

## ALLEY Rundown July 22-24, 2023

**Today's Bible Story:** We Belong Together (The Church) • *Hebrews 10:23-25*

**Today's Key Question:** Who has encouraged you?

**Today's Bottom Line:** Our faith is stronger together.

**Monthly Memory Verse:** *God's grace has saved you because of your faith in Christ.*

*Your salvation doesn't come from anything you do. It is God's gift. Ephesians 2:8 (NIRV)*

Campus supply needed: A white board or large piece of sticky easel paper.

**SLIDE: Theme**

Hello, everyone! I'm pretty excited to be back with you, learning, teaching, and getting wisdom and knowledge from the Bible—and today is about to be full of big ideas. Are you ready?

*Move over to the whiteboard/paper.*

Quick question before we get started. When I say the word 'church,' what word or words come to mind? Call them out and I'll write them down.

*Take answers from the kids and fill one half of the whiteboard, leaving the other half blank for the upcoming story.*

This is a great list! For me personally, when I hear the word 'church,' I think of . . .

*Add a few words of your own to the list, explaining each one.*

For a lot of people, church is a building—like this one. For some, it might be something that you're dragged to, and for others, it might be the best place in the whole world. For some, it's a place to see friends, to pray, to sing fantastic songs.

But is the church *just* a building? Can *people* be a church? I've heard people say that we have to *be* the church. What does that mean? What's the difference between being the church and going to church? Aren't they the same thing?

A fair question, honestly. Sometimes around here you hear phrases and you're not sure really what they mean. Thankfully we've got some pretty good information on all things church right here. (*hold up Bible*) This is chock full of wisdom, and I can't wait to start digging into these questions about church, the people of the church, and what it all means."

Today we're in the New Testament again; only this time, we're looking at a book called Hebrews. Before we head to our story, you might remember how we've been looking at God's Big Story.

We've seen how God created everything in the whole world, including people. God had a plan to bless the world through the family of Abraham. And at the right time, God sent Jesus to be our Savior. Jesus died on the cross for our sins and then came back to life.

Of course, that's not all that happened! Before Jesus returned to heaven, He gave His disciples a big job: to tell the world about Him. Sure enough, the followers of Jesus worked together to spread the word about Jesus and what He did for us.

With the help of the Holy Spirit, the early believers started new churches and helped more and more people become Jesus-followers. But as the early church grew, some of the believers got distracted from the message of Jesus.

And it's here where we pick up God's Big Story in the book of Hebrews. People who study the Bible aren't sure who actually wrote the book of Hebrews, but it was most likely written by a close friend or follower of Paul—the guy we've been talking about a lot lately. The writer of this letter wanted to remind believers that Jesus is more important than anyone or anything else, ever. He challenged them to hold onto their faith in Jesus and to encourage others in the church to do the same.

It's really inspiring. Let's take a look.

**VIDEO: *The So And So Show* (16:52)**

When the church first started in the early days—specifically for the followers of Jesus—they didn't really have large church buildings like we do. Oh, there were synagogues, and temples, and a lot of times they met in houses. But there weren't huge church buildings.

What they did have, though, was each other. They had people. People who would come together and talk, discuss, pray, and lift up the name of Jesus. And even though our churches often meet together in buildings today, we can't lose sight of the fact that we don't just go to church . . . we *are* the church.

Following Jesus together is important because we are a part of something bigger than ourselves.

Friends, we need others to remind us that our hope is truly in Jesus. We need others to motivate us to love others when it's hard to love others. We need others to remind us that it's worth the time to stop and serve others. We need to intentionally gather with other followers of Jesus so we can encourage them and be encouraged by them. We need to share words of hope with those who are discouraged.

As we look back over these words we wrote down earlier about the church on the whiteboard, I'm wondering how our answers might change if we were to think more about the people of the church and less about the building the people meet in. *We are the church!*

Today our key question is this:

**SLIDE: *Key Question***

**Who has encouraged you?** When you think about other followers of Jesus, how have they helped you experience hope or encouraged you to love others well?

Let's learn our memory verse for this month, Ephesians 2:8. Say it with me.

**SLIDE: *Memory Verse***

*“God’s grace has saved you because of your faith in Christ. Your salvation doesn’t come from anything you do. It is God’s gift.” (Ephesians 2:8, NIV)*

Before we move on, let’s pray and ask God to make us the kind of people who also encourage others well. Let’s pray!”

*Communicator leads group in a prayer related to what they just heard.*

**OFFERING:**

Where has our offering money been going this summer? To families in Kenya! We are collecting money for food baskets for families who live in Turkana. They have a food shortage there because of a drought, so the food they do have is really expensive. If you have any offering, you can bring it up now while we watch this video of Turkana families receiving baskets.

***Turkana video #2***

***\*\*AT YOUR COORDINATOR’S DIRECTION, YOU WILL EITHER DIVIDE INTO SMALL GROUPS OR DO ACTIVITIES TOGETHER.***