

PRAXiS

A photograph of a church interior, likely a sanctuary or worship space. The room is filled with rows of dark-colored pews. A young boy, wearing a red jacket and blue jeans, is walking through the aisle, looking down. The lighting is dim, with a warm, golden glow from the right side, creating long shadows and a contemplative atmosphere. The pews are arranged in a semi-circular or fan-like pattern, typical of modern church architecture.

The Church

HOW TO USE

This discussion guide is designed for you, leaders, to guide your group through this Praxis video series. This series is structured as a conversation based around engaging questions intended to promote thought-provoking discussion throughout each episode. When these questions pop up on the screen, hit pause and turn the question to the group. **Each episode includes the following:**

BIG IDEA

We highlight the big idea behind the episode, emphasizing key scriptures or quotes, to give you and your group an idea of what will be covered in the video. Feel free to share this before pressing play, or after to summarize what was taught into a concise thought.

SUPPORTING QUESTIONS

If the video question does not invite participation, use these questions to promote further interest. These questions are simply reworded to present the idea in a different way. We invite you to be creative and present the questions in a way that engages your group.

DISCUSS

The video questions are created to encourage conversation and to allow the formation of thoughts and ideas – inviting participants to wrestle with and begin sharing their beliefs and experiences. This is just the beginning. The discussion questions exist to go deeper and to invite more intimate and transformational conversation.

CONTEXT

■ IN A CHURCH OR LARGE GROUP SETTING

This guide is designed to be used by a leader, so begin by identifying those leaders and getting a guide into each of their hands. If you are watching the episodes with more than 20 people, we would advise identifying multiple leaders and having them focus on a section of the group. When the video questions arise, have them turn to their “small group” and discuss the questions openly. Time dependent, ask each smaller group to share with the larger group what was shared. This invites more people to share without the intimidation of a large group setting. Whether you keep these groups consistent from week to week, or you mix it up, remaining the same for the discussion portion of each episode will allow for greater depth and increased transparency.

■ IN A SMALL GROUP SETTING

Every leader in the room should have one of these guides prior to beginning the video. It can be helpful to identify one leader as the facilitator, and others as helpers. The facilitator can guide the video question time, with helpers stepping in as needed based on the direction of conversation. Come discussion time, gathering into small groups where one or two leaders oversee a small group can invite quieter participants to engage and allow for greater depth of conversation.

■ AS AN INDIVIDUAL

While this discussion guide is designed with group participation in mind, the content is something we believe is valuable for every individual. We advise watching these episodes with a pen in hand and paper before you. Have your Bible handy and get ready to pause the video. You get to take this at your pace! When Scripture is referenced, open your Bible and read along – when questions are asked, hit pause and write out your answer. If questions arise in your mind that you are unable to answer, write them down to ask later.

GET READY

Take a breath, the pressure is off. We are not asking you to teach, or to have the answer to every question. Your role is to guide, facilitate, but most importantly to **listen** and **invite**.

Invite questions. Invite conversation.

This discussion guide was created to provide direction for the conversation, but not to limit or harness the group. During the video, listen to what the participants say. Do not feel the need to answer the question yourself. Be comfortable with silence. Give it fifteen seconds before you use a supporting question. Let them think.

“When will I know when to press play again?” Trust me, you’ll know. Conversation will end, or you may even have to re-focus the group if they go down a rabbit trail. If a valuable question or topic is sparked during the video, write it down and say you will return as a group to it during the discussion time.

When it comes time for discussion, follow the pace of the group. Let them naturally guide the conversation around what content stuck out from the video, or what questions were sparked for them. You are not confined to the questions in this guide. Pick the ones that stand out to you or add your own. This time will look different for each group and that’s intentional.

Listen and Invite.

THE CHURCH

FOUR EPISODES | PRAXIS SERIES 13

BIG IDEA

This series is based on the words spoken in Acts 2:42-47 that describe the characteristics of the early Church. The Christian Church has changed many times since its establishment, and our hope in this series is to take it back to what Christ had in mind.

Every church looks different, but we believe there are a few unifying factors that are important for us to keep in mind as we engage with and build Christ's church. This four-part series unpacks what it looks like for us to be the Church through worship, community, and in our serving.

THE CHURCH

EPISODE 1 | CHURCH

BIG IDEA

A focus on what Jesus had in mind when He set the church in motion. A movement motivated by love and ushering in the next generation of young people to lead our churches.

KEY TERMS & SCRIPTURE

Passages to Read:

John 13:34-35; 17:20-23 // Matthew 28:18-20 // Acts 2:42-47 //
1 Corinthians 12:8-27 // Romans 12:3-8 // Ephesians 4:7-13.

Universal Church:

Churches that believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior across the globe (John 17:20-26).

Protestant:

A believer in Jesus who is affiliated with Christian churches that have separated from the Roman Catholic Church. Separation from the church of Rome happened during the Reformation where the word Protestant became a general term to describe these believers.

Doctrine:

Is a word that describes a set of beliefs someone might have in regard to Christianity or other religions.

Biblical meaning of 'ministry' or 'ministries':

In the Christian church, ministry is a word that describes an activity, vocation, or event that is carried out by Christians in order to show compassion, relief, council, charity and invite others into faith in Jesus.

The Sacrament of Eucharist:

Sacrament is a tradition or ceremony practiced by the Christian Church. Eucharist means thanksgiving and is a sacrament that involves the practice of the Last Supper of Jesus (Passover). Churches partake in eating bread and wine as way to remember the forgiveness of sins through the death, burial and promised resurrection of Jesus.

Jesus Arrangement > Temple Arrangement:

He taught that love replaced law-keeping & self-sacrifice replaced animal sacrifice. Jesus taught that the way to measure love for God was how one displayed love for others.

SUPPORTING QUESTIONS

- **Do you ever wonder if today's church is anything like what Jesus had in mind when He set it in motion?**
 - In what areas of your church do you think we have gotten better or weaker in?
 - If you could change one thing about church, what would it be?
 - What did Jesus have in mind? (John 17:20-23; Matthew 28:18-20; Matthew 5-7; Acts 2:42-47; John 21:15-17)
 - What surprises you the most about Churches today? What have you heard from friends/family who don't attend Church?
- **Do you think teenagers and young adults are capable of effectively leading the church in the next era? Why or why not?**
 - What do you believe stops teenagers or young adults from leading in a church?
 - What areas of the church could you see yourself leading or being a part of?
 - Why do you think young people should lead? Why do you believe they are capable?
 - Where have you seen evidence of God using young people to shape the church? (1 Timothy 4:12; 2 Kings 22; 1 Samuel 16:7; Matthew 19:14)
- **What do you understand as your role in making the church irresistible again?**
 - What role do you believe the Holy Spirit has to make the Church irresistible? (2 Timothy 1:7; Titus 3:4-7)
 - What giftings do you think God has given you in order to play a role in making the church irresistible? (Matthew 5:43-48; 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 12-27; Romans 12:3-8; Ephesians 4:7-13)

DISCUSS

- **What excites you the most about church? What doesn't? Share your experiences.**
- **Why do you think there are so many ways of doing Church? Do you believe there is one correct and specific way of 'doing church'?**
- **Do you believe the Church is a building or a community of people? (1 Corinthians 12)**
- **What stops you from engaging or re-engaging in a church? Or serving in a church?**

NEXT STEPS

Consider taking the time to read & understand what the Church is and what its purpose is by reading what was said by Jesus, Paul the Apostle, and John the Apostle.

(John 17:20-23; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:42-47; 1 Corinthians 12:8-27; Romans 12:3-8; Ephesians 4:7-13)

1.) Ask God this week, where He may be asking you to play a role in the church you attend. Find someone who serves in that area and ask them if there is a place you can help.

2.) If you currently don't attend anywhere, find a place where there is a body of believers that gather and reflect on the following passages you have read.

THE CHURCH

EPISODE 2 | WORSHIP

BIG IDEA

A focus on how the church is to worship together and what it means to be in deep awe.

KEY TERMS & SCRIPTURE

Passages to Read:

Acts 2:42-47 //

*“All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord’s Supper), and to prayer. A **deep sense of awe came over them all**, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. **They worshiped together** at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord’s Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity – all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.”*

Psalm 108:1 // Psalm 108 // Isaiah 6 // Revelation 4-5

Worship:

“Simply put, worship is defined as expressing reverence or awe. One way we worship God is through song – by singing.”

Statements to reflect on:

“It’s about the awe and wonder that we can experience collectively when we sing in worship together - the same awe and wonder the early church experienced in Acts!”

“Worship of the living God does not begin with us and it does not end with us.”

“The point is that God made a way for you and I to be in that celebration. He wants us there. He wants YOU there. That’s why we participate in this mysterious thing called worship.”

SUPPORTING QUESTIONS

- **Why do we sing? Why do we even worship for that matter?**
 - What are some other forms or ways we can express worship? Share your experience.
 - When do you find yourself singing in general? When do you find yourself singing to Jesus? Is it only in church?
 - What do you think the purpose of worship is?
 - Do you find it difficult to engage in worship? What causes the struggle?
- **What is your current engagement with worship like? Do you sing, raise your hands, just watch?**
 - When do you feel the most comfortable to engage in worship? What creates the comfort?
 - When do you not feel comfortable?
 - Why do we tend to think worship is about 'what we get out of it'? What do you believe is wrong in this thinking of worship?
- **How can you willingly engage in worship when we gather next?**
 - What areas in your life cause you to worship something else?
 - What song brings you to a place of awe of God?
 - How do you engage in worship outside of church? Does engagement look different outside the church?

DISCUSS

- **Do you think our worship gets affected and becomes less engaging when our hearts are more in awe with something else? What are those things in your life?**
 - **Describe a moment when the presence of God was strong and evident through the form of worship you take – singing, hands lifted up, quiet reflection, etc.**
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NEXT STEPS

- 1) How can you willingly engage in worship the next time you're in church?
- 2) How can you willingly engage in worship outside of church? At home, room, car, nature, etc.?

THE CHURCH

EPISODE 3 | COMMUNITY

BIG IDEA

A focus on being a part of intentional & authentic community within the church locally & globally.

KEY TERMS & SCRIPTURE

Passages to Read:

Genesis 2:18 //

“It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him.”

“This particular verse is not specifically talking about a marriage relationship but instead it is actually giving us the framework by which we are to live in community with one another! It is only when we come together that we are truly whole. It is only then that our weaknesses are filled by other people’s strengths and vice versa.”

Romans 12:6-8 // Acts 2:42-47 // 1 Corinthians 12:24-26 // Galatians 6:2

Denomination or Non-Denomination:

The term denomination means, ‘to have a name.’ There are many local churches across the world that share a same set of beliefs within Christianity. A denomination is a term that would describe a large group of people or churches that are spread throughout the world. A non-denomination is a group that does not find an affiliation with any larger named entity. Denominations are branches of the Protestant Church with examples like: Baptist, Pentecostal, Alliance, Evangelical.

Authentic Community:

“To be part of a community where you are loved and valued, where you can both give and receive, and where you are able to bring the unique talents that God has given to you is an amazing gift that God has given to the local church. Unlike many of the other “communities” that we encounter in our world there is a massive difference between knowing **about** something and being **a part** of something.”

Consumeristic Culture: Living in such a way or in the mindset of only what you can get out of something. This mindset can affect the way we view Church, worship and how we see community.

SUPPORTING QUESTIONS

- **Are you part of a real authentic community? What does it look like? Do you just know about this community or are you known by this community?**
 - What do you define as authentic community?
 - What does authentic community look like with Jesus?
 - What are ways you create intentionality with Jesus?
- **Have you often viewed the church in terms of what you can get out of it, not what you can contribute to it? Do you believe our consumeristic culture has affected how you view church?**
 - Why is it so much easier to point out what's missing in a community/church rather than see what positives there are?
 - What percentage of consume and contribute would you place on yourself in how you view the church and community?
 - Where in your relationship with Jesus is He asking you to contribute?
 - Do you think God shows you what is missing in a church/community because you are someone who can create and cultivate it? Contribute rather than consume?
- **What steps do you need to take to contribute to your church community? Are there people that come to mind that you could be more intentional with in community?**
 - What fears or hesitations are stopping you from pursuing or contributing to your community?

DISCUSS

- **Authentic Community is found when we decide to make contributions into the relationships around us. How would you rate your community on authenticity? (1 – non-existent // 10 – I feel known)**
 - **Why is community such a high value to God? Why should it be a high value to us?**
 - **Read Acts 2:42-47, what portions of this community can your current community begin to reflect?**
 - **Read 1 Corinthians 12:7-30, What do you find is hardest to contribute? In regard to the gifts God has given you, what do you think you bring to your community?**
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NEXT STEPS

- 1.) What you long for or hope to see in community might be the very thing God is asking you to contribute to. Ask God to give you wisdom in how you could contribute and boldness to execute it in the next coming weeks.
- 2.) Jesus longs for authentic community with you. Read James 4:8. Where can you begin to contribute to the relationship you have with Jesus?

THE CHURCH

EPISODE 4 | SERVING

BIG IDEA

A focus on asking God where we can play a significant role in serving Jesus, His church, and the needs around us.

KEY TERMS & SCRIPTURE

Passages to Read:

1 Peter 4:10-11 //

“God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another. Do you have the gift of speaking? Then speak as though God himself were speaking through you. Do you have the gift of helping others? Do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies. Then everything you do will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ. All glory and power to him forever and ever! Amen.”

John 13:12-14 // Matthew 20:28 // Acts 2:44-45 // Isaiah 58:6-7 // 1 Corinthians 12:24-26

Missionary:

An individual called by God and the church, to be sent and carry-on God’s work in areas of need either locally or globally. What they carry into these areas of need is the Gospel message of Jesus, to actively aid or bring relief, to bring charity and help create self-sustainable living with the people groups & communities in need.

Key quotes from this episode:

“Serving is all about being selfless.”

“Think about how you can be serving your parents and how they have served you from infancy.”

“Think about what Jesus did on the cross for us. The ultimate love and sacrifice; the ultimate act of service.”

SUPPORTING QUESTIONS

- **Have you ever seen something happening and thought, “I need to do something about that?” What did you do?**
 - How do you normally feel after giving a helping hand? Did you have a sense of accomplishment? Joy? Exhaustion?
 - What has stopped you from ‘doing something about it’? What were some of those underlying factors that kept you from doing something?
 - Has there been moments, or even now, that God is asking you to do something about a situation? Where is He nudging you to serve?
- **Have you ever felt discouraged by the amount of need in the world and unsure of how you can help? What did you do in response to this feeling?**
 - What are some of the injustices in this world that you believe we as a Church can have more of a participating hand in?
 - Where areas of need and injustice have you seen the church walk away from?
 - In your community, neighborhoods, schools, workplaces, etc – Where do you see the last, least, little and nearly dead? These are individuals who may be struggling, alone, hurting, or are physically/emotionally/spiritually dying.
- **Why is serving others important? What should our motivation to serve be?**
 - What do you think the Disciples thought when they saw their teacher, Jesus, wash their feet? What was the response they had?
(John 13:1-17)

DISCUSS

- **What giftings do you believe God has given you that may add to the community, the church, or a need that is currently around you?**
 - **What next steps do you believe God is asking you to trust Him and step into? Do you believe God is able to use you? Why or why not? (1 Timothy 4:12)**
 - **Read Acts 2:42-47. What surprises you the most about the early church? What portion of this description of the early church excites you? Where do you think the Holy Spirit is able to use you and reflect the same heart that Jesus had for the Church?**
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NEXT STEPS

1.) Would you consider asking Jesus what areas He may be asking you to serve others? Or how you can be a part of the church? Would you step into one or all of these actions in the next two weeks?