

GBC Discipleship RESOURCE



What is the Church? Aug 7-13, 2022

Week 03 | The Body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-16)

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!

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 body of Christ.

The body of Christ is one of the more fully developed images for the church in the New Testament. This image emphasises the unity of the people of God

despite all the variety and diversity. This unity is a functional one. In other words, the unity allows the proper functioning of the church. It's like a car. Made up of many, many parts, all the parts must be united together in order for the car to fulfil its function.

And the function of the church is to be the body of Christ. We are to continue the work of Jesus on earth (John 20:21). We might summarise the work of Jesus as the outworking of God's love in restoring and renewing all things. It is striking that in the three key "body" passages (Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4) the discussion of unity (and gifts) is closely followed by a discussion of the importance of love.

The "instructions for Christian living" that are included in these passages can be seen as a description of a life of love; the expression of the body of Christ in the world. There are several areas of overlap between these descriptions, but one stand out is the importance of forgiveness (Romans 12:19a; 1 Corinthians 13:5d; Ephesians 4:32). And Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to his disciples saying, "This is my body." After supper he did the same with the cup saying, "This is the cup of the new covenant in my blood." While the use of the body image is different than what we find in the epistles, it is striking that Jesus would describe his body in relation to reconciliation and forgiveness.

Nothing threatens our unity or witness quite as much as a spirit of unforgiveness. Likewise, nothing expresses our unity as the body of Christ quite as much as forgiveness extended to one another.

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 focus on the body imagery and our purpose as Christ's body. Note the inclusion of love and/or forgiveness.

- John 20:19-24
- Romans 12:3-21
- 1 Corinthians 12:12-13:13
- Ephesians 4:1-32b

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. In the "body" passages we often focus on the spiritual gifts. How does the emphasis on unity shape our approach to gifts (and diversity more generally)?
2. What are some of the things that create disunity in the body?
3. While Jesus' work includes much more than forgiveness (e.g., victory over death) we often summarise his work in this way. How is forgiveness a central practice for his body?
4. What makes forgiveness difficult?
5. Is there someone you need to forgive? What is your next faithful step?

A Prayer to Pray

Pray for our unity as a community of faith and for a willingness to forgive one another.

40 Days of Prayer

Pray for our unity as a community of faith and for a willingness to forgive one another.

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.

Prayer Focus	Scriptural Reflection	Additional, Optional Activities
<i>In this first week we pray for the general preparation for the Day of Discernment.</i>	<i>August 8-14 (Days 1-7)</i>	<i>Read (or re-read) "The Long Read" to remind yourself of what we are seeking to do and how we have prepared for this third stage. (Access The Long Read on GBC Links home page or contact GBC Office to receive it via email).</i>
Invite the Holy Spirit to continue to lead us in this process of discernment.	John 14:26	
Give thanks for what God has done in and through this community of faith in the past.	Psalms 105:1	Write down three ways that God has used this community of faith to impact your faith.
Ask the Holy Spirit to unify us as we listen to his promptings.	Psalms 133:1	
Intercede for the leadership as they prepare for the Day of Discernment.	Ephesians 6:18	
The ability to listen to each other with humility and grace.	Luke 6:31	Fast for part of the day and use that time to pray. We will do this each Friday.
That those who will be attending the Day of Discernment (Sept. 17) will be sensitive to the Spirit's leading.	Nehemiah 8:1	
Pray that the result of this process would lead to lives changed by Jesus.	John 20:21	