

Notes to the Leader for S101 – What If God Was One of Us

Special Note – Story telling see below. Story on back of page.

Session Preparation

The depth of this session will be enhanced if each member thinks about the topic in advance. Please distribute the preparation sheet at the end of the prior session and make sure absent members receive a copy. Have extra copies available at the gathering for people who have forgotten to bring their copies.

Preliminaries

Prior to beginning the session:

- Take a few minutes to go over the announcements of the church events given at the last leader meeting or from a recent church bulletin.
- Remind members of the next meeting date and location.
- Get volunteers to light the chalice.

Storytelling

The story is included here on the back of the leader notes. If you or someone in your group is comfortable with storytelling, try telling the story. If not, choose someone to read the story to the group. Be sure to get it to the reader or storyteller ahead of time.

Feedback

This session includes a segment with feedback on the sharing. In these small groups, feedback is an exercise in ministry, not judgment or questioning. It should be very brief, gentle, and positive, and not lead to a discussion. Like sharing/deep listening, members should participate as the spirit moves them. Some members may choose not to offer feedback and that's fine, too.

Timekeeping

Use this timetable as an aid to keep the gathering on track. It leaves 15 minutes available in case the sharing portion runs longer or if a Life Ritual is planned. If it appears that portions of the session will run long, the group members can decide whether to stop continue or eliminate other portions.

Preliminaries	2 minutes
Opening	1 minute
Check-in	15 minutes
Story	5 minutes
Silence	5 minutes
Deep listening	45 minutes
Feedback	20 minutes
Singing	1 minute
<u>Closing</u>	<u>1 minute</u>
Total	~100 minutes

Preparation for the Next Session

Make sure everyone gets a copy of the preparation sheet for the next session.

The story concerns a monastery that had fallen upon hard times. All its branch houses were lost and it had become decimated to the extent that there were only five monks left...all over seventy in age.

In the deep woods surrounding the monastery there was a little hut that a rabbi from a nearby town occasionally used for a hermitage. As he agonized over the imminent death of his order, it occurred to the abbot at one such time to visit the hermitage and ask the rabbi if by some possible chance he could offer any advice that might save the monastery.

The rabbi welcomed the abbot at his hut. But when the abbot explained the purpose of his visit, the rabbi could only commiserate with him. "I know how it is," he exclaimed. "The spirit has gone out of the people. It is the same in my town. Almost no one comes to the synagogue anymore." So the old abbot and the old rabbi wept together. The time came when the abbot had to leave. They embraced each other. "It has been a wonderful thing that we should meet after all these years," the abbot said, "but I have still failed in my purpose for coming here. Is there nothing you can tell me, no piece of advice you can give me that would help me save my dying order?"

"No, I am sorry," the rabbi responded. "I have no advice to give. The only thing I can tell you is that the Messiah is one of you."

When the abbot returned to the monastery his fellow monks gathered around him to ask, "Well, what did the rabbi say?"

"He couldn't help," the abbot answered. "The only thing he did say, just as I was leaving - it was something cryptic - was that the Messiah is one of us. I don't know what he meant."

In the days and weeks and months that followed, the old monks pondered this...The Messiah is one of us? If that's the case, which one? Do you suppose he meant the abbot? Yes, if he meant anyone, he probably meant Father Abbot. He has been our leader for more than a generation. On the other hand, he might have meant Brother Thomas. Certainly Brother Thomas is a holy man. Everyone knows that Thomas is a man of light. Certainly he could not have meant Brother Elred! Elred gets crotchety at times. But come to think of it, even though he is a thorn in people's sides, when you look back on it, Elred is virtually always right. Often very right. Maybe the rabbi did mean Brother Elred. Of course the rabbi didn't mean me. He couldn't possibly have meant me. I'm just an ordinary person. Yet supposing he did? Suppose I am the Messiah? O God, not me. I couldn't be that much for You, could I?

As they contemplated in this manner, the old monks began to treat each other with extraordinary respect on the off chance that one among them might be the Messiah. And on the off, off chance that each monk himself might be the Messiah, they began to treat themselves with extraordinary respect.

Because the forest in which it was situated was beautiful, it so happened that people still occasionally came to visit the monastery...As they did so, without even being conscious of it, they sensed this aura of extraordinary respect that now began to surround the five old monks and seemed to radiate out from them and permeate the atmosphere of the place.

Then it happened that some of the younger men who came to visit the monastery started to talk more and more with the old monks. After a while one asked if he could join them. Then another. And another. So within a few years the monastery had once again become a thriving order and, thanks to the rabbi's gift, a vibrant center of light and spirituality in the realm.

-- Scott Peck, from The Different Drum