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ARTICLE

Session 10: To the Ends of the Earth

PREPARATION

Read Scripture and background information. Reflect on the questions in the participant's book. Review links suggested in the lesson outline below.

Train of Thought

Moving a congregation into the new paradigm requires a diversity of leadership styles, gifts, knowledge, and abilities. A systems view ensures that all leaders will work together to maximize the potential for transforming lives.

Desired Outcomes

As a result of this session, participants should be able to:

- Recognize the chaotic feelings that change brings, and understand that God brings order out of chaos.
- Realize that change is not to be feared or resisted, but accepted as a natural part of life.
- Understand that transformation does not come from restructuring the congregation or from starting new ministries. God brings transformation as congregations build relationships, share information, and search for who God calls them to be.

Lesson Supplies

- [Posters](#)
- Candle and matches
- Prepare for Bible study by reading the New Interpreter's Bible commentary (or other commentaries) on Acts 28.

EXPLORATION AT GROUP SESSION

Total time: 50 minutes

Light the worship candle as a reminder of God's Presence at all times. God is with us when we meet together, just as God was with the early followers of Jesus we have read about in the book of Acts. There are strong parallels in the final scenes of Acts and Luke. Paul is persecuted and misunderstood by his own people, just as Jesus was persecuted and misunderstood.

Bible Study Focus Verses: Acts 28:17-31

This study leads to fuller understanding of Paul's situation as he understood the implications of a global gospel.

Approach this text with the five questions of an investigative reporter— *Who? What? When? Where? How?* Make lists and write notes on newsprint of the group discussion for the final question.

Who are the individuals and groups in this passage?
 What is happening to each of these individuals and groups?
 Where is this happening? Where in the world? Where in the city?
 When is this happening in chronological time?
 When is it happening in relation to other Christian, Jewish, and Roman events?
 How are the events unfolding?

Review the answers and discussion and ask, "What are the implications of a global gospel for our congregation?"

Transition to Our Time

Paul's spiritual strength in the face of opposition has been a model for people for 2000 years. The Reflective Moment Along the Way (page 85 of the Bible study) invites participants to remember who has strengthened them in times of need. Ask, "What role models will help our congregation reach out to people who are the 'gentiles' of our time?"

You can find more information on chaos theory for non-scientists at <http://www.mathjendl.org/chaos/>.

DISCOVERY – APPLYING IDEAS TO THE CONGREGATION

Total time: 45 minutes

Discussion Questions (30 minutes)

Chaos theory is an emerging understanding of organizational patterns. God's activity in what appears chaotic to us frees us from the burden of needing to control a cumbersome organizational structure for our church. [Click here for book suggestions.](#)

In Matthew 11:28-30 Jesus promises that when we focus attention toward him, our burdens are light. As congregational leaders, the burden of maintaining a church structure is lifted.

Leaders cultivate abilities of balance, poise, rhythm, and playfulness through practice. [Click here for more notes and examples.](#) Discuss the questions on page 89.

Discovery Exercise

The discovery exercise introduces insights from Margaret Wheatley (see www.margaretwheatley.com), a teacher who has combined her professional competence in human organizational systems with her lifelong interest in life sciences. Meg Wheatley exercises the principles of a learning leader (see "paradigm thinking" in Session 8) to view the mystery of our world from a larger perspective than her own professional field might suggest. Check out [books](#) she has written to learn how she lives with balance, poise, rhythm, and playfulness.

Complete the exercise on page 91 with focus on questions that are most relevant to your congregation.

Feedback & Evaluation (5 minutes)

Ask, "What insights do you have from this session? Are there immediate applications for our congregation?"

Sending Forth (10 minutes)

One way leaders can increase poise is called the [breath prayer](#). In closing, ask participants to pray together the prayer on page 83, then to sit quietly paying attention to their own breathing. They can imagine they are breathing in the peace of God and breathing out the turmoil of chaos. After a few moments of silence, close the session with an "Amen."



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BUILDING LEADERS FOR TODAY'S CHURCH

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CHAOS THEORY

- **A wonderfully complex, highly ordered reality underlies what appears as chaos and randomness in the world.**
- **Order emerges from chaos when there is enough time and space.**
- **Organizational structure should facilitate relationship building and avoid trying to control chaos.**

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JUGGLING AND MASTERING THE ART OF LIFE

One image for daily living in chaotic times with qualities of . . .

- **Balance**
- **Poise**
- **Rhythm**
- **Playfulness**

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SESSION 10



Leadership Qualities

Balance, poise, rhythm, and playfulness are traits that strengthen our ability to live through times of change, times which feel chaotic. Helping people find balance, poise, rhythm, and playfulness **takes time!** Here are some notes and extra questions for your discussion:

- How does our church provide opportunities for people to have discussions about important issues outside of meetings with an agenda?
- Do these kinds of discussions happen only in the parking lot?
- What is the role of leaders in helping people find balance, poise, rhythm, and playfulness?

Balance

Balance is something we take for granted until it is no longer present. Watch closely as a baby is learning to walk. Young children are called “toddlers” for a reason! Have you had to learn to walk with a heavy cast? Or have you tried to walk after being in bed for several days? Our spiritual lives also need balance. Some days we are so “out of balance” that we forget what balance feels like! Regular prayer and practice of the means of grace are the ways we keep spiritual balance. (“The Means of Grace” is the title of Session 15.)

Poise

To be alert to the present moment without a need to control the moment or to worry about the moment is called **poise**. The *FaithQuest Bible Study* story of a young woman leading children through a museum is a great illustration! A leader with “poise” is sometimes called a guide. The leader provides some boundaries for safety, yet allows others to explore, to experiment with options, and to make their own decisions. Sometimes this leadership quality is called “non-anxious presence.”

Rhythm

Rhythm underlies balance. In our daily lives, we function optimally if we follow a rhythm of sleeping, eating, working, and playing. Some churches follow the rhythm of observing the liturgical seasons of Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Pentecost, and Ordinary Time. Many families with young children follow the rhythm of the school year. Some individuals are strongly affected by seasonal changes. The popularity of self-help books is evidence of our search for balance in our lives.

Playfulness

Balance, poise, and rhythm free us to be playful! One greeting card reads: “Angels fly because they take themselves lightly.” Taking ourselves lightly is a quality of playfulness. Playfulness involves moments of pure joy in the delight of life and moments of total awe at the beauty and majesty of creation. Playfulness involves moments of spontaneous thanksgiving to God for the goodness of life.