

A Conversation Guide for Processing Traumatic Events

By Aaron BATTERY, C4SO's NextGen Leader

The church is the right place for hard conversations. We have recently experienced challenging and traumatic events, and we will again in the future. Examples include local unrest, a tragic loss of life in community, or moments in the national or global awareness such as mass shootings, natural disasters or social unrest. This conversation guide will help you and your students to process these events.

Begin by naming:

1. Name the event and describe it as completely and accurately as you can.
2. Name the validity of different responses. We each respond from different perspectives, information sources, families and feelings. However, we have the opportunity to be unified in the place of the Kingdom and the mind of Christ.
3. Name that while all responses are valid, you as the leader will promote the character, posture and politics of the Kingdom and the King to the best of your ability, as seen in the scriptures and witness of the Church.
4. Name the rules of engagement, specifically that students engage one another with the mind of Christ, seeing each other and those involved in the event as image bearers. Ask students if they agree to be kind and above reproach in their interactions.

Next, ask questions to prompt Kingdom awareness, Christ-mindedness, and a Holy Spirit-driven response in your students.

As you reply to your students' responses, begin with "I heard you say...", and then, as you feel led, offer encouragement or a Kingdom perspective.

Kingdom-Awareness:

- How does this event fit or not fit with the Kingdom of God?
- What sort of action or response does Jesus model for us or advocate for in scripture?
- What role did anxiety, fear and power-seeking play in the situation?

Christ-Mindedness:

- Are there places of anxiety, fear and power-seeking within us now?
- How are we invited to have the mind of Christ about this event?
- How does this event tempt us to participate in the world's kingdom? How does it draw us to participate in the kingdom of God?
- Are we part of the "problem"? If we have, even unconsciously, participated in the culture that produced this event, where do we need to repent, seek reconciliation?
- Jesus clearly stated his aims and methods, namely to be with the weak and to live in the power of humility. How are we doing in advocating for the weak and living in humility?

Holy Spirit-Driven:

- How is the Holy Spirit inviting us to pray about this event?
- We have a voice and are not called to be silent. What is the Holy Spirit calling us to proclaim to a broken world?
- How is the Spirit forming us today? Are others experiencing our fruitfulness?

Do you have questions or ideas about raising up the Next Generation of leaders in your community? Contact the Rev. Aaron Buttery at aaron@c4so.org.