

# BIBLE STUDY: We are the Church!

by Heidi Goehmann

## Session 1

Who remembers this song?

You are the Church,  
I am the Church,  
Yes, We're the Church together!  
All who follow Jesus, all around the world,  
Yes, we're the Church together!

*(If you don't know the song, there are several YouTube videos if you search and it's available on iTunes.)*

Think about your church, the place where you go to on Sundays....

Living Faith, Abiding Word, Christ the King, St. Paul, St. Luke, etc.

What makes you feel like a vital part of your church?

*(Who or what activities? Answers are probably personal, such as "Everyone says hi to me." "I help take the offering.")*

What kinds of activities are you involved in at church?

*(Encourage sharing - youth group, midweek, a particular Bible study, mission team, etc.)*

What would you like to change about your church? Why?

*(This is an important question that many youth have never been asked. In order for them to feel like a part of the community of believers, they need to feel like their voices matter.)*

What do you LOVE about your church? Why?

*(The people they love to see there, God's Word is there, the purple carpet in the narthex always cracks me up, etc. No matter how mundane or serious, again, help the youth identify, that it is their church and they are a part of it all.)*

Let's turn to 1 Timothy 4:12.

\*Timothy was a pastor. He had been mentored by the apostle Paul most of his life and was a leader in the Early Church, but that doesn't mean he didn't have struggles. Let's look at one in particular. Paul wrote the following reading to Timothy.

Read 1 Timothy 4:12.

"Don't let anyone despise you...  
look down on you...  
think less of you..."

Your translation may differ, but the problem is the same. Someone or a group of people thought less of Timothy (or at least were likely to think less of him) simply because he was young. It didn't matter if he was passionate for the Lord, or that he had knowledge and training, or his position as a leader. For some, he was just a young 'un.

Have you ever felt like this? When? How did you respond?

So, what was Paul's answer to Timothy?

Paul's answer has two parts:

1. Don't let them do it!

Why not? First, Paul's answer to Timothy is inspired by the Holy Spirit, so we can be confident that these are not just Paul's thoughts on the matter, but God's.

Let's search the Word to understand better God's thoughts on His Church. Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, emphasizing verse 27.

- We are each a part of the Body of Christ, the Church
- No one can say "I don't belong!" or "I don't need you!"
- We are all a necessary part. (This also means that everyone else around us at church is a necessary part, whether

we like it or not!)

Read Colossians 3:3 and 11.

- v.11 “here” = with those who have died and been raised in Christ
- In the Body of Christ we are not to be judged by our station in life.
- Christ in us, through our Baptism and faith in Him, that is what matters and gives us our place in the Church (and the church – our individual congregation)

2. Show ‘em what you’ve got! (Or rather, what the Spirit is doing in you!)

Read 1 Timothy 4:12 again, emphasize part b.

Paul exhorts (strongly encourages, as in “You can do it!”) Timothy to...

“Set an example...”

“Be an example...”

The Greek word here is example, but also could be model, or pattern.

I like the idea of a pattern. What is different between an example and a pattern?

The insinuation is that it is not just a one-time thing, but our example is an ongoing pattern, the way we live our life is a life overflowing with the Spirit.

What kind of example or pattern do we set in our own lives?

*(This may be a hypothetical question, to get the youth thinking. Some may have a thoughtful response.)*

Read 2 Corinthians 4:6 .

Because Christ is shining in our hearts we can be assured that we don’t need to search for a pattern to set, an example to be. We simply let Christ shine out. Sometimes, even when our lives feel junky, when we are faced with our own sinfulness and the sinfulness of others, we can have full assurance that forgiveness is ours. God the Father has set Christ in our hearts, we need only live in that forgiveness and let Him shine out.

So we can also be purposeful in our example then, living in thankfulness for Christ’s mercy and compassion in our lives...living for Him, instead of the moment, or a certain person we want to impress, or accomplishments we might boast about.

Conclusion: Give every student and yourself an index card and have them write 1 Timothy 4:12 on the front. Ask them to take it with them, put it in their room or place it in their Bibles to remind them of God’s plans for them as part of His Church on Earth.

Close with prayer.

## Session 2

Possible intro – check out the Skit Guys video “This is Church” @ skitguys.com.

The Skit Guys have been at several National Youth Gatherings. This video is a short clip to help youth (or anyone) understand what church is and its purpose on Earth. It does need to be purchased if used.

Otherwise begin below:

Open with prayer.

Reread 2 Corinthians 4:6. Remind the students that Christ is shining in us as we go into the world as His church.

Read 2 Timothy 4:12.

What 5 areas of his life does Paul suggest to Timothy that he check out?

Speech

Conduct

Love

Faith

Purity

Which area do you struggle with the most?

Let's look at each area for our own lives.

### 1. Speech

Think of some examples of how speech can be a challenge in our Christian walk.

- This is not just curse words or potty mouths, but gossip, talking back to our parents, talking down to others, etc.
- See the explanation to the 8th commandment in the Small Catechism if you are stuck.

Think of examples of how we can “shine” Christ in our speech.

- Talk respectfully and kindly to one another.
- Build each other up with encouragement.
- See 8th commandment explanation again.

### 2. Conduct

The Greek can also be translated “way of life”, how we live, our belief in action, what we watch, what we read, how we spend our time, who we let sit at our lunch table...

Think of some examples of how our behavior or “way of life” can be a challenge in our Christian walk.

- Ignoring some people in preference for others.
  - Putting other things before God in our life.
  - See the explanations of other commandments for help.
- Think of how we can “shine” Christ in our behavior.
- See Galatians 5:22-23 for help.

### 3. Love

Think of some examples of how loving can be a challenge in our Christian walk.

- See 1 John 4:10-11. Name some of the people you love, and how you show them.
- Is everyone around us easy to love? God calls us even to love our enemies (including those who just plain annoy us).

Think of some examples of how we can “shine” Christ in love.

- See 1 Corinthians 13:5-7 for help.

### 4. Faith

Read Philippians 1:27. Think of some examples of how we “stand firm” in the Spirit.

In what ways can this be challenging to do?

### 5. Purity

This can be particularly difficult in youth.

Read 2 Timothy 2:22. What “evil desires” are difficult to deal with in youth?

This is what Luther had to say about temptation (well, one thing he had to say about it):

“It is impossible to keep the devil from shooting evil thoughts and lusts into your heart. But see to it that you do not let such arrows (Eph. 6:16) stick there and take root, but tear them out and throw them away. Do what one of the ancient fathers counseled long ago: ‘I cannot,’ he said, ‘keep a bird from flying over my head. But I can certainly keep it from nesting in my hair or from biting my nose off.’” [SL 7, 445f.]

What help can Luther’s advice be when we face sexual temptation (a narrow idea of purity) or any other temptation (a broad idea of purity)?

Read 1 Corinthians 10:13. Remember that what you are going through is not uncommon to man, many before you have experienced it. Also remember, that God will provide a way out. Look for the way out! (Or better yet, look for a way to avoid the situation in the first place, if possible.)

How can we “shine” Christ in the area of purity?

Conclusion: So, we are the Church. We’re not the church of the future, or just the up and coming leaders in the church. You and I, every one of us, are the Church, from the moment of our Baptisms, the conception of our faith, from the

time the Word of God was first implanted in our hearts. Christ invited us in, so no one may dismiss us now. We can be the hands and the feet of Christ on earth, with each of our brothers and sisters beside us. How can you serve in God's Church today? How can you or your youth group or your church in general reach out to a world in need of a loving Savior? How can you be a leader and servant to see this happen?

Challenge your youth to think of some practical ideas for their group or church or themselves.

Prayer: Thank you Jesus, for making me a part of Your Church. I thank You for this time and place that You have called me to. Help me to have open eyes to see the needs of others and to be bold in sharing You with my friends, my family and even people at other lunch tables. Thank You for sending Jesus to rescue me from sin and for leading me to You. May I be Your hands and feet on this Earth. In Christ's precious name, Amen.

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