

Current



✓ Prepare in Advance

Before the Session

- Have the *Bible Background Video* ready to view
- Read Psalm 95. Read the article that details Nathan Phelps’s discussion of his father’s condition.
- Have a copy of the prayer for Fred Phelps.
- Provide paper and pencils.

✓ Intro

Option 1: Ask something like “When you hear the name Westboro Baptist Church, what images come to your mind?”

Say: Recently in the news, we have learned that Fred Phelps, the founder of Westboro Baptist Church is near death. His controversial church is known for protesting funerals with demeaning signs that state in bold print: that God hates certain groups of people. Fred is in hospice care, reportedly “excommunicated” from the church he founded. The reasons for this are not clear. His son, Nate Phelps, who left Westboro Baptist in 1976 expressed sadness over his father’s legacy and his heartache for the family members who will soon grieve the loss of their father and pastor.

Option 2: Show two pictures to the group.

The picture of Fred Phelps holding the sign

The picture of his son smiling with the rainbow flag.

Invite your group to share one word or phrase that comes to mind when they see these pictures.

Invite the group to share examples of how they have responded to blogs, news stories or social media conversations about Westboro Baptist Church.

✓ Examine

Have someone read Psalm 95:1-7 out loud and use the following questions to encourage discussion.

- How do these verses call you to worship?
- What do you hear in these verses about God?
- What do you hear about yourself in these verses?
- Have someone else read Psalm 95:8-11 out loud and use the following questions to continue discussion.
- How would you describe a hardened heart? How does a hardened heart affect your experience of worship? How does the idea of a hardened heart resonate with the story we heard about Fred Phelps?

- What do you hear in the phrase “loathed a generation”? Is loathing a word you use or have heard used by certain groups? Does this word work with your understanding of God?

Say: Think about the idea of confession. The season of Lent certainly makes room for confession in our lives. Is there a need for us to confess any sense of hard-heartedness toward people who think differently or whose motives we do not understand? How might we confess our own judgment? Would this impact our experience of worship?

✓ Respond

Invite the group to respond creatively. Hand out white paper and pencils/colored pencils. Ask them to write one word in the center of the paper, any word that stands out to them from the scripture or discussion today. Then, ask them to write a short confession to God - a sentence, phrase or even a sketched picture, about how that word might lead to a confession in their faith journey.

✓ Closing

Have a time of prayer using the prayer offered by Mark Sandlin, “A Prayer for Fred Phelps”

By Erin Hall

Finding Your Voice
HOW TO SPEAK YOUR HEART'S TRUE FAITH
Jim Dant

How to Speak Your Heart's True Faith

Get the eBook
thefaitlab.info

New!

Faithelement
Studies for Women
living.faithelement.net