



Introductory Presentation



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INTRODUCTORY PRESENTATION

This 45-minute presentation offers potential participants a “taste” of the Engaging Spirituality (ES) process and an invitation into discernment. This presentation is divided into three 15-minute segments. It is designed to fit around busy evening schedules or follow a weekend church service.

Promotion and Invitations

- Schedule this session in the two weeks following initial promotion in your church community.
- Personal invitations are vital. Follow up bulletin announcements with personal invitations.
- Make sure the time and location of the presentation, along with co-facilitator contact information, (*See bottom of SOLE Time sheet, p.11*) is clearly marked on all promotional materials.
- Encouraging people to notify you in advance will make it easier to predict attendance.
- Keep in mind the scope of this small-group process (8-10 participants). Ideally this gathering should not exceed 20 people.

You Will Need...

- a quiet location
 - a circle of chairs
 - a small table
 - a DVD player (*or a computer/ lap top with internet access for the “youtube” video option*)
 - a table-cloth
 - a Bible
 - a candle and matches
 - copies of “Sole Time” Discernment process (*see p. 11*)
- If necessary, write facilitator contact information on the bottom of the SOLE Time sheets.*

From JustFaith Ministries...

- a copy of “*Holding The World Together*,” the ES promotional DVD
Youtube internet option: <http://youtu.be/QNa1bN7PyU4>
- copies of the **ES Promotional Flier** from the website (print in color or black and white): http://justfaith.org/programs/pdf/engaging_flyer.pdf



Setting the Scene

Locate the introductory session in a meeting room at church or a spacious room at home, where you will be uninterrupted.

Set a reflective tone that gives participants a feel for the Engaging Spirituality process.

Where possible, arrange chairs into a single circle and put a small focus table in the center.

Cover the table with a cloth. Add a large pillar candle and a Bible.

If possible use dim or indirect lighting.

Keep copies of the overview flyers and the SOLE Time discernment process out of sight and minimize distractions by making the literature available at question time- the final 15-minutes.

Place the DVD player and monitor (*computer or laptop*) off to one side.

Spiritual Readiness

Before people arrive, (*co-facilitators*) purposefully put yourselves into the unhurried space of prayer. Bless yourselves with this invocation:

Mind of Christ enlighten us.

Heart of Christ fill us with compassion.

Spirit of Christ compel us to action.

As people enter, invite everyone into an atmosphere of prayerful silence.

Remove any empty chairs and tighten the circle.

Begin promptly, after all the participants are seated.

Take a few moments to open a space for silence together.

PAUSE

Lead the group through the reflection outlined in the pages that follow.



Still in the Eye of the Storm 15 Minutes

Warmly welcome everyone, giving eye contact, a nod, a smile...

Invite people to put everything down— *tasks, problems, questions, expectations*— and sit in a receptive attitude (*feet on the floor, palms upturned, resting on their laps*) so they can be fully present and ready to receive.

A Call to Stillness

Slowly share these words (*if there are 2 presenters, alternate voices*):

Engaging Spirituality is about making space in our lives.

Breathing space...

a quiet space for listening...

space for community...

space for a world of problems and possibilities...

space for God to break through...

in the eye of the storm that surrounds us.

Pause



Open the Bible and read the story of the calming of the storm (Mark 4: 35-41). Pause after the reading and slowly offer this prayer:

***In a fear-filled,
fast-paced world,
prayer and stillness
are breathtaking.***

Pause

Spirit of Christ calm us ...as you calmed the storm.

Invite everyone to practice this breath prayer:

***Jesus commanded both the storm
and his terrified companions to BE STILL.***

These words can be a breathtaking prayer.

Inhaling, we softly repeat the command to be fully present.

BE (inhaling)

Breathing out, we echo the call to stillness.

STILL (exhaling)

Repeat the breath prayer two or three times,
more softly and quietly with each recitation.



A Call to Silence

The author of Psalm 36: 7 counsels us:

Be still before God and wait patiently... (Repeat)

Be still before God and wait patiently...

Let us open ourselves to the fullness

of this present moment by making space for silence.

Silence

Silence

Silence

Allow two full minutes of complete silence
before offering this reflection:

*Silence is the universal language of intimacy... of lovers...
of prayer.*

It punctuates the streaming thoughts and actions of our days.

In silence we open a space, and the whole world rushes in.

We become attuned to the noise within and all around us.

Pause

*By keeping silence we become sensitive
to deeper, quieter voices... to the hunger inside,
to the needs of our loved ones,
to the cries of suffering people,
to God's planet in distress...*

Pause

*Silence can be uncomfortable, even disturbing.
Sometimes it helps to close our eyes.*

Pause and invite everyone to close their eyes.

*We still ourselves,
stop running away or running around...
And from this still-point,
we acknowledge and address
the storms that swirl around us and within us.*

Pause



Still in the Eye of the Storm continued

*Keeping silent before the storm of frantic activity,
and before the restless ocean of human suffering,
can lead to intimacy, to a deeper kind of connection.*

Pause

*Choosing to listen, with full attention,
is a way of engaging the LIFE, the LONGING and the LOVE
that surround us.*

To listen is to lean in, softly, with a willingness to be changed by what we hear.

Invite people to quietly consider this question

Mark Nepo

What do you hear when you quiet yourself?

Leave another minute full minute of silence.

Silence

Silence

Silence

Invite people to open their eyes.

A Wake-up Call

Light the pillar candle and offer this reflection:



*Attracted by an awesome presence
in the flaming bush,
Moses drew closer...
and encountered the living God
who sees... hears... cares...
and is involved in our lives.*

Pause

*Fire breathes, consumes, moves, changes, enlightens and burns.
A symbol of the creative power of God's passionate love...
fire also destroys.*

Pause

*There is hurt in every life... ...and love pains us.
There is darkness in our world.
And within us there is a restless longing for completeness, for connection.*



A Wake-up Call continued

What are you longing for, ...for yourself, ...for our world?

Pause for a full minute of quiet reflection on this question:

Silence

Silence

Silence

Here are some of the challenges for Engaging Spirituality in our times.

Catch your breath!

Bear witness!

Hold Still!

Be Amazed!

Reach out!

Give thanks!

Keep Quiet!

Grow together!

Listen!

Become familiar with the dark!

Take to heart the joys and struggles of God's people!

Close this section with these final verses of Psalm 139.

*Search me O God and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.*

Engaging Spirituality DVD Presentation 15 Minutes

Put the DVD monitor (laptop or computer) in a visible location.

*You have just had a taste of the Engaging Spirituality process.
Let's listen to the voices of people like you who have already embarked on
this spiritual journey.*

Play the promotional DVD.

Following the video presentation take a few moments to highlight a FEW of the points listed in the headings below.

Most of this information is already covered in the DVD.

1. Where does Engaging Spirituality come from?

Engaging Spirituality has been developed by JustFaith Ministries.

Encourage those who are unfamiliar with JustFaith Ministries to visit the website listed on the materials.

Invite anyone who has completed a JustFaith Ministries' program to BRIEFLY share something about their experience.



2. What does it mean to follow Jesus in these times?

Engaging Spirituality is... about being connected, growing in faith, living prayerfully, sharing and listening from the heart.

It is...

- *an opportunity to express our deep connection to God who is at the hub... and Christ at the margins of life!*
- *an invitation to widen the scope of our lives and deepen our compassionate engagement with the world.*
- *an intensive, spiritual process and a practical experiment in being disciples by the way we live out our everyday lives.*

3. How long does it last? What do we do?

This small-group journey is open to:

- *NO MORE THAN 10 participants and 2 facilitators.*
- *It is at least a six-month process involving 21 sessions.*
- *Each 2½ hour session is centered on contemplative prayer and sharing from the heart.*
- *At each session, the group reflects on a personal letter written by a contemporary spiritual teacher, author, minister or activist.*
- *Between sessions participants keep a journal, commit to spiritual practices like... spiritual reading, prayer and outreach.*
- *There is an opening and closing retreat, as well as two immersion experiences.*

Engaging Spirituality creates a small community of disciples, seeking the wisdom to live in these times with compassion and integrity.

4. Who is the process for?

This process is ideally suited for people who are looking to GROW, to deepen and broaden their spiritual lives, while also responding directly to the needs of our world.

Engaging Spirituality is aimed at Christians who have been “seasoned by life” — who have struggled with loss, who hunger for wholeness.

Though it is an ideal follow-up for people who have completed another JustFaith Ministries’ program, participants do NOT need to have already experienced JustFaith.



5. What is asked of participants?

...an open mind and heart.

...a willingness to be stretched, to learn, to share questions and insights.

...a serious commitment of time and presence to a group process.

...wholehearted participation in all aspects of the process.

Participants are expected to purchase the spiritual reading materials:
5 books and a journal (*approx. \$85 per person*).

Engaging Spirituality challenges us to integrate a rhythm of **personal prayer**, **journal-keeping**, **spiritual reading**, and **outreach** into our lives.

Engaging Spirituality flows from a **desire** to be centered and rooted in faith, as well as an **intention** to take into our hearts the great possibilities and terrible problems of this age.

*Like any small faith community,
flexibility, patience and a listening heart are vital.*

6. Am I called to this spiritual deepening process?

Engaging Spirituality is NOT for everyone.

It is an open invitation that presumes a free and enthusiastic response.

All participants are invited into a discernment process that includes a short interview with the facilitator team.

An outline of the discernment process will be available at the end of the session to anyone who is seriously interested.

Invite people to quietly consider these questions for a few quiet moments:

At this point in your life...

- Are you willing to be led by the Holy Spirit at work in your life, in your group, in the needs and gifts of neighbors?
- Are you looking for insights into your life and the events of our world?
- Do you long to feel deeply connected to the life within you and the world and around you?
- Are you concerned about the daily struggles of God's people and disturbed by the desecration of life in our times?
- Do you have the resources of time and energy to freely commit to this process?
- What questions has this presentation raised within you?



Questions 15 Minutes

Distribute the promotional flier and open the floor to questions.
A few frequently asked questions and responses:

What books do you use?

While spiritual reading is an important part of ES, the books do not provide the primary source of content for this process.

This process hinges on the sacred space created for the Holy Spirit, that we experience in the connections we develop in community.

Will it be like the JustFaith program?

In some ways it will feel familiar.

It is no less demanding, yet is also distinctive.

The tone is spacious and prayerful.

Reading requirements are lighter, with more emphasis placed on journal-keeping, spiritual practices, heart-sharing and outreach.

Do I have to participate in all the sessions?

Everyone is challenged to surrender to the process.

In any small community the absence of one person impacts the experience for all. Since each gathering involves dialogue, soul-sharing and prayer, these moments cannot be reclaimed. Extenuating circumstances (*illness, family emergencies...*) always arise.

The covenant cloth reminds people of their commitment to the group.

What are the meeting dates?

The dates and times for weekly sessions are scheduled by co-facilitators.

If you have already selected these, share them with the group.

If not, assure participants they will be notified well in advance so that personal calendars can be adjusted.

Leave a few minutes for closing remarks and prayer. If there are additional questions and time does not permit you to respond, invite those who interested to connect with you personally via phone or email.

Offer these concluding remarks:

ES participants are asked to make space in their lives for a spiritual journey.

Like all Gospel-based processes Engaging Spirituality is designed to interfere with our life-patterns and priorities.

With God's help and our cooperation ES has the potential to broaden our minds, soften our hearts and reorganize our relationships to life.



Be Still

Invite everyone to return to silence and stillness.

Lead the group in the breath prayer once again.

Inhaling, we softly repeat the command to be fully present.

BE (inhaling)

Breathing out, we echo the call to stillness.

STILL (exhaling)

- Repeat the breath prayer two or three times, more softly and quietly with each recitation.
- Ask people to close their eyes and open their palms in receptive attitude.
- Call to mind a current local, national or global reality.
- Ask people to take this situation, those people, to heart, to hold them together, to hand them over the mercy of God.

After a moment of silence, end with this prayer:

*“Come Lord, do not smile and say you are already with us.
Millions do not know you, and to us who do what's the difference?
What is the point of your presence if our lives do not alter?
Change our lives, shatter our complacency...
Take away the quietness of a clear conscience.
Press us uncomfortably.
For only thus that other peace is made, your peace.”*

Helder Camara

“SOLE time”: For Further Consideration

Invite those who feel drawn to this spiritual journey to take home a copy of the SOLE time discernment sheet.

If you know you already have multiple, conflicting demands on your time, the discernment will make clear whether you can realistically make this commitment at this time.

Discernment is a spiritual practice that helps clarify the call of the Spirit at this point in our lives.

The SOLE time discernment is for your personal use.

Follow the directions, and if you still feel called to ES, complete your discernment by scheduling a brief dialogue or interview with the facilitator team.



“SOLE” TIME Discernment

DIRECTIONS: Take this sheet home. Find a quiet place. Make a quiet space

- Give yourself the gift of silence and solitude. Take 15 - 20 minutes of “alone” time.
- Allow questions, images, feelings to surface in you as you revisit your taste of Engaging Spirituality.
- Welcome the gift of this time to consider, ponder, reflect or journal.

KEEP IN MIND

Discerning is NOT the same as deciding! Discernment always involves listening to other voices, keeping an open heart, and paying attention to responses. Consult with others about the invitation to participate in Engaging Spirituality. Listen for the deeper, quieter inclinations, tugs and nudges. Some anxiety, mixed with excitement, is a healthy, holy indication of a call.

A Wake-Up Call. Life beckons us.

With every moment, God calls us into awareness— a state of readiness.

“The time is fulfilled, and the Reign of God has come near; turn your lives around and believe in the good news!”

Mark 1:15

We experience such awakenings in many ways— *an inner yearning, a nagging question, a jarring encounter with the fragility of life, a pilgrimage along the broken edges of the world, a challenging nudge from a friend, the tragic loss of a loved one, the end of a relationship, the embrace of pain and suffering, falling in love with life, a personal taste of injustice, a disturbing encounter with violence or evil, an experience of rebirth or renewal, a struggle with illness, a breath-taking exposure to wonder and awe, a reality that captures our hearts, a sense of incompleteness, a deep desire to grow and be transformed...*

How are you being called to live more deeply?

Discerning Questions

Where is my growing edge? What do these times require of me? How am I hoping to grow?

What am I holding onto? What do I need to relinquish? What resonates deeply, tugs at my heart, nudges me toward newness?

A Free and Open Invitation

There are many forces active in our lives. Some seek to control us, others compel and drive us.

The Holy Spirit **DRAWS** us out toward a broader, deeper, more compassionate, connected life.

No matter the specific situation, the Spirit’s call always comes as a free invitation.

It is an urgent (*urging us*), liberating call. It is demanding, but never overbearing.

Take these things to heart...

At this point in my life... •Do I feel called by the Holy ONE, by life, by others to this journey?

- *Am I open to being a participant?*
- *Can I envision entering the Engaging Spirituality prayerful process?*
- *Who might join with me on this kind of process?*

Interview: If you feel drawn to Engaging Spirituality, contact the facilitator team at...

Phone
or
Email
