

INTRODUCTION

Jesus predicted that he would start a gathering, a movement . . . what we call church. And that church would spread all over the earth and outlast the Roman Empire. It would change the world. His prediction must have sounded outlandish to even his closest followers. But here we are, two thousand years later, and the Roman Empire exists only in history books, while Jesus' gathering is still going strong.

The church is the hope of the world because the church is the vehicle by which God is bringing the solution to mankind's greatest problems: sin, sorrow, and death.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do you associate with the word "church"?
2. How does the description of the original purpose of the church differ from or affirm your personal experience?
3. What are some things people think make them unworthy or disqualified from being fully engaged in the mission of the church?
4. In light of Paul's story, how might God use those parts of their stories to draw others to him?
5. What are some things you can do to better understand how to use your strengths, weaknesses, and experiences to help draw others toward him?
6. What is your best next step for engaging more fully in the mission of the church?
How can this group support you as you take that next step?

MOVING FORWARD

In Matthew 28:18–20, Jesus invites you to participate in the unstoppable activity of God on earth. The foundation of this movement is not a truth claim. It is an event. So, take a step. It's the most significant thing you can do in your life.

*"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"
Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."
Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed
to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven.
And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock
I will build my church, and the gates of Hades
will not overcome it." Matthew 16:15–18*