



### **Week #3: The Way of Inclusion**

*Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."*

Luke 14:12-14 (NIV)

**1. We are FOR \_\_\_\_\_ welcoming \_\_\_\_\_.**

*Certain people came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the brothers: "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved." This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question. The church sent them on their way, and as they traveled through Phoenicia and Samaria, they told how the Gentiles had been converted. This news made all the believers very glad. When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything God had done through them.*

*Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the law of Moses."*

*The apostles and elders met to consider this question. After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: "Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith."*

Acts 15:1-9 (NIV)

**2. We are FOR \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ keeping people from Jesus.**

*“Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear? No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are.”*

Acts 15:10-11 (NIV)

*“It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God.”*

Acts 15:19 (NIV)

*So the men were sent off and went down to Antioch, where they gathered the church together and delivered the letter. The people read it and were glad for its encouraging message.*

Acts 15:30-31 (NIV)

### **3. We are FOR \_\_\_\_\_.**

*But you are the ones chosen by God, chosen for the high calling of priestly work, chosen to be a holy people, God’s instruments to do his work and speak out for him, to tell others of the night-and-day difference he made for you—from nothing to something, from rejected to accepted.*

1 Peter 2:9-10 (MSG)

*Andrew went to find his brother, Simon, and told him, “We have found the Messiah.” Then Andrew brought Simon to meet Jesus. ...*

John 1:41-42 (NLT)

*“...Do good things **for** the city I sent you to. Pray to the Lord **for** the city you are living in, because if there is peace in that city, you will have peace also.”*

Jeremiah 29:7 (ERV)

## **Discussion Questions**

1. Reflect on your experiences with attending and/or becoming a member of a church. What was that like? What kind of hoops, if any, did you have to go through to feel like you belonged?
2. What ideas do you have about being a Christian that prevents others from experiencing freedom in Christ?
3. Are there ways that you are turning Christianity into a religion defined by some confined set of expectations? If so, how so?
4. What obstacles do you think you need to remove for others to encounter Jesus through you?

## **Recommended Resources**

- <https://thewaysofjesus.com/devotionals>
- *Lifestyle Evangelism*, by Dr. Joe Aldrich
- *Flesh: Bringing the Incarnation Down to Earth*, by Hugh Halter

**(NIV) New International Version**  
**(ERV) Easy-to-Read Version**

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### **1. We are FOR insiders welcoming outsiders.**

*Certain people came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the brothers: "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved." This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question. The church sent them on their way, and as they traveled through Phoenicia and Samaria, they told how the Gentiles had been converted. This news made all the believers very glad. When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything God had done through them.*

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### **2. We are FOR removing the obstacles keeping people from Jesus.**

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### 3. We are FOR 100% participation.

*But you are the ones chosen by God, chosen for the high calling of priestly work, chosen to be a holy people, God's instruments to do his work and speak out for him, to tell others of the night-and-day difference he made for you—from nothing to something, from rejected to accepted.*

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