

We Are the Church - Community & Practice
November 24, 2024

As you join this discussion, let the Holy Spirit guide you. Share your thoughts and reflect on the message. Work through the guide by reading Scripture and answering a few questions.

Open Up Together:

- Where do you have community?

Read Together:

Matthew 4:17

From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent for the Kingdom of heaven has come near."

Matt 16:16-18

Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon, son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

Romans 12:3-5

For by the grace given me, I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

Romans 12:9-13

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality

Romans 13:8-10

Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not covet," and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

Romans 15:7

Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.

2 Cor 3:18

And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

Discuss Together:

- How does Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom of Heaven (Matt 4:17) shape our understanding of the church as a community? What implications does that have for how we live together as believers?
- What does it mean for the church to be an "alternative body politic" as described in Romans 13:2-5? How does this challenge or confirm your current perspective on the church's role worldwide?
- Paul writes in Romans 13:8-10 that love fulfills the law. How does this teaching connect to Jesus' summary of the greatest commandments? How can love guide the practices of the church today?
- How does the concept of "Christiformity," or being shaped like Christ, help us understand the purpose of spiritual practices? Why is transformation an essential part of the church?

- In what ways does the New Testament description of the church as a family (Brothers and sisters) challenge cultural norms about individuality and relationships? How can we live this out more authentically?
- If the church is a practicing community, what spiritual practices are the most important for building a solid and loving church?
- Have you experienced spiritual growth through one of the seven foundational practices (gospel, scripture, reconciliation, prayer, worship, generosity, service)? What helped you engage with it?

Pray Together:

Stephen spoke about the importance of practicing faith together; what can you do to be even more engaged in your group and the church?

How does this lead you to pray?