

772  
of Following Jesus  
were walking along the road, a  
to him. "I will follow you  
you go." "Foxes have holes and  
air have nests, but the Son of  
place to lay his head." "Follow me."  
applied. "Lord, follow me."

773  
who rejects you rejects me; but he who re-  
jects me rejects him who sent me."  
The seventy-two returned with joy and  
said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us  
in your name." "I saw Satan fall like light-  
ning from heaven. <sup>19</sup>I have given you au-  
thority to trample on snakes and scorpions  
and to overcome all the power of the ene-  
my. Nothing will harm you. <sup>20</sup>However, do

## 2017 STARTER KIT **WEEK 13**

# THE CHURCH AND ITS PURPOSE

### FOR YOUR YOUTH GROUP OR SMALL GROUP MEETINGS

of him to every town and place  
was about to go. <sup>2</sup>He told them,  
rest is plentiful, but the workers  
ask the Lord of the harvest, there-  
and out workers into his harvest  
I am sending you out like lambs  
wolves. <sup>4</sup>Do not take a purse or bag  
and do not greet anyone on the

you enter a house, first say,  
his house." <sup>6</sup>If a man of peace is  
peace will rest on him; if not, it  
to you. <sup>7</sup>Stay in that house, eat-  
inking whatever they give you,  
rker deserves his wages. Do not  
and from house to house.

you enter a town and are wel-  
what is set before you. <sup>9</sup>Heal the  
re there and tell them, "The king-  
d is near you." <sup>10</sup>But when you  
n and are not welcomed, go into  
and say, <sup>11</sup>"Even the dust of your  
sticks to our feet we wipe off  
u. Yet be sure of this: The king-  
d is near." <sup>12</sup>I tell you, it will be  
able on that day for Sodom than  
wn.

to you, Korazin! Woe to you.  
For if the miracles that were  
in you had been performed in  
Sidon, they would have repented  
sitting in sackcloth and ashes.  
ll be more bearable for Tyre and  
ne judgment than for you. <sup>15</sup>And  
rnaum, will you be lifted up to the  
you will go down to the depths."  
ho listens to you listens to me; he

<sup>21</sup>Then he turned to his disciples and said  
privately, "Blessed are the eyes that see  
what you see. <sup>24</sup>For I tell you that many  
prophets and kings wanted to see what you  
see but did not see it, and to hear what you  
hear but did not hear it."

#### The Parable of the Good Samaritan

<sup>25</sup>On one occasion an expert in the law  
stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he  
asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal  
life?"

<sup>26</sup>"What is written in the Law?" he re-  
plied. "How do you read it?"

<sup>27</sup>He answered: "'Love the Lord your  
God with all your heart and with all your  
soul and with all your strength and with all  
your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as  
yourself.'"

<sup>28</sup>"You have answered correctly," Jesus  
replied. "Do this and you will live."

<sup>29</sup>But he wanted to justify himself, so he  
asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

<sup>30</sup>In reply Jesus said: "A man was going  
down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he  
fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped  
him of his clothes, beat him and went away,  
leaving him half dead. <sup>31</sup>A priest happened  
to be going down the same road, and when  
he saw the man, he passed by on the other  
side. <sup>32</sup>So too, a Levite, when he came to  
the place and saw him, passed by on the  
other side. <sup>33</sup>But a Samaritan, as he trav-  
eled, came where the man was; and when  
he saw him, he took pity on him. <sup>34</sup>He went  
on him and bandaged his wounds, pouring  
oil and wine. Then he put the man on his  
own donkey, took him to an inn and took

## HERE IS WHAT WE PROVIDE IN EACH SESSION:

1. A brief reading on the topic. This can be read, but of course should be shared instead in the leader's own words, adding or subtracting details that fit your group. Usually, there are Bible readings and questions worked into the text.
2. A short devotion that brings home the principles of the topic of the week. This is intended to be shared with the whole group.
3. An activity suggestion. These are simple, requiring few, if any, materials, but we all learn and retain better if we do something physical with what we've heard and seen.
4. A short skit. If you have time to rehearse and learn, these can be done on different weeks, or even for other meetings such as church services. But they can also be and done in impromptu fashion, each person reading his/her part expressively. Always allow time to discuss people's reactions after skits.
5. Very important: Each week's starter kit includes a page called "7 Days of Soul Food." Print these out and give copies to each person, or give each person the link if they have online access. These are personal applications that will carry the devotion through the whole week. It is highly recommended that each person begin some sort of prayer journal and use it all year. We general think of journals as being full of writing, but if you don't like to write, you can draw, doodle, paste in pictures that bring the lessons of the week to mind — anything that helps you draw closer to God.

# THE STORY

## THE CHURCH AND ITS PURPOSE

*[Note to translators: Please rewrite first paragraph as necessary to make it applicable to the language into which you are translating.]*

Here is a little lesson for you in ancient Greek. The word we translate “church” in the New Testament is *ekklesia*, meaning “called out ones,” or the people who have been called out of a life of sin and into God’s kingdom. I’m not sure why that word is translated “church” in English, since that word actually comes from the Greek *kyriakos*, meaning “belonging to the Lord.” This, of course, is certainly true of believers, but it isn’t a correct translation of *ekklesia*.

Clearly both of these words are about a 24/7 way of life, and not just about an assembly. As important as that assembly is, it can never take the place of choosing every minute of every day to live as one who has been called out of sin and now belongs to the Lord.

In some ways, the church of Martin Luther’s time did live this way. Religion was a huge part of the people’s everyday lives. Every single thing they did, from homemaking to farming to working in their crafts and trades, was surrounded by the sense of God and the angels being around them. This should have been wonderful (and no doubt often was), but there were two major problems.

First and most importantly, trust in a loving God had largely been supplanted by fear of an angry one who was constantly watching them, hoping to catch them doing something wrong so He could condemn them. His watchdogs were the local priests and religious teachers.

Secondly, they were taught that faith meant ritual. So, prayer took the form of daily mass, plus certain prayers read out of a book at predetermined hours of the day. Unfortunately, many people could not read, so even though they might have a prayer book (and think of it as a holy and somehow protective object in itself) they had to depend on the (usually Latin) prayers of the priests, monks, and nuns, as well as the memorized, repeated prayers of their rosaries. It might not even occur to many of them that they could pray in their own words. Certainly they were taught they could not pray directly to God, but had to go through intermediaries of dead saints or

the Virgin Mary. And they were more likely to have their prayers answered if they did some good deed or gave money to the church.

So it wasn't so much that God was the center of their lives as that the church was. Luther reformed this way of thinking. Remember in session 2 when he said: "I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates. There a totally other face of the entire Scripture showed itself to me." This led to an entirely new way of being, with a cheerful, trusting life centered on the certainty of the Holy Spirit's loving presence all the time. Prayer came from the heart, not from a book.

This church, this ever-growing body of believers all over the world, spread in invisible ways, like yeast in bread dough, all through their communities, their cities, the countries they knew, and overseas. The church, instead of being visible as a building or a certain group of buildings, was visible wherever, in any community large or small, you could see love at work. The Bible says all good gifts are from God (James 1:17) so wherever you see love and compassion, God is at work there even if the people don't know it yet! It's the greatest of transformations.

However, in order to share and grow, the church must also meet together, and in most climates, we need buildings for that. So in the early church we see both personal, individual faith and witness, and the group gathering together in large bodies. Both of these are the church in action.

Read or have read Acts 2:43-47 and make a list of the purposes this early church saw for itself. Decide which of these things were personal and might be done by one or two, and which were done as a group. How well does your church measure up to this vision?

# DEVOTION

In practical terms, what kind of reforming does it take to live as a called-out one?

Obviously, one first has to hear God's call and respond to it. Each morning, when we wake up and say good morning to God, we can reaffirm our choice to live in the awareness of the Holy Spirit's presence all day long. On many days, this will not include a formal assembly with other believers, although we can certainly have prayer partners, either in person, on the telephone, by email, or social media, or whatever. On other days (this one, for instance!) the assembly of believers will be an important part of our day or evening.

In our recent Bible study in Hebrews, we learned about the new and living way that Jesus made for us. Let's look again at Hebrews 10:19-25. Read or have read this whole passage. Then go back and create a step-by-step path from individual verses.

- Verses 19 and 20: What is the confidence that these two verses promise and why? Is this speaking to an individual or to a group? Explain your answer.
- Verse 21: Who is our great high Priest? Can you think of another word for "house of God"? Is this part for an individual or a group? Explain your answer.
- Verse 22: There are three separate steps outlined in this one verse. What are they? Individual or group? Explain.
- Verse 23: What are we to hold fast? Is this speaking to the individual or the group? Explain.
- Verse 24: What mission is given here? Individual or group? Explain.
- Verse 25: What does assembling encourage? Is this true of your church or group? Why or why not, and what can you do to increase that? Why does "the day drawing near" make a difference?

You are the church! Just you, one person, really can make a difference.

## ACTIVITY SUGGESTION

God can see the whole planet as if it were lit up with the small lights of each believer. Perhaps there are villages where there is only one who follows the Creator of love. The Holy Spirit is there, and the darkness can never overcome that tiny light. (See John 1:4.) But just imagine what it looks like when a lot of tiny candles come together to praise God and encourage each other! They can go out from this gathering with their lights rekindled.

Give each person a small unlit candle. Have them scatter all over the room. Some can be alone and some can be in pairs or small groups near each other. Have one large candle at the front of the room to represent God, from whom all light comes. Darken the room as much as possible. Now have a few people light their candles at the main light. They then take their candles and go to the others, urging them to come to the great light. They do not light each other's candles, but they light the way for their friends to come to the big candle and be lit by God.

When everyone is lit, gather together to sing "This Little Light of Mine" or another similar song. How bright is that area? Now have each take his or her light back to the place where they started. This represents going to find more people to bring to God. How lit-up is the room now, and how lit-up would it be if each could bring one more?

# SEVEN DAYS OF SOUL FOOD

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## SEVEN DAYS' WORTH OF DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

You must love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind (Luke 10:27). To put it another way, body + heart + mind = one living soul.

We can't divide ourselves into different sections, but it's useful to look at these different aspects of ourselves and be sure we have a well-balanced faith that uses all the avenues of a soul. Each of these starter kits will include a week's worth of food for your soul in each of these four methods of understanding and expression.

Write about each of the following in your prayer journal this week. Each day strive to use language of emotions, thought, physical health and strength, or spirit on the given days.

**DAY 1:** Read 1 Corinthians 12 and ponder the imagery of “the body” that Paul uses to represent the church. There are two ways to see this, and both are true. In the most important sense, all the believers in the whole world are one body, walking, talking, and working for Jesus in this world. But in a more practical sense, we can use this image to think about our own local churches. Make a drawing or chart that represents the “body” of your church. Keep it to use all week in your devotional times.

**DAY 2:** Heart. If you had to choose a person or persons who is/are the “heart” of your church congregation, who would they be? Why? Write the name or names on your drawing in the heart area and pray for them today.

**DAY 3:** Mind. There is only one Head of the church, of course: Jesus. But some in your congregation are particularly gifted in thinking things through, understanding deep Bible study, solving problems, and so on. Who would they be? Put the names on your chart and pray for them today.

**DAY 4:** Strength/body. Where is the physical strength of your congregation? Are there people who are particularly health-conscious and help others to be healthy? Are there athletes? In another sense, is there a particular area of strength that your congregation has? You could put names of people who go out to serve on the feet of your drawing, or medical workers on the hands, for instance. Pray for all you think of.

**DAY 5:** Soul/spirit. As you prayerfully ponder the heart/mind/body insights into this symbolic body of Christ, your church, have you begun to think of where you fit into the picture? Where would you put your name and why? Pray for God to show you how you can both help and be helped by people in the other positions you have thought about.

**DAY 6:** Your family and your community are presently being influenced one way or another by your church. What are the ways you can think of, and how can you help to encourage strong areas and strengthen weak areas?

**DAY 7:** Use day 7 to create something beautiful that reflects what you have learned.

- Write a poem or song or story.
- Create a poster.
- Write a letter.
- Paint or draw a picture.
- Make a sign.
- Do some sidewalk chalk art or writings.
- Build something.
- Create a podcast or blog post or Twitter post(s).
- Make food and give it to someone in need.

Use whatever creativity God has given you. We all have something. Share the love!



# a short skit

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# **Skit**

**10 minutes**

## **CHARACTERS**

1. Peter
2. Several disciples, both men and women, to represent the 120 in the Upper Room.
3. Others to represent the crowd.

## **PROPS**

1. Some Bibles, or if you want, you can roll up papers to represent scrolls.
2. Have one Bible open to Acts 2 for Peter to use.
3. Decide in advance whether he will read the entire sermon, which is verses 14 (beginning with "People of Judea") through 36, or if you want to shorten it, in which case he can stop at verse 24 and then read verse 36.
4. Choose an area to represent the Upper Room and an area to be the outside where the crowd gathered.

## Act 1

**Opening Scene:** The disciples, including Peter, are gathered together, studying and discussing the Bibles or scrolls. Spend a minute or two, having them discuss whatever seems relevant, such as telling each other stories of seeing Jesus in Jerusalem even though He was crucified weeks ago, or perhaps the story of the road to Emmaus. After a minute, have them all begin to pray together. Suddenly they begin to look up and gasp and point. (You could have someone make noises like blowing wind if you like.)

**One disciple:** Fire! There's fire over your head!

**Another:** It's over your head, too!

**A third:** What is it?

**Peter:** (reverently and with wonder) It's the Holy Spirit!

**Disciple:** That's right! Remember, Jesus said power would come on us from on high!

(As the group grows excited and louder, the crowd begins to gather and exclaim, asking what's going on. The disciples go to the area that represents the outside, praising God. It would be wonderful if some can actually praise God in different languages, the more the better. At first it sounds like confusion.)

**Person from crowd:** (shouting above the noise, which quiets somewhat) Listen! Do you hear that? Aren't they all Galileans? Why do we hear them praising God in all our languages?

(Others agree and exclaim, saying to each other, "What does this mean?"

**Another person from crowd:** (mockingly) They're drunk, that's all! (A few others might agree and laugh or jeer momentarily.)

**Peter:** (gets his Bible and raises his hands for quiet; everyone quiets down) People of Judea, and everyone who lives here in Jerusalem, listen to me! (He reads the sermon, either to verse 36 or skipping 25-35, as previously determined. Everyone listens intently. As he ends, "this Jesus whom you crucified," everyone is very upset and begins asking, "What can we do?"

**All disciples:** now disperse through the crowd, explaining things and praying with individuals. Then read together verses 37-47 and discuss how the whole group of apostles worked together, even though it was Peter preaching.

End with a group prayer and song of praise.