

You may be wondering how you can be part of the purpose of God right now.

- Listen to the Spirit. Tune in to what God is saying to you personally. It will be different for each of us, so don't assume you need to be the one who fills every need. That can overwhelm you and it probably isn't what God is calling you to do. First and foremost, listen for God's still small voice.

- When the Spirit speaks to you, do the next right thing. What is that? Only you will know. God has a way of prompting us. Sometimes it is just a sense that we need to call someone to encourage them. Sometimes we feel especially inspired when we read a scripture that we should act on what we just read. Let God direct you to act on the opportunities that come your way.

WRAP-UP

We are living in a unique time. But it is in such times that the church thrives because the Spirit empowers each of us to be the hands and feet of Jesus, carrying the Kingdom of Light into the darkness.

Memory Verse

7 Go and announce to them that the Kingdom of Heaven is near. 8 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cure those with leprosy, and cast out demons. Give as freely as you have received! - Matthew 10:7-8

PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: _____

Pray for your group members' needs: _____

Challenge- Here are a few things we all can do: Pray, check in on needy friends or neighbors, call, text or talk to friends and family on video chats. You can still be salt and light in days of social distancing. It's actually distance socializing and physical distancing you know :-)

“The Power of the Church Under Pressure” **“Practicing the Way” #4**

INTRODUCTION

This week we find ourselves in a stressful season, a time when the pressure is on us. And although it doesn't feel good, when pressure is applied there is an opportunity to see what we really have stored up inside of us. For some this may feel like a season of fear, but for God this is an opportunity to unleash the power of the church.

Ice Breaker (Optional—8 min)

How do you squeeze your toothpaste tube?

STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)

1. The Building is Closed, but the Church is Not

You've probably heard this from the pulpit – the church is not a building; the church is made up of the body of believers. Now we have a unique opportunity to experience the truth in that statement. In this time of global crisis, the church has a chance to step up and do the work of ministry.

Matthew 9:35-36 NLT - 35 Jesus traveled through all the towns and villages of that area, teaching in the synagogues and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom. And he healed every kind of disease and illness. 36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

In this passage the people were described as being like sheep without a shepherd; confused, helpless and in need. Up to this time Jesus had been traveling to towns and villages performing miracles of all kinds.

What do you think the disciples expected Jesus to do next? Today we are in a similar situation, people are confused, helpless and in need. What have you been expecting Jesus to do in response to the current crisis of Covid-19?

Matthew 9:37-38 NLT - 37 He said to his disciples, "The harvest is great, but the workers are few. 38 So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send more workers into his fields."

Surprisingly Jesus didn't perform a miracle and meet all the needs, instead He told the disciples to pray for "workers". They were being invited to be part of a Kingdom purpose. Maybe you thought being a "worker in God's field" only meant converting people.

What kind of work was going to be required to meet the needs of these people? What had Jesus modeled for his disciples, and what had they witnessed him doing up to now (look quickly through Matthew chapters 8 and 9)?

2. Go and Do

Matthew 10:1, 5-8 NLT - 1 Jesus called his twelve disciples together and gave them authority to cast out evil spirits and to heal every kind of disease and illness. ... 5 Jesus sent out the twelve apostles with these instructions: "Don't go to the Gentiles or the Samaritans, 6 but only to the people of Israel--God's lost sheep. 7 Go and announce to them that the Kingdom of Heaven is near. 8 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cure those with leprosy, and cast out demons. Give as freely as you have received!"

At this point Jesus transferred the authority for ministry into the hands of His disciples. This involved much more than telling people they need to be saved. They were to be the hands and feet of Jesus, doing the same things He had been doing all along.

What were the disciples asked to do that would demonstrate that the Kingdom of Heaven was near? How do you see yourself being used to address the needs of those around you today, both spiritually and practically?

3. Greater Things

*Pressure becomes the catalyst for greater things God wants to do.
- David Hutsko*

It was under pressure that the purpose for the church was revealed. God always intended for us to do the work of the Kingdom, but it was in a time of chaos and uncertainty that the purpose of the church came to light.

The current situation produces pressure differently for each of us. What do you find to be the most stressful or anxiety-inducing aspect of the current Covid-19 crisis? Have you found particular scripture verses that bring you comfort and peace?

Romans 15:13 NIV - 13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit

The peace of God is available to all. Depending on your particular situation you may find yourself classified as vulnerable due to age or underlying medical conditions. Rest assured, that even those who are vulnerable are still valuable in God's Kingdom. You are filled and empowered by the Holy Spirit Himself.

John 14:12 NLT - 12 "I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father.

Jesus promise is that those who believe will do "greater" works than He did. The word for greater here (*megas*) means numerous or more abundant. All believers have been given authority to do the work of the Kingdom and together the church will multiply Jesus's ministry.

How have you witnessed "the Church" (not just New Life but all believers) responding to do ministry during this time of crisis?