

Hospitality over Video Chat:

Welcoming & Belonging for Adult Faith Formation

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“You’re going to do just FINE!”

Facilitation:	Clarity on your technology norms will help put people at ease.
Intimacy:	Can you make a personal connection by integrating faith & your life?
Needs:	Anticipating your guests’ needs will help them feel seen and known.
Experience:	5 senses + personalization = memory associated with emotion

Facilitation: Clarity on your technology norms will help put people at ease.

- **Create and share an agenda** to help deescalate nervousness.
- **Create a facilitation guide** for your leadership team. This is especially helpful in formal teaching contexts, so all leaders know the timing, scheduled speaker, and presentation notes.
- **Use body language as able!** Set up your camera to see your upper body, so you can employ hand gestures. This can be especially helpful in teaching sessions (VanEdwards).
 - Open and vulnerable hands communicate warmth and trustworthiness.
 - More hand gestures convey more competence & intention, i.e. “I know my content so well that I can speak to you on two tracks: words and images”
 - The brain gives 12.5x more weight to gestures than words
- **Establish facilitation norms:** Have a few key phrases handy to help normalize the online experience. You can also create one slide that you can recycle every session to help onboard guests to the norms, i.e.
 - “This is the Zoom equivalent of, ‘Let me show you where the restrooms are.’” (Mute unless speaking, engage in hand signals, multitask mindfully)
 - “We don’t have the luxury of body language to be able to know when it’s time to move on...” ...so we’ll limit our opening sharing to 2-3 sentences around the room (Blessed is She).
 - “We’ll cut down on awkward silence and uncertainty about who will speak next in our faith-sharing group by popcorning. After you share, you get to pick the next person to share” (Blessed is She).

Intimacy: Can you make a personal connection by integrating faith and your life?

- **Spotlight view vs. Gallery view:** Which creates the type of intimacy you want? Consider:
 - Bible study with instruction: Spotlight view for teacher
 - Small group discussion with many voices: Gallery view to see everyone
 - Large group: Choose your adventure based on your goals. Will it be more helpful to see many faces, or just the face of the presenter?
- **How can your personal life be integrated into the experience?** You may want to:
 - Set up a designated prayerful facilitation space. If you are leading personal faith-sharing, you may want this distinct from your office/desk. If you are teaching, a desk may feel most appropriate.
 - Incorporate personal photos or prayer items in the background of your camera shot.
 - Welcome children or pets popping in and out (depending on the tone of your meeting)

Needs: Anticipating your guests' needs will help them feel seen and known.

- **Consider the tech needs of your folks.** How much tutorial do they need? If they need it, it is worth doing. You may invite folks to an optional technology test session to walk them through the platform and any first-time jitters.
- **Share facilitation duties.** Especially in large or more formal sessions, it is ideal to share duties across a facilitation team so no one person is spread too thin: Someone for hosting/welcome, someone different for chat/tech support
- **Establish your communication norms: Reactions?** Chat with all, with leaders, or with nobody? (This is the equivalent of "Come on in, and you can leave your shoes on!")
- **Consider generational differences around multitasking.** How can you accommodate for generational norms as a form of welcome? Also, how can you help build sensitivity and cross-generational kindness so there is not any miscommunication or perceived disrespect?
 - Native tech users (generally people <40) grew up knowing how to and expected to multitask. But it can look disrespectful for people who didn't grow up that way.
 - Older generations learned that the respectful thing to do is not multitask. Some older folks may also not have practice multitasking online. So, if the chat or reactions are active during the presentation, that can feel disrespectful.
 - Find a way to name and normalize the expectations of people in the room and guide them to create the kind of experience you think would be most helpful for your session. This can be in formal, up-front ways (communicating the norms) and also in passive, behind-the-scenes ways (disabling the group chat).

Experience: 5 senses + personalization = memory associated with emotion

- **Largely, experiences are the normalized way that Millennials & Gen-Z engage the world.** Create an experience for your guests by engaging their five senses and personalizing the event for them. The product of an experience is an emotion, a feeling, a memory.
 - Consider Build-A-Bear, Disney World, Starbucks: What are the little things they do to make their guests feel cared for?
- **Be intentional about engaging your guests' 5 senses.**
 - Visual: Good lighting, good background, and clear picture matter!
 - Auditory: Clear sound quality is a baseline.
 - Taste: Have fun with this one! Some groups like to surprise participants in a closed group by hand-delivering snacks to their doorstep with a note, explaining that they're for the session that night. Or, when your Bible study participants stop by the parish to pick up their materials, do you also have a small bottle of sparkling grape juice awaiting them, for a special opening toast at the session?
 - Touch: You cannot simulate touch via zoom, but body language, hand gestures, and Zoom reactions can integrate connection the ways that touch can.
 - Smell: This one *really* may not be possible over Zoom! But socially distant in-person gatherings can be elevated by baking a batch of cookies or brownies right before your guests arrive, so they walk into the warm and comforting smell of baked goods.
- **How else will you personalize the experience for your guests?**
 - Closed groups: Send a hand-written welcome note or small gift in advance, have a behind-the-scenes checklist of making a personal connection with each person.
 - Large, open, or formal groups: Use the polls feature to let guests "choose their own adventure" for the style of that session's closing prayer. Incorporate breakout rooms to allow participants to connect with one another. You could even have participants take a poll about breakout rooms for preferred topics and place them in the one they choose. (This would be best done by a team of tech facilitators!)

Resources:

Blessed Is She. "Lead a Small Group Remotely Online." 2020. <https://blessedisshe.net/blog/lead-small-group-remotely-online/>

Center for Generational Kinetics. www.genhq.com

Pine, B.J. and Gilmore, J.H. *The Experience Economy, Updated Edition*. 2011.

Pine, B.J. "Welcome to the Experience Economy." 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TOjUxGqh7aA>

VanEdwards, Vanessa. "You Are Contagious." 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cef35Fk7YD8>