

# Jeff's Org

WHAT IS THE CHURCH? • THE CHURCH IS A BUILDING • EPHESIANS 2:19-22 • NO DATE

## MAIN POINT

The church is like a temple under construction—constantly growing and changing in Christ.

## INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**What is the most impressive building you've ever seen? What makes it so impressive?**

**What are some different reasons people have for constructing buildings?**

**Do any of those reasons give you insight into why the church might be pictured as a building?**

Just as temples are built for the purpose of worship, the church is the new dwelling place of God through the Holy Spirit. Because God's Spirit lives inside the followers of Christ, we as the church are pictured as a building. But rather than being constructed out of wood or stone, this building is made out of living people. Thus, the church is a temple under construction—constantly growing and changing in Christ.

## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ EPHESIANS 2:19-22.

**How is the building described here different than a physical structure built by men?**

**How do individuals in the church show they are part of this spiritual building?**

**How does the church as a whole show the world that it is God's earthly dwelling place?**

In this passage, Paul emphasized the ongoing process by which Jesus is building His church. God dwells in each believer by His Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19-20) and collectively in the church as the assembly of all believers (1 Cor. 3:16). Nothing gives more significance to the church than the

fact of God's residing in His people. He does not dwell in buildings; rather, His people are His temple. We display the Spirit of God living in us through the way we live in community with each other and how we treat the rest of the world.

**What are some hallmarks of the church built by God according to these verses? How do you see these characteristics displayed at our church?**

**In what ways can you see God's earthly church being fitted together and growing in the Lord?**

According to Ephesians 2:11-22, Jesus died to reconcile us to God and to create one new man. In Him we experience peace with God and peace with one another as He builds us together into His holy church. Churches today stand only when they depend on the foundational truths God revealed to the apostles and prophets, now preserved for us in the Bible. But the chief hallmark of this building is the cornerstone.

**Why did Paul say that Jesus Christ Himself is the cornerstone of this building?**

**What does this mean about the place of Jesus in the church?**

The cornerstone was the first stone set in a structure, giving the rest of the building shape and definition as the measuring point for everything else. That's what Jesus is to the church. He provides definition and shape to everything we still do today as the spiritual house.

**Why is it important to recognize Jesus as the cornerstone of the church?**

**Why is it important to see the foundation as the words of the apostles and prophets, now recorded for us in the Bible?**

**What happens to a church when it loses sight of the cornerstone and foundation?**

**What are some ways that we can make sure we remember the cornerstone and foundation?**

A church forgets its basis at its own peril. Wherever we are, no matter how much we grow, or how many things we change, we must always remember what the basis of our spiritual house is. That's why, above anything else, we will always learn from and obey the Bible and continue to keep Jesus central.

| ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ 1 PETER 2:4-5.

**What parts of the stone imagery in this passage stand out to you the most? Why?**

**In verse 5, the stones fit together to form the spiritual house. What is your role in the spiritual house, and how might God's church suffer if it were built without you?**

**If believers are living stones, does that mean the church is meant to be static or dynamic?**

Like Paul, Peter saw believers in churches as the stones that are built up together to form a spiritual house. These stones work together to form the structure as a church; it is not about any individual but about how individuals can be concerned for one another in the church and for those who will come after them. Furthermore, these stones are living, meaning they are constantly growing and changing in Christ until we eventually reach maturity together in Christ.

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**In what ways does our church fit together as a spiritual house? What are some areas we could improve in?**

**Are you committed to your own personal growth and change? What might you do to be more committed to that growth and change?**

**In what ways is the church meant to be always changing? What must we never change?**

**What are some ways we can constantly be changing but guard ourselves against changing what we are built upon?**

## PRAYER

Thank God that you are a part of His spiritual dwelling place. Pray that our church would continue to grow and adapt to reach more and more people with the gospel. Pray that we would continue to remember the cornerstone and foundation of our faith throughout the coming years.

## COMMENTARY

| EPHESIANS 2:19-22

2:19. The "you" language throughout this passage refers to those born as Gentiles. Such believers are no longer what they were. The word foreigners was a reminder of their previous deprivation as those "excluded from the citizenship of Israel" (2:12). The term strangers was a

reminder that Gentiles had no knowledge of “the covenants of the promise” (2:12). By contrast, in the new humanity Jews and Gentiles together are fellow citizens with one another in the kingdom of God. The saints may refer either to Old Testament people or to all believers in the church (1:1). If the term citizens suggests that Jewish and Gentile believers are part of the same kingdom, then members of God’s household means that both groups belong equally to God’s one true family.

2:20. The architectural language compares the new humanity to a magnificent temple under construction. The foundation for this divine building is the apostles and prophets. Jesus’ designated representatives were the apostles, whose preaching and writings are foundational to the church. The term prophets refers to inspired men who proclaimed the Word of God alongside the apostles. Churches today stand only when they depend on the foundational truths God revealed to the apostles and prophets, now preserved in the Scriptures. The cornerstone is none other than Jesus Christ Himself.

2:21. Individual believers are compared to the stones being added to the whole building. The words holy sanctuary (traditionally, temple) imply this building was set apart for God’s use. The Ephesians were well acquainted with the unholy temples in their city. They knew well that the whole idea of a temple was to serve as a house or dwelling place for a god (Acts 19:23-34).

2:22. Paul’s return to “you” language reminded his readers again that they had been included in God’s plan. They were being built together with Jewish Christians to become God’s dwelling place on earth. It wasn’t the stone-and-gold temple in Jerusalem but instead God’s new people—the church—in which the Spirit was present. God’s new humanity, scattered around the world but meeting in local congregations, is His home. What He is building through the ages, as more and more people believe and are added to His body, will one day be complete (Rev. 21:5).

## 1 PETER 2:4-5

2:4. Many years earlier, Jesus had given Simon the nickname “Rock” (petros in Greek, from which the name Peter comes). Here the apostle nicknamed “Rock” described Jesus as a living stone. (See Psalm 118:22, which refers to the cornerstone that the builders rejected, and also see Peter’s use of this psalm in v. 7.) The world had rejected Jesus, but God had chosen Him and declared Him valuable. Jesus is the chosen One, and we are chosen because we are in Him. Our entire identity is wrapped up in Him.

2:5. Because of our relation to the resurrected and living Lord, we too can be called living stones (but not in the same sense as Jesus). Just as stones were used to build the temple of God in

Jerusalem, so we are being built into a spiritual house, a temple, to God. God now dwells in His people, not in a building (1 Cor. 3:16-17; 6:19). Then Peter changed to another word picture and described believers as priests who offer spiritual sacrifices. Under the old covenant, the priests of Israel sacrificed bulls and goats in the temple. As Christians, we are priests of the new covenant who offer spiritual sacrifices to God. These sacrifices are truly acceptable to God, because they are offered through Jesus Christ. Peter specified the nature of these spiritual gifts in verse 9.