamation element into our next social gathering, or to use it as the invitation for a proclamation event.

Proclamation events:

A proclamation event may look like a good social event or a special 'festival' type service. It is an event where the Christian faith is presented in an appropriate and attractive way perhaps through a relevant talk or testimony.

Suggestions for proclamation events

- Food and speaker event (Breakfasts, Curry nights, Medieval Banquets...)
- All Souls service
- Back to Church Sunday
- Mission weekend with guest speaker
- Themed Outreach Evening (Chocolate, Sports, Quiz night...)
- 'Pints of View' - Any questions event in a local pub
- Local pilgrimage – with short time of reflection
- Big stories – one or two local people talk about their life and faith, plus a speaker
- Big God night – questions, apologetics
- Reel Issues – Using clips from popular films to talk about life and faith
- Women's night out
- Teenagers' sleep-over
- Restaurant night
- Men's gathering

- Book night
- Supper party at vicarage
- Games night
- Agnostics Anonymous
- Creative arts – drama, music etc.
- Coffee Morning
- Hard Questions

Presence and proclamation events both work very well in conjunction with the major festivals.

As presence pours itself into proclamation, so proclamation filters itself through to persuasion.

Persuasion:

Persuasion is not twisting peoples' arms or coercing people to believe. It's allowing people space to explore and ask questions about the relevance and importance of the Christian Faith.

Suggestions for persuasion events

- Using Table Talk or Puzzling Questions resources
- Running an Enquirers' course (Start!, Alpha, Pilgrim, Christianity Explored, Life Explored etc.)
- Searching Questions – discussion events
- Themed presentation/discussion evening (Faith and Science, God and Suffering, Other Faiths...)
- Activity Day with natural opportunities to talk and discuss (craft, church walk, outdoor challenges and activities)
- Pints of View – pub based discussion evening
- Agnostic Anonymous group
- 'If you could ask God one question - what would it be?' Apologetics Evening
- Encounter Evening – Exploring Christian spirituality through creative prayer stations