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GPS GUIDE Grow, Pray, Serve Guide for Weekly Reflection
(Adapted from United Methodist Church of the Resurrection resources: sharechurch.com)

November 17, 2024 *Why Do People Need the Church?*

Scripture: Matthew 16:15-18, 1 Corinthians 1:26-28, 1 Corinthians 12:12, 28, 26

The Church: Called, Holy, Gifted

MONDAY 11.18.24 1 Corinthians 1:1-9

The apostle Paul reminded the church in Corinth that God made them a special community. Despite their problems, they were "made holy" through their connection with Jesus Christ and enriched with spiritual gifts. "God and the Lord Jesus Christ are the patrons of the community, and they grant favors and gifts, including peace or general well-being.... *because of God's grace*: expresses the reason that Paul gave thanks." * The church thrived not because of perfect people, but because God's grace linked imperfect people in a community centered on Jesus.

- Paul addressed the Corinthian church as "those who have been made holy," even though he knew about their many conflicts and problems. This showed God's amazing grace in claiming us as his own. How clearly do you sense that as you choose to follow Christ, you are "holy to God," part of God's family, even when you still have room to grow?
- The Corinthians received spiritual gifts to strengthen their church community, not for individual pride. Paul emphasized that these gifts came from God's generosity, not human achievement (an idea he expanded in [1 Corinthians 12:12-27](#)). What spiritual gifts has God given you? How could you use them this week to build up and encourage others in your church family or your community?

Prayer: Lord God, I thank you that you haven't called me to make life's journey all by myself. Thank you for those who walk the pathway with me. Amen.

* Charles A. Wanamaker, study notes on 1 Corinthians 1:3, 4 in *The CEB Study Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013, p. 306 NT.

Church: Where Christ Fills Everything

TUESDAY 11.19.24 Ephesians 1:15-23

“His body, the church, is the fullness of Christ”—strong words! Ephesians said people need Jesus' church—a gathering of deeply committed people serving together. Scholar N.T. Wright said, “The whole business of being a Christian is about living by the belief that Jesus is already the true Lord of the world.” * The church wasn't just another social club—it was (and, when it gets things right, is) the living body of Christ, where God's power transforms lives and communities through ordinary people. •

Verses 18-19 held a prayer that “the eyes of our heart” will be able “to see what is the hope of God's call, what is the richness of God's glorious inheritance among believers, and what is the overwhelming greatness of God's power that is working among us believers.” Verse 20 said **the same power** that raised Jesus from death was at work in the church. As you worship and work with others in the church, do you expect to experience God's power? What might change if you did?

- “His body, the church, is the fullness of Christ.” The church's calling, **our** calling, is to be Christ's body in the world. Christian philosopher Dallas Willard said the Greek word usually translated “heaven” (which we see as far away) often meant “heavens”—i.e., the air around us. He wrote, “The Judeo-Christian witness sees space as full of God... we should assume that space is anything but empty.” ** In what ways can you make God's holy presence, as the song says, “the air I breathe” ***?

Prayer: O awesomely great, wonderfully good God, your vast power and gracious goodness are on my side. I experience them as I worship and share life with your people. I thank and praise you! Amen.

* N. T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone: The Prison Letters: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon* (The New Testament for Everyone) (p. 94). Westminster John Knox Press. Kindle Edition.

** Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering our Hidden Life in God*. HarperSanFrancisco, 1997, key phrases excerpted from a longer section on pp. 73-77.

*** “Breathe (Live)” by Michael W. Smith was written by Marie Barnett, all lyrics at <https://genius.com/Michael-w-smith/breathe-live-lyrics>.

Why We All Need Church

WEDNESDAY 11.20.24 Hebrews 10:24-25

The writer of Hebrews urged Christians not to give up meeting together. They needed each other to grow in faith. Roman persecution made regular meetings risky but vital. “Mutual care is especially important for a community experiencing harassment.... Some who had formerly believed were beginning to stop meeting together regularly for worship.” * Even if we don't face oppression, we need each other's inspiration and support. The church is where we "spark" one another to love and good deeds.

- The letter to the Hebrews urged Christians to "spark" one another to love and good deeds. This wasn't about criticism (other translations use language like “spur on” or “encourage”), but about active inspiration to live like Jesus. Think about your church relationships. Who are some of the people who have inspired you to grow in faith? How could you encourage someone else this week?
- Some Christians had stopped attending worship gatherings, weakening their personal faith and the faith community. The writer knew isolation would make it harder to stay faithful to Jesus. What factors tug at you to disconnect from church? How has being part of a faith community nurtured your spiritual journey? What important growth motivations will you miss out on if you disconnect?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, I'm thankful I don't have to do this “faith” thing all alone. Thank you for the people, in history and in my day-to-day life, who encourage and cheer me on. Amen.

* Kenneth Schenk, study notes on Hebrews 10:24-25 in *The CEB Study Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013, p. 447 NT.

The Church: God's Living Temple

THURSDAY 11.21.24 1 Corinthians 3:9, 16-17, Matthew 18:20

In ancient cities, temples were buildings where people thought their gods lived. Yet the apostle Paul told the Corinthian Christians something remarkable—together, **they** formed God's temple where God's Spirit lived. “This [Temple] image refers to the church community as a whole, not its individual members, as the holy place of God's presence.” * Jesus promised to be present when believers gathered in his name. The church is not just a building or program, but a living encounter of people with God.

- Paul called the church community God's temple—the place where God's Spirit lives. This was revolutionary, shifting focus from a physical building to people gathered in shared faith and service. That's why we often refer to worship as “the place where you encounter God.” Can you view the people you worship and serve with, more than the physical building where you do some of that, as God's temple? How might that alter your understanding of your faith journey?

- Jesus promised to be present wherever two or three gather in his name. He emphasized the power of coming together in faith, rather than trying to follow him alone. Can you remember times you've felt God's presence in group settings? What makes gathering with other believers important, and different from private devotional time?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, guide me into a fuller understanding of how you wish to dwell in me, and in all my fellow believers, as your ultimate temple. Amen.

* Charles A. Wanamaker, study note on 1 Corinthians 3:16 in *The CEB Study Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013, p. 309 NT.

Church: Every Member Matters Here

FRIDAY 11.22.24 1 Corinthians 12:12-14, 26-27

The apostle Paul used a powerful image to help the Corinthian Christians understand why they needed each other—the human body. “Just as a body needs all its different parts working together, the church needs all member’s unique gifts and contributions.” * This wasn't just nice advice—it showed God's design for how Christians grow and serve together. No one can be a healthy Christian alone, because God created us to function as one body.

- Paul taught that **every** member of the church body matters—from those who seem most important to those who might feel insignificant. He knew some Corinthians, who’d grown up in a culture that stressed social rank, felt less valuable or more valuable than others. When you think about your role in your church family, do you ever feel unimportant? Do you see others as insignificant? How does Paul's body image change that way of looking at the church community?
- Much like our physical bodies, the body of Christ grows healthier when all parts share each other's joys and sorrows. Paul emphasized this deep connection between church members. Think about your church relationships: How deeply do you share life with other believers? What practical step(s) could you take to deepen these connections? What (if anything) makes it hard for you to take those steps?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, your Spirit has gifted all of us in unique ways so that your Kingdom might come to earth. Help me to honor my giftedness, and that of all the people with whom I serve and worship. Amen.

* Charles A. Wanamaker, study note on 1 Corinthians 12-27 in *The CEB Study Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013, p. 325 NT.

The church flavors and lights the world

SATURDAY 11.23.24 Matthew 5:13-16

Salt: that white stuff in a shaker (unless we prefer the fancy types). For most of us, salt makes things taste better, and we miss it if health reasons make us limit salt. In Jesus' day, with no refrigerators, people used salt to preserve food as much as to flavor it. As for light, today we light empty parking lots more brightly at 2 am than Rome or Jerusalem's main street was ever lit. People in Jesus' day had oil lamps, candles and torches—but they couldn't even imagine an idea like "light pollution." More darkness made light more valuable. "The Bible is enveloped by the imagery of light, literally and figuratively. At the beginning of the biblical narrative, physical light springs forth as the first created thing ([Gen 1:3–4](#)). At the end of the story, God's light wipes out all traces of darkness: 'And night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light' (Rev 22:5)... The imagery of light makes nearly two hundred appearances." * Jesus said his followers, together, "are the light of the world."

- Scholar John Stott wrote, "What was then popularly called 'salt' was a white powder (perhaps from around the Dead Sea) which, while containing sodium chloride, also contained much else. There were no refineries.... the sodium chloride was probably the most soluble component and so the most easily washed out. The residue of white powder still looked like salt... but it neither tasted nor acted like salt. It was just road dust." ** What steps can you take to ensure that the culture around you does not "wash out" the effects of your loyalty to Christ? Scholar William Barclay said people "are to see our *good* deeds. In Greek, there are two words for *good*. *Agathos* simply defines a thing as good in quality; whereas *kalos* means that a thing is not only good, but also winsome, beautiful, and attractive. The word used here is *kalos*." *** How can other Christians' encouragement help you not hide your light under "a basket"? Prayerfully choose one appealing way you'll shine your light in the weeks ahead.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, help me to make this world "taste better" for all those who know me. Make me more and more transparent so that your light can shine out of me like a beacon of love, grace and peace. Amen.

* Article "Light" in Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit and Tremper Longman III, general editors, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998, p. 509.

** John Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1978, p. 60. *** William Barclay, *Daily Study Bible Series: The Gospel of Matthew—Volume 1 Chapters 1–10* (Revised Edition). Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1976, p. 125.