



# SERMON

## SMALL GROUPS



Sermon Series: “3 Strands” – A Culture of Acceptance

### USING THIS SERMON DISCUSSION GUIDE

- This Sermon Discussion Guide is only a tool to aid you in meeting the needs of your group. For most groups, there are too many questions to answer in one session together. After considering the needs of your group, you may choose one of the following options:
  - ◆ one section of questions
  - ◆ one or two questions from each section
- Feel free to adapt the format to meet the needs of your group. If your group is mature and wants to dig deeper, add Scripture and ask suitable questions. Remember that this is only a guide.
- Personal application is key to everyone’s growth and should be included in every discussion. When asked how he or she intends to apply a certain principle a group member may say, “I need to spend more time in the Bible and in prayer.” It is important for you to help group members make applications that are more specific and commit to a specific plan of action by asking, for example, “How are you going to begin?” An example is to get up 30 minutes earlier each morning, spending 15 minutes reading the Bible and 10 minutes in prayer. Encourage each group member to be accountable to the group for personal progress at the next meeting.
- As the leader your goal is to help bring the group into a stimulating discussion that helps the members recognize their need for personal life change. Ultimately you want them to be willing to commit to change with accountability to the group. Accountability helps us to persevere in our commitments and achieve the blessings of success.



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### Introduction

What happens when a group of people loves unconditionally, accepts the rejected intentionally, and brings an atmosphere of healing? A culture of acceptance is created. Because of Christ's unrelenting love for us, we can fully accept people, without condoning their behavior. This week we discuss how to open the door for people to meet with the God who brings change and healing.

#### [1 Peter 1:21-25]

Through Christ you have come to trust in God. And you have placed your faith and hope in God because he raised Christ from the dead and gave him great glory.

<sup>22</sup> You were cleansed from your sins when you obeyed the truth, so now you must show sincere love to each other as brothers and sisters. Love each other deeply with all your heart. <sup>23</sup> For you have been born again, but not to a life that will quickly end. Your new life will last forever because it comes from the eternal, living word of God. <sup>24</sup> As the Scriptures say, "People are like grass; their beauty is like a flower in the field. The grass withers and the flower fades. <sup>25</sup> But the word of the Lord remains forever."

#### *Key Scripture*

#### [1 Peter 1:22]

Now you must show sincere love to each other as brothers and sisters. Love each other deeply with all your heart.

*"Love one another fervently"*

*KJV*

love = agape/unconditionally

fervently = Intentionally



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The deepest and purest form of love is Agape love. This is the love that comes from God that loves unconditionally. The object of love does not determine the love that is given, but the heart of the giver. This unconditional love is recognized and released through acceptance

### **[Matthew 15:21-28]**

Then Jesus left Galilee and went north to the region of Tyre and Sidon.<sup>22</sup> A Gentile woman who lived there came to him, pleading, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! For my daughter is possessed by a demon that torments her severely.”<sup>23</sup> But Jesus gave her no reply, not even a word. Then his disciples urged him to send her away. “Tell her to go away,” they said. “She is bothering us with all her begging.”<sup>24</sup> Then Jesus said to the woman, “I was sent only to help God’s lost sheep—the people of Israel.”<sup>25</sup> But she came and worshiped him, pleading again, “Lord, help me!”<sup>26</sup> Jesus responded, “It isn’t right to take food from the children and throw it to the dogs.”<sup>27</sup> She replied, “That’s true, Lord, but even dogs are allowed to eat the scraps that fall beneath their masters’ table.”<sup>28</sup> “Dear woman,” Jesus said to her, “your faith is great. Your request is granted.” And her daughter was instantly healed.

- 1. Full Acceptance of others is only possible when we realize we have been fully accepted**

### **[Ephesians 1:3-6]**

God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure.<sup>6</sup> So we praise God for the glorious grace by which He made us accepted in His dear Son



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***The word accepted means to be the object (the target ) of grace and honor”***

### **2. Breaking down walls and accepting people must be intentional (*targeted grace & honor*)**

#### **[Ephesians 2:11-14]**

Don't forget that you Gentiles used to be outsiders. You were called “uncircumcised heathens” by the Jews, who were proud of their circumcision, even though it affected only their bodies and not their hearts. <sup>12</sup> In those days you were living apart from Christ. You were excluded from citizenship among the people of Israel, You lived in this world without God and without hope. <sup>13</sup> But now you have been united with Christ Jesus. Once you were far away from God, but now you have been brought near to him through the blood of Christ. <sup>14</sup> For Christ himself has brought peace to us when, in his own body on the cross, he broke down the wall of hostility that separated us.

#### **[Romans 15:7]**

*“Accept one another then, just as Christ accepted you”*



## Small Group Questions

1. If the opposite of acceptance is rejection and if it's true that the root of rejection is prejudice, what are some areas that you have experienced prejudice (*prejudging a person or situation before you really knew them*)
2. What test was Jesus presenting to the disciples and the woman in these verses? Did they pass or fail?
3. How can we "target" someone and make them the focus of our intentional honor and grace? Talk about how this would break down walls and heal rejection.
4. What walls of hostility have the tendency to be rebuilt in our nation that need to be broken down? In our church? In your life?
5. How would you describe the culture around you (workplace, social circles, your city, etc.), when it comes to how people generally treat each other?
6. What are some areas where you have experienced prejudice?
7. In Matthew 15:21-28, what test was Jesus presenting to the disciples and the woman? Did they pass or fail?
8. When have you witnessed or experienced adoption, and how did it affect your identity? What did you gain new access to (i.e. love, relationships, resources, purpose)?



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9. How can we "target" someone and make them the focus of our intentional honor and grace? How would this break down walls and heal rejection?
10. What walls of hostility have the tendency to be rebuilt in our nation that need to be broken down? In our church? In your life?