

Why in the world does the church exist?

Aim of study: to see that our church is part of the larger body of Christ in the world and exists for two main purposes – building up the body & reaching out

Hand out cards and pencils.

Launching question: Jot down the first thing you think of when you hear the word – ‘church’. Collect in cards, and read them out. We’ll see how what we’ve said matches up with what we read about God’s purposes for the church.

Ask someone to read the passage, and paragraph following before distributing the notes.

1 Peter 1: 1-2; 2:4-12

Some of the churches to whom Peter is writing grew up as the first Christians were forced to flee Jerusalem, due to persecution after the stoning of Stephen. The believers were *scattered* throughout Asia Minor (1:1), and so were able to carry the good news of Christ with them. At the same time, they were *gathered* together for worship and building up one another (2:5). Peter’s letter addresses both Jewish and Gentile Christians. Each church was the body of Christ in miniature, and also part of the whole body of Christ. In the same way, our church is both the local body of Christ, and part of the global, universal church.

Divide into two groups & each write down their observations

- How does Peter describe the believers? (1:1-2; 2:5,9,10) *List phrases under these two columns*

once you were...	now you are...
In darkness	In light / chosen by God
Not belonging to God	A holy nation / Royal priesthood / Living stones
Had no mercy	/Belonging to God / received mercy / strangers in the world

Collect contributions

- What does it mean to be a spiritual house made of living stones? (see also Ephesians 2:19-22)
- What activities might contribute to becoming a healthy spiritual house?

Think about our church. What do we do that builds up the local body of believers? For the moment, don’t include outreach activities. Write your ideas in the *gathered* column. [The *gathered* aspect of church life refers to how we help one another grow as Christians.] You could also look up Acts 2:42-47.

Give time for groups to fill in the *gathered* section then get input.

Gathered - collect these answers at question 3	Scattered – you will collect these answers at Question 9
Worship / breaking bread / giving / praising God / pastoral care / church-wide fellowships / teaching / prayer times / meeting together / home groups / house-parties, weekends / music group / equipping in practical living / etc	equipping for outreach / some teaching, preaching / giving to non-church causes / personal witness – word & life / involvement in social concerns / proclaiming the story of Jesus / outreach events, missions / supporting missionaries / Jesus video / evangelistic community magazine / etc

- To whom is Peter referring when he says, “You are a royal priesthood”? (2:9) see also Rev 1:5b-6 & Exodus 19:5-6

All believers. God designated all the Israelites, not just priests & Levites, to be a kingdom of priests.

- What do the words *royal priesthood* suggest to you? See Malachi 2:7 for a good description of the Old Testament priest. How can we relate to this today?

Old Testament priests represented men to God through the sacrifice system, and represented God to men, conveying his laws, wisdom and guidance. Now that the perfect sacrifice has been made, we no longer need to

MAKING HIM KNOWN STUDY 1: WHY IN THE WORLD DOES THE CHURCH EXIST? LEADER'S NOTES

approach God through an intermediary. With God indwelling each believer with his Spirit, we are to represent him directly to men and women – both fellow believers and those as yet outside his family.

Apply- Ask group to write down their thoughts to both questions; then ask someone to share what they have written.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are some implications for me personally if God views me as a living stone, part of a royal priesthood? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are some areas in which I would like God to produce growth? |
|---|--|

6. As royal priests, what is our responsibility to the world? (2:9b, 11-12)

Declaring the praises of God (Acts 26:17) / Living exemplary lives – abstaining from sinful desires. Peter is implying that God's worth is also to be declared to those outside God's family.

7. How does Peter describe followers of Jesus? (1 Peter 1:1; 2:11)

Aliens & strangers in the world

8. What does it mean to be a stranger in the world? How does this fit in with declaring the praises of God? see John 17:14-18

John 17 – 'in the world but not of it'. We are not to live in isolation, but keep ourselves from evil so we can influence those under its control.

The church is not only to be *gathered* - for building itself up, but also *scattered* - to influence the world.

9. What church activities contribute to 'declaring the praises of God'? (write your answers under *scattered* in the box under question 3) List activities that are actually & effectively declaring God's praise to outsiders.

- Is there any overlap with our original thoughts about 'church'?

Get group into 3s to brainstorm on the following question. Hand out two cards per group for them to record gathered & scattered ideas. After a few minutes, get feedback of one idea from each category from each group. Give the best ideas to church leaders.

10. What could our church improve on, or start doing, that would contribute towards greater effectiveness in the *gathered* or *scattered* aspect of the church's purpose?

Summary – read out this summary

Though there are many aspects of *gathered* that we could discuss, the focus of 'Making Him Known' is on the *scattered* task – to take the message of God's love and forgiveness to those who have, as yet, no relationship with Jesus.

Then ask everyone to write down their responses to this question in the Apply box.

Apply – Write down your own activities and relationships under *gathered* and *scattered*

gathered	scattered
Eg: home group; music group;	Eg: conversation at work / drink with neighbour

Pray – encourage group to express aloud what they have discovered and to pray about the 'scattered' task of the church

Before next time...

Read Luke 5:27-32

Think about: Why did Jesus come to earth?

Why in the world does the church exist?

Aim of study: to see that our church is part of the larger body of Christ in the world and exists for two main purposes – building up the body & reaching out

1 Peter 1: 1-2; 2:4-12

Some of the churches to whom Peter is writing grew up as the first Christians were forced to flee Jerusalem, due to persecution after the stoning of Stephen. The believers were *scattered* throughout Asia Minor (1:1), and so were able to carry the good news of Christ with them. At the same time, they were *gathered* together for worship and building up one another (2:5). Peter's letter addresses both Jewish and Gentile Christians. Each church was the body of Christ in miniature, and also part of the whole body of Christ. In the same way, our church is both the local body of Christ, and part of the global, universal church.

1. How does Peter describe the believers? (1:1-2; 2:5,9,10) *List phrases under these two columns*

once you were...	now you are...

2. What does it mean to be a spiritual house made of living stones? (see also Ephesians 2:19-22)

3. What activities might contribute to becoming a healthy spiritual house?

Think about our church. What do we do that builds up the local body of believers? For the moment, don't include outreach activities. Write your ideas in the *gathered* column. [The *gathered* aspect of church life refers to how we help one another grow as Christians.] You could also look up Acts 2:42-47.

Gathered	Scattered

4. To whom is Peter referring when he says, "You are a royal priesthood"? (2:9) see also Rev 1:5b-6 & Exodus 19:5-6

5. What do the words *royal priesthood* suggest to you? See Malachi 2:7 for a good description of the Old Testament priest. How can we relate to this today?

Apply

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are some implications for me personally if God views me as a living stone, part of a royal priesthood? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are some areas in which I would like God to produce growth? |
|---|--|

6. As royal priests, what is our responsibility to the world? (2:9b, 11-12)
7. How does Peter describe followers of Jesus? (1 Peter 1:1; 2:11)
8. What does it mean to be a stranger in the world? How does this fit in with declaring the praises of God? *see John 17:14-18*

The church is not only to be *gathered* - for building itself up, but also *scattered* - to influence the world.

9. What church activities contribute to 'declaring the praises of God'? (write your answers under *scattered* in the box under question 3)
 - Is there any overlap with our original thoughts about 'church'?
10. What could our church improve on, or start doing, that would contribute towards greater effectiveness in the *gathered* or *scattered* aspect of the church's purpose?

Apply – Write down your own activities and relationships under *gathered* and *scattered*

gathered	scattered
eg: home group	Eg: conversation at work / drink with neighbour

Pray

Before next time...

Read Luke 5:27-32

Think about: Why did Jesus come to earth?