
How to Make Church Accessible to Anyone

What it looks like to make room for people who don't think they belong.

Overview.

It's easy to assume church is only for people who already believe what we believe. But some of the most powerful moments in the Bible happen when someone unexpected shows up — and finds they're welcome. In this discussion, we'll look at three kinds of people who rarely feel at home in religious spaces, and ask ourselves honestly: would they feel at home with us?

Warm up.

Icebreaker: If you had to teach someone something you're passionate about to a complete stranger, what would you choose — and how would you explain it without using any jargon they wouldn't know?

That instinct — to translate what you love into language someone else can actually hear — is exactly what this discussion is about.

Watch the video.

[How to Make Church Accessible to Anyone](#) — a video by Bay Area Christian Church

Follow along with the guide, or use it independently as a recap. If you're in a group, press play.

Read and talk.

1. Some people come to us — but only in the dark.

Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. [2] He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him."

— John 3:1-2 NIV

- **Key point:** Nicodemus was a powerful, established religious leader — and he came to Jesus. Not because Jesus argued him into it, but because Jesus was changing lives in ways that were impossible to ignore. Accessibility isn't a program. It's a reputation built on real impact.
- **Reflection:** Think about someone in your life who would be most likely to show up "in the dark" — curious but not ready to be seen. What would need to be true about your group for them to feel safe enough to come?
 - (Examples: They'd need to know they won't be corrected, they'd need to see people

like them already there, they'd need to feel like their questions are welcome, etc.)

2. Some people don't need us — and that's exactly the point.

On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. [14] One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message.

— Acts 16:13-14 NIV

- **Key point:** Lydia was a successful entrepreneur with her own household, her own employees, and her own faith. She didn't need Paul's group — if anything, they needed her. Paul reached her not by selling something, but by showing up, sitting down, and talking. The conversation came first. Everything else followed.
 - **Reflection:** When I'm around someone who seems self-sufficient — successful, busy, socially set — how do I typically respond?
 - *(Examples: I assume they're not interested, I wait for them to come to me, I try to find common ground, I pull back because I feel like I have nothing to offer, etc.)*
 - Is there someone like Lydia in my life right now — someone who has everything figured out on the outside, but might still be open to a real conversation?
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3. Some people want a real conversation — not a sales pitch.

While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. [17] So he reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there.

— Acts 17:16-17 NIV

- **Key point:** Athens was full of intellectuals — people who built careers out of taking ideas apart. Paul didn't avoid them or argue them down. He reasoned with them, on their turf, in their language. Becoming all things to all people (1 Corinthians 9) means doing the work to understand someone else's world before asking them to understand yours.
- **Reflection:** Am I genuinely curious about the people around me — their careers, their ideas, their doubts — or do I mostly wait for a chance to share what I believe?
 - *(Examples: I ask questions but mostly to redirect to faith, I'm curious about some things but not others, I've gotten less curious over time, I think I'm curious but haven't tested it recently, etc.)*
- What's one world — one field, passion, or perspective — I could learn more about this week to become a better conversation partner?

Discuss

1. Of the three people in this discussion — the religious Pharisee, the woman entrepreneur, the intellectual — which one do I find hardest to reach? Why?

2. Michelle mentioned that insider language (inside jokes, "church speak," group references) can make people feel excluded without us even realizing it. When I'm in a group setting with someone new, how aware am I of that? What would it take to change?
3. Russ asked: "Would they just argue them to death?" — meaning, would someone who believes differently feel safe having a real conversation in my group? What would my honest answer be right now?

Keep growing.

- **Get curious about one person this week.** Think of someone in your life who is different from you — different beliefs, different field, different background. Ask them one genuine question about their world and just listen. Don't redirect to faith. Just listen.
- **Audit your group's language.** Before your next gathering, make a mental note of any inside references, church terms, or assumed knowledge that might feel alienating to a first-timer. Bring one suggestion for how to translate it.
- **Read one thing outside your world.** Pick an article, video, or podcast about something a person in your life is passionate about — robotics, business, art, policy, whatever it is. Come back next week ready to say, "I looked into that thing you care about."

Dive deeper.

For more on this topic, check out: [Love, Listen, Learn: Why Relationship Skills Matter and How God Helps Us Build Them.](#)