

SESSION I

INTRODUCTION TO EMBRACING EVANGELISM

In this first session, we introduce the practice of evangelism and explore the importance of growing your own loving relationship with God.

Highlights to Remember

Scripture gives us ample guidance for practicing evangelism: In John 4, we read Jesus' intense conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well, a conversation that leaves both of them changed. In Acts 11, Philip chases down the Ethiopian eunuch and helps the eunuch to understand where God was already speaking in his life. In Luke 19, we meet Zacchaeus, a tax collector who climbs into a tree to spy on Jesus and, by the end, hosts Jesus in his home and welcomes others to follow Jesus.

We draw on these and other scriptures in Episcopal Evangelism – the spiritual practice through which we seek, name, and celebrate Jesus' loving presence in the stories of all people and then invite everyone to MORE.

Here is a breakdown of each part of this practical definition of *Episcopal Evangelism*:

1. *Seek* – Episcopal Evangelism is inherently curious, wondering where Jesus' loving presence is showing up in others' lives and in our own.
2. *Name* – Once we find that loving presence, we name it. “Hey, when I see you do this..., it looks like God to me.” “I feel the Spirit at work when...” In other words, proclamation is essential.
3. *Celebrate* – When you discover good news, you can't keep it to yourself. You celebrate it. Let the gratitude and wonder flow, and share it with others.
4. *Jesus' loving presence* – Christian life starts with Jesus and his love. Through him, God meets us, heals us, surprises us. Through him, we have intimate knowledge of the fullness of God. Through him, God invites us into the eternal dance of the Trinity.
5. *Everyone's stories* – Stories are the heart of evangelism. There is the story of the God we meet in scripture. There are our own stories of life with God: our struggle, loneliness, authentic presence, resurrection. And there are other people's stories. Maybe they wouldn't name God, but you see God in them and can help them to find their own words and relationship.
6. *Invite everyone to MORE* – Evangelism includes an invitation: to more conversation over coffee; to a book, poem, or film that resonates with whatever you've both discovered together about God; to visit a community that is growing in faith and practice. “Come to church with me” is an option, so don't be afraid to say it! But that's just one of many ways to invite someone to MORE.

For a lot of us, this is a different kind of evangelism, but it might just be what our neighbors and even we are most hungry for.

Exploratory Exercise: Recognizing God in Your Midst

As was mentioned in the video, Episcopal Evangelism flows directly from our gratitude, joy, and wonder for all God's goodness. Reflect for a moment: Has there been a moment in your life when you experienced wonder, joy, or deep gratitude? What was happening? How was God part of this for you?

One-to-One StorySharing

Now, share this story with one other person in One-to-One StorySharing.

1. Turn and find one partner. Make pairs, so everyone gets the chance to listen and to share.
2. Sit or stand so that you and your partner are looking at each other face to face.
3. One person will be Partner A and one will be Partner B.
4. Partner A will go first and will have one minute to share. When one minute has passed, you will hear a signal. This is the time to switch, so Partner B will share.
5. When it is your turn to speak, offer your authentic story, using details and emotions.
6. When it is your turn to listen, create the space to welcome the story of the other as a real blessing.
7. When you both have taken a turn, thank each other for the gift of sharing.

Brief Discussion

- How did it feel to share your story?
- How did it feel to receive your partner's story?

Discussion & Reflection Questions

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

How do you feel about your relationship with God?

Are you able to see and feel the love of God in your life?

What part of the definition of *Episcopal Evangelism* resonates for you?

Does any part of the definition bring you hope?

Who has been Good News to you? How was that person Good News to you?

Try It Out

Before the next session...

Ponder the questions above, on your own through journaling or in conversation with a partner from the class.

Notes