

Life Group Topic #17
Three Levels of Living
Ephesians 1:18-23

WELCOME: (15 minutes)

Who was your best friend in elementary school days and why?

WORD: (45 minutes)

OPTIONS: There are two ways of pursuing this topic. 1) **Lectio Divina:** You can carefully read together the text several times (**Ephesians 1:18-23**) and let it lead you into a time of building each other up as the Spirit impresses you with truth and how to apply it to each other. 2) **Topical:** You can read or distribute the abbreviated sermon notes below as a launching point into the application questions below:

Jesus was raised from the dead, seated at God's right hand in the heavenly realms, far above any competitor, appointed to be head over everything. All of this expenditure of power was: **FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE CHURCH (NLT)**. So let's camp here for a minute...**AND GOD PLACED ALL THINGS UNDER HIS FEET AND APPOINTED HIM TO BE THE HEAD OVER EVERYTHING FOR THE CHURCH, WHICH IS HIS BODY, THE FULLNESS OF HIM WHO FILLS EVERYTHING IN EVERY WAY.**

One of the greatest challenges we have is sorting out the kind of picture conjured up in our minds by the words we use. That is particularly challenging with the word "church". When Tyndale translated the Bible into English he translated the word *ekklesia* as congregation and we probably would have been OK if that had stood but the authors of the Authorized Version decided to use the word *church* which derived from a Greek adjective meaning *the Lord's house*...we are still captured by that building centred image. **The biblical image that God intended was that we are a group of people specifically summoned together by God**...we are the called out ones, so our very name shouts purpose.

We have been called out to travel together to a planned destination. The calling has been described as chosen, adopted, redeemed. The destination has been described as our full inheritance because we are in God's family and a part of the body of Christ. **The clarity needed for our day is what it means to travel together as the called out ones.**

THREE LEVELS OF LIVING AS THE CALLED OUT ONES

• **MEMBERSHIP...choosing to belong**

This level means that you find a church family and you choose to get connected with it

Ephesians 2:19 ...You are members of God's very own family...and you belong in God's household with every other Christian.

Christianity is not just a matter of believing...it is a matter of belonging...choosing to belong. The church is where we live out what it means to be a Christian...how could we not choose to belong? God's purpose is for us to be a part of His family.

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

We belong to every other Christian! We are members of a family but we make choices to belong and function within that family. If you want to grow and see God at work in your life you have to join a body...you can't just float

• **FRIENDSHIP...learning to share**

Since we were created in God's image, we were made for relationships

Acts 2:44 All the believers met together constantly and shared everything with each other.

We choose to develop friendships by making time for them...it has to be a priority of your life...they shared everything together. **We are called to share...**

1. Our Experiences

Proverbs 27:17 *People learn from one another, just as iron sharpens iron.*

We learn from other people. Rather than living life by trial and error we listen to the experiences of others and gain from the wealth of knowledge in other people's lives.

2. Our Homes

I Peter 4:9 *Open up your homes to each other.*

We are to share our homes...no matter how they compare with other people's homes. Fellowship does not happen here on Sunday morning...worship and celebration can but fellowship only takes place in a small group. We are to open our homes intentionally...sharing only happens in a small group-

3. Our Problems

Galatians 6:2 *Share each other's troubles and problems.*

We are not called to fix everybody's problems, just share them...share your sympathy and experience. That will never happen unless you are in a small group!

• **PARTNERSHIP...doing my part**

We all need the understanding that the family of God needs me...I have a contribution to make. He brought you to this church to serve...not just with words but with actions.

I Corinthians 3:9 *We are partners together for God.*

But then we all need to find where we fit in...where our niche is

Ephesians 4:16

We are the EKKLESIA...the called out ones that journey together with a purpose. What level do you live on...membership, friendship, partnership?

Application Questions:

1. What images come to your mind when you hear the word church?
2. How has the building centered image of the church derailed us from the true meaning of church as in Tyndale's first English translation?
3. Abbotsford is a unique place for at least two reasons: a) it is part of an affluent culture where the consumer mentality means we are always shopping for the best and b) there are 90 churches in the city. How do these two factors strengthen or weaken what it means to be the called out ones of God?
4. How important is church membership to you? Do your views reflect Eph. 2:19-22?
5. Is it important to have deep friendships in the church? What facilitates deep friendships that are defined by sharing and sacrificing for one another?
6. Is it enough for "church" to be a venue where you get what you need, without giving of yourself? Is it like a business where the paid professionals provide services to their clients?
7. What would South Abbotsford be like if every single member considered themselves an essential servant of the Lord? How might the church and city be impacted?

Soul Cravings: 15 minutes

- Share your stories of initiating spiritual conversations with the group and on the new blog on our church website @ www.southabbotsford.com
- Come to **SOUL CRAVINGS CONVERSATIONS**: to continue the dialogue of how we are experimenting with sharing our faith with others on **Sunday, June 13th at 10:00am in the sanctuary @ South Abbotsford Church.**