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Week 8 – The Church

Introduction:

“Church” = Greek work *EKKLESIA*

- from *EK* (out from)
- and *KALEO* (to call)

The Church is Christ's body of “_____ ones”

Matthew 16:13-18

Matt. 16:16

Peter = “little rock, small stone”

Rock = “bedrock, foundation stone”

The Foundation of the Church – Three Critical Truths...

1. Faith is the _____ (Matt. 16:18)
(...upon this rock...)
2. Christ is the _____ (Matt. 16:18)
(...I will build my church...)
3. We are the _____ and the _____ (Matt. 16:18)
(...and the gates of hades will not overcome it)

The Big Idea:

Jesus alone is the builder of His church – and He calls out to anyone who will confess Him by faith as Lord and Savior...

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS AND PERSONAL REFLECTION:

Personal Life:

1. When you were growing up, what was your understanding of the word "Church?" Was it a building? A gathering? Something else? What influenced this perspective?

Ponderings:

2. **Ephesians 3:1-13** is one of the clearest passages describing the nature and purpose of the church (ekklesia) of Jesus Christ. Read this passage together and discuss the following as a group...

The word "administration" (vs. 2) means "dispensation" or "stewardship" and refers to a new spiritual "economy" whereby humanity can relate to God. How has the spiritual "economy" changed between the Old Covenant (Law) and the New Covenant (Grace)?

In reference to this new "administration of God's grace" (the church), Paul says that it was a "mystery" hidden from the former generations (vs. 4-5). Some Christians believe the church now "replaces" Israel in God's plan. Others believe the church to be something new and unique from Israel, but that God still has a special plan for Israel as a nation. Do you have any opinions about this? Do these verses give any insight? Explain...

How did Paul characterize his place as a "servant" of the gospel (vs. 7)? How is this characterization true of you and every believer in the present day?

Paul's humanity comes through in describing himself as "less than the least of all God's people" (vs. 8) and unworthy in himself to be called to preach. Why do you think this image was a part of Paul's psyche? Have feelings of unworthiness ever prevented you from allowing the Lord to use you? Explain...

Try to re-state in your own words the essence of verses 10-12...

Promptings:

3. Close with group prayer using the remaining of Ephesians 3 as your guide (vs. 14-21). Take the words and pray them for yourselves as a Life Group.