



SOMA

THE BODY OF CHRIST

▷ STUDY GUIDE
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SOMA: The Body of Christ

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"I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me." John 17:23 (NIV)

"Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples." John 13:35 (NLT)

INTRODUCTION TO SOMA: THE BODY OF CHRIST

Jesus said two astonishing things about the Church. Many times I've read the above verses but never grasped what Jesus said about the local church. See, I grew up in at a time when Christians believed church membership was optional. "You can be a Christian and not go to church" was widely accepted. Jesus didn't share the same view of Church membership. He said being active in a local church, and loving those whom God loves, is the key to world evangelism and the best way to silence those who attack the faith.

You might respond by saying, "Pastor, we know that. We win people to the faith as we share the Gospel. This is a common belief in the Church but it's not what Jesus says. He declared it's not what we say that wins people to God and silences critics, but what we show the world and its critics. The quality of our lives together is the best form of **evangelism** and the best argument for the faith.

You may say: "Don't we need to share the Gospel too?" Absolutely, but the world will not believe the Gospel until they see the Gospel. If we proclaim a God of love who gave himself for us but are unloving to one another, we lose credibility. People must see the Gospel before they can believe the Gospel message.

This means we must work on the quality of our lives together so that others may see Jesus in our community. If we want to win people for Jesus, convince critics that Jesus is real, and transforms lives, then we must be the "Body of Christ" as envisioned by God and revealed in scripture.

The purpose of the **SOMA** series is to better equip ourselves to show Jesus to the world. You may ask: "How should we treat one another?" Jesus spoke about this in what are referred to as the Gospel's "one another" passages. During this 7-week series we'll look at these passages to learn how we must to treat one another. My prayer is that we'll authentically live out Jesus teachings and that people will witness and be amazed by the love we have for one another so that they are encouraged to follow the same Jesus who has changed our lives.

Make this your prayer as well: "That Christ may be formed in us" (*Galatians 4:19*) that we will become proficient at expressing the same grace and love we experienced through Christ, "who loved us and gave himself for us." (*Ephesians 5:2*)

Tips for Small Groups

Thank you for participating in the SOMA series and leading a small group. Here are some things to keep in mind as you prepare to lead or participate:

1. **Focus on application, not information.** Information for the “one another passages” will be shared in the weekly worship messages. Though you may want to review the content of the message, keep focus on applying the message in your daily life. Answer the question: “How would my life and our church look if the trait discussed in the message was applied every day?”
2. **Don't try to do it alone.** Create a task list and ask others to help. When possible, share the facilitator role. If food is being served, create a signup sheet and ask everyone to take turns. If there are children in your group, plan how to manage their interest or attendance and share the related tasks and/or the cost.
3. **Be prepared.** Review weekly messages and discussion questions well in advance. Ask the Holy Spirit to impress upon your heart the awareness of Jesus' four demonstrative qualities of faith so that applying each one is an automatic response when interacting with others. Small group leaders, minimize distractions by mindfully planning seating, temperature, lighting, food/drink, noise, & time.

Listen to the previous Sunday's message at <http://journeyec.org/sermons> when meeting later in the week or if you missed the sermon. Weekly discussion questions reference the message and meeting success requires the message being firmly planted in everyone's mind.

4. **Limit the small group time to 1.5 hours.** It's a challenge to meet for seven consecutive weeks. Make it easy for everyone.
5. **Keep groups small.** Groups of 4-5 people are ideal for participation. Introverts fade into the background in larger groups
6. **Be patient for answers.** Give people time to think when questions are asked. Someone will respond eventually.
7. **No one dominates.** Encourage quick responders to practice patience and allow others to form their responses. Observe who isn't participating and encourage them to share.
8. **Affirm and follow up on input.** Highlight helpful ideas shared. Follow responses with questions to build community. Ask others to share similar situations they've experienced or about how a truth has shaped their understanding. People won't speak up if they feel their thoughts aren't valued or a certain answer is the goal.
9. **Maintain connection.** Keep in touch via email, text, or social media. Midweek everyone share how living out the weekly focus is coming along. Begin each week with 'Praise Reports.' When the series is over consider throwing a SOMA party to share what God did in your life through the series.

SOMA

Schedule

Week 1	9/17	"The Body of Christ"
Week 2	9/24	"Love One Another"
Week 3	10/1	"Accept One Another"
Week 4	10/8	"Be United to One Another"
Week 5	10/15	"Encourage One Another"
Week 6	10/22	"Restore One Another"
Week 7	10/29	"Serve One Another"

“The Body of Christ”

I Corinthians 12:27

Week 1: Questions

According to Jesus, the number one way for the Gospel to reach the world is through the Church. It's God's primary method for evangelism and His best apologetic (argument for the faith) to a world finding every reason possible to not believe in Him. Jesus said if the Church acts like the Church God envisioned, we'll reach the world for Christ.

But what does it mean to be the “Body of Christ”? It's very helpful that the Apostle Paul used the human body to describe the Church. This analogy is packed with incredible meaning and implications. Some of the implications drawn from the body analogy are easy to see while others require time meditating on the analogy to grasp the full weight of their meaning.

(If you missed the message or can't remember it, visit <http://journeyec.org/sermons> and get caught up.)

1. Being the “Body of Christ” isn't complicated. Just ask yourself: “What did the original ‘Body of Christ’ do?” To answer this question scan the Gospels.

Have a group brainstorm on the things Jesus did and write them down in a list. When this is complete, ask: “What quality of or form of service from Jesus' life stands out in contrast to my own life?”

Identify the trait in Jesus' life that is most lacking in your own and set a goal to work on it during the SOMA series. Share it with your small group (4-5 people) and hold one another accountable. Wrestle with why you struggle with this the challenge you've identified. Don't get down on yourself, guilt won't help you change. Focus on being obedient to Christ's will.

Here's an example: This week's message was about the first two qualities God revealed to us about himself in Exodus 34:6. God describes himself as compassionate and gracious, the same two characteristics seen in Jesus' life. What would your life, your small group, and church look like if you and the church body were more compassionate?

Try this with the word “gracious” using grace to redefine every role in your life. What does gracious parenting look like? What does being a gracious employee/boss look like? A gracious spouse or friend? Small group and church? Steward of money?

2. What qualities or practices of Jesus do we embody as a church? What three qualities or practices are we weakest in? What would it look like for our church body to align itself with the life of Jesus?

3. Everybody has a head. In the "Body of Christ" Jesus is the head (Colossians 1:18). What does this say about our connection to and relationship with Christ?

How do you stay connected to the Head? Be honest. Is something missing that keeps you from responding faithfully to the direction sent from the Head? What things must we stop doing because it doesn't come from Jesus?

4. Everyone's head has a brain that filters and interprets the messages it receives. We must allow Christ to interpret and filter the world for us so we may see what he sees and respond as he would.

How would your day go if you intentionally tried to view life from Jesus' perspective? What would it look like? Would it change how you view and respond to: your boss, co-workers, acquaintances, spouse, children, the person irritating you the one who hurt you the deepest, the rude person you just encountered, and the people you see at church?

Choose a day to begin with this prayer: "Jesus, help me see what you see. Help me interpret the things people say and do as you would. To respond the way you would." Record what happens this day and share it with the group next week.

5. The original "Body of Christ" (Jesus) was "God Incarnate," which means He was God in human flesh and had a physical nature. God didn't remain in heaven and shout down the "good news." He came down to us physically and in doing so became 1. visible, 2. accessible, 3. approachable, and 4. touchable.

As the "Body of Christ" we must embody the Gospel. People must see the Gospel in action in order to believe it. The Gospel must be visible in us first before others are willing to hear our message.

We must be accessible to unbelievers. Like Jesus we must surround ourselves with non-Christians and be approachable.

Lastly, to express the Gospel physically requires touch, being there for one another. We must show God's compassion to those who struggle with poor decisions that have been made.

Revisit the four expressions of being in the physical body of Jesus. What would our lives look like if we embodied the Gospel during our daily interactions? How would this look to others?

What would it look like if our church better embodied the Gospel and was a tangible expression of Jesus? What would change at Journey? What would we add to our ministry and what would we get rid of?

Notes:

“Love One Another”

John 13:34-35

Week 2: Questions

Businesses are known by their brand. An apple with a bite taken out alerts consumers that certain standards of quality, functionality, and creativity have been met. A product stamped with this image you know is from Apple. Golden arches announce to kids that a McDonald's is nearby and mom and dad need to stop to get a Happy Meal. Trademarks, logos and other branding tools distinguish a company.

The Church has a trademark: Love. Before Jesus left earth he gave his disciples a new command, to “love one another.” What does this mean? There are over 28 definitions of love. Jesus defines it for us: “as I have loved you.” (*John 13:34-35*)

The cross is God's icon and love is his brand. When people see a cross it should remind them of God's love for them. And when they experience Christians who worship a God of love, they should come away with the same reminder: “God loves you.” Love must permeate the Christian life and every Christian church that displays the cross. Our behavior must match God's brand. The intensity and depth of love God expressed to us is the same intensity and depth of love we're to express to one another. Loving one another within the Church is a training ground for learning how to love those out in the world.

**(If you missed the message or can't remember it,
visit <http://journeyec.org/sermons> and get caught up.)**

1. “As I have loved you” refers to the cross. The cross is God's concrete definition of love. It defines love in this way: Love is service for the good of others at personal cost without regard to personal benefit.

Use this definition of love to discuss how it changes the shape of your personal life, relationships, service, acts of kindness, attitude toward others, and outlook.

2. Jesus singled out groups of people for us to love. He challenges the limits we place on love and encourages his us to push the boundaries of our love to include:
 - A. An enemy (*Matthew 5:44*)
 - B. People of other ethnicities, especially when there are feelings of prejudice toward a specific group of people.
 - C. Fellow believers and those outside the faith. (*Galatians 6:10* – “especially the household of God” does not mean “only the household of God,)
 - D. The poor (*James 2:14-17*)

Read these passages and then discuss what “loving one another as I have loved you” looks like when applied to each one of these individuals/groups.

When the discussion is finished, identify a person/group that you struggle to love “as Jesus loved us” and talk about why you struggle to love them. What prejudices do you

carry towards them? How can you break down your prejudices so that your heart is open to loving them as Christ has loved you?

3. "As I have loved you" connects our love for God to our love for others. The love we experience from God is to match the love we express towards others.

Does your expression of love for others match the love you've experienced in Christ? What would it look like in your life if the love you've experienced in Christ matched the love you express to others? Apply the answer to your marriage, relationships, friendships, home, small group, and church.

4. "As I have loved you" suggests that if we want to love others the way we've been loved by Jesus, we must grasp and internalize the love He has for us. The stronger our love relationship with God, the stronger our love will be for others.

How is your relationship with God? What are you doing to draw closer to the Lord so your love for Him is hotter rather than cooler?

5. Jesus used another comparison to help us understand what true love looks like. In *Matthew 22: 37-39* He added "as yourself." Loving others "as ourselves" doesn't mean we love people the same way we like to be loved. For example, some people experience love through meaningful touch while others find a person touching them uncomfortable. To love others "as myself" means to show love in a way that the recipient experiences love, what is meaningful to them and not us.

To begin to love other as ourselves means we must first begin to develop a relationship with them. It isn't possible to show love for others in the way they understand and accept until we get to know them. What would it look like in your life to develop a relationship with 1. Members of your small group, 2. Members of your church, 3. An enemy 4. Someone of a different ethnic background 5. A non-believer. 6. Someone of a different economic status?

6. To love others as ourselves means that, in addition to taking on attitudes and actions experienced by others as loving, we also rid ourselves of attitudes and actions that are unloving. Everyone is different in this area and what one person finds offensive is not taken that way by another. However, we all share a common humanity and can come up with a list of attitudes and actions we all can agree as being unloving.

Brainstorm a list of attitudes and behaviors that are unloving. When finished, review the list and discuss how to shed these unloving habits.

7. End on a positive note by sharing a time when you experienced God's love through someone from the church.

Notes:

“Accept One Another”

Romans 15:7

Week 3: Questions

The church is a family and in every family is a variety of characters. All families have members who need a little more grace, yet in each family member accept one another as they are, character flaws and all.

The same is true about the Family of God. We’ve all been accepted into God’s family by grace. The same kind of acceptance we received through Jesus is the same acceptance we’re to express to one another.

(If you missed the message or can’t remember it, visit <http://journeyec.org/sermons> and get caught up.)

1. Read *Romans 15:7*; *John 3:16* and *Ephesians 2:8-9*. On what basis did God in Christ accept you into His family? List all the conditions and qualifications you had to meet before Jesus accepted you.

To help, ask yourself if any of the below were requirements for acceptance:

- Age
- Gender
- Ethnic
- Income
- Marital status
- Language
- Educational
- Physical ability or attribute
- Moral or spiritual condition
- Other: _____

On what basis are we to accept one another? What would it look like if you accepted others on the same basis as Jesus did?

What practices and prejudices must you leave behind to be as accepting of others as Jesus is? Which ones must Journey leave behind?

What new practices can help you become more accepting? What new practices would help Journey become more accepting?

Here are the practices and attitudes mentioned in the Sunday message: Being welcoming and inviting, fellowship, active listening, humility, preferring one another (meaning we refuse to live selfishly but intentionally defer to the wishes of other as long as they do not violate the clear teaching of scripture, thoughtfulness without self-interest, grace, mercy, avoiding judging one another, inclusion, tolerance, hospitality, and openness without prejudice.

Add anything missing to the list and include in your discussion.

2. Share a time when you experienced the radical acceptance of Jesus.
3. Share a time when people made you feel unwelcome. What did the experience teach you about accepting others as Jesus accepted you?
4. In what ways have you felt Jesus' acceptance through those worshipping together at Journey? In what ways have you felt excluded here? What can we do to better demonstrate to others and to one another the radical acceptance of Jesus?
5. Anyone in your small group that you don't really know? If so, pair off to get to know one another better. Share with each other your journey of faith and how you came to Journey. If everyone knows each other make it a point next Sunday to meet and chat with someone you don't really know. Cross a few lines: age, socio-economic status, ethnic, and national.
6. Read *Revelation 7:7-9*. God gives a picture of what he wants the Church to look like. Imagine you were worshipping in a church like He describes. What would:
 - Excite you
 - Challenge you
 - Church leadership need to do to encourage attendance of a diverse body of people to worship together
 - Is there anything you'd consider supporting if it were possible at Journey?

Notes:

“Be United to One Another”

Philippians 2:1-4

Week 4: Questions

Disconnected body parts are something seen in horror movies. Hands, arms and feet are meant to be a part of a whole, functioning body. If they aren't, the body can't perform as it was meant to.

The same thing is true about the body of Christ. It's made up of many parts and that are meant to work together. When the body of Christ becomes disconnected, it can't function properly. No one wants to be around monsters or a monster church. This is why it's vital for believers to learn how to be united with one another.

(If you missed the message or can't remember it, visit <http://journeyec.org/sermons> and get caught up.)

1. The story of Frankenstein is a great example of the importance of unity in a local church. Paul called the Church the “Body of Christ.” (*I Corinthians 12:27*) The human body is an illustration of the Church, in particular, the unity of the Church.

Contrast the difference between the human body and the body of Frankenstein. In what ways is the church more like a human body and in what ways does it seem to function more like Frankenstein's monster? Are we merely stitched together or are we united to one another the way an arm connects to the shoulder?

Have you ever been a part of a church that experienced a split or a horrible conflict that resulted in the Body of Christ coming apart? What was the experience like? How did the community react to the division of the Body of Christ?

How did believers respond that caused the division to worsen and make it difficult to watch or go through?

How can we protect the Church from this kind of debilitating conflict?

2. Read *Philippians 2:1-4*. Identify practices to incorporate and remove that encourage unity in the Church.
3. Read *Romans 12:10, 16, 18; I Corinthians 1:10; 12:25*. Identify practices that lead to unity and ones that do not.
4. Read *Ephesians 4:1-6*. Paul helps the Ephesian church walk in unity by providing practical habits that lead to unity and by encouraging the Ephesians to focus on what they have in common instead of on their differences.

We all share many things in common. How do these commonalities help in bridging differences amongst people? What can we do as a church to connect people better?

5. Put *Philippians 2:1-4* into practice. Pair up with someone with opposing political views. If there isn't anyone, have your facilitator randomly pair people up to discuss this question:

"What do you think about Donald Trump, his presidency, policies and personal life?"

Take about 10-15 minutes and then come back together and talk about the experience by answering these questions as a large group:

- Was this a difficult exercise? What parts were challenging?
- Were you nervous to discuss this topic?
- What attitudes and actions helped to maintain unity in the midst of difference? Do we have to see eye-to-eye on everything in order to walk hand-in-hand?
- Did you feel heard? Did the other person listen well and try to understand your view point?
- Were feelings validated or dismissed?
- What did you learn about being united to one another through this experience?
- Should politics divide believers? (To answer this compare politics to things all believers have in common. Are they enough to overcome the things that divide us?)

6. Close by praying for the unity of Journey and our country.

Notes:

“Encourage One Another”

Hebrew 10:19-25

Week 5: Questions

Every sports team has cheerleaders. Regardless what happens on the field, their role is to encourage the players. This doesn't mean they always agree with the coach's decisions or appreciate the players' performance, but no matter what, they are **for** the team.

The same is true about the Church. We are to be each other's cheerleaders. We don't have to agree with what the leaders of the Church are doing or the conduct or attitudes of others. We all have bad days where we're irritable or we grate on each other. Despite all this, we are still called to be there for each other, cheering one another on!

(If you missed the message or can't remember it, visit <http://journeyec.org/sermons> and get caught up.)

1. “To encourage” literally means “to come along side to help.” Jesus used the same word to describe the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives: “*And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another **comforter** to help you and be with you forever—*” (John 14:16)

The Holy Spirit is a source of encouragement in our lives. Others are the local church and fellow believers. We aren't called to judge and criticize one another. We are called by God to come alongside the live others to help.

Describe a time of discouragement and a fellow believer came alongside your life to encourage you. What did they **say** that was timely? (See *Proverbs 25:11*) What did they **do** that was helpful? Are you discouraged right now? If so, please consider sharing it with the group so they can come alongside and support you.

2. Name three people who encourage you. List what they say or do that you find encouraging.

Are you more of a critic or an encourager? What can you do to turn things around? (Read *James 2:19-20* for help.) Put this verse into practice and you will move from being a critic to being an encourager.

3. What do you find discouraging? List things people say or do that's discouraging. Now list things people can say or do that are encouraging. What would it take for you to be a better encourager?
4. In *Hebrews 10:25* the writer connects church attendance with encouragement. He tells us that a good reason to not skip church is so you won't miss out on the encouragement that comes through both God's Word and His people.

It's expected that when believers meet they are to encourage each other. In *Hebrews 3:13* the writer adds the word "daily." Encouraging people is to be a daily practice. How often do you encourage the people around you? How can you be more intentional in finding someone to encourage each day?

5. What do you need to become an encourager? What are you doing to tap into the resources of your faith that bring you comfort so that you may comfort others? (See *Romans 15:4; John 14:16; Philippians 2:1-4; I Thessalonians 5:11; Hebrews 10:19-25*)
6. Acts of kindness or offering practical help in times of need are great ways to encourage others. What we say to people can be another great source of encouragement. *Proverbs 25:11* talks about saying the right thing at the right time. *Ephesians 4:29* gives the best guidelines for determining if something should be spoken or left unsaid.

Read and interact with the passage. If you take this verse to heart what difference would it make in your speech-life?

End the time together by saying encouraging words. In your small group share something you like or admire about the people in your group. Whatever is shared about you, do not diminish the sentiment. Just receive it and politely say "thank you, I appreciate that."

Notes:

“Restore One Another”

Galatians 6:1-5

Week 6: Questions

Hospitals exist to help sick people get well. Hospital patients don't expect to be ignored or made to feel worse about their situation. They are looking for help.

The Church is God's spiritual hospital. It exists because all of us are spiritually ill and need help to get well. We're all broken and addicted to sin; in need of mending and people who love us enough to intervene. Each one of us is also called to be one of God's "first responders", offering assistance and care for those trapped by sin. God's caregivers remain with one another until those we care for are well.

In *Galatians 6:1-5*, Paul assumes something we don't. – that Christians will get themselves into trouble. More than that, he knows Christians will fall to things that will enslave them, making it impossible to break free of the sin without assistance from others. As a result, Paul teaches the Galatians what to do when a fellow believer is caught in sin.

**(If you missed the message or can't remember it,
visit <http://journeyec.org/sermons> and get caught up.)**

1. What's the default response of people to those who get themselves into trouble?

How do Christian organizations typically respond to those who commit "big" sins: Sexual sins, stealing, cheating, and developing an addiction?

Compare and contrast how Christian organizations and the average workplace handle people experiencing a major moral failure. Which does a better job in your opinion?

2. *Galatians 6* sets a process of restoration for people who have experienced moral failing and encourages us to help those overwhelmed by life. Paul uses the word "burdens." List burdens that can overwhelm us.

What burdens do churches handle well and what burdens challenge them? Some examples are: financial, psychological, relational, marital, and emotional.

3. What needs are you better equipped to handle? What burdens or sins are harder for you? If the church were able to equip you to handle these situations, would you take advantage of the training?

(Group Leaders: Forward responses to this question to the pastors to assist creating a teaching schedule.)

4. Have you ever restored a fallen family member, friend or fellow believer? Please share your experience.

5. Has the Church ever helped you? How would you describe the experience? Did it change your perception of those in moral or personal crisis, or how you respond to the person's need?
6. What's your default response to those who fall? For those with heavy burdens? Are you inclined toward any of the following responses?
- Ignoring them
 - Becoming fearful of them
 - Assigning blame
 - Scolding them
 - Hammering them with truth
 - Enabling
 - Pitying
 - Empathizing
 - Feeling overwhelmed by not knowing how to help
 - Trying to rescue them
 - Teaming up with others to offer help
 - Refer them to the pastor

Why do you respond the way you do? How do you view those who get themselves into trouble? Is your view consistent with how God views those who get themselves into trouble? Is it consistent with what Paul tells us to do to restore a brother/sister?

What would it look like in your life to align your life and attitudes with what Paul teaches about restoring fellow believers?

7. The goal of confronting a fallen believer and carrying each other's burdens is restoration. With that goal in mind work as a small group to craft a process the church could use to handle one of these situations
- Sexual sin: (Choose one) adultery, promiscuity, homosexuality
 - Debt
 - Depression
 - Poverty – They are chronically short each month and as a result lack food, money for medicine, rent and utilities
 - Addiction
 - Crisis: (Pick one) Lost job, suicidal, life threatening illness, experienced a loss due to death or divorce

If you completed this project, please share your ideas with the pastors by emailing the information to us. We have some of these processes for responding to needs already formed. Your input may help us fine tune them. Other processes for responding to specific needs have not been developed so your responses may help jump start our efforts to form a restorative process.

Notes:

“Serve One Another”

John 13:1-17

Week 7: Questions

It's hard to find a full-service gas station today. What is a full service gas station? They existed in the 50's and 60's. It's a gas station where a team of people run out to your car and pump the gas, wash your windows, check your oil level and tire pressure. All you have to do is pay for the gas. The rest of the services come with the fuel.

Nowadays everything is self-serve. We have become a do-it-yourself culture, which makes it difficult being a follower of Jesus because his Church is a full-service station. We are called by God to work as a team to serve one another. Christ came to serve, not to be served. As his followers we are called to do the same, serve and not be served.

**(If you missed the message or can't remember it,
visit <http://journeyec.org/sermons> and get caught up.)**

1. In the sermon the pastor used the phrases “worship service” or “worship selfish.” It's a clever and memorable way of probing the issue of service. Based on his explanation of the two terms, which one best describes your approach to worship? Is your worship service oriented, meaning you have an outward focus on pleasing God and serving others or is your worship self-focused, looking for what you can get out the worship service for yourself?

In what ways can the Church perpetuate the consumer mentality that exists in our culture that the purpose for organizations and institutions, including the Church, is to benefit the individual?

2. Are you serving the people of your church? If so share what you are doing. If not, share what is keep you from being involved in some form of service? What can the church leadership do to inspire and equip you for service?
3. The pastor spent some time talking about the “Why” of service. Why do people serve in organizations, charitable groups, or volunteer for a community service project? Are there benefits to service? How does this contrast with what our motivation for service should be as believers?

(Hint: In case you missed it, our motivation for service is based on what Christ has already done for us and not on what he is doing for us.)

What has Christ done for you already? Make a list and review it. Take a couple of minutes to think about this and, using the space below, write out your answer.

What would your life look like if you participated in a ministry that serves others because of what Christ has done for you instead of for personal blessing or benefit? Have you ever thought about this?

Have you ever served without considering what you get out of it? Who do you admire who serves from this motivation? If someone comes to mind, please share their story with the group.

4. If your group divides into smaller discussion groups, come together as one group to talk about applying what you've learned. Consider identifying a mission you can adopt as a small group.

What's everyone passionate about? If you can identify something, schedule one day to do it and see how it makes you feel. Try just one time. You don't have to commit beyond that but you may discover that the experience was so good the group may want to continue. Let God guide you in this.

Here are some ideas if you are having a difficult time coming up ways to serve the Church and our community:

- Organize a block party and invite all your neighbors. Ask everyone to bring something and to RSVP so you know who is coming. Explain to people the reason for organizing this – "Our neighbors aren't that familiar with one another and it'd be great to get to know them a little better!"
- Your kids participate in Saturday basketball but you haven't met the other team parents. Provide lunch or snack for the group. People arrive rushed and hungry create a platform for building new friendships amongst the group.
- Foodies. Plan a monthly dinner club and invite non-churched friends. A great opportunity to befriend non-believers.
- You have a heart for the poor. Take part and volunteer for SERVE once a month.
- Doctors, consider beginning a free medical clinic at the church or a mobile clinic to reach needy neighborhoods.
- Dentists and professionals with great organizational skills, create a mobile dental ministry. Tap into funds from the government and charitable foundations to finance the work.
- A patch of land is the neighborhood eyesore. Clean it up and start a community garden as a small group.
- Your group loves sports activities. (i.e. bowling, billiards, golfing, etc.) Form a league and invite non-believers (just a handful) and develop friendships within the group.
- Start a second food distribution day at the church and hand out groceries to the community. (All the food we get is free and right now there is an unlimited supply of surplus food that can be picked up from Second Harvest and the OC Food bank.) Take this ministry on as a small group.
- Adopt a school and ask the PTO how your group can serve them.
- Adopt a stretch of highway that is an eyesore and keep it clean in Jesus' name.
- Sponsor a Parents Night Out at the church. Your group will watch the kids while the parents have a free night out together without the burdensome cost of childcare.
- Other ideas: (Be creative)_____

Notes:

SOMA PARTY!

Week 8

Congratulations on completing SOMA!

I pray God used this series to bring you closer to Him and His Family, the Church. We're the Body of Christ and God has a purpose for us. We are to:

- **Love one another**
- **Accept one another**
- **Be united with one another**
- **Encourage one another**
- **Restore one another**
- **Serve one another**

If we live these out principles with integrity together as a church community, Jesus said two things will happen:

"Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me." John 17:23 (NIV)

"Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples." John 13:35 (NLT)

Think about this. People will be drawn to Jesus because they'll see him tangibly in our midst through the depth of our community, and we'll convince those who are skeptical of our faith as to the reality of Jesus. What a mission! That's something worth giving your life to.

SOMA may be over but our efforts to be a faith community who loves Jesus and extends the grace we've received in Christ to our community never ends. We're a work in progress. What God has started amongst us via SOMA must continue every Sunday. We must be vigilant to walk this out until everyone in our community knows the love of God for themselves...a never ending mission!

So persist at practicing what you've learned. *"Continue to spur one another on in love and good works" (Hebrews 10:24)* Consider throwing a SOMA party and sharing what God did in your life during the series.

Write me at pastorrichard@JourneyEC.org to share your stories. Feedback from the congregation is great to receive. I love hearing how God is working in your lives. Everyone will also be given an opportunity to share their story with the congregation at the Thanksgiving service. What a great time to thank God for what he has done in us and through us!

In Christ's love,
Pastor Richard

Notes: