[[1]](#footnote-1)Week 1 Preaching Resources: Plugged into Community

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Scripture Passage | Ephesians 2:19-22 |
| Focus Statement | The world has never been more connected, and yet feelings of isolation and loneliness are at an all-time high. You have a place and are welcome in our community! |
| ME | Share a story of a time you were part of a team. On a team, particularly a sports team or a band, where people come together to work and serve with a unified purpose. Each position, person has a role, a responsibility. Each part belongs. |
| WE | We can all relate to a place we belonged. On your first day of school – can you remember some friends you made over the course of a school year that you stay in touch with today? Others may be able to relate to a legacy that was inherited or followed at work.  |
| GOD | The Book of Ephesians is a timeless message concerning the unity of the church. 1. As Paul writes this letter there is a strong division between the Jews and Gentiles. Paul is writing to two distinct groups: circumcised and uncircumcised. Despite these strong cultural differences, Paul is emphasizing that they are all brought together into the family of God through Christ. Jesus reconciles everyone through his death on the cross.
2. We are built on the foundation of those who came before us. We rise to be the holy temple of God when our foundation is joined by new, different members of the household of God.
 |
| YOU | If you’ve been here for 50 years, or this is your first day, we love you, you’re welcome here. You belong to the family of God. We want to welcome the stranger, called to love those who are different. We want to be like the sports team that comes together, it takes practice. Paul wrote to the people in Ephesus as they were experiencing division. There’s a neighborhood of people outside the doors who need a safe place where they can belong.  |
| WE | We celebrate the foundation laid for us and lift those who have served this church faithfully. However, even though we are \_\_ years old, we are a new temple. Christ is always calling us to something new. Today is a new beginning of possibility. Rejoice that we have new people who have stepped up to serve the church today. Finally, we will go beyond the doors of this church, as we plug into this community. Will you join in being the new temple God has for the world today? Commit to being kind, joyful, peaceful and loving together. This week – commit to doing something kind for your neighbors. |

Week 2 Preaching Resources: Plugged into Jesus

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Scripture Passage | Ephesians 3:14-21 |
| Focus Statement | Christian community is different than any other group on earth because Jesus is at the center. We are rooted in God’s power and love. As life g gets busy, we can learn how to be plugged into Jesus first.  |
| ME | Did you know that I pray for you? Share some prayers that you have prayed for the congregation. Tell a story about your prayer life. You might include what you prayed for as a child.  |
| WE | We pray as a church every week. Share why we pray the way we do a local church setting, before meetings, and in other places. We believe that our prayers plug us into a power beyond ourselves |
| GOD | Paul, the writer of Ephesians, prays for his people, he boldly prays for more than just strength, health, safety and success, but for the power of the Holy Spirit to dwell in the hearts of the people. 1. Paul is praying, interceding, for others to comprehend the love of God. Intercession is prayer for others. Your parents, or other loved ones, may have prayed for you.
2. To study theology, to gain learning and knowledge is good for us, but what changes us is the love of God. We can spend all our time reading and studying the Bible and learning about God, but until we move into relationship with God and others it won’t change our lives.
 |
| YOU | Plug in and experience God’s love. There are many ways to do this, engage with others investing in your life of faith. This isn’t just one more thing to do. Sign up for a small group as a good start, but what does it look like to really invest in the small group to pray for one another, to commit to doing more than “attending.” Share testimony or an illustration of someone in your church to share how they experienced the love of Jesus through a small group or ministry.  |
| WE | To grow in the love of Christ is intentional, there’s always room for growth. Often, we feel that when we graduate from Sunday school, or our small group ends, we’re done. This is just one step in our journey. The longer you have been a believer, the more you need to be intentional in growing. We grow when we have the knowledge and experience of God’s love. Share a challenge or growing edge of your spiritual growth, clergy accountability or planning for a spiritual retreat. How are you choosing to grow in love? How are we together choosing to grow in love?  |

Week 3 Preaching Resources: Plugged in for Others

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Scripture Passage | Ephesians 4:11-16 |
| Focus Statement | We are here for a purpose. When we plug in, Jesus fills our lives with meaning; but that’s not the end of the story! Jesus sent the disciples to go into all the world – and sends us to do God’s work too. |
| ME | Sometimes the most cherished sports players are our favorites because they were great teammates. The church is made up of different teams including the choir. While there might be some solo selections, the most important function of each member is to sing in manner that does not stand out on their own, but instead blends in with a group sound. |
| WE | Sometimes the most cherished sports players are our favorites not because they were the best players but because they were great teammates. Sometimes those who are very talented miss out because they were not good team players. When Terrell Owens was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame, he was one of the best wide receivers in NFL history, but he was never a good influence in the locker room. He bounced from team to team, and in the end didn’t even attend the Hall of Fame ceremony because he didn’t have a core group of players to go with. While Mariano Rivera was one of the best relief pitchers in baseball’s recent history, the NY Yankee is equally known for his strong team spirit, loyalty and commitment to the pitchers he followed. The church is made up of different teams including the choir. While there might be some solo selections, the most important function of each member is to sing in a manner that blends in with a group and enhances the overall sound. |
| GOD | The Book of Ephesians Paul is instructing the members to support, build up and develop one another in love. 1. In the Body of Christ, each one of us has a different gift and important role. The church and the world need the gifts that God gave us – that’s how we arrive at fullness. It is essential that we help one another to develop our own unique gifts.
2. Each of us are required to grow and build up this body in love. Ideally, we are called to use our gifts in unison with one another.
3. Anything that keeps us away from the ultimate goal of living our lives for others keeps us away from the fullness of Christ. Team ministry is not easy, we need to commit to work together for the benefit of the kingdom of God.
 |
| YOU | Church isn’t about any one individual, including the pastor. We get our greatest joy when we live life and serve together. Lift up something memorable we’ve done as a congregation: Shoe boxes, community dinners, Angel tree, a mission trip are some examples. Many gifts go into making these happen, but they’re not for us, they are for others. |
| WE | We are called to be knit together as ligaments. Each of you is integral in the Body of Christ, in this church. We are better when we work together. How will we go out and live our lives so that others experience and know the love of God? The church is the biggest family that God has created; there are still those who believe themselves to be foreigners and strangers. We need to do more than just open doors for people – because everyone has a gift.  |

1. To find more information, please reference *Breakthrough: A GNJ guide to best practices for worship*, pg. 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)