

Sharing The Faith That Is In Us

A Workshop For The Laity

Of The Diocese of Georgia

Version 4.0

The design of this workshop trains lay leaders to lead other laity through the spiritual exercises that follow so that, when completed, the participants will have a greater competency and comfort level for sharing their faith, and thus the faith of the Church, with those outside the Church. Ideally the workshop would be divided as follows into four *spiritual exercises* done in small groups of 3-4 persons each:

1. Experiencing separation from God
2. How we have run away from God
3. God's love and acceptance of us
4. Telling how our personal story connects with God's story

The total time for the workshop is approximately six hours. Each spiritual exercise should take about one hour with a 5-minute break built into that hour. An hour-long meal break should be factored in between the third and fourth spiritual exercise. So, for example, if the first spiritual exercise began at 9:30 a.m. a lunch break would occur at 12:30 p.m. with the fourth spiritual exercise beginning at 1:30 p.m. The workshop, using this example, would begin at 9 a.m. with introductions of the participants, a brief overview of the workshop by the leaders, and then an abbreviated form of Morning Prayer with centering prayer or other form of silent meditation as a part of it to relax the participants and set the spiritual tone of the workshop. The workshop would conclude, again using this example, at 3:00 p.m. with the preceding half hour being given over to feedback and brief evaluation of the experience from the participants. The following shows the example described above:

9:00 a.m. - Gathering, introductions, overview, morning prayer, focused meditation
9:30 a.m. - Spiritual Exercise # 1
10:30 a.m. - Spiritual Exercise # 2
11:30 a.m. - Spiritual Exercise # 3
12:30 p.m. - Lunch
1:30 p.m. - Spiritual Exercise # 4
2:30 p.m. - Evaluation, Feedback, and Closing Prayer, and
3:00 p.m. - Sending Forth

The above is just an example. Any six-hour period of time would suffice as long as the breaks, particularly the meal break, is included in the order described above.

The desired outcome of this workshop, as noted above, is to help participants gain greater competence in their baptismal vows, particularly sharing how the Good News of God in Christ has changed their lives.

Sharing The Faith That Is In Us
Spiritual Exercise # 1
Experiencing Separation from God

1. Read the following passage from Holy Scripture three times allowing for a minute of silence between each reading. (5 minutes)

John 3:16-17

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

2. Reflection (25 minutes)
 - a. Identify a time in your life when you found yourself experiencing separation from God. When and where was that? What was going on in your life at that time? Who were the significant people in your life then? Can you now identify what caused this experience of separation from God at that time?
 - b. Write out a brief response to the above questions in the space below. Use the reverse side of this paper if needed.

3. Share with members of your group whatever you wish of what you wrote above. (25 minutes)

4. Conclude with the following prayer:
Merciful God, creator of all the peoples of the earth and lover of souls: Have compassion on all who do not know you as you are revealed in your Son Jesus Christ; let your Gospel be preached with grace and power to those who have not heard it; turn the hearts of those who resist it; and bring home to your fold those who have gone astray; that there may be one flock under one shepherd, Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen. (BCP, p. 280)*

Sharing The Faith That Is In Us
Spiritual Exercise # 2
How we have run from God

1. Read the following passage from Holy Scripture three times allowing for a minute of silence between each reading. (5 minutes)

Mark 14:37-42

He came and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep awake one hour? Keep awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. And once more he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to say to him. He came a third time and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Enough! The hour has come; the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up. Let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand."

2. Reflection (25 minutes)
 - a. Identify a time in your life when you found yourself running away from God. When and where was that? What was going on in your life at that time? Who were the significant people in your life at the time? In what way do you think you were also running away from the person God intended you to be?
 - b. Write out a brief response to the above questions in the space below. Use the reverse side of this paper if needed.

3. Share with members of your group whatever you wish of what you wrote above. (25 minutes)

4. Conclude with the following prayer:
Almighty God, you alone can bring into order the unruly wills and affections of sinners: Grant your people grace to love what you command and desire what you promise; that, among the swift and varied changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen. (BCP, p. 219)*

Sharing The Faith That Is In Us
Spiritual Exercise # 3
Experiencing God's love

1. Read the following passage from Holy Scripture three times allowing for a minute of silence between each reading. (5 minutes)

Matthew 11:28-29

Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

2. Reflection (25 minutes)
 - a. Identify a time in your life when you experienced a profound sense of God's love and acceptance of you right where you were and just the way you were. When and where was that? What was going on in your life at that time? Who were the significant people in your life at the time and what role did they play in your experience of God's love and acceptance?
 - b. Write out a brief response to the above questions in the space below. Use the reverse side of this paper if needed.

3. Share with members of your group whatever you wish of what you wrote above. (25 minutes)

4. Conclude with the following prayer:
Almighty and eternal God, so draw our hearts to you, so guide our minds, so fill our imaginations, so control our wills, that we may be wholly yours, utterly dedicated to you; and then use us, we pray, as you will, and always to your glory and the welfare of your people; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. *Amen.*
(BCP, p. 832)

Sharing The Faith That Is In Us
Spiritual Exercise # 4
Telling How God's Story Meets Our Story

1. Read the following passage from Holy Scripture three times allowing for a minute of silence between each reading. (5 minutes)

Matthew 28: 18-20

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

2. Mission Project (25 minutes)
 - a. Take your responses to the previous three reflection exercises and combine them into one story. In other words, refer to the time you experienced separation from God, the time you ran away from God, and the time you experienced God's love and acceptance and weave those three experiences into one story.
 - b. Write out your complete story on the legal pad provided.
3. Share with members of your group whatever you wish of what you wrote above. (25 minutes)
4. Conclude with the following prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, you stretched out your arms of love on the hard wood of the cross that everyone might come within the reach of your saving embrace: So clothe us in your Spirit that we, reaching forth our hands in love, may bring those who do not know you to the knowledge and love of you; for the honor of your Name. *Amen. (BCP, p. 101)*

Following the collect above, the workshop leaders engage the participants in an evaluation of the workshop. When the evaluation is complete, someone reads Luke 10:1-5 and concludes the day with the following collect.

Almighty and eternal God, so draw our hearts to you, so guide our minds, so fill our imaginations, so control our wills, that we may be wholly yours, utterly dedicated to you; and then use us, we pray, as you will, and always to your glory and the welfare of *thy* people; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. *Amen.*
(Collect 61 in the BCP in section for *Prayers & Thanksgivings*)

The evaluation questions are on the next page.

Questions for Feedback and Evaluation

1. Were the Scriptural passages used beneficial for your reflection? Are there others you would recommend?
2. Were the Collects used beneficial for your reflection? Are there others you would recommend?
3. Was the time assigned for each part of the workshop adequate? Was it too much time? Was it too little time?
4. What was the most challenging part of writing your different reflections? What was the easiest part (if any) for you?
5. What was the most challenging part of sharing in your small group? What was the easiest part (if any) for you?
6. In evaluating the whole workshop, did it:
 - a. Help you feel more confident in sharing your faith?
 - b. Assist you in connecting your faith story with God's story?
 - c. Increase the likelihood you might share your faith with someone outside the Church?
7. Would you recommend this workshop to other members of the Church?
8. On a scale of 1-10 with 1 being a "waste of time" and 10 being "a very important experience," please rate this workshop.