

Crosswalk Communities Discussion Guides

November 6th Study Guide

Icebreaker Questions (Pick at the least one question, but use as many as your group feels comfortable)

1. It is hunting season. Are you a hunter? If so, what has been your best hunting story?

Bible Study Questions

1. If you grew up in the church, then what was your home church like. If not, how did you first get exposed to the church?
2. There has been a growing number of Christians who have left the church. What frustrates you the most about the church? What do you find most appealing about the church?
3. Read Hebrews 10:24-25. Why does the Bible encourage people to be in a church community? What other benefits can you think of?
4. In Acts 1:8, Jesus gave the church the job of being his witnesses. How does Christians engaging in a Christian community help them in the mission of making disciples?
5. Read some of the verses on how Jesus views the church. 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, Ephesians 1:22-23, Ephesians 5:25-32, 1 Peter 2:9-10. What does this tell you about God's love for the church?
6. How do we transition from being people who are critical of the church to being people who help the church become better? What are some ways that we can do that?
7. Are there any practical things that you can do to help increase the health within your church community?

November 6th The Church

Over the past several decades, there has been an increasing exodus from the church. The most common reason listed is that it doesn't add value to one's life. They can follow Jesus just fine on their own without the church. We have all witnessed churches that are fully of judgmentalism and hypocrisy. It prompts the big question, why should we care about the church?

I. What is the church: a gathering of the people of God: People often get confused about what they mean by the word "church." A building with a steeple is not the church, but the building where the church meets. Some people say that they are going to church on Sunday mornings, though they are referring to a church service. Biblically, the word church referred to a gathering of God's people. Any time that a group of Christ followers come together, church is taking place.

II. Why church?

- **The church exists for our benefit:** Christians struggled with the church back in the 1st century. In Hebrews 10:24-25, the author encourages people to not quit the church, but to continue to meet with other. The reason is that they need each other's community to make it during challenging times. The enemy is on a mission to destroy us and we are easy targets when we are disconnected from a Christian community. Another benefit of the church is that it gives us an environment in which we can live out God's commands to love one another.
- **The church is a missional community:** Both at the end of Matthew and in the beginning of Acts, Jesus gives the church the mission to go into the world and to make disciples. The church does not exist for themselves, but is God's agent to share his love with the world. It is in the church where we can pool out gifts and resources to be more effective in making disciples.
- **The church is precious to God:** God uses a number of images to show his love for the church. He routinely refers to the church as his bride (Ephesians 5:25, Revelation 21:9-10). Jesus is referred to as the head of the church and the people being his body (Ephesians 1:22-23). The point is God loves the church. His followers cannot serve the groom while rejecting the bride, or embracing the head but rejecting the body.

Conclusion

If we believe these things, then it should prompt a number of things. For those who have been hurt by the church, we should remember that healing does not happen best in isolation but in community. Resolve conflicts. Secondly, instead of being critical of the church, we should focus on the potential and look for ways to make the church better. Thirdly, we should invest in community. On Sunday mornings, linger longer and engage in community. Invest in a small group. Find some way to be an active part of a Christian community