

"So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, ²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, ²¹ in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord,"

-Ephesians 2:19-21

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, ²⁶ so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷ that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless."

-Ephesians 5:25-27

"...but in case I am delayed, I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth."

-1 Timothy 3:15

"If the church is central to God's purpose as seen in both history and the gospel, it must surely also be central to our lives. How can we take lightly what God takes so seriously?"

-John Stott

"The institution of the church is a necessary, helpful, God-given, and God-ordained means for spiritual growth and development. It is meant to be there— and it is meant to be used."

-Alister McGrath

"As we value the health of our own souls and of the Christian church, then, we must learn to prize fellowship."

-J.I. Packer

"The church has to rediscover who God is, come to know Him, and fellowship with Him. The avenue for that has always been Bible exposition and teaching. There's no shortcut."

-James M. Boice

"Do you want to know that your new life is real? Commit yourself to a local group of saved sinners. Try to love them. Don't just do it for three weeks. Don't just do it for six months. Do it for years. And I think you'll find out, and others will too, whether or not you love God. The truth will show itself."

-Mark Dever

"How could my family and I invest joyfully in all of Sunday in a way that truly celebrates God's love and presence in our lives— and helps us carry this celebration over into the rest of our week?"

-Joshua Harris

STOP DATING THE CHURCH:

FALL IN LOVE WITH THE FAMILY OF GOD

STUDY GUIDE

BASED ON THE BOOK BY JOSHUA HARRIS

GRACE GROUPS
TOGETHER PURSUING CHRIST

SOVEREIGN GRACE FELLOWSHIP OF AUBURN

CHAPTER 1: CAN THIS RELATIONSHIP BE SAVED?

Scripture to Study This Week:

Matthew 16:13-21, Acts 2:40-47

- (1) Do you agree with the statement "Every Christian is called to be passionately committed to a specific local church"? Is this supported biblically? Explain.

- (2) Our author gives a brief profile of a church-dater. What is a church-dater? Which of these characteristics or tendencies do you see in yourself?

- (3) What do you think is meant by "treating church with a consumer mentality"? Why is this a problem?

- (4) Do you tend to be critical towards your church? What is at the root of this tendency? How can we avoid it?

- (5) How do 1 Corinthians 3:9 and 6:19 help relate the necessity of not only attending church, but also being an active part of it?

- (6) Read Acts 20:28. What implications does this verse have for you as it relates to your church?

- (7) Do you care enough about the church to pursue its growth through evangelism and the passing of the torch of the gospel? Evaluate how you are doing and how by God's grace you can improve in this endeavor.

- (8) How has your passion for, love for, and commitment to the body of Christ grown during this study? By God's grace how will you make this a long term and permanent change in your life?

CHAPTER 7: THE DEAREST PLACE ON EARTH

Scripture to Study This Week:

John 21:15-19, Acts 1-4

- (1) How does reading John 21 affect you and your thoughts about the church? How can you put your love for Christ into action?

- (2) Of what wrong thinking and sinful habits have you had to repent of in response to this book? Describe how the grace of God has affected you during this time.

- (3) "Loving what Jesus loves is important for the believer." How so? What will this mean to your living for Christ?

- (4) Why is humility so difficult in the area of service in the church? What is your role in the church and how can you humbly fulfill it?

- (5) Does resistance to passion and commitment really cheat everyone out of God's best? Explain your answer.

- (6) How would you describe God's design for the relationship between the believer and the local church?

- (7) How does the gospel and evangelism connect to one's commitment to and involvement in a local church?

- (8) What does it mean to commit to a local church? Does the idea of committing or recommitting frighten you? Why or why not?

- (9) What initial changes need to be made in your perspective on, attitude towards, and interaction with the local church?

CHAPTER 2: HE STILL CALLS HER HIS BRIDE

Scripture to Study This Week:

Ephesians 5:25-32, Colossians 1:21-29

- (1) What pictures and emotions were (or you imagine would be) present in your heart at your wedding?

 - (2) What does the word "bride" tell you about the nature of Jesus' love for the Church?

 - (3) List out different ways that Scripture presents Christ displaying love for His bride (note past, present, and future activities).

 - (4) Do you find the fact that Jesus is passionately committed to the church compelling for your own love for and commitment to the church? Why or why not? Explain.
- (5) Describe the balance between the preacher's responsibilities and the listeners. Which do you tend to emphasize more on a personal level?

 - (6) What are some practical ways you can express love towards visitors or those who appear out of place at our church this coming Sunday?

 - (7) How and when do you review Sunday's message? How can you develop a more effective habit in this regard?

 - (8) Imagine your life without the church. How do you imagine it would affect your life and your spiritual health?

 - (9) How has this chapter brought conviction to your heart as you have evaluated the way you view and use Sunday? What will you seek to change in response to it?

CHAPTER 6: RESCUING SUNDAY

Scripture to Study This Week:

Psalm 19:1-14, James 1:21-25

- (1) What do you do to prepare for Sunday personally? As a family?

- (2) Why is it that we should never allow Sundays to become routine engagements? Describe the deeper reality of what is happening when our church gathers on Sunday.

- (3) Why do we at times assume that we can show up on Sunday with no spiritual preparation? How can we change this way of thinking?

- (4) In what sense can listening be worship? What practical steps can you implement that will help you listen better?

- (5) Read Ephesians 2:13-22. How have you seen this principle of reconciliation worked out in the church? Is there a present situation where this could be helpful? Explain.

- (6) Describe the significance of the word pictures used for the church found in Ephesians 1:22-23; 1 Peter 2:5; and Ephesians 2:21-22.

- (7) How does understanding the future of the church as a whole and as individual saints help us view our church and those around us differently?

- (8) By God's grace, how will your view of the church and your fellow believers change in response to this chapter?

CHAPTER 5: CHOOSING YOUR CHURCH

Scripture to Study This Week:

Matthew 18:15-20, 2 Timothy 3:14-4:5

- (1) What are some of your preferences when it comes to church? Do you find it difficult to keep these in their rightful place? Why or why not?

- (2) Is God's Word being faithfully taught at our church? Does sound doctrine matter at our church? Why are these important?

- (3) In what ways can the church consistently proclaim the gospel? Can this be done without being boring and overly simplistic? Explain.

- (4) Is evangelism an important aspect to look for in a church? Why or why not? What are the affects when it is not made a priority?

- (5) What is one of the evidences of true salvation found in 1 John 2:9-10? What are the implications of practicing this on a long term basis within a local church?

- (6) Do you agree or disagree with the statement that "our generation's biggest obstacles aren't problems in the church, but problems in us"? Explain.

- (7) Which one of the three attitudes listed on pages 58 and 59 do you tend towards most easily? How can you combat them?

- (8) What was corrected or reinforced in your mind with regards to the necessity of the local church in this chapter? Be specific. How might this change your actions?

CHAPTER 4: JOIN THE CLUB

Scripture to Study This Week:

Hebrews 13:15-21, 1 Peter 4:7-11

- (1) What does the author mean by "club"? Identify your "club." Is it the church? If not, what will it take to make the church your "club"?
- (2) Discuss the author's statement, "Building your life around the church means making it the kind of priority that secondary concerns flow around, not over." What might this look like practically?
- (3) Is membership important? Why or why not? How does Hebrews 13:17 shed light on this issue?
- (4) According to Scripture how are you to relate to your leaders? Is this new for you? Difficult? Explain.

- (5) Meditate on Ephesians 4:16 for a moment and describe ways in which you might fulfill your design and do your part in the body of Christ.
- (6) Of the "one another" commands, which two do you find easiest? Which two the hardest? Why?
- (7) Onto whom and how is your passion for Christ and His Church spilling over? What will you do to, by the grace of God, run harder after this mission?
- (8) Which one of the seven aspects of the profile of commitment is most lacking in your life? How will you seek to change in response to the conviction you are under?