

SESSION 1: JESUS ESTABLISHES HIS CHURCH

Watch the video or read the script together as a group; then discuss the following questions. Keep in mind the questions are meant to prompt conversation, so don't feel the need to use or discuss every question.

BIBLE REFERENCES

John 17; Matthew 28:16-20; John 20:19-23;
Matthew 16:19; John 16:12-15

QUESTIONS

1. At the end of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew, chapters 5-7), the listeners marvel at what they heard because Jesus spoke with authority, not as the scribes. Shortly before His ascension, Jesus told the 11 apostles that "all authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." Outer authority is given and is reflected in a title/position. Inner authority is developed from what a person believes or learns. How did Jesus express His inner authority? Do you have inner authority?
2. Looking back on the 2000 year history of the church of Jesus Christ, it seems like a "given" that the church would be established and function, and that the gospel would continue to be spread after Jesus' ascension. What do you think were some of the obstacles and challenges faced by the church in its infancy? What are the challenges the church faces today?
3. Consider this statement: *The wonder isn't that there are living apostles today, but that Jesus Christ is alive in the apostle ministry.* What does that statement mean to you?
4. What does the duality of Jesus, True God and True Man, mean to you? How do you understand it? How would you explain it someone?
5. How do you understand the dual nature of the church of Jesus Christ?
6. What are ways to continually grow in our understanding of God's plan of salvation? How are you part of it?

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7. Jesus knew who He was and His purpose. How do we come to know who we are and what our purpose is?

8. Discuss how the Holy Spirit equips individuals for their unique calling.

SESSION 2: JESUS ESTABLISHES HIS CHURCH

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BIBLE REFERENCES

1 Corinthians 9:2; 2 Corinthians 3:1-3, 5:20

QUESTIONS

1. How can we, individually and as a congregation, give evidence of the apostle ministry to the world?
2. As members in the Body of Christ we are called upon to support the apostles in their commission described in Matthew 28:18-20. How do we go about that?
3. The word doctrine is defined as something that is taught or teachings collectively. What is the "apostles' doctrine" referenced in Acts 2:42? *And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.*
4. People often make assumptions about parents based on the words and actions of their children. When a child is well behaved and respectful, adults say that their parents are raising them well. As children of God, our actions reflect our Heavenly Father. How do our actions provide the world around us a testimony about our God?
5. When talking with others about your beliefs, how can you avoid "testifighting"?
6. Why have you chosen salvation in Christ? Is this a choice you make only once?

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SCRIPT & ADDITIONAL CONTEXT

SESSION 1: JESUS ESTABLISHES HIS CHURCH

Welcome back. We are drawing closer to Holy Week, and the holy days of Palm Sunday, Good Friday, and Easter, the time when Jesus Christ's victory was won. In this session we will explore how Jesus laid the foundation for the further progression of God's plan of salvation after His death, resurrection, and ascension.

Jesus Christ was sent to earth by God, and was given the authority, sanctification and blessing sufficient to redeem mankind and give them eternal life. We read in John 17, Jesus' "high priestly" prayer: *"Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him [Jesus Christ] authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him."*

Jesus knew who He was, and His purpose (inner authority). He carried it out perfectly. When He began His ministry, He gathered disciples - men who would walk with Him, learn from Him, and, after His ascension, carry on with God's plan of salvation. Those disciples didn't always understand who Jesus was, why He had been sent, or how He would accomplish what He had been sent to do. Nor did they always understand what they were called, equipped, and then sent to do. Gradually, incrementally, their understanding grew. It is the same for us. We are to continually grow in our understanding of God's plan of salvation and our purpose in it.

Jesus Christ knew that His time on earth was limited. He knew that His sinless life, sacrificial death, resurrection, and ascension were absolutely essential to God's plan of salvation, but those victories alone would not complete it. Jesus Christ knew that after His ascension, there must be a mechanism through which human beings could gain access to the eternal life that His victory offered. That mechanism would be the church of Jesus Christ.

So while on earth and exercising the authority given Him, Jesus promised to establish His church, and to give the church a ministry. *"And I [Jesus] also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."* His church would be the mechanism that would convey His Gospel message, dispense sacraments of salvation, make disciples of Christ, and assemble believers to praise and worship to God.

His church was established on Pentecost, and it has continued to exist without interruption to this day.

The church that Jesus established has a dual aspect, just like Jesus Christ Himself. Jesus is true God, and true Man. To some, His humanity was more apparent than His divinity. The invisible aspect of the church of Christ is that which is divine. The visible aspect of His church is that which is done by human beings.

Jesus gave one ministry to His church to enable it to carry out its purpose – the Apostle ministry. The word apostle is a derivation of the Greek word *apostolos*, which means "one who is sent." Ministry also has a dual aspect. There is the ministry, which is God-given, invisible, and perfect. Then there are the human beings who occupy the ministry, who are God-chosen, visible and imperfect.

Jesus gave direction to the Apostles regarding how they were to lead His church. He gave the "great commission" to the ministry [Matthew 28:16-20]. Jesus delegated some of His authority to the Apostle ministry, again in order to carry out the purpose of His church, as it says in John 20: *As the Father has sent Me, I also send you...If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."* [Matthew 16:19, John 20:19-23] He promised the ministry the help of the Holy Spirit in a very special way. In John 16: 12-15, we read, *"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you."*

What is the role of the Apostle ministry in the church of Jesus Christ? Let's examine some biblical statements. (some statement about bible verses)

The apostle ministry is...

- To be the ministry of reconciliation, and ambassadors for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:18-20)
- To proclaim forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus Christ (John 20: 23)
- To baptize in the name of the triune God (Matthew 28:19)

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SCRIPT & ADDITIONAL CONTEXT

SESSION 2: JESUS ESTABLISHES HIS CHURCH

Last week we delved into how Jesus set up the church and the apostle ministry on earth to continue the mission He gave. We also briefly discussed the responsibilities of the ministry. The apostles are proof of the ministry Christ established to the congregation and the congregation is proof of the apostle ministry to the world. Today we're going to discuss how the apostle ministry is evident through our actions as Christians.

Apostle Paul was not one of the original 12 Apostles. During his ministry, there were many who doubted that Apostle Paul was an Apostle of Jesus Christ. What proof did Apostle Paul offer of his apostleship?

To the congregations he boldly asserted that he was an Apostle. Eleven of his letters included in the New Testament begin with a reference to him, Paul, as being an Apostle of Jesus Christ.

But he also told the congregations that they were the proof of his Apostleship. *"If I am not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord."* (1 Corinthians 9:2)

It is the same today. We can talk about the Apostle ministry being the only ministry Jesus established for His church. We can rebut arguments that the Apostle ministry was given to and intended for the early church only, or that to be an Apostle one had to see the resurrected Christ. But discussions like that can soon devolve from testimony to *"testifighting"*. The real evidence of the present day occupation of the Apostle ministry must be in our congregations.

Let's consider these remarks from Chief Apostle Schneider:

Recently in a message to the apostles the Chief Apostle outlined a responsibility: "As children of God, we have the commission to draw mankind's attention to the fact that living Apostles are at work today."

In 2 Corinthians 3 we read how Apostle Paul wrote to the congregation of how they became evidence of his work: *Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or do we need, as some others, epistles of commendation to you or letters of commendation from you? You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart.* (cf. 2 Corinthians 3: 1-3). When the apostles accept this responsibility and truly represent

Christ, the Church becomes proof of the importance and the effectiveness of this ministry established by Christ to carry out His mission and to point us to Christ.

Let us focus on the commission of the apostolate, as Paul described it: *"Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God"* (2 Corinthians 5: 20). Chief Apostle Leber helped us rediscover the importance and benefits of repentance. Proclaim the Lord's grace, preach repentance and lead by example!

"It is for us [the congregation] to prove that the Apostles truly have the power to proclaim the forgiveness of sins! Let us show the world that New Apostolic Christians:

- are willing to reassess and are committed to change;
- are willing to forgive and reconcile;
- are committed to oneness.

"Such behavior earns us God's blessing and arouses interest of the apostolate in our contemporaries."

In these quotes we find characteristics of what it means to be a disciple of Christ. These characteristics must be visible in our lives, and we must grow and develop them as we become more like Christ. Our discipleship in Him, shown to the world through our actions, is proof of the importance and effectiveness of the apostle ministry to those around us. Together, as the apostles and as members, we reflect Christ to the world as we continually align our lives to Him, demonstrating His love and offer of salvation to all.

ADDITIONAL CONTEXT

Catechism References

The Third Article of Faith 2.4.3

The Fourth Article of Faith 2.4.4