

GBC Discipleship RESOURCE



Discerning the Invitation of God Together

Week 04 | **When God Does Something Unexpected (Acts 15:1-35)**

*For a brief overview of why (and how) to engage in each of these practices, you can read the **Guideline For Growing** on our website.*

<https://www.gymeabaptist.org.au/growing/pages/guideline-for-growing>

What is a Discipleship Menu?

A discipleship menu is a selection of discipleship activities to engage in to continue the conversation that begins on Sunday throughout the week. The aim is to extend our interaction as a community of faith around activities that help us follow Jesus every single day. The activities vary from week to week (though there are some standard activities) and you are encouraged to do as many as you find helpful (like a menu; you don't need to eat everything on it!). Do them on your own (God and you), with a couple of friends (you and a few), or in a Life Group (you and a crew). The important thing is to do a few!

GBC Sermon Podcast and The Big 3

Podcast

Don't forget you can review this week's sermon on the GBC Sermon Podcast. The sermon is usually uploaded by Monday afternoon. You can also listen in to the Big Ill podcast; a weekly podcast where Matt, Jess, and Marc sit down and continue the conversation by engaging in three big questions raised by the congregation about the sermon. The Big Ill comes out on Wednesdays.

Overview

After the Gentile Cornelius had been baptised by the Holy Spirit you'd be forgiven if you thought that they all – Jewish and Gentile believers – lived happily ever after. Luke tells us about the founding of the Gentile church in Antioch and Paul's first missionary journey to the province of Asia Minor (modern day Turkey) where many more Gentiles came to faith. It all seems to be going great! Until some Jewish believers begin to teach that the Gentiles essentially need to become Jews in order to be saved. This salvation issue was a pressing one in the early church and you see evidence of it in many parts of the New Testament.

What interests us today is the way the believers sought to discern how they should proceed. There are four aspects (in their order of appearance in the narrative): they choose to submit to the authority of the apostles and elders in Jerusalem (15:2b), they reflect theologically on their experiences (15:7-13), they consider Scripture (15:14-18), and they relied upon the Holy Spirit (15:28). While this is their order of appearance, their order of importance might very easily be reversed. The work of the Holy Spirit is to continue and bring to completion the work of Jesus and it is the Spirit that has been active throughout Acts. The work of the Holy Spirit – in line with the purposes of God in Christ – frame the way the believers engaged with Scripture, thought about their experiences, and made decisions. And it should for us too!

Passages to Read

We believe that the Word of God is living and active and that reading and reflecting on it is one way we encounter God. As you read, we encourage people to ask a set of simple questions: What stands out to you? What questions do you have? What is the invitation of God to you? Who can you tell?

The readings selected this week are about the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. As you read, note how the Spirit continues and completes the work of Jesus.

- Luke 4:14-21
- John 14:15-31
- John 15:26-16:15
- Acts 1:1-8
- Galatians 5:13-26
- Ephesians 4:1-16

Questions to Reflect on

These questions can be used as the basis of a small group discussion or as journal questions. As with the rest of this menu, use the questions that are most useful for you or your crew.

1. The Holy Spirit is the least understood member of the Trinity. What is your understanding of the Holy Spirit? What questions do you have about the work of the Spirit?
2. Share an experience of God that has shaped your discipleship. How did you make sense of the experience?
3. How does the Bible inform your faith?

4. When have you submitted to authority in your discipleship? What was that like?

Submission as Spiritual Practice

This has been taken and adapted from Adele Ahlberg Calhoun's Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices that Transform us (IVP, 2015).

"Submission is an unpopular, repugnant concept these days. The notion of giving away power conjures up images of becoming a doormat, a weak-willed nonentity or a brainwashed cult follower. But this perception is miles away from the biblical model of submission. It begins in the very center of the Trinity where the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit all mutually honour and defer to each other...

Godly submission is rooted in God's good and loving intentions for each one of us. Submission is not something God forces down our throats – because forcing people to submit is oppression. Therefore, biblical submission does not trap people in abusive relationships that rob them of their freedom. Submission is a way we allow God's kingdom agenda to shape our choices, relationships and vocations. And it always works in conjunction with our personal freedom." (Calhoun 2015, 136)

She invites reflection through the following questions:

1. What is your reaction to the word submission?
2. What submitting experiences have you had?
3. What does it look like for a lad, an activist, or an achiever to be submissive?
4. If you have questions about the biblical concept of submission, how might you educate yourself on the topic?
5. Who today do you submit to in the normal events of your life – boss, teachers, parents, colleagues, friends, spouse? What does healthy

submission look like in each of these relationships? Pray for grace in these relationships.

A Prayer to Pray

These are the areas of prayer that were listed in The Long Read for our discernment process as a congregation. Commit to pray through these.

- Thanks for the ways our community of faith has responded to God's invitation in the past.
- Thanks for God's faithfulness to our community of faith.
- That God would move our hearts for his purposes and plans.
- That God would fulfill his word to us to build his church and make all things new.
- That we would fulfill our mission, vision, and purpose.
- That we would genuinely be indifferent; open to hear God's "now" invitation.
- For the appointment of the Discernment Group.
- For our Day of Discernment on Saturday September 17; that we would be unified and truly see God at work in this process.