



One Stock in God's Grove: Rooted in Values of Grace

Week 3 Discussion Guide

Consistent: The Spirit Makes Us One

The Holy Spirit Unites and gathers the Church by calling all to repentance, faith, and community. We participate with the Spirit in Christ's redemptive mission because God's family is not complete until all of His children are welcomed home.

Opening Questions to get started

1. How did you meet your best friend or spouse?
2. What's the best hospitality you've ever received? What made it so great?

WATCH VIDEO for Week 3: Consistent Welcome

Passages in the video

Acts 2:37-39

When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."

Matthew 28:18-20

"Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

Isaiah 49:6

he says: "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth."

1 Corinthians 9:19-23

"Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those

under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings."

Genesis 18:1-8

The LORD appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground.

He said, "If I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, do not pass your servant by. **4** Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree. **5** Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed and then go on your way—now that you have come to your servant."

"Very well," they answered, "do as you say."

So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah. "Quick," he said, "get three seahs of the finest flour and knead it and bake some bread."

Then he ran to the herd and selected a choice, tender calf and gave it to a servant, who hurried to prepare it. **8** He then brought some curds and milk and the calf that had been prepared, and set these before them. While they ate, he stood near them under a tree.

Questions to Discuss

1. The Holy Spirit is responsible for creating faith and growing the Church, but God asks that we partner with Him and play an active role in cultivating faith in others.
 - a. **How does it feel to know that God is responsible for creating faith and it's not all up to you?**
 - b. **How does it feel that God wants to partner with you to accomplish his work?**
 - c. **The Holy Spirit empowered Peter and the other disciples in an extraordinary way on Pentecost. Do you feel empowered to proclaim Jesus like them? Why or why not?**
2. The crowd at Pentecost believed what Peter was saying, even though Peter told them that they were responsible for the death of the Son of God. The crowd could have been offended at that reprimand, but they responded with repentance instead. The response of the crowd was another mighty work of the Holy Spirit!

- a. Do you ever worry that someone will respond negatively when you tell them about Jesus, repentance, and forgiveness?
 - i. What worries you the most?
 - b. Has someone ever responded to you in a negative way when you told them about Jesus? If so, what happened?
 - i. How did that affect your willingness to share Jesus after that? (either with that same person or with someone else)
 - c. Has someone ever responded positively to you sharing Jesus with them? Tell your group about it!
 - d. Who shared Jesus with you? Praise God for that!
3. Jesus's mission of revealing God to the world is passed onto his disciples, even coming down to you and me. But Jesus mission didn't start with Him. Jesus did perfectly the mission that God always had for His people. Starting with Abraham, the Israelites, and even the kingdoms of Judah and Israel, God wanted His people to show the world around them who God is and how He is faithful. God explicitly shares this mission in Isaiah 49:6. We have even seen that the people who don't believe in God often judge God based on what they know of Christians. They expect Christians to "match" God and they assume that God "matches" Christians.
- a. Do you agree that Christians should be a reflection of God?
 - i. Do you think Christians do a good job reflecting God?
 - ii. What do you think gets in the way of Christians reflecting God in a positive way? What makes it hard?
 - b. The responsibility of reflecting God is a great honor, but it can also feel like a heavy burden. How do you handle that?
 - i. Reflect on yourself this week:
 1. How have I shown God's light to the people around me?
 2. How can I *better* reflect God's light?
 - a. This is a huge responsibility, but God thinks highly of us and empowers us! Remember, Isaiah 49:6 starts off, "it is too small a thing...", that means that for He expects big things of His people! He believes in you! And God has sent His Spirit to all believers to equip and empower us to shine His light to the world. God is with you!
 - c. God's mission for His people to "shine His light" means that the church doesn't exist as an "insider's club" for its own benefit, but that the Church exists for people who don't belong to it yet. The Church exists for the benefit of people outside the Church.
 - i. Do you agree with that?
 1. Why or why not?
 - ii. Why is that hard to practice?

- iii. **How do you think Grace does a good job of practicing this?**
- iv. **How do you think Grace could improve?**

4. St. Paul is an example of all Christians in sharing the Gospel with the world. He went out of his comfort zone and sacrificed his rights and preferences so that people who were very different from him could hear and relate to the message of the Gospel. He learned about different cultures and adapted the way he presented his message to fit into their context. At the same time, St. Paul never omitted the truth or watered down God's Word in order to appeal to people. He always spoke the truth, sometimes at the risk of his personal safety. We at Grace are trying to pursue a similar line. We want to stand firm on God's Word and proclaim it in its entirety, and yet we want to do so in a way that allows all people, even unbelievers and outsiders, to hear what we have to say and respond in faith.

a. **Have you encountered a "language barrier" when you want to share Jesus with others?**

i. **This usually happens when people have a different frame of reference. Like when a Christian has heard about "sin", "grace", and "God's righteousness" all of their life, but someone who hasn't grown up in the church isn't familiar with any of that.**

b. **Has someone ever tried to talk to you about something that you had no experience with?**

i. **How did it feel?**

ii. **Why was it difficult?**

c. **Why is it difficult to appeal to people who are different?**

d. **St. Paul forfeited rights, freedoms, and preferences so that he wouldn't create any unnecessary barriers between Jesus and the people that Paul was ministering to.**

i. **What barriers do you think we might be putting up at Grace (whether we notice they're barriers or not!) between Jesus and people who don't believe in Him?**

ii. **What do you think might be confusing or difficult for someone at Grace who isn't already a Christian?**

iii. **Even though St. Paul gave up a lot for the benefit of others, he never compromised the Gospel. What is a non-negotiable in sharing faith for you?**

1. **What is a non-negotiable for Grace?**

5. Grace promotes the B.L.E.S.S. model of evangelism ("Bond", "Learn", "Engage", "Serve", "Share").

a. **What other methods of evangelism have you learned?**

i. **Do you prefer one of those methods, or the B.L.E.S.S. method? Why?**

- b. How do you feel about the B.L.E.S.S. method?**
 - i. Examples:
 - 1. I love it!
 - 2. It seems fine
 - 3. It feels like we have an ulterior motive for friendships instead of just loving people and being friends with them.
 - 4. Isn't it just making friends?
 - c. Have you experimented with B.L.E.S.S.? Was it affective? Why or why not?**
 - d. Do you think it's easier to share your faith with your friends who don't know Jesus, or with strangers?**
 - i. Why?
 - ii. Have you shared your faith with a friend who wasn't a Christian? How did it go?
 - e. Do you think we should put more of an emphasis on B.L.E.S.S. at Grace? (more teaching about, promote it more, etc.)**
6. Abraham exhibited incredible, "unreasonable" hospitality when he served all that food to his three guests. It's not clear if Abraham knew that his guests were God while he was serving them or if he learned that after-the-fact, but he certainly treated his guests royally.
- a. Abraham's feast must have cost a fortune! Could you imagine providing that much for *strangers*?!**
 - b. What do you think "unreasonable hospitality" looks like today?**
 - c. How have you experienced generous hospitality at Grace?**
 - i. Have you felt welcome at Grace?
 - 1. Why or why not?
 - d. Would you consider Grace to be a welcoming church?**
 - e. How do you think Grace could feel more welcoming?**
 - f. What do you think Grace could do to be more hospitable to guests and "outsiders"/nonmembers?**

This 3rd value is all about being welcoming- welcoming God's family (Christians) and people who aren't yet in the family of God- and that involves many different aspects. In many ways, it's obvious that Grace values "welcoming" and hospitality because so many in our church experience it every week. At the same time, we will never exemplify this value perfectly until Jesus comes back. Until then, we will strive to improve together and be a welcoming, inviting, and hospitable church to everyone, so that all people can become part of the family of God.