

The Church (universal) is made up of sinners who are imperfect, those saved by the grace of God, and sincere in their faith towards God. The Church (universal) is made up of citizens of heaven and members that are as diverse as the body. There is diversity with unity. God is a Divine Gardener that tends to its people keeping them in unity and union with Christ who is the Vine. The church is the place of the holiness of God, 1 Cor. 3:16-17, 2 Cor. 6:14-18.

Why do we take a definitive position on the Church? Do members know the identity, purpose, and glory of the Church? This will be a reminder for some and an encouragement for others (2 Pet. 1:12-15).

What is the Motivation Behind this Series? It is a counter to individualism. It is counter to those who turn on leadership and leave. Why do people leave? They want a more organic, less institutionalized church. They leave because of hurts. They didn't have their felt needs met, weren't connected, didn't financially support the church, sought a better job at another place, or they turned a secondary or third level issue (preference) into a primary one. They forgot that the church gathers to worship God and fellowship follows.

- **Good reasons to leave:** not confronting sin of leaders, false Gospel, and unsound teaching. >> Describing not a cultural view or contract, but a covenant, like a spiritual marriage, bound in heaven. Every Christian is an example of the power of the gospel who are saints of God.

What is the Desire Behind this Series? Rom. 11:33, to know the depth of the riches [of] both of the wisdom and knowledge of God. For us to know what it means to belong to the church, the Bride of Christ. What it means to stir up one another to love and good works, Heb. 10:24-25.

What is the Strategy for the Series? This is not an exhaustive theology of the church but boiled down to be able to understand. From Heb. 13:7, to remember those who lead you and have spoken the word of God to you considering the outcome of their conduct. To include a look at church history and the lives of those who lead churches and their impact on the church today.

5 Ways to Identify the Church of Jesus Christ:

1. **The Church are All Who are United IN Christ:** See: Rom. 3:24, 6:11, 6:23, 12:5; 1 Cor. 1:2, 15:22; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 1:3, 2:10; Phil. 1:1. It is made up of redeemed, regenerated people (Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 6:20; Tit. 3:4-5). We are a special people, 1 Pet. 2:9-10, called out of darkness into light.
2. **The Church is the Body of Christ:** 1 Cor. 12:12-13, 27. A description of the body: 1) V15-16, members are not to judge *themselves* as separate from the body. 2) V21, members are not to judge *others* as separate from the body. 3) V22, weaker members are necessary and should receive greater honor. 4) V23, weaker members receive greater honor and are made more presentable. 5) V25-26, the body is to care for itself. The members that neglect other members are dishonoring Christ. 1 Cor. 11: 17-22, is the context for loving one another. There was mistreatment of others, divisions, and factions. They weren't discerning the Lord's body. Paul was throwing believers in prison and having them stoned, but Jesus told Saul he was persecuting Him, Acts 9:4-5.
3. **The Church is Owned by Christ:** the use of *ekklesia* in Matt. 16:18-19 is upon the rock that Jesus is the Messiah, Jesus will build His church (*ekklesia*). 1 Cor. 6:19-20, Christ has redeemed or purchased all of the church (universal). Eph. 1:22, Jesus is head over all the church (universal). Col. 1:18, He is the head and first place in everything (preeminence).

4. **The Church is the Family of God:** Rom. 8:16-17, we are children of God. Matt. 10:37, the church is my primary family. Matt. 12:49, faith in Christ gives me a new family, we resemble each other being born again, regenerated by Christ, Eph. 4:4-6.
5. **The Church is the Wisdom of God:** Eph. 3:9, God made the mystery of the church made known through the Holy Spirit to the apostles and prophets (Eph. 3:5-6). The mystery that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs with the Jews and partake of Jesus' promise through the gospel. Eph. 3:10-11, the manifold wisdom of God is carried out in Christ. 1) It was eternally planned, V11. 2) Carried out by Christ, it will succeed, V11. 3) It was displayed to the angels, 1 Pet. 1:10-12, who don't understand what it is like to be redeemed (Rev. 7:9-10). 4) The light of the gospel never goes out, it always expands even in the darkest of times (Matt. 16:18). Look up the example of Patrick Hamilton (1504).

Further Discussion and Application

Being members of one another, what is our responsibility to one another? Who should care for each other? Who should teach? Who should disciple? Why is obedience the hallmark of a mature believer and of one who loves Christ? What is Jesus asking us to do with regards to those who have come to faith in Christ in whatever state they come?

Christ's ownership establishes His rights concerning His church. What are those rights that He has over His church? List some of the commands that He gives to His church that you find in Scripture.

The church displays the manifold (multifaceted) wisdom of God. What has He shown by the grace that is displayed through Christ? What is the glory of Revelation 5:9-10? What is the glory of God demonstrated in Eph. 2:11-13?

Christians are called the children of God. What are some of the blessings and results of being given this title in 1 John 3:1-3? What are the blessings of the Spirit of God we receive as children of God in Rom. 8:1-2, 9, 11, 15-17, 26-30, 32, 31-39? What are the blessings of being known by Christ in John 10:14-16, 11:25-30? In God's wisdom, why were all these things bestowed upon us? Why did we need them? How is it God's glory to give us an abundance of grace? Why does Romans 8:29 guarantee our righteousness and glorification in Christ?