

## The Call to the Great Community!

### Lesson #1: “The Church is God’s Idea!”

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+ INTRO: “The Call to the Great Community” is a series of messages about the body of Christ and our call to be fellow members of the body of Christ and why that is an important call to answer for us individually and corporately for the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ (why He came!) and the glory of God.  
+ The Great Community is the “church” (*ekklesia* in Acts 11:26), which literally means, “the called out gathering or assembly.” While it can be used to describe any assembly of people, in the New Testament it is the work of the Holy Spirit to ingather those who have been called *in* Christ for God’s will.

+ BODY: The BIG IDEA for today is THE CHURCH IS GOD’S IDEA; NOT MINE OR YOURS!

+ Today’s reading from God’s Word comes from Ephesians 1:18-23, where Paul teaches, “I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”

**1) THE CHURCH is the BODY OF CHRIST!**

+ The church is an *intentional community* of disciples who are called in love, gathered for love, and sent on the mission of love. We carry on the great rescue effort of Jesus Christ (Luke 19:10).

+ Read short story from LOMT, page 97.

+ As we just read, Ephesians 1:22-23. Let us continue to see how this idea is developed in Ephesians 4:11-16; Romans 12:4-8; and 1 Corinthians 12:12-27.

### **2) BECAUSE THE CHURCH EXISTS FOR THE MISSION OF JESUS TO THE GLORY OF GOD**

+ The Great Commission was given to the church before Jesus’ ascension in Matthew 28:18-20 and then empowered by the Holy Spirit to fulfill it at Pentecost in Acts 2.

+ We must remember WHY the CHURCH exists or we will get off mission and go in maintenance mode – We are called to the Rescue Mission of Jesus Christ (John 3:16-17)!

+ We are redeemed to fulfill the Genesis Commission (Genesis 1:26-27) as the heirs of the Abrahamic Promise (Genesis 12:1-3). To bless all things as Ephesians 1:19b-21 proclaims.

### **3) THIS IS GOD’S PLAN A!**

+ Paul started our lesson in Ephesians 1:18-19a.

+ Let me remind you of the “so that’s” of Jesus’ prayer in John 17:22-23 (“By this all men will know that you are My disciples”) and His new commandment in John 13:34-35 (“so that the world may know that You sent Me”)? This is the ultimate purpose of all that we do as the church and as a local assembly of believers.

+ This is why we gather as the church – to remember and practice that this is God’s BIG IDEA! Read Hebrews 10:19-25.

CONCLUSION: We have so much to learn together over the course of this sermon series. We are going to pray Jesus’ prayer book together as we study, so I invite you to join me in the 150-Day Pray the Psalms Discipleship Challenge, which starts tomorrow with Psalm 1. Finish your NT and pray in unity.