



Who is PORTICO?

PORTICO
LEARNING HUB



ESSENTIALS - MODULE 3



"There are millions of Christians around the world who belong to God's Church. They meet on different days, different times and in all kinds of places. Some use elaborate cathedrals, while others meet in someone's living room. They meet on Friday nights, Sunday mornings or even Wednesday afternoons. There is no recipe for what makes a church "right".

Even though there is no "right way" to do church, most people would agree that there is a "right" church for them. Some of us like bigger churches, others prefer the small and more personal expressions. Some like traditional expressions of church and others like a more modern/contemporary feel.

In this Module, we will walk through an understanding of what makes a church a church, and how we express that at PORTICO."

Rick Carroll

Key Topics

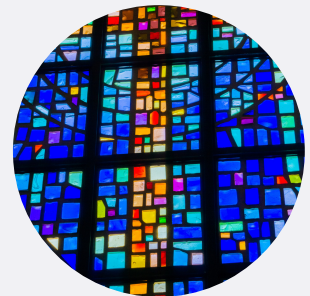


01

WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

02

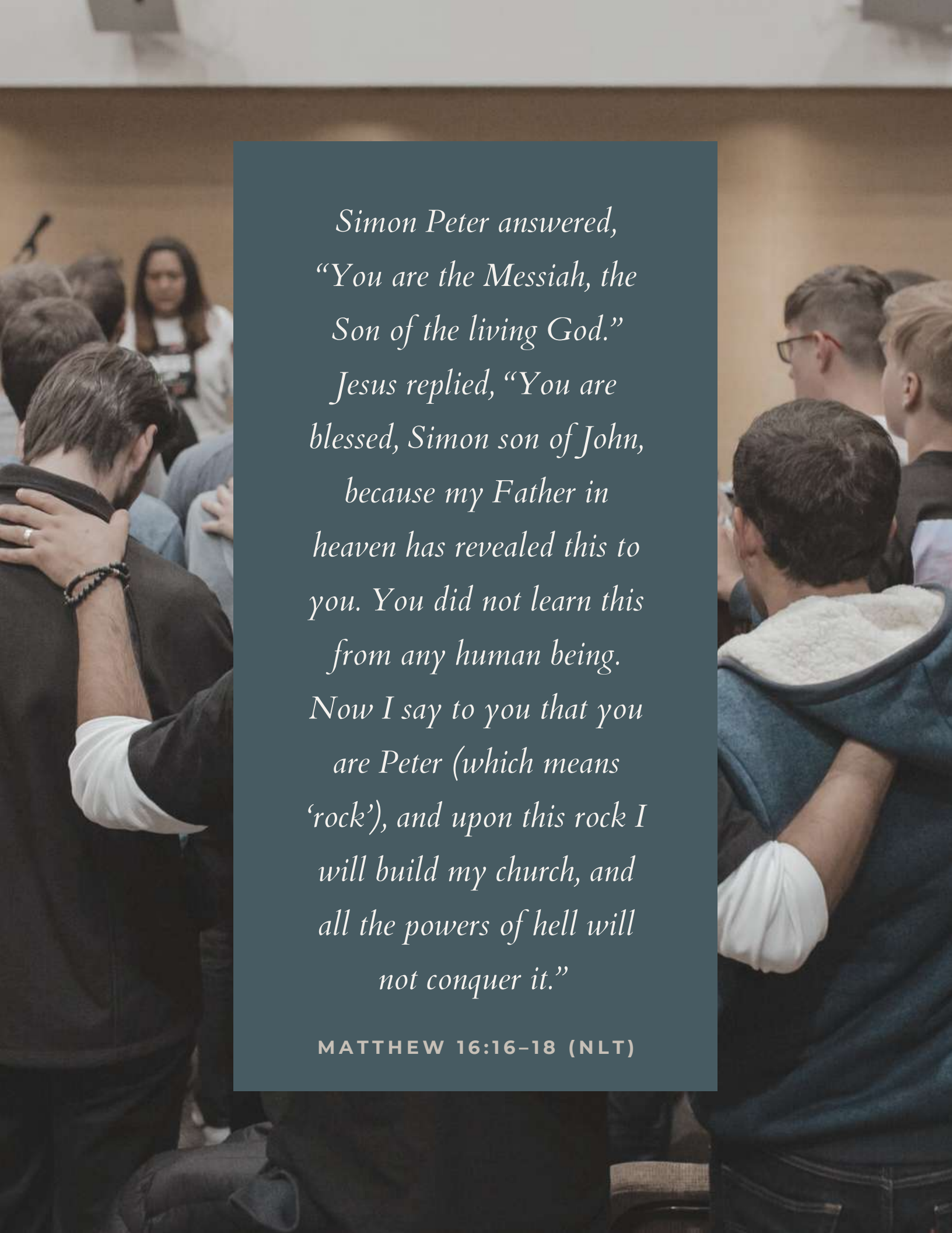
WHY ARE THERE SO MANY
DIFFERENT CHURCHES?



03

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO BELONG
TO A LOCAL CHURCH



A photograph of a church service, showing the backs of several people in the foreground. A dark teal rectangular box is overlaid on the center of the image, containing white text. The text is a quote from the Bible, specifically Matthew 16:16-18 (NLT).

*Simon Peter answered,
“You are the Messiah, the
Son of the living God.”
Jesus replied, “You are
blessed, Simon son of John,
because my Father in
heaven has revealed this to
you. You did not learn this
from any human being.
Now I say to you that you
are Peter (which means
‘rock’), and upon this rock I
will build my church, and
all the powers of hell will
not conquer it.”*

MATTHEW 16:16-18 (NLT)

01

What is the Church?

We've really messed people up over the years by calling our buildings churches. The word "church" actually has nothing to do with physical buildings or structures. "Church" is the Greek word "Ecclesia" and it means the gathering of people who ARE the church.

So you can never attend a church, but you can attend a gathering of the church. And since we typically gather in buildings in North America, we've called those buildings churches, which has added to the confusion.

**The Church represents all people who believe that
Jesus Christ is both Lord and Saviour.**

You alone as one person are a Christian, not a church. When Christians gather together, we are the Church.

If you've ever been to church, it doesn't take long to make an assumption that there is a pretty specific way that we're supposed to do church. That assumption leads to thinking that some churches are right and some are wrong.

Some churches focus on when you sit and when you stand. Other churches make a big deal about what you wear. The language seems very formal and Holy. Almost every church in a specific denomination seems to do it pretty much the same - although different from other denominations. Confused yet?

What makes a church is the people.

The funny thing is that none of all these details are all that important. In the Bible, there are actually only a very few things that we're told we must do when we meet together as the Church.

No matter if you're dressed up or casual, sitting or standing, in a big building or a home, here is what is supposed to stay consistent:

- *We align under Jesus as Head of the Church. Not the pastor or priest. Not any other god. Jesus Christ as the head, worshipping God as Father/Son/Spirit.*
- *We read and teach the Bible, as given to us by the early church apostles and leaders. The completed Bible work as first brought together in the 2nd century. That's our truth.*
- *We participate in corporate worship and communion with God our Father.*
- *We evangelize by sharing the truth of Jesus, making disciples and baptizing them.*



There are thousands of different ways to function as a church.

The rest is pretty much up to our best ideas and plans for how to do it in functional and organized ways. The New Testament churches met in homes, the temple, smaller synagogues, even outside. They had lavish meals and parties, or had times of reflection and solitude.

As long as we are following Jesus commands and examples, we are participating in His worldwide church.

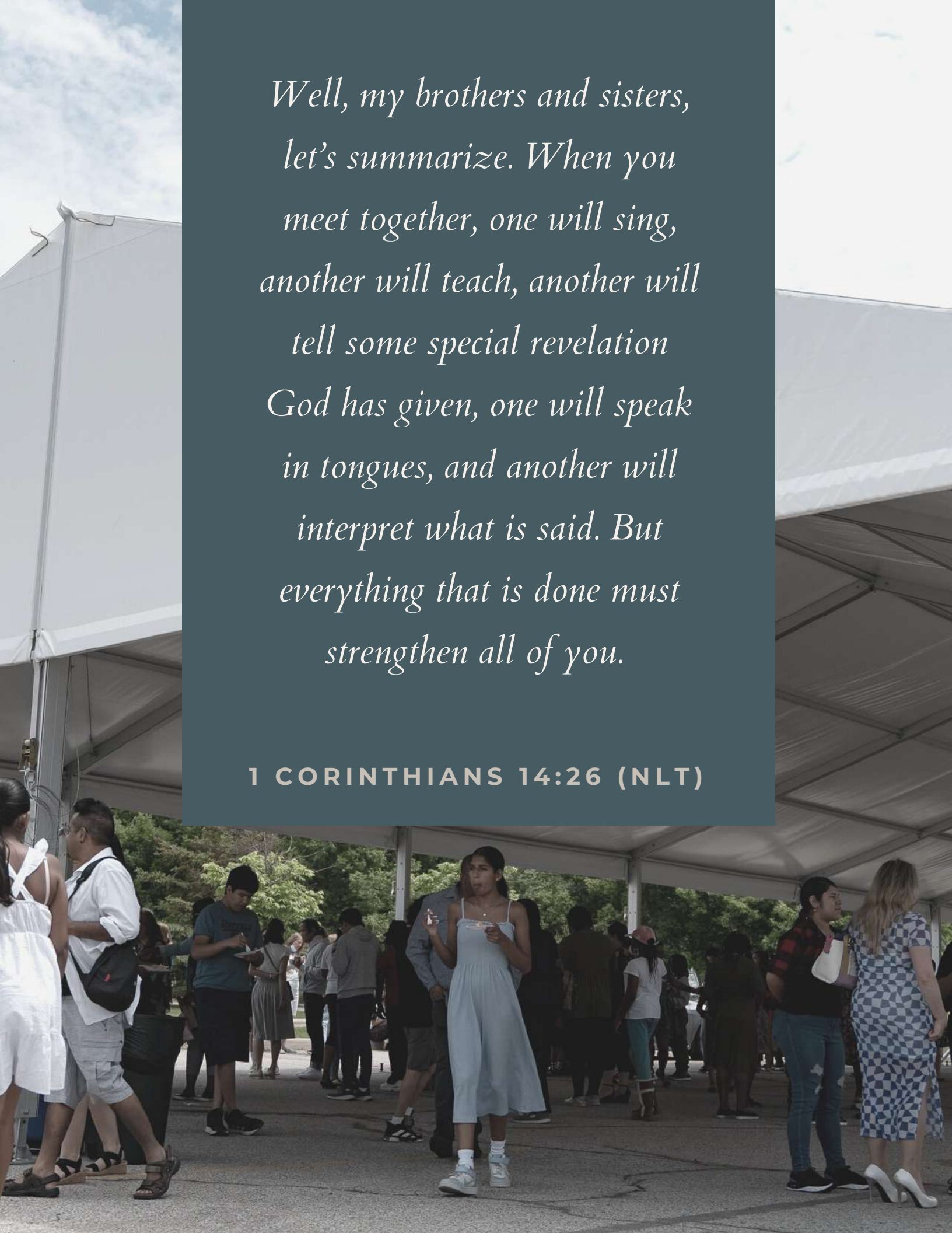
Anywhere, that a group of believers, committed to being together, gather for worship with Jesus as the Head, this is the Church.

If the method was that important, Jesus would have been more specific with Peter.

Jesus wasn't more specific. He just told him to go and make disciples.



We're called to go and make disciples.



*Well, my brothers and sisters,
let's summarize. When you
meet together, one will sing,
another will teach, another will
tell some special revelation
God has given, one will speak
in tongues, and another will
interpret what is said. But
everything that is done must
strengthen all of you.*

1 CORINTHIANS 14:26 (NLT)

Paul made an effort to teach new believers at the church in Corinth to do church God's way, not their way.

Paul's instructions were simply to strengthen and encourage each other in the faith.

PORTICO is not a building or the people who work there. It's a group people who have committed to growing in their faith together with others Christian believers.



PORTICO is a group of followers of Jesus.

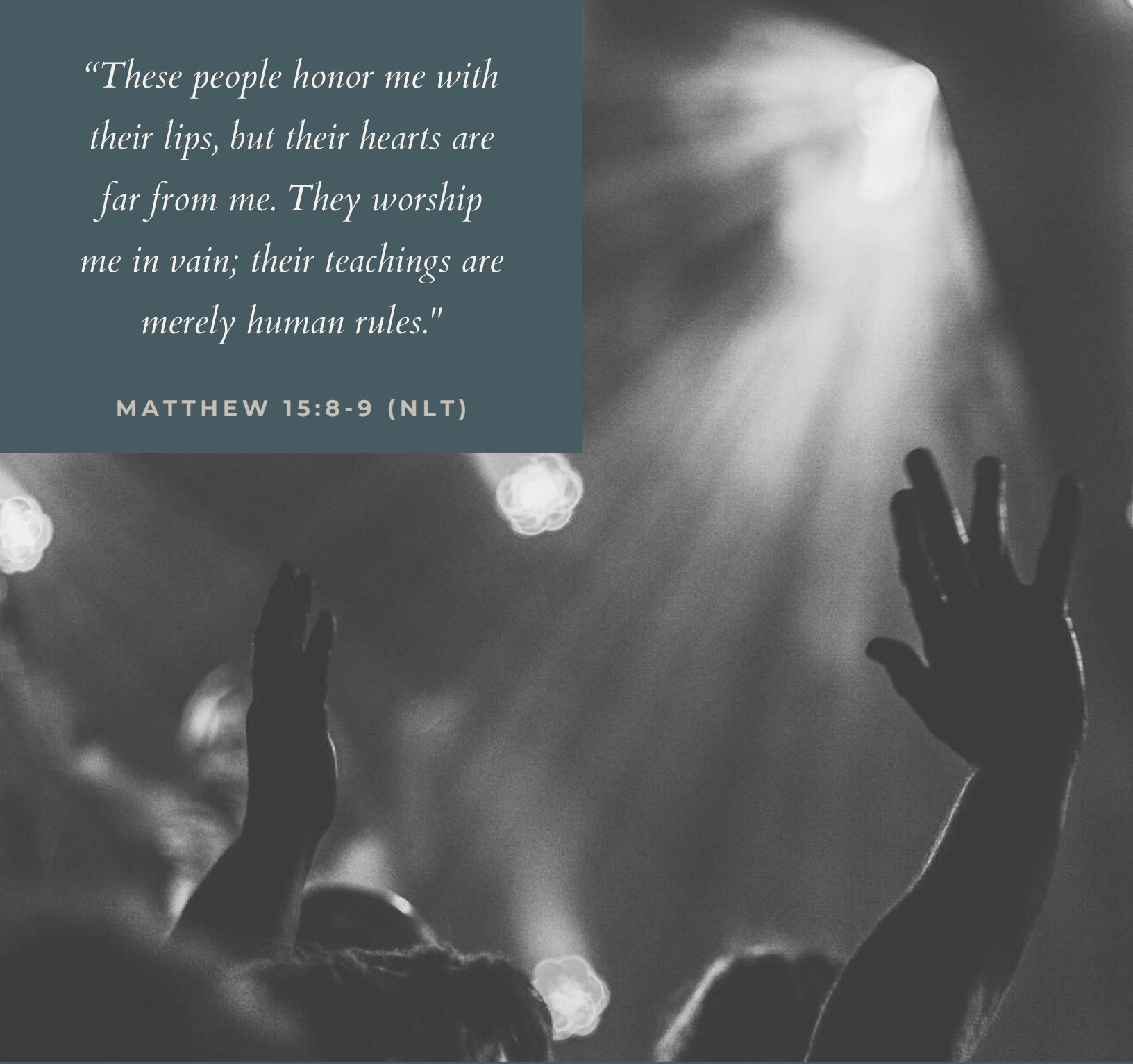


Reflection #1

Do you have a good understanding of how the Bible defines “church”?

Who are you regularly meeting with to strengthen your faith?

Notes



“These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules.”

MATTHEW 15:8-9 (NLT)

For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ, like putting on new clothes. There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

GALATIANS 3:26-28 (NLT)

02

Why are there so many different churches?

Since the Church is people, and since people express themselves culturally, imperfectly, emotionally, we will have different preferences and styles that are just as unique and imperfect as we are. None are better, more holy, more right than others. We have messed this up for sure over the years.

Some will prefer a certain translation of the Bible, and feel that it's not as "right" unless they read from that translation.


A particular translation may connect with us, our memories, and our emotions, but it's not better than another translation that dozens of Bible scholars spent years translating. The translations are just different.

Different forms of communion or baptism have also divided the church. For some, if you don't take communion from a Holy Priest, it is deemed improper. For others, it doesn't seem to matter.

While these practices began with good intentions, we end up like the Pharisees of Jesus' day who tried to force religious practices over a relationship with Jesus. Jesus got quite upset with them.

All of us together form The Universal Church - a global and eternal expression of Christ's family. None of us should feel more holy than another.

Human righteousness is filthy rags the Scripture teaches us.



*...so it is with Christ's
body. We are many parts of
one body, and we all belong
to each other.*

ROMANS 12:5 (NLT)

Every part of the body of Christ will look different, function differently, but we belong to each other and have equal value.

Where you fit, and how you choose to journey together in Christ's global Church is not as critical as making the choice to find your place.

Faith is not a singular journey, and to be part of His body means you need to find yourself aligned with other people, committed to functioning together. This analogy of the body that Paul makes in Corinthians and Romans has a global expression and a local expression. Each of us needs to prioritize being part of a local body, following the example of the early church believers.

That's why at PORTICO, we emphasize that we are One Church, One Message, with Many Expressions.

We have campuses in multiple locations, with Communicators who teach the same thing. There is nothing better, more spiritual about what's happening at the Mississauga Campus - it's just the largest campus.

You might like a larger campus, or a smaller one. You might connect better with one specific communicator or worship leader, and that's OK.

The style is not as important as the commitment to be together.

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.

ACTS 2:42-47 (NLT)



Reflection #2

What expression of the church fits best for you?

Why is it important to set aside time for "church" each week?

Notes



*Jesus called out to them, "Come, follow me,
and I will show you how to fish for people!"*

MATTHEW 4:19 (NLT)

03

Why is it important to belong to a local church?

Believing in Jesus is a singular activity, and you can be part of the body, just off functioning on your own. You're like a strand of hair. It can come and go as it pleases, without changing the overall function of the rest of the body. Your hair can be cut, dyed, shaved bald – but your hair does not affect the rest of your body.

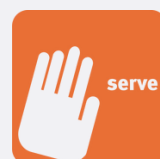
It's because the global and eternal Church, not a cultural expression, is about mission, not about your faith. Your faith is about salvation.

Once a person has faith and becomes a follower, Jesus makes them a part of the community that shares His message of good news to other people. This makes the Church fishers of people.

Your role in a church community is designed to serve into the greater mission of the Church as a disciple-making community.

The wholistic practice of disciple making means we help people **CONNECT** with Christ and His family in worship, we **GROW** together, becoming more like Christ, and we **SERVE** this great mission in the world of making disciples.

PORTICO's Core Values:



This whole process takes people of different giftings, experiences, connections, ages, and energy levels. No one person can be effective at reaching people, helping them to develop in worship, Christian growth, and service to others. This spiritual growth pathway requires a community.

On Sundays, we have hundreds of people who serve as musicians, baristas, kids' leaders, camera operators, greeters, snow shovelers and more. Each has a significant role as we help each other CONNECT to Christ, and His family.

Our desire is that each member of this family, would connect in a growth group, where we take time to study more deeply the messages we hear on Sundays. No one becomes a disciple just by listening, it's a process that requires, reflection, discussion and then action. This happens best in smaller groups, where you figure out how to apply the word of God to your life. It's an important step to being part of this family.

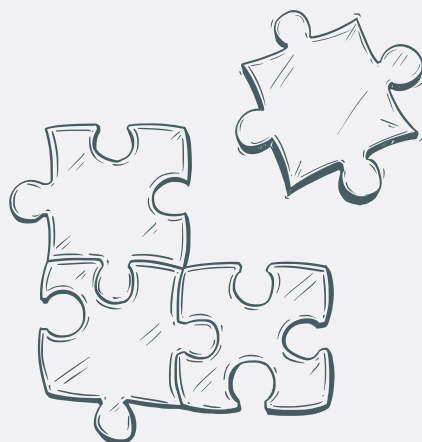


Let's apply the Word of God together.

Finally, we know that an individual of faith can follow Jesus, but only a community of faith can truly make disciples of followers of Jesus.

One person can't have all the answers and abilities to serve, challenge and grow another follower into being part of a Church. That happens when collectively we use our talents, time, and resources to serve the mission Jesus gave individuals of faith.

Our hope is that PORTICO becomes a place that fits for you, to connect, grow and serve.



Don't just attend, get involved!



Reflection #3

Have you made a commitment to be part of a church family?

What skills or talents could you be using at church?

Notes



CONNECT
with Christ and His Family!

[PORTICO.CC/CONNECTNOW](https://portico.cc/connectnow)



I appeal to you, dear brothers and sisters, by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, to live in harmony with each other. Let there be no divisions in the church. Rather, be of one mind, united in thought and purpose.

1 CORINTHIANS 1:10 (NLT)

No one hates his own body but feeds and cares for it, just as Christ cares for the church.

EPHESIANS 5:29 (NLT)

...you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light. 'Once you had no identity as a people; now you are God's people. Once you received no mercy; now you have received God's mercy.'

1 PETER 2:9-10 (NLT)

For we are both God's workers. And you are God's field. You are God's building.

1 CORINTHIANS 3:9 (NLT)

This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one.

EPHESIANS 5:32 (NLT)