

The Church - Living Called

The True Community of Jesus Christ.

Acts 2:42-47; Ephesians 4:11, 12

Overview: To understand that the 'church' consists of a people "called out" by Jesus, living in community and directed by our Triune God to grow in grace by demonstrating faith, hope and love towards God, towards one another, towards the world.

Outline:

Matthew 16:18, "...I will build my church..."

Acts 2:42-47 – Life of the Early Church.

1. Worship
2. Discipleship – learning & living.
3. Fellowship – Community.
4. Stewardship – Giving
5. Serving together (Ministry)
6. Living and proclaiming Jesus (Evangelism).

Ephesians 4:11, 12 – The Process: Equipping (to make whole).

This study uses the WISDOM acronym:

W – What is the main point, or key thought, and/or we work the issue

I – Investigate the scriptures. Study God's word.

S – Seek counsel from other sources, voices and articles.

D – Develop a response. The best response is a written one because there is many a slip from the mind to the pen.

O - Openly discuss your study with others; this is especially valuable in a small group or learning community setting.

M - Move to action. This is where we apply what we have learned to our lives. It is in application that we find that God's word is indeed living and active. And transformation occurs as the heart is impacted.

Please note: *This is a study guide, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. We need to walk in the truth therefore: It's you, the Holy Spirit and the Scripture in the interpretation process. Try not to relinquish your personal study to reading and repeating commentaries, check in with them as resource to make sure that your interpretation is not way off.*

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W [What is the issue] In reading the scripture the objective here is to determine the main point or points that Paul is trying to make.

Read *Matthew 16:18, Acts 2:42-47, Ephesians 4:11,12*

Ask yourself questions while discovering the issues in this text:

Ask the Who What Why When Where and the So what [what difference does this make – or it's the application question] questions to discover the main issue or issues that are in this text. Command to obey; doctrine to understand; life in the church to live out; and application (to myself) to apply.

Write down your questions...as you write clarity regarding the text of scripture will emerge.

- This was along with redemption the main emphasizes of Jesus' life. How do to interact with the statement that Jesus says "I will build my church" – This was and is one of his major statements. Discuss.
- Write and share with one another the six components of the early church found in Acts 2:42-47
- Observe the differences between the early church and us. Realize that we have the same Holy Spirit indwelling each one of us.
- Discuss and connect the dots between grace and the receiving of gifts. (4:7 & 4:8).

- Write down the gifts mentioned in this passage and the concept to equip the saints (the church)

Ephesians 4:13-16

Write down the goal(s) of a truly authentic church.

I Investigating Scripture:

Matthew 16:18

16:18 "Peter" This is the Greek word "petros," a masculine noun. It referred to a boulder. For much of his life (Matt. 16:22,23; Mark 14) Peter was anything but a rock.

“this rock” This is the Greek word, "petra," a feminine noun. These two words (petros and petra) cannot grammatically link up to each other because of their gender. The disciples did not see this as a reference to Peter's superiority because they continued to argue over who was greatest (cf. Matt. 18:1, 18; John. 20:21).

“church” -Ekklesia was the word used in the Septuagint for “the congregation of Israel”. The term itself implied a called gathering for some purpose. Its Greek background was a called town meeting (cf. Acts 19:32,39,41).

“gates of Hades” Gates can refer to an active scheme of evil against the Church.

Acts 2:42-47 – Life of the Early Church.

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3. Fellowship – Community.
4. Stewardship – Giving
5. Ministry – Serving together
6. Evangelism – Living and proclaiming Jesus.

2:42 “They were continually devoting themselves”

Observe what they did when together:

1. Teaching
2. Fellowship
3. Breaking of bread
4. Prayer

Worship:

The Bible teaches us the value and importance of private and corporate worship. We need to understand that corporate worship changes and grows us in ways that will not be accomplished through private

worship (1 Chronc. 25:1-7; Heb 10:23-25). When we worship together; God is glorified and we are encouraged and strengthened and grow into a community of believers (1Cor 14:26).

Discipleship

Maturity in the faith does not happen just because we have been ‘born-again.’ It certainly does not occur because we rub shoulders with one-another; we are to encourage, build one another up, mentor and be mentored (1 Thess 5:11; Eph 4:11,12; 2 Tim 2:2).

Jesus himself is our example; wherever he went he took his disciples. He was mentoring them for the future responsibility of equipping and growing His Church (Matt 4:21, 5:7; 10:1-16; Mk 9:28,29).

One of the most important tasks in the church is to disciple believers in such a way that they are equipped to grow and mature in their faith. And as they grow they help others in the body to grow in grace and knowledge. It is tragic the numbers in the church who identify themselves as Christians but have little or no knowledge about their faith and provide little or no evidence by their lifestyle.

Jesus called us in the great commission (Matt 28:18-20) to make disciples and by extension disciples who will make disciples.

Fellowship

In Matthew 16:18, Jesus said that He would build his church; the word that he used was ekklesia, which means as assembly or group of people who are called out for a special purpose. According to Scripture we the called out ones are all children of God (Jn 1:12) and therefore are in the family of God. And like family we are to support, encourage and build one another up in the faith. We practice this by bearing one another’s burdens, being accountable to one another, rejoicing with those who rejoice and mourning with those who mourn.

Also since we are made in the image of God we are expected as the Triune Godhead lives in fellowship and harmony we are to model fellowship and harmony to the world around us. But one of the most compelling reasons for community is the promise that when two or more are gathered in his name he is present (Matt 18:20).

Stewardship

Giving and stewardship is a principle found in scripture that cannot be disputed. It is an act of worship for we are first give ourselves to God and then give of our first fruits to Lord (2 Cor 8:5; Mal 3:10; Pr 3:9,10).

Our giving reflects our gratitude and love for the Lord, it requires us to rearrange priorities in order to give a tithe. This rearrangement will cause us to be different, think different about money and finances, and spend different, when asked we communicate it’s not about me but Christ in me my hope in glory.

Ministry – Serving together

The hallmark of the early church was that they served one another and cared for people. The manner in which they served those in the body and those outside the body demonstrated their transformation and caused the world to note that they were different because of Jesus.

All believers are called to serve one another in the body and also those not in the body of Christ. Serving in reality is Christian love in action and is modeling Jesus (Mk 10:45) – this is particularly difficult for the American church. By serving together we transform lives.

Evangelism – Living and proclaiming Jesus.

This task of evangelizing the world and making disciples was not given to a group of unconnected, divided and angry individuals but to followers who make up the family of God; who are united, connected and passionate about their faith. Paul described this as the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:17-20).

The need of the 21st century church is to incorporate consistently all these characteristics, failure to do so leaves the church spiritually incomplete, imbalanced and vulnerable.

Ephesians 4:11,12

4:11

NASB “He gave”

NKJV “He Himself gave”

All believers are gifted ministers. Some are servant- leaders, but all are called to serve.

There are several lists of spiritual gifts in the NT (cf. 1 Cor. 12: 8-10, 28-30; Rom. 12:6-8; Eph. 4:11).

The lists not being identical imply that these lists are not exhaustive, but representative. For Paul the gifts are aspects of Jesus' ministry given to His body (the church) to continue His ministry. The focus is on the diverse aspect of ministry.

- “apostles” This is an ongoing use of the term ‘apostle’ goes beyond “The Twelve” (Acts 14:4, 14, Barnabas; Rom. 16:7, Andronicus and Junias; 1 Cor. 4:6, 9; 12:28-29; 15:7, Apollos; Phil. 2:25, Epaphroditus; 1 Thess. 2:6, Silvanus and Timothy). Their task involves proclamation of the gospel and servant leadership to the church. It is very possible that in Romans 16:7; Junia refers to a female apostle.
- “prophets” They are not the same as OT prophets who wrote Scripture. New Testament prophets apply Scripture to new and different situations. They are linked with apostles, evangelists, pastors and teachers because they all proclaim the gospel.
- “evangelists” It is interesting to note that, in light of Matt. 28:19-20, this gift is mentioned only three times in the NT. Their task in the early church, was to proclaim the gospel (Acts 21:8; 2 Tim. 4:5).

● “pastors and teachers” The titles “elders” (presbuteroi), “bishops” (episkopoi), and “pastors” (poimenas) all refer to one function and office (Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5-7). The term “elder” had an OT background, while the term “bishop” or “overseer” had a Greek city-state background. The Greek syntax link these two titles together as one function, one gifted person who proclaims and explains the gospel to a local church.

It is noteworthy that in Rom. 12:7 and 12:28 teachers are listed as a separate gift and pastors are not mentioned at all.

4:12

NASB “for the equipping of the saints for the work of service”

NKJV “For the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry”

Leaders are God's gifts given to equip the Body of Christ for the work of ministry. The church needs to recapture the power, giftedness and biblical assignment of all the members of the church. Every Christian is a full-time, God-called, God-gifted minister.

The term "equip" means to cause something to be ready for its assigned purpose. It is used of:

1. broken limbs being healed and made useful again
2. torn fishing nets being mended and thereby able to catch fish

Also, note the goal is not that only some believers became mature, but all (cf. Eph. 4:13).

The gifts are given to every believer for the common good (1 Cor. 12:7,11). Every believer is a called, gifted, full-time minister of Christ. Not all are “vocational” ministers, but all are called to serve one another and the world. The modern church is crippled by: (1) a clergy/laity separation and (2) and that salvation is treated as a product instead of a relational process of servanthood.

S Consult other sources

Question: "What is the church?"

Answer: Many people today understand the church as a building. This is not a biblical understanding of the church. The word “church” comes from the Greek word ekklesia which is defined as “an assembly” or “called-out ones.” The root meaning of “church” is not that of a building, but of people. It is ironic that when you ask people what church they attend, they usually identify a building. Romans 16:5 says “... greet the church that is in their house.” Paul refers to the church in their house—not a church building, but a body of believers.

The church is the body of Christ, of which He is the head. Ephesians 1:22-23 says, “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.” The body of Christ is made up of all believers in Jesus Christ from the day of Pentecost (Acts chapter 2) until Christ’s return. The body of Christ is comprised of two aspects:

1) The universal church consists of all those who have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. “For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink” (1 Corinthians 12:13). This verse says that anyone who believes is part of the body of Christ and has received the Spirit of Christ as evidence. The universal church of God is all those who have received salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

2) The local church is described in Galatians 1:1-2: “Paul, an apostle ... and all the brothers with me, to the churches in Galatia.” Here we see that in the province of Galatia there were many churches—what we call local churches. A Baptist church, Lutheran church, etc., is not the church, as in the universal church—but rather is a local church, a local body of believers. The universal church is comprised of those who belong to Christ and who have trusted Him for salvation. These members of the universal church should seek fellowship and edification in a local church.

In summary, the church is not a building or a denomination. According to the Bible, the church is the body of Christ—all those who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ for salvation (John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 12:13). Local churches are gatherings of members of the universal church. The local church is where the members of the universal church can fully apply the “body” principles of 1 Corinthians chapter 12: encouraging, teaching, and building one another up in the knowledge and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ

D[develop your response] This where we do our personal study and develop our personal response.

As we work the main point from scripture, look at Scripture and interact with other voices. We write down our response. Realize the value of writing – I realize that this is difficult but when we put on paper our thoughts the greatest connection between head and heart occurs.

Use the questions in work the issue and in the openly discuss section and also come up with some of your own.

O [openly discuss] After we have our written response this is where we interact with our community or connect group and learn from one another. Share openly and honestly what our Lord has taught you from scripture. Your understanding may change as a result of your discussion with others. Let the Holy Spirit lead and be open to learn from one another. It is an amazing experience as the Spirit of the Lord shows up in our discussion and lives are touched and changed.

M [Move to action.] Apply God's word to your life, this where transformation occurs as the Spirit of God moves in your life and you respond to His prompting. This is where the heart connects with the head and the hands. Without application we will gain knowledge and remember what the apostle Paul says, 'Knowledge puffs up but love builds up.'

My personal application: {write it down and share it with someone who will hold you accountable}.

An application to ponder:

My personal journey is linked with the larger faith community (the church) in order to demonstrate the wisdom of God to those watching.

For our church Beth El:

Passionately Pursue Jesus

Meeting you where you are and helping you take the next step

Towards;

God One Another The World

In order to become a fully devoted follower of Jesus.