

Week Seventeen: “A Place to Belong”

Day One: “A Place to Belong”

Read: Ephesians 2:19-22 (*Freedom in Christ Bible*, p. 1357)

Read: *Purpose-Driven Life*, pp. 130-132

Reflect: How intentional are you in worshiping with fellow believers? Do you *love* the body of Christ or do you merely *use* it?

Dig: Read the following passages and then in one sentence summarize their common theme:

Ephesians 2:19-22

Romans 12:4-8 (p. 1295)

1 Corinthians 12:12-31 (p. 1318)

In what different ways is this common theme presented?

Apply: Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you in evaluating the role you have in your local church. Are you connected? Are you connected in the right places?

(If you want help in addressing this last question, contact the Spiritual Gifts Team via Cindy Leep or Willie Julius).

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Day Two: “Why You Need a Church Family Part I”

Read: Ephesians 4:11-16

Read *Purpose-Driven Life*, pp. 132-134 (from ‘Your Local Fellowship’ to right before ‘The Body of Christ Needs You’)

Reflect: Evaluate (a) your **love** for the members of your local church and (b) your ‘**spiritual muscle**’ by thinking of specific instances in which they were (or should have been) exercised. Does your level of involvement in your local church demonstrate that you love and are committed to God’s family?

Dig: Read Ephesians 4:14-16 and list at least 4 results of staying connected to the church family.

What does ‘unity in the faith’ (verse 13) look like?

Note the high priority that Jesus places on unity (read John 17:20-23).

How are we doing? To put it in the context of the *Purpose-Driven Life* commentary for today, how unified are we in:

Celebrating our diversity?

Suffering with each other and rejoicing with each other?

Sharing in our church’s ‘family responsibilities’ (p. 134)?

Apply: Hebrews 10:25 says “Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” (NIV)

Put that into practice: who within the body of Christ and your local church needs encouragement? Put your love into action by dropping them a note or giving them a call today.

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Day Three: “Why You Need a Church Family Part II”

Read: 1 Corinthians 12:12-31

Read: *Purpose-Driven Life*, from bottom of p. 134 to top of 136

Reflect: What are your top spiritual gifts? Are you effectively using them within your local church?

Dig: *The Body of Christ Needs You*

From 1 Corinthians 12:28 and Romans 12:6-8 remind yourself of the various spiritual gifts.

Why are they given? See Romans 12:5, Ephesians 4:12, and 1 Peter 4:10-11.

How are they to be used? Clues are given in the context surrounding the above verses; see Romans 12:9, 1 Corinthians 13, 1 Peter 4:8.

You Need the Body

Note the admonishment in 1 Corinthians 10:13.

The body of Christ is there to keep us in check—note the particulars of *how* this is to be done by reading Matthew 18:15-20.

Apply: Pray about how, within the next week, you can use your gifts to minister to people within your care group, a ministry you are involved in, or the larger church body at Madison Square Church. (Then do it!)

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Day Four: “Your Choice”

Read: Acts 2:42-47

Read: *Purpose-Driven Life*, pp. 136-137

Reflect: With respect to your local church are you a spectator, a member, or a member who spectates? Are you a consumer or a contributor? Why? What prompts your activity or inactivity?

Dig: In Acts 2:42 note the word ‘devoted’ (NIV) or ‘committed’ (MSG). What type of behavior/attitude do the words ‘devote’ and ‘commit’ connote?

List the activities that the Acts 2 church engaged in.

- Do you do these with your brothers and sisters in Christ?
- Are you **devoted** to doing them?
- What’s the difference between simply doing them and being devoted to doing them?
- What prompts devotion? See Acts 2:32-33.

Apply: It’s decision time: If you’re not a member of a local church, make steps toward becoming a member today. If you are a member take steps to address:

- a.) any area in which you are not ‘doing your part’ as Ephesians 4:16 says or
- b.) any area in which your love for the body of Christ needs to grow.

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Day Five: **Lectio Divina**

Using the “**Lectio Divina**” method of Bible study (see page 3 of this booklet), **meditate on this scripture:**

In Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. Romans 12:5 (NIV)

Lectio divina (a Latin expression which means Sacred reading) is done in three stages:

- reading: you read the passage slowly and reverentially, allowing the words to sink into your consciousness; after you have memorized the text, write down one word which strikes you and draws your attention and note why you chose that word.
- meditation: you allow the passage to stir up memories within you, so that you recognize in it your own experience or that of people who have touched your life; write down memories of events or conversations or other scripture passages.
- prayer: you allow the meditation to lead you to prayer – thanksgiving, humility and petition. Write out a prayer based on the passage.