

THE CHURCH

(Called Out of the World and Belonging to Christ)



or



I. Introduction

What is the church? Many people have a mistaken concept of the church resulting from a bad experience, an understanding rooted in public opinion, or a lack of acceptance/knowledge of the Scriptures. This study is meant to help us explore God's word to discover a portion of God's design for the church.

II. Importance of Relationships

Read **Genesis 1:26-27**. This passage reveals two critical pieces of information, one about God and the other is about us. God says, let "us" make man in "our" image. Though God is one, we have already discovered that Jesus is God and is somehow both different and the same as the Father. The other part of the godhead assumed in this text would be the Spirit. The crucial bit of information about God is that he has dwelt within "community" (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) for all eternity. What that means for us is that we are created with a need for fellowship, since we are created in the image of God who exists in community. God is helping to fulfill us by the relationships meant to be present in His church.

III. Scriptures on the Church as a Body

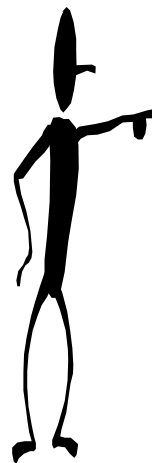
Ephesians 5:21-32

What does this say about Jesus and the church?
What happens to a body without its head? How about a body that does not respond to the brain?
What are qualities of a healthy body?

Observations:

Jesus loves the church. He died for his bride and he planned for her to be holy and wonderful.
Jesus is the head of the body, which is the church.
Just as our bodies are dead without the head, so the church is dead without the headship of Christ.

The body is unhealthy if it does not respond to the commands of the brain. A church that does not respond to the teachings of Jesus is unhealthy and not acceptable. Just as the body is made up of many members so each Christian is a member of the church.



Jesus – Husband & Head _____ _____ _____ _____
Church – Bride & Body _____ _____ _____ _____

I Corinthians 12:12 – 13

The body in this context is the church. How do we get into the body?
How many bodies are there? What does that mean? (Matthew 16:18)
How attached are you to the members of your physical body? For example, how attached is your arm? Or what would you do to protect a part of your body from being cut off?

Observations:

The body is one though it has many parts.
We get into the body by being baptized into Christ.
According to God’s instruction there is only one church. Our goal is to be the church God has called us to be in Scripture.



Romans 12:4 – 8

What are some gifts/abilities you have?
Why are your gifts important to the body?
What commitment is assumed in the phrase, “each member belongs to all the others” from verse 5?

Observations:

We all have different abilities that are needed (I Corinthians 12:14 - 26).
We belong to each other and there is meant to be an interdependence among all Christians.

IV. Scriptures on the Church and the Family of God

Ephesians 2:19 - 21

What terms are used to describe the Ephesians before Christ?
What are they in Christ?
What are some characteristics of a healthy family?



<u>Families:</u>	
F	_____
A	_____
M	_____
I	_____
L	_____
Y	_____

Observations:

Christians are no longer foreigners and aliens to God, but are members of God’s household. Christians are the family of God. Characteristics of a good family include love, acceptance, discipline, sharing, conflict resolution, commitment and others. The box to the right could stand for Faithfulness, Acceptance, Mediation of conflict, Invested, Love, and You are important.

I Timothy 3:14-15

What is the church called in this text?
What must the church support from this text to continue to be the church?

Observations.

We as Christians are to be God’s household, we are family.
As the church we need to support God’s truth and not man’s perspective.

V. Applications Concerning the Church of the Scriptures

Hebrews 10:24 - 25

Why is it important for Christians to meet together? (Remember our creation.)

Observations.

We are created with a need for fellowship and we will seek it whether it is healthy or not.

We are to encourage one another to grow in Christ (Hebrews 3:13). Meeting together is part of following Jesus (Acts. 2:42 - 47).

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THE CHURCH IS NOT BUT WOOD AND NAILS ...
IT IS MADE OF THE PEOPLE WHO GATHER IN
GOD'S NAME

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Ephesians 2:20

Why is Jesus the cornerstone of the church?

Who are the apostles and prophets? What is the foundation of the apostles and prophets?

What would you call a "church" built on a foundation other than the Scriptures?

Observations.

Christ is the cornerstone of the church. The apostles and prophets are called the foundation. That means God, through the teachings of the apostles and prophets as contained in the New Testament, has revealed His design and plan for His called people, the church. Any organization that builds on a different foundation than the apostles and prophets is not the church Jesus died for and established (1 Cor. 3:10-11). We must seek to be the church of God's choice and not seek the church of our choice.

VI. Conclusion

The church is God's people who have been called out of the world to live for Jesus. We are a family and a body that is meant to work together to bring God glory. It is extremely encouraging to know that we are not here alone. We have a spiritual family to help strengthen us and an avenue where we can use our gifts to serve. We are created in the image of God who exists in community, therefore lone wolf Christians have never been God's plan. Instead, the church has been God's design for His people to dwell in community and experience the fellowship of a family and body. May this study help as we seek God's plan for His church and our involvement in that church family.