



First Person Week Three

Opening Prayer: God, thank you for welcoming all to your table and not rejecting us. Help us to remember your heart for us as we wrestle with what that means. Allow us to receive and transfer grace in our everyday lives.

Talk It Over: No one likes to be rejected but we often reject others, sometimes without even realizing it. Our quick judgments toward specific people groups coupled with our tendency to transfer old hurts onto people with similar traits of those who hurt us create rejection to those who don't deserve it.

- Can you think of a name that you have a bad association with? This often comes up when new parents are deciding on a name for their child. Finish the sentence; "I don't really like anyone named ____ I have not had good relationships with people of that name." Seems like a silly analogy but notice how quickly you could come up with some name or memory. It is easy to do!
- Jesus shows us in Mark that he is a king without favoritism. That is counter-cultural to our past and current society and leadership structure. He was establishing a new kingdom. Take a minute to let that sink in and then share any thoughts you have.

Read Mark 7:24-29 NLT

The interaction between God and the woman who showed up early to the party shows us how much Jesus values everyone.

- Name some ways culture collides with God's kingdom.
- We have all experienced some form of racial conflict either as a victim or a witness. What feelings does talking about this evoke? How does it make you feel to know that there is no room for cultural conflict in God's kingdom?
- Jesus is inviting all to his table. This rubs up against our cultural blindness. How can you navigate that tension and not just receive his invite but also extend it to others?

Read Romans 12:18 NIV

Living at peace with everyone is the goal. Saying yes to that goal does not mean it will be easy! Without setting our intentions on peace we will quickly fall into the judgment and hate our culture teaches us is part of our human right.

- Grace is more powerful than we are aware of most of the time. Combined with love it is unstoppable. In what ways are you practicing receiving grace?
- In what ways are you extending grace to others?
- Have you ever extended grace to someone who you viewed as an enemy? If so and you feel comfortable, share that story.

We all have an instinctive and reflective response as we experience everyday life and the challenges that come with it. In order to create more peace and grace we need to

respond out of that reflective response. This doesn't mean our instinctive response goes away. It just doesn't get to lead in our lives.

- What are some ways you can try and hit the pause button on your instinctive response?
- Discuss some ways that you can add margin or time (reflective requires this) during a heated conversation? This will probably feel strange or counter-cultural.
- Just like all spiritual disciplines, responding with our reflective response takes practice. Consider setting a numerical goal for this week as you try out this shift in thinking.

Reflection: Imagine Jesus standing next to someone you have previously rejected. Would you recognize him? Take a minute to talk with Jesus about this and ask for his help to correct and guide your heart in a way that you can receive and transfer his grace to all.

Closing Prayer: God, help us to not transfer our hate and cultural expectations on people but to transfer your unconditional love and acceptance. Thank you that we all matter so much to you.

Challenge: We would like to invite you to follow along with us as a church as we read through the books of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. You can do that through the eDevotional. <http://eastlakechurch.com/next-steps/edevotional/> If you have already started this reading, share some thoughts or insight about your experience this week.