

I SEE A CHURCH

A man with short brown hair, wearing a black long-sleeved shirt and blue jeans, is kneeling on a paved surface. He has his hands clasped together in front of his face, and his head is bowed in prayer. He is wearing a black watch on his left wrist and a red string bracelet on his right wrist. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with trees and a light sky.

SESSION FIVE

I SEE A CHURCH THAT CARES AS MUCH
ABOUT THOSE WHO WILL BE AS THOSE
WHO ALREADY ARE

WEEKLY MEMORY VERSE

...on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades
will not overcome it. **Matthew 16:18**

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GOD HAS PUT YOU IN YOUR CHURCH
FOR A REASON.

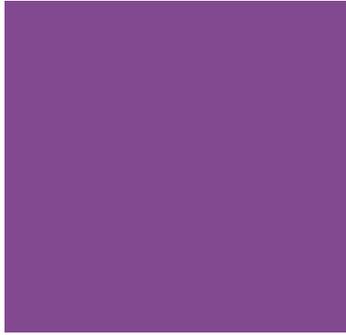
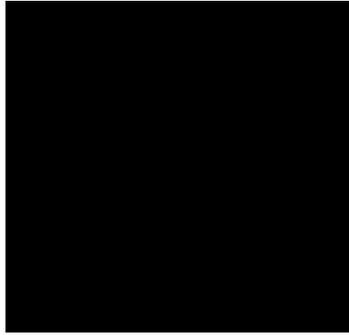
When Jesus said he would build his church, he wasn't talking about creating an exclusive club or a building. The church is a community where all are welcome. It's a place where we all, regardless of our background, our gifts, our strengths or our weaknesses, can become a vital part of the body of Christ.

Jesus envisioned that the church would be a place that cares as much about those who will be as those who already are. It's a safe place for people who are in process, who seek truth and, in so doing, find God.

While God asks us to partner with him to reach people who are far from him, it is God who ultimately changes people's hearts and lives. Our job is to welcome everyone, and to model a relationship with God that is attractive and life-giving.

If we're willing to welcome all, and live out our faith in a sincere and winsome way, we'll be like the early church described in Acts 2—and we'll see God add to our number.

I SEE A CHURCH



OPEN YOUR GROUP WITH PRAYER

We can help one another to share honestly by creating a safe place: be sure that your group is one where confidentiality is respected, where there's no such thing as a "stupid question," where you listen without criticizing one another.



GETTING STARTED

Begin your time together by using the following questions and activities to get people talking.

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1. Do you think some Christians tend to avoid people who don't yet know Christ? Why?

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2. Think about someone you know—a co-worker, neighbor or friend—who seems to be far from God. How could you show that person you care about them?

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3. Have you ever experienced kindness or generosity from an unexpected person?

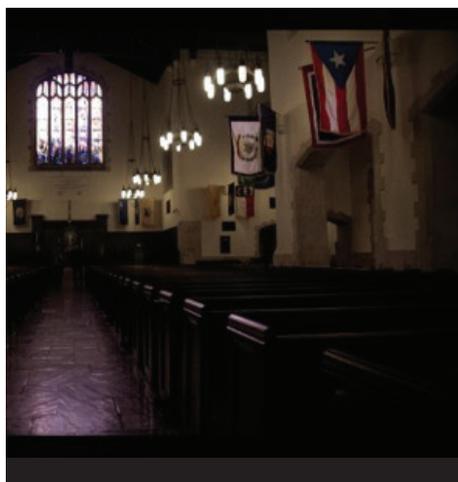
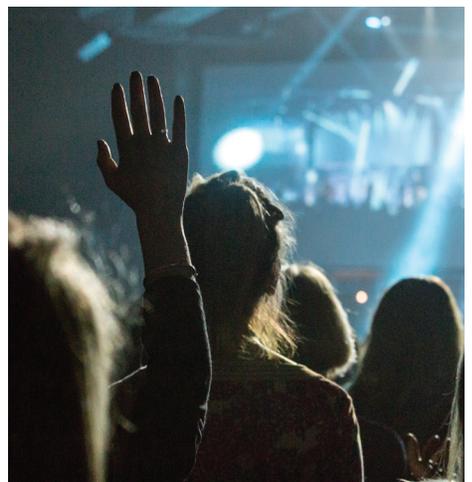
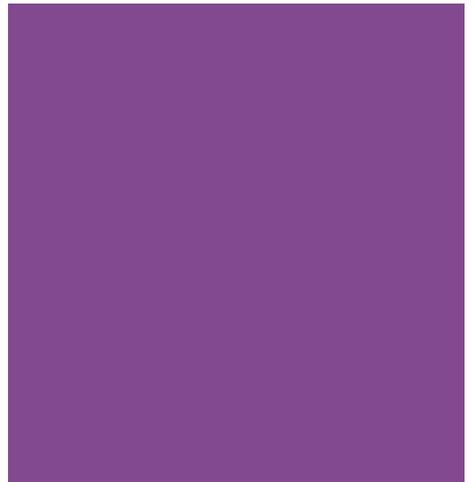
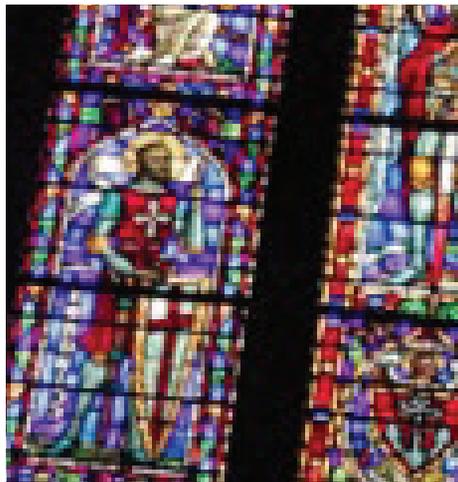
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REFLECT

When we sense God teaching us or drawing our attention to something, it's important to stop and reflect on what he might be trying to tell us. Use the following questions to guide your discussion of the teaching and stories you just experienced, and the Bible passage below.

READ ACTS 2:46-47

⁴⁶ Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

1. Does anything surprise you about these verses? How was the experience of the early church different from how we "do church" today?

2. In the video, we heard about three ways we can partner with God to reach those who are far from him. Read verse 47 again; why do you think they grew so fast? Why were all these people showing up?

RESPOND

Now that we have spent some time reflecting on what God might be saying to us, let's talk about how we will apply the wisdom we have learned from the teaching and Bible study. Then think about practical steps we can take in the coming week to live out what we have learned.



ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS

In the video, we heard that one way we can partner with God is to invest in people. Who are you investing in relationally these days? What is happening as a result?

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What appeals to you about the way that the early church members lived? What does not appeal to you?

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ACTION STEPS

Allow everyone to answer this question: "How can we pray for you this week?" Be sure to write prayer requests on your Prayer and praise report on page 100.

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How do you think we as a church do at reaching out to those "who will be?" What one specific action will you take this week to show care to someone who is not yet a believer?

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CLOSE THIS SESSION WITH PRAYER.





GOING DEEPER

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You can explore the following Bible passage as a group (if there is time) or on your own between sessions. Try writing down your reflections in a journal or in this study guide. A great way to gain insight on a passage is to read it in several different translations. You may want to use a Bible app or website to compare translations.

READ MATTHEW 5:13-16

What does it mean to be “salt” to those who don’t know God?

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What does it mean to let your light shine?

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Why do you suppose Jesus chose these metaphors?

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READ 1 PETER 3:15-16

What work or study would you need to do in order to be prepared to give an answer about your faith?

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Is your “answer” about your faith more about what the Bible says, or telling your own story? How can you blend those two things?

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What attitude does this verse say we should have when telling others about Jesus?

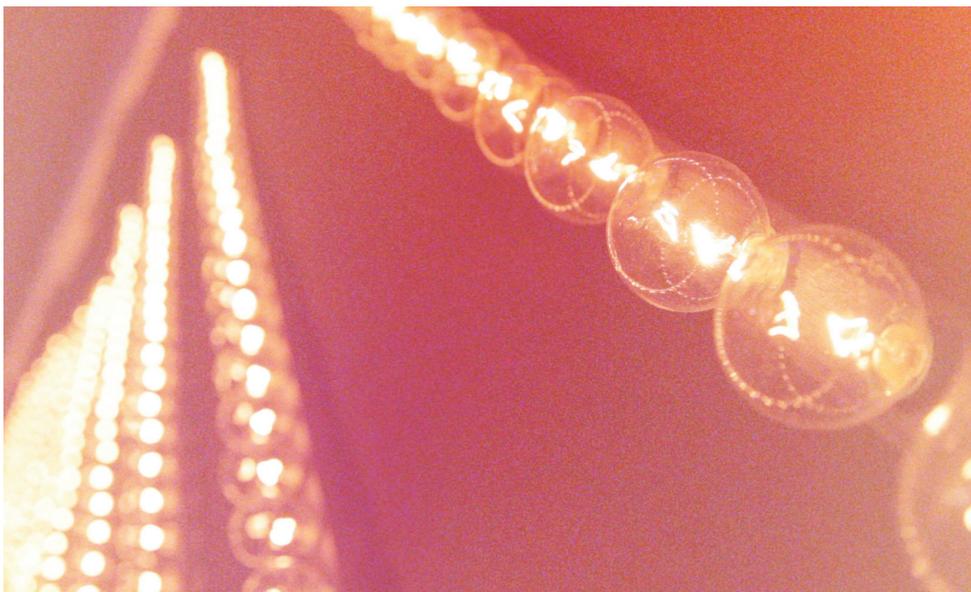
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Why do you think our attitude matters?

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DAILY REFLECTIONS

Ask God to speak to you through His word.

DEVOTIONALS

Day 1.

READ PSALM 68:4

Sing to God, sing in praise of his name, extol him who rides on the clouds[b]; rejoice before him—his name is the Lord.

CONSIDER:

Spend some time just praising and worshipping God for who he is. What attributes of his character are you thankful for?

Day 2.

READ PSALM 68:5

A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling.

CONSIDER:

Do you know any people who might be forgotten or ignored? Could you invite them to church or just get to know them a bit?

Day 3.

READ PSALM 68:6

God sets the lonely in families,[c] he leads out the prisoners with singing; but the rebellious live in a sun-scorched land.

CONSIDER:

Who is someone you know who would be comforted by the promises in this verse? How could you share it with that person?



Use these daily devotions to go deeper into this week’s topic. Each day, read the verse given. Take your time. Ask God to speak to you through His word. Listen to what he wants to say to you, and respond to him as you meditate on the truths of Scripture.

DEVOTIONALS

Day 4.

READ PSALM 68:19

Praise be to the Lord, to God our Savior, who daily bears our burdens.

CONSIDER:

In this lesson, we talked about how God does the “heavy lifting” when it comes to drawing people to himself. What burdens are you carrying that you need to let go of and allow God to bear?

Day 5.

READ PSALM 68:20

Our God is a God who saves; from the Sovereign Lord comes escape from death.

CONSIDER:

What promise do you find in this verse? Spend some time thinking about that promise and what it means for you and for others you care about. Spend a few moments simply praising God.

Day 6.

Use the following space to write any thoughts God has put in your heart and mind about the things we have looked at in this session and during your devotional time this week. You may also want to write down observations or questions that you’d like to share with the group at your next meeting.

SUMMARY:

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