

VIII

Gracious
S p a c e

One Church
Many churches

Review

The first step in fostering *gracious* space is to recognize the barriers we put up that limit authentic connection. After recognizing that not all barriers are helpful, we need to make the courageous step to bear with (make allowances for) what we find on the other side. Curiosity, humility, and empathy are essential for building authentic and durable connection with the other. However, we also have to let go of winning. Often in a debate, there are only two losers. We must recognize that each of us brings unique perspectives and biases to our understanding of the Christian faith. In fact, we often study the Bible to find support for our preconceptions rather than to discover anything new. God is mystery; and the Bible is a massive story that draws us into that mystery. Let's remember that we are a part of the developing story of God's good creation.

This not to say that it doesn't matter what we believe or do. Quite the opposite, because *gracious* space is all about recognizing what *really* matters.

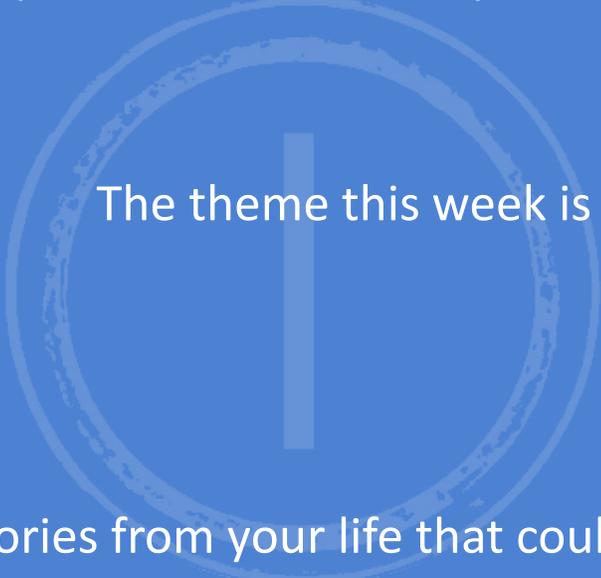
Please take some time to “be still” and position yourself to recognize the all-powerful God in which we worship.

If you’ve jumped right into the study over the past few weeks *without* a time of prayerful meditation, we encourage you to do it this time.

Do you notice a difference when you take time to pause?

RESOURCE: [Presence of God Meditation](#)

Continue now, giving space for yourself and others to journey into the Father’s Words, the Spirit’s Presence, and the love, grace, and passion of the Son.



The theme this week is all about breakups.

What are some stories from your life that could be examples of “bad” breakups?

(eg. romantic, family, work relationships)

Did it have to go badly?

How could it have gone differently?

Maybe the results would have been the same, but how could have *gracious* space helped you personally?

Gracious Space: One Church, Many Denominations

At KCC, we do our best to follow the Christian mission
(as we have interpreted it)
from the whole Bible story and teachings of Jesus.
We also choose to focus on this mission
and the primary matters of faith,
placing other matters as secondary.

What are some reasons that someone might think
they need to “break up” with a church?

What would be some reasons for someone to stay
and tough it out?

Reflect, or discuss in your group,
the concept of “guilt by association” and how that affects
church communities.

Scripture:

Read Acts 15

(if time is limited, then read from verse 22 on)

This scripture is extremely insightful when it comes to secondary matters of faith and trying to get along.

The Apostle Paul was part of this delegation from the main church leaders in Jerusalem.

They brought specific directives for Christian living and practice to the large body of believers in Antioch.

What do you notice about Paul's teachings from last week (Romans 14:17) and the "requirements" set by the counsel in Jerusalem.

The early church struggled in similar way to today, but contextually different ways.

And at times they even experienced breakup.

How healthy does the breakup in verse 39 sound?

RESOURCE: [Barnabas's perspective video \(25mins\)](#)



Barnabas, Paul and others were sent out from the church in Jerusalem to “preach the Word of God”.

What does this mean for us today in Kaleden?

Read Gal 2:11-16

Peter was one of the main leaders of the early church and yet according to Paul, was a hypocrite.

In what ways might we be hypocrites today?

If the Apostle Paul was visiting KCC today, on what hypocrisies might he “call us out”?

Scripture:

Read Acts 13:5b & 13:13

John Mark was a young man who was sent with Barnabas and Paul to help with the mission.

But he abandoned them just as they were getting started.

Reflect, or discuss in your group,
times in which you have quit something you have started
and abandoned the people who needed you.

Re-read Acts 15:36-41

While doing God's work,
Barnabas and Paul have a disagreement "so sharp"
that they split up.

Why do you think Luke (the author of Acts)
includes this event in his writing?

Reflect or discuss the reality of today's many
Christian denominations. Is this the ideal?

Scripture:

Read Acts 16:6-7

Some Bible scholars suggest Paul had a very difficult and unproductive time in ministry directly following his break up with Barnabas.

What might be some consequences to a church and their mission when they experience a breakup or people leave over a sharp dispute?

What would it look like to split or break up graciously?

Read 1 Cor 9:1-6; 2 Tim 4:9-11; Philemon 1;23-24

(These letters were all written after the events in Acts 15)

What do these scripture passages suggest regarding some of the earlier broken relationships described in Acts?

Gracious Space: One Church, Many Denominations

Paul, Peter, Barnabas, and John Mark
all experienced the incredible work of the Holy Spirit
through their common mission
of proclaiming and building Christ's kingdom.
But their uniqueness, personalities, and lived experiences also
caused failures with negative consequences.

Our hope and prayer with the *Gracious Space* study series,
is that we all gather around the same mission,
and worship the same Almighty God,
but give space and grace for our own unique journeys.

The final questions on the next page are meant to
challenge and evoke transformation.

Try to make some decisions and put in place action plans
that will help solidify what God has been teaching you
through out this series.

Gracious Space: One Church, Many Denominations

Reflect on any barriers that you may have constructed that would prevent you from fully engaging in KCC community and mission.

What are some things I realize about myself that might make it difficult to get along with others?

How would *curiosity*, *humility* and *empathy* impact my feelings towards those that would wish to leave our community?

How has how my *culture*, *history*, and *ego* influenced the way I understand Scripture?

Do I struggle with needing to know all the answers?

While living out my Christian life, where I have missed the point of it all?

Turn to the back cover and read out loud
(or have your group repeat phrase by phrase)
the call to believers from the author of the book of Hebrews.

Gracious Space



Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Hebrews 4:16

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