



Here is the church – Open the doors. *Accept people the way they are*

**CONTEMPLATIVE DISCUSSION MODEL:**

*Ask these of the group or break into groups of 2-3 to allow people to interact more.*

What kind of person would scare you if they showed up at Sunridge?

How are you contributing to the work God is doing at Sunridge?

What are you learning about God from the message?

What are you learning about yourself from the message?

What questions did the message leave you with?

What is God doing in your heart lately?

What things do you feel are getting in the way from what God wants to do in you?

**STRUCTURED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: pick 4-5 for the group**

When have you attended a gathering at which you didn't feel accepted? What was it that made you feel unaccepted?



How would you put the Sunridge Mission into your own words? What part of our mission is most challenging for you personally?

What did Jesus say his followers were to do in Matt 28:19? How are those tasks affected by the statement, “there is no impact without contact?”

Read Ro 15:7. What does Paul exhort us to do? How does the second part of that verse change the first?

How does Jesus’ acceptance of Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1-10 challenge your perspective on acceptance?

When have you encountered the *myths of acceptance*?

Read Acts 10:9-35. What were some of Peter’s obstacles to accepting Cornelius? In what ways can you relate to Peter’s difficulty in accepting non-Jewish believers?

Do you agree or disagree that in order to open its doors wider a church must be accepting?

Do you think most churches are accepting? Why?

What is one thing you could do to be more accepting and open your doors more?



### **Leader's Guide: Open the doors. *Accept people the way they are.***

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"Here is the church; here is the steeple. Open the doors; see all the people." You may remember that little rhyme - along with its hand gestures - from your childhood. But studies tell us that in America this year, when the doors open there will actually be less people to see inside than in years past. Has the church lost its mojo? Our *Here Is the Church* series rediscovers why church matters and just how much you matter to your church.

### **OUTLINE & SCRIPTURES**

#### **The Great Commission**

Matthew 28:19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

The Sunridge Mission Statement  
***Helping people find and follow Jesus***

#### **The key to opening the doors is one word: "ACCEPTANCE"**

Ro 15:7 **Accept one another**, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.

Ro 12:2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

#### **1. Acceptance does not come naturally for us.**

#### **The Apostle Peter and others struggled with acceptance**

Acts 10:9 About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. 10 He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. 11 He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. 12 It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles of the earth and birds of the air. 13 Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat." 14 "Surely not, Lord!" Peter replied. "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean." 15 The voice spoke to him a second time, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean." 16 This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven. 17 While Peter was wondering about the meaning of the vision, the men sent by Cornelius found out where Simon's house was and stopped at the gate. 18 They called out, asking if Simon who was known as Peter was staying there. 19\* While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Simon, three men are looking for you. 20 So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them." 21 Peter went down and said to the men, "I'm the one you're looking for. Why have you come?" 22 The men replied, "We have come from Cornelius the centurion. He is a



righteous and God-fearing man, who is respected by all the Jewish people. A holy angel told him to have you come to his house so that he could hear what you have to say.” 23 Then Peter invited the men into the house to be his guests. The next day Peter started out with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa went along.

24 The following day he arrived in Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. 25 As Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet in reverence. 26 But Peter made him get up. “Stand up,” he said, “I am only a man myself.” 27 Talking with him, Peter went inside and found a large gathering of people.

Acts 10:28 He said to them: “You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him. But God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean. 29 So when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection. May I ask why you sent for me?”

Acts 10:34 Then Peter began to speak: “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism 35 but **accepts men from every nation** who fear him and do what is right.

Re 7:9 After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no-one could count, from **every nation**, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb.

### **2. Acceptance precedes influence.**

#### **An example of acceptance from the life of Jesus-**

Luke 19:1 Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. 2 A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. 3 He wanted to see who Jesus was, but being a short man he could not, because of the crowd. 4 So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. 5 When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.” 6 So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

7 All the people saw this and **began to mutter**, “He has gone to be the guest of a ‘sinner’.”

#### ***To be unaccepting, is to be unlike Jesus***

8 But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, **I will pay back four times the amount.**” 9 Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.”

#### ***There is no impact without contact***



### **3. Acceptance doesn't require change but it is the only way change happens.**

Ro 12:16 Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

#### **Some myths about acceptance:**

- **Myth 1: Acceptance = Approval.**
  
- **Myth 2: Approval = Acceptance**