

OPEN SHARING

FIRST CHURCH COUNCIL

ACTS 14:21-15:35

This spiritual practice is adapted from a group structure implemented by the Samson Society. The Samson Society is a fellowship of Christian men who are serious about authenticity, community, humility & recovery. You can discover more or participate in an online meeting at their website: samsonsociety.com The goal of this practice is to allow space for open, honest sharing of how God is getting your attention. Sharing how you see God at work in your life aids in connection and growth. A specific topic is given in order to help direct and guide the process.

STEP ONE

Select one person to read Step 2 and Step 3. The steps below are taken directly from the Samson Society meeting format so some of the language may feel new. The discussion topic was selected from Jay's message on Sunday. Feel free to use this topic, select your own topic, or discuss the passage specifically.

STEP TWO

As Christians, we meet at other times for worship, for teaching, or for corporate prayer. Today, however, we meet to talk. Our purpose is to assist one another in our common journey. We do so by sharing honestly, out of our own personal experience, the challenges, and encouragements of daily Christian living in a fallen world. Our faith rests in the love of God, as it is revealed in His Word and in the life of His Son. This is the Great Fact of the Gospel, which is the foundation of our Charter.

The Fact

God exists. In the timeless mystery of the Trinity, He is perfectly harmonious, perfectly whole. God is our Creator. He designed us to live in eternal harmony with Him and each other, and to care for the rest of His creation. Spurning God's fellowship, we all have sinned, forfeiting our created place and losing our spiritual lives. I myself have personally defied God's law and rejected His love. Alienation from Him has produced darkness and chaos in my life, for which I have often blamed others. God has continued to love me, even in my active rebellion, and in Christ has done everything necessary to restore me perfectly to Himself. As I accept responsibility for my sin and find forgiveness in the finished work of Christ, I experience reconciliation with God and am progressively restored to harmony with myself and others. Despite the lingering effects of sin, I am a restored son of the sovereign Lord, whose Spirit is at work in my weakness, displaying His glory and advancing His kingdom.

STEP THREE

In sharing, we speak honestly out of our own experience. We tell the truth about ourselves, knowing that our group will listen to us in love and will hold whatever we say in strictest confidence. We try to keep our comments brief, taking care to leave plenty of time for others. We address our statements to the group as a whole rather than directing them toward any one person. As a rule, we refrain from giving advice to others or instructing them during the meeting, believing that such conversations are best reserved for private moments between friends. The suggested topic today is **ADDING TO THE GOSPEL**. But we are not confined to that subject. You may speak about any issue that is currently commanding your attention. The floor is now open for anyone who wishes to speak.

NEXT

Process this experience as a group. Are there ways God is trying to activate you or your group? The "Activated" Group Process questions on page 6 may be a helpful guide as your group engages with this material and with God.