

### 3. Embracing the Lifestyle of Jesus

*Matthew 16:24-25 NLT - 24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross, and follow me. 25 If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it."*

Many of us have an internal struggle when it comes to following Jesus. Our spirit says "yes" but our flesh says "no." It seems overwhelming. Jesus said to follow Him means turn from selfish ways and take up our cross. We must care more about others than we do about ourselves. Fasting is a literal way to deny yourself, and prayer is a good way to connect to Jesus so that you can follow.

*New Life will be observing 21 days of prayer and fasting starting Monday, January 10. We invite you to join us as we embrace the lifestyle of Jesus so that we can be changed into a church that is Tov. If you choose to fast, decide 1- what you are giving up, 2 what you are filling yourself with instead, and 3 how you will seek to encounter God during this time of fasting.*

#### WRAP-UP

God is good and when the church reflects God's goodness it is also good. But it takes all of us to be the "good" God had in mind. The church is the Body of Christ, called to be royal priests and a holy nation, but we must put away our selfish ways and embrace the lifestyle of Jesus if we are to bring hope and healing to a broken world.

#### MEMORY VERSE

*1 Peter 2:9 NLT - 9 But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.*

#### PRAYER (20 MIN)

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

*Challenge- Join New Life in 21 days of prayer and fasting. Text "prayer" to 805 979-2003 to receive weekly prayer prompts. Or join us in the Worship Center at 9 am Thursdays or 6 pm Mondays in the Student Center for a time of corporate prayer.*

## "When the Church is Tov {good}"

### Tov 1

#### INTRODUCTION

God is good..... I know, we've been conditioned to reply to that phrase with "all the time". But what do we really think about the "goodness" of God? What does it mean that God is good? In Hebrew the word *tov* is translated as good. In the broadest sense *Tov* is very well done, fulfilling its purpose, morally right, pleasant, excellent. God not only defines what is "good", He embodies it by His very nature. In the creation story in Genesis, God pronounces the things He makes to be "good" because not only is God good, but He also creates good things. Genesis also tells us what is evil (*ra'*). *Spoiler alert- given the choice, mankind chose evil, and sin entered the world.* Fast forward to the New Testament; Jesus was born both fully God and fully human. He is the prototype of what humanity was designed to look like. He is the image of God, and He is good. As part of "The Church" we are collectively called the Body of Christ. We represent Jesus' physical presence here on earth. And when the Church is functioning the way God intended, it is *Tov*.

#### Ice Breaker

What are some of the things in your life that are *Tov*?

#### Key Passage

*1 Peter 2:9 NLT - 9 But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.*

#### STUDY QUESTIONS

##### 1. When the Church is Good

In the Bible, the word church does not refer to a building. In the New Testament it is the Greek word *ekklesia* and can be defined as an

assembly of believers gathered to worship. That means that we, the church, is seen collectively, as one.

*1 Peter 2:9 NLT - 9 But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.*

In our key verse, Peter is contrasting the church and the world. He says you (church) aren't like that (the world.) Notice when Peter describes what the church is, he is describing the plural (chosen people, royal priests, holy nation), and not addressing us as individuals. Because the church is meant to be about "we" not "me".

*In the Old Testament the priests represented God to the people by announcing God's blessings on them. The priests also interceded for the people by offering sacrifices to God on their behalf. What can we do as royal priests to be representatives of the people before God and intercede for them? And what does Peter say that people will see because of us living in these roles God has called us into?*

*To be holy means to be set apart, separated for God's purposes. We should be shaped by Jesus and not conformed to the culture around us. What were some of the ways Jesus lived differently from those around him and how has that shaped the way we should live?*

We are the church, and the church is the body of Christ.

*Ephesians 4:15-16 NLT - 15 Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. 16 He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.*

*Ephesians 4 gives us a picture of what the church looks like when it is *Tov* and functioning the way God intended. What do you think it means for Christ to be the head over his body (the church)? What are the main activities referred to in this passage? Paul says each part has a special work, but what is the result of doing that special work (v 16)? Can you identify your special part in the Body of Christ?*

## 2. When the Church isn't Good

If the church is good when we reflect God, then it is not good when we lose our way and become a reflection of anything else.

*Romans 12:2 NLT - 2 Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.*

*We are constantly being shaped by what we expose ourselves to. The more time you spend with something the more you are influenced. Paul tells the Romans that God has a good and perfect will for you. But before we can learn God's will for us, what does Paul say has to happen? What would you say are the strongest sources of influence on your way of thinking? Is that what you devote most of your time to?*

*2 Corinthians 5:20 NLT - 20 So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!"*

The world needs hope and healing. As the Body of Christ, we can offer that hope. But a number of things can derail us from that mission. God wants to forgive sins and restore relationships. That means seeing people for who they are, "made in God's image", not as enemies who don't share our viewpoints. We are living in a deeply divided world, but God's desire is to mend rather than destroy the broken.

*Which of these are most likely to deter you from God's mission to be an ambassador of reconciliation? What is needed to counter each of these obstacles?*

- *lack of caring for the other guy*
- *contention over different viewpoints on an issue*
- *fear for your own physical or emotional safety*
- *doubts over your own ability to share God's message*
- *giving up on anything ever changing*

Paul says God is making his appeal through us. But if we allow obstacles to prevent us from that mission, we may be a source of hurt and pain rather than hope and healing. We need to change our way of thinking, ask God to give us His eyes and His heart for the lost and trust that God has the power to overcome our own inadequacies if we are willing to be used by him.