

Why is the Church on Earth?

Objective: For participants to carefully consider why the local church exists. A search of the scriptures will inform the discussion. Emphasis will be placed on how well both “we” and “me” are doing in the five purposes, and in particular the purpose of mission.

15
minutes

Discovery Activity

There will be three rounds for this team activity. Divide the group into even numbered teams of three or four players. Directions to the group: “Each team will have one minute to brainstorm as many items as they can related to the category given. The goal is to list items that match the “master list” which will be read at the end of each round. The team with the most correct matches wins the competition.”

Round #1: Things that help you see. After one minute has expired, read the list below to see how many correct matches each team has made.

1. Glasses
2. Telescope
3. Microscope
4. Binoculars

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Round #2: Things that cut. After one minute has expired, read the list below to see how many correct matches each team has made.

- | | |
|--------------|--------------------|
| 1. Knife | 5. Scissors |
| 2. Axe | 6. Hedge clippers |
| 3. Hand saw | 7. Whipper Snipper |
| 4. Lawnmower | 8. Chain saw |

Round #3: Things that hit. After one minute has expired, read the list below to see how many correct matches each team has made.

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Baseball bat | 5. Golf club |
| 2. Hammer | 6. Fly swatter |
| 3. Wrecking ball | 7. Gun ("hit the target") |
| 4. Tennis racquet | 8. A wall ("hit the wall!") |

Debrief

1. Find out which group had the most correct matches in the Name that Purpose game. Hand out a team prize.
2. The game is a way for us to begin thinking about the phrase purpose. Each of the categories was introduced with a purpose: i.e., things that help you see, things that cut, and things that hit. With the teams that you competed in, take a few minutes to share your responses to this question:
One of the things that gives me a sense of purpose in my life is _____ and here's why.
3. Bring the room back together and ask a few people to share briefly what their response to the question was.

**30
minutes**

Learning Activity

To transition to the learning segment of the session, ask everyone to close their eyes for a moment and to "point north" with their finger. Ask everyone to open their eyes and to compare how everyone did.

The point to make is this: Having a purpose in life is like having a compass. Purpose is like knowing where "True North" is on a compass. Today, we're going to open up the Bible together to determine what the purpose of the local church is. In other words, we're going to wrestle with the question: "Why does the local church exist?"

Facilitator Instructions: In groups of two or three, look up the following passages. Try to find themes that will help us understand the purpose of the local church. Assign portions of the passages to different groups rather than have each group look up all twelve passages.

For this exercise we will use the five purposes that Rick Warren popularized in his book *The Purpose Driven Church* which are:

Fellowship, Worship, Discipleship, Mission, Ministry

Ask the groups to try to determine which of the five purposes their passages relate to (there could be more than one purpose). After 15-20 minutes bring everybody back together to report in. Lead the group in a discussion about the themes that emerged from the passages. List them out on a legal pad. You'll have to keep it moving along so that you have time for the other pieces of the module.

Scripture Search Passages

Passage	Purpose of the Church
(1) Matthew 28:19-20	
(2) Acts 1:8	
(3) Acts 2:42-47	
(4) Romans 15: 6, 17-22	
(5) 2 Corinthians 4:1-6	
(6) Ephesians 2:1-9	
(7) Ephesians 4:11-16	
(8) Colossians 2:6-7	
(9) Colossians 3:12-16	
(10) Colossians 4:5,6	
(11) Hebrews 10:24-25	
(12) 1 Peter 2:1-5, 9-12	

10-15
minutes

Practice Activity: Personal and Church Assessment

Ask each person to do a bit of assessment regarding the themes that emerged from the scripture search activity. Instruct everyone to give themselves and the church a score on each of the themes using the following scoring:

(1) practiced seldom ... (3) practiced somewhat ... (5) practiced often

For Example:

	Me	Our church
Worship	3	4
Discipleship	2	3
Ministry	3	3
Fellowship	2	3
Mission	2	2

After everyone has a couple of minutes to assess themselves and the church have them pair up with one or two others to discuss their scores. Next, conduct a large group discussion where you ask people to reflect on these two questions:

Question #1: Which purpose are you most inconsistent at living out and why?

Question #2: Which purpose are we as a church most inconsistent at living out and why?

Key Point: Most churches around the U.S. struggle with reaching out into their community. Although there may be things a church can do to strengthen its other purposes, most churches agree that impacting non-Christians with the Gospel is the purpose that they most need to improve.

After making this point, drive it home by quoting an LCMS research finding by Alan Klaas. Ask a few people to respond to the quote after you read it.

A study of 4,371 lay people and 886 clergy in Lutheran congregations provided helpful insights into attitudes about outreach. Fifteen congregational activities were listed. Lay people and clergy picked the top six “purposes of a local congregation.” Evangelism was not one of the top six selected by 99 percent of the laity and 94 percent of the clergy. A more general concept, “bringing in new members,” did not appear among the top six purposes selected by 70 percent of laity and 58 percent of clergy.
(In Search of the Unchurched by Alan C. Klass)

Suggest to the group:

“With this in mind, this study is going to focus solely on understanding and strengthening the outreach potential of our congregation. In future segments we will learn more about God’s heart for the world and His expectations for us to be involved in His mission.”

5
minutes

Application Activity: Interview a Friend **Homework Assignment**

Here is a homework assignment that will help you to apply what we’ve discovered today. In the next week, (or before the next session) take a few minutes to talk to a friend that doesn’t currently attend church. Simply explain that you are taking a class at your church and that you have the assignment to talk to someone who does not go to church.

Questions to ask:

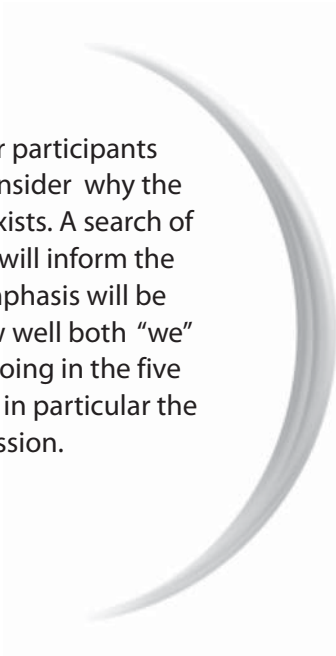
1. What impressions do you have of church?
2. What are some of the reasons why more people don’t go to church?
3. What are some of the needs in our community that a church could try to address?

Wrap-Up

Before closing out the session take some time in pairs or as a whole group to pray for these Friend Interviews and for God to help the church to become more effective in reaching into the community.

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Understanding the Purpose of the Church

Purpose is like knowing where “True North” is on a compass. Today, we’re going to open up the Bible together to determine what the purpose of the local church is. In other words, we’re going to wrestle with the question: “Why does the local church exist?”

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Personal and Church Assessment

Give yourself and your church a score on each of the themes using the following scoring:

(1) practiced seldom...(3) practiced somewhat...(5) practiced often

Me

Our church

Worship

Discipleship

Ministry

Fellowship

Mission

Which purpose are you most inconsistent at living out and why?

Which purpose are we as a church most inconsistent at living out and why?

Homework Assignment: Interview a Friend

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Wrap-Up

Take some time to pray for these Friend Interviews and for God to help the church to become more effective in reaching into the community.