

Leader Guide Session 4

Video Points:

- Nick Vujicic's story: Born with tetra-amelia syndrome (no limbs), overcame depression and loneliness through faith and the support of friends in church.
- Emphasize how these friends included Nick in their life and church community.
- Parallel to the story of the prodigal son:
 - Younger brother asked for his father's inheritance and left home, leading to a life of hardship.
 - Upon returning home, the father, filled with compassion, saw him from afar and ran to him.
 - Interpretation: The father is God, ready to embrace us when we return to him.
- Key message: Importance of an orientation towards inclusion.
- Our church should be a place where you can belong before you believe.
- Illustrate the father in the prodigal son's story:
 - Picture him looking to the horizon, anticipating his son's return.
 - Connect this to us looking out for those seeking God.
 - Encourage active inclusion of people in our lives and community.
- Over time, our social circles tend to shrink - challenge this trend.
- Discussion on the next level of inviting - inclusion.
- How can we open our lives to include both followers and non-followers of Jesus?

Journey CHURCH

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- Highlight a study that links a sense of belonging and inclusion in a faith community to higher levels of wellbeing and satisfaction.
- Encourage activities that include non-church attendants:
 - Community service projects.
 - Social gatherings (4th of July, Labor Day, Christmas parties etc.), deliberately inviting folks from outside church circles.
- Discuss the puzzle analogy:
 - Our church feels more complete when we include people who don't follow Jesus.
 - Emphasize the importance of gradually introducing them to the community before attending services.
 - Challenge for the coming days: Actively mix church friends with social connections outside of church.
- Example scenarios: Movie night at your house, lunch at work.
- Reiterate the three "I"s: Invest, Invite, Include.
 - Investing in relationships because Jesus loves them.
 - Inviting them to see the good things God is doing.
 - Including them by mixing social circles.
- Closing Remarks:
 - This four-part challenge is only the beginning.
 - Encourage continuation of investing, inviting, and including people.
 - Reiterate the idea that people can belong before they believe.
 - Offer help from the church in their journey as change catalysts.
 - Express gratitude for their desire to be change catalysts.

Discussion Questions:

- 1) How did Nick Vujicic's early struggles with depression and loneliness change after he was invited to church and encouraged in his faith?
- 2) How does the story of the prodigal son exemplify the idea of God's orientation towards inclusion, and how can we apply this attitude in our own lives and interactions with others?
- 3) The speaker emphasizes the importance of having an orientation towards inclusion. What are some practical ways we can actively include people from different backgrounds in our church and social circles?
- 4) The speaker mentions that over time, our social circles tend to shrink. How can we consciously expand our social circles and make efforts to include new people, especially those who may not yet know Jesus?
- 5) According to the study mentioned, how does a sense of belonging and inclusion in a faith community positively impact individuals' wellbeing and satisfaction?
- 6) The challenge is to mix the social circles of friends from church with those outside of church. What are some creative ways to achieve this and create opportunities for diverse groups of people to interact?

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- 7) How can we strike a balance between being inclusive and not making people feel like projects? How can we genuinely show love and grace to others without an ulterior motive?
- 8) In what ways can small groups or life groups play a role in fostering inclusion and creating spaces where people can belong before they believe?
- 9) The speaker suggests inviting friends from different circles to events or gatherings. Have you personally experienced the power of connecting people from diverse backgrounds and seeing positive outcomes?
- 10) As we continue to invest, invite, and include others, how do you think this collective effort can impact the community and the church as a whole, creating a more welcoming and inclusive environment for everyone?