

## PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

FOR FAITHFULLY FOLLOWING JESUS THROUGH YOUR WEEK

### DINNER TIME DISCUSSION:

Take some time to consider the diversity of the body of Christ. Have you experienced another expression of the body of Christ outside of Woodlands? → Now think of the diversity of churches, at this moment in time, that are worshipping God through grace found in Jesus Christ across the globe. → And then go a step further, think of those different expressions across time. → Spend some time in worship and praise for the simplicity of the gospel and the unity it brings amongst the diverse body of Christ across time and space. Amazing grace, indeed!

### DEVELOPING DISCIPLINES:

Read and reflect on Matt 11:28-30. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any burdensome yokes that have been added to your pursuit of Jesus. Turn these burdens over to the Lord and speak the simple truth of Jesus having carried everything to the cross on your behalf. Rest in this reality.

### GOSPEL IN EVERYDAY LIFE:

Be intentional to spend time with someone who does not yet know Jesus. Listen closely for any additions or subtractions to the gospel that are influencing them. How might you help them to see the simplicity of the gospel?

### JOURNAL PROMPT:

Is there anyone you feel like you are disputing with currently? What can you do to “come to one accord?” Whether they are believers or not, how does this dispute tarnish the gospel?

### PRACTICING PRAYER:

In Acts 15, the leaders come together honestly, intentionally, and prayerfully. Pray for our church leaders, that they would be fully led by the Spirit and be in one accord as they lead Woodlands Church.

### VERSE MEMORY:

“We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that we are saved” Acts 15:11



To be a Christ centered community helping people faithfully follow Jesus both locally and globally.

## Leader Resource Guide

Date: November 17, 2024

# Weeding the Garden



## OPENER QUESTIONS FOR BUILDING COMMUNITY

If you ever wrote a book, what would it be about?

Do you have any hopes for the upcoming holiday season? Any habits or rhythms you're hoping to continue, stop, or change?

## NOTES

**THE GOSPEL HAS NO ADDITIONS.**

**THE GOSPEL HAS NO SUBTRACTIONS.**

**THE GOSPEL WILL CHANGE YOU.**

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR FOSTERING CHRIST CENTERED COMMUNITY

1. What passages of Scripture are you interacting with lately? How is it forming your view of God? Of yourself? Of how you live in light of who God is?
2. The Story so far... read Acts 14:21-28. Find some similarities to the passage we are studying today.

*Remembering and recalling the story God is writing is a key way in which disciples are encouraged and strengthened. Also, leadership is in place and working in the church, especially in the face of conflict. There is a continuity of the open door for the gospel to run to the Gentiles leading to unity of the body of Christ.*

3. Get a feel for this narrative by reading through it (Acts 15:1-35). What's the central tension in this text? What solution does the Jerusalem council arrive at?

***Tension:** What do you need to do/ be, to be saved? Is circumcision a requirement for salvation? How about keeping the Law of Moses?*

***Solution:** Acts 15:11; also see some of Paul's later writings: Ephesians 2:4-10, Galatians 5:1-6, Romans 3:21-31.*

***Leader,** do you sense any lingering questions/tensions in your discussion that would indicate an addition or subtraction to the simplicity of the Gospel? As best you can, gently lead toward easing those tensions (or call for reinforcements!).*

4. Consider the manner in which this conflict is solved. What practices do you see in this text that help the early church to work toward a unanimous decision? How might we use this model as we encounter conflict in the church? How can we use the resources Jesus provides to help us achieve the peace that Jesus envisioned?

*The early church relied on helpful practices for resolving their first major issue of disagreement.*

*They acknowledged their common experience of the Holy Spirit (Acts 15 vs. 8) After acknowledging the Holy Spirit, they incorporated debate. Finally, after a reasonable argument, James offers an interpretation of Scripture. (Acts 15 vs. 15-21).*

5. To what extent are your lifestyle and religious customs required for all Christians, and to what extent are they just cultural and personal preferences? Think of some specific examples. How should this distinction affect the way you view the practices of other Christians? How can we work towards having the same discerning, gracious attitude toward others that is displayed in Acts 15?

*God's gift of eternal life is free for anybody regardless of color, race, or worship preference. Wrestle with what it means to extend God's grace to others.*

*This question could bring up some theological questions. As you discuss, remember the ethos of the EFCA is to major on the majors and minor on the minors. Oftentimes, disagreement comes from confusing which is which. Remember the whole story from Acts 15 - we do see debate and argument based in Scripture, relying on the witness of the Holy Spirit, going to elders who can give more mature perspective and wisdom, and ultimately, leaning into God's Word to resolve questions and conflict. The Spirit of God ushers in unity, not uniformity. You may not (and don't need to) have all the answers.*

6. Meditate this week on the liberating truth decided at Jerusalem. Why is it important for you? How does it affect your actions? How is this central truth strengthening and encouraging you as you continue in the faith?

*Remember the central truth: there is one means of salvation exists for both Jew and Gentile: God's grace in Jesus Christ.*

7. Read 1 Corinthians 15 + 16, 2 Corinthians 1-3 for next week. The sermon passage will be Acts 15:36-41.