



BE A PART OF THE CHURCH

“From the bottom to the top, the gospel creates community like no other.”

- David Mathis

PREP

Check out the video for this session from Pastor Dave:
www.templebiblechurch.org/disciplines

Overview

Growing in holiness is hard. It is even harder to grow alone. The church is not a building, but a body of believers who belong to one another. As we walk together, practicing spiritual disciplines, we do two things. We help one another in living out what Scripture asks of us and we show off the Savior found in Scripture to the watching world.

Passages

John 13:34-35 | Acts 2:42-47 | Galatians 6:2
1 Corinthians 12:12-30 | Hebrews 10:24-25

Terms

The Church

A body of people who profess and give evidence that they have been saved by God's grace alone, for his glory alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.
(Dever)

Biblical Community

A place we live out the one-anothers of Scripture before a watching world. (TBC Core Values)

Opening Question

- o *Why did you choose to join a home group?*
- o *What do you think about the statement, “I love Jesus but not the church”?*

READING

by Solomon and Anna Thomas

Twenty years ago, we started attending TBC one week after we got married. At first, the size of the church intimidated us. We thought it might be hard to meet people. It was important to us to be at a church where we could grow and serve. That same week we went to the Young Marrieds' Sunday School class and felt so welcomed. Other young couples in the class had a small group that met in our neighborhood. So, we joined it. This gave us an area to grow. TBC had become a place that felt like home and we began to feel the Lord calling us to serve. That led us to start working in the nursery teaching 2-year olds about Jesus. We were growing and serving.

Through our time being a part of the church, the Lord has helped us understand what it is like to live in biblical community. He has taught us to love and care for other believers in the body. As a small group, we have been there to help each other physically, emotionally, and spiritually. During Snowvid (Snowpocalypse, the Freeze, Snowmageddon, whatever you want to call it) our small group was able to care for one another to make sure there was no need among us. As Paul puts it in Ephesians 4:2, we were bearing with one another through offering hot showers, warm places to sleep, and childcare to make sure everyone was taken care of.

One of the greatest things that has happened while we live out being a part of the church is the opportunity to be ministered to and to minister to others. Our small group and other members of the body have

come alongside us during difficult times in our lives. I, Solomon, have had the opportunity to meet weekly with a fellow small group member for the last 14 years as we discuss life and help each other look more like Jesus. Our home group co-leaders have provided godly counsel to us while we walked through a big crisis of dependence on God to provide for us due to work difficulties. God has revealed his sustaining power to trust him through difficult times by using the local church to speak into our lives.

Being a part of the church is rewarding and beneficial, but it has been hard at times. Some of the difficulties we have had to work through include the stress of hosting small groups (broken items, running out of food for the group, scrambling when people cancel, etc.), trying to meet with people who are not dedicated to discipleship, not being sure how to volunteer, and disagreeing sometimes with leadership decisions. Although these things have been difficult to walk through, we have chosen to remain faithful to the local body and press in instead of leaving or giving up. We believe that God has rewarded this decision to stay engaged and faithful to one local body through our own growth in our faith and seeing others growing in theirs.

DISCUSSION

John 13:34-35

On Jesus' last night with his disciples, he gave them a "new command". And he told them the love he was displaying for them to live out was going to make them look different to the world. The outward metric for devotion to Jesus is in our love for one another.

- o *Who is Jesus referring to here as "one another"?*
- o *Does the church in our community/country look different from the unchurched? Explain.*
- o *If the command here is to love one another, how do we give ourselves the best opportunity to do this?*

Acts 2:42-47

Something amazing happened when the first believers lived out in fellowship the love Jesus commanded. The way they loved was contagious. This passage in Acts describes the scene in the early church. Today, home groups are a way we foster living intentionally in biblical community. As you gather together, you are continuing a practice essential to being a disciple of Christ.

- o *What does it look like to be devoted to the apostles' teachings as a community?*
- o *What are ways someone can be devoted to fellowship?*
- o *This passage describes how the first church lived life together day by day. How does living life together look in our culture?*
- o *What keeps us from living life with other believers?*
- o *What does it look like for the church to have "favor with all the people" (Acts 2:47)?*

Galatians 6:2

- o *What does it look like to bear one another's burdens? What examples in your life can you share that shows this?*
- o *If this is not something that comes naturally to you, how can you grow or practice living out bearing one another's burdens?*

DISCUSSION

1 Corinthians 12:12-30

The imagery here is simple yet profound. Peak performance of the human body requires its members to function the way they are meant to. Since we are commanded to love each other and live together, Paul describes our dwelling as a natural blending of different giftings. One is not more important than another. Rather they complement one another.

- o What are some of the different areas of giftings in the church?***
- o What does it mean to suffer if one member suffers? Or rejoice if one is honored?***
- o Our tradition is to gather together on a Sunday morning as a church. What roles help the body to gather and worship on a Sunday? Are these roles necessary for how we gather? What is your role?***

Hebrews 10:24-25

The author of Hebrews points out that our gathering is in preparation for the Day. This Day is the Day of Christ's return where he will make all things new. We do not approach this day alone. We need each other. We cannot neglect the help the body is to each of its members as we all approach Jesus' return.

- o What does it look like to stir up one another to love and good works?***
- o What happens to believers when they isolate themselves from gathering?***

The apostles' letters to the church were constantly pointing out ways in which they were falling short of living out Jesus' command of love. The first churches were not perfect, just like churches nowadays and all throughout history.

- o What causes us to expect church/home groups to function flawlessly? What unrealistic expectations do we need to set aside for the church?***
- o No institution or organization or gathering of people of any kind is perfect. So what makes the church, the body of believers, different from the world?***

CHALLENGE

This week, take on one or more of these challenges. This is not meant to be a finalized list of what it means to live out being a part of the church as a discipline. This list is to give you opportunities for practice. Find ways to practice the disciplines in order to make them habits. Spend some time reading through the challenges and commit to the one(s) the Holy Spirit draws you to.

- o Invite someone new to your small group so that they too can experience life with other believers.**

- o If you are not currently serving at church, find an area of ministry to be a part of to serve the body.**

- o Invite someone from church that you do not know well over to your house and greet to know them.**

- o College students are looking for a way to be connected to people in the church. Reach out to a group of college students and invite them to your home or home group.**

- o Reach out to an elder of the church and get to know your leadership on a personal level.**

- o Has anyone heard your testimony recently? Meet up with another home group member and share your stories with each other.**

- o The volunteers of the children's ministry work hard to pour into the kids at church. Pick a Sunday and bring them some goodies to show them appreciation.**

RESOURCES

Community

Brad House

The Connecting Church

Randy Frazee

When the Church Was a Family

Joseph H. Hellerman

Life in Community

Dustin Willis

Life Together

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

This image shows a full page of blank white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, providing a template for writing or drawing. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.