

GROWTH GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Fall 2023 – Acts Sermon Series - “Witness”

Week of Sept 10 (Week 1)

EMPHASIS FOR THE MONTH: The month of September is all about ***building relationships and building trust within your group***. You really want to be sure to give some time to just getting to know one another if people don't already know each other or know each other very well and allowing time for those that do know each other to just catch up.

SET UP: Have [THIS VIDEO](#) set up and ready to go to watch as a group. If you are able, play it on your TV or laptop. If you are unable to do this, please ask someone from your group to bring one to use and send them this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zcVIJoovOYg>

ICE BREAKER: This time is designed for getting conversation going. [Click here](#) for a helpful list of ideas for this time or create / do your own!

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

1. Join us on Sunday, September 17 from 12-3 PM for our Fall Kickoff Picnic! We will be meeting at Dunkerhook Park Pavilion D in Paramus. We hope to see you there as we celebrate the start of a great season! To sign up to attend and/or sign up to participate in the Chili Cook-Off and for any questions, please contact our Connections Director, Jackie Levesque at jackie.levesque@churchatbergen.org
2. We will be holding our next Child Dedication Class on Saturday, September 30 at 8:30 AM. For more information and to sign up to attend, please contact our BergenKIDS Director, Barbara Krieger at barbara.krieger@churchatbergen.org
3. Join us for prayer every Tuesday night from 7-8 PM. All are welcome!
4. Every Wednesday morning at 6:30 AM a group of women meet for prayer at the church! Reach out to covenant members Danielle Hoitsma (leavnalegacy@aol.com) and Al Cimino (alexandra.m.cimino@gmail.com) for more information.
5. Join us for prayer every Sunday morning from 9-9:30 AM. We meet in the classroom behind the Guest Services desk. All are welcome!

VIDEO: Watch [THIS VIDEO](#) together as a group. After the video is done, you can transition by going over your group's specific expectations (start time, end time, etc...)

PRAYER FOR DISCUSSION: Leader or Co-Leader prays for the discussion time. Pray that the Spirit of Jesus would assist in the conversing, processing, and listening of the discussion.



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SERMON DISCUSSION TIME: Have someone read Acts 16:1-5. You can start the discussion by saying: This past Sunday we looked at Acts chapter 16:1-5. Pastor Peter Ochoa gave us 5 points to consider from the text about healthy churches. #1 - Healthy churches are fearless for the gospel, #2 - Healthy churches partake with those with a good reputation, #3 - Healthy churches are a place where we give ourselves to one another for the sake of the gospel, #4 - Healthy churches will be flexible and culturally sensitive to those they are trying to reach, #5 - Healthy churches will unite in the objective foundational truths of the gospel.

QUESTION #1: Out of the five points shared during the sermon about healthy churches, which one impacted you or stood out to you the most?

QUESTION #2: It was said in the sermon that healthy churches choose courage over comfort. Why is this so difficult for us? What are the roadblocks that get in our way from choosing courage over comfort? What makes it possible to be courageous in the gospel?

QUESTION #3: It was said in the sermon that as a christian, your reputation matters. It doesn't only affect you, but your church as well. Have you ever considered the communal aspect of your reputation in the way shared in the sermon? Why does your reputation as a christian matter? How is this contrary to societal norms?

QUESTION #4: It was said in the sermon that sometimes the gospel will ask big things from us, sometimes even things that may be hard or hurt, a lot like Timothy experienced in the text. Why is it important to be flexible for the gospel? Why is it hard for us to be flexible? What things get in the way from us being flexible? What are some practical things we can do to keep a flexible frame of mind?

PRAYER: Before going into a time of prayer together, read the following to your group:

Praying by yourself and praying with others are necessary practices in the church. There is more freedom and self-focus when praying alone, but praying together requires wisdom, patience, and love. Wisdom, because it's done in public. Patience, because it takes time to do it well. And love, because it considers others. Below you will find guidelines that are universally helpful when praying together. These are not laws. We will not be legalistic. So, if someone “violates” one of the guidelines, we will gladly bear with one another in love and remain patient as we grow in this together.

Sincerity: Pray in a way that reflects what is really going on inside. Suppress the desire to sound “spiritual.” In-sincerity cultivates in-authenticity, so just be yourself when you pray.



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Length: Prayers should generally be shorter, rather than longer. This allows more people to pray and more people to be prayed for. But do not over think this one! Just pray.

Simplicity: Prayers should be easily understood. Prayers are not sermons or theology lessons. So, pray simply, plainly, and childlike. This way everyone can truly say “Amen!” to your prayer.

Courage: Prayer fuels prayer. Saints love to hear the heart cries of fellow saints. So, don’t hold back just because you are afraid of not getting it right. We are totally for each other!

PRAY TOGETHER: Spend time taking **and recording** prayer requests and then pray together as a group. *(You may want to consider sending out the prayer requests weekly to your group to keep everyone informed and in the loop on how to pray for one another throughout the week. This also makes it easier to check-in with people who have shared requests to see how the Lord has been working in their lives.)*

