

VIII

*Gracious*  
S p a c e

One Church  
Many Denominations

## Introduction

Welcome to the “*Gracious Space*” Study Series produced for FBC in conjunction with our 2019 Fall Sermon Series.

This 8 week study can be done in a small group, as couples, or as an individual reflection, and is best done in order along with the Sunday sermons... but doesn't have to be.

You will notice through this guide where we suggest an optional “RESOURCE.” To find these additional resources, you will need to use your computer, tablet, or smart phone, go to the church website [www.fbcpg.ca](http://www.fbcpg.ca) and click on the “Gracious Space” logo.

If you are leading a group it is important that you pre-read the guide in order to properly manage time. It is best not to rush through any one question, allowing for multiple people to give their perspectives.

This study is anywhere from 30mins to 2 hours.

We pray you will enjoy the journey into *Gracious Space*...

Wayne & David

Please take some time to “be still” and position yourself to recognize the all-powerful God in which we worship.

If you’ve jumped right into the study over the past few weeks *without* a time of prayerful meditation, we encourage you to do it this time.

Do you notice a difference when you take time to pause?

**RESOURCE: Psalm 46 Meditation (7mins)**

Continue now, giving space for yourself and others to journey into the Father’s Words, the Spirit’s Presence, and the love, grace, and passion of the Son.



The theme this week is all about breakups.

What are some stories from your life that could be examples of “bad” breakups?

(eg. romantic, family, work relationships)

Did it have to go badly?

How could it have gone differently?

Maybe the results would have been the same,  
but how could have *gracious* space helped you personally?

## *Gracious Space: One Church, Many Denominations*

At FBC, we do our best to follow the Christian mission,  
(as we have interpreted it)  
from the whole Bible story and teachings of Jesus.  
We also choose to focus on this mission  
and the primary matters of faith,  
placing other matters as secondary.

What are some reasons that someone might think  
they need to “break up” with a church?

What would be some reasons for someone to stay  
and tough it out?

Reflect, or discuss in your group,  
the concept of “guilt by association” and how that affects  
church communities.



Scripture:  
Read Acts 15

(if time is limited, then read from verse 22 on)

This scripture is extremely insightful when it comes to secondary matters of faith and trying to get along.

The Apostle Paul was part of this delegation from the main church leaders in Jerusalem.

They brought specific directives for Christian living and practice to the large body of believers in Antioch.

What do you notice about Paul's teachings from last week (Romans 14:17) and the "requirements" set by the counsel in Jerusalem.

The early church struggled in similar, but contextually different ways.  
And at times they even experienced breakup.

How healthy does the breakup in verse 39 sound?



Barnabas, Paul and others were sent out from the church in Jerusalem to “preach the Word of God”.

What does this mean for us today in Prince George?

Read Gal 2:11-16

Peter was one of the main leaders of the early church  
and yet according to Paul,  
was a hypocrite.

In what ways might we be hypocrites today?

If the Apostle Paul was visiting FBC today,  
on what hypocrisies might he “call us out”?

Scripture:

Read Acts 13:5b & 13:13

John Mark was a young man who was sent with Barnabas and Paul to help with the mission.

He has now abandoned them just as they were getting started.

Reflect, or discuss in your group,  
times in which you have quit something you have started  
and abandoned the people who needed you.

Re-read Acts 15:36-41

While doing God's work,  
Barnabas and Paul have a disagreement "so sharp"  
that they split up.

Why do you think Luke (the author of Acts)  
includes this event in his writing?

Reflect or discuss the reality of today's many  
Christian denominations. Is this the ideal?



Scripture:

Read Acts 16:6-7

Some Bible scholars suggest Paul had a very difficult and unproductive time in ministry directly following his break up with Barnabas.

What might be some consequences to a church and their mission when they experience a breakup or people leave over a sharp dispute?

What would it look like to split or break up graciously?

Read 1 Cor 9:1-6; 2 Tim 4:9-11; Philemon 1;23-24

(These letters were all written after the events in Acts 15)

What do these scripture passages suggest regarding some of the earlier broken relationships described in Acts?

## *Gracious Space: One Church, Many Denominations*

Paul, Peter, Barnabas, and John Mark  
all experienced the incredible work of the Holy Spirit  
through their common mission  
of proclaiming and building Christ's kingdom.  
But their uniqueness, personalities, and lived experiences also  
caused failures with negative consequences.

Our hope and prayer with the *Gracious Space* study series,  
is that we all gather around the same mission,  
and worship the same Almighty God,  
but give space and grace for our own unique journeys.

The final questions on the next page are meant to  
challenge and evoke transformation.

Try to make some decisions and put in place action plans  
that will help solidify what God has been teaching you  
through out this series.

## Gracious Space: One Church, Many Denominations

Reflect on any barriers that you may have constructed that would prevent you from fully engaging in FBC community and mission.

What are some things I realize about myself that might make it difficult to get along with others?

How would *curiosity*, *humility* and *empathy* impact my feelings towards those that would wish to leave our community?

How has how my *culture*, *history*, and *ego* influenced the way I understand Scripture?

Do I struggle with needing to know all the answers?

While living out my Christian life, where I have missed the point of it all?

Turn to the back cover and read out loud  
(or have your group repeat phrase by phrase)  
the call to believers from the author of the book of Hebrews.

## Gracious Space



Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Hebrews 4:16



This booklet was produced and written by pastors Wayne and David in conjunction with the 2019 Fall Sermon Series: *Gracious Space*, at First Baptist Church Prince George, BC.