

BreakThru

From Catechism to *Christ*

EVERYDAY SAMARITAN: HELLO

LEARNING EVENT MAKE-UP

A WORD ABOUT THE EVERYDAY SAMARITAN SERIES

For this and the next four Learning Events, we will be going through a series called Every Day Samaritan for Early Adolescents, which is a curriculum of Peer Ministry Leadership led by Lyle Griner. The Learning Events themselves are very interactive, involving one-on-one and small group interaction and practice of skills, and it is a challenge to get the full experience through a make-up assignment like this. I encourage you to make an effort to be at the actual Learning Events throughout this series to get the full impact of this wonderful training and learning opportunity.

HAND – THE CIRCLE

Spend some time in conversation with your parents using the following questions. Jot down some notes from your conversation in the space below. Both parents and students should share for each question.

- **Why might it be that some people don't let others join their groups or make it hard?**
- **What are all the reasons a group doesn't want to change? What are their fears?**
- **What are the reasons a group would want to include and welcome?**
- **How is it that dehumanizing (treating as less than human) acts seem to be okay with some people?**
- **How can a person stop negative behaviors when someone is being kept out, being picked-on or bullied?**

READ THIS: THE CIRCLE

- **How quickly a group becomes a group:** We are most comfortable with the people we already know. When a new person is included, group dynamics change. If people feel threatened by change, the group will not grow.
- **It can be fun to keep someone out:** Outsiders are easy targets for humor and to get laughs from others. It is easy to dehumanize strangers or people who are perceived differently. "Fun" is a word that should never be used to describe embarrassing, ignoring, put-downs, harassments, or bullying acts that dehumanize another.



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- **How quickly we follow others when excluding:** Groups often have a pack mentality. A pack of wolves follows its leader. There is very little individualism. If someone in a group decides to pick-on, bully, make fun of, or just ignore, other group members do the same. Picking on another even seems fun, when it is reinforced in groups.
- **Saying, “Stop!”:** Simply pointing out the negative behavior often helps! Say, “Stop!” or “It is not okay to make fun of...” or “We need to include...” Most people in a group already know when a behavior is wrong. There is often relief, even if it is not articulated right away, when someone takes new leadership.
- **There is a big difference between youth group and youth ministry:** Congregations are not about forming clubs. They are about being an open family, who gathers in awareness of a graceful God. They are about caring and welcoming their neighbor. They are about including.

HEAD – THE PARTY

You are going to plan a party! Hollywood style. The budget has no limits, and you want it to be the BIGGEST event ever. Spend some time brainstorming your biggest, best, most outlandish ideas possible for the party using the space below:

The party will be held at:

The food will be catered by:

Live music performed by:

Luscious, mouthwatering deserts such as:

The area will be decorated with lots of:

People will be picked up and brought to the party:

Free door prizes for everyone as they enter will include:

We’ll pay celebrities to come and mingle with the guests to make us look good. Let’s invite:

On another sheet of paper, draw a picture of your extravagant party.

Stop! Here is what has happened! We did the work (take a look at what you just planned!). However, here is the bad news. No one we invited wants to come! Everyone is too busy. Everyone has some kind of excuse. The contracts are all signed. We have to pay for this party anyway. What should we do?

This story really happened.

Open up your bibles and read **Luke 14:15-24**. It's a challenging, uncomfortable story.

Discuss the questions below with your parent after reading the story. Jot down some notes from your discussion:

How does this apply to us? What does it mean?

Who is easily welcomed and included in your church, group, school, home, neighborhood or community?

Who has not been invited?

Who do you need to welcome?

How will you do it?

READ THIS - THE PARTY

- **Bible and culture don't always match:** This is a challenging story in that all the "wrong" people get to come to the party including the weak, poor and lame. It is a reversal of what society usually values. Adolescents may think of this as the popular and unpopular. Many already perceive themselves as unpopular in some way. Certainly most are busy comparing themselves to images that seem better. The good news is that all are invited.
- **Welcoming is not a selection process:** Recognizing and welcoming includes people simply because they are human. Pretending someone isn't there is another way of saying, "You don't exist." If someone is human, and all are, they are to be invited, welcomed and included. A big challenge!

HEART – STAGE OF WELCOME

Spend some time in conversation with your parents using the following questions. Jot down some notes from your conversation in the space below. Both parents and students should share for each question.

- **Share a time when you felt left out, or unwelcome, even bullied.**
- **Share a time that people did a good job of including or welcoming you.**
- **What is an element that is important to welcoming others?**

Choose one of the scenarios below in which someone did not feel welcomed. Talk through the scenario, using the following questions, explaining what you could do in the scene as the person being affected or as a bystander.

- First day I walked into the cafeteria and not being allowed to sit at a table with friends.
- Visiting a different congregation's youth ministry group and not being invited in.
- Being made fun of on a bus.
- A friend is in the hallway at school, inviting everyone but you to a birthday party.

What wrong is being done in the scenario?

What feelings are likely present?

Why might people act the ways they do?

What choices do bystanders have? Why and how do they choose whether or not to act?

How might you right the wrongs? What would you want to do or say?

READ THIS: WELCOMING IS NOT LIMITED

- **Does a group want to grow?:** Most church groups, schools, and organizations would claim that they want to be welcoming, inviting, and growing groups. Yet, most have never even talked about how they would do this. If a group is going to expand, it must want to grow, then plan for it.
- **Entering a new group:** It never feels good when you are new and all eyes are upon you. The new person often feels he or she is being checked over, even evaluated in some way. It is easiest to enter when one person is the first to greet. This person can then slowly introduce a newcomer to a few more people. Eventually, it feels safe to be acknowledged as "new" and welcomed by the whole group. Attention on a new person by the whole group should be short.

- **Be careful of extremes:** It is wrong to ignore, and it is also wrong to have a welcoming program that is not genuine. People are wary of groups that seem too welcoming or even desperate for new members. If the welcoming seems like a canned program, rather than a genuine relationship, suspicions about the group's motives arise.
- **Information:** When a stranger enters, they need key information quickly. They need to know whether it is okay to be there, where to sit, how to get more information about the group, who some of the individuals are, what the group traditions are, what the activity or conversation will be, what the group's norms are, how to interpret the inside jokes, even where the restrooms are located.
- **New to the culture:** It can be challenging for a stranger to enter a whole new culture. Take time to listen and learn from each other. One person reported how the humor in his country was not funny in his new home, which left him confused. Another person told how there seemed to be a condescending assumption that he must need help—"Can I help you?" was the question that everybody asked. Acknowledge differences and be ready to learn from each other.
- **Welcoming is not limited to a place:** Youth have often said about church youth ministries: "They were nice to me when I was there, but at school the people act like they don't know me." Welcoming is not about a place; it is an attitude that extends itself to the neighborhood, community, school, home, coffee house, and wherever people meet, greet, and invite one another. Peer ministers need to recognize that welcoming becomes part of a person's personality and responsibility no matter where they are.