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discussion guide for october 22nd

"I Believe in The Church"

Ephesians 5:25



"Yes, I try to find **common ground** with everyone." 1 Corinthians 9:22b NLT

➤ **Launch the Discussion** (11:00 am)

In our culture, many adults are deeply interested in spirituality, but disenchanted with the church as they have experienced it. What are some reasons you have heard or experiences you have had that serve as reasons people feel or think this way?

- List ways you have been disappointed by church before.
- What do people mean when they speak of the church?
- What does the Bible mean when it speaks of the church? Read Matthew 16:18, p. 1276-DSB*
- What would you say to one who believed it wasn't necessary to be a part of a church?

*"DSB" - The "Discovery Study Bibles" on common ground tables.

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➤ **Guide the Discussion** (11:10 am)

*I believe in the . . . **one holy church;**
the **communion** of saints;*

Pastor Tom focused on three words from The Apostles' Creed that capture the vision Jesus has for that gathering of people known as the church; "one, holy, and communion."

1. The body you belong to is *one*, so nurture Christian unity.
 - Read Ephesians 4:3-6 (p. 1537-DSB*) Discuss the mandate for unity found in these verses. How does it apply to Hillcrest? How does it apply to all believers? (see 1 Cor. 1:2, p. 1512-DSB*)
 - What is the responsibility of the individual to nurture unity in the body of Christ? Give examples.
2. The body you belong to is *holy*, so promote Christian purity.
 - Have someone read Ephesians 5:25-27. (p. 1565-DSB*) Why is the church of Christ already holy?
 - What responsibilities do you and I have to promote holiness at Hillcrest?
 - Do you think the power of the church is linked to the purity of the church? Why? How?
3. **The body you belong to is a communion, so improve Christian fellowship**.
 - Read Acts 2:42-47. (p. 1437-1438-DSB*) List elements in this passage that describe the early communion or community of saints. What is fellowship?
 - Acts 2:42 uses the word "devoted." How is the level of commitment related to experiencing real community in a church?

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➤ **Apply the Discussion** (11:35 am)

Read Revelation 2:1-5 (p. 1665-DSB*). The entire New Testament describes following Christ in the context of a group of believers called a church. What positive message do these verses have for us? What warning is given? On a scale of one to ten, ten being in love with the church like Jesus loved her, how well are you doing in your efforts to:

- Nurture Christian Unity? 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10
- Promote Christian Purity? 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10
- Improve Christian Fellowship? 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10

Next week is High Attendance Day at Hillcrest. You can be a part of a significant day in the life of this church if you will devote yourself to prayer for this next weekend and to inviting others to join you.

Prayer Time: (11:45 am)

- Pray for those who share things God is leading them to do in response to this discussion.
- Pray for other shared needs from the group.

- **Pray for absentees by name.**
(Who will contact them this week and TELL THEM THEY WERE MISSED?)

Go Deeper: Use the “*Going Deeper*” section in your personal daily devotionals. It is a great way to strengthen and reinforce what you are learning and applying to your life.

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➤ **Going Deeper**

Last Sunday you discussed the truth that it takes a church to raise a Christian. These passages and thought questions should help solidify your belief in the one holy church established by our Lord Jesus Christ.

Monday, October 23: Read Acts 8:1-4 (p. 1447-DSB*) What happened to “the church” in these verses?

Tuesday, October 24: Read Acts 10:31 (p. 1451-DSB*) How is “the church” defined in this passage?

Wednesday, October 25: Read Acts 10:44-48 (p. 1453-DSB*) How does this passage refer to the unity of “the church”?

Thursday, October 26: Read Acts 11:19-26 (p. 1454-DSB*) How does “the church” cross human barriers?

Friday, October 27: Read Ephesians 4:14-16 (p. 1562-DSB*) What can each Christian do to make the church all Jesus intended for it to be?

*“DSB” refers to the “Discovery Study Bibles” available in common ground.