



S T A R T

FOUNDATIONS

OF

THE

CHRISTIAN

FAITH



START

WEEK FIVE: GOD'S PEOPLE

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Review (15 minutes):

Last week, you learned about your role in God's mission to take the gospel to everyone. You also began to consider how God has gifted you to serve the church and carry out the mission.

Did you have the chance to teach anyone what you learned? How did it go?

What do you think God is calling you to do as a next step from last week's study?

Learn (20 minutes):

Most people in our culture have had some sort of personal experience related to the Church. Thus, the concept of church can bring with it a lot of baggage depending on your story. To some, church can be a place of refuge, support, community, and love. To others, church brings back memories of pain and hypocrisy. This session is designed to survey the Bible to understand the purpose and function of the Church and your role in it.

Write down three words that you think describes what a Christian church is.

Key Concept

The Church has an important function in God's story of redemption and restoration. As the world waits for the final restoration, the Church bears witness to Jesus by proclaiming and demonstrating the gospel.

1. *The Church **witnesses** by proclaiming the gospel together:*

Read 1 Peter 2:9-10

“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”

What does 1 Peter 2:9-10 say about the nature of the Church?

What does it say about what the Church is to do?

One way the local church proclaims the “excellencies of God” is by gathering to worship together. Singing, preaching, communion, baptism, and personal stories are ways the Church proclaims God's greatness to one another when it gathers each week. Non-Christians are invited into this gathering so they can encounter the gospel message and evaluate it for themselves. This is why the weekly worship gathering is so important. The Church also proclaims the gospel as it is scattered throughout its local region. Christians spend most of their time away from one another in homes, offices, and campuses. These spaces we live in give us opportunities to proclaim the gospel message to those who don't know it yet.

WITNESS IN THE BIBLE

Very early on, the laws of the Hebrew Scriptures showed a deep concern for truth and accuracy. Prophets had to be 100 percent in their predictions, legal claims were required to have two witnesses to be considered valid, lying was outlawed in the Ten Commandments, and false teaching is strongly combatted.

Thus, when the New Testament writers claim to be “witnesses” to Jesus, his miracles, and his resurrection, they are invoking a very strong concept. The disciples and the early Christians did not view their role as builders or creators, they viewed their role as messengers: news-carriers that had something important to pass along that would change everything.

2. The Church **witnesses** by demonstrating the gospel to one another.

Read each of the following passages from scripture and write down what they have to say about how church members interact with one another.

Read John 13:34-35

Read Acts 2:42-47

Read 1 John 4:18-21

Key Concept

Jesus' love for us was self-sacrificial and covenantal. Our love for one another must model the love of Jesus for his Church.

Covenantal love means that we make lifelong commitments to those in the Church. We express that commitment to one another through church membership. A group of Christians covenanted together on the same mission affirms the unity Christ calls us towards in John 17. When functioning like it should, members won't be afraid to have hard conversations with each other. A church will confront sin together, but seek to bring one another back to Christ's redemption and restoration. Many get disillusioned with the church because they see sin in it. The Church was not designed to be a collection of perfect people, but rather a place where sinners go to get help and be pointed back to Christ's forgiveness.

Have you become a member of The Summit Church?

If not, consider going through the process of joining with others in your group. Visit summitrdu.com/startingpoint to begin the process.

Do you have a role where you can serve others in The Summit Church?

3. *The Church **witnesses** by demonstrating the gospel to the world.*

Christians show their faith in the redemption and restoration of God by showing small signs of it to their friends and neighbors who aren't believers. We will talk about this more in the last chapter, but the Church displays confidence in God's plan by working to make the world look more like what it will when God fixes everything. That means working for justice and providing help for those in our community who need it. Christians do not wait for someone to join the church to show love to them, because we believe that Christ loved us long before we gave any consideration to following him.

What opportunities are out there for your small group to demonstrate the gospel through serving others?

Practice (30 minutes):

Divide up into smaller groups and open your Bibles to Ephesians 4. Do the REAP method (from week 2) on this passage. What should a church be like based on this passage?

Pick out one verse from this passage that you are going to try to embody next time you meet with Christians. Make plans to show the traits and follow the commands mentioned in your verse. Use this verse as a personal theme for when you are in church or in small group and interacting with others.

Teach:

Who will you teach "the Church" lesson to this week?

Consider finding someone this week who has an unfavorable view of church. Try to identify how they came to these conclusions. See if you can expand their view of what church is designed to be.

I'll try: Yes No

Wrap-up:

Pray for The Summit Church. Pray for other churches in your location, that they would fulfill the design that God has for church. Pray for those in your area that have been burned by past experiences in the Church. Ask God to forgive local churches for not being better representations for Christ's glory. Ask God to empower us, by his Spirit, to live Christ-centered lives and be focused on Christ's mission.