



# WHY CHURCH?

## Week One

### Opening Prayer

God, thank you for being with us here today and for allowing us to come together as a group. We want to hear from you; help our time together lead to meaningful transformation. Amen.

### Talk It Over

Church is not intended to be a place we go, but rather a collection of all people following Jesus learning to live and love the Jesus way. This series, "Why Church?", is intended to help us better understand why the church is important and relevant to us today.

- What are some common motivating factors as to why people go to church?
- Following up to the last question, if you go to church services regularly, what keeps you going back?
- If you asked some of your non-church attending friends what keeps them from going to church, what sort of answers do you think you'd get? *The goal of this question is not to judge people's reasoning, we are just exploring the idea of why some people don't seem to see the value of church.*

***This guide is broken up in two parts. We will start by looking at some specific reasons the church exists on the front end and then we will look at one of those specific reasons in greater detail the second half of our time together. (A note for all leaders: This guide is longer than most guides due to its two parts. As always, be sure to check out the "How To Use this Discussion Guide" for tips on how to best utilize your time.)***

### **PART ONE — Three specific reasons the church exists:**

#### **1. Upward: The church exists for the glory of God.**

##### **Read Colossians 3:23**

We are intended to be a people group who point to Jesus in the best way possible. Regardless of the details of our life, we are made to bring glory to God.

- Tell us about a time you saw a believer or a group of believers live in such a way that they brought glory to God.
- Looking at your normal, everyday life, what are some ways you could or you do bring glory to God?

#### **2. Inward: The Training of the saints.**

##### **Read Ephesians 4:11-16**

The church is intended to be a family that builds up believers or helps one another grow. The church is intended to be a group that helps others know they are chosen and loved.

*(Content continued on the next page.)*

- Does this match your previous understanding of why the church exists? Why or why not?
- In a few sentences, how could you say the church has helped you grow?

### **3. Outward: Hope of the world.**

#### **Read Matthew 28:18-20**

We are made to be the visible expression of God's hope in the world. God wants his followers to reveal who he is; God desires for the church to tell the world about his love and grace.

- Tell us about a time you saw a believer or a group of believers bring hope to others.
- How do you feel or what do you think about this idea of us, as the church, filling the role of "the hope of the world"?

### **PART TWO —**

This week we are looking specifically at idea two — the church is intended to help build up builders. In other words, the church is intended to help believers grow more faithfully or more spiritual mature. The rest of our time today will be looking at three practical ideas to equip us for spiritual growth.

#### **Read the Theme Verse for Series: Hebrews 10:24-25 (Voice)**

The goal of all spiritual growth is to become more loving, life-giving people.

- What are some common misunderstandings you hear about spiritual growth?
- How has your faith helped you grow into a more loving, life-giving person this past year?

#### **Read Philippians 2:13**

#### **Optional Additional Verses: Acts 1:8 and Galatians 5:19-23**

**1. Allow the internal to lead the external.** While it's easy for us to want to focus on the external and to try harder, Jesus invites each of us to change from the inside out through a partnership with his spirit. Jesus is not looking for behavior modification; he is looking to change our whole lives — including our hearts. Our job is to cooperate with God. We have a part to play. The spirit of God is always moving; our job is to be open and available to hear his voice and to see him move.

- How is God helping you change from the inside out this season?
- Have you ever focused a lot of effort on trying to make yourself change or trying to change externally only to later realize God was looking to partner with you in a personal way? Tell us about that experience and learning.
- Tell us about an area of life you seem to have an easier time cooperating with God or remaining open and available to God.

#### **Read Philippians 1:6 (NLT)**

#### **2. Realize all growth is progress.**

**3. On going consistency is much more important than short term intensity.** These two principles are true in all areas of growth; it's all about slow growing compound interest — don't look for shallow quick results and don't expect perfection. Look for small changes that build slowly overtime. Most often, spiritual growth is about next right step after next right step.

- Have you ever been frustrated with God because what you wanted was instant results or a quick fix? Tell us about that experience.
- In what ways have you seen yourself change spiritually slowly over time?
- If you could have God change one thing about you in an instant, what would you pick and why?
- As a follow up to the last question, with that last desired area of growth in mind, what would it look like for that change to come slowly over time?

*(Content continued on the next page.)*

### **Closing Prayer**

God, thank you for wanting to help us grow and change. Help us to be open to the change you desire for us and to the process in which you move. Help us to be open to your Spirit in a consistent manner. Amen.

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### **How To Use this Discussion Guide**

The guide is meant to serve you and your group as you intentionally create space to grow in friendship and faith. Use the guide as a tool to help your unique group.

With that in mind, consider reviewing the guide before your group to see if some content or questions might resonate more or less with your group. Don't feel pressure to read all the content or to hit all the questions. The guide is not meant to be something you power through for the sake of completing. Pick the content from the guide you feel will help foster friendship and faith in your specific group.

In addition, spend some time praying for your group each week, preparing your heart, and asking God for wisdom and guidance as you lead.