

STORIES **AND** RITUALS

Meaningful **MENTORING**

LESSON 8

Stories & Rituals: Meaningful Mentoring

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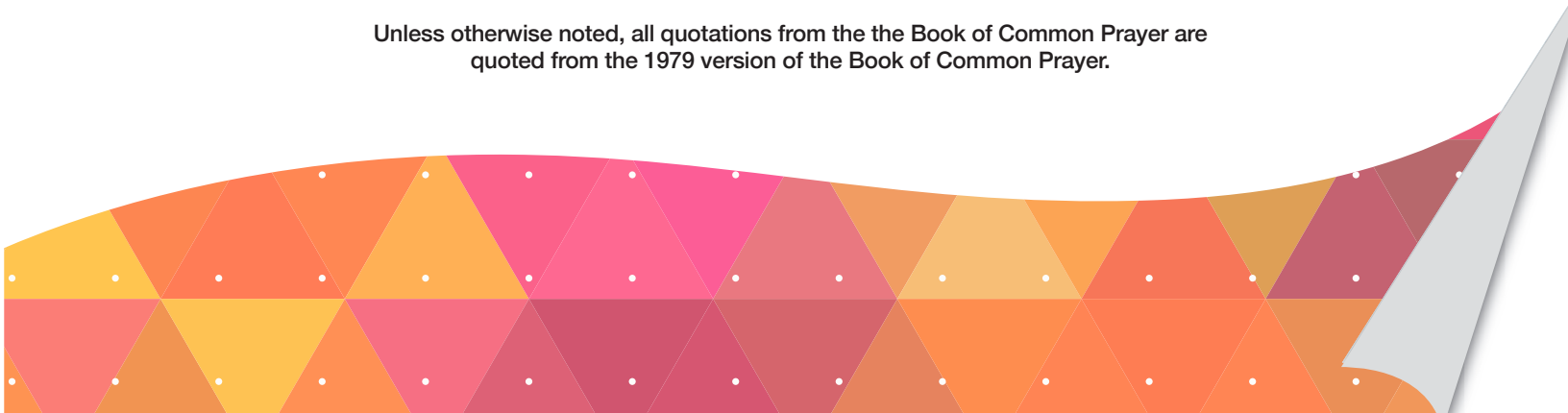
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MEANINGFUL MENTORING

Cemetery Tour

Lesson Focus: Death and Dying (John 11:23-26)

Lesson Goal: To take a moment out of our busy lives and spend it quietly within a cemetery.

Activity: Explore a cemetery with your mentee.

Duration of Lesson: 60-90 minutes

Materials Needed

- Lesson Sheet 8.1 (*Cemetery Tour*)
- Pencil or pen
- Crayon
- Blank sheet of paper
- Camera or phone with the ability to take pictures (*optional*)

LESSON OVERVIEW



The Story and the Ritual

This lesson will invite both you and your mentee to explore the stories hidden and found in cemeteries. Cemeteries can provide us with insights into the history and development of churches and communities. Each person buried there has a story, and these stories can be found on gravestones and markings.

As you explore the cemetery, you will complete the Cemetery Questionnaire together. This Questionnaire will invite you and your mentee to find unique markers and headstones as well as look for God's presence in a place that brings fear to many people.



What's the Focus?

We all share in this life together. Death is the end of our time here on earth, but it is not the end of our journey. As an example, take note of the graveyard and the stark comparison of tombstones. Some were built to memorialize famous, notable individuals; others were made to mark a place of burial. Yet, some lack all indication of burial. The only recorded information we have about those without a tombstone has been passed down by word-of-mouth.

It is important in the Church to be able to say the words "death," "dying," "died," and "dead." When someone dies, we don't lose them and they don't pass on. Death isn't the end because the promise of Jesus and his resurrection. When we die, we may leave this earth but we are reunited with God to live a new life in God.



What's the Point?

Death and dying is a hard topic for many people to talk about. It is a hard topic because it brings a lot of fear to people. However, death is a topic that we can (*and should*) talk about. We shouldn't be afraid of death because, as Christians, we know that we rest in the promise of the resurrection and eternal life (John 11:25-26). In the Book of Common Prayer, we are told that "the liturgy for the dead is an Easter liturgy" and that "because Jesus was raised from the dead, we, too, shall be raised." Burial liturgy invites us to celebrate in the joy of this resurrection while also mourning the loss of someone close to us.



Preparing for Your Lesson

Arrange for you and your mentee to meet at your church's cemetery. If your church doesn't have a cemetery, find a local public cemetery or cemetery at another church to visit. If possible, contact the caretaker of the cemetery and see if you can have a conversation with them while you visit.

Make one copy of Lesson Sheet 8.1 (Cemetery Tour) to bring with you. Look over the sheet and familiarize yourself with the material.

THE LESSON

- Meet with your mentee on your designated date and time. If you are travelling to your cemetery location together, follow all necessary Safe Church policies and procedures (*see the Suggested Safe Church Guidelines supplement for sample policies and procedures*).
- When you arrive at the cemetery, begin your time together in prayer. Ask God to be present with you and open your heart to finding God's presence in this place.
- Follow the tour on Lesson Sheet 8.1 (*Cemetery Tour*). Follow the steps of the tour in sequential order.
- If desired, take a picture of your mentee at the tour landmark that was most impactful to them.
- After you have completed your tour, find a well-illuminated, visible, quiet place for you each to take a moment and talk about the cemetery tour. This place should be in a public setting. Use the following questions to spark your discussion:
 1. What was most surprising about your experience?
 2. What was most encouraging about your experience?
 3. Did you find or feel God's presence and love? If so, where did you see it? If not, where were you expecting to find it? Why?
 4. How did your experience and time at the cemetery change what you think about cemeteries?
 5. What was your general impression: were the majority of the headstones glorifying the deceased, or were they glorifying God?
- If possible, plan the next date and time you will meet and write these times in the space provided on Lesson Sheet 8.1. Also set a date that can serve as a "Plan B," or backup, meeting (*just in case something happens and you can't meet on the first date you picked*).
- If you are transporting your mentee home, follow all necessary Safe Church policies and procedures.

WRAPPING UP

Take a few moments to reflect on your mentoring experience. Ask yourself the following questions. You may wish to write your answers down in a journal.

1. How did your mentee respond to your cemetery tour? How did you respond?
2. How did both of you answer the questions at the end of the lesson?
3. Were there particular moments in this mentoring session that impressed you or surprised you?
4. Where did you see God during your session?
5. Based on your conversations and experience, do you have any new insights on your mentee? What are these insights?

If necessary, report any new insights, issues or concerns to church leadership.

LOOKING AHEAD

Your next session will be an ongoing session throughout the month. During this time, you and your mentee will serve alongside each other in a worship service at your church. Help your mentee identify a clergy member or worship leader to contact about serving in a service at your church.

LESSON SHEET 8.1

Cemetery Tour

We all have passed a cemetery numerous times in our lives. They tend to blend into the background. This mentoring session is intended to get us to take a moment out of our busy lives and spend it quietly within a cemetery.

What do you see?

1. Before walking into the cemetery, look around.

- What is surrounding the cemetery? Why?
- Is it well taken care of, or run down?

2. Find the center of the cemetery.

- What is the design?
- What is the focal point?
- Where can you find representations of God?

3. Find three unique headstones.

- Why are these headstones unique?

4. Find the oldest headstone and make a head stone rubbing using paper and crayon or pencil. See if you can fill in any of parts of pieces missing from the headstone, if there are any.

5. Are there any headstones that have been distorted by tree or root growth?

6. If there is a caretaker or groundskeeper for the cemetery in proximity, take time to ask that person some questions about the cemetery. Some questions to ask might be:

- How long have you been working here? Have things changed over your time working here? How?
- Who would you contact to purchase a grave plot?
- Who funds the upkeep of the cemetery?
- Can anyone be buried here, or are there certain requirements (family association, spiritual beliefs, etc.)?

Copy down the words on the headstone that best glorify God.

Write these words here: _____

Besides headstones, what do you see? Are there wreaths, flowers, flags, or other grave markings?

How would you describe your feelings standing in the cemetery? Write some adjectives here: _____

Next meeting:

Date:

Time:

Location:

“Plan B” meeting:

Date:

Time:

Location: