

The Church

Part 2

LIFE-CHANGE OBJECTIVE

- To gain a new appreciation for what the church can be in your life and in the world.
- To let go of false pictures of a perfect church and commit to the true picture of a powerful church (filled with weak people!).

A quick review of the last session:

- The church was envisioned by God.
- The church was established by Jesus.
- The church was energized by the spirit.

The church was made possible by Jesus' death and Resurrection. Our mandate from God is to live out the Great Commission and the Great Commandment through the five purposes of evangelism, fellowship, discipleship, ministry, and worship.

The New Testament lists 67 names and metaphors for the church, each one giving another dimension and aspect of the nature and mission of the church. Today we'll be looking at five of the most significant metaphors for the church.

METAPHORS FOR THE CHURCH

THE BODY OF CHRIST

The church is Jesus' body and Jesus is the head of the body.

EPHESIANS 1:22-23

And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

Two words are crucial as we study the Body of Christ, the church:

1. _____

2. _____

OUR UNITY IS BUILT UPON:

- Christ breaking down the wall of _____.

EPHESIANS 2:14 (NLT)

For Christ himself has brought peace to us. He united Jews and Gentiles into one people when, in his own body on the cross, he broke down the wall of hostility that separated us.

FOUNDATIONS DISCIPLESHIP STUDY: The Church (Part 2)

- Our _____ in Christ's Body.

EPHESIANS 2:15 (NLT)

He did this by ending the system of law with its commandments and regulations. He made peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating in himself one new people from the two groups.

- Our _____ at the cross.

EPHESIANS 2:16 (NLT)

Together as one body, Christ reconciled both groups to God by means of his death on the cross, and our hostility toward each other was put to death.

- Our common _____, common _____, and common _____ destination.

EPHESIANS 2:19 (NLT)

So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family.

KEY PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

**HOW DO I HANDLE A DISAGREEMENT
WITH A FELLOW BELIEVER?**

The wrong way: _____

PROVERBS 16:28 (NLT)

Gossip separates the best of friends.

The right way: _____

MATTHEW 18:15-17 (NLT)

“If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the offense. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back. But if you are unsuccessful, take one or two others with you and go back again, so that everything you say may be confirmed by two or three witnesses. If the person still refuses to listen, take your case to the church. Then if he or she won’t accept the church’s decision, treat that person as a pagan or a corrupt tax collector.”

MATTHEW 5:23-24 (NLT)

“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.”

FOUNDATIONS DISCIPLESHIP STUDY: The Church (Part 2)

OUR DIVERSITY

1 CORINTHIANS 12:14-17

Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be?

ROMANS 12:4-5

Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

THE FLOCK OF GOD

JOHN 10:16

“I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.”

FOUNDATIONS DISCIPLESHIP STUDY: The Church (Part 2)

1. We are the sheep.

This image emphasizes that members of the church, as the sheep of Christ, _____.

JOHN 10:26-29

“But you do not believe because you are not my sheep. My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand.”

2. Jesus is the shepherd.

The metaphor of Jesus as our shepherd shows is love and care for us.

JOHN 10:11, 14-16

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep... I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.”

FOUNDATIONS DISCIPLESHIP STUDY: The Church (Part 2)

THE FAMILY (HOUSEHOLD) OF GOD

1. God adopts us into his family

In the physical world, individuals automatically become part of a family unit when they are born. God wisely made the same provision for his spiritual children as well. At salvation, we are placed by the Holy Spirit into God's family, and God is now our Father.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:13

For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

ROMANS 8:15 (NLT)

So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, "Abba, Father."

2. We're to treat one another as family

1 TIMOTHY 5:1-2

Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity.

FOUNDATIONS DISCIPLESHIP STUDY: The Church (Part 2)

THE BUILDING OF GOD

You are also God's building (1 Corinthians 3:9 GNT).

In contrast to the Old Testament period in which Israel _____ a temple (Exodus 25:8), the church _____ a temple: a living, vital temple.

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.

In this metaphor, Jesus is pictured as the _____
_____.

The cornerstone was placed at the juncture of two walls to tie them together. In arches, a stone was placed between the supporting sides. The weight of the arch was on that stone, and if the stone was removed, the arch would collapse.

Individual believers are pictured as _____.

In the construction of the church as a temple, each stone is a living stone because it shares the divine nature, and the building as a whole becomes a dwelling place for God through his Spirit.

FOUNDATIONS DISCIPLESHIP STUDY: The Church (Part 2)

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.

KEY PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

How readily do you accept believers from other denominations and churches as being “real” Christians? Have you been trying to carry all the weight of the Christian life on your shoulders? Do you need to see the importance of your place in God’s building? Do you need to recognize your need to depend on others in the Body of Christ?

FOUNDATIONS DISCIPLESHIP STUDY: The Church (Part 2)

THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

This is the one metaphor that is used of the church in a prophetic sense.

- Israel was often portrayed in the Old Testament as being the _____ or _____ of God.

HOSEA 2:19-20

And I will make you my promised bride forever.

I will be good and fair;

I will show you my love and mercy.

I will be true to you as my promised bride,
and you will know the Lord.

- However, Israel was repeatedly _____ to her vows of lover to God.

JEREMIAH 3:6-7

During the reign of King Josiah, the Lord said to me, “Have you seen what faithless Israel has done? She has gone up on every high hill and under every spreading tree and has committed adultery there. I thought that after she had done all this she would return to me but she did not, and her unfaithful sister Judah saw it.

FOUNDATIONS DISCIPLESHIP STUDY: The Church (Part 2)

- Unlike faithless Israel, the church is portrayed in Scripture as being a _____ awaiting the coming of her bridegroom.

2 CORINTHIANS 11:2

I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him.

In Ephesians 5:22-33, the analogy is drawn comparing the husband-and-wife relationship in marriage to Christ and the bride, the church. The illustration is powerful because it reveals the magnitude of Christ's love for his church. He loved her enough to die for her. It also reveals the obedient response the church is to have to the bridegroom, Jesus Christ.

EPHESIANS 5:25-26

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word.

FOUNDATIONS DISCIPLESHIP STUDY: The Church (Part 2)

- The relationship of the bride to the Bridegroom reflects two characteristics of the nature of the church:
 1. The church lives with a sense of urgency to always be _____ for the Bridegroom.

MATTHEW 25:1-13

“At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. The wise ones, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep. At midnight the cry rang out: ‘Here’s the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!’ Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.’ ‘No,’ they replied, ‘there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.’ But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut. Later the others also came. ‘Lord, Lord,’ they said, ‘open the door for us!’ But he replied, ‘Truly I tell you, I don’t know you.’ Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.

FOUNDATIONS DISCIPLESHIP STUDY: The Church (Part 2)

2. The church is to _____ into the new relationship with the Bridegroom.

MATTHEW 22:8-9

“Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. So go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.’”

REVELATION 19:9

“Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!”

REVELATION 22:17

The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let the one who hears say, “Come!” Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.

KEY PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

Being the bride of Christ is a spiritual love affair. Is this a reality in your life? Or does the idea seem too sentimental? Is there submission in your heart to Jesus as your Bridegroom? Are you ready to meet him? Are there some priorities you need to rearrange so that you can concentrate more on loving him?

A FINAL WORD

Is the church a useless, worn-out institution? It doesn't have to be. God has made all the provisions necessary for local churches to be vibrant, transformational groups of believers who live independent, authentic lives of ministry and mission, building bridges so that lost people can find hope in God. The Devil can't stop us; the pervasive culture around us can't stop us. We are the only ones who can cause the church to lose its place of importance by not acting like the Body of Christ, the flock of God, the family of God, the building of God, and the bride of Christ.

MATTHEW 16:18

“I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it!”