

ADVANCING THE GOSPEL

+ SESSION IN A SENTENCE:

The church exists to build up the body of Christ and to grow in the faith as it proclaims the gospel to the world.

+ BACKGROUND PASSAGES:

Matthew 16; 2 Corinthians 5; Ephesians 4

+ SETTING:

The church exists to confess and proclaim Christ. He has revealed Himself to us so that we might know Him and love Him. As we grow in our knowledge of Him, we will grow together into complete maturity and not be shaken or tossed around by troubling trends in the world. People need help seeing who Christ is, and this is the role of the church. By using our spiritual gifts, we glorify Christ together and appeal to unbelievers so that they might turn from sin and believe in Jesus for their salvation.

DAY 1

READ:

Matthew 16:13-16

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Matthew 16:16

NOTES



KEY DOCTRINE #85:

MISSION OF THE CHURCH

The church is a sign and instrument of the kingdom of God, a people united by faith in the gospel announcement of the crucified and risen King Jesus. The mission of the church is to go into the world in the power of the Spirit and make disciples by proclaiming this gospel, calling people to respond in ongoing repentance and faith, and demonstrating the truth and power of the gospel by living under the lordship of Christ for the glory of God and the good of the world.

Who are you? Trying to answer this question can be difficult at times. We might define ourselves by our occupations because we identify ourselves with our work. Our roles in our home might define us—we are a father, a mother, a son, a daughter, a grandparent, an aunt or uncle, a widow or widower. We can describe our physical features—our height, our hair color. Sometimes we define ourselves by our ethnicity or nationality.

When Jesus asked, “Who am I?” He was not asking His disciples for His role, ethnicity, status, or vocation, but His place in their lives. He wanted them to see Him as Lord and Ruler, as God and King, as Messiah and Savior. While others might be confused about who He is, Jesus wanted His disciples to be clear about His identity and mission.

Every single one of us needs to answer who Jesus is. Is He just a good moral teacher? Just an example to follow? Or is He the Lord and Savior?

What opinions do people have of Jesus today?

DAY 2

READ:

2 Corinthians 5:20

FOCAL PASSAGE:

2 Corinthians 5:20

NOTES

When nations have diplomatic relations with one another, they open embassies. Representatives move abroad and represent the interests of their home country to the nation in which they live. An ambassador has the role of representing his or her country's leadership, government, and message. The goal is to maintain diplomatic relations and the interests of their home country.

As citizens of heaven (Philippians 3:20), we have been stationed in the embassy called "the church" to represent the interests of our kingdom and King, Jesus Christ. We do not have the authority to make up the message any more than an ambassador has the right to make up their own values for their nation. Representing national interests is key. Our role as ambassadors for King Jesus is to represent Him well in word and deed. We have a message that He wants us to take to the nations: "Be reconciled to God." People's response to that message might be positive or negative, but we are not called to determine people's reactions, only to convey the message faithfully and well.

How do you see yourself as an ambassador for Christ?

DAY 3

READ:

Ephesians 4:11-12

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Ephesians 4:11-12

NOTES

Houses are built with a specific goal in mind: to provide residence for a family. Every home is uniquely designed to suit those who are going to reside in it. The layout is picked to provide a functional flow for the family. Paint colors and floorings are chosen that represent the owner's tastes. The yard is landscaped and over time the house reflects the owner's character and desires.

Just as homes are constructed for people to live in, God is building His church with a similar goal. He has given different people different gifts in this construction project. He has given His blueprints to the church so that the specifications for His dwelling place will meet His approval. Spiritual gifts are not given for the sake of our personal fulfillment, but for the completion of God's design. When we use our gifts to build others up and become more like Jesus, we find that our gifts glorify God and bring us joy. In using these gifts, we can build one another up and know that we are working together to be a holy temple in which God will be pleased to dwell (Ephesians 2:19-22).

What is one gift has God given you for His glory and how are you using it?

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"The Church's one foundation
is Jesus Christ her Lord,
She is his new creation by
water and the Word,
From heav'n he came
and sought her to be his
holy bride,
And with his blood he
bought her and for her life
he died."¹

—Samuel J. Stone (1839–1900)

DAY 4

READ:

Matthew 16:18-20

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Matthew 16:18

NOTES

In today's consumerist world, everything is a product to be bought or used. When it comes to the local church, this attitude often continues. People choose a church on preferential factors—the style of music, the accessibility of vibrant children and youth programs—and secondary consideration is given to the vitality of growing together and displaying the beauty of the gospel in relationship with other believers.

When the local church is treated like another item for consumption, the church will be for one's own personal benefit. But God has designed the local church to be more like a family that we belong to rather than a car to be upgraded every 100,000 miles.

When we see that we are bound to a group of people in a local congregation, we will resolve to live out the realities of the gospel. We won't see our relationships as dispensable; rather we will see one another as vital instruments to grow together in holiness, maturity, and love. Being built up together means that we commit to one another, through thick and thin, to love, forgive, respect, and build up one another.

How do you express your commitment to your local church?

DAY 5

READ:

Ephesians 4:13-16

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Ephesians 4:13-14

NOTES

In many homes, there is a wall where the heights of children are recorded. Usually on a birthday, the child will stand with their back against the wall and their height will be marked with the date put beside it. After years of doing this, it becomes clear when there were times of slower growth and when there were sudden spurts where they shot up.

Being able to measure our height can give opportunity for reflection. Sudden growth spurts might explain the constant hunger. Comparing how siblings have grown in height at similar ages gives a sense as to who might be taller when older.

For Christians, we are all growing. That growth isn't measured on a wall with a mark and a date. But there are times that we can recount significant events that have shaped us and challenged us to trust Christ, pray more, be bolder, or be hungrier for the Word and fellowship. But like the marks on the wall, we often are in need of someone to mark out those moments and help us to see the growth. Through those marks, we can be encouraged.

What marks of spiritual growth have you seen in your life?

GROUP

NOTES

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"It must not be your way of being saved, but God's way. Your way is to try and live better. . . . God's way of saving you is that you trust Jesus Christ, and then He will make you live better, old things shall pass away, and all things shall become new when Jesus Christ has you in His hands. Have done with yourself, and let Jesus Christ do the whole work, and He will save you. That is God's way of salvation."²

—Charles Spurgeon
(1834–1892)

POINT 1: The church exists to proclaim the name of Christ (Matthew 16:13-16; 2 Corinthians 5:20).

The confusion that people have about Jesus's identity means that it is the church's mission to proclaim to the world who He truly is.



From Day 1: **What opinions do people have of Jesus today?**

KEY DOCTRINE #85: MISSION OF THE CHURCH

The church is a sign and instrument of the kingdom of God, a people united by faith in the gospel announcement of the crucified and risen King Jesus. The mission of the church is to go into the world in the power of the Spirit and make disciples by proclaiming this gospel, calling people to respond in ongoing repentance and faith, and demonstrating the truth and power of the gospel by living under the lordship of Christ for the glory of God and the good of the world.



What challenges do you face that prevent you from speaking about Christ more?

POINT 2: The church exists to build up the body of Christ (Matthews 16:17-20; Ephesians 4:11-12).

God builds the everlasting church as people profess faith in Christ, giving His disciples the authority to proclaim entrance into heaven through forgiveness of sins through Christ alone.



How do you view your responsibility to proclaim Christ, thus giving people an opportunity to enter heaven, and why?

God builds up His church through giving them gifts, equipping them for the work of the ministry.



Why is it important that we all build up the church together?

POINT 3: The church exists to grow in the faith of Christ (Ephesians 4:13-16).

The church is not to be stagnant but growing, that the world would not toss us around by deceit.



How can believers grow in maturity?

For the church to grow, we must speak truth in love, growing together with everyone doing his or her part.



When trying to speak truth in love, do you veer more towards truth or love, and why?

MY RESPONSE

Because Jesus is Lord and Savior, we seek to live in joyful obedience to the mission He has given us, professing our love for and faith in Him to the nations.

- **HEAD:** What gifts have you received, and how might those gifts bless the church?
- **HEART:** What has Christ done for you that made you love Him?
- **HANDS:** How can you support the work of global missions and the proclamation of the gospel to unreached peoples?



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

VOICES from THE CHURCH

“Do you welcome another person’s encouragement as a purposeful safeguard? Are you encouraging the people in your life with diligence? It’s our privilege as brothers and sisters to exhort and encourage, build up and bear with, remind and reprove . . . and it’s equally our privilege to receive the same.”³

–Ruth Chou Simons