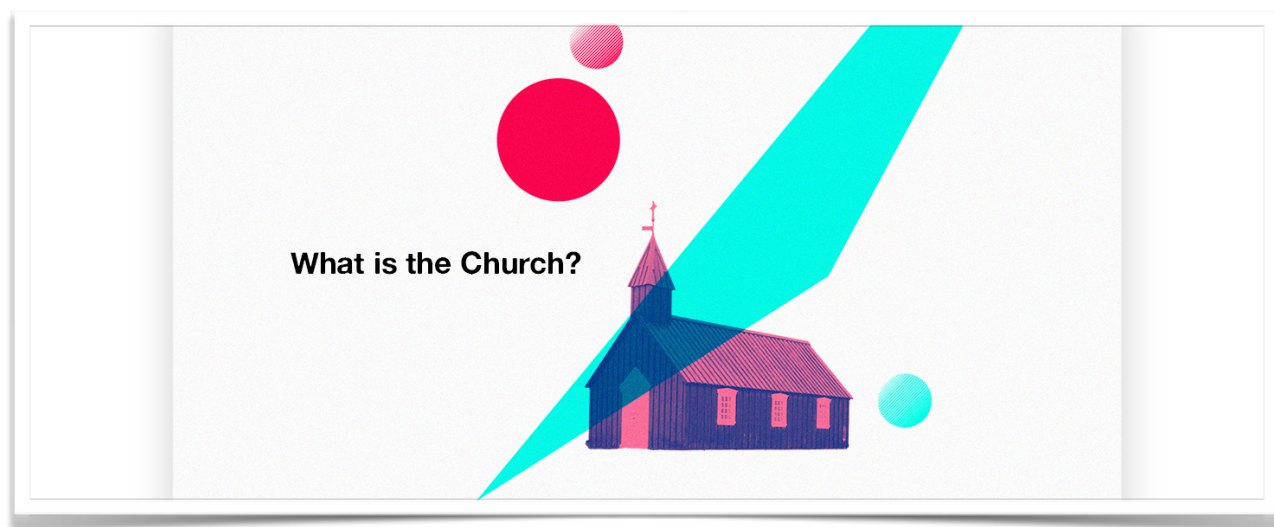


GBC Discipleship RESOURCE



What is the Church? Jul 31-Aug 6, 2022

Week 01 | The Bride of Christ (Rev 19:6-9)

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.gymeabaptist.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!

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.

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 bride of Christ.

The relationship between the Lord and his people is frequently compared to the relationship between a husband and a wife. In the Old Testament the

focus of this image is on the unfaithfulness of Israel in that relationship and the faithfulness of the Lord despite the failures of his people (see Hosea 1-3). In the New Testament the focus of the image is on the impending wedding between the Lord Jesus and his people.

It is useful to recognise that weddings in a first century Jewish context were different than our modern weddings. A Jewish couple would be betrothed to one another in a special ceremony before entering a period of preparation before the wedding. The bride and groom would have specific tasks to perform in preparation. For example, the groom might build the rooms they would live in and the bride would make her wedding clothes.

Much of the New Testament imagery of the church as the bride of Christ has to do with the period between the betrothal and the wedding. As such, this metaphor speaks to the preparation of the people of God as those who already belong to Christ.

There are three areas we can consider in relation to our preparation as the people of God. First, to clothe ourselves with the character of Christ (Colossians 3:12). Second, to be faithful to our Lord and not allow our eyes to wander to others (Hebrews 12:1-3). Third, to be watchful (Matthew 25:1-13).

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 examples of the marriage image. Consider how they speak to our preparation as God's people: clothed in Christ's character, faithfulness, and watchfulness.

- Hosea 1-3
- Matthew 9:14-17
- Matthew 25:1-13
- John 3:22-30
- 2 Corinthians 11:1-4
- Revelation 19:6-9
- Revelation 21:1-6

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. Applying a singular image (the bride) to a community (the church) is interesting. What strengths does this image have to describe our corporate life together? In what ways is it partial?
2. How can we remain watchful for Christ's return?
3. What challenges are there for us to remain faithful to Christ?
4. In what ways can we be clothing ourselves in preparation for life with Christ?

A Prayer to Pray

Pray that we might – as individuals and a community – be prepared as the bride of Christ; clothed in his character, faithful to his name, and watchful for his return.