

world's response?

- In Ephesians 4 (our memory verse), Paul urges believers to make every effort to be united in the Spirit. That means doing the hard work of living in unity. What does he urge us to do to accomplish this?
- What do you find tearing away the unity that should exist in The Church today? What do you think this will do to the response of the world to Jesus' message that God is love and He loves them? Are there any actions we can take that will help mend the division we see forming in "The Church"?

### *What is the Mission of The Church?*

So, what is the mission or calling of The Church; why do we exist? There are several reasons actually. God placed you in a body of believers so that your unique spiritual gifts and callings can be expressed in a way that will makes disciples, teach, show compassion, work for justice and represent the Kingdom of God to the world. Together we fulfill the mission of God for His church.

*Matthew 28:18-20 NLT - 18 Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. 19 Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. 20 Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*

Mathew 28:18-20 is often referred to as, "The Great Commission." But it is not only an individual assignment, it is also the collective assignment of The Church. How do you see The Church fulfilling this mission and what part do you have individually in doing so?

## **"The Church"**

*Deeply Rooted week #6*

### **INTRODUCTION**

It's likely that when you hear the term "The Church" your first thought is of a building. But "The Church" is not a place, and it isn't even limited to a local group you meet with weekly. In fact, "The Church" is a much more universal term and encompasses anyone in the family of God. So, if you follow Jesus, you are part of The Church. But what does that mean about the way you live your life, how you relate to others and the mission you've been called to as part of The Church?

### **FOUNDATIONAL TRUTH – THE CHURCH**

We believe in the Church, the community that confesses Jesus Christ as Lord, the covenant people of God made new in Christ, the Body of Christ called together by the Holy Spirit through the Word. God calls the Church to express its life in the unity and fellowship of the Spirit; in worship through the preaching of the Word, observance of the sacraments, and ministry in His name; by obedience to Christ, holy living, and mutual accountability. The mission of the Church in the world is to share in the redemptive and reconciling ministry of Christ in the power of the Spirit. The Church fulfills its mission by making disciples through evangelism, education, showing compassion, working for justice, and bearing witness to the kingdom of God. The Church is a historical reality that organizes itself in culturally conditioned forms, exists both as local congregations and as a universal body, and also sets apart persons called of God for specific ministries. God calls the Church to live under His rule in anticipation of the consummation at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

### **MEMORY VERSES**

*Ephesians 4:1-6 NLT - 1 Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God. 2 Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. 3 Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. 4 For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. 5 There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 and one God and Father, who is over all and in all and living through all.*

## MEDITATE ON GOD'S WORD

We read the bible to be formed and transformed, not merely to gather information. Reading of the scripture in this way requires unhurried time and an open heart. Only God's Spirit can fully interpret God's Word, and as you meditate on His Word in *the memory verse* above the Spirit has the opportunity to give you personal insight. We can break it down into four parts:

- reading - This is a reflective, gently paced, one-bite-at-a-time kind of reading. As you read, ask God, "What are you saying to me just now?"
- meditate- Let's be clear, this is not an Eastern religious practice, it is our taking time to reflect on the passage and repeat it in our minds, and throughout our day. Speak it out loud, find ways to incorporate it into the thoughts, feelings and experiences of your life
- pray – a natural product of meditating on God's Word will be to communicate with God. As we find God addressing us directly through His Word, our hearts cry out to Him. Perhaps we feel joy and gratitude, or repentance and pain. But as God's Word penetrates our lives, our response will be heartfelt prayer.
- Rest – as a result of spending time reading, meditating and praying through God's Word, you can come to a place of sabbath-time rest in God's presence. Simply receive from Him by being with and near to Him.

*Share with the group what God has shown you in this week's passage.*

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS –

### *What is The Church?*

*Acts 2:42-44 NLT - 42 All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer. 43 A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. 44 And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had.*

After Jesus' disciples received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, Peter preached the Good News of Jesus to the crowds in Jerusalem and many were saved. They were the beginnings of what we call "The Church". But they were not part of the church simply because they repeated a prayer. It was because of their faith which was evident in the transformation of their lives. This passage in Acts shows us how the believers first gathered together as a community and where their priorities were.

*As you read this passage, what characterized the early church's activities, their attitudes and their actions? Which do you still find in the church today and which seems to be missing or at least not easily found?*

### *How Do We Live as God's Family?*

*John 17:19-21 NLT - 19 And I give myself as a holy sacrifice for them so they can be made holy by your truth. 20 "I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. 21 I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one--as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me.*

In John chapter 17 Jesus prays specifically for His followers. This includes not only the disciples who were with Him at the time, but all who would believe. In other words, The Church. In his letter to the Ephesians Paul echoes this same plea.

- What would you say is at the heart of Jesus' prayer?
- When Jesus' disciples experience true unity, what is the