



ENTER God's presence

My eyes fail, looking for your salvation, looking for your righteous promise. Deal with your servant according to your love and teach me your decrees. I am your servant; give me discernment that I may understand your statutes.
Psalm 119:123-125

Heavenly Father, we believe that you are here with us and that you want to speak to us through your word. Help us see and discern the places in our lives where you are at work and also help us to see where you are at work in the world and in the lives of those around us. We put this time and ourselves in your hands and ask that you would give us ears to hear your word to us now, in Jesus name, Amen.



SHARE life together

1. **How have you seen Jesus at work in your life this week?**
2. **Share how you went with your living purposefully from last time?**
3. **Who is the most intuitively discerning person you know?**

Siri, Google, Alexa - your own personal voice activated assistant that can update you on your daily appointments, give you a rundown of the news, answer your burning questions or even tell you a joke. Voice activated technology has come a long way since the old clapper device helped you find your keys or switch off the lamp. From the beginning, God's kingdom has been voice activated. He spoke and the world came into being. Jesus spoke and lives were healed and restored. The Spirit-filled apostles spoke the Word of God and saw thousands of people being saved. Powerful, life-changing, culture-shaping things happen when the Church speaks and shares what God has done and will do in this world. But it requires discernment to recognise and understand the implications of where and how God is at work right now in the world today. Too often we get stuck in a way of thinking or living, trying to box God in and put obstacles in the way of others coming to know the inclusive grace of God that has conquered our hearts. The early Church shows us the discerning acts needed that will enable and deploy more voice activated, Spirit-filled human devices into the marketplace to revolutionize the world today.

Week beginning
Sunday 27th June 2021

Worship series:
Getting Our Acts Together



VERSE for the week
It is my judgement,
therefore, that we should
not make it difficult for the
Gentiles who are turning to
God.

Acts 15:19



REMEMBER this week

The Spirit of
discernment
empowers the church
to fully enact the grace
of God's kingdom here
on earth.



LISTEN attentively

Read Acts 15:1-21

- 5. What stands out for you in this text? What questions does it raise for you?**
- 6. What does this passage tell you about God or his plan or purpose for the church?**
- 7. What ways do you think the church can make it difficult for people to turn to God today?**

The church in the book of Acts and throughout its entire history, has faced many false teachings or challenges to the heart of the gospel message of Jesus. Anything that we insist people do in order to be accepted by God is contrary to the gospel message that we are saved only through faith in saving power of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Each time these other teachings or human traditions have threatened this message the church has had a similar response – to meet together, to return to the Word of God contained in scripture, and to try and discern the truth of God’s revelation through his Word. Martin Luther made a point of distinguishing between those things which were fundamental truths of the Gospel which could not be adapted or negotiated and those things that were neither commanded or forbidden by Scripture (these things are called ‘adiaphora’ a Greek word loosely meaning ‘things of indifference’).

- 8. Have you ever visited a church that does things differently than your home church? How did that make you feel? Did the differences make you feel uncomfortable? If so, why?**

One of the things we often communicate with couples they prepare for marriage, is the different expectations that they may encounter around significant days like birthdays, Easter, and Christmas, depending on the traditions of their family of origin. Our different churches and denominations can be a bit like this, we have different traditions and different emphases, but at the heart of every Christian church is the message of salvation through faith in Jesus. To a certain extent, many of our differences are adiaphora, things of little significance, yet they have been the cause of major debate and conflict among the church for centuries.

- 9. How might this kind of conflict between Christians be something that makes it difficult for people who might be trying to turn to God?**



GROW deeper

Read 2 Corinthians 5:16-21

As God’s people we are now Christ’s ambassadors. Think about what an ambassador does: they represent the interests and speak with the authority of their respective nations and governments. When an ambassador speaks, it is as if the king, president, or prime minister of their home country was speaking. They are vested with the authority of their government to act as a representative to the foreign country with the full power and authority of the government which they represent.

- 10. What does it mean to you to be an ambassador of Christ?**
- 11. How does an ambassador know what to say to a foreign power? How do we know what God wants us to say or do?**

These days ambassadors have easy lines of instant communication back to their homelands. In the time of Jesus, ambassadors were trusted to understand the interests and the intent of the one who sent them, and to respond accordingly as the situation developed around them. Sometimes a situation had dramatically changed between when an ambassador had been sent with a message and the time he actually arrived. They had to understand the purpose of their diplomatic mission so that they could respond appropriately to the situation they encountered on their arrival.

12. According to this passage from 2 Corinthians 5, what is the message or the purpose that Christ has for his ambassadors? How well do you think your words and actions communicate that message?
13. How well do you think the Christian church communicates that message to the world? What do you think are some of the things that get in the way of that message?



LIVE purposefully

Being discerning is simply a matter knowing what God is up to and knowing how and when to speak his word into a situation. This is how the apostles resolved the issue of circumcision, they looked around them and looked to see if they could see what God was doing. Given the testimony of Peter, and of Paul and Barnabas, they saw that God was pouring his Holy Spirit out on Gentiles who had not been circumcised and in some cases had not yet even been baptised. Then hearing the word of God through the prophet Amos, they affirmed that what they were seeing, although it had never been seen before, was in line with God's Word and his plan for the world. The mistake we often make in discerning is that we often look to the past and rely on what we have seen God do previously and rely on what we have heard him say in the past. Why would God do things the same way now, when the world is so radically different? Have a look at you life and see where God has been at work. Help others around you to identify the work of God in their lives. See what God is doing and be ready to speak his truth into those places where he is at work and expect to see new things happen.

14. How often are you aware of the presence and activity of God in your life? How could you try to be more aware of that this week?
15. What things in your life make it difficult for you to turn to God? How might they also make it difficult for others to hear God speak to them through you?



PRAY intentionally

- Praise God for reconciling us to himself through Jesus.
- Ask God to help you grow in discerning his presence and activity in your life and in the lives of those around you.
- Continue to pray that God might use us to reach others with the love and grace of Jesus Christ.



BLESS one another

You might like to address one person in your group and make the sign of the cross in the air as you say...

[Name], God's grace is enough for you. Amen.