

Church History

Disciple copy — Pleasant Springs Church, Discipleship School

Name: _____ Date: _____

The full thirty-three-lesson series: ps-church.com/discipleship/church-history

You did not invent this

The Bible you read was collected, copied, argued over, translated, smuggled and printed by people whose names you do not know. **Somebody died so you could read Ephesians in**

Psalm 145:4 (ESV) — "One generation shall commend your works **to another**, and shall declare your mighty acts."

Two thousand years in fifteen minutes — six hinges and one thread. We are skipping almost everything.

Hinge 1 • The church outlives its own collapse — AD _____

Rome destroys Jerusalem and burns the _____. By every reasonable expectation the movement should have died with it.

Instead it spread — carried by the **Apostolic Fathers** (Clement, Ignatius, _____), some of whom had known the apostles personally.

► **The church has survived the end of its world _____.**

Hinge 2 • The church says what it means — AD _____ and _____

Nicaea and **Chalcedon**: the church states carefully that Jesus is fully _____ and fully _____.

⚠ This is **not** men inventing a doctrine. It is the church being forced to say precisely what it had always worshipped, because somebody started saying something else.

► A creed is a _____ built after a _____ .

Jude 3 (ESV) — "...appealing to you to **contend for the faith** that was once for all delivered to the saints."

"Contend for" — not invent, not update. _____ something you were handed.

Hinge 3 • The church splits — _____ and _____

1054 — the Great Schism, East and West. **1517** — Luther, and the West fractures again.

Two things that are both true:

The Reformation recovered	The Reformation cost
Scripture in the _____ of the people	the visible _____ of Christ's body
justification by _____ through faith	
the priesthood of _____	

John 17:20–21 (ESV) — "...that they may all be **one**, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you... so that the world may believe that you have sent me."

⚠ We are Protestants and we will not pretend the division cost nothing. **Charity here is not weakness — it is _____ .**

Hinge 4 • The Bible gets into your hands

The **Masoretes** preserved the _____ text with obsessive care. **Jerome** translated the whole Bible into _____. Then the long, dangerous fight to put it into English — which people were _____ over.

Acts 17:11 (ESV) — "Now these Jews were more noble... they received the word with all eagerness, **examining the Scriptures daily** to see if these things were so."

⚠ For most of church history most Christians physically _____ do that. You can. **It cost somebody.**

Hinge 5 • The fire comes back

The church goes cold; God sets it alight again from an unexpected corner.

The **Moravians**, who prayed in shifts around the clock for _____ years • the First and Second **Great Awakenings** • the **Wesleys** • **Pietism and Bach** (who wrote *to the glory of God alone* on his manuscripts) • **Holiness and Pentecostalism**.

► **The pattern: revival almost never starts at the _____ . It starts at the _____ .**

Hinge 6 • And it is not our story any more

The centre of gravity of world Christianity has moved. It is no longer Europe or North America — it is _____ , _____ and _____ .

Revelation 7:9 (ESV) — "After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, **from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages**, standing before the throne and before the Lamb."

⚠ That is not a sentiment. It is a _____ prediction, and it is coming true in our lifetime.

The thread through all of it

1. The church has been in serious trouble in **every** century. ⚠ **There has never been a** _____ . If you are waiting for the church to be what it used to be — it never was.
2. It has been _____ in every century. Usually not by the people in charge.
3. **You are a** _____ .

2 Timothy 2:2 (ESV) — "...and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses **entrust to faithful men**, who will be able to **teach others also**."

Count the generations in that verse: _____

Paul → _____ → faithful men → _____

Hebrews 13:8 (ESV) — "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."

The church changes in every century. He _____ .

Carry out

Be less impressed with yourself, and less _____ about the church. Every argument you are having has been had before, often better.

Hebrews 12:1 (ESV) — "Therefore, since we are **surrounded** by so great a cloud of witnesses... let us run with endurance the race that is set before us."

You are not the _____ runner, and you will not be the _____ .

Three things to remember

1. There has never been a _____ .
2. You are holding what other people _____ for.
3. 2 Timothy 2:2 has _____ generations in it. You are a link.

Closing prayer

Father, thank you for two thousand years of people we will never meet who kept this and handed it on — the copyists, the translators, the martyrs, the mothers who taught children to pray. Forgive our arrogance toward brothers and sisters in other traditions, and our despair when the church is weak. Make us a faithful link in a long chain, and let what was handed to us be handed on whole. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

Take it further — the full series

Thirty-three lessons, plus a two-thousand-year timeline.

Era	Lessons include
The first centuries	The apostles and the writing of the NT · the fall of Jerusalem · the Apostolic Fathers · apologists and the Gnostic crisis · Tertullian, Origen and Cyprian
Councils and creeds	Nicaea (325) · Chalcedon (451) · Augustine of Hippo
The long middle	Benedict's Rule · the Masoretic Text · Jerome and the Vulgate · Charlemagne · the Great Schism · scholasticism · the morning-star reformers
Reformation	Luther at Worms · Calvin and Zwingli · the Anabaptists · the English Reformation · the English Bible · the Counter-Reformation
Awakening	Puritans, Quakers and Moravians · the Great Awakenings · the Wesleys · Pietism and Bach · the Restoration Movement
The modern world	The French Revolution · Edinburgh 1910 · Holiness and Pentecostalism · Vatican II · the Chicago Statement · the Global South

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Who handed the faith to me — by name

Who am I handing it to?

My notes

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