

## Exploring *Seasons of the Spirit* Adult Resources

(45 minutes)

### Materials needed:

- Newsprint and markers, tape
- CD/cassette player and *Seasons Music CD*
- White tablecloth, Communion chalice and paten, *Christ of the Breadlines* (p. 13 in *Behold*), candle, matches
- Two Bibles (same translation)
- Make two cue cards: “When did we see you?” and “When did we let you down?”

### A. Introducing The Adult Resource

1. *Establish the mood:* Have the *Seasons Music CD (vol. 1)* playing quietly in the background.
2. *Introduce self*
3. *Establish commonality:* Since we are all adults, that means we all have something in common: we are all adult learners! Whether you participate in a formal adult study program or not, you are and always will be a learner.
4. *Share a personal observation about what “adult education” means in a context with which you are familiar.*
5. *Introductions:* Invite participants to introduce themselves: name and where they are coming from, and ask them to offer a word about the types of adult education opportunities available in your congregation. [OR, if the group is large, skip introductions and invite people to simply name the formats.] Capture information on newsprint.
6. *Imagine:* Are there any other types of adult learning opportunities we have not named, but that you *WISH* were available? Capture information on newsprint.
7. *Introduce Seasons Adult materials:* Components of Adult Resource include two pages of seasonal introduction, the weekly session with Bible Background and reproducible resource sheets, printed music, and several pages of background articles. Also packaged with the Adult Resource is a copy of *Behold: Arts for the Church Year*, two full size posters, and with the first season ordered, a copy of *From Start to Finish* booklet.
8. Affirm that Adult learning settings offer by far the most diverse learning environment with an age span ranging from young adult to the very mature; along with other factors such as socio-economic realities and life and faith experience. In *Seasons* resources for Adult learners, we believe we have offered more than any single group would need with options for a variety of learning styles, group sizes, and comfort zones. I’ll be leading you through an abbreviated Adult session so that we can experience together how the four parts of the session – Gather, Engage, Respond, and Bless – work together as the session flow that begins and ends with time for prayerful reflection and discernment. Let participants know that if you were their group leader, you would have distributed the Bible background for this session at the conclusion of last week’s class so that participants would be coming with an awareness of the texts for the day.

### B. Gather

1. Set the table with white tablecloth. Open *Behold* to p. 13 and display *Christ of the Breadlines*.
2. Light the candle.
3. Introduce focus passage and focus: To enter into the heart of God’s reign as together we experience Matthew 25:31-46.
4. *Imagine:* Invite participants to close their eyes and imagine a time of day, or a favorite place, or something that helps them to think, “That’s the way it should be!” Go to that place or time,

experience the feelings... embrace the feelings... bask in the feelings. When you have finished there, whisper, "That's the way it should be!" and open your eyes.

5. *Prayer:* Use "Litany for the Season" (*Behold*, p. 3), teaching the response before beginning: **"Help us as we work together with you, God, in community."** Invite them to pray, holding their hands open to receive if they are comfortable.

O God,  
we are called to live in community with one another,  
to find that place where we long to be, and where we belong.  
We are called into community,  
to love, and struggle, and listen, and act.  
We are called into community,  
with all its joys and sorrows, challenges and fulfillment.

**Help us as we work together with you, God, in community.**

We are called into a community that involves  
intimacy and belonging – providing us with support, connection, shared joys and sorrows.

**Help us as we work together with you, God, in community.**

We are called into a community that involves  
call and consequences – as we live out our faith as followers of Jesus, responding to his call,  
we sometimes face the consequences of this daring.

**Help us as we work together with you, God, in community.**

Cathie Talbot, excerpt from "Litany for Pentecost 2," © *Seasons of the Spirit* 2002.

## C. Engage

1. *A story about God's empire: Matthew 25:31-46.* Ask two volunteers to serve as the narrator and the king. The facilitator will need the two cue cards (see Prepare). Divide the group in half to create the "sheep" and "goats." Rehearse each group's response. Sheep: "When did we see you?" and Goats: "When did we let you down?"
2. *Matthew 25:31-46.* Have the narrator and king read the story. Hold up the appropriate cue card at the appropriate time, for the appropriate group.
3. *Imagine:* What if this passage was the only clue you had to the nature of God's empire. What are its characteristics and concerns? Turn to a neighbor and share these. Allow 3-5 minutes and invite groups to report in.
4. [In an abbreviated workshop, you might receive the feed-in from this question, but then simply pose the next questions as examples of other ways the group could engage with the text.]
5. *Engage:* Invite the group to make a list, from the passage, of what we know about "the least."
6. *One step deeper:* "The least" are representatives of the ruler: what does this tell us about the ruler?
7. *Use of Resource Sheet:* Offer a brief introduction to the L'Arche community (see p. 79). Ask a participant to read the first Vanier quote at the bottom of the page 79. In what ways is the L'Arche Community seeing Christ "in the least of these?"
8. *Consider the context:* What denominational ministries are you aware of that are responding to Christ in "the least of these?"

## D. Respond

1. *Christ of the Breadlines*: Invite a volunteer to read “About *Christ of the Breadlines*” on page 13 of *Behold*. Then ask participants to stand up and form a line. Lead them in walking past the image of *Christ of the Breadlines*, which is displayed on the worship table. Before you begin to walk, ask them to imagine they are in line with Jesus. What do they hear? What do they feel? What do they smell? What do they long for? When they return to their chairs, distribute paper and pens or crayons. Invite participants to take at least five minutes to use this paper to create something to represent the experience of being in the breadline with Christ. They might choose to write a prayer or single words, or to draw something, or to create a shape or symbol with the paper. Play meditative music in the background (you might also choose from selections on *Seasons Music CD* such as *We Give Our Hands to You* or *Jesus Is Alive Today*) and allow them to create this response until the end of the music. While the group is working, read the quote from Lilla Watson on page 20 of *Behold*.

If you have come to help me; you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us walk together.

Lilla Watson, Australian aboriginal leader

## E. Bless

1. *Call to Worship*: Near the end of the meditative music, set an empty Communion chalice and paten on the worship table beside the *Christ of the Breadlines* image.
2. *Sing*: “Come Now, O God of Peace” (p. 83). [Skip this if your group isn’t into singing!]
3. *Prayer*: Invite a volunteer to read “Matins” on page 3 of *Behold*:  
May I live this day...  
Compassionate of heart,  
Gentle in word,  
Gracious in awareness,  
Courageous in thought,  
Generous in love.

John O’Donohue, from “Matins”

## F. Undemonstrated Resources For Adults

- [www.spiritseasons.com](http://www.spiritseasons.com): Spirit Sightings, Ask the Rabbi, Online Activity, Spirit Talk, Seasons International Bible Study
- Adult posters
- Reproducible Bible Background for adult learners. After the experience, point out that the session plan recommends distributing the Bible background to Adult learners the week prior to the session so that they will have the opportunity to come to the group with the same background that is provided to the group leader. Because of the brief timeline, this has not been distributed, but it is available in the sampler, if that would be of interest.
- Note that *Behold* is available as a single sale item, so that each adult could have a copy.

## G. Workshop Summary

1. *Facilitating the session*: Because the approach to learning does not rely on a lecture style, a single leader could facilitate the Adult learning experience, or leadership might be shared among the group.
2. *Adapting the session*: Point out that this session plan contained many more options in the form of discussion questions, creative activities, and reproducible materials for discussion and devotional

reading, and articles for further background, for example the Tom Long article on Mathew's use of parables. We expect that adult facilitators will adapt these sessions to minister to their specific learner groups, and recommend including at least these elements:

- An opening worship.
  - As much of the Engage section as you can.
  - At least one short Respond option.
  - A closing with a brief prayer.
3. *Respond activities come in all sorts and sizes:* Some involve individual work, such as journaling or prayer writing. Some are more creative, such as the construction of a group arpillera. Some are quite active, such as making a video dramatizing the week's text. It is important to offer adult learners both comfort and occasional challenge. Just be sure that you take the time to meet learners where they are and gently expand their comfort zone, rather than rushing them into response activities that might shatter their self-confidence.

## **Questions**