

MPC Growth Group Study – week 1

# Sparkling like a... Church!

Ephesians 2-3

As we meet next Sunday to grant Eatons Hill "Freshchurch" freedom as an independent church, it's a good time to pause and think through what church is all about, and why it's important. The New Testament is full of great metaphors and word pictures for the church – we're a 'body' with many parts that work together, we're a beautiful 'bride' being prepared for her wedding day, we're a family, we're a giant temple being built out of living stones each slotting into place. Clearly, this gathering of Jesus-followers into mutually supporting groups is high on God's agenda for the world.



Church is meant to be great! But that's not always how things work out. Often, our world is cynical about what they perceive to be 'the church', and Christians are disappointed by it. Can you give some examples?

Let's take a quick and refreshing look at God's cosmic plan for his church in Ephesians 2 and 3.

- a. First, take a look at Ephesians 2 verse 1. What problem does the world have?

How much of this is a supernatural, 'spiritual' problem?

- b. According to 2:11-12, what hope did the gentile world have?
- c. According to 2:13, how has this problem been resolved?
- d. According to 2:17-18, what can we now enjoy?
- e. According to 2:19-22, what have we become?
- f. Remembering that Paul says in 2:1 that we're caught up in a spiritual battle, and that the world lives under the influence of the 'ruler of the kingdom of the air' (Satan), what is God's intention for the church? (3:10-11)

"Manifold" means multi-faceted, or 'many sided.' Did you notice that God intends his church to show his manifold wisdom not just to this world, but to Satan as well! It's God's demonstration to all creation of how love works, how unity works, how the curse of selfishness and hopelessness can be reversed. All kinds of people are brought together by His Spirit in the common bond of Jesus Christ. Every time the church grows and extends and hope in Jesus is proclaimed, Satan's kingdom is pushed back further.

- g. What is Paul's prayer for the Ephesian church in 3:16-19?
- h. Paul's words of blessing in 3:20-21 give another eye-popping insight into the importance of the church. In what two ways does he pray that God will be glorified?

The church is God's way of showing both his wisdom and his glory to this world, and the spiritual realms. Maybe sometimes it doesn't look like much, **yet as people hear of the hope we have in Jesus Christ, and see the way we love one another, God is glorified and Satan is horrified!**

What should we be praying for Freshchurch at Eatons Hill? Spend some time praying together now.

### **The Road Ahead at MPC... Praying for "The Next 100"**

Over the past few years, God has graciously added hundreds of people of all ages to our church, at MPC, Latechurch, Village Church and Eatons Hill. The following questions are aimed specifically at MPC Morning Church. Dream a little. If God continues to add to our number, **imagine the next 100 people who will be joining us...** men, women, boys and girls. Think through what we'll need to do to encourage them and include them in our church family.

- a) Of the **next 100** people to be added to our MPC morning church, how many do you expect will be kids?
- b) How many more kidzbiz leaders will we need to care for them, plus others coming through now?
- c) When the **next 100** people are added to our church, how many new growth groups will we need?
- d) Where will we find leaders for these groups?
- e) When the **next 100** people are added to morning church, how much more seating space do we need to create in our building?
- f) People come to our church for all kinds of reasons and from all kinds of backgrounds. How many of the **next 100** people will you pray will be converted from a non-Christian background?
- g) What kind of outreach would we need together to see that many people begin to follow Jesus?
- h) How quickly will you ask God to add the **next 100** people to our church family? (Over 1 year? Five years?)
- i) How many of the **next 100** will you actually invite and encourage to be part of our church family?
- j) How many of the **next 100** people should we send off to pioneer our next church plant? (And where?)

While Paul says in 1 Corinthians that God is the one who gives the growth, he is clear that he and Apollos are called to actively plant and water. In other words, if no seed is planted, and no water sprinkled, God is less likely to sprout seeds! **As a church, we need to spend time actively strategising, mobilising and evangelising while we pray earnestly that God will give us growth. Spend some time praying together about these things now.**