



a
**CHARITABLE
DISCOURSE**
VOLUME 2

*Small Group
Facilitator's
Guide*

with
DAN BOONE



inSight series

Lessons for Faith Communities
DVD + Facilitator's Guide

A Charitable Discourse

Volume 2

Uncomfortable Conversations

SMALL GROUP FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

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Contents

Welcome	4
How to Use This Group Guide	6
Session 1: Our Turn to Be Odd <i>with Dan Boone</i>	7
Session 2: The Power of the Cyber Word <i>with Tim Green</i>	11
Session 3: Christian Discipleship in a Technological Age <i>with Tim Gaines</i>	15
Session 4: War! A Conflict of Kingdoms <i>with Michael Palmer</i>	19
Session 5: Do Christians Have to Go to Church? <i>with Shawna Songer Gaines</i>	23
Session 6: Christians in the Public Arena <i>with Dan Boone</i>	27

Session 1: Our Turn to Be Odd with Dan Boone

(chapter 1 in *A Charitable Discourse, Volume 2*)

Topic Summary

Growing up in any traditional church can breed a keen sense of being very odd. We learn not to smoke or drink or cuss or even, for some, not to dance or play cards or go to movies. The rules I lived by growing up in a holiness church in southern Mississippi could make me odd in contrast to the surrounding community. However, for several decades now, I've not felt that odd. After education at Nazarene universities, I've been to movies, carnivals, played cards with a real, fifty-two-card deck, subscribed to the Sunday paper, bowled, and yes, even square danced with my wife once upon an uncoordinated time. But I think I've come full circle, and I'm beginning to feel odd again.

In one of my habitats, when I go to the worldly, higher-education gatherings of the public university leaders in Tennessee, they look at me quizzically when I talk about the sanctity of human life, the meaning of our sexuality, fasting from technology, an alcohol-free campus, sexual abstinence, and reducing athletic scholarships. Then, in my other habitat, I go to a small church somewhere in the southeast. I talk about social justice, immigrants and refugees, war, politics and power, accountability for leaders, a biblical eschatology, and how global warming might be a better explanation of the tornado that decimated Tuscaloosa, Alabama, than the wrath of God on the Crimson Tide.

The world has many reactions to *odd*—amused, threatened, intrigued, opposed, defensive, ignorant, confused, angry. How do we deal with being treated as odd by those inside and outside the church? Being Wesleyan is like standing in the middle of a two-lane highway with cars barreling toward you at seventy miles per

hour in the pagan-world lane, and from the opposite direction they are driving at you seventy miles per hour in the religious-fundamentalism lane. The simple truth is that you will never be given the opportunity to bear witness if you confront discipleship issues by picking a fight with everyone who finds you odd. Being defensive will consume your life. Therefore, perhaps the best path forward is the choice to *be* odd.

Wesleyans preach a doctrine of perfect love. For me, this doctrine has a face. I know the ultimate face of perfect love is Jesus, but in my lifetime, I've seen that reflection in the face of Dr. William Greathouse, former president of both Trevecca Nazarene University and Nazarene Theological Seminary. Dr. Greathouse was generous in spirit. He challenged shallow thinking and sloppy discipleship. He spoke with loving regard, a forgiving spirit, and a peace that surpassed theological differences. In his wake is a generation of holiness leaders who have serious work to do for the sake of Christ's church. Knowing Dr. Greathouse, I believed the doctrine of perfect love and the experience that he testified to.

Now it's our turn to be odd. To be that odd person who stands between a pagan world and religious fundamentalism and loves people like God loves people. It is our turn to be odd because the doctrine of perfect love looks better on a face than on a page.

Introductory Questions

1. Take a moment to reflect on your upbringing. Did you grow up in an environment that instilled conservative or religious standards? How have you carried or discarded those parameters throughout your adult life?
2. Has your faith ever put you in a position that felt odd or awkward? How did you respond?
3. How do you feel about this apparent call to embrace the odd and engage in situations where you allow your faith to speak for you and potentially make you an outsider?
4. In times when you have allowed yourself to be odd for your faith, what sorts of questions or interactions did you encounter?

Video Segment

Take time to watch the Session 1 video, “Our Turn to Be Odd, with Dan Boone,” as a group.

Related Scripture

Luke 6:20–23; Luke 6:27–36; John 15:18–21; John 17:14–17; Philippians 4:8

Digging Deeper Questions

1. You may have non-Christian friends or family members who know you are a believer. If or when you conceal the evidence of your faith, what impression might this give the unbelievers in your life? What questions might they have for you?
2. If you grew up in a conservative or strict household, what difficult feelings have you struggled with when it comes to being different from those around you?
3. How might we alienate others when we choose to be hateful, boastful, judgmental, prideful, or smug about showcasing what we believe? Where is the line between hiding our faith and weaponizing our faith, and how do we walk that line faithfully?

Biblical instruction to live openly in our identification as Christians almost always appears in conjunction with the instruction to live a life of love (John 13:34–35; James 1:27). As you reflect on this chapter, make connections between opportunities both to reveal your faith and extend Christlike love to those around you.

Call to Action

We live in divisive times. Our public opinions are constantly being judged. As you find yourself more consistently encountering challenging dialogues or difficult interpersonal interactions, practice a disciplined approach to prayer and seeking Christ for how to engage with both bold faith *and* bold love.

Family gatherings, social outings, and professional engagements are all opportunities to invite Jesus into the interaction and prayerfully prepare to be an ambassador for Christ.