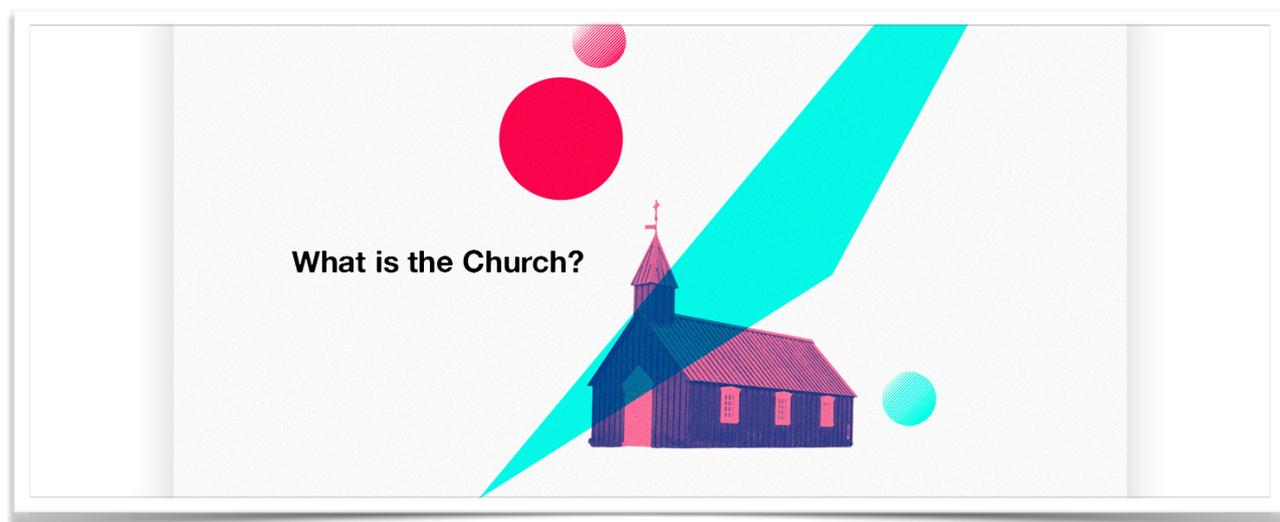


GBC Discipleship RESOURCE



What is the Church? Aug 22-27, 2022

Week 05 | The Living Temple (1 Peter 2:4-10)

For a brief overview of why (and how) to engage in each of these practices, you can read the Guideline For Growing on our website.

<https://www.gyneaabaptist.org.au/growing/pages/guideline-for-growing>

What is a Discipleship Menu?

A discipleship menu is a selection of discipleship activities to engage in to continue the conversation that begins on Sunday throughout the week. The aim is to extend our interaction as a community of faith around activities that help us follow Jesus every single day. The activities vary from week to week (though there are some standard activities) and you are encouraged to do as many as you find helpful (like a menu; you don't need to eat everything on it!). Do them on your own (God and you), with a couple of friends (you and a few), or in a Life Group (you and a crew). The important thing is to do a few!

NOTE: This is the final discipleship menu for a little while as we re-evaluate how best to utilise them.

GBC Sermon Podcast and The Big 3 Podcast

Don't forget you can review this week's sermon on the GBC Sermon Podcast. The sermon is usually uploaded by Monday afternoon.

You can also listen in to the GBC Big Three podcast; a weekly podcast where we sit down and continue the conversation by engaging in three big questions raised by the congregation about the sermon. The GBC Big Three comes out on Wednesdays.

NOTE: The Big Three is on a brief hiatus during this series but will be back with our next series.

Overview

One of the consequences of the pandemic has been that many people have begun asking probing questions about their values, priorities, assumptions, direction, and practices. The so-called "Great Resignation" appears to be a result of this 'deconstruction'. Many believers are deconstructing their ecclesiology (what we believe about the church); asking questions about why we do what we do, what our place is in the community of faith, how we can effectively minister in a changed world, etc. Asking these questions is important and while the answers may take time to become clear we believe that the images used in Scripture to describe the people of God will provide some guidance for us. In this series we will be exploring several images used to describe the church. Each of these images are partial; they don't say everything that can or should be said about the church.

This week's image is the living temple.

In 1 Peter 2:4-10 Peter uses a relatively rare image to describe the people of God; as a living temple. What becomes clear, however, is that this image is one that comes from deep reflection on the person of Jesus and the teaching of the Old Testament. Peter quotes three passages from the Old Testament and alludes to two others. Three of these are scripturally important; reflected upon by other biblical authors. These additional passages provide us with a context for Peter's use of this image.

The first of these passages is Isaiah 28:16. In this chapter the prophet is challenging the leaders of Jerusalem to trust the Lord rather than their own schemes and alliances. In the midst of a city that will not trust the Lord the prophet declares that the Lord himself will build a refuge as a testimony against them in Zion (another name for Jerusalem that symbolises the Lord's plans to restore the world).

The second text is from Psalm 118:22; a passage that Jesus uses to describe his rejection and his selection by the Lord to be the cornerstone of his plans. Peter follows up with another reference in Isaiah. Isaiah 8:14 describes the Lord as a stumbling block. This is not to be understood as the Lord's motivation but, rather, is the outcome. The people, bent on going their own way and with their eyes fixed on their way, will trip and stumble over the Lord who stands in their way.

These passages suggest that the church, built on Jesus, shares in his rejection and his purpose – to be a testimony and a witness to the world to find their refuge in God (over which the world may stumble and fall).

This raises an important question: How is the church, filled with imperfect people, supposed to do this!? The last two passages that Peter alludes to provide an answer to this gap between the ideal and our reality.

The first is Exodus 19:4-6 where the Lord enters into a covenant (a formal relationship) with Israel and describes them as his treasured possession, holy nation, and kingdom of priests and invites them to be faithful. We can often

read this passage conditionally; as if our obedience is the condition for being God's people. However, the reality is that our faithfulness is the condition of fulfilling our identity, not the condition for identity. This is like a husband who seeks to be faithful to his vows to his wife. He is her husband; that is not up for grabs. However, faithfulness fulfills his role as a husband.

The second is a reference to Hosea where the prophet is called to perform a sign action; a lived out message. In this case, Hosea is commanded to marry a prostitute; a woman who is never going to be faithful. This doomed relationship is then described as an analogy for Israel's relationship with the Lord; they were never going to be faithful. The description of being made the people of God is likely a reflection on Hosea 2:19-20 where the Lord promises to give Israel all they lack – righteousness, justice, love, compassion, and faithfulness.

By using these passages Peter reminds his readers that the work of the church is less about what the church does and more about what the Lord has done and is doing in their midst. Radically transformed lives lie at the heart of the Lord's purposes achieved in Christ and continued in the church as empowered by the Spirit.

DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITIES

Passages to Read

We believe that the Word of God is living and active and that reading and reflecting on it is one way we encounter God. As you read we encourage people to ask a set of simple questions: What stands out to you? What questions do you have? What is the invitation of God to you? Who can you tell?

This week's readings are those that we looked at on Sunday.

Isaiah 28

Isaiah 2:1-5 (and Micah 4:1-5)

Psalms 118

Psalms 2

Isaiah 8:11-17

Exodus 19:4-6

Hosea 1-2; 14:1-9

Questions to Reflect on

These questions can be used as the basis of a small group discussion or as journal questions. As with the rest of this menu, use the questions that are most useful for you or your crew.

1. How does the idea of the church being a stumbling block – standing between the world and their reckless path – shape your view of the church?
2. We share in Christ's rejection. How has this participation affected you?
3. How have the past few years affected your view of 'the church'? In what ways have you been dissatisfied? In what ways have you been encouraged?
4. If changed lives are the baseline for the church, how does that shape what we do and how we do it?
5. What stood out to you most about the passages that Peter uses in this passage?

A Prayer to Pray

Pray for our unity as a community of faith that we might be focused on the Lord's purposes in the world first and foremost.

40 Days of Prayer

We are also encouraging our community of faith to pray for the 40 days prior to our Day of Discernment on Saturday September 17. Below are the prayer points and scriptures for this week (Week Three: August 22-28)

Prayer Focus	Scriptural Reflection	Additional, Optional Activities
<i>This week our focus is our vision, mission and values as a community of faith. We believe that these express part of what God is inviting us to in the future.</i>	<i>August 22-28 (Days 15-21)</i>	
That we would see lives changed by Jesus.	2 Corinthians 3:18	
That we would invite everyone to follow Jesus everywhere we go and in everything we do.	Matthew 28:18-20	List three people you would love to see come to faith in Jesus. Pray for them.
That we would be a community characterised by big-hearted generosity.	2 Corinthians 9:6	
That we would be a trust-worthy community; consistent, safe, and non-anxious.	1 Peter 2:12	
That we would be on-purpose in all we do; creating margin to join with what God is doing.	1 Corinthians 10:31	Fast for part of the day and use that time to pray.
That we would be life-long learners; committed to curiosity and humility.	Psalms 25:4	
That we would be others-focused; seeking to serve others and put them first.	Philippians 2:3-4	