

What is the Church? teaching notes

>Understand the Church

Ephesians 1:22—23 "God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made him head over all things for the benefit of the church. 23 And the *ekklēsia* which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all"

note on context: *"The sequence of thought here seems to be: by his resurrection and ascension Christ is exalted to be Lord of all, he is head of all things for the church; the church is his body intended to express him in the world; more than that, the church is intended to be a full expression of him by being filled by him whose purpose it is to fill everything there is"*

Foulkes, Francis. 1989. *Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary*. Vol. 10. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Greek word Church = *Ekklēsia* **"gathered assembly"**

A local congregation of believers (e.g., 1 Cor 1:2)

And the universal church (e.g., Eph 1:22–23)

"Local and Universal"

"Gathering and Going"

Ephesians 5:25 for husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her 26to make her holy and clean, washed by the cleansing of God's word. 27 He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault. 28In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies. For a man who loves his wife actually shows love for himself. 29 No one hates his own body but feeds and cares for it, just as Christ cares for the church. 30And we are members of his body.

31As the Scriptures say, "A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one." 32This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one.

"This is an invitation to read Genesis 2 Christologically— looking for Christ"

Note: this practice is often labeled the *Theological Interpretation of Scripture*

Genesis 2:21–24

21 So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep. While the man slept, the Lord God took out one of the man's ribs and closed up the opening. 22 Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib, and he brought her to the man.

23 "At last!" the man exclaimed.

"This one is bone from my bone,
and flesh from my flesh!

She will be called 'woman,'
because she was taken from 'man.'"

24 This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.

Historical scholars are confused why Genesis 2:24 says this, because there was never an ancient culture where the male leaves his family to join the woman. But, by the Holy Spirit... this is exactly what Paul says it is: a mystery left in the Scripture that points to Christ!

A Christological Reading of Genesis 2:21–24 yields some beautiful substance:
Christ is the Man who would leave His Father's home to find a Bride.
Christ is the Man who would be put to sleep, wounded by God, and yet Healed.
Christ is the Man who would see His Bride and say, "at last!"
Christ is the Man who has given us a name, a new identity as His.
Christ is the Man who longs to be united with us, who calls us bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh.

One more:

In Genesis 2:22, most English translations say:

"Then the Lord God **made** a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man..."

But the Hebrew doesn't use the common verb for "made" (*asah* or *bara*). It uses a much more architectural, deliberate term: *wayyiben*, from the root *banah*. Literally: "God **built** the woman." *Banah* is used elsewhere for building **temples, cities, altars, and houses**. It implies **intentional design, structure, and purposeful assembly**. Eve isn't hastily formed. She's *carefully constructed*—almost like a sacred dwelling. This fits beautifully with the later biblical idea of the **Church as the Temple**—a Bride **being built** together into a holy dwelling for God (Eph 2:20–22, 1 Pet 2:5).

Is it any surprise that in the New Testament the top-3 images of the Church are His Bride, His Body, and His Temple??

In summary, the Church is the Bride bought by Christ.

the Body united to Christ.
the Temple built by Christ.

>See the Church

Early Christian Gatherings:

- **Sunday mornings** called "the Lord's Day"
- **Private homes** ~10–30 people per house church.
- **Many hours long**
- **Social mixing** slaves, elites, men & women, Jews & Gentiles all gathered as equals
- **Shared Meal** (often called an "*Agape Feast*")
- **Lord's Supper**
- **Singing** (Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs)
- **Prayer**
- **Scripture Reading** followed by teaching or exhortation.
- **Spiritual Gifts**
- **Contribution** every member contributed gifts and resources

Recommended Book

The Lost Letters of Pergamum by Bruce W. Longenecker
published by Baker Academic, 2016.

Referenced Studies

Research from *Harvard's Opportunity Insights* project—backed by the Behavioural Insights Team, Meta, and Stanford—has shown that cross-class friendships are one of the strongest predictors of upward mobility.

A 2002 study titled *Religious Involvement and Status-Bridging Social Capital* found that churches and religious communities are some of the last remaining spaces in modern society where these kinds of cross-class relationships still happen naturally and regularly.

Studies:

"Religious Involvement and Status-Bridging Social Capital (2002)"

Harvard's "*Harvard's Opportunity Insights*" — backed by Behavioural Insights Team (BIT), Meta, and Stanford University.

Wuthnow, Robert. "Religious Involvement and Status-Bridging Social Capital." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 41, no. 4 (2002): 669–684.

Chetty, Raj, et al. *Social Capital I: Measurement and Associations with Economic Mobility*. Opportunity Insights, 2022. <https://opportunityinsights.org>.

The Nicene Creed (381 AD)

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary,
and became man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father (and the Son)
who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, universal* and apostolic Church.
I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins,
and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

One common and helpful—but imperfect—way of categorizing modern churches is:

Sacramental

the largest grouping, with well over *1 and a half billion* people

Churches like the Anglican, Lutheran, Eastern Orthodox

Distinct Emphasis: Communion and Tradition.

Influential voices: C.S. Lewis, Mother Teresa, Brother Lawrence

Charismatic/Pentecostal

largest non-Catholic grouping, and fastest growing

Churches like the Assemblies of God, Vineyard, non-denominational

Distinct Emphasis: The Lord (His Leading / Presence / Activity)

Influential voices: John & Lisa Bevere, Jack Hayford, Heidi Baker, Reinhardt Bonke

Evangelical

Churches like Baptists, community churches, reformed churches.

Distinct Emphasis: the Sermon (for churches focused on members) or the Gospel presentation (for churches focused on the lost)

Influential voices: Billy Graham, Tim Keller, Jackie Hill Perry, Rick Warren

Mainline/Broad

smallest and shrinking fast

Churches like United Methodist, Presbyterian, Church of Christ, Episcopal

Distinct Emphasis: community outreach, charity

Influential voices: Eugene Peterson, Martin Luther King Jr.

Note that many denominations have recently split, resulting in theologically *liberal* and *conservative* branches. (Many of these splits have been centered on social issues.) For example, the Anglican Communion in the United States split into the liberal Episcopal Church and the conservative Anglican Church in North America (ACNA), and the Methodist Church has split into the liberal United Methodist Church (UMC) and the conservative Global Methodist Church (GMC).

>Love the Church

The Church is called to walk in **Unity in Diversity**

The Church displays God's multi-faceted wisdom (Ephesians 3:10)

It's interesting to note that in Acts 2, which describes the birth of the Church, cross-cultural understanding is given (through the interpretation of tongues), but unique languages are not dissolved. Thus, we see the Church can have unity of heart and understanding, even with diversity of cultures and ways of speaking.

The simplest unity we can have is to pray for the Church

John 17:20-21 "I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me."

>Be our church

DPC is unequivocally part of the Global and Historic Church of the Lord Jesus.

But what is God's distinct work here?

Pastor Randy's message:

"First and foremost, God's building a dwelling place where the heartcry of his people—His Bride—is to minister to him before anything else. We are a people hosting Him, and learning to do life centered around the presence of Jesus. Here, Jesus is preeminent, and He is everything.

Second, we are diverse people of all ages and backgrounds, who are learning to walk together into our destiny as a family of God.

We are also a church for our city, for our nation, and for the nations of the Earth. We serve our city and our global family by giving them everything Christ has given us, and we serve by carrying his presence and his gospel everywhere we go.

We very much believe in the present-day manifestation of God's glory and power, and that Jesus is truly the same yesterday, today, and forever. He wants to touch people today just like He did in the gospels.

Our cry is Maranatha; even so Lord come, the Spirit and the Bride say Come! to all who are thirsty. We believe that God is revealing his glory as we pray the prayer of Moses: "show us your glory!"

Dwelling Place Distinctives

- One-Thing priority to love and be loved by God
- People of unity and peace* (this message)
- Presence-centered services and lifestyles
- Global family with international outreach

- Celebration of different cultures and languages
- Unshakable commitment to the goodness of God
- Unapologetic love for the Holy Spirit and his gifts
- Authenticity in community and relationships
- Equipping and sending every believer (not just "ministers")
- Generations walking together in honor
- Radical generosity, rooted in deep faith
- Hopeful expectations of the future
- Commitment to always care for the poor and persecuted
- Convinced expectation that God is moving
- ***And a commitment to never stop growing...***

...which is WHY this list isn't actually long enough, and will surely keep growing!

We have explored the church biblically and historically, celebrated its diversity, embraced our call to love and pray, and considered how the Lord is leading us to build locally.

May we lift up Christ by lifting up His Body; understanding, seeing, loving, and being the Church He died to redeem.