

We are the Church and we are called to Minister to ONE ANOTHER

Welcome to **Week 3** of “**We Are The Church**”! As we have said each week our goal for this series is to help us understand why the church is to be such a vital part of our lives as followers of Jesus. We hope that by the time we are done with this series that you will have a newfound appreciation for the Church and that we all will change our mindset from thinking about the church as a place we GO, to understanding that the CHURCH is who we are supposed to BE.

In **Week 1** we took on the task of defining the CHURCH. We said that the **CHURCH is a local assembly of believers that desires to WALK with Jesus together, GROW to be like Jesus together and ultimately LOVE like Jesus together.**

Last Week we introduced the first of THREE MINISTRY PURPOSES that the Church is to carry out as a vital part of helping you and I grow in our relationship to Christ. The first ministry purpose that we looked at was the ministry of WORSHIP. **We are the Church and we are called to Worship GOD.** WORSHIP really should set the tone for everything we do as the CHURCH.

In fact this is what we were created for and it is worship that really sets the tone for the other two purposes we are going to look at through the rest of this series. Worship is a demonstration of our love and devotion to God especially in light of what God has done for us. But as we also noted last week our worship is not only to be based on WHAT God has done for us but it is also to be in response to WHO He is. God is worthy of all worship therefore, we should worship HIM in all of His splendor, majesty, and authority as King of the universe.

Today, we are going to look at **Ministry Purpose #2 - We are the Church and we are called to Minister to ONE ANOTHER.** Because this is such a vital ministry of the church, at the end of today's message we are going to be providing you with an opportunity to connect to Jesus and to the body by challenging you to consider where God would have you to serve so that we can minister to one another effectively. I want to challenge you to really press into today's message and allow your heart to be open to what God wants to accomplish in and through your life. This isn't a matter of IF you should serve but really a matter of WHERE you should be serving if you are a follower of Jesus and you understand the importance of us ministering to one another.

There was a Harvard study that was conducted recently that determined that **1 in 3 people** believe they **have NEEDS in their life and no one to help meet them.** They **have HURT to share and no one to listen to them.** They **have LOVE to give and no one to receive it.** This study is proof that people are suffering from loneliness, isolation, and a lack of community. I want you to know that God never intended for it to be this way. I also believe that this number will only increase as time goes on especially when we consider the impact that social media and our infatuation with the online world is having on our lives and our mental health. It is not uncommon for people to be together in the same room physically and yet far apart emotionally. There is an epidemic taking place where we are rapidly becoming more and more disconnected from one another physically and emotionally and the results are not promising. Part of the lure of such a

way of doing life is our desire to seek autonomy and independence without accountability. Because of relational dysfunction that we experience in life it is just safer and less of a hassle to live our lives online rather than to take a risk of trying to develop intimate relationships with other people. Through the online world we still have connections with people but without the emotional entanglements. We can bank online, we can shop online, we can work online, we can even go to church online. We can communicate without seeing each other or hearing each other's voices. We have the illusion of connection but in reality we are relationally disconnected. I love technology and the vehicle it provides us for easy communication with one another. But we must be careful that we don't allow it to cause us to lose intimacy and true connection with one another. And here is why? **Because we are designed for community!!!** To help us understand this important reality let's go back to the beginning when God first created man.

Genesis 2:15 (NIV) 15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. God took man and placed him in a perfect paradise environment but notice what verse 18 says.

Genesis 2:18 (NIV) 18 The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. Why was it not good? Because God designed Adam for community and at the time he was created there was no one to share life with him comparable to him. No one to help with the tasks given him by God. No one to share God's love with. No one to help him be accountable regarding what God had given him to do. This is what COMMUNITY provides and this is what makes life meaningful and fulfilling. Without someone to share community with the paradise garden would actually become a relational prison.

Genesis 2:18-22 (NIV)18 The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." **19** Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. **20** So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals. But for Adam no suitable helper was found. **21** So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. **22** Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

The reason community is so vital to our lives is because we are made in the image of God and because we have this innate desire to share our life and our love with other beings. Look back with me to Genesis 1

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. As we work our way through verses 2-25 God establishes the earth. Forms the light. Separates the waters into the atmosphere and the oceans. Establishes the dry land. Produces vegetation. Establishes the sun and the moon. He then establishes all the creatures of earth. The birds of the sky, the fish of the sea, and all forms of creatures and insects on the land. And then we come to verse 26.

26 Then God said, “Let US (emphasis here is on the plurality of God- the idea that God is a complete community unto Himself. He is one GOD in being but three distinct persons which you will discover if you read the rest of God’s word) Now why is this important that we recognize that God is a complete community within Himself? Because we need to understand that God did not create man because He was lonely and in need of a relationship. God has perfect community and fellowship within the Godhead between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. So why did He create man, especially knowing man would sin against Him? He created man simply because He wanted to share His LOVE with us, not because He was lonely **26** Then God said, “Let US make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” **27** So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. He didn’t just create one man but he created mankind (plural - man and woman) and gave him the ability to reproduce and make more of himself. That brings us back to us being made in the image of God. If we share likeness with our creator we have a desire to share our life and love with others just as God desires to share His life and love with us. To not do so is to work contrary to who you and I were created to be.

How much of our stress, mental health struggles, hurt and emotional trauma is the result of us working against or allowing sin to deceive us into thinking that isolation or the avoidance of community is a better way to try and live our lives. We are the CHURCH and we were made to minister to one another in community!! I want to call you back to Acts 2 and what we see when the CHURCH was first birthed.

Acts 2:46-47 (NIV) **44** All the believers were together and had everything in common. **45** They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. **46** Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, **47** praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

What we have here is more than just physical proximity to one another. There was a sense of emotional UNITY. You see, unity leads to multiplication and life. Division leads to death. **What makes the 1st century church so different from us?** They had economic hardships, so do we! They dealt with sickness, so do we! They lived in dangerous times, so do we! **What’s different?** They desperately NEEDED each other and they knew it! We have either forgotten that or we have been conditioned to think that we can make it on our own. I think the latter is a result of our American individualism that has devalued the sense of community in our lives.

Guys we really need to come to grips with the reality that COMMUNITY is what you were made for and the CHURCH is God’s vehicle for redeeming it as a priority in your life especially if you are someone who has been hurt by community or relationships in your past. Just in case you missed any of **Week 1 and 2** of this series, listen to how vital the CHURCH is for your development into CHRISTLIKENESS.

Ephesians 4:11-16 (NIV) 11 So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, (These were Important offices regarding Church leadership) 12 to equip his people (The CHURCH) for works of service, so that the body of Christ (The CHURCH) may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. (Without the CHURCH, life is going to blow your faith around like a kite in a whirlwind. You will struggle to believe. At times you will be led astray by false teachers and unbelievers.. You may even abandon your faith and live contrary to God due to basic challenges of life) 15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body (The Church) of him who is the head, that is, Christ. 16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. (Each of us has an important part to play in the ministry of the church. When every part fulfills their role we will be healthy and grow together as the CHURCH becomes like Christ. If we fall short, as the church, it is because some have neglected their part in the body of Christ).

What is your part in the Body of Christ (The Church)? Imagine your body without a lung, or a kidney, without eyes, without hearing. How healthy would your body be? How are you plugged into the community of Vertical Church? I hope that it goes beyond just the attendance of a Sunday Service. Yes, we are called to worship! But if you are truly worshipping it should also lead you to serve and minister to others within the CHURCH! You see when we say **We are the Church and we are called to Minister to ONE ANOTHER** it is because we believe TWO vitally important environments are created when we do. The first environment we create is a place for people to find **HEALING.**

James 5:16 (NIV) Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

Whether you are the one God uses to help someone else or whether you are the one in need of healing, when we do life together (establish relationships and trust where we can share our struggles and pray for one another) this is where we can receive healing. Yes God is the one healing us but I want you to notice this power is unleashed through the hands and feet of God's people. How many of us have experienced real breakthroughs in our lives as a result of others who have prayed for us and encouraged us? What a blessing to share burdens with others and to know you are not alone in your struggle (share a time where this has been true in your life whether it is a sin struggle or an emotional healing or encouragement from other believers). The Church is place for broken people to help other broken people find healing in Christ. When we understand we have a ministry to one another we allow God to create the space to do just that and He wants to use you and me to accomplish this purpose.

The second environment we create by ministering to one another is we help establish a place for the **MISSION** to be carried out. Look back at **Acts 2:47 (NIV)** praising God and enjoying the

favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. Because the people loved “one another” an environment was created that others wanted to be associated with and it says, “the Lord added to their number daily”. God is seeking those whom He can save from sin. That is His mission and it should be our mission. Sin has created a barrier in our relationship with God and with others. God wants to use the community of the church to draw people to God and to make them feel apart of the family of God. No matter what your earthly family or experience was like, you always have a place in the family of God and our mission is to seek after and draw near all those who are separated from Him

In the NT scriptures there are 59 “one another” passages. These are verses that call us as believers to the action of SERVING and MINISTERING to one another. I want you to notice, as we just look at five of them, that they require us to move, not just sit in a seat on Sunday morning. They are not accomplished by just scrolling on Instagram. We must open ourselves up to God and the community within the church and allow Him to use us to build His kingdom by ministering to one another in community.

Galatians 5:13 (NIV) You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.

When you come to the church gathering are you looking to receive or are you looking to serve?

1 Peter 4:8-10 (NIV) **8** Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. **9** Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. **10** Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.

When is the last time you showed hospitality by inviting someone into your home who needed help or who needed salvation?

Ephesians 4:32 (NIV) **32** Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

How are you expressing kindness, compassion, and forgiveness to those who are hurting and suffering in the world?

1 Thess. 4:13-14 & 18 (NIV) **13** Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. **14** For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.....**18** Therefore encourage one another with these words.

When was the last time you went out of your way to encourage others, especially with the Gospel?

Galatians 6:1-2 (NIV) 1 Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. **2** Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

Are you willing to allow God to use you to help others carry their burdens?

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Invitation:

Invite people to step out in FAITH and move beyond a Sunday gathering and connect with others. For some of you this is going to be a breakthrough step for you in your relationship with Jesus. Refer to Resource card or to Welcome card (TAKE ONE UP WITH YOU ON STAGE)

Join a Vgroup

Join a Vteam - Talk a little about all the opportunities

We want you to not just minister here at church but in your community, where you work, and through your daily life. But to do that you need the encouragement of your brothers and sisters in community.

Instructions as to what is to do NEXT:

- 1) Take you card fill it out this morning or take home and pray over
- 2) Turn in you card at NEXT / drop in offering box / place on the stage
- 3) We will follow up with you through a phone call or text
- 4) We will help you get plugged into an area to minister