

SPHERES OF INFLUENCE

DISCUSSION GUIDE
FEBRUARY 21st, 2016

“Integrated” | John 1:1-4,14; Philippians 2:1-8

GETTING STARTED: When was the last time you needed a splint, sling, cast? Are you more likely to rush to a prompt care facility or find a home remedy?

EXPLORE THE PASSAGE:

1. “Incarnation” means to “take on flesh” or to “cover in flesh.” How do the words of John 1:1-4,14 and Colossians 2:9 relate to this concept? According to Hebrews 2:14-18, how did Jesus’ incarnation allow him to *integrate* with and help others?

2. Brooks summarized author Brian McLaren’s list of some common responses to culture in Jesus’ day. Identify ways in which individuals within our culture mimic their actions:

- Zealots: *intimidate the culture*
- Pharisees: *purify the culture*
- Herodians/Sadducees: *embrace the culture*
- Essenes: *separate from culture*

3. Compare those common responses (question 2) with Jesus’ incarnation. How did Jesus enter into his culture? How and when did Jesus join with people where they were (physically and emotionally)? Brainstorm a list of as many people/groups with whom Jesus *integrated* his life.

4. Joining with people where they are can be messy. How can a person decide if/when it is the right time to integrate with their culture or person? Is there ever a time when integration should be avoided?

5. Summarize Paul’s challenge found in Philippians 2:1-4. The use of the word “others” in verse 4 refers to people that are different, not just “other Christians.” Take turns suggesting

“others” in our culture that belong on this list (atheists, Muslims, etc.).

6. What responsibility do Christ-followers have to those “others?” Identify a concrete example of “not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.”

7. Consider Greg Nettle’s quote that, “*Far too often, when people are around Christians they feel like they have a target on their back – that at any moment we’re going to get out our Gospel gun and open fire.*” How do you manage the tension between being a witness without being shunned before you can even have an audience with your culture?

8. How did Jesus “empty himself” and integrate with others according to Philippians 2:5-8.

APPLY THE TRUTH:

Review any progress you have made on your “Mapping My Spheres” chart. Which spheres seemed to rise to the top of your list of most potential influence? Use the list your group created in question 3 to help you complete the second column’s question, “Who do I already know in this sphere?”

PRAY:

Pray for our Christ-following family as we continue to become *integrated* in the lives of those around us. Ask God to help you become aware of opportunities for you to be a witness within our culture.

NOTES:

Mapping My Spheres

Spheres	When and where do I already intersect with this sphere?	Who do I already know in this sphere?	How will I influence the people and culture of this sphere?
<i>Arts/Media</i>			
<i>Business</i>			
<i>Education</i>			
<i>Government/ Politics</i>			
<i>Science/Medicine/ Technology</i>			
<i>Family</i>			
<i>Religion</i>			

Don't worry – it doesn't have to be perfect! This worksheet will be available each week during our "Spheres of Influence" sermon series. You can use the same one each week or start fresh as you expand your understanding of your spheres of influence.