

Annoying People

Will Penner

“In the Habit” session for use with devozine meditations for February 10–16, 2014.

MAKING THE CONNECTION

“One of the roughest moments I had as a young youth minister was finding out that several kids didn’t want to come to youth group because they thought I was kind of annoying. I had been thinking of myself as silly, wacky, zany—all in an effort to draw kids in to the ministry. It worked to a large degree, yet somehow I was turning some of them off in the process. As I shared my devastation with my mentor, he helped me realize that I had spoken about certain kids with the same level or even a higher level of irritation and annoyance. He suggested that my attitude likely shone through to them, at least a little bit. That began a process wherein I try a lot harder to decrease my annoyance factors—both from and for others.” —Will

MEET THE WRITER

Will Penner has been in ministry with young people for more than two decades in Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian churches, public and private schools, and as a popular speaker at youth retreats, camps, and conferences. He has served as the editor of both leading professional journals of youth ministry and has authored or edited numerous youth ministry curricula and books, the latest of which is *It Happens: True Tales from the Trenches of Youth Ministry* (<http://www.amazon.com/It-Happens-Tales-Trenches-Ministry/dp/1937734048>). Most important, he is the husband of his amazing wife, Christine, and the father of five children, ranging in age from 4 to 22.

STUFF YOU WILL NEED

- copies of the January/February 2014 issue of **devozine**
- markers
- newsprint—Write on separate sheets of newsprint these five quotations from the January/February 2014 issue of **devozine**, and post them around the room:
 - + “When other people are most annoying, I remind myself that God loves them and I pray for the strength to love them too.” (Richard Lawton, page 46)
 - + “If we walk with the wise, we will grow wise and if we spend time with fools, we will get hurt.” (Alice Mayer, page 47)

- + “I wonder if we are annoying to God.” (Leah Bryan, page 48)
- + “Getting frustrated and annoyed with people is normal, but the way we deal with annoying people shows our true character.” (Bob Sneed, page 49)
- + “If it is possible, let people know when they are being annoying.” (Kimberly Dyer, page 50)
- peel-and-stick dots
- a Bible
- copies of the closing prayer

PLUGGED IN

- + A bizarre home video of “Annoying People on Airplanes” is kind of fun to have playing as group members enter the room (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rjHupKWbE7k>).
- + Anyone who has watched *Dumb and Dumber* remembers “The Most Annoying Sound in the World.” In this video it is looped for 10 minutes; but I don’t recommend showing more than about 25 seconds, tops. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=urJJKyE8Qp0>)

CHECKING IN

Ask group members to close their eyes and to picture clearly the person who annoys them the most. After a few moments, give them permission to think about more than one person. Next, suggest that they imagine being in a room with the four or five most annoying people they know. Allow a few moments for them to experience how it would feel. (You will probably notice tense body language or verbal groans or comments among those who are actively participating.) Finally, have group members imagine a scenario in which they are annoying and people they respect have been imagining them as the most annoying people.

Invite people to open their eyes. Instead of opening the discussion at this point, point to the quotations written on newsprint and displayed around the room. Mention that those who have been reading **devozine** will probably recognize the quotations from the current issue. Ask group members to walk around the room and, without talking, to place a peel-and-stick dot on the three passages with which they feel the strongest connection.

EXPLORING THE WORD

Scripture: multiple passages

Scripture supports several different approaches for dealing with annoying people, depending on the context. Not every one of the quotations from **devozine** that you have displayed is appropriate to every situation. That said, we should not make excuses for trying the approach we believe God is calling us to use at a particular place and time. Take a moment to read aloud a passage that supports each approach (see below). Then invite group members to talk about situations in which the suggested approach might be an appropriate response to annoying people and when it would be inappropriate.

- “When other people are most annoying, I remind myself that God loves them and I pray for the strength to love them too” (page 46).
Read **Matthew 5:43–45**. During this portion of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus encourages people to get beyond simply abiding by the letter of the law by focusing on the spirit of the law.
- “If we walk with the wise, we will grow wise and if we spend time with fools, we will get hurt” (page 47).
Read **Proverbs 13:20**. This quotation from **devozine** paraphrases the proverb, which comes from a collection of sayings in the scripture.
- “I wonder if we are annoying to God” (page 48).
Read **Jeremiah 17:5–6**. Scripture uses harsh language to describe God’s attitude toward those who turn away from lives of faith.
- “Getting frustrated and annoyed with people is normal, but the way we deal with annoying people shows our true character” (page 49).
Read **Luke 6:43–45**. Trees bear the fruit that is contained within. Who we truly are comes bursting forth when we are put to the test, including when other people annoy us.
- “If it is possible, let people know when they are being annoying” (p. 50).
Read **Titus 2:14–15**. This chapter is all about telling people the truth, even when it is not popular.

SHARING IN PRAYER

Invite the group to pray with you:

“Lord, thank you for giving us chance after chance when we do far worse than annoy you. Help us to show the same level of compassion for those who annoy us. Illuminate anything in our lives that is grieving your spirit, and give us the grace to begin eliminating annoying areas of our character so that we may be refashioned more and more into your divine image. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.”

TAKING IT FURTHER

Ask group members to come up with one appropriate way of dealing with someone who is super annoying in their lives right now and to practice it during the coming week.