

The what, who, where, why and how of the church.

Ephesians 2:20-22

Theme: the church

FCF: stagnancy

Point: the church is a living community where Christ dwells by his spirit for his mission

App: step into our identity and purpose as 'church' by realigning ourselves with Christ's mission

Where: The cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself.

Who: We are carefully joined together in him, becoming a holy Temple for the Lord

What: Through him you Gentiles are also being made part of this dwelling where God lives

How: by his Spirit.

Intro:

1. if you're disillusioned with institutional religion (disillusioned)
2. if you're bored in the pews (purposeless)
3. if you just came here for the coffee (consuming)

You're here to give it one more shot, asking yourself...

What is the church all about?

Depends on who you ask!

Young adults in the church think it is:¹

AP!

1. overprotective
2. shallow
3. repressive
4. exclusive

- David Kinnaman. *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving the Church*

Young adults outside the church think it is:²

1. anti-homosexual (91%)
2. judgmental (87%)
3. hypocritical (85%)

Church, to many, seems an isolated, exclusive, judgmental subculture

Among young people: 59% w/xian background have dropped out of regular attendance

One disconnect: "separation of faith from their 'real lives'"

Among Baby Boomers: 41% of boomers are unchurched (struggling with connection with church)³ - **Barna**

Why should an older generation care about about the perception of the church?

Because there are millions of passionate young people who want to look up to you. And as disciples of Jesus, you want to make sure the legacy you leave behind is rightly aligned with God's mission so that you can make disciples who take ownership

Why should a younger generation care about the church?

Because we want to make sure our lives count. God's primary instrument in the world is the church.

If that rubs you the wrong way, it's probably because you have a skewed understanding of "church"

The only way to realign is to look at God's intention with the church....

¹ David Kinnaman. *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving the Church...and Rethinking the Faith*. L.1446-3411

² Gabe Lyons and David Kinnaman. *UnChristian*.

³ Barna Group 2011. <http://www.barna.org/faith-spirituality/506-barna-describes-religious-changes-among-busters-boomers-and-elders-since-1991?q=church+attendance+drop>

The gathering of the church is a fulfillment of God's ancient desire to be with his people. Paul uses "temple" instead of church in this passage.

Temple (occurs 117 times in the NT) **AP!**

1. ἱερόν (whole sacred area)⁴

1. Court of the Gentiles
2. Court of women
3. Court of Israel

2. ναός (a place for God to dwell)

1. the holy of holies
2. the holy place...
 1. a place for priests to minister

Showbread (food)

Incense (presence)

Lampstand (light)

Paul says, we are "carefully joined together in him, becoming a holy ναός for the Lord (21)

Perhaps we should be rephrasing our question to be...

Who is the church?

We are.

The church the new dwelling place of God made of his people

But no more building...so where does he dwell?

The center of gravity (holy of holies) is in heaven.⁵

The Holy Place is the spiritual dimension that extends to earth
where we function as a kingdom of priests.

Christ now represents us to God (holy of holies), but we represent Christ to the world (holy place).

1. When we gather: He dwells in us

1. word, baptism, communion, singing, giving
 1. but that one isn't the one we have difficulty with...

2. When we scatter: We dwell in our context with him

1. context: residence, work, play.

"Church" is a living, dynamic organism of people that gathers and scatters with the presence of the Spirit

⁴ Harold W. Hoehner. *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*. p.410

⁵ "First, 'the holy of holies remains in heaven, the place of the temple's 'center of gravity'. Second, the holy place is the spiritual dimension that extends to earth, were God's people function as a 'kingdom of priests' (Rev. 1:6; 5:10; cf. Exod. 19:6) and as 'lampstands' shining God's revelation to the world (Rev. 1:13,20; 2:2; 11:1,4)." G.K. Beale. *The Temple and the Church's Mission*. p.389

Conflict...

The way we live our lives depends on our perspective of God's church...

Perceptions (if we don't understand "who" the church is) **AP!**

1. Church is a building
2. Church is the clergy
3. Church is programs

Implications (if we don't understand "who" the church is) **AP!**

1. we "come" instead "go" (sent)
2. we rely on a few instead of equipping all (own)
3. we turn to programs, instead of investing ourselves (cost)
stagnancy

illustration: Dead Sea

A place for tourists.

It's easy to lose our sense of sentness,
when you don't know where you're going.

Redemption...

Where are we going?

Cornerstone.

Lazo: Janna, is a cornerstone really that important?

Janna: oh yeah...everything else is set in reference to the cornerstone, and it determines the position of the entire structure. If the cornerstone is off by even an inch, the rest of the structure will be exponentially off center.

Grand Canyon.

We'll regain a strong sense of purpose, if we think in terms larger than ourselves.

The church is not about us, it is about Jesus.

If we get anything right, let it be the "Cornerstone"

Why does the church exist?

To enjoy God as originally designed.

Lampstand ---> light to all people⁶

To teach others to do the same

Back to the "who are we"...

⁶ Revelation 1:12,13,20; 2:1 state that the church is a lampstand that Jesus dwells among

“The church is the people of God called to God sent by God for the glory of God to meet the needs of the world with God.” - Britt Merrick, *Godspeed*.

The church is the people of God (“what”) called to God (“where”) sent by God for the glory of God (“why”) to meet the needs of the world with God (“how”).

Resolution...

How are we doing?

1. if you're disillusioned with the church (disillusioned)
 1. to engage Jesus and see how he views His church.
 2. remember that Jesus is the only hero, and his followers are just broken people that are trying to follow him too.
2. if you're bored in the pews (purposeless)
 1. do you feel stagnant?
 1. engage Jesus' mission
 1. pour out where your normal relationship exist
 1. your home, your job, your recreation, etc.
3. if you just came here for the entertainment (consuming) There's better places for that.
 1. But if it's eternal purpose, significance, and meaning you want? You're in the right place: the dwelling of God.

How will we impact the coastlands if this was all true? Why don't we believe?

Because it's by the Spirit that he dwells in us (22b).

We need a fresh filling of the Spirit.