

Okay, GHA family! Here is a small group study guide based on Pastor Shantel's wonderful message, "**We are the Church.**" This guide is designed to help us dive deeper into God's Word together, encourage one another, and live out the truths we're learning as we prepare for our exciting move!

GHA Small Group Study Guide

Sermon Title: We Are the Church **Speaker:** Pastor Shantel Seevaratnam **Date:** May 18, 2025
Primary Scriptures: 1 Peter 2:4-5, Ephesians 2:19-22, Acts 2:42-47

Theme: Understanding and embracing our identity as the Church – a spiritual house, a loving family, and a people on mission – regardless of our physical location.

Leader's Note: Welcome to leading your small group! Your role is to facilitate discussion, encourage participation from everyone, and help the group connect with God and each other. Don't feel you need to know all the answers; rather, guide the group to discover them together in God's Word and through the Holy Spirit's leading. Pray before you begin, asking the Holy Spirit to guide your time. Keep an eye on the time to ensure you cover the key sections. Most importantly, foster an atmosphere of grace, openness, and love.

Getting Started (10-15 minutes)

- **Welcome:** Greet everyone warmly. If there are new people, take a moment for introductions.
- **Icebreaker:** Pastor Shantel talked about our church moving to a new location.
 - Share one thing you appreciate about being part of *this* church family (GHA).
 - Alternatively: What's a place (not your home) where you feel a strong sense of belonging or community? What makes it feel that way?

Connecting with the Message (10-15 minutes)

- **Recall:**
 1. What was one key takeaway or idea that stood out to you from Pastor Shantel's sermon this past Sunday about "We are the Church"?
 2. Pastor Shantel emphasized that the church isn't just a physical location. She highlighted three main aspects of what "we, the church" truly are. Can anyone recall what those were? (*Leader's Note: Spiritual House, Family, Mission*)

Digging Deeper into God's Word (25-30 minutes)

Let's explore the scriptures Pastor Shantel shared:

1. The Church is a SPIRITUAL HOUSE, Not Just a Physical Building

- **Read Aloud:** 1 Peter 2:4-5

"As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him— you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

- **Discuss:**
 - What does it mean to you to be a "living stone"? How is this different from a non-living stone in a regular building?
 - Pastor Shantel said, "Your presence matters. Your contribution matters. Your smile, your giftings, your fellowship, it all matters." How does the imagery of "living stones" being "built into a spiritual house" reinforce this truth?
 - In what ways can we, as individuals, be more intentional about being "fitted together" to build up GHA, especially during this transition to a new physical space?

2. The Church is a FAMILY, Not Just a Physical Address

- **Read Aloud:** Ephesians 2:19-22

"Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit."

- **Discuss:**
 - This passage says we are "members of God's household." What does being part of God's family mean to you practically?
 - Pastor Shantel mentioned Pastor Rubin's story of believers in Burma traveling days on foot to gather. What motivates such dedication to corporate gathering? How can we cultivate a similar heart that prioritizes family over mere convenience or location?
 - Pastor Shantel contrasted membership in God's household with a "country club." What are some of the "privileges" of being in God's family that she mentioned (or that you can think of)?

3. The Church is a MISSION, Not Just a Meeting Place

- **Read Aloud:** Acts 2:42-47 (select key verses or summarize if time is short)

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common... Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."

- **Discuss:**
 - What characteristics of the early church described in Acts 2 inspire you or challenge you?
 - Pastor Shantel reminded us of GHA's mission: "to love God, to love people, to serve others, to share the gospel." How does our physical location (current or future) relate to this mission?
 - The sermon emphasized that "when we go out those doors, we are the church." What's one way you can consciously be "the church" in your workplace, marketplace, or home this week?

Living it Out & Prayer (15-20 minutes)

- **Personal Application:**
 - Reflecting on Pastor Shantel's message and our discussion, what is one specific way the Holy Spirit is prompting you to adjust your perspective or actions regarding your role in GHA as we move forward?
 - Is there a particular "living stone" (another member) you feel led to encourage or connect with this week?
- **Group Action (Optional):**
 - As a small group, is there one tangible way we can support the church's transition or live out our mission together in the coming weeks? (e.g., volunteering for the move, praying specifically for an outreach, encouraging one another to invite friends to the new location).
- **Prayer Time:**
 - Let's spend some time praying together.
 - Pray for GHA as we transition: for unity, for smooth logistics, for the new space to be a beacon of hope.
 - Pray for each member to fully embrace their identity as a "living stone," a member of God's "family," and a participant in God's "mission."
 - Pray for opportunities to *be* the church wherever we go this week.
 - Pray for any personal needs shared within the group.

Closing: Thank everyone for their participation. Encourage them to continue reflecting on these truths throughout the week. Remind them of the next small group meeting (if applicable).

Additional Notes for Leaders:

- **Flexibility:** Feel free to adapt the questions or spend more time on a section that resonates with your group. The goal is Spirit-led discussion, not just getting through material.
- **Encourage Sharing:** Create a safe space where people feel comfortable sharing honestly. Affirm contributions.
- **Listen to the Spirit:** Be open to where the Holy Spirit might lead the conversation.
- **GHA's New Location:** Keep the excitement and positive anticipation for the new location in view, framing it as a new chapter for "us, the Church" to continue God's work.

May God bless your time together as you grow in Him!