



## Sermon Discussion Guide for Cumberland Fellowship Church Sermon Series: Biblical Pattern Church History – Week 2 (April 30, 2023)

*This guide is a supplement to the weekly sermon. We encourage families and groups to use it. When we hear God's Word, we need to do more than listen. The bible says, "Be doers of the word, not hearers only" (James 1:22). Step 1: **GATHER** with your family or group. Step 2: **REVIEW** and **DISCUSS** the key points and scriptures from the sermon. Step 3: **PRAY** for the prayer requests shared by your family or group.*

### DISCUSSION STARTER

What would it be like to change suddenly from persecution to power—to be hunted like criminals one day and to be officially promoted the next?

### DIGGING DEEPER 1

***The Catholic Christianity (70-312 A.D.). Read John 14:6; Ephesians 1:22-23.*** When the Church first began it was called the Way, the Way was how the Jews separated Christ Followers from their Jewish faith. As time progressed from the mid 30's to early 2<sup>nd</sup> century another word began to circulate in the Greek language it was the word Catholic. What does the word Catholic mean? Where did the name Catholic come from? Why was it originally applied to all Christians? What does it mean to be part of the universal church or universal body of believers?

### DIGGING DEEPER 2

***Read Matthew 16:13-18; 1 Peter 2:4-6; Hebrews 2:17.*** Christianity, spread rapidly throughout the Mediterranean world. During this time the church was driven by the apostles' writings and the position of bishop was developed. In the Catholic church this is called the Apostolic succession. What is the doctrine of Apostolic Succession? And what did it develop into? What is the Petrine Theory? When Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build my church", who or what is the "rock"? If this rock isn't Peter, then who/what is the rock? Since Peter was believed to be the rock, what was the ramifications on how the church developed into future Christianity? What does Pope mean? How was the Pope viewed? The Pope was viewed as infallible and should not be questioned. How did this influence church tradition being equal to scripture? Discuss the dangers of this. Do we need a mediator (an earthly priest) to mediate to God on our behalf? Why? Between the fourth and fifth centuries, popes gave themselves the title *pontifex*, which means chief high priest in ancient Rome. This was the title also held by the emperor in Rome. Who is the one true High Priest?

### DIGGING DEEPER 3

***Constantine.*** What was the Edict of Milan? A half a century after the emperor Constantine issued the Edict of Milan, emperor Theodosius outlawed paganism and made Christianity the only state-sanctioned religion in the Roman Empire. This sounds great and for the most part it was, but this brought a problem to the church. What was that problem? It would be easy to paint Constantine's rise to power in only bright colors. After all, the church had been illegal for two-and-a-half centuries. It had just faced a decade of horrendous struggle. The legalizing of Christianity and later its official adoption as the religion of the realm must have seemed like the golden rays of dawn piercing through the oppressive darkness. It was a great triumph. But it also brought with it new problems. Discuss thus problems? What was the Treaty of Nicaea? What was Arianism? What did they believe? What did the council of Nicaea affirm? Who defined the term Roman Catholic?

### DOING THE WORD

What is your general impression of the early church after these first two messages on Church History? Has it changed? In what way are the members of the early church good examples for you? What might you do differently because of what you have learned? Pray for God to give you spiritual discernment to know the difference between scriptural truth and man-made traditions. And to walk in His ways not man's ways. Finally ask for the strength to take a stand against political correctness and people pleasing. May we all strive to be Biblically correct God pleasers.