



+ Generations Together

Going to Church

Here is an intergenerational session for all members of the congregation exploring the reasons and motivations for attending worship on Sunday, and the importance of being a welcoming community. This session is designed to be conducted in about 90 minutes, and can be adapted for a shorter or longer timeframe.

Introduction

People's reasons for going to church and participating in worship change. How the church relates to people of different ages also changes. By interviewing different people, you can better understand the purpose of church and a communal faith life. What's your motivation for being at church?

I. Gather

[use the following adaptation of the activity New or Visiting]

Needed

Necessary equipment to show the following YouTube video to the whole group: [What if Starbucks Marketed Like a Church? A Parable](#)

Activity Plan

1. Invite participants to form family groups or small groups of 5-6 persons. Begin the session with this short prayer:

God, you know I want to tell others about you, but sometimes I don't do it well. Guide my words and actions to reach out to others. Help me be an expression of your love and care for all people. In Jesus' name. Amen.

2. Say to the whole group: Most churches try to help visitors feel welcome, but sometimes they don't do a very good job of it. Invite participants to discuss these questions in their family/small groups:
 - Have you been a visitor in a church? If so, what was it like?
 - If you worship regularly, when was the last time you welcomed someone new to your church?Pray:
Invite at least one person from each age group (child, teen, adult) to share one of their responses to these questions.
3. Show this YouTube video: [What if Starbucks Marketed Like a Church? A Parable](#). Get some reactions from participants by asking the following questions of the large group and taking one or two responses for each:
 - What is your first impression of this parable?

- How would you feel visiting this coffee shop? Would you return for a second visit? Why or why not?
 - What might have made the experience better for the two visitors?
4. Ask participants to think about their own experiences visiting churches or welcoming new people to your church. Have them share in their family/small groups:
- What made the experience good?
 - What do you wish you would have done differently?
 - Why do you think first-time visitors to a church sometimes feel awkward?
- Once again, invite some sharing with the large group. Use their comments to draw conclusions about the need to be a sensitive, welcoming community. You might share with them some/all of the following Ten Reasons Why Guests Don't Return by Jim LaDoux
- a. A website that's outdated, boring and not user-friendly.
 - b. Signage, internal and external, that's inadequate.
 - c. Members that fail to greet guests and engage them in conversation.
 - d. Asking guests to stand during worship to be recognized.
 - e. Lack of user-friendly worship bulletins (hard to follow the service)
 - f. Hymns/songs they had a hard time singing.
 - g. Sermons/messages that left them grasping how to apply it to their setting.
 - h. Uncomfortableness around communion (Am I welcome?).
 - i. Nobody invited them to hospitality time.
 - j. Members seemed oblivious to their presence.

II. Grow

[use the following adaptation of the activity I Go Because]

Needed:

What's Your Motivation worksheet, 3 copies per person

Activity Plan

1. Ask participants to gather as one large group.
2. Give each participant one copy of the What's Your Motivation worksheet, and instruct them to complete it with their own responses. Young children may need assistance from someone older.

Invite at least one person from each age group (child, teen, adult) to share one of their responses to a question on the worksheet.

3. Now, give each person at least two copies of the *What's Your Motivation* worksheet. Tell them to interview at least two people in the room and ask them the questions on the worksheet. The persons they interview must be from a different family than their own and from a different age group (child, teen, or adult) than their own. (Again, small children may want to simply accompany an adult in this process).
4. After the interviews are completed, ask participants to rejoin their family/small groups. Invite them to discuss these questions:
 - How do the responses from your interviews compare with your own answers on the worksheet?
 - Do you see any overall patterns in the responses?
 - Can you draw any conclusions from those patterns?

III. Go Forth

Needed

[Copies of the activity *The Church—Why Stay* (one for each adult)]

Activity Plan

1. Invite participants to gather in a large group. Invite general discussion on these questions:
 - What have you learned about going to church and being a welcoming community today?
 - What are you going to do differently from now on?
2. Read aloud the following Scripture passage: Acts 2:42-47. Ask participants to sit in silence with these words for a few moments. Read aloud the passage one more time, and then ask them to reflect on this statement as honestly as they can:

I go to church (or I don't go to church) because...

Invite them to share with one other person their response. Ask if a few persons would like to volunteer their responses to the large group.

3. Give a copy of the activity *The Church—Why Stay* to each adult and ask them to do the activity as “homework.”
4. Conclude by praying for a church you love or one that drives you crazy. It may be the same place. Here are some words if you need them:

Prayer for the church:

God, you know better than we do that groups of people are never perfect because they are filled with people. Send your Spirit to all churches and help them live up to your expectations as the body of your Son, Jesus Christ. Help me and all in the church to not mess up your holy work. Amen.

What's Your Motivation?

What is the importance of church attendance to you? (Circle one.)

extremely important

somewhat important

no big deal

I don't attend church

What were your reasons for attending church at different stages in your life?

* Childhood:

* Youth:

* Adult:

What role has your family played in your church attendance or lack of it?

In what ways has your motivation for attending church changed over the years?

At what points in your life was worshipping at church a difficult thing to do?

What factors or people have shaped your commitment to the church?

What advice do you have for someone looking for a church home?

New or Visiting?

By Erin Davis Gibbons



If you're not a frequent churchgoer, you probably know a lot about visiting churches. If you worship regularly, when was the last time you welcomed someone new to your church? Consider different ways to respond as a visitor and as one who welcomes visitors.

For

Young Adult

Season

Summer

Needed

Wireless device, Internet access

Activity Plan

1. Most churches try to help visitors feel welcome, but sometimes they don't do a very good job of it. Have you been a visitor in a church? If so, what was it like? If you worship regularly, when was the last time you welcomed someone new to your church? Pray:

God, you know I want to tell others about you, but sometimes I don't do it well. Guide my words and actions to reach out to others. Help me be an expression of your love and care for all people. In Jesus' name. Amen.

2. Watch this YouTube video: [What if Starbucks Marketed Like a Church? A Parable.](#)
 - What is your first impression of this parable?
 - How would you feel visiting this coffee shop? Would you return for a second visit? Why or why not?
 - What might have made the experience better for the two visitors?
3. Think about your own experiences visiting churches or welcoming new people to your church. What made the experience good? What do you wish you would have done differently? Why do you think first-time visitors to a church sometimes feel awkward?
4. What can you learn from your experiences of being a church visitor or of welcoming visitors to help you welcome the new people you meet in your daily life?
5. If you have time, contact the pastor or minister of your church or a church you've visited recently. Start a conversation about what's good about the ministry with visitors and what could make it even better.

I Go Because ...

By Lee Yates

Over the years, people's reasons for going to church and participating in worship change. How the church relates to people of different ages also changes. By interviewing different people, you can better understand the purpose of church and a communal faith life.



For

Young Adult

Season

Spring

Needed

What's Your Motivation worksheet

Prepare in Advance

Print out four or five copies of the What's Your Motivation worksheet, one for each person you will interview. Ask three or four people from different backgrounds who are regular church attendees to talk with you about their faith practice.

Activity Plan

1. Begin with prayer:

God, be with me as I listen to others and think about my own beliefs and practice. Amen.

2. Complete a What's Your Motivation worksheet with your own responses.
3. Interview three or four people with different backgrounds. Try to find people who are older than you are. As you visit with each individual, complete a What's Your Motivation worksheet with his or her responses.
4. After the interviews are completed, review the worksheets and look for patterns in the answers. How do the responses compare with your own answers on the worksheet?
5. Finish this statement as honestly as you can:
I go to church (or I don't go to church) because...
6. Pray for a church you love or one that drives you crazy. It may be the same place. Here are some words if you need them:

God, you know better than I do that groups of people are never perfect because they are filled with people. Send your Spirit to all churches and help them live up to your expectations as the body of your Son, Jesus Christ. Help me and all in the church to not mess up your holy work. Amen.

The Church – Why Stay?

By Erin Davis Gibbons



Young people are leaving the church, but why? Take a look at a study and at your own life and decide what would be the perfect church for you.

For

Young Adult

Season

Fall

Needed

Computer with internet access, paper and writing utensils, art supplies (optional)

Activity Plan

Young adults are leaving the church, and older, lifelong churchgoers are trying to figure out why. Are you a part of a church? Why or why not?

1. In September 2011, the Barna Group published a study documenting “Six Reasons Young Christians Leave Church”. Do an Internet search for this article.
2. Read through the reasons the Barna study found.
 - Do any of these make sense to you?
 - Why do you think the church finds it challenging to accept many parts of popular culture?
 - Have you ever felt like church was boring or uninteresting? Why?
 - What’s something you feel like the church antagonizes?
 - How do your views on sexuality compare with the wider church’s views?
 - Have you ever tried to reconcile your Christian beliefs with other religions’ beliefs? What was it like?
 - When have you doubted your beliefs? How did your participation in church influence or not influence you during this time?
3. Think about your last experience attending church. How did it make you feel? Were you welcomed? Did you act like yourself and feel comfortable? Did your cell phone stay in your pocket or did you feel free to use it? Were there other young people there?
4. Do an Internet search for “Why I left the church,” and be sure to read Rachel Held Evans’ blog post <http://rachelheldevans.com/15-reasons-i-left-church>. What are your peers saying? Do you agree or disagree?
5. Make a list of the good church memories you have. Then make a list of the not-so-good church memories. Which one is longer? Why do you think that is?
6. Design a church that fits you. What would it look like? Who would attend? What would you do there? What would worship be like? Draw, write about, or create your dream church.