

This Evening's Topic

Inviting People to an Orthodox Church

*The How and Why of Taking Action
for the Unchurched*



Fr. Jonathan
Ivanoff



Joseph
Kormos

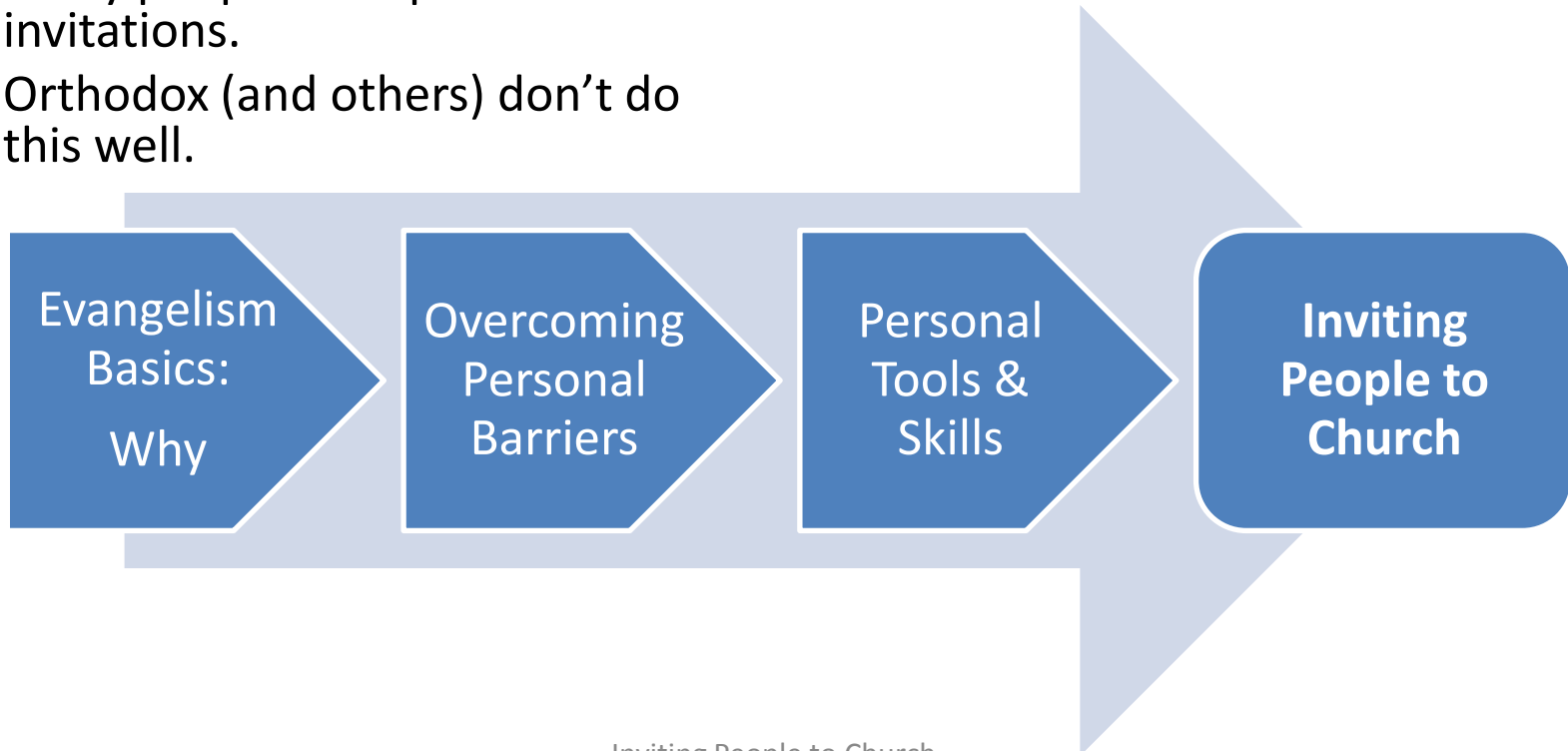
Tonight's Outline

Thesis

- Inviting people to Church is one of the most potent methods of exposing people to the Gospel.
- Many people are open to invitations.
- Orthodox (and others) don't do this well.

Goal

Begin to equip ourselves to be more effective at inviting and sharing.



Assumptions for Tonight's Session

- Good parish
 - something to offer.
- Decent understanding
 - of Orthodox faith
- Everyone can do something
 - not everyone “*gifted*”

Also NOT Covering

1. Reaching lapsed Orthodox
2. Differences with other faiths
3. Reaching out to the neighborhood in service

Session 3
Parish Wide
Evangelism & Growth
Sept 26

Session 4
Integrating New
Members
Oct 24

Proper Motivation

EVANGELISM BASICS

Evangelism Is Not...

- Something Protestants do
- Formulaic, manipulative, high pressure, gimmickry
- Coercion of unsuspecting persons into commitments for which they are unprepared
- Optional – a “facet” of Christian life.

Evangelism Is...

- Sharing
 - of “Good, (*important*) News” of Christ with others.
- Utilization & application
 - of our faith in our day to day activities, behavior, & relationships
- Being open
 - to any encounter. Prepared if God gives the opportunity.

Public proclamation and sharing of Good News of Christ
– using words when necessary –
to those sent to us and to whom we are sent.

Improper Motivation for Inviting

- Saving Our Parish
- Increasing Attendance
- Paying the Bills
- Justifying *My* Choice
- Thrill of Conquest
- A chance to show off my knowledge of ____ .
- A Ride to Church
- _____

Sharing the Good News

Proper Motivation

Apostles motivation

- **Gratitude**

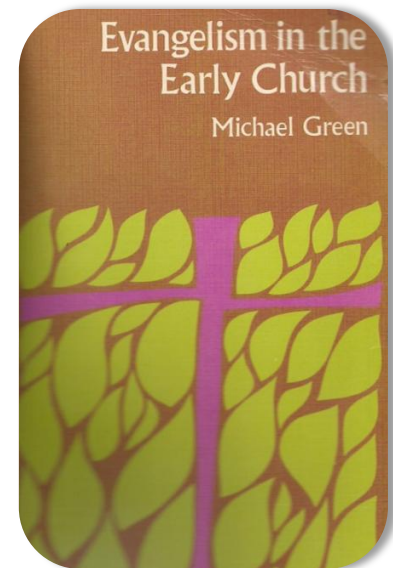
Overwhelming appreciation of the love of God experienced through Jesus Christ

- **Responsibility**

To share the message of God's love

- **Concern**

For the well being of the unevangelized – a lively awareness of the *peril of those without Christ*.

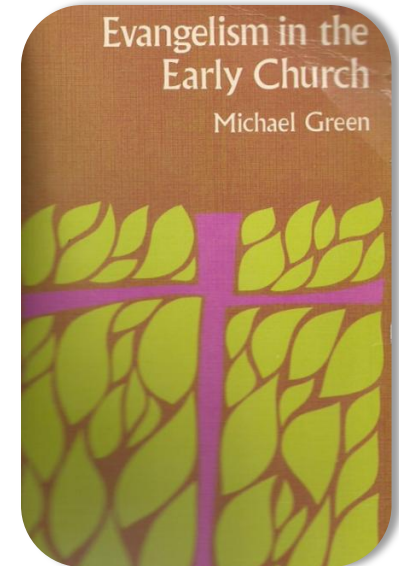


"They really believed that men without Christ might suffer eternal and irreparable loss. This thought drove them to unremitting labors to reach them with the Gospel."

A Lay Movement -- Every Christian's Job

In the apostolic era...

- “Communicating the faith was not seen as the preserve of the very zealous or the officially designated evangelist.
- Evangelism was the prerogative and duty of every church member. Christianity was supremely a lay movement spread by informal missionaries.”



What is Holding You Back?

OVERCOMING PERSONAL BARRIERS

Our Biggest Fear?

“Ding-Dong! Orthodoxy Calling!”



Our Biggest Fear?

“Ding-Dong! Orthodoxy Calling!”



Identify: What is Holding *You* Back

Think about what holds you back:

Click on the poll
and answer the points
that best describe your fear

Poll

- “Inviting is sooo...Protestant!” (just *not* Orthodox)
- I don’t know enough to answer questions (makes me uncomfortable)
- I’m not good at ‘selling’
- Possible negative reactions
 - Fear of rejection/disinterest/ opposition
- People deserve to be left alone
- I don’t have non-Orthodox friends

That's Not Orthodox – TNO

What's Holding You Back

- ***Jesus*** went after the Lost (the 1 vs 99 sheep)
- The ***Church*** went after the Lost (e.g., Cyril & Methodius)
- ***Mary's*** “Yes” was on behalf of the Lost
- The ***Liturgy*** is meant to appeal to the Lost (Vladimir's emissaries, anyone?)
 - Passing the Paschal light
 - *In faith and love...draw near*

“I Don’t Know Enough”

What’s Holding You Back

- Yes, and you never will
- Assume God’s assistance
- Focus on Christ, not doctrine (hint: memorize the Creed!)
- Know what they’re going to ask

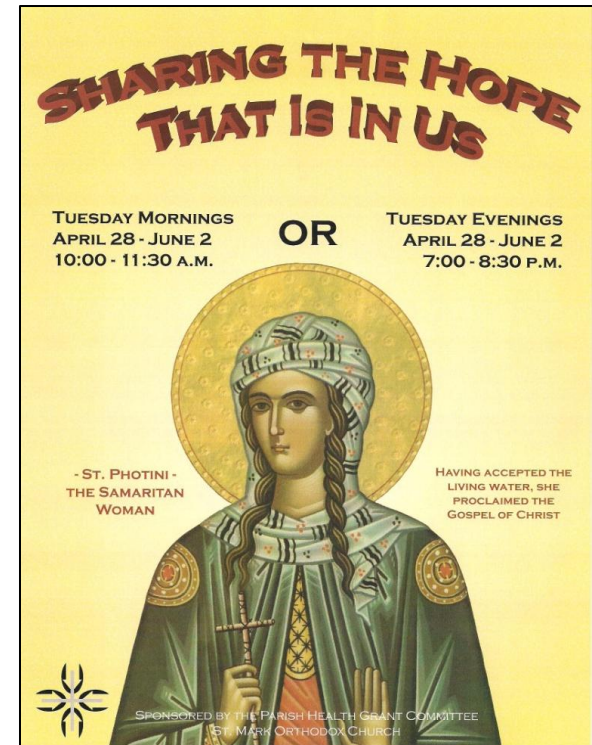
— See “St. Mark” Rochester MI Course

<http://www.midwestdiocese.org/evangelization.html>

➔ Emphasize areas of commonality!

RCs: Liturgy, sacraments, history, Mary, saints, etc.;

Protestants: Bible, faithfulness to God’s Word, prayer life



“I’m not good at ‘selling’”

What’s Holding You Back

➔ You’re not selling anything!

- You’re identifying a need
 - Pain/hunger/thirst
 - Build curiosity
 - Help when help is needed/desired
- Key skills
 - listening (very key!)
 - empathizing
- Let God do some of the work (next!)



A Reminder @ 'Selling'



“Remember always that the conversion of a sinner or a heathen to the right path comes not from us or from our skill, but **directly** and **solely** from **God**.”

“‘They’ will have negative reactions to us”

What’s Holding You Back

- Complex, unusual worship...compared to what?
 - Study of unchurched: prefer traditional church buildings over contemporary

"I like the smell of candles burning, stained-glass windows, [and] an intimacy that's transcendent."
- Too long...compared to what?
 - ✓ Invite to Saturday night Vespers
 - ✓ Invite on a festal day, preferably with lunch following
 - ✓ Bishop's visit may **not** be the best time
- Orthodoxy isn't for everybody...ok, but ***faith*** is

Concerns About Your Parish

What's Holding You Back?

- Too far away
- Facilities
- People are old
- Poor attendance
- Late arriving/ distracting behavior
- No study groups or gatherings
- Afraid they'll encounter “Baba Anna”

Before you invite... make sure
your parish is inviting



Fear of Rejection: Assuming Too Much?

What's Holding You Back?

- It's not personal
- Its *just* an invitation
- *"I will draw all men to myself."*
- It won't ruin relationships
 - See techniques for asking well

Paul traveled 15,000 miles, mostly on foot, in four journeys. He met with acceptance or rejection, never indifference.

Source unknown

People Have a Right to Be Left Alone

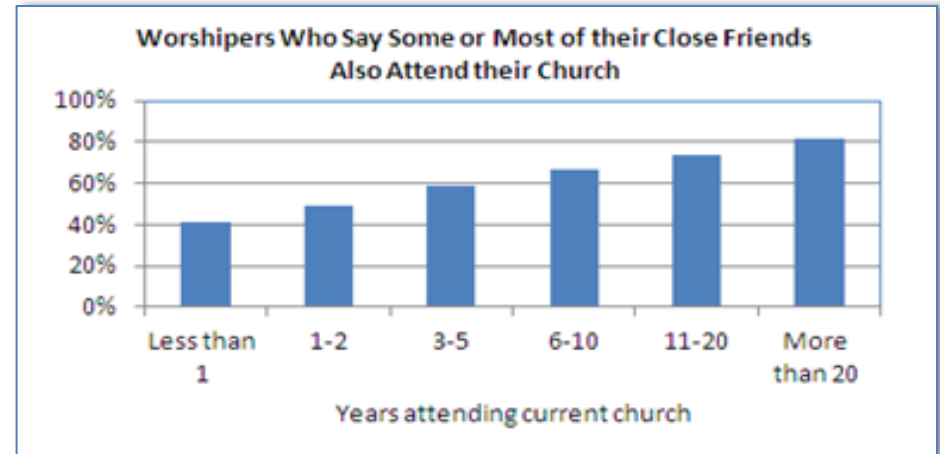
What's Holding You Back?

- “Don’t ask... don’t tell” (sorta...)
 - We don’t **ask** where someone is in their relationship with God because that would be “intrusive and judgmental”
 - We don’t **proclaim** Christ because that is imposing your faith on another and that implies a possible judgment on their spiritual condition
- Result?
 - Keeps us hiding our faith
 - Beware the “*Spiral of Silence*”
- Who Did God ever leave alone?
Mary? Paul? Jonah? Jeremiah? Amos?

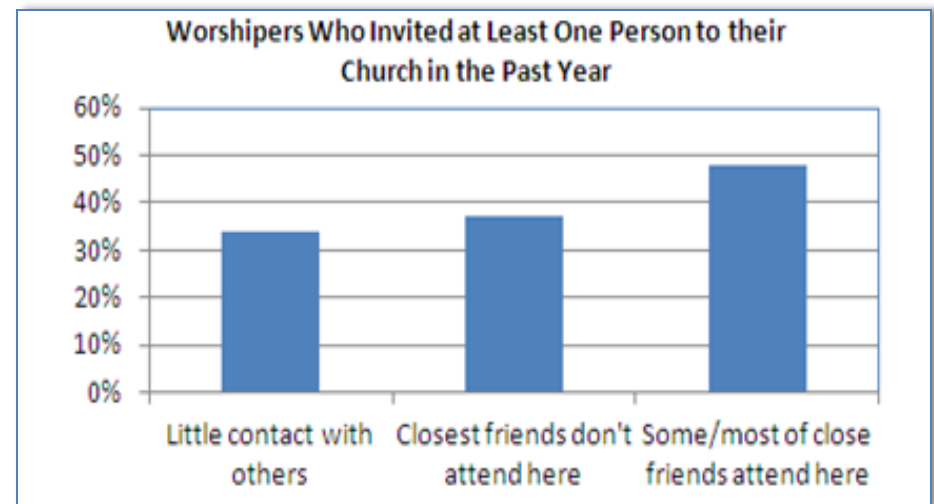
“I Don’t Have Non-Orthodox Friends”

What’s Holding You Back?

- Not unique
 - Presbyterians express same problem!
- No free pass!
 - Try harder:
 - Neighbors
 - Associates
 - Family
 - Ask God to open doors
- Converts beget... converts!



US Presbyterian Data





Your Personal Toolbox

SKILLS AND TOOLS

Prayer ♦ Focus ♦ Understandable language ♦ Plan of Attack ♦ Good Questions ♦ Listening ♦ Personal Narrative

Pray

Personal Tools

Ask God...

- To open doors
- Give strength
- Discernment
- Ask Him remind you that ...
 - *it's not about you.*

Focus: Who to Invite?

Personal Tools

No

- People who are satisfied/comfortable with their life in another Christian tradition.
- Certainly not those from another Orthodox parish.

Better

- People who inquire of you.
 - “Say, what is that cross you’re wearing?”
- People with whom you have a relationship and who trust you.
 - FRAN --Friends, relatives, associates, neighbors
- Those who fit the *profile*
 - of those who’ve converted to Orthodoxy

Who Has Been Attracted to Orthodoxy?

Characteristics of Orthodox Converts

Survey of 194 Orthodox Converts

60% Male

Most found Orthodoxy
– not invited.

Almost entirely
Caucasian

Faith background

29% “multiple”

20% Roman Catholic

9% Episcopal

34% Other Protestant

8% Non Christian

Well educated

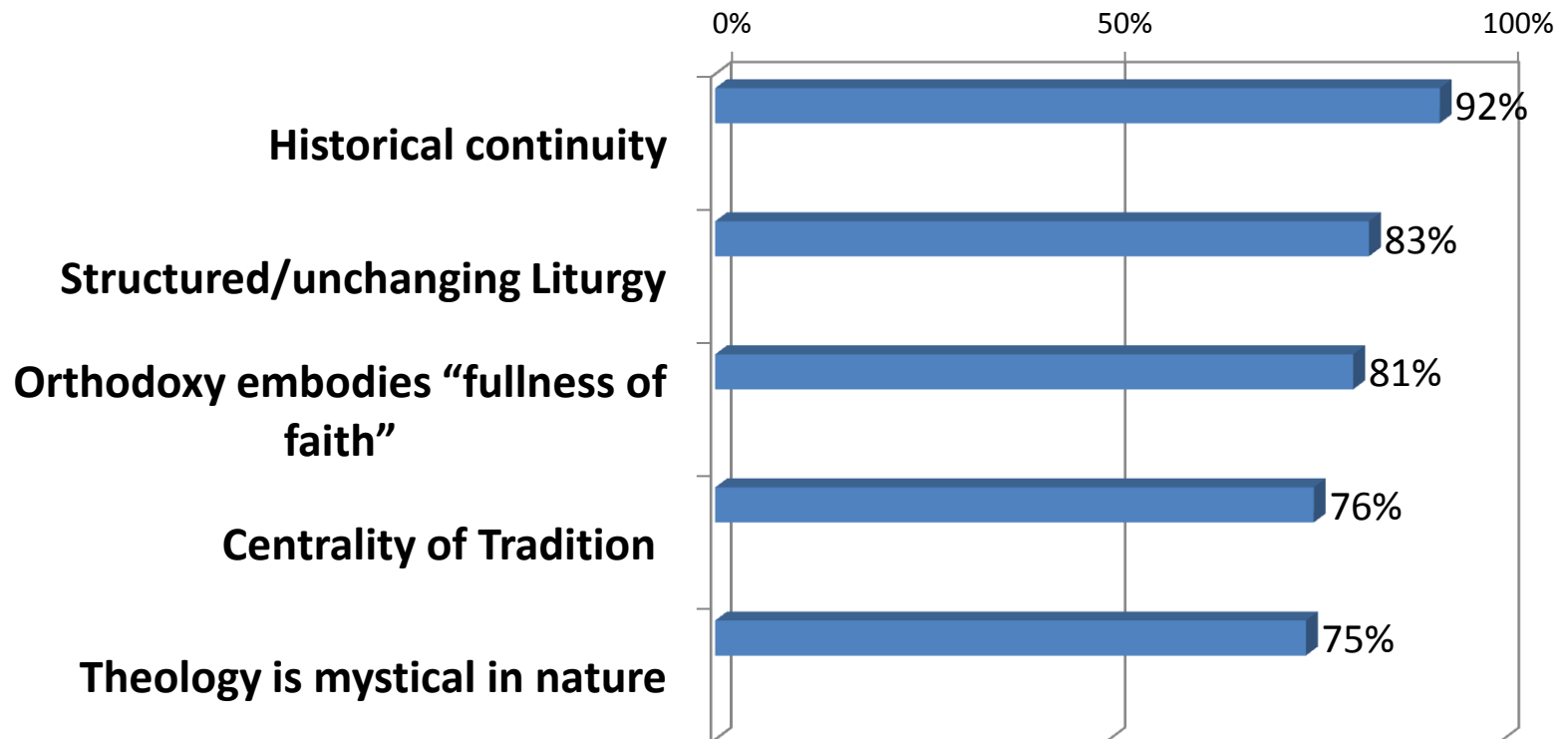
88% College; 34%
advanced degree

To What Are They Attracted?

Characteristics of Orthodox Converts

Attractive Attributes of Orthodox Christianity

as Cited by 194 Orthodox Converts ~ 2008

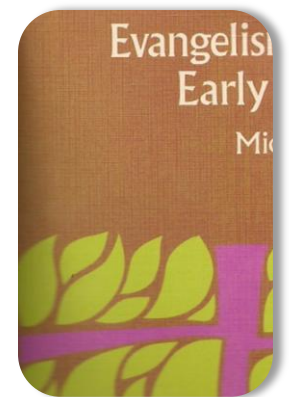


See more at: <http://www.midwestdiocese.org/evangelization.html>

Understandable

Personal Tools

- Gospel never proclaimed in a vacuum
 - but *to people*.
- Message must be given in terms that make sense to them.
 - “Apostles were intensely sensitive to the felt needs of listeners, the thought world in which they moved and the language that would strike the clearest note.”

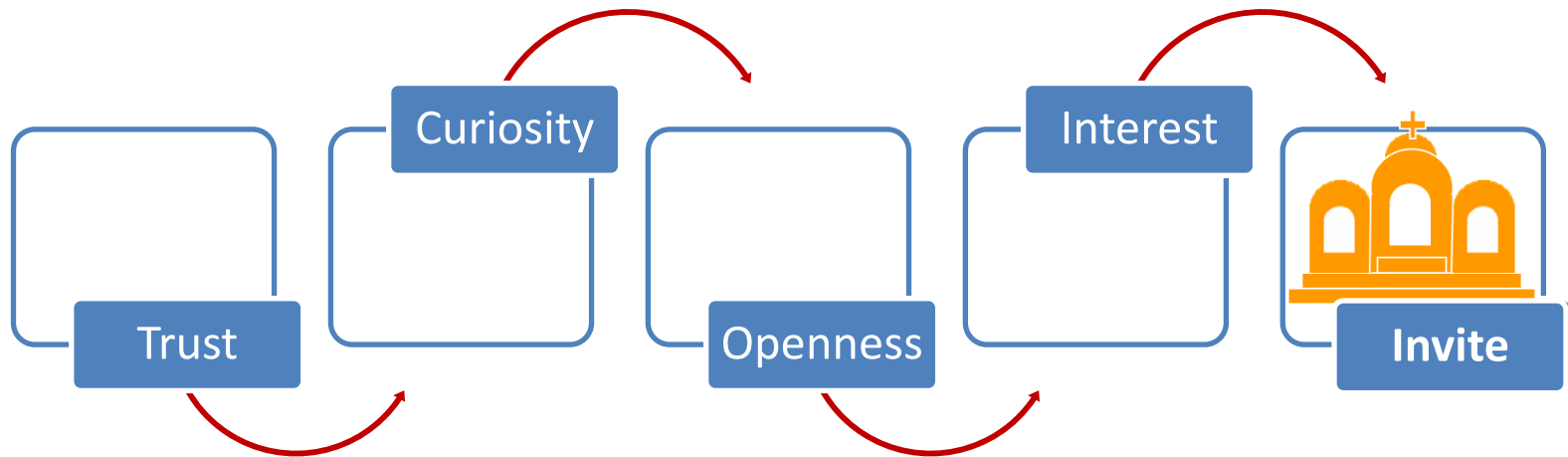


Words Used By Orthodox Converts to Describe Orthodoxy



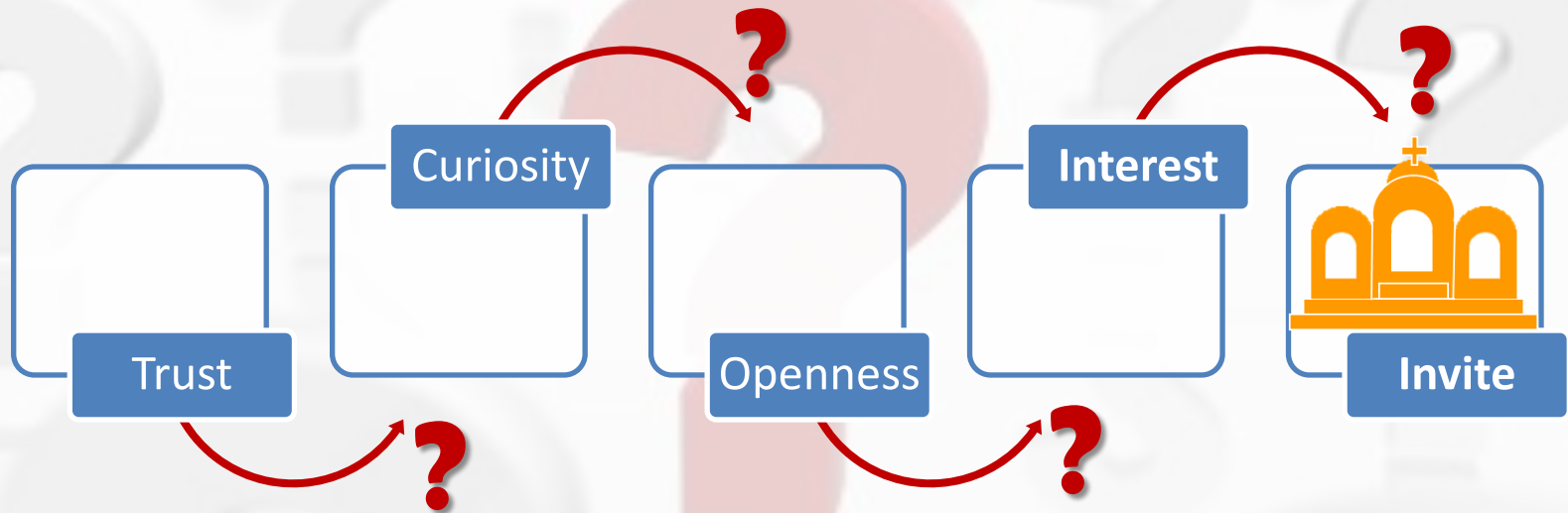
Plan of Attack: Small Steps

Personal Tools



Ask Good Questions

Personal Tools



- Honest
 - Not manipulative/ rhetorical
 - Concern for the other
- Ask permission
- Not an interview -- dialogue not monologue
- Adapted to their “state” and situation

Possible Questions – Trust to Curiosity

Personal Tools

- What gives meaning to your life?
- What are some experiences or ideas that have changed your life for the better?
- If you could change one thing about your personality what would it be?
- “Have you ever...”
 - Had an experience in which you felt the presence of God in your life?
 - Believed in God? If so why did you stop?
 - Had any exposure to religion or spirituality at some point?
 - Attended a religious congregation or school?
- What do you think God would have to be like, if God exists?
- If God existed, how would you know?
- Do you ever pray?
- Are you close to any religious or spiritual person(s)?
 - Why do you trust them?
 - What role does God played in his/her life?
 - How, do you feel about that'?
- “What would it take...”
- Are you satisfied?

Source :Catherine of Sienna Institute “Making Disciples”

Listening

Personal Tools

- Actually DO IT!
- NOT -- planning next statement
- Repeat back what was said in your mind.
- Observe body language
 - Theirs AND Yours



Personal Narrative

Personal Tools

➔ The most powerful tool you have

Authentic faith: *Is this for real?*

- What does God mean to me?
- Why do I have faith/why do I believe?
- Why am I an Orthodox Christian?
- Why do I attend St. Ignorus parish?

Personal Narrative

Personal Tools

“As a teen, I struggle with many significant decisions every day. Being an Orthodox Christian makes my struggle easier, guiding me through a maze of choices. My faith makes my struggle less lonely, giving me strength when I feel lost. But, most importantly, Orthodoxy makes my struggle meaningful, teaching me that life is a miraculous gift that I am only beginning to understand.”

-Joanna, lifelong Orthodox Christian

“I grew up an active Methodist in Kansas City, Missouri. However, in college, through reading and travel, I discovered a religious void. When a friend introduced me to Holy Trinity Orthodox Church, I found truth in answers to questions I had not yet even realized. Suddenly, saints and sacraments made sense to me. Truly, the Holy Spirit guided me to a loving spiritual family.”

-Vicki, high school teacher

Personal Narrative

Personal Tools

“I remain grateful for [my Protestant upbringing]. But through study and prayer I concluded that these traditions fell short of the full expression of the New Testament Church...I discovered the Church in its entirety...in the historic liturgy and organic continuity of the Orthodox Church. Now, nothing pleases me more than to see how excited my children become as we look forward to receiving the Body and Blood of Christ each Sunday.”

-Ron, evangelical seminary graduate

“Becoming Orthodox for me was the natural end of my search for authentic and true catholicism. I had spent 40+ years as a Roman Catholic and Anglo-Catholic Anglican. Although I remain close to both communions...only Holy Orthodoxy possesses the fullest vision of the Church founded by Christ...this Truth was found by coming home to the true catholic Church which has preached the Word and kept His sacraments for 2,000 years.”

-Paul, nonprofit fundraiser

Why Are You Orthodox?

Personal Tools

“I am Orthodox because I believe the Orthodox Church reveals an authentic, apostolic and perfectly modern understanding of God. Coming to church helps me find the right track. And it helps me to Glorify Him.”

Personal Narrative

Website testimonials

meet the parish

Sally Smith
Westhaven WI



Sally has been attending St XXX for five years, ~~having been raised in a~~ (ethnic) Orthodox parish.

Why St XXXX Is My Home Parish:
St XXXX is simply an exciting spiritual home. It provides a link to the church of my youth while offering a sense of mission and community. We're truly bringing the Orthodox faith to all people.

Without Being Pushy

INVITING PEOPLE TO CHURCH



Some Messages Are Better Delivered In Person



Scoreboard proposal?

Pre-Inviting

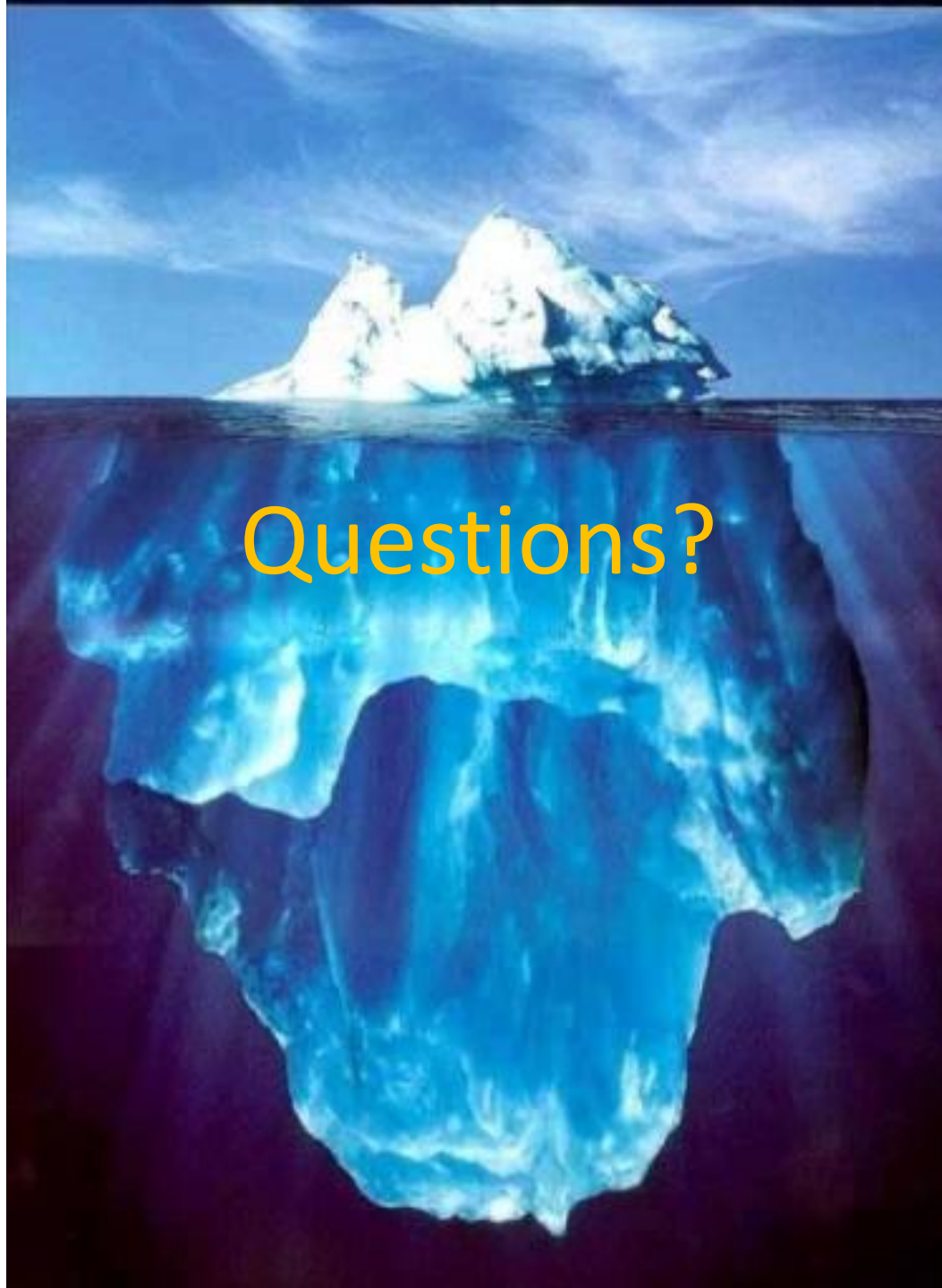
Ground Rules

- Be authentic
 - Be open, honest; don't do things for show
 - Leave room for the Holy Spirit
- Share Identity / areas of commonality
 - Kids, raising a family
 - Work, no time!
 - Women's and men's fellowship issues; loneliness, community
- Sign of cross at meal
- Cross/icon/palms in your office
- Where were you today? What did you do yesterday
 - "Went to confession"
- Music, art, literature (Dostoevsky, anyone?)

What to Say

Examples

- Pain: Loss of loved one /serious problem
 - *“What’s their name... I’ll pray for them.”*
 - *“Let’s have their memorial at our church.”*
 - Graveside blessings
- Hunger: Never connected with God
 - *“If you could feel the presence of God in (adjectives) worship, would you think about visiting that church?”*
- Thirst: Does the NT Church still exist?
 - *“Did you know there’s a church that has 2,000 years of unbroken, unchanging faith and teaching?”*
- Doubt: Is Orthodoxy relevant in the 21st century?
 - *“If Orthodoxy is the very Faith taught by Jesus and the Apostles, and we’ve never changed from that, then Orthodoxy is eternally relevant!”*



Evangelization Webinar Series

Session 1 The Unchurched

Defining the Unchurched

- Characteristics
- Statistics
- What matters to them
- 5 faith stages

July 18

2 Inviting People to Church

Personal Evangelism

- Motivation
- Obstacles
- Skills & tools
- Who to Invite
- Inviting Tips

Aug 22

3 Engaging the Parish for Action

Parish (Corporate) Evangelism

- External Communication
- Sizing the effort
- Focus
- Growth behaviors
- Greeting; follow up
- Events

Sept xx

4 Assimilating

Integrating New Persons

- Catechesis
- Mentors
- Making friends
- Total Stewardship
- Member expectations
- Small Groups
- Inspiring to Invite

Oct xx

Begin to equip & encourage Orthodox to
share the Good News of the Gospel
... using words when necessary

....with those God sends to us ...or to whom God sends us.



Summary: Principles of Orthodox Evangelization

Evangelism is Orthodox

Evangelism is everybody's Job

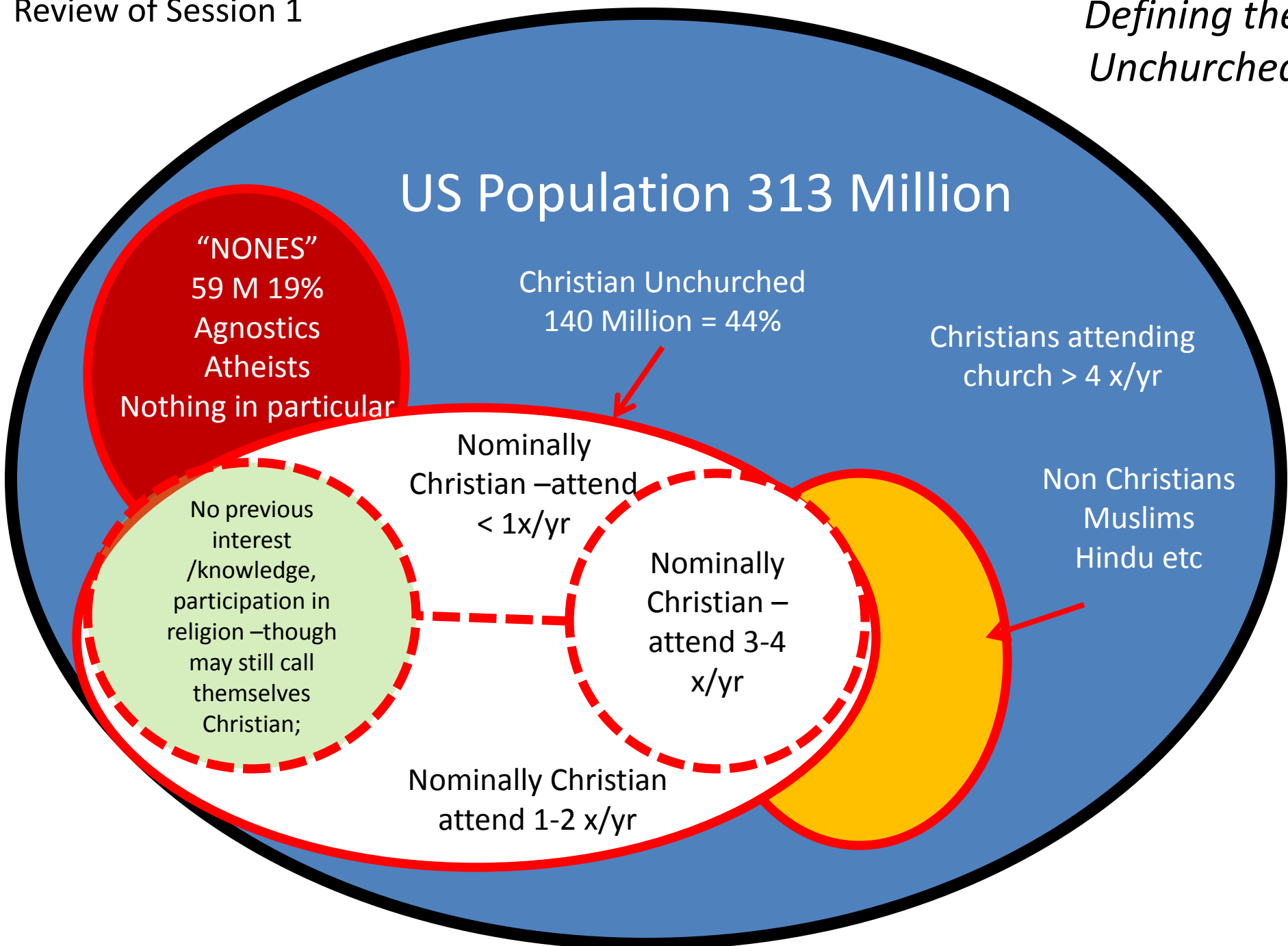
Evangelism is Not Optional

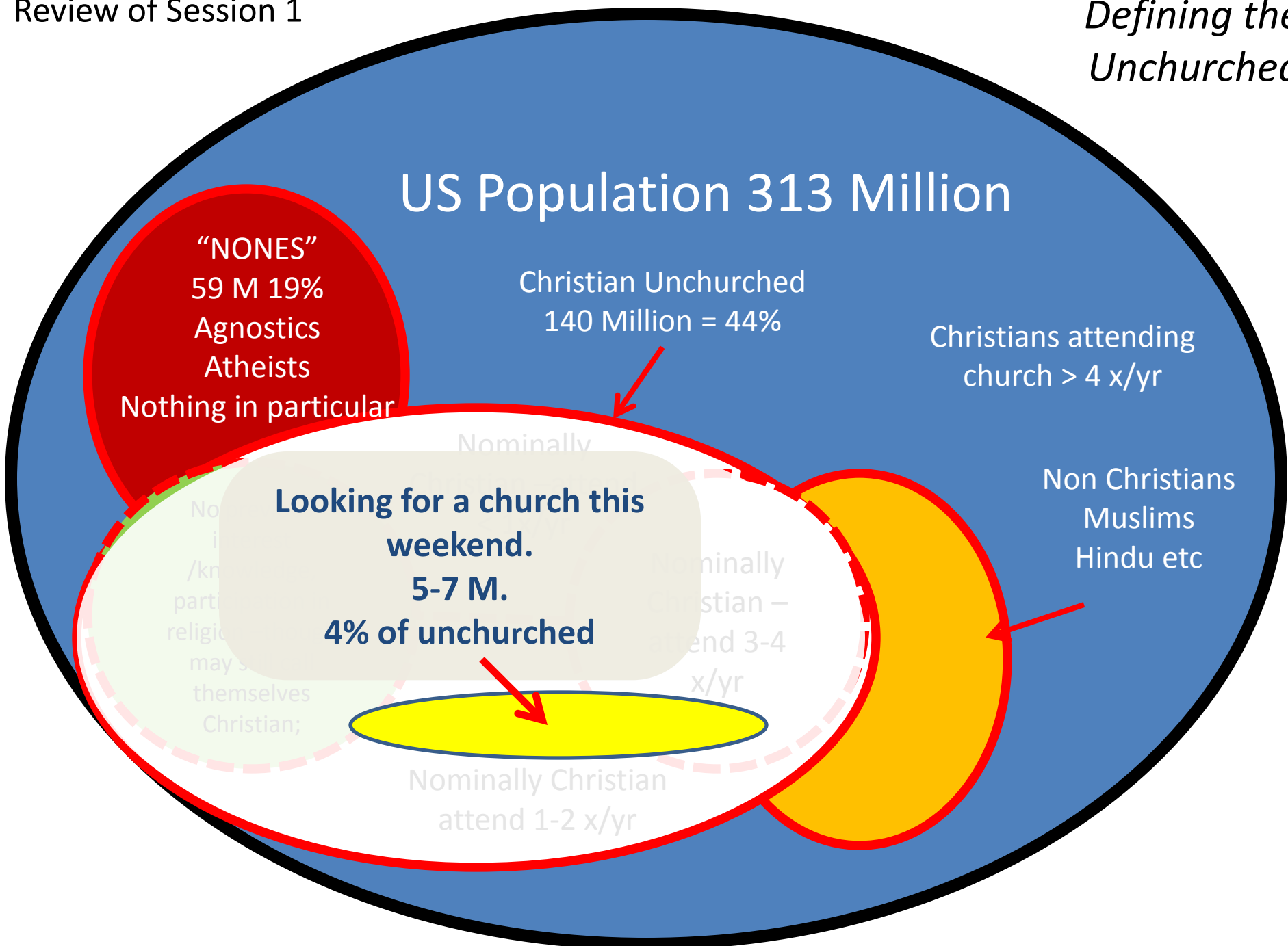
Proselytizing is Not Evangelism

Evangelism requires corporate (parish) and personal effort

Parish Related principles	Personal Principles
Parish is not a closed community	You are sharing good important news
Evangelism is more than planning	You do not have to be an expert
Not about the roof	Everyone can do this better
Finding those moved to the suburbs is not Evangelization	Beware the "spiral of silence"
Prerequisites: Know God, Loving community, proclaim and serve	You almost always need words
Don't wait for the parish to be perfect	Network of communication
Evangelism will change the Parish	Not manipulative or hard sell
Evangelization requires intentional structured effort	Not an interrogation, argument or conquest
Define a clear process – an Evangelization cycle	Not a justification of our choice
Catechesis is Linked with Evangelization	Not a Monologue
Beauty is Our secret Weapon	An authentic dialogue tuned to needs of other person
	Job 1 develop curiosity
	Accentuate the Positive
	Not peddlers of God's word

SESSION 1 REVIEW

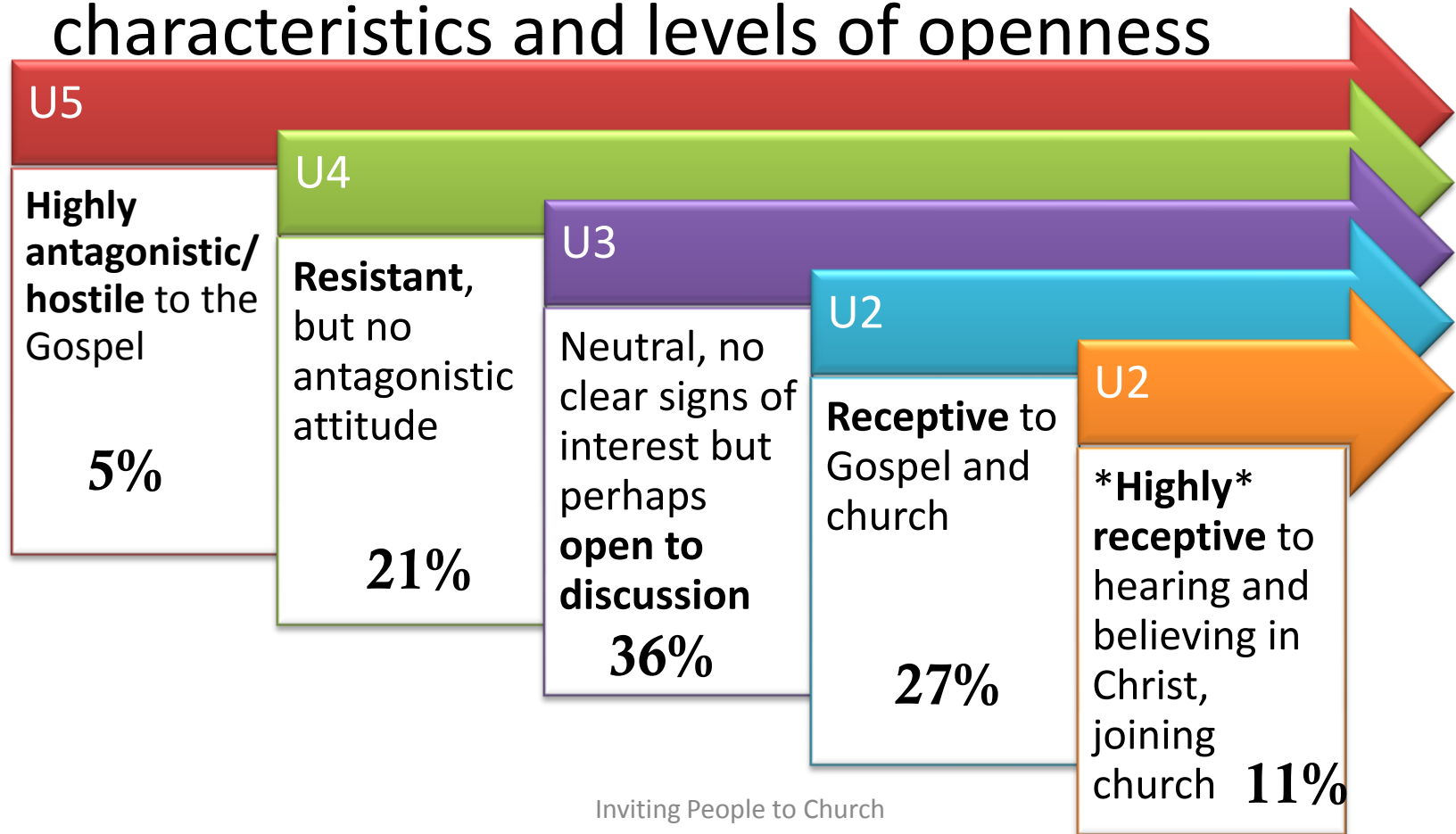




Review of Session 1

Defining the Unchurched

- Various categories of unchurched with differing characteristics and levels of openness



Review of Session 1

Defining the Unchurched

- Many are attracted to *good preaching, authentic worship, solid doctrine*
- Many experts feel these people will come if asked.