

Seeking God's Ways (4 of 6)  
Small Group Discussion Questions

Join our congregation for worship in-person or online at 10:30 am each Sunday via our [Grantham Church YouTube Channel](#). If you ever miss a message, the sermons are always posted to the [recent sermons page](#) at our website and at the [Grantham Church Podcast](#) the following day, along with the small group discussion questions under Worship Resources. Thank you for staying connected with us!

Sunday, March 27th, 2022



**Series Focus:** Lent is a time to repent—to turn from our ways and recommit ourselves to the ways of God as revealed in Jesus. What do those ways look like? Join us for our Lenten series as we explore the higher ways of God and embrace his will for our lives.

**Sermon Title:** From Exceptionalism to Inclusion

**Scripture Reading:** Hosea 6:6; Luke 5:27-32, 15:1-32; Romans 2:1-5

**Sermon Focus:** As we seek God's higher ways, we discover that the restoration of "sinners" and of sinful society comes through a radical embodiment of the gospel of grace and a kindness that leads to repentance, rather than withholding our love and acceptance or excluding people from the community. In this fourth message of our Lenten series, Pastor David calls us to move away from the conditions that create exceptionalism, so that we might welcome and include everyone into the Kingdom.

Thank you for going deeper in conversation with your small group in person or by video call. Use the following questions to help *guide* your small group discussion:

1. Read Luke 15:1-32 together. You may have someone different read each of the three parables. After you've read the passage, take the time to discuss the stories that Jesus tells in response to why he eats with sinners and outcasts. Imagine how this challenged the original audience, especially those who dedicated their lives to being separate and faithful to the Law of Moses. What do you find encouraging in Jesus' stories? What do you find challenging?
2. At the beginning of the sermon, Pastor David shared a story about the time Tony Campolo helped to throw a party in a diner for a prostitute and her friends. This is a moving story. It's even more moving because it actually happened. When asked what church he belonged to, Tony said, "I belong to a church that throws birthday parties for prostitutes at 3:30 in the morning." The manager responded, "No you don't. There ain't no church like that. If there was, I'd join it. Yep, I'd join a church like that." Why do you think more people today don't think of the church as a people willing to throw birthday parties for prostitutes?
3. Read Luke 5:30-32 together. Jesus isn't saying that he *only* came to save the really bad people who are lost. He is *also* saying that the religious who think are "righteous" are more lost than the "sinners" that they were failing to love. In other words, Jesus is leveling the playing field. We are all sick and need Jesus, the doctor. Share with your group how you've experienced this in your own life.
4. The Croatian theologian Miroslav Volf writes: "[Jesus] was no prophet of "inclusion" . . . for whom the chief virtue was acceptance and the cardinal vice intolerance. Instead, he was a bringer of "grace," who not only scandalously included "anyone" in the fellowship of "open commensality," but made the "intolerant" demand of repentance and the "condescending" offer of forgiveness" (Mark 1:15; 2:15-17). How does this challenge both sides of the theological and political spectrum in the church today? Why do you think that is?
5. Pastor David listed some "conditions" that lead to exceptionalism. Discuss each one and how you've seen this in yourself, our neighbors, and our country:
  - Isolation, sectarianism & segregation
  - Taking the "us vs. them" approach
  - Idolizing your views, preferences & positions
  - Having a tribalistic view of God
  - Myths that glorify and/or "deify" our group
  - Fear & hostility toward differences
  - Minimizing or being willfully ignorant of our own sins