



Section II: Session Guides

These guides are each organized into five sections.

1. A “Focus” statement indicates the primary emphasis of this particular session.
2. “Getting our bearings” suggests ways to introduce the theme.
3. “Checking our compass” explores a biblical text and what guidance it gives for the journey.
4. “Moving on” works at how to apply these teachings to our lives and the world around us.
5. Finally, the “Next steps” section encourages choosing a specific step that can be taken during the following week.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION: Going the Second Mile

Focus: To introduce the vision for this resource and what it means to “go the Second Mile.”

Getting our bearings

Option A: Ask each person to think about a time when they were mistreated and draw or describe it on a sheet of paper. How did they respond to this situation? What was the result? Is there anything they would want to change about their response?

Option B: Bring a supply of newspapers or newsmagazines, and ask each person to find a story about a situation of violence, injustice, or oppression. List these on a board or newsprint and answer briefly: How is this situation being addressed and by whom? Who is benefiting? Who is losing? Keep in mind that this is a brief survey to connect with the idea of injustice; don’t let the group get too deeply involved in any particular story.

Checking our compass

Move into this section by noting that the Bible also has much to say about injustice and violence. The people of God experienced these realities and can provide much wisdom in how to respond and transform these situations.

Option A: Ask someone to read the passage and then invite two volunteers to role-play the example of a soldier demanding that someone carry his gear for a mile. First, have them do it as they imagine it would normally have been done in occupied Palestine. Then ask them to do it as Jesus suggests, with the subject volunteering to carry the pack for another mile. What happened between the two in each scene? How did the soldier feel? The subject? Were there any surprises? (Another option would be to use the 17-minute video by Walter Wink, “What Jesus Really Said,” focusing on Matthew 5:38-41.)

Option B: Invite people to share what first comes to mind when they hear the words, “Going the second mile.” Record the responses on a board or newsprint and reflect together on common ideas or differences that appear.

Read the discussion of this passage in the student pamphlet. These instructions in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount have often been understood to mean passive acceptance of mistreatment and suffering. More recently, people have begun to see them as creative and surprising responses to injustice, allowing the one being humiliated to take the initiative but in a nonviolent way that invites transformation of the situation. How does this interpretation match your class responses? How does it differ? In what ways does this interpretation make sense? What questions remain? (Also see *Engaging the Powers* by Walter Wink, pp. 179-183.)

Moving On

Refer to the situations named at the beginning of the session and explain that this resource is designed to help everyone learn more about following Jesus along this "second mile." Emphasize that this is a life-long journey that continually invites us to learn new skills, understandings, and behaviors. While Western Christians have tended to see conversion as mostly believing the right things, this was not true of the early church. Rather, as Alan Kreider explains, for the first few centuries, the process of conversion was an extensive process, often lasting three to five years! Candidates for baptism "submitted themselves to a process of 'resocialization' by which their new community superintended the transformation of their beliefs, their sense of belonging and their patterns of behavior" (*The Change of Conversion and the Origin of Christendom*, p. 21).

Second Mile is also a journey, which will require both action and reflection. Read or summarize the section, "Preparing for the journey," which describes this process of planning, study, and action. Refer also to the list of provisions for the journey. Highlight the fact that this resource includes many different writers and perspectives. Invite the group to think of themselves this way as well. There is no one expert; everyone can contribute to greater understanding and faithfulness.

Further, it is often assumed that it is good to journey together with others. Does the group agree? In what ways does their faith journey now include others? In what ways do they travel alone? What are the dangers in either situation?

Read the "Vision" for Second Mile, especially the questions it seeks to answer. Note that the group already identified some of the challenges faced today. Are there additional challenges they would like to name? What blessings are they being called to give or receive?

Review briefly the various pathways in Second Mile and highlight the pathway that the group will be using first. Discuss specific commitments that the group would like to make to one another during this study. For instance, can everyone commit to reading the pamphlet before class? Are they willing to choose one step each week that they will pray about and act on? Are there any ground rules that you want to suggest?

Next steps

Invite each person to reflect further on the questions about journeying this week, both about what is needed for taking a journey and also how one thinks about journeying with Christ.

PATHWAY A INTRODUCTION: The Land that I Will Show You

Focus: To explore what it means to follow God’s call to a journey of faith.

Getting our bearings

Invite any reflections about journeying from the previous week. Note that today’s session will focus further on what it means to take a journey of faith.

Option A: Prior to meeting, invite one or two people to prepare to share about a journey that they or their forbears took, either by choice or necessity. What led them to take this journey? Was this in response to a call from God? What expectations or fears did they have? What risks did they face? What provisions were available to them? What preparations did they make? How did their expectations match the actual experience? (An alternative would be to do this in groups of three or four.)

Option B: Bring to the group a number of brochures or descriptions of journeys that people in your class might find attractive, as well as daunting. Invite people to choose the one they find most intriguing ... and most likely to be a call from God. Why? What would they need before taking such a journey? What hopes, dreams, or fears would they have for such a trip?

Checking our compass

Note that many stories in the Bible involve God calling people to a journey of faith. Read the passage about Abram and Sarai in the pamphlet. Trace their journey on a Bible map. Reflect on what it might have meant for them, in their time, to leave behind a settled community and venture into the wilderness. What fears might they have had? What expectations? What hopes and dreams?

It is striking to note that this call to Abram in Genesis 12 directly follows the story of the tower of Babel in Genesis 11. The building of this city and tower reflected the primary assumptions of Canaanite city-states, that security and prosperity depended on a centralized and hierarchical system linked to the heavens by a temple tower. Within this social order, a small wealthy class commanded the service and sacrifice of the majority of the people. As one scholar explains, “In Egypt and Mesopotamia alike, rulers were considered to be the living incarnation of deities, and the purpose of commoners was ‘to serve the gods by supplying them with food, drink, and shelter’” (William R. Herzog II, *Jesus, Justice and the Reign of God*, Westminster John Knox Press, 2000, p. 112). In return, the gods (and their earthly representatives) were supposed to guarantee security and a good harvest.

Thus, the call to Abram and Sarai can be seen as an invitation to a different way of life. Were they in fact tired of the economic exploitation in these towns and the violence used to maintain order? Did they long for a measure of freedom and autonomy? Indeed, were they seeking a different kind of God who did not need to be pampered and manipulated with the proper sacrifices and rituals? In any case, God’s call to them involved a faith journey very different

from their neighbors: a call to go out, rather than to come together; a call to trust God to make them a nation, rather than establish it for themselves; a call to rely on God's promise to make their name great, rather than make a name for themselves. (See Millard Lind, *Yahweh Is a Warrior*, Herald Press, 1980, pp. 128-132.)

Moving On

Pray the litany together. Then read the Sarah Corson story and reflect together: How was she called to a journey of faith? How was her response surprising or different from what was expected? What resources did she have available to her? Were the soldiers also called to a faith journey? How? What resources did they have? Has anyone in the group had a similar kind of experience?

Refer to the situations that people prayed about over the past week. Invite them to share in pairs or small groups any insights or ideas that came to them over the week. Invite a few volunteers to share their situation and invite the group to brainstorm together. What might be some courageous, surprising, loving responses? What resources are available to deal with the situation? What questions or needs remain? What changes are needed?

Review together the areas of life addressed in this pathway: Spirituality, Transforming Conflict, The Shadow of War, Creation Care. Decide together how to design this journey. One option would be to start with the lessons on Spirituality and Transforming Conflict and then move on to either the Shadow of War or Creation Care series. The ones on Spirituality provide important guidance for seeking God's help and nurture for the journey. The ones on Conflict are also foundational in helping the group plan together how to address difficult and controversial issues that will arise along the way. After these sessions, the group can then decide which area, War or Creation, to address next. Or, the discussion may naturally lead to one or the other.

Next steps

Encourage everyone to continue praying about a situation of injustice or violence. Or the group could choose to focus on a particular situation, and commit to praying and reflecting together about this over the next several weeks.

Follow the "Pack Your Luggage" step. Together list as many Bible stories as possible in which people were called to take a journey or a step of faith without knowing what the end result would be. Or ask everyone to choose one of the following stories to study further during the week: Noah and his family, Abraham and Sarah, Hagar and Ishmael, Joseph, Miriam, Moses, Aaron, the Hebrew slaves, Samuel, Jeremiah, Daniel, Jonah, Mary and Joseph, the wise men, Jesus, Mary and Martha, the Samaritan woman at the well, the woman caught in adultery, Peter, Paul, and Ananias. Be prepared to answer the questions given.

Close by reading the quote from St. Gregory of Sinai.



TRANSFORMING CONFLICT # 1: What is Conflict?

Focus: To examine feelings and assumptions about conflict and to look at models for dealing with disagreements.

Getting our bearings

Option A: Ask the group to share the first thoughts and emotions that come to mind when they hear the word “conflict.” Which ones are positive? Which have a more negative connotation? Another option would be to ask everyone to line up in a continuum, with one end of the room for those who enjoy conflict and the other end for those who cannot tolerate conflict and try to avoid it if at all possible. Why did people place themselves where they did? What experiences have they had with conflict?

Option B: As a group, list some of the major conflicts and changes that have occurred in your congregation. Which changes were positive and resulted in life and growth? Which had more negative consequences?

Ask three people to read the definitions in “What’s in a name?” Then ask everyone to reflect on which term most closely matches the way they normally think about conflict. Which best describes their assumptions? What are the strengths of this approach? What are the weaknesses? How is the concept of conflict transformation helpful? or not?

Checking our compass

Before reading Acts 15:36-41, briefly review the first part of that chapter and what happened in the debate about whether Gentile believers had to observe Jewish laws. Emphasize that we tend to idealize the early church and assume they did a much better job of knowing what was right and working through difficult decisions than we do. Yet, they were also very human and struggled with questions of faith and life just as we do. As the pamphlet notes, Paul and Barnabas agreed on some issues but also disagreed strongly on others. And even when some issues appeared to be resolved neatly, what happened in actual practice continued to be a source of tension and misunderstanding. For instance, in Galatians 2:11-14 Paul describes how he and Peter and Barnabas were still struggling over how to relate to Gentile believers.

Try to identify what was positive about these conflicts. What truths of God were revealed through the new perspectives that Paul and Barnabas brought to the church? How was the gospel spread because of their conflict? What might have happened if they had not spoken about their convictions? What if the church had not worked through the conflict?

Reflect on the statement, “We have an ideal,” by Ted Grimsud. To what extent do people agree or disagree? Have they ever seen this happen in their families or in other groups?

Moving on

Look at the section, “Biblical Models for Agreeing and Disagreeing in Love,” and review the main points together. How does the group respond to these principles? With which ones do they agree? Which do they question? Is anything missing? It is important to acknowledge that different cultures have different ways of debating issues and handling conflict. For instance, in *Black and White Styles in Conflict* (University of Chicago Press, 1981), Thomas Kochman observes that “the black mode ... is high-keyed: animated, interpersonal and confrontational. The white mode ... is relatively low-keyed: dispassionate, impersonal, and nonchallenging” (p.18). He goes on to observe that blacks tend to “present their views as advocates. They take a position and show that they care about this position” (p. 20). They also expect others to challenge these views and to engage in persuasive argument that will lead to further clarification and truth. By contrast, whites tend to present their views as observers, using the “relatively detached and unemotional discussion mode to engage an issue” (p. 106).

Other cultures, of course, have their own styles and assumptions about conflict. How well does the lesson’s model fit the cultures represented in your group? Are there any principles that don’t fit your context? Are there any changes that the group would like to make?

After adapting this model to your cultural context, choose a current (or potential) conflict in your congregation. With that issue in mind, ask each person to go through the principles and mark either a + or - sign: + for those principles that they are able to carry out most of the time and - for those that they find to be difficult. Which are the easiest to carry out? Which are the hardest? Why? Consider together what principles the group can agree to use over the rest of their Second Mile study. The group may also want to consider the “Test Drive” step.

Close by praying together, “We thank you, Lord.”

Next steps

Invite people to use the Bible references in “Agreeing and Disagreeing in Love” as devotional material over the next two weeks. They may want to focus especially on those areas they identified as most difficult for them.

Obtain the poster, “Agreeing and Disagreeing in Love,” to post in your room as a reminder for how to deal with future disagreements in the group. Or, ask someone to make a poster, based on the principles chosen by the group.

If you chose not to do Option B at the beginning, ask for volunteers to do this in the coming week and prepare to report back to the group.

Ask for another volunteer to check the church library, as suggested in “Hit the Books.”

Arrange a time for the group to view the video, “Conflict in the Church.”



TRANSFORMING CONFLICT # 2: Ears to Hear

Focus: To recognize the importance of listening and to strengthen that skill, while also dealing with anger.

Getting our bearings

Receive reports from the previous week and any further reflections people have. Then read “Cold Water, Hot Coffee.” Ask people to think about a time when someone really listened to them. How did that feel? What happened to them as a result? Why is listening important?

Checking our compass

Ask everyone to silently read “The Hard Work of Hearing” and underline one or two phrases that stand out to them. Then ask for volunteers to share what they underlined. What points seem particularly important? What questions do they have?

One of the common threads in these proverbs is how to handle anger. This is also a key element in the verse from James. Why should one be “slow to anger”? When can anger be useful or healthy?

It may be helpful to share the following reflection, “Dealing with anger in conflict”: “Anger is a necessary emotion—it informs and motivates us to change or make changes. There are many things in this world that should make us angry. Anger is like fire; directed appropriately, it is powerfully productive. Undirected and uncontrolled, it is powerfully destructive.

It is anger’s power and intensity that makes us feel uncomfortable and out of control and that makes it a particularly difficult feeling to respond to. Staying calm and nondefensive is extremely difficult but important because defensiveness and agitation tend to escalate the conflict.

It is important to remember that anger is a secondary emotion. Under it usually lies fear or powerlessness. Listening for and responding to the primary emotions and the unmet needs is often key in managing anger.” (From Carolyn Schrock-Shenk, *MCS Mediation Training Manual*, 1995, p. 122.)

How does the group respond to this reflection? What can they affirm? What questions do they have? How do they deal with their own anger? How do they respond to the anger of others?

Again, it is important to recognize that cultures handle anger in different ways. For example, in comparing black and white styles, Kochman notes that black culture generally allows for more self-assertion and expression of strong emotions, while white culture generally values emotional restraint (*Black and White Styles in Conflict*, pp.18-31, 106-118). What assumptions or beliefs do people in your group have about anger and how it should be expressed?



TRANSFORMING CONFLICT # 3: Speaking the Truth

Focus: To examine when and how to speak the truth.

Getting our bearings

Invite reflections from the past week. How did the listening go? How hard was it? Were there times when it was easier? Why? Did others notice that you were listening differently? Are there any further thoughts or questions?

Note that last week focused on the work of listening; today's focus will be about speaking. Actually, there are two issues here: when to speak the truth and then how to do this in the most helpful, loving way. Depending on the group, you may want to focus more on one of these aspects than the other, or spend two sessions on it.

Make sure everyone has paper and pencil. Ask them to think about a time when they took sides in a conflict. Why? What was at stake? How did they participate? What was good about that interaction and what would they like to change? Encourage them to jot down notes they can refer to later.

Checking our compass

Read the piece, "Jesus' Way." How does the group respond? Why did Jesus make this such a big issue? Emphasize that Jesus saw that the rules about Sabbath observance had actually turned God's intentions upside down. God had meant for the Sabbath to be a blessing, a day of rest for everyone and especially those most likely to be taken advantage of. Deuteronomy 5:14-15 makes clear that no one was to work on the Sabbath "so that your male and female slave may rest as well as you." Perhaps this was the earliest labor law! Jewish people were to remember that they had been slaves in Egypt, with no provision for a day of rest, and thus grant this blessing of rest to all.

By the time of Jesus, however, the rules had become so strict and laden with guilt that the Sabbath had become a burden for many. People were told that they were poor or ill because they didn't keep this law like they were supposed to. More likely, their poverty made it very difficult to keep the Sabbath. Perhaps they had to work the lands of wealthy landowners during the week and had only the Sabbath on which to work their own garden plots. Or perhaps their wages had been withheld and they had no choice but to glean food however they could on the Sabbath. Thus, by healing people on the Sabbath, Jesus sought to restore God's original plan that this law be life-giving, a source of joy, rest, and healing. Truly, "the Sabbath was made for humankind and not humankind for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27).

In this way, Jesus was not really creating conflict. Rather, he was bringing out into the open areas of conflict that were already present. There was a conflict between God's original intention for the Sabbath and what it had become. There was a conflict between God's love for

those in need and the disregard shown to them by their rulers. Finally, there is also conflict over the use of power. These religious leaders used their knowledge and influence to condemn people and keep them in their place, blaming the victims of injustice rather than addressing the economic and political realities that impoverished and diminished people. Jesus, however, showed that God intended power to be used in life-giving and healing ways.

Many peacemakers believe that this work of surfacing conflict is as vital as that of resolving conflict. Martin Luther King wrote from prison in Birmingham that “there is a type of constructive, nonviolent tension which is necessary for growth.” In situations of injustice, positive change usually does not come without painful struggle. (See Joseph Fahey, “Conflict Creation,” *MCS Mediation Training Manual*, 1995, pp. 100-101.)

How does the group respond to this idea that Jesus stirred up or exposed conflict? Do they agree that such tension can be essential for growth? Are there areas of life today where the church has or should speak God’s truth in similar ways? (It may be tempting to debate issues here; try to keep the discussion focused on when it is appropriate or necessary for people to speak up.) What are the signposts or markers to look for? What are some potential dangers?

Ask everyone to think back to the conflict they considered at the beginning of the session. Recognize that sometimes conflicts are due to misunderstandings or misconceptions; not all conflicts result from injustice. How would they describe that particular conflict? Were issues of justice and fairness involved? Who held most of the power and how was it used? What truth needed to be spoken? What truth did your opponent see and speak? Ask them to share these reflections in pairs or with the larger group.

Moving on

Option A: This option explores further this question of when to speak truth. Read “Be a CO Against Contentious Debate,” which presents another perspective on the peacemaker’s role in social debates. How does the group respond to this idea? Answer the questions or try the suggestion in the “Mending Fences” step. How might this be helpful or not to these victims? Has anyone in the group ever tried this approach? What happened?

Option B: This focuses more on how to speak. Read or review “Speaking Clearly.” To illustrate, ask four volunteers to role-play a common situation, such as who will do the dishes. One person could pose the question and the other three could give the different types of responses. (If helpful, possible answers could be prepared ahead of time for each of the respondents to read.) A passive response might be: “Oh, I don’t care; whatever; it doesn’t really matter to me.” An aggressive one might be: “You never do the dishes, so it’s obviously your turn tonight.” An assertive response might be: “I have a lot of work to do this evening and so would prefer not to do them tonight. Would you have time to do them?” Or, “I’ve done the dishes the past three days and so would like a break tonight.”

Discuss the role-play. What feelings did people have in each situation? Which response felt most comfortable? Which was most helpful in solving the question? Which was most likely to lead to further conflict? Why? More generally, how does the group respond to this essay? Is assertiveness helpful in your cultural context? If not, what would be helpful types of responses?

If there is time, try these responses in other situations. Choose a current issue in the community or invite someone to share about the conflict they identified at the beginning of the session. Brainstorm together what some passive, aggressive, and assertive responses might be. Again, feel free to add other types of responses that fit your context.

Next steps

Invite everyone to think about what kinds of responses they generally use in conflict situations. What style did they use in the conflict they identified at the beginning of the session? Encourage everyone to try using assertive responses (or other helpful responses) over the next week.

Work on the “Yakety Yak” step. Spend five minutes defining gossip. How is it different from speaking the truth in love? Pledge together to watch carefully for gossip this week and to instead speak directly with those involved in the situation.

Encourage each person to pay attention to whether there is an issue or concern that is bothering them that needs to be brought out into the open. Ask them to prayerfully consider how they might lovingly “speak the truth” in this situation.

Close with the prayer, “Loving and all-knowing God.”

Notes:
