



All Christians' Fellowship International

INTERACTIVE SUNDAY SCHOOL OUTLINE FOR YOUTHS AND YOUNG ADULTS

Foundations

The Light of the World, Part 2

Overview

Summary

In this seventh Lesson of the Foundations series, you will invite your students to consider the identity and purpose of the Church and their place within it. There's no place like home, and God has made his home and ours among his family: the church. Church is not just somewhere we go once a week; it's the community of God's redeemed people across time and place. The community helps us orient our lives around God's Word as we walk in the way of Jesus. We need to ask not just what the church can do for us, but what we can do for the church.

Key Takeaways

1. The church gives us a place of belonging.
2. The church helps us orient our lives.
3. The church is local and global.

Scriptures

Ephesians 1:5 / Philippians 2:12b-15 / Ephesians 4:3-4 / Romans 12:4-5 / Philippians 2:1-4

Lesson 7 Script

Introduction

Have you ever had the experience of loving something that the people around you didn't really think was cool? Maybe it's your favorite band, show, or hobby. You can enjoy it on your own, but when you're with people who "get" it, isn't that so much better? When you find someone who understands it like you do, even if they're a total stranger, you can connect so well and so fast because of what you have in common! It's like you speak the same language in a foreign land. You've found a little piece of home.

In a similar vein, have you ever had the experience where you're going through something difficult, and you feel alone in it? Then maybe also you've had that moment when you share your difficulty with someone, and when you open up to them, they say, "me, too!" They understand what you're going through. Having someone to share the experience with is really meaningful. When we find someone who has been through what we have experienced, we feel a little less crazy and a whole lot less alone. When you find someone walking the same journey as you, it makes the whole thing easier.

As followers of Jesus, we don't need to go through life by ourselves, and this is what we get to talk about this week: the community of our faith, the church. Our word 'church' comes from the Greek word, *ekklesia*, which means "called out." We are people who have been called out of the darkness and into the glorious light of God's love which we experience together.

Transition

Throughout this series, we've been borrowing imagery from Plato's cave allegory to illustrate some of the core beliefs of the Christian faith. But today as we talk about the church, there's a difference we want to emphasize: In the allegory, the prisoner escapes the cave and is left to figure out life in the outside world on his own. Thankfully, the same isn't true for Christians. When Jesus saves us, he saves us into the community of the church where we learn with others how to live in the world and reflect the light of God.

When we become part of the Christian faith, we become part of something much larger than ourselves. We become part of God's family. God's family transcends time, culture, nation, age, language, everything! All who have confessed and believe in Jesus make up this body of believers, and we are unified by what we share: Christ our Savior. Each of us make up a unique part, but it takes us all to be the real thing.

Did you know that not every place in the world allows Christians the freedom to gather publicly? Thank God we have the privilege to be here together without fear. We've got a lot to talk about [tonight] with this messy and beautiful thing called church. So, let's jump on in!

Point #1: The church gives us a place of belonging.

We see family language all over the New Testament! We call God our heavenly father; and when we follow Jesus, we are adopted as God's sons and daughters, and our fellow believers become our brothers and sisters in Christ. Ephesians 1:5 says, "**God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure.**" It pleases God that you're related to him! Isn't that fun to hear?

Maybe you look a lot like one of your parents. Anyone resemble your siblings? Some families have a strong physical resemblance or have other characteristic traits in common, like laughs. When we join God's family and spend more time with our brothers and sisters, we pick up the family traits. We might do things that identify us as belonging to God. We begin to "look like" Jesus.

Remember: Christians are people who live in the light of God's truth. The cave really formed us, and sometimes we have a hard time knowing how to live in the light. Last week we talked about how the Holy Spirit helps us with this adjustment. Another gift God gives us to help is our brothers and sisters in Christ. We cannot live life on our own. We need each other on this journey.

So often, we use phrases like "my experience" or "in my opinion" to describe our relationship with God because we live in a society that prizes individuality. And certainly, one's relationship with God is intimately personal. But we have a lot more in common than we might think, and Christianity is always a group project. It's like joining a team. You have your role, but the larger picture is about us. Truth is always found and lived out in community.

Mark 2:1–12 tells us a story about a man who was paralyzed, and his friends carried him to Jesus so he could be healed. He couldn't get there on his own. But they took his need upon themselves, and he experienced a miracle because of it. This tells us it's really important who we hang around. We want to be around people who can help carry us to God.

But this community called the church isn't just a social club or group of friends. This community has a purpose and a mission, and that leads us to our next point....

Point #2: The church helps us orient our lives.

The church does a lot for us. It gives us a place to worship and learn about God. It provides us with opportunities to serve God and our neighbors. We get to be around and pray with other believers and learn about our identity in Christ. It's where we participate in the sacraments of communion and baptism. And most importantly, it's the context within which we live our lives in the world, following Jesus.

Each person orients their life around their priorities. For most people, that's their family and their job. For Christians, we always orient our lives toward God's truth in our relationships, jobs, and whatever else we have. As we participate in the life of the church community, it forms us so that we live our lives in a way that pleases God.

With our community we learn to listen for what God is trying to teach his people in real time. Philippians 2:12b-15 says, **Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him. Do everything without complaining and arguing, so that no one can criticize you. Live clean, innocent lives as children of God, shining like bright lights in a world full of crooked and perverse people.**

Together, and with the help of the Holy Spirit, we can learn to live like Christ. We've been using the words, church, together, and community a lot... but what do we really mean by those? Who are we really talking about? The church is more than our church. Let's dive into that now...

Point #3: The church is global and local.

Have you heard this word, “glocal”? It’s a combo of the words “local” and “global,” and it gets at how some things are both. They happen here and also all over the world. This is how God’s kingdom is. It’s not bound by geography or culture. [Tonight] as we’ve been talking about church, you may have been thinking about the good folks right here at [Church Name]. But we aren’t all there is. God’s people, our brothers and sisters in Christ, are everywhere all over the globe.

In his letter to the people of Ephesus, Paul writes, **Make every effort to keep yourself united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future.** (Ephesians 4:3–4) Not every Christian everywhere believes or does everything exactly the same. Yet the lordship of Jesus means we have something in common that outweighs all our differences. This means we can sit down with someone who doesn’t look like us, eat like us, dress like us, or speak like us, and we can still call them ‘brother’ or ‘sister.’ Belonging to God makes us all family.

This means that “church” isn’t just the place you go once or twice a week. The church is more about the who than when or the where. No matter where we go to church, followers of Jesus everywhere make up “the body of Christ,” as the apostle Paul calls us. He says in Romans 12:4–5, **Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, so it is with Christ’s body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other.** Since we’re one body, all family, we must be unified even though we are not uniform. We have a lot to learn from each other. Just like you have a unique role to play here in our local congregation, so our church has a role to play in the global body of Christ.

Have you ever seen a mosaic? Maybe an old one made of pottery or stained glass? [Here’s a good webpage if you’d like a visual. <https://www.mosaicartgallery.com/history-of-mosaics>] All these tiny parts that are so different come together to play their role and together make something beautiful and larger than themselves. This is what it’s like to belong to God’s community. Everyone is unique. Everyone is important. But one body. One Spirit. One Lord. One goal: to walk with God and each other in truth and love.

Closing

You know when you finally get home after a long hard day, and you can put on your comfy clothes and just relax? You might throw down your bag, kick off your shoes, and maybe even feel your shoulders drop, letting go of the tension you were carrying from that day. Home is where you feel most comfortable, most like yourself. It’s where you rest, where your food is, where your clothes are, where your people are. This is supposed to be what church is like.

It’s where you know, no matter what else is going on in your world, you can relax your shoulders here. You’re in your space with your people. But we know that all families have their fights and problems. Being God’s people doesn’t make us God. Each church has its flaws. If a church messes up or hurts us big time, we have to think like we do with people: Do we forgive and reconcile? Or forgive and move on? We have to remember that they are not our Savior, and they are not the whole body of Christ.

As we close [tonight], hear these words from the apostle Paul to the church that was in Philippi:

Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate? Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose. Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. (Philippians 2:1-4)

It takes a lot of work to build a healthy, holy body of believers. To conclude, I want you to think about your interests and the interests of others. What can the church do for you? And what can you do for the church? Consider also: What can the Church do for those still living in darkness? Think globally. What about right here right now, and what about the global community? God's Spirit is here, and God's Spirit is there, teaching all of us how to be more like Jesus.

We're a part of something bigger than ourselves. You belong here, and there's always room for more. God's family never runs out of room. So, whether it's when you walk in these doors, or you're anywhere in the world with God's people, remember: You're home.

Discussion Questions

1. What practical steps can you take to deepen your relationship with your church community? How can you lean on your church community to support you as you grow in your faith?
2. What opportunities do you see for your church to "shine like bright lights" (Philippians 2:14) in your community?
3. Let's brainstorm together. What are the qualities you should look for in a church community? Which of these are essentials, and which are just preferences? If you had to pick, which one thing would you say is the most important?