

EKKLESIA

We are the Baptized

- Open in prayer.
- The Bible is an ancient book written in an eastern culture that viewed the world through community. Today we live in a western culture that views the world through individualism.
 - How does this shape the way we look at Scripture?
 - How does it change the way we live? (HINT: It's not about me, it's about we)
- God the Father longs to have His family back so they can bear His image on the earth.
 - Read and discuss Galatians 3:8.
 - Discuss Pastor Derwin's statement, "Instead of reading the Bible and asking yourself what's in it for me, read it and ask what's in it for Jesus? Then you will find what you were created for...God wants His family."
 - What are some ways we reflect God's image on the earth?
- The work of Jesus creates God's new family.
 - Read Galatians 3:14.
 - Discuss Pastor Derwin's statement, "The Gospel isn't just about accepting Jesus as your Savior and going to heaven when you die."
 - What Jesus did in His life, death, burial, resurrection and ascension transforms us. Marinate on what He did for us as His new family.
 - Why is it important for the world to see us doing life together as a new family—a multiethnic, multigenerational, mission-shaped family?
- As a member of God's new family, you are affirming allegiance to crucify:
 - Ethnocentrism
 - Read and discuss Galatians 3:27-28.
 - What does it mean to be "clothed with Christ"?
 - Discuss the statement, "We aren't color blind (diminishing our heritage), we are color blessed (our ethnicities are celebrated in Christ)".
 - Ask yourself, "Do I just hang out with people who look like me, act like me, think like me? Or do I embrace and learn from others who are different from me?"
 - How does doing life together as God's new family break down the barrier of ethnocentrism?
 - Classism
 - Read Galatians 3:28b.
 - What does classism look like today in our culture? (Example: number of poor in our prison systems)
 - How will being members of God's new family break down and destroy the walls of classism?
 - Sexism
 - Read Galatians 3:28b.
 - Why was it important in that culture that Mary, a woman, was the first person to see the empty tomb and resurrection of Jesus?
 - What can we (men and women) do to stop the way many women are treated in the workplace? (The "me too" movement)
 - How does doing life together as God's new family help to break down the barrier of sexism?

- Baptism affirms your inclusion into God’s new ethnicity, called the Church.
 - Read Galatians 3:28c – 29.
 - Discuss the statement, “Our oneness with each other is an act of worship of what Jesus did for us”.
 - How does our being “one in Christ” change the way we look at life? (individualism vs. community)
 - Why is it important to remember that growing in Christ (sanctification) is a day to day process as we become His new family?

- **Soul-tattoo:** Celebrate baptism.
 - What did you appreciate most about our baptism celebration?
 - How did the folks being baptized reflect God’s new family?
 - Do you need to follow the Lord in baptism?

- Before you close in prayer, Read the following excerpt from Pastor Derwin’s Doctrinal Thesis:
 - Wherever Paul preached the gospel, new communities of Jews and Gentiles came into being because of their incorporation into the Messiah. The Messiah redefined their identity as the church of God. Even though the word *ekklésia* (church) appears only three times in the gospels, it probably originated in the earliest Jerusalem church as a self-designation of believers in the Messiah.^[1] The Apostle Paul developed the use of *ekklésia* to describe the Jews/Gentile communities in the Messiah. The term resonated with Gentiles who would have understood the church as a new kind of civic gathering.^[2] Paul’s assignment was to develop local churches in such a manner as to “define the community of believers in ways that did not conform to ancient concepts of community,”^[3] which were divided by ethnicity, class, and gender. Thompson writes, “When he converted people from different classes and ethnic groups, he formed a community that was unparalleled in the ancient world. Thus his task was to build lasting communities, and his letters are attempts at ecclesial self-definition that challenged the common views of community.”^[4]

^[1] Thompson, *The Church According to The Apostle Paul*, 17.

^[2] *Ibid.*, 18.

^[3] *Ibid.*, 19

^[4] *Ibid.*

- Close in prayer.
Pray that we as Transformation Church, would reflect His Ekklesia by living as a multiethnic, multigenerational, mission-shaped community breaking down the barriers of ethnocentrism, classism, and sexism as Jesus lives in and through us!
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