



What is a Church? (February 13th, 2022)

PREPARATION

- Familiarize yourself with this Study Guide.
- You can watch the sermon online [HERE](#).
- Spend some time in prayer before your group gathers.
- You **always** have the option to use some or all the questions and/or prepare your own questions.

Welcome: *Icebreaker – What would you say is your overall experience with the church?*

Study Context: According to the book of Acts, the apostle Paul was an important fixture at the church of Ephesus. At first, Paul reaches the church at Ephesus in Acts 18:18-23 and ministers in the area by leaving some representative associates behind and by reasoning with the Jews in the synagogues. The Ephesians wanted him to stay longer, but Paul's return would not occur until his 3rd missionary journey. Paul returns to Ephesus for a 3-year stay, one of the longest stays in Paul's ministry recorded in Acts. Over those 3 years, Paul had become closely acquainted with the church at Ephesus. This can be seen in Paul's powerful ministry in the area and the emotional letter written to the leaders at Ephesus recorded in Acts 19-20! One of the main issues Paul addresses is when a silversmith in the area is concerned about Christianity due to a decline in the "Artemis Idol-making" business. ***What is important to remember is that Paul had deep relational ties to the church at Ephesus and was one of the churches he was deeply invested in.*** With this in mind, we know that the letter to the Ephesians is penned by Paul (see vv. 1:1, 3:1). However, some of the earliest manuscripts of the New Testament letter do not actually include the phrase "in Ephesus" in the greeting (see v. 1:1). *This begs the question whether the letter was meant to be delivered to the Ephesians or if Paul had someone else in mind?* As it turns out, many scholars conclude that this letter uses Paul's close relationship with the church at Ephesus to represent his voice to the wider region of churches in the area. How does one come to this conclusion of a "circular letter"? The book of Ephesians informs us that Paul sent a man named Tychicus who was also meant to continue to Colossians with a very similar message (Col. 4:7; Eph. 6:21-22). Travelling with Tychicus was a man named Onesimus, an important character in Philemon. Therefore, the assumption is that the true destination of Tychicus and Onesimus was Colossae and on the way, they would read circular letters like the one "to Ephesus" acting as a global word of encouragement to the Gentiles grafted into the church! As you engage with this short segment of Ephesians 2, keep in mind Paul's deep love for each church he comes by and the way that each local church plays an important role in the overall body of Christ!

What's Going on This Week

This week, Pastor Danny Strange brought us into the first week of our series titled *A Church that Pleases God*. Danny directed our attention to *Ephesians 2:19-22* to challenge our basic definition of what a church is supposed to be. As you wrestle with this short passage this week, evaluate your community to see whether you gather (a) under the authority of Jesus, (b) for the glory and pleasure of Jesus, (c) according to the will of Jesus, and (d) to be a place on Earth where Jesus dwells with his people!

"Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever." – The Westminster Shorter Catechism Question 1



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GROUP MEETING (60 – 90 minutes)

Worship (10 – 15 minutes)

Take time with your group and prepare your hearts as you enter into the presence of God for this meeting.

Option 1: Worship Music Have someone share their favorite song. You can find it online, play it, and even sing along with your group! Have them explain why the lyrics have impacted them!	Option 2: Lectio Divina 1 Peter 2:5 Allow scripture to speak to you. How do you see yourself as a part of the spiritual house that is the Holy priesthood? What do spiritual sacrifices look like in your life?	Option 3: Authority of Jesus 2 Corinthians 5:1-10 What does it mean to submit yourself to the glory, pleasure, will, and authority of Jesus. Share with your group after meditating on these concepts!
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Word #1: Begin by reflecting on the gospel of Jesus in your life (15 – 25 minutes)

Primary Text: Ephesians 2 – This important chapter of Ephesians is a great summary of the gospel and its impacts on a personal and communal level. This gospel of Jesus Christ brings us from a state of death and exile to a state of vibrant life and belonging. This is all done by the grace of God manifesting itself through the faith in us necessary for salvation! **As you read this powerful gospel presentation, what are some of the themes that stand out to you the most? As we begin this series on the church, how do you believe the Lord may be challenging you according to these passages?**

Host Tip: This would be a great time to let your group make observations about the prominent gospel presentation found in Ephesians 2. As a start to this series, allow message of the gospel to unpack where everyone is at in their spiritual formation.

Word #2: Unpack a scriptural definition of Church (15 – 25 minutes)

Primary Texts: Focus on Ephesians 2:19-22 (see Ephesians 1:22-23; Matthew 16:18-19; Colossians 1:15-18)
– In this series, we will be unpacking the core definition of what the church is and how we ought to act as a local church body to please the Lord. This key passage functions as a great preliminary definition as it explains that the church is supposed to be a place in which Christians gather (a) under the authority of Jesus, (b) for the glory and pleasure of Jesus, (c) according to the will of Jesus, and (d) to be a place where Jesus dwells with his people! **As we think about the church, what types of personal or cultural definitions come to your mind? How does this short passage (or the categories mentioned) challenge or strengthen your previous thinking about what the church is supposed to be? How can your group collectively commit to submit to Jesus / submit to each other as part of a church in this season?**

Host Tip: This would be a great time to discover what everyone thinks about the church. Allow each member to take stock of their own thoughts and draw from this passage to test their own individual thoughts to the writings of the apostle Paul! Then, ask your group to commit to engaging with the church in this season!



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Witness (20 – 25 minutes)

- Pray that the Holy Spirit would deepen the roots of the Gospel in our lives.
- Pray that the Holy Spirit would open our eyes to the importance of His church.
- Pray for any individual prayer request that comes up in your group.
- **Pray for the entire group and how they may be able to participate in future group meetings.**
- **Pray for an interaction with someone who you can invite into your next group meeting!**
- **Pray for God's hand in the multiplication and revival of your group!**

Stay up to date with our Prayer Ministry by signing up to be an intercessor online at 3Crosses.org/pray!

Throughout the Week

-Follow up between group members: Have each member of the group pick one other group member to follow up with about how they are growing in their faith as they learn to keep in step with the Holy Spirit

-Baptism: Are you a Christian and have not yet been baptized? Have you had any children that need to be spiritually dedicate to the church? 3Crosses will be hosting our next celebrate New Life Sunday on February 27th, 2022! Sign-up to be baptized at 3Crosses.org/baptism

-Membership: Do you want to become a member of 3Crosses Church? Do you want to come and hear about what we are all about at 3Crosses? We would love for you to sign-up for 3Crosses 101 membership course at 3Crosses.org/membership

-Join relief efforts locally and around the world: Looking to contribute to what is going on both locally and around the world? Visit our website and join one of the [relief efforts](#) being made available through our church partners or sponsor an [indigenous missionary](#)!

-Life Groups 2022: For more information about joining a group, hosting a group, or general inquiries, contact AJ at avanegas@3crosses.org or Carmela at carmela@3crosses.org