Week 7: The Quest for Uniformity

Welcome your ACTS Group! As your group either forms – or reconvenes – it is important that together you review the following:

1. **The what and why of Groups**: An ACTS Group is a small group of people doing life together. They seek to live out an experience of Adventure, Community, Transformation, and Sending as they follow Jesus. ACTS Church has defined “Growing in a Group” as one of three key Marks of Discipleship (along with “Growing in Grace” and “Growing in Generosity”).

2. **Don’t skip the small talk**: As you gather together as a group, it is important that you spend time getting to know one another. Carve out a few minutes to share names (if needed) and talk about anything important or interesting going on in your lives. If group members need help getting started, throw out a question and have everyone share.

3. **Write up and sign (or review) your covenant**: A covenant is a written agreement between members of your ACTS Group. This document outlines how your group would like to “be” with each other. A simple covenant should include: 1.) A commitment of when/where to meet; 2.) a pledge of confidentiality; 3.) a commitment to how you will interact with each other; and, 4.) any other commitments that may be important to the group (ie, how responsibilities might be shared, how children will be taught/cared for during group times, a commitment to pray for one another).

4. **Summer Sharing**

1. Every family has their own unique set of traditions. Most of these are seen and experienced around the holidays. What are some of the holiday traditions that your family had or still have to this day?
2. Have you had an experience of bringing an outsider into that tradition? How did it go? How did you prepare them?
3. In your adult life, are there any new traditions that you and your family or friends have started? How did those come to be?
4. What is the goal in these traditions? How is this accomplished?

5. **Discussion Questions for Accidental Pharisees – The Quest for Uniformity**

1. In your own words, how would you define the difference between uniformity and unity?
2. Looking back, can you think of a time where you heard or experienced a situation where the quest for uniformity destroyed the potential for biblical unity? If so, what happened? What did you learn?
3. We often classify our area or space in Christianity as our “tribes.” This could be determined by denomination, structure, vision, etc. Each tribe then has certain “boundary markers,” that are used to identify that tribe as unique. What would be some of the boundary markers for ACS? Be as specific as possible.
   a. How would someone from the outside your tribe learn about those things if he or she wanted to fit in?
   b. Would the Jesus of the New Testament be inside or outside those boundaries?
4. As we discussed, there are some things that are worth fighting for. Which specific issues in the church do you believe should be on that list? Which specific issues in your day to day life should be on that list? What filter do you use to decide when an issue is worth fighting for and when it’s best to
“agree to disagree”? What is something you might have fought over or guarded that it might be time to let go of?

5. On a scale of 0 (we are clones) to 10 (we are shockingly different), how would you rate the diversity (not just racial diversity) of your congregation? How would you rate the Christian diversity of your personal relationships, circles of friends, and colleagues?

6. Sunday morning we looked at Galatians 3:26-29 and found that our differences are trumped by the power and love of Jesus Christ. That said, we have a God that created us unique and different. So how can we not just acknowledge and allow, but go to the level of embracing our differences?

Close your time together in prayer, confessing to God where you might have fallen short, praising Him for the grace offered to you, and lifting up specifically those who you might be called to “include”.

Note: We credit a book by Larry Osborne of the same name (Accidental Pharisees) for providing the concept and a portion of the content for the series. A segment of the group discussion questions below are drawn directly from the book, as well (Zondervan 2012).