

# WEEK 7 - The Church Through History - Good News Travels

Fall Focus 2024 // Canopy Guide

## The Big Story

### CONVERSATION STARTERS

*Use the questions below to kickstart a community building, all-play conversation that connects to our weekly topic. If your group meets for dinner, these might be great questions to share around a table.*

- What is your first memory of the church?
- What do you think it was like to meet as the church 2,000 years ago? How have we survived? What have we learned? How are we still the same?
- Describe a time when the church met you in a special need.

### VIDEO INTRO | STUDY GUIDE

The curtain has been torn. The tomb has been found empty. Jesus has met the two on the road to Emmaus. Jesus has been taken into heaven. The Holy Spirit has descended onto those gathered with Peter. But now what?

How did we go from Jesus' feet on the ground to the written canonical Scriptures found in our Bible to the nearly unbelievable number of denominations of the Church and our own Stone-Campbell movement today? The 2,000+ years of history that separate Jesus' earthly ministry from us has fascinated scholars, authors, and historians, but how does it fit into the Big Story of Scripture (particularly when much of Church history extends beyond the time frame of recorded Scripture)?

Much of what we know about the early Church is found in the New Testament book of Acts and the letters of Paul and others. The Church grew rapidly after the Holy Spirit descended at Pentecost, and was characterized by a desire to serve the poor, spread the Gospel, and love the outcast. The travels and ministry of Paul and many others spread the Church even further, reaching areas that Jesus' feet never touched during his earthly ministry.

After that first century and the writings mutually accepted by the Church as canonical,

our common knowledge starts to fade. There were, however, many faithful leaders who served Christ and helped the Church to grow in outreach and understanding. But there were also some who strayed from Jesus' teaching and lifestyle, and divisions resulted from controversies and power struggles. There were wonderful people and times of faithful witness. There were also some shameful failures and embarrassing times. Overall, the Church grew and bore good witness to Christ, and the general effect in history has been a blessing.

Yet there are so many questions that still linger. What was it like in those early days just after Jesus had ascended into Heaven? How did the Church start organizing missions and sending missionaries? How did they start collecting money to disperse to the poor and needy? Did they ever wonder if they had it right?

Fortunately for us, after Jesus ascended into Heaven, he didn't leave us completely on our own. Instead, he sent the Holy Spirit as our helper and our guide. At Pentecost, the Lord descended on the apostles and believers and added to their number daily. He has continued to do so now, 2000 years later. The Holy Spirit is still with us as we seek to move the mission of Jesus forward in this world.

Similar to the Israelites, the Church hasn't always gotten it right. The Church at times has harmed its people, its mission, and its story. The Church is made up of imperfect people serving a perfect God. We're not always going to get it right, but the bulk of Church history shows us that it's not about us. It's about Jesus, his ministry, and his love. It's about a faithful God who has been present with his creation, working to bring order from chaos with an ever present love. The problem is still sin and rebellion, but we carry the message of hope, the good news, the Gospel of Jesus Christ and redemption through his name. The Church shares this Big Story and plays a special role in it - to advance the Gospel and bear witness to the redemption that comes from Jesus. We are to be people of good news in our communities, who live in, live out, and retell this Big Story.

### **Scripture to Read**

- John 17:20-23
- Ephesians 4:1-16
- 1 Peter 2:4-10

### **Scripture to Memorize**

- Matthew 16:16-18

### **Deeper Discussion Questions**



1. What part of the extra-biblical history of the Church is most fascinating to you?  
What questions do you have that you would love to ask someone?
2. How did Paul's missionary journeys move the Gospel forward?

3. What can we learn from the early Church? What do you think we could do better?

## PRAYER

Thank God for the gift of the Church and our role to care for and extend this community as Christ commissioned us. Ask for the Holy Spirit to guide us and give us a spirit of unity and discernment as we work to understand and love the world we live in with the mind and heart of Christ. Make sure to claim some time as a group each week to pray specifically for each other.

## EXTRA RESOURCES/ARTICLES/RESEARCH

1. Check out this article to learn more about how the Biblical canon was assembled through history:  
<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/the-biblical-canon/#:~:text=Although%20it%20wasn't%20until,and%20connection%20to%20an%20apostle.>
2. If you want a pretty extensive deep dive into the making of the Bible (1hr45min), check out this video by Tim Mackie (Bible Project):  
 Making of the Bible [Year of Biblical Literacy] Tim Mackie (The Bible Project)
3. If you want a fast refresher on Church history (like 10 minutes trying to simplify & condense the last 2000 years of history) check out this cartoon video:  
 Church History in Ten Minutes
4. Grandview is deeply grateful to have some experts on Church history in our congregation who can better explain some of the movements and decisions and events throughout church history. Contact Katy if you want to connect with one of our local professors.