



R-Group Process

LEADING A GROUP INTO PRESENCE

Introduction

What does it mean to become *present*? This is one way of saying that we open ourselves to God with an attitude of consent. We are yielding to the presence of the Holy Spirit, in whom we have life and breath. It is living in the presence of God. We are centered in Him. We are going to Him as our source of life.

We are created to reflect the image of Christ. When we are not dwelling in His presence, we present a fractured image to the world. As we progressively consent to God and His presence, we are transformed and renewed into the image of Christ, expressing more fully the presence of Christ in our lives and less and less a fractured image. We manifest the Mystery – Christ in us, the hope of glory. The light of His presence, His glory, shines with increasing brightness as we yield to his mysterious working in our lives.

Individually, we can be pulled out of presence by thoughts, judgments, denial of our false selves, repressed or unacknowledged feelings, unacknowledged needs, approval seeking, blame, unwillingness to forgive, trying to control others, or trying to rescue or save others. A group too can also be pulled out of presence. The process described in this document could be used as a sacred space process to begin a meeting. It could also be used spontaneously to bring a group back to presence when a leader becomes aware this is needed.

Process (Consenting Prayers)

Any of the following prayers could be used as a part of this process.

Version 1

Yes, yes, yes.

Spirit of God, welcome.

I consent to everything that comes to me today.

I choose to loosen my grasp on control, on perfection, on acceptance and approval, on success and meaning, on pleasure and happiness, on knowing and on security.

I open myself to your love and presence, God, and to my whole self.

Amen.

Version 2

Welcome, Lord Jesus, welcome.

I consent to everything you bring to me today, because I know it's for my healing.

I consent to your presence in all thoughts and feelings, all people and situations.

I loosen my way of trying to change and control people and circumstances.

I loosen my way of grasping for power and control, safety, and security

I loosen my way of grasping for approval and worth, love and pleasure.

I loosen my way of grasping for knowledge and open myself to your mystery.

I welcome the grace that continually flows for me at the foot of the cross.

I embrace your presence.

Amen.

Version 3

Welcome, Lord Jesus, welcome.

I welcome everything you bring to me today because I know it's for my healing.

I welcome every thought and feeling, every person and situation.

I surrender my desire to change the people and circumstances in my life.

I surrender my need for power and control.

I surrender my need for safety and security.

I surrender my need for love and pleasure.

I surrender my need for for knowledge and wisdom.

I open myself to your mystery.

And welcome the grace that continually flows for me at the foot of the cross.

I embrace your presence.

Amen.

These prayers, and others like them, can be helpful to use in our daily lives as we learn to abide in God and to consent to His presence. They can also form the structure for a presencing process. There is tremendous variety that can be woven into a presencing process, but building a process around the structure of the first prayer above (welcome, letting go, and opening) can provide purpose, progression, and flow to the process. A similar process could be built around the other version and around other similar prayers. The process would flow along the following lines:

Begin the process with a time of breathing and body awareness, leading the group to take several deep breaths, directing them to become aware of their body and what they are experiencing in it, and then allowing the men or women to state what they're experiencing. Move slowly through this time, giving the men or women time to settle into the moment. Lead with a centered presence and voice. Then, pray the following.

Yes, yes, yes.

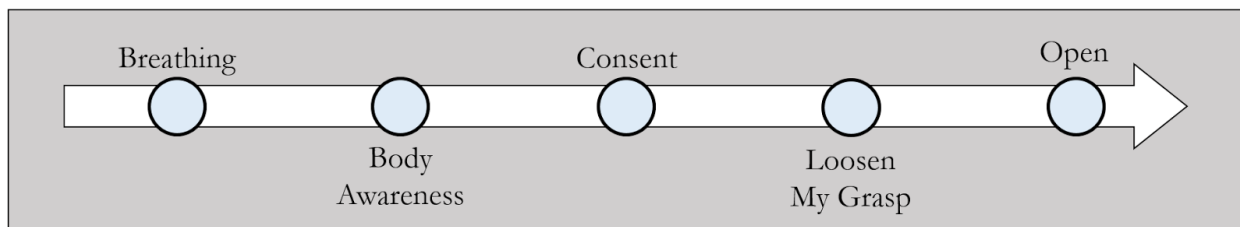
Spirit of God, welcome.

I consent...In this portion of the process, offer the men or women the opportunity to pray one or two sentence prayers consenting to whatever they are aware of in the moment, to reject it, to accept life as it is and the moment as it is. This could relate to the reality of their lives. It could relate to emotions or thoughts that are coming up for them in the moment. Invite them to begin their prayers with the words "I consent..."

I loosen my grasp on...Now, invite the men or women to become aware of what might be pulling them out awareness of God's presence or blocking them from opening themselves to what God has for them in this moment, or possibly what has been blocking them over the last week. This could be inviting the men or women into a general awareness around this and allowing to come up whatever comes up. It also could be awareness around a theme - denial of a false self, repressed or unacknowledged feelings, unacknowledged needs, etc. In introducing this theme, one or two sentences of teaching may be necessary, though it should be subtle and short teaching that is unlikely to pull the men or women out of their work. Less is more.

I open myself to...Give the men or women the opportunity to pray and to state their openness to what God has for them, what God has for the other men or women in the group, and to whatever God wants to bring up.

Amen.



Breathing and Body Awareness

Our bodies are central to living in presence. They aid us in living centered lives, abiding in God. This is because our bodies are always inhabiting the present moment, which is where we experience and relate to God. The use of our breath is a major help in anchoring us in our bodies and in God's presence. We use our breath, slow deep breaths, to become present to the body and all of its sensations. We drop down out of our heads and yield to Him who is beyond our thoughts and imaginations.

When you ask the group to become aware of what they are experiencing in their bodies, it will be helpful to list off several examples of what they might be experiencing. Here is a list of body sensations that will help you become more aware of your own experience and may help you in leading this process.

Heavy/Light
Tense/Loose or Relaxed
Warm/Cool
Hot/Cold
Energized/Weary
Open/Closed
Constricted
Clenched
Knotted
Full/Empty
Sweaty
Dull
Suffocated
Numb
Dark
Tender
Sensitive
Achy
Sore
Nauseous
Shaky

As the group progresses through the process, occasionally state something along the lines of, "If a thought comes to mind or if you are distracted by thinking, then simply let that go and come back to your body and breathing."

Consenting-Loosening-Opening

In leading the group through this progression of welcoming-letting go-opening, be aware of the possibility of over-leading. Allow each individual to become conscious of what is coming up for them as opposed to leading the group to a particular feeling or sensation. Trust God's Spirit to do whatever he chooses to do with each person. We do not bear the burden of any person's response to this process.

After completing the presencing process, give the group members opportunity to check in with what is coming up for them. Be available to help each individual dig deeper into what is coming up for them (by asking pertinent questions). This could be a helpful way to leading into a work round in an R-group.