

Small Group Study: Week 11

Welcome to week eleven of the "Off the Shelf" Small Group study. Throughout this 13 week series, we pray this study will help you and your group further grasp the overall story of the Bible and what it means for your lives today. This study will build on each weekend's sermon, so please make it a priority to listen to the sermon before meeting with your group each week. If you were unable to catch the sermon this weekend, check it out at firstdecatur.org/sermons. Also, if you need an online Bible, please download the YouVersion Bible App from the App Store or Google Play.



Getting Started

Last week we finished a two-week study about Jesus' humanity and divinity. This week we are studying the book of Acts. As a reminder, the book of Acts is a continuation of the Gospel of Luke. This book captures the account of Jesus' followers after he ascended into Heaven. It gives us an understanding of the beginnings of the church, the difficulties they faced, and the spread of the Gospel message. As Pastor Brian put it, Acts shows the extraordinary power of God working through what could not be more of an ordinary and exceedingly unqualified group of people; to carry out the most crucial mission in the history of the world.

- ▶ In his message, Pastor Brian focused on the idea of not making it difficult for people to turn to God. To get the conversation started this week, have each person in your group share about something they've done that was far more difficult than they anticipated.
- ▶ For those who participated in one of the Bible reading plans last week, what was your biggest takeaway?



Read Acts 15:1-21

Acts 15 gives us an essential point in the story where the church takes a significant step in moving from Jewish people only to also include ethnically non-jews or "Gentiles." Since the church was born out of the Jewish faith, questions arose about how to bring gentiles into fellowship in the church. As James said in verse 19, it is essential not to make it difficult for Gentiles to come to faith.



Talk About It

- ▶ How have you seen churches or individuals create barriers that have kept people from coming to God?
- ▶ How have you seen individuals or churches remove barriers and help people come to God?
- ▶ Why do you think we tend to create barriers?
- ▶ What is at stake if we are unwilling to remove barriers?
- ▶ Are there ways you feel like a barrier right now? What are you going to do about that?

Off the Shelf



Watch

- ▶ Watch the “Off the Shelf Week 11 Small Group Video”. The video is available on the leader blog at <https://fccgrowtogether.org>.



Talk About It

In the video, Pastor Brian talked about three drifts that we are prone to the longer we follow Jesus.

The first is the drift from the passion for outsiders to pacifying insiders (and ourselves). Often we allow our personal interests to outweigh our desire to serve and care for others. When this happens, we need to embrace what is best for us, which is to serve and give generously. In other words, we should care for ourselves by caring for others.

The second drift is the drift from grace to law. We need to remember that Jesus is still working in us, and the same grace we experienced at salvation is the same grace that continues to free us today.

The third drift is the drift from internal transformation to external conformity. Rather than address the things that need to change in our lives, we sometimes just make it look like we are changing.

- ▶ How would you rate your passion for outsiders? How does serving and giving rekindle our passion for outsiders?
- ▶ Would you say you lean more toward grace or more toward the law? What would it look like for you to lean more toward grace?
- ▶ Why are people prone to drift from internal transformation to external conformity? When you experience this, what should you do?
- ▶ How do we get honest with what we are really struggling with? How do we get past protecting our image and allow God to bring about transformation in our lives?
- ▶ Pastor Brian said that we should come as we are, but not stay as we are. What does that mean for you today?



Pray

Pray for one another this week that you will be intentional about removing barriers from people coming to God. Have each person think of someone in their lives who needs to know God and then pray individually about how they can remove barriers for that person.



Bible Reading Plan

Please continue reading the Bible reading plan together as a group in the week ahead. Encourage one another throughout the week to stay engaged.