

TOTAL REVOLUTION of PURPOSE

Revolutionary Purpose #2

Created To Be Part of God's Community

Session Objective: The objective of this session is to realize that being a follower of Jesus requires revolutionary commitment to other people. The word Community has been used and abused greatly over the past few years, but from a theological perspective, the word is so rich and meaningful... God created us to live in community! At the end of this session your students should be questioning the radical individualism of our culture, and be on their way to pursuing revolutionary community with the people of God.

Minimum Prep: Read through this session, paying particular attention to the story, scripture and quote threesome given below. Work through questions 1-10 with your group.

Extended Prep: At the end of question 10 you will see a creedal component that you could as a group do together. It would be extremely powerful as a group exercise, but will require time, a piece or few pieces of Bristol board, some fat markers and some markers (Sharpies) for students to sign the creed. You will need time to create the creed. Also, or as an alternative, a time of prayer as suggested could be utilized in your group.

Also – after question 4 is asked, and you have given time for an answer – it would be powerful if you could find a video clip of Jerry Falwell from the U.S.A. Jerry is a well-known preacher, Christian leader, who is famous for making unbelievably harsh statements in the media. Following 9/11 and in the wake of Canada's decision to recognize gay marriages, Falwell has made some very negative comments that result in a negative identification of Christianity. If you could find a clip from CNN or CBN (Christian broadcasting network), of Falwell, you could show it and then ask: "Are we to be known by our conservative political views or by our compassion?" How do you think your friends would view this video? (Otherwise a Google search of Falwell will produce lots of information) P.S. – this is not to condemn Falwell, but rather to spark a conversation amongst your young people about how we should act as Christians.

Session Outline

Leader Preamble:

Maybe you have heard the story from the Seattle Special Olympics years ago now. The hundred-yard sprint – one of the most celebrated races in the Olympics was to begin with nine entrants in this Special Olympics. The gun sounded and the runners started out as fast as they were able. But then as the leaders were just beginning to pull away, one little boy tripped and fell onto the track. He cried out in pain, and lay there crumpled and crying. Imagine if you will at the Olympics – Donovan Bailey or any of the other people who proudly bear the title, “world’s fastest” stopping, and helping a competitor to his feet. But as we said these aren’t the Olympics...these are the Special Olympics, where extra-ordinary things happen. In the Special Olympics, or at least at this one Olympic competition, in this one hundred yard race, all the competitors stopped. The other eight heard the cry of the one who had fallen, and all stopped and turned. They saw him lying on the ground, but didn’t leave him there. Each of them walked back to him, against the encouragement of their coaches – all of them. One little girl with Down Syndrome bent down, kissed his leg, and said, “This will make it better.” Then all nine of them put their arms around each other and walked together to the finish line. Lets return to the “normal” Olympics for a minute if you will. When Donovan Bailey or Michael Johnson crossed the finished line first – applause erupted from the stands. But not from all the stands. The country of the contestant was jubilant, everyone else was at best polite, and the other competitors stood with their hands on their knees, their heads bent – in disappointment and defeat. That’s what happens when you compete. But not when you compete in the Special Olympics. In the Special Olympics, at least on this one occasion, all nine fellow runners crossed the finish line together. The crowds erupted in applause – all of them – and they didn’t stop. And this story is remembered and likely will be, long after the fastest man or woman that year in the other Olympics is long forgotten, and their record long broken.

Read Together Acts 2:42-47

Leader Say: *We have just read from the Bible. Let’s supplement that with a quote from an early church leader – a man named Tertullian who lived in a time of great persecution and terror for anyone who was a Jesus follower. Tertullian said, “It is our care for the helpless, our practice of loving-kindness, that brands us in the eyes of many of our opponents. “Look!” they say, “How they love one another! Look how they are prepared to die for one another.*

- 1. Can you think of anything that comes out as a common theme between the story of the Special Olympics, the story of the early believers from Acts 2 and the quote by Tertullian?**

2. **Throughout the ages family has always been important. Can you think of some of the ways in which families or tribes have distinguished themselves, or made their identity unique throughout time?**

Leader Note: There are likely many that you and your students will brainstorm – tartans were used to identify Scottish tribes, hair cuts have been used to set people apart, face paint, or tattoos, clothing styles, etc.

3. **How do you think the Christian community has made itself known over time?**
4. **How have some of our identification practices been positive, how have some been negative?**

Leader Note: See extended prep for a good way to prep this question.

5. **Do you think Christians should be known for their conservative political views or by compassion?**
6. **How does the Bible say we should be identified?**
7. **Throughout scripture we read a number of very common verses – they all include the phrase “one another” – “love one another”, “submit to one another,” “bear one another’s burdens” etc. Think together of some ‘one anothers’ that you would like your group to be known for. Can you find places in the Bible where those things were said of the Christian community?**

Leader Say: *A famous Christian man – Dietrich Bonhoeffer who was hanged by the Nazis in Germany as a result of his convictions wrote: “Christian brotherhood is not an ideal which we must realize; it is rather a reality created by God in Christ in which we may participate.” This is pretty much a paraphrase of the apostle Paul when he says “to keep (notice – not produce, or achieve) the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”*

8. **According to Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the apostle Paul, how should our youth group and our church relate to one another?**

Leader Note: We understand this could be a huge question in some settings, where a church is divided in controversy, or where a youth ministry is acting in defiance to the leadership of the church. At this point, all we can say is – “it seems clear from scripture that the goal of the Church is to live in unity with one another, in acts of submission to one another, and to be known by love, and charity, and grace and peace – inside and outside the church.” If this is an issue in your youth ministry or church, this is likely where our suggestions from this point forward will be far different than your leadership. That is okay, and

encouraged – you lead your ministry by the guidance of the Spirit – towards unity!

9. Why do you think it is so important for the church to live in unity and peace?

10. What are some of the benefits of being a part of a radical community of people who love one another?

Leader Say: *Revolutionary living is contentious. It is hard to live at peace with everyone around you, when your life is so different from theirs. That is one of the reasons why the church is called to live in radical community. The reality of the revolutionary life is that it will be filled with all kinds of undeserved suffering. Scripture tells us to “suffer well” in a way that displays the supernatural aspects of our lives. Christian community is essential in that regard. In this way, the church acts like a hospital for its members – we come together, battered and bruised from a world that can’t relate, and find healing as we worship together, pray together, and love one another.*

11. What would make it easier for you to be able to share your hurts, bruises, needs, and fears with other members of our youth ministry?

12. What commitments do we need to make as a youth ministry to make our group a true “community”

Application: At Blizzard 2002 (weekend II) we had a tribal creed – it was a creed that all of us together spoke out loud, and which many of the students and the leaders on the weekend signed as a covenant. There is something powerful about a creed that is created by the group. Think of the power of the apostle’s creed – as we commit ourselves to a creed that has been said for thousands of years by thousands of others. What would a creed in your youth ministry look like? Spend some time thinking as a group about a creed that you could sign as a group. Develop the creed, have someone with neat penmanship write it on a large piece of Bristol board, and then have each person in your youth ministry sign it. Read the creed together, make a ceremony out of signing it and then placing it on the wall of your youth ministry gathering location. If you have a youth room...keep it there...if you don’t – find a place in the church or in your group’s “place” where it can remain – an office, the basement wall of people’s home that you gather in, etc.

End with a time of prayer for one another. If time permits, in small groups, have people pray for one another – place one person in the middle of a small group of students, and have each of them lay hands on the person and pray for them. Love them uniquely by praying specifically!

Comments and Feedback

Leader Note: This is your place each week to record significant sharing or growth in the lives of your students for subsequent follow up. You can also use this space to provide feedback on the material. All suggestions are welcome.

Please see the following handout. You have permission to reproduce these handouts for your group.