

SCRIPTURE CARD GUIDE FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

"ONLY FOCUS ON THE PAST" MAY 21 & MAY 22

SERIES OVERVIEW: "7 EASY WAYS TO DERAIL THE CHURCH"

In the U.S. more churches are closing than opening. As the church, we need to recognize what causes this trend. While some might point to a changing culture, a deeper look into the churches that closed reveals several common denominators. In this series, we distill points from Thom Rainer's book, "Autopsy of a Deceased Church" to reveal seven main factors that lead to a church declining, and ultimately dying. Looking at how the church of Acts avoided these pitfalls, we better understand, not only why the early church grew, but how the church today, can avoid these traps and continue our mission of more people experiencing the power of the Gospel.

*Follow the directions below for a guided group discussion with a friend, in a family, small group, etc.
Grab a Scripture Card (printed or electronic) and simply follow steps from 1 to 6 on this page and the next.*

1

OPENING PRAYER AND SCRIPTURE:

About 3 minutes

Ask a volunteer to open in prayer.

2

BIG IDEA:

A seconds to read

Every single one of us has said the phrase, "I remember the good ole days." We love remembering the past and traditions. Yet, a quick way for us to derail our church is to get stuck focusing on the past and as a result, start making it difficult for new people to experience the Gospel. While tradition is a gift from God, we are called to never let it get in front of our mission of more and more people having a relationship with Jesus Christ.



May 21 & 22, 2022

So why are you now challenging God by burdening the Gentile believers with a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors were able to bear?
- Acts 15:10 NLT

Reflect

Read the full passage in your Bible - Acts 15:1-19.

What word or phrase is the Holy Spirit highlighting from the scripture reading?

What might be God's invitation to you in this?

What might be God's challenge to you in this?

How might God be calling you to respond?
Be curious...and then do it.



DISCUSSION HELP:

Use follow-up questions to take the discussion deeper. Guide answers to be honest and real.

Can you say more about that?

How have you seen that play out in your life?

What does that stir up in you?

Has anyone else had a similar thought or experience?

What might God be inviting you to do?

3

INTRO QUESTIONS:

About 10 minutes

What traditions of your family or ancestry are important to you and why? What traditions in your ancestry or from other cultures have you heard about that seem seem bizarre to you?

4

SCRIPTURE READING + GROUP DISCUSSION

About 40-45 minutes

See verse 10. What kinds of "yokes" do you think we mistakenly put on people who are trying to get to Jesus?

What did Peter and Paul each do differently than they had before in order to reach more people with the Good News of Jesus? (See Acts 10:1-48 where God showed Peter new ways to relate to the Gentiles so that all nations might know Jesus. See also 1 Cor 9:19-23 as Paul describes finding common ground with everyone so that he can spread the Good News of Jesus.)

How might God be asking us to relate differently to people today in order that more people would know Jesus? What things do you think should stay the same? How do you discern what things should stay the same and what things should change for the sake of the mission?

5 CLOSING GROUP PRAYER:

About 10 minutes

Read the prayer section on the card aloud. Allow for a time of personal reflection and silent prayer. Allow for a time of popcorn prayer from group members with the leader opening and closing in prayer.

Father God, thank You that we are Your children. Thank you that You love us and that while we were yet sinners, You sent Your Son to die for us. Thank You for reminding us of who You are and who we are in Your eyes in this time of prayer now...[popcorn prayers]. Lord, we also ask You to reveal to us the ways we have prioritized tradition over your mission. We offer these prayers of repentance now...[popcorn prayers]. Lord, continue to draw all people to saving faith in Jesus and let us be instruments of Your grace and mercy in all we do and say. Amen.

TAKE IT DEEPER



Pray

Take a moment to be still in God's presence...(after a moment) offer this prayer: "Lord Jesus, I'm here to connect with you, to just be with you as your child."

Ask God to show you any ways that you have prioritized tradition over the mission of the church... over more people coming to know Jesus.

Thank God that as we lift up Jesus, he promises to draw all people to himself.

Live It Out

Read Acts 15:19 each day this week, inviting God to bring someone to mind who currently feels like an outsider to the church. Ask God to reveal to you ways in which you can make it less difficult for this person to turn to Jesus. How might God use you to remove an obstacle in their lives? Listen and act upon how God speaks to you throughout the week.

6 LIVE IT OUT:

About 5 minutes

Read the "Live It Out" section and invite the group to take the steps noted.