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TO INSPIRE COURAGE SPIRIT CHARACTER



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WELCOME TO **mettle**  
COURAGE SPIRIT CHARACTER ...

**WELCOME TO** this new issue of *Mettle*.

The Church is more than just a strange building we go to on Sundays. It is a movement of people, committed to following Jesus. In fact, the Church is God's plan for the world. In our core readings, we'll find out more about what the Church is, what it's for and how we can play our part.

Our hot potatoes are Conflict, Decisions and the Future, and The Media. First up, we'll think about the different conflicts we face, what God thinks of them and how we can handle them. Then we'll chew over the many types of decisions we make daily – and find out how to tackle them in a godly way. And, finally, we'll discuss the media – what it is, what's good and bad about it, and how it can influence us. Enjoy!

The *Mettle* Team



# THE CHURCH

**OVER THE NEXT** few weeks we are going to be looking at what the Bible says the Church is and should be like. I should explain straightaway that there is a difference between church (the local meeting place/ the people who meet there) and the Church (Christians everywhere). To help, I will use lower case 'c' for the local church and upper case 'C' for the Church, Christians everywhere.

In the reading today we can see that Jesus is telling one of His disciples, Peter (whose name means 'rock'), that the Church belongs to Jesus. He will build His Church on a strong foundation. This foundation is the people who follow God – not just Peter but anyone who believes.

Jesus tells us of the Church's need for a strong foundation of people,

WEEKEND 1 MAY

4



## READING: Matthew 16:15–18

'... you are Peter... and upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it.'

KEY VERSE  
V18



but He also tells us that nothing, not even death and destruction, can defeat it. In a world where we are being told that the Church is not relevant and that the Church is dying as numbers dwindle, this promise from Jesus is really important.

God wants us to know what the point of His Church is – that it is actually there as a help to us and to others. He is also telling us that by being part of the Church we belong to Him. As a body of people we belong to God and He isn't going to let that body of people be destroyed in their relationship and worship of Him.

### THINK

Think about your views and feelings about the Church. Are you going to believe what the world is telling you about the Church or are you going to discover for yourself the point and purpose it has in your relationship with God?

Ask God to show you the positive side of being in a church and how it can help you in your relationship with Him. Pray that He will help you be a committed part of it.

WEEKEND 1 MAY

5



## READING: Acts 20:28–32

'So guard yourselves and God's people. Feed and shepherd God's flock – his church, purchased with his own blood ...'



KEY VERSE  
v28

MON 2 MAY

6

### THINK

Have you ever seen your local church as being somewhere that you can learn more about God and be guided in how to live as part of the whole Church? Think about your church or a church you could go to and how could you help it to be more like this – or is it already?

Wow – what an awesome fact! Jesus, by dying on the cross, has enabled us to have the Church and be a part of it. Not only does the Church belong to Him, but if He hadn't died on the cross it would not exist. That is how important the Church is to Him.

Verse 28 also tells us that the Church needs feeding and guiding. This gives us a further clue as to what the idea of church is. Jesus realises that we are human; that we can make mistakes and get things wrong. He sees our local churches, the places where we meet with other Christians, as places where we can receive help, guidance and teaching on who He is, what He can do for us and how we can love and serve Him in return. It is a place where we can learn what is right and how we should be living our lives for God; where we can be guided by His Spirit through the help of others.

Church leaders should also 'shepherd God's flock' – take care of church members. God's Holy Spirit has appointed them to help and lead the Church.



## READING: Ecclesiastes 4:7-12



### KEY VERSE v12

'A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer.'

A number of people I know have questioned why the Church is important. They're quick to point out the shortcomings of the church they belong to – the poor worship band, the annoying people, the problem of having to get out of bed on a Sunday morning in the first place – and ask whether they'd be better off without it. Couldn't they just live as a Christian on their own, without needing to bother with being part of a church? This might sound like a tempting option, particularly if there are people at your church you don't get on with, or if you just want to stay in bed on Sundays. But what happens if life starts going wrong? The people I know who turned their backs on the Church, effectively turned their backs on the people who would help them when they needed it. So, the next time they had to face one of life's battles, there was no one to fight alongside them. They ended up hurt – and lost their faith.

Church might not always seem like fun, but it's vital for us to help each other through life's battles. Don't try to fight alone.



### THINK

Who do you have fighting alongside you in the battles you face? How can you fight for them too?



## READING: 1 Corinthians 1:10-17

'... live in harmony with each other. Let there be no divisions in the church. Rather, be ... united in thought and purpose.'



KEY VERSE  
v10

WED 4 MAY

8

### THINK

God calls us to be united so that we can all benefit from worship and teaching, but how can you help your church to become more in line with this view? Stay positive if there are divisions and keep focused on what God wants you to do.

Over my years of going to church I can recall times when there have been divisions among the people there. Whether over something as small as how much to charge for the tea and coffee after the Sunday service, or what kind of songs should be sung in worship, they can all cause disagreements and hurt. Unfortunately, I know people who have left churches over these kinds of arguments. So how can we be united in our churches in thought, mind and purpose?

Churches need to seek God's will in the way they operate as it is God whom we follow and to whom the whole Church belongs. Unity is a hard thing to achieve, but everyone has a part to play. If there is something you do not agree with in your church, or something you would like to see changed that is preventing unity, you need to do something about it. It could well be that others agree but do not have the courage to do anything.

The important thing to remember is that you should act in the way that Jesus would want, and seek His will. Prayerfully bring your concerns to someone in leadership and get their opinion.



## READING: 1 Corinthians 14:12-17



### KEY VERSE v12

'Since you are so eager to have the special abilities the Spirit gives, seek those that will strengthen the whole church.'

In chapter 12 of 1 Corinthians Paul lists different spiritual gifts that the Holy Spirit wants to give to people in the Church. Spiritual gifts are there to help people in their worship of God and their understanding of Him. In the Corinthian church there was a lot of discussion over which gifts should be more sought after – a discussion that churches still have today.

In our reading today, Paul is trying to make people see that God will give gifts that will help individual churches and therefore the Church as a whole (v.12). It may be that someone wants the gift of prophecy or speaking in tongues. These are great gifts to ask for, but are they things that everyone can benefit from? Paul goes on to say that encouraging, strengthening and comforting within the churches is just as important.

Paul says love should be our highest goal (1 Cor. 13:1-3). Sometimes we can get caught up with the desire to have spiritual gifts and lose sight of the fact that they are meant to bless the whole of our church.

Maybe you don't see the evidence of any spiritual gifts in your church. Why not spend some time talking to God about this. If there is a gift you would like to receive, ask the Holy Spirit for it. If you have not really heard about spiritual gifts before, why not find a mature Christian and speak to them about it further?

THURS 5 MAY

5

PRAY





## READING: Ephesians 2:14-22

'Through him you Gentiles are also being made part of this dwelling where God lives by his Spirit.'



KEY VERSE  
v22

FRI 6 MAY

10

PRAY

Do you accept that God has a place for you in His Church? Do you see your church as a place where you too can dwell in God's presence? Pray that God will meet with you next time you are in church.

The Church is for all, not just for specific people as was originally taught by some. (Note: Gentiles are people who are not Jews.)

Have you ever been included in something really special where you were chosen from a group to do something? When I performed in *Grease* in the sixth form it didn't matter that I was only in the chorus and was not playing one of the named parts. I'd still been chosen and had got into the cast instead of someone else. Friends of mine who didn't get through were gutted, yet I knew that I was special enough to be chosen to sing and dance. As nervous as I was, walking into the audition, I knew that it was the only way I could be chosen and be seen as special enough to be in the cast.

God's Church is like this – we are special and chosen and He wants us to be a part of it. However, there is one big difference – it is open to all people. There is no audition. All God asks is that people repent, believe in Him and what Jesus did by dying on the cross, and accept Him into their lives. Church is somewhere that people can be in God's presence with other Christians and learn and support each other.





## READING: Colossians 1:15–23



### KEY VERSE v18

‘Christ is also the head of the church, which is his body ... he is first in everything.’

Over the next week we will look at the image Paul gives us in the Bible of the Church being like a body. It's all about relationship: our relationship with Jesus and with each other within the Church. This image shows that church is a two-way thing. It is never just about us.

The idea of Jesus being the Head of the Church, presented in our reading today, can be looked at in various different ways. Jesus is at the centre of all that happens among His people. We, as the rest of the Body, depend on the Head. We all know how important our heads are in making the rest of our bodies work. Without Jesus the Church won't work, therefore we need to depend on Him.

We know how closely connected all the parts of our body are and this shows that we have a close



connection with Jesus as the Head. Our heads influence the rest of our being by sending messages to various places. Jesus should be influencing His Body in a similar way. We should be listening and watching for messages from Jesus to see how we should be acting as one.

The second part of verse 18 points even more strongly to the idea of Jesus having influence and a ruling power over us as we see that He is such an important part of the whole of creation and future times. We should view the Church as including every believer on earth and not just people we may see in our own church or youth group week by week. If Jesus has such an important role over the whole earth then we can see that His Church has an important part to play as well.



### CHALLENGE

Reread Colossians 1:15–23. This passage speaks about Jesus' supremacy and place as number one. Is Jesus supreme in your life? Do you actually feel that you are a part of the Body with Jesus as the Head? What does being part of Jesus' Body, the Church, mean to you?