

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

To prepare for class, take time during the week to pray, read the lesson's scriptures and look over the questions and think about your answers.

Structure of each session:

Sharing God's Word

- Open in prayer.
- Opening question (warm up question)
- Read the passages and discuss the questions
- Finish with prayer, taking requests and praying for us to apply the lessons learned from the scriptures and discussion.

Lesson titles

Jesus

- 1. The fulfillment of Prophecy**
- 2. The Son of God**
- 3. The Miracle Worker**
- 4. The Master Teacher**
- 5. The Crucified Savior**
- 6. The Risen, Reigning and Coming Lord**

The Disciples (Followers)

- 7. Nicodemus: A Curious Follower**
- 8. The Samaritan Woman: A Thirsty Follower**
- 9. Mary, Martha and Lazarus: A Family of Followers**
- 10. Thomas: A Doubting Disciple**
- 11. Peter: A Restored Disciple**
- 12. Judas: The Betrayer**

The Church Disciples and Disciple Makers

- 13. Stephen: The First Martyr**
- 14. Paul: The Missionary**
- 15. Barnabas: The Encourager**
- 16. James: The Unifying Leader**
- 17. Priscilla and Aquila: Church Planters**
- 18. Timothy: Youth for Christ**

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. Jesus: The Fulfillment of Prophecy

Read Luke 24:13-27, 44-47, Matthew 1 and 2

Begin with Prayer

Opening discussion: No other religious writings give specific prophecies like the Bible does for Jesus coming, ministry, death and resurrection. How does this evidence assure us in our faith?

- **Read as a group: Luke 24:25-27, 44-47**
- How did Jesus prove His identity through fulfillment of scriptures?
- What was necessary for Jesus to do to enter glory? How does that apply to us?

- **Read as a group: Matthew 1:18-26**
- What is important about Mary being a virgin? How does this fulfill prophecy?
- What is significant about Jesus being the son of David?
- What does the name “Emmanuel” tell us about Jesus and how did this fulfill prophecy?
- How did God help Joseph to have faith so that he took Mary as his wife? How does God help us to take Jesus as our Savior?

- **Read as a group: Matthew 2:1-12**
- How do you explain the faith of the wise men vs the reaction of Herod? They wanted to worship Jesus, Herod wanted to kill him. Why?
- Micah 5:2 prophesied where the Messiah would be born. Who else was from Bethlehem? What was prophesied in Micah?

- **Read as a group: Matthew 2:13-18**
- How would you describe Herod’s response to the prophecy of Jesus? Why didn’t he follow Jesus? Why did the Wise men follow the star worship him?

- **Application: Jesus is fully human, but also fully divine. He is the son of David, and the Son of God. The Old Testament prophecies of Jesus begin in Genesis and continue throughout the Old Testament. Matthew sites several just in the first 2 chapters. This should be a faith builder for us. God has given great evidence for us. Let us thank Him and come to Jesus in worship and obedience!**
- Why do some people, like Herod, reject Christ when the evidence is so clear to them? Why do some seek Jesus when all they have is a tiny light?
- Why do you follow Jesus and worship Him? What evidence is most convincing for your faith?
- Jesus’s birth broke many barriers. Jews and Gentiles are all invited. Who will you invite?

Close in prayer

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

2. Jesus: Son of God

Read Matthew 3:1 - 4:17 for class preparation

Begin with Prayer. Opening discussion: How did Jesus identify with us sinners in His baptism and temptation?

- ***Read Matthew 3:1-17 together***
- What does it mean to repent? Why did John urge people to repent? How did this prepare the way for Jesus?
- How did John point to Jesus when the Pharisees came to him? How did John point to Jesus? What did John say Jesus would do?
- Why did John hesitate to baptize Jesus? What did this reveal about Jesus? How did God affirm Jesus as His Son when Jesus was baptized? How does God affirm us as His children when we are baptized?

- ***Read Matthew 4:1-7 together***
- Why did the Spirit lead Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted? How is that like Israel? How did Jesus succeed when Israel failed?
- How did Satan first tempt Jesus? What did Satan acknowledge about Jesus's identity? Israel, in the desert, complained about food. How was Jesus different?
- How did Satan use scripture to tempt Jesus to jump off the temple? What kind of temptation was that?

- ***Read Matthew 4:8-11 together***
- Satan tried to seduce Jesus with power and wealth. What was Jesus's response? How was this a temptation? Why does this work on so many people?
- ***Application: Jesus is God's Son, but also fully human. He overcame temptation with the word of God. This is our example. God allows us to be tempted, but will provide a way of escape. Jesus shows us the path to overcome. Satan's temptations are short lived and based on lies that we will find satisfaction in them. Jesus shows God's way.***
- Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to be with us. How does the Spirit help us overcome sin?
- How does God's word help us recognize and overcome temptation?

Close in prayer

3. Jesus: The Miracle Worker

Read Matthew 8-9 for class preparation

Begin with Prayer. Opening discussion: What is the difference between power and authority?

- ***Read Matthew 8:1-13 together***
- What did Jesus do (besides heal the leper) that was usual? How did this show His power and authority?
- How did the centurion recognize the authority and power of Jesus with a faith that made Jesus marvel? How do we recognize the authority and power of Jesus?
- In the verses that follow in Matthew 8, Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law and a crowd of demon possessed and sick "with a word." Jesus calmed a storm "with a word," Jesus cast out a legion of demons "with a word." What do these miracles tell us about Jesus's power and authority?

- ***Read Matthew 9:1-8 together***
- What did Jesus first say to the paralytic in verse 2? What kind of authority was He claiming with these words?
- How did some of the scribes react? How were they correct? How were they wrong?
- What did Jesus say that put them in a bind? What does Jesus value most, healing or forgiveness of sin? What do we value most? Why?
- Verse 8 tells us the people's reaction to the miracle. What message did they get?

- ***Application: Miracles demonstrate power and authority. Jesus worked many miracles that were witnessed by multitudes. These were signs to produce faith in Jesus as the Son of God so that we could know Him as our Lord and Savior and become His followers. How is Jesus working His power and authority in your life today?***

- How do we learn to trust God when we don't see His power and authority in miracles?
- What blessings are there for those who do not see and yet believe?

Close in prayer

4. Jesus: The Master Teacher

Read Matthew 13 for class preparation

Begin with Prayer. Opening discussion: Jesus taught with direct instruction in the Sermon on the Mount, but when opposition became stronger, Jesus began teaching in Parables. What did this show about Jesus teaching skills?

- *Read Matthew 13:1-9 together*
- How does this parable show the different kinds of people who respond to Jesus's words?
- How did telling parables avoid controversy? How might it create curiosity?
- How do parables help us see the truth better? How do they cause confusion?
- Jesus knows those who are His and he uses parables here to sort out those who want to know and understand from those who don't. How does this show Jesus's wisdom as a teacher?
- *Read Matthew 13:10-17 together*
- What did those who were "disciples" do after Jesus spoke in Parables?
- Notice carefully... some who heard Jesus came and asked Him to explain, others didn't. What did Jesus say to those who came to Him wanting to know and understand? What does Jesus imply about those who do not come seeking to know?
- How does this fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah about Jesus and about the crowds?
- Notice verse 16-17 carefully. To whom did Jesus say this? How were they different from those who didn't come seeking to know and understand?
- *Application: Jesus used His teaching to separate those who were truly seeking from those who were not. How does this reveal His wisdom as a teacher? How does it reveal that He is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy? We prove who we are by how much we seek to know and understand and follow Jesus and obey His teachings.*
- Jesus spoke plainly in the Sermon on the Mount, but here Jesus begins teaching in Parables. What can we learn from this?
- How can we follow Jesus's example as we share the word of God with others?
- How would Jesus have us speak to our neighbors and friends if they resist Him?

Close in prayer

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

5. Jesus: the Crucified Savior

Read Matthew 27 for class preparation

Begin with Prayer... Opening discussion: How does knowing that Jesus willingly gave His life for you affect your worship of Him?

- ***Read Matthew 27:24-44 together***
- What did Pilate do with Jesus?
- What did the soldiers do with Jesus?
- What did those that passed by do with Jesus?
- What did the chief priests, elders and scribes do with Jesus?
- What did the robbers do with Jesus? (don't be too quick to jump to Luke's account).
- What do we do with Jesus?

- ***Read Matthew 27:45-56 together***
- How did nature, the temple curtain, and even dead saints respond to Jesus's death?
- How did the centurion on duty at the cross respond to Jesus's death?
- Who else was there witnessing Jesus's death?

- ***Read Matthew 27:57-66 together***
- Who is Joseph of Arimathea and what did he do?
- Who witnessed where Jesus was buried?
- What were the Jews worried about so that they went to Pilate?
- What did Pilate do to comply with them?

- ***Application: Jesus's death on the cross is another proof of His identity as the Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament. Jesus crucified is the last thing the Jews and Jesus's own disciples expected of the true Messiah. Jesus called disciples to "come, follow me." He said that we can't be His disciples unless we take up our cross and follow Him. This separates the disciples from the curious. Where will following Jesus lead us? Are we really His disciples or just religious fans?***
- What does the death of Jesus on the cross mean to people who don't believe in Him today?
- What does it mean to those of us who believe in Him?
- How does the cross work to separate those who are followers from those who are not?

Close in prayer.

6. Jesus: The Risen, Reigning and Coming Lord

Read Matthew 28 for class preparation

Begin with Prayer... Opening discussion: What is the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus?

- ***Read Matthew 28:1-4 together.***
- Who of Jesus's followers first discovered the empty tomb? Why is this significant?
- What happened at the tomb and how did it affect the soldiers who were guarding?

- ***Read Matthew 28:5-10 together.***
- What did the Angel tell the women at the tomb?
- What did the angel show them and what were they told to do? Why the hurry?
- Jesus met them, and what did they do? What did Jesus tell them to do?
- Both the women and the soldiers witnessed something at the tomb, how does their reaction differ?

- ***Read Matthew 28:11-15 together***
- How did another narrative of what happened to Jesus begin here?
- What are some different narratives about Jesus that are still circulating today?
- How do witnesses help clear up the confusion? How do the gospels supply us with this?

- ***Read Matthew 28:16-20 together***
- Matthew seems to sum up a lot here about the disciples reaction to His resurrection. What reactions does vs 17 say happened? How do you explain this?
- Jesus commissioned them to "go make disciples..." how are we doing this today?
- How does or response to Jesus show faith? How does it show doubt?

- ***Application: The resurrection of Jesus is the final great miracle that proves Him to be the Son of God, Savior and Lord. We lean on and learn from the eyewitness accounts of the gospels, but we also see Jesus working in our lives today. What does the resurrection hope do to your faith?***

- Jesus resurrection on Sunday has changed the weekly schedules of the world. How is this being threatened by worldly pressures?
- When we come to believe in Jesus as our risen King, what does this mean to our daily lives? Our priorities and worship?

Close in prayer

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

7. Nicodemus: A Curious Follower

Read John 3 for class preparation

Begin with prayer... Opening discussion: What's the hardest change you have had to make?

- ***Read John 3:1-3 together***
- What do we learn about Nicodemus here?
- Why do you think he came to Jesus at night?
- What did Jesus say was missing in his life?

- ***Read John 3:4-8 together***
- How did Nicodemus respond to Jesus's statement about being born again? What was he thinking? Why?
- What do you understand about Jesus's answer to Nicodemus? What is this birth of water and the Spirit? How does it change a person so they can enter the kingdom of God?
- What is difficult about Jesus's words here? What is easy?

- ***Read John 3:9-13 together***
- Nicodemus asks a question: How can this be? What kinds of questions do you have for Jesus about this?
- Does Jesus's explanation satisfy your curiosity? Does it raise other questions? If so, what are they?
- How does Jesus describe everyone who is born of the Spirit? What does this mean?

- ***Read John 3:14-16 together***
- How is Jesus describing His own death here? What is the saving response to Jesus on the cross?

- ***Read John 17-21 together***
- How does the cross separate those who are saved from those who are lost?
- What impact does believing have on the one who is saved? Can you believe and not be saved? (See John 3:36 & 12:44-60).

- ***Application: Nicodemus saw the signs and believed Jesus was from God, but he needed more to enter the kingdom of God. Jesus leads him to see that there has to be radical change in his life for this to happen. Curiosity is a start, but more is needed to save us.***

- Are Jesus's words still true today for everyone, everywhere? How can we get this message out to others?

- Close with Prayer

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

8. The Samaritan Woman: A Thirsty Follower

Read John 4:1-42 for class preparation

Begin with Prayer... Opening discussion: What are some social barriers to friendly conversations?

- ***Read John 4:1-8 together***
- Jesus and His disciples left Judea and “had to go through Samaria.” Why did they “have to go” there? Are there places you “have to go through” that you’d just as soon not? Why?
- Why was Jesus alone at Jacob’s well? Who showed up? What did Jesus do?

- ***Read John 4:9-12 together***
- How is the conversation here developing? What are the things that make it difficult?
- What does this woman seem to think about Jesus?
- How is Jesus leading her to know Him and how is she responding? Does Jesus still do this with us today? How?

- ***Read John 4:13-19 together***
- How is the conversation going now? What significant turns has it taken to reveal who Jesus is and also who she is?
- Why do we need to see our sins before we can see our Savior? How is this a threat that most want to avoid?

- ***Read John 4:20-30, 39-42 together***
- What did Jesus just do here? How did this woman respond when she faced her Messiah? How did she become the messenger of salvation to Samaria? How can we do the same?

- ***Application: This thirsty woman found in Jesus the living water. Jesus patiently led her to see who she is and who He is. Knowing Jesus changes who we are. Then we can help others know Him so they can be changed by His grace.***

- What is your “testimony” about how Jesus? How can you share this with others?
- Recognizing who Jesus is and who we are has power to change us. How does this work?

Close in prayer

9. Mary, Martha and Lazarus: A Family of Followers

Read Luke 10:38-42, John 11:1-45 for class preparation

Begin with Prayer... Opening discussion: Are you a Martha or a Mary (project oriented or people oriented)?

- ***Read Luke 10:38-42 together***
- What do we learn from Jesus about what is most important?
- How do things and projects get in the way of worship and relationships?

- ***Read John 11:1-6, 11-15 together***
- What do we learn about Jesus's relationship with this family?
- When Jesus heard about Lazarus, what did He do? How was this working for a greater purpose?
- God allows faithful families to suffer. What about this story is troubling? What is comforting? Why?
- What are Jesus's concerns? What are the concerns of the disciples?

- ***Read John 11:17-27 together***
- How would you describe Martha's faith in Jesus? How do the words of Jesus both help and challenge her?

- ***Read John 11:28-37 together***
- What do the comforters think of Jesus here? How is Jesus sharing their pain?
- ***Read John 11:38-45***
- What was the result of Lazarus being raised? How does God turn hard things to blessings?

- ***Application: Imagine the reunion of Mary, Martha and Lazarus at the tomb. Their experience was not wasted. This event brought many to believe. God knows how to take the hardest things in life and bring the greatest blessings from them. How have you experienced this?***

- What are some excuses people have for not believing in and following Jesus?
- How might our trials and troubles be tools for God's glory to be seen?
- Can you tell of an event where you've seen this?

Close in prayer

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

10. Thomas: A Doubting Disciple

Read John 20:19-31 for class preparation

Begin with Prayer... Opening discussion: Is seeing believing, or do you need to believe to really see?

- ***Read John 20:19-23 together***
- Why were the doors locked? What does this tell us about the disciples at this point?
- In verse 21 Jesus said, “As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.” What does this imply about those of us who have believed in Jesus’ resurrection?
- How is forgiveness emphasized by Jesus in this? Why do you think that is so?

- ***Read John 20:24-25 together***
- What is wrong with Thomas’s faith? What evidence did it take for you to believe?
- Why does Thomas resist the testimony of the other apostles? What does this say about their relationship?

- ***Read John 20:26-27 together***
- The doors are still locked, why? Did they not receive the Spirit a week ago?
- Thomas is with them and Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” Do you think Thomas was at peace with this?
- Jesus provided Thomas with the evidence he demanded and commanded him to stop doubting and believe. When Jesus returns, what will everyone do?

- ***Read John 20:28-31***
- How did Thomas respond to the overwhelming evidence of Jesus’s presence?
- What did Jesus say about the faith of Thomas compared to yours?
- While we may wish we were eye witnesses, John has compiled signs of Jesus’s power, authority and resurrection for us. What are they for and how should we treat them?
- What is the promised goal for we who believe?

- ***Application: Thomas is an example of one who doubted and refused to accept the eye witness accounts about the risen Christ, even from his fellow disciples. When doubts arise in our hearts, John’s gospel is a place to go to help overcome them.***

- Are there any nagging doubts or fears that hinder your faith today? If so, please share them with the group for prayer and the peace of Christ to guard your heart and mind in Him.

Close in Prayer

11. Peter: A Restored Disciple

Read Mark 14:66-72; 21:1-23 for class preparation

Begin with Prayer... Opening discussion: What needs restoring in your life?

- ***Read Mark 14:66-72 together***
- How would you describe Peter's faith here?
- Peter had promised Jesus, "Even if all fall away, I will not!" How must this have impacted Peter's confidence?
- How is the third denial of Peter the most serious? What had Jesus taught them about swearing oaths?
- What kind of failure do you think Peter felt like when he heard the rooster crowing?

- ***Read John 21:1-14 together***
- Who in the boat first recognized Jesus? How do you think that impacted the rest?
- Peter almost walked on water again, did he not? What made Peter jump in the water?
- Peter has seen the risen Jesus before this. What makes this even different?

- ***Read John 21:15-22 together***
- Jesus asked Peter the same basic question three times. Why?
- How is the repetition of this question effecting Peter?
- How does Jesus give assurance to Peter about Peter's faith in the future?
- How do the words of Jesus prepare Peter for what is to come?
- Why does Peter bring John into the conversation?
- Twice Jesus tells Peter: "Follow me." How is this both a command and an invitation?

- ***Application: Peter promised to never deny Jesus, but he did... three times, right when Jesus appeared to need him most. But Jesus knew this would happen and told him so. Now Jesus tells Peter how Peter will die for Jesus one day. Jesus knows us. Jesus restored Peter and commissioned Peter to feed and care for His sheep. Jesus wants us to focus on following Him and serving to help others. This keeps us on the right path.***

- Where do you need restoration in your relationship with Jesus? How can this event with Peter help you?

Close in Prayer

12. Judas: The Betrayer of Jesus

Read John 6:60-71, 12:1-7, 13:2,18-30, Matthew 26:14-16; 27:1-5 for class preparation

Begin with Prayer... Opening discussion: How does God work even through Judas to accomplish His purposes?

- ***Read John 6:60-71 together***
- What did Jesus know and say about Judas in this reading?
- Why did Jesus choose Judas if He knew what he was and what he would do?
- Judas was called an Apostle, just like the rest. He fulfilled what God prophesied would happen. How do you feel about God having such knowledge of our nature and future?
- Judas was a devil from the start. What does this tell us about human nature?

- ***Read John 12:1-7 & Matthew 26:14-16 together***
- What is Judas concerned with?
- What has he been doing with the funds that Jesus and the disciples used for their ministry?
- Why does Jesus allow Judas to remain undetected as a betrayer?
- What does this tell us about how the others view Judas?
- What did Judas do after Jesus rebuked him for objecting to Mary's exorbitant act of anointing Jesus?

- ***Read John 13:2,18-30 together***
- Who prompted Judas to betray Jesus and how did Judas's love for money come in to play?
- When Jesus revealed that one of them was a betrayer, how did that ultimately help the disciples believe in Him (vs 19)?
- How did Jesus show who it was that would betray Him to the disciple who asked? Yet, what does verse 28 tell us?

- ***Read Matthew 27:1-5 together***
- Why is Judas's remorse so ironic? What he does next fulfills scripture.

- ***Application: Judas is a troubling figure in the gospels. He performs what is prophesied and his actions accomplish necessary elements of the gospel. Yet he is the devil's pawn. We see God's sovereignty and man's free will. But we also see Satan's influence.***

- How does Judas's free will and God's foreknowledge work in this?
- "Judas was blindly motivated by greed and is rightfully condemned." How is this the true answer? How does this show the mystery of God's sovereignty and our free will?

Close in Prayer

13. Stephen: The Martyred Leader

Read Acts 6 and 7 for class preparation

Begin with Prayer... Opening discussion: Are you someone who stirs things up or keeps things peaceful?

If you are a peace keeper what would it take to make you want stir things up?

- ***Read Acts 6:1-10 together***
- How was Stephen equipped to do the work of ministry?
- Look at verses **3-5**. What does this tell us about Stephen that adds to what we just read?
- Why were these qualities needed for the work Stephen was going to be doing?
- Where did Stephen get his wisdom and how did he use it?

- ***Read Acts 6:11-15 together***
- What happened to Stephen when his opponents could not refute him?
- How must Stephen have felt about their dishonesty and reaction?
- What temptations might that have brought in Stephen's heart and mind?
- Why do some people turn to hostility to deal with their opponents?

- ***Read Acts 7:1-3, 51-53 together***
- How did Stephen begin his defense before the court of the Jews?
- What accusations did Stephen finally make against his accusers?
- Do you think Stephen was being too harsh? Why or why not?

- ***Read Acts 7:54-60 together***
- How does Stephen's treatment impact your emotions and thoughts?
- What stands out the most to you in this record of his martyrdom?
- How is his boldness here different from the kind of boldness in verses 51-53?

- ***Application: Stephen's faith stood the test of great opposition and hostility. The Holy Spirit in him and vision of Jesus must have been a strength at that time. He stood firm in the face of death, but saw the Lord of Life as he died. His final words were words of forgiveness. What a great example to God's children everywhere!***

- Would you ask God to give you this kind of boldness and strength? Why or why not?
- How does Stephen's example help us understand true victory and Christian mercy?

Close in Prayer

14. Paul: the Missionary Leader

Read Acts 8:1-3 and 9:1-22 for class preparation

Begin with Prayer... Opening discussion: Describe your life before and after becoming a Christian. What changes did you experience?

- ***Read Acts 8:1-3 together***
- How would you describe Saul of Tarsus from these verses?
- Does he show anything that might make you think he could become a Christian?

- ***Read Acts 9:1-9 together***
- What did Jesus say to Saul that changed his entire life?
- Why was Saul going to Damascus? How did his trip go? Was it successful? How?
- What did Jesus tell Saul to do?
- What must his companions have thought about what happened?

- ***Read Acts 9:10-19a together***
- What did Ananias think about Saul? Could he imagine Saul as a missionary for Christ?
- What is a chosen instrument? How is Saul a chosen instrument of Christ?
- What happened once Saul's vision was restored? What did Saul do? Why?

- ***Read Acts 9: 19b- 21 together***
- How did Saul demonstrate his new faith in Jesus? What were the people expecting?
- How did Saul's new ministry grow? How will ours grow?

- ***Application: Meeting Jesus changed Saul's life. This event of Jesus appearing actually occurred! But the greater miracle was the change it worked in Saul. Jesus still changes lives.***

- Who do you think is beyond God's reach? Jesus knows who will come to Him, what are we do to to help that happen?
- How did God get your attention? Who helped you know Jesus and told you what He wanted you to do? Have you shared Jesus with others who have come to faith in Him?

Close in Prayer

15. Barnabas: the Encouraging Leader

Read Acts 4:33-37, 9:26-29, 11:19-30 for class preparation

Begin with Prayer... Opening discussion: Don't you love people who encourage you? Who has been someone who has encouraged your faith and walk with God? How did they do it?

- ***Read Acts 4:33-37 together***
- What was Barnabas like?

- ***Read Acts 9:26-29 together***
- What did Barnabas do to help Saul?

- ***Read Acts 11:19-22 together***
- Why do you think the church in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to Antioch?
- What was going on there that was concerning to the church in Jerusalem?

- ***Read Acts 11:23-24 together***
- Barnabas knew that Saul was from Tarsus, not Jerusalem. How might his have caused him to get Saul to come help with the church in Antioch?

- ***Read Acts 11:25-26 together***
- How is Saul and Barnabas's ministry behind the word "Christian?"
- What did Barnabas's bringing Saul to Antioch accomplish?

- ***Read Acts 11:27-30 together***
- How did the church in Antioch react to the bad news from Agabus?
- If Antioch is a new Gentile/Jew church, why are they sending help to the Jerusalem church? What does this tell you about the church there and in Jerusalem?

- ***Application: People like Barnabas are needed in every church... Why? Encouragement is like spiritual fuel. Every time we meet Agabus he brings warnings. Every time we meet Barnabas, he is taking up for the weak or needy. Every part of the body of Christ has it's place and purpose in bringing glory to God and growing the church.***

- Who encourages you most in your faith?
- Who have you encouraged in their faith?
- What can you do this week to be like Barnabas for someone?

Close in Prayer

16. James: the Unifying Leader

Read Acts 15:1-35 for class preparation

Begin with Prayer... Opening discussion: Who do you know that is good at resolving issues and bringing people who disagree together? What are some (non-biblical) rules that are sometimes expected for others to practice to be in good standing?

- ***Read Acts 15:1-5 together***
- What is going on in these verses?
- Why is this a dangerous thing for the churches?
- How did Barnabas and Saul deal with this matter?

- ***Read Acts 15:6-11 together***
- What was God's choice for the Gentiles?
- How did God confirm His choice of accepting the Gentiles?
- How did this change the way we are all saved?

- ***Read Acts 15:13-23 together***
- How did James sum up what was being presented by Peter, Barnabas and Saul?
- What scripture did James' appeal to for guidance in this matter and what did it say?
- When James gave this judgment, what did he recommend that they do?
- What four actions were prohibited in this recommended letter?

- ***Read Acts 15:30-35 together***
- When this letter was read to the churches, what was their response?
- How are the letters of the New Testament unifying messages for the church?

- ***Application: James words demonstrate wisdom and the Holy Spirit's guidance for the church in his leadership. James was not an apostle, but the apostles all approved of his recommendation and this confirmed the Holy Spirit's approval. How can we learn from this to solve issues in the church today?***

- What happens when the church turns its attention away from reaching people who are far from God?
- What might a church do today to make it hard for a believer to be accepted?
- How does keeping the gospel the main message help us avoid making rules that hinder those who wish to enter the Way?
- What teachings and examples of Christ help us stay faithful and holy, while bringing those who are lost to Jesus and bring them into the family?

Close in Prayer