



Stats
have
Faces

Handout 2

Bible study

To understand
God's thoughts
we must study
statistics, for these
are the measure
of his purpose.

Florence Nightingale

Trivia quiz icebreaker

Some people seem to have an extraordinary capacity to remember trivial things. Try this quick true/false trivia quiz.

1. A giraffe can clean its ears with its 50 cm tongue.
2. Penguins fall backwards when they look up at airplanes.
3. The longest recorded flight of a chicken is 13 seconds.
4. The weight of all the termites in the world is 10 times greater than the weight of all the human beings put together.
5. A cockroach can live for several weeks without a head until it dies of starvation.
6. A sneeze usually travels from your mouth at around 50 kilometres per hour.
7. The microwave oven was invented by mistake when an engineer testing a magnetron tube noticed that the radiation melted the chocolate bar in his pocket.
8. When Moses took the census near the Jordan River the total number of the men of Israel was 601 730.

Thinking about collecting statistics

Every five years a census form is completed by all households in Australia. Our last census was undertaken in August 2011.

- Do you remember filling in the census form, or helping someone else to do so?
- As a group, make a list of the questions you can recall.
- How did you feel about filling out a census form?
- For what purposes is the census data collected?

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Reflecting on the scriptures

Statistics play an important role in the history of the Old Testament. The Book of Numbers is named after two “countings” of the people of Israel. Read Numbers 1:1-3 (CEV).

The people of Israel had left Egypt and were living in the Sinai Desert. Then on the first day of the second month of the second year, Moses was in the sacred tent when the Lord said: I want you and Aaron to find out how many people are in each of Israel's clans and families. And make a list of all the men twenty years and older who are able to fight in battle.

- The Israelite community was preparing for a journey through the wilderness to the land of Canaan. What do you see as the main purpose for taking a census at this point?
- What was significant about who was actually polled and who was not?
- When and why have you counted or surveyed your congregation, and what did you learn?

The Bible suggests that accurate numbers are necessary for informed decisions. Read Luke 14:28-30 (CEV).

Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. What is the first thing you will do? Won't you sit down and figure out how much it will cost and if you have enough money to pay for it? Otherwise, you will start building the tower, but not be able to finish. Then everyone who sees what is happening will laugh at you. They will say, "You started building, but could not finish the job".

- What is the main thrust of this parable?
- Has your congregation used this kind of planning and preparation process as it goes about its normal business?
- Having looked at these passages, in what ways do you think the church could use statistics and measurement information?

Looking forward

Discerning what God is up to in our neighbourhoods is not so much about skills or knowledge as about learning to hear God together and discovering how we might join with what the Spirit is already doing in our community.

It has been said that for mission to be effective, it should be intentional rather than improvised.

- If we are trying to discern what God is up to in our neighbourhoods, what information will we need and how will we get it?
- What information would be helpful in assisting your congregation to join with what the Spirit is already doing in the community?

Prayer (Five minutes)

Pray for the Stats have Faces process and the work ahead. Ask God to bless the journey and to give clarity about the destination.



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