

3 WEEKS

THE CHURCH





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Sometimes we make the mistake in thinking that the church is a building or an organization, but the reality is, the church is a living body of people.

1 Peter 2:5 says, "...you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

As a follower of Christ, you are one of those living stones that make up the church of Jesus Christ. And together, we are each part of the body of Christ; each of us is a separate and necessary part of it (1 Corinthians 12:27). In this series, we are taking a look what Christ has called the church to be – our mission and vision- and how we are to function together to accomplish that mission.

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3 Mindsets for a Better Year

week 1

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Kicking it off:

What first comes to mind when you think of “the church”?

Big Idea:

Our mission is to be fully devoted to Christ and to lead people to become fully devoted followers of Christ.

Key Scriptures:

Acts 2:42-47

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. 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, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”

Acts 4:33-34

“And God’s grace was so powerfully at work in them all that there were no needy persons among them...”

Ephesians 3:20-21

“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

Discussion:

1. Much of what we learn about the birth of Jesus’ church is contained in the book of Acts. It contains the acts of the apostles and new believers after Jesus’

resurrection and the Holy Spirit came upon believers to empower them for ministry. Read Acts 2:42-47. What do you learn about the early church based on this passage?

2. In this week's message, we talked of three commitments as a church:

- We will be an intensely devoted church.
- We will be an irrationally generous church.
- We will unapologetically share the love of Jesus.

How do you see that being played out in our church currently? How might you grow in your application of these commitments?

3. Some spiritual practices that mark devotion include:

- Read God's Word
- Serve in the church or community
- Engage in a small group
- Tithe
- Pray daily

We can grow in our devotion to God by choosing to do one thing that moves us toward Him. What could that one thing be for you?

4. *Read Acts 4:33-34.* How does your generosity contribute to meeting needs both within and outside of the church?

5. How have God's people impacted your life and relationship with Jesus through their devotion, generosity, and love?

6. *Read Ephesians 3:20-21.* How have you seen God do this in 2023?

Wrapping It Up:

Pray together a prayer of thanksgiving for all the ways God has added to our numbers those who are being saved, and ask Him to help us continue to grow in our devotion, generosity and love in this new year.

Prayer Focus:

Pray for our new Supper Clubs that are being formed – that many people would take a first step in engaging in community here in our church.

Memory Verse:

**“... And the Lord added
to their number daily
those who were
being saved.”**

Acts 2:47

The Miracle You Need Most

week 2

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Kicking it off:

Share about the most extreme example you've seen of someone's life being transformed by Christ.

Big Idea:

We want to be God's church, to carry the good news of the love and the grace of Jesus so that people will experience Him, the miracle that they need most.

Key Scriptures:

Mark 2:17

"It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

Mark 2:2-12

"They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. Some men came, bringing to [Jesus] a paralyzed man, carried by

four of them. Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, "Son, your sins are forgiven." Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone? Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things? Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'? But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So he said to the man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This

amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

Discussion:

1. Sometimes people get the wrong idea about church. They think it's a place where everyone has it together, or at least they think they do. Read Mark 2:17. According to Jesus' own words, who is He calling into His church?
2. In every church...
 - You see someone in need.
 - You see someone who cares.
 - You see someone who's preoccupied.
 - You see someone who's critical.
 - You see someone, who can be changed by the grace of Jesus in their lives.

What have you noticed lately about what you see in our church? How would you characterize yourself in relation to these statements?

3. *Read Mark 2:2-5.* In this story, the paralyzed man had a physical problem, but he also had a sin problem. How did Jesus address both?
4. The statement was made this week that "We will do anything short of sin to reach

people who don't know Christ. To reach people no one is reaching, we'll have to do things no one is doing." What are the things that no one else is doing that we are doing in our church?

5. What are things no one else is doing that you are doing to reach those who don't know Christ?
6. Is anyone in your life in need of help? How might God be calling you to help them?
7. Share about a time when someone cared for you. How did that change you? How did that impact your relationship with God?

Wrapping It Up:

What can you do to grow in extending grace to others, even if that "other" is yourself?

Prayer Focus:

Pray for our many support groups that are gathering, providing hope and healing for those experiencing brokenness in their lives.

Memory Verse:

"It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." Mark 2:17

Letting Go of Loneliness

week 3

SMALL GROUP STUDY **Acts 2:46-47**

Kicking it off:

When do you feel most lonely?

Big Idea:

God created us in His image, made for community with one another.

Key Scriptures:

Genesis 1:1,26

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth... Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness ..."

Genesis 2:18,22-23 NLT

"Then the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him." ...Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib, and he brought her to the man. "At last!" the man exclaimed..."

"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, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people..."

Discussion:

1. Read Genesis 1:26. When you think about how God is never alone, what questions, thoughts, or feelings come to mind?
2. Read Genesis 2:18, 22-23. If we are made in God's image, how do these passages demonstrate His desire for us to experience community?
3. Read Acts 2:46-47. "The first-century believers desperately needed each other, and they knew it. Believers today desperately need each other, and they have forgotten it." Discuss how you see this to be true.
4. Share about a time when you needed others. Who showed up, and how did that

experience grow your faith?

5. In this week's message, we talked about how a live-giving small group is:
- A gathering of grace
 - A gathering of healing
 - A gathering of mission

Talk about the ways your small group honors Jesus. How are you creating a space for grace, healing, and mission?

6. Read the "one another" statements below. Which of these would you characterize as your small group's greatest strength? In which areas would you like to see growth?

- Serve one another (Galatians 5:13).
- Show hospitality to one another (1 Peter 4:9).
- Be kind to one another (Ephesians 4:32).
- Encourage one another (1 Thessalonians 4:18).
- Carry one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2).

Wrapping It Up:

How might your group be on mission to invite others into the kind of community God created us for?

Prayer Focus:

Pray for the new small groups that will be formed from our

Groups Launch this week.

Memory Verse:

“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, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people.”
Acts 2:46-47



Top 10 Tips for Leading a Small Group

1. Establish a welcoming, accepting, and safe environment.
 - Take time to prepare.
 - Make sure to give a warm enthusiastic greeting to each person.
 - Verbally communicate the environment that you hope to create.
2. On the opening night of your group you need to have some intentional discussions centered around these questions:
 - What is the purpose of our group?
 - What is the vision for our group?
 - What are your expectations?
 - What do you hope to gain from this group experience?
 - What are some things we value as a group?
 - What are some healthy guidelines we need to have in place?Review and sign a group agreement.
3. Be authentic. Spend time sharing your life stories in order to get to know each other on a deeper level.
4. Find a good balance between:
 - Truth and grace/Bible study and life
 - Encouraging and challenging one another
 - Giving and receiving feedback from each other
5. Ask good questions to stimulate good discussion. Use open ended questions and follow up questions.
6. Hang out together, do things socially, eat together and have fun together!
7. Develop a missional lifestyle, find a service project to do together in the community.
8. Raise up new leadership by rotating facilitation of the group.
9. Share the responsibilities in order to increase individual commitment and ownership of the group.
10. Pray for your group and for each other!

Find ways to celebrate what God is doing in your group! Who else could you invite to join you in order that their life may be impacted by what God is doing in your group?

Group Agreement

OUR PURPOSE

To transform our spiritual lives by cultivating our spiritual health in a healthy small group community. In addition, we: _____

OUR VALUES

Group Attendance: To give priority to the group meeting. We will call or email if we will be late or absent.

Safe Environment: To help create a safe place where people can be heard and feel loved. (Please, no quick answers, snap judgments, or simple fixes.)

Respect Differences: To be gentle and gracious to people with different spiritual maturity, personal opinions, temperaments, or imperfections. We are all works in progress.

Confidentiality: To keep anything that is shared strictly confidential and within the group, and to avoid sharing improper information about those outside the group.

Encouragement for Growth: To be not just takers but givers of life. We want to spiritually multiply our life by serving others with our God-given gifts.

Welcome for Newcomers: To keep an open chair and share Jesus' dream of finding a shepherd for every sheep.

Shared Ownership: To remember that every member is a minister and to ensure that each attender will share a small team role or responsibility over time.

Rotating Hosts/Leaders and Homes: To encourage different people to host the group in their homes, and to rotate the responsibility of facilitating each meeting.

OUR EXPECTATIONS

- Refreshments/mealtimes _____
- Childcare _____
- When we will meet (day of week) _____
- Where we will meet (place) _____
- We will begin at (time) _____ and end at _____
- We will do our best to have some or all of us attend a worship service together.
- Our primary worship service time will be _____
- Date of this agreement _____
- Date we will review this agreement again _____
- Who (other than the leader) will review this agreement at the end of this study _____



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