

The Church: 'A Home Away From Home'

by Greg Herrick

The church is a single, spiritual entity composed of all true believers in Christ, with a mandate to fulfill its mission through the power and service of its members.

Scripture: Matthew 28:18, Acts 9:31, Romans 16:5, 1 Corinthians 1:1, 1 Corinthians 12:12, Ephesians 1:22, Ephesians 2:19, Ephesians 4:1, Ephesians 5:25, Colossians 1:28

Topics: "Church Unity", "Spiritual Gifts"

Description

Greg Herrick preaches on the nature of the church, emphasizing its essential oneness as a spiritual entity composed of all true believers in Christ, regardless of different people groups. He explores various scriptural metaphors for the church, highlighting the imagery of the church as the body of Christ and the importance of love in exercising spiritual gifts. Herrick delves into the power and service of the church, discussing its mandate to equip members for holiness and effective service, as well as its mission to reach the world for Christ. He also touches on the marks of a true church, emphasizing the importance of biblical doctrine, sacraments, discipline, equipping members, and evangelism.

Transcript

So then, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of God's household (Ephesians 2:19)

Meditation: The God Who Gives Me A New Family The Nature of the Church 1. Read Romans 16:5 and 1 Corinthians 16:19. Were the Christians meeting in these houses regarded by Paul as a church? 2. Read 1 Corinthians 1:1 and 1 Thessalonians 1:1. How does Paul refer to the church in these passages? How does this compare with the passages cited in question #1 above? 3. Read Acts 9:31. How is the church referred to here? Why is it significant in all these passages (see questions 1-2) that the church is not referred to in the plural as "churches," but only in the singular?

Did you notice the expanding size of the churches being referred to, i.e., "house," "city," "region." 4. Based on the passages above we can say that the church is one single, spiritual, and invisible entity composed of all true believers in Christ. Read Ephesians 4:1-6. How does this passage explain the essential, spiritual oneness of the universal church, though local churches--with certain differences--may spring up in every town (cf. Titus 1:5)? Further, though we do not know in every case who is and who is not a true believer, God certainly "knows those who are his" (2 Timothy 2:19). 5.

According to Ephesians 5:25, for whom did Christ die? What does this imply regarding the essential oneness of the church and the positional (before God in Christ) unity she has and should demonstrate practically before the world in her relationships, i.e., Christians with each other? 6. Read Ephesians 2:11-22 and 3:6. What is the nature of the church viewed ethnically (i.e., viewed according to the different people groups)? How important is this truth for today? Scriptural Metaphors for the Church 1.

In scripture there are several metaphors (symbols) for the church drawn from the world of agriculture, religion, biology, and so on. Each metaphor contributes something unique about the nature of the church and taken together they greatly enhance our understanding of God's wonderful work called the ekklesia. Read John 15:5. What symbol is used to describe our relationship with Christ? What feelings and images does this metaphor evoke in you? What does 15:6 state about our total need to abide in Christ? 2.

In talking about his ministry to the Corinthians, how does Paul refer to the church? See 1 Corinthians 3:6-9. (See below for further reference on the church as a building.) 3. Read 1 Corinthians 3:9-15. To what does Paul compare the church? In what ways is the church like a "building" and what is the point of this metaphor here, i.e., why does Paul mention this to the Corinthians? Read Ephesians 2:19-20. How does passage relate to 1 Corinthians 3:9-15? 4. How does Paul refer to the church in 1 Corinthians 3:16-17?

See also 1 Peter 2:4-8. What was the function of the Temple in the OT? See Exodus 40:34-38; 2 Samuel 7:5; 1 Kings 8:17-19, 27-30. What does this imagery invoke with regard to privilege and responsibility? 5. What imagery is used in 1 Timothy 3:15 to refer to the church? What does this imply about her relationship with God, the Bible, and the world? 6. How does Jesus refer to God in Matthew 6:6, 9? What are Christians called in Galatians 3:26 and 1 Corinthians 6:18? What does this imply about the nature of the church if God is our Father and we are his sons and daughters?

See Ephesians 3:14-15 and Galatians 6:10. 7. One of the most often used metaphors in Scripture to refer to the church is "the body of Christ." Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-26. What does the imagery of a body reveal about the nature of the church in this passage? 8. Read Ephesians 1:22-23 and 4:15-16. Here the church is viewed as a body, but Christ is also included in the metaphor as the Head. This is a different use of the body imagery than in 1 Corinthians 12. According to these passages in Ephesians what appears to be the role of the Head in terms of the body?

What then should be the response of the body? The Power and Service of the Church 1. According Ephesians 1:12 what is the chief reason God has brought the church into existence? How does Romans 12:1 and 2 Corinthians 7:1 relate to this idea? 2. What is the mandate of the church with respect to its own members? See Ephesians 4:11-16 and Colossians 1:28. 3. Who gives the church the authority and power to fulfill its mission? See Matthew 28:18. 4. With respect to the world, what is our primary mandate in Matthew 28:19-20?

How does Matthew 5:16, Luke 10:25-37, and Galatians 6:10 relate to this? 5. What does Paul say about the gospel in Romans 1:16 and 10:14-17? Marks of a True Church There are several marks of a true church, but some of the more commonly mentioned include: (1) biblical doctrine; faithful preaching of God's word combined with living faith in Him (2 Timothy 2:15); (2) the proper interpretation and faithful administration of the sacraments, i.e., the Lord's Supper and Baptism (1 Corinthians 11); (3) the Biblical exercise of restorative discipline (Matthew 18:15-20); (4) equipping each member toward holiness and effective service (Colossians 1:28), and (5) strong emphasis on reaching the world for Christ and training new Christians (Matthew 28:19-20).

Gifts Given the Church

1. Read Romans 12:4-5; 1 Corinthians 12:4-26, and Ephesians 4:1-6 and note the emphasis on diversity in the context of an overall unity. Who is the cause of the diversity and the unity? Why were gifts given to each member? Do you think that the gifts listed in Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:7-10, 28-30, Ephesians 4:11 are exhaustive? Why or why not?
2. Who determines which person receives which gift according to 1 Corinthians 12:11?
3. Does everyone have the same gift? See 1 Corinthians 12:29-31. Should everyone have the gift of tongues? Teaching? Etc.?
4. 1 Corinthians 12-14 forms a single unit of thought. All three chapters hang together around the topic: "the use and abuse of spiritual gifts." Chapter 13 is about love and is sandwiched right in the middle of 12-14. It can be broken down into three sections as follows: (1) the pre-eminence of love (12:31b-13:3); (2) the practice of love (13:4-7), and (3) the permanence of love (13:8-13). How does this chapter contribute to Paul's point in chapters 12 and 14? Why is this so critical to understand and apply in our fellowships? What would happen if love were absent or not at the forefront of people's thinking in the exercise of the gifts?

Offices in the Church

1. Read Acts 14:23; 20:17, Titus 1:5; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1; 1 Timothy 3:1-7, and Titus 1:6-9 (overseer probably equals elder). Who were the main leaders of the church? What were their qualifications?
2. Read 1 Timothy 3:8-12. What is the other main leadership group in the church? What are their qualifications and perhaps some of their functions?

Meditation: What Does This Mean for My Life?

The Nature of the Church

Does learning that Paul referred to believers who met in homes as churches change your perspective on the church? How? What other facts about the nature of the church caught your attention and how can this new understanding benefit you in the situation into which God has called you?

Scriptural Metaphors for the Church

What did you learn about the organic nature of the church from these metaphors? In your mind, how do these metaphors relate to the institutional church? Which metaphor, in your thinking, best expresses your relationship with Christ and other believers?

The Power and Service of the Church

What does it mean to you, in the context of sharing your faith, that Christ has all authority in heaven and earth? In talking about the service of the church, we discussed three areas. What were they and why is it important that all three be present in any church? How do you serve in your church? How can you develop and mature this ministry?

Marks of a True Church

What things should a person look for in a church? What is the minimum that must be present before you would fellowship somewhere? When is it proper for a Christian to leave a church for reasons other than relocation (e.g., due to a career change, or the like)? Is there a difference between the importance of the gospel, and the importance of one's eschatology? If so, which is more important and at what point would you begin to struggle with a church in any one of these areas (if the church differed from you). NOTE: In all these questions we would encourage people to stay where they are and try to mature together with other believers, rather than leaving simply because someone holds to a pre-tribulational rapture and another a post-tribulational rapture. Of course, there are certain doctrinal errors that might lead to leaving a church since it appears in some cases that any hope for restoration to clear Biblical standards is unlikely. But, it has been our experience that there are a lot of Christians, in the US and Canada, in particular, who change churches at the first sign of differences or dislikes. This is unhealthy and prevents a person from truly committing himself to God and His people in a certain location.

Gifts Given the Church

What is your spiritual gift(s)? If you do not know, what is a good way to begin the process of discerning your gift? Prayer? Godly counsel? See Romans 12:1-2. What is the basic ethical and spiritual context for the healthy functioning of the gifts? How can you contribute to developing this kind of ambience in your church?

Offices in the Church

Why does God establish leadership in his church? What should be our response to the leaders God has appointed over us? See Acts 17:11; Hebrews 13:7, 17.

The Issue of Unity

How has reflecting on these passages given you fresh insight into God's passion that his children live and walk in unity? What can you do to foster unity in your church and among churches in your community? Trust God to bless you in this.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/greg-herrick/the-church-a-home-away-from-home/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net