

September 16 & 17, 2023
Message: Pastor Doyle
Study: Pastor Doug McCoy

In The Groove – Together

I. Announcements & Prayer

- **This Weekend** – worship services **Saturday @ 5pm** and **Sunday @ 9:20 and 11am**. You can listen in your car by tuning your radio to 95.3 FM or watch the livestream on Facebook or thechurchnextdoor.org. **Bring a neighbor! Invite a friend!**
- **Radio Show** – the **Your Next Step** radio show continues **Mon-Fri at 10:30am on The Word 880 AM and 104.5 FM**. The podcast is also available on our website ournextstepnow.com as well as all podcasting services.
- **Special Messages from Africa** – Bishop Evans and Mellen Achanga will be visiting us on September 30-October 1. They will be bringing special messages at each service and Deeper Life. David Josiah Curtis will also be here with special music. Plan on being here!

II. Ice Breaker Questions

1. When you were between the ages of 7 and 11, who was your favorite cartoon character?
2. If you could be two places at one time, which two places would you be?

III. Bible Study

Read **John 3:16–19** (NIV)

16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. **17** For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. **18** Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son. **19 This is the verdict:** Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.

1. What does Jesus say is the “verdict”? How does a love of darkness rather than light reveal itself in relationships? When has the light brought you into deeper relationship with others?

Read **Ephesians 5:25-27** (NIV) and **Ephesians 1:4**

25 ... Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her **26** to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, **27** and **to present her to himself as a radiant church**, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

God chose us in Christ... **4** For he chose us in him before the creation of the world **to be holy and blameless** in his sight. In love...

2. What does the fact that “Christ loved the church” tell us about the need for Christians to be a group? Why does this group need to be “radiant, holy, and blameless”? What would help us do that?

Read **Romans 6:22-23** (NIV)

Slaves to righteousness... **22** But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap **leads to holiness**, and the result is eternal life. **23** For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

3. How is “holiness” a “benefit” and a “gift”? How can we share this gift with the people in our lives?

Read **James 1:21–25** (NIV)

21 Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. **22** Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. **23** Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror **24** and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. **25** But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does.

4. What do you think of the analogy of looking at yourself in a mirror and forgetting what you look like? How can we keep ourselves from forgetting God’s word like this?

Read **Ephesians 2:1—10** (NIV)

1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, **2** in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. **3** All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. **4** But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, **5** made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. **6** And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, **7** in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. **8** For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— **9** not by works, so that no one can boast. **10** For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

5. What two opposing forces do these verses identify (hint: look at verses 2 and 4)? When did you become aware of the conflict between these forces? When do you consider yourself to have been delivered from “death” to “life” as described here? How do you live differently now that you have been delivered like this?

Read **Ephesians 2:11-14; 22** (NIV)

11 Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (which is done in the body by human hands)— **12** remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. **13** But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. **14** For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility...

22 And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

6. What has brought us “near” to God? Now that we have been brought near to God, what are we being “built together” to become? How would you like to contribute to this today?