



The Church

PART 2.5

BUILD YOUR LIFE ON THE FOUNDATION OF 11 CORE BIBLICAL TRUTHS

The family (household) of God

1. God adopts us into his family.

In the physical world, individuals automatically become part of a family unit when they are born. God wisely made the same provision for his spiritual children as well. At salvation, we are placed by the Holy Spirit into God's family, and God is now our Father.

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

And so we should not be like cringing, fearful slaves, but we should behave like God's very own children, adopted into the bosom of his family, and calling to him, "Father, Father."

—Romans 8:15 (LB)

2. We're to treat one another as family.

Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity.

—1 Timothy 5:1–2

The building of God

You are also God's building (1 Cor. 3:9 TEV).

In contrast to the Old Testament period in which Israel _____ a temple (Ex. 25:8), the church _____ a temple: a living, vital temple.

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

—Ephesians 2:19–22

In this metaphor, Jesus is pictured as the _____.

The cornerstone was placed at the juncture of two walls to tie them together. In arches, a stone was placed between the supporting sides. The weight of the arch was on that stone, and if the stone was removed, the arch could collapse.

Individual believers are pictured as _____.

In the construction of the church as a temple, each stone is a living stone because it shares the divine nature, and the building as a whole becomes a dwelling place for God through his Spirit.

As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him—you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

—1 Peter 2:4–5



Key Personal Perspective

How readily do you accept believers from other denominations and churches as being “real” Christians? Have you been trying to carry all the weight of the Christian life on your shoulders? Do you need to see the importance of your place in God’s building? Do you need to recognize your need to depend on others in the body of Christ?

The bride of Christ

This is the one metaphor that is used of the church in a prophetic sense.

- Israel was often portrayed in the Old Testament as being the _____ or _____ of God.

And I will make you my promised bride forever. I will be good and fair; I will show you my love and mercy. I will be true to you as my promised bride, and you will know the LORD.

—Hosea 2:19–20 (NCV)

- However, Israel was repeatedly _____ to her vows of love to God.

This message from the Lord came to me during the reign of King Josiah: Have you seen what Israel does? Like a wanton wife who gives herself to other men at every chance, so Israel has worshiped other gods on every hill, beneath every shady tree. I thought that someday she would return to me and once again be mine; but she didn’t come back. And her faithless sister Judah saw the continued rebellion of Israel.

—Jeremiah 3:6–7 (LB)

- Unlike faithless Israel, the church is portrayed in Scripture as being a _____ awaiting the coming of her bridegroom.

I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him.

—2 Corinthians 11:2

In Ephesians 5:22–33, the analogy is drawn comparing the husband and wife relationship in marriage to Christ and his bride, the church. The illustration is powerful because it reveals the magnitude of Christ's love for his church. He loved her enough to die for her. It also reveals the obedient response the church is to have to the bridegroom, Jesus Christ.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word.

—Ephesians 5:25–26

- The relationship of the bride to the Bridegroom reflects two characteristics of the nature of the church:

1. The church lives with a sense of urgency to always be _____ for the Bridegroom.

At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep. At midnight the cry rang out: "Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!" Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, "Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out." "No," they replied, "there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves." But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut. Later the others also came. "Sir! Sir!" they said. "Open the door for us!" But he replied, "I tell you the truth, I don't know you." Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.

—Matthew 25:1–13

2. The church is to _____ into the new relationship with the Bridegroom.

Then he said to his servants, "The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find."

—Matthew 22:8–9

Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!

—Revelation 19:9

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The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say,
“Come!” Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let
him take the free gift of the water of life.

—Revelation 22:17



Key Personal Perspective

Being the bride of Christ is a spiritual love affair. Is this a reality in your life? Or does the idea seem too sentimental? Is there submission in your heart to Jesus as your Bridegroom? Are you ready to meet him? Are there some priorities you need to rearrange so that you can concentrate more on loving him?

A Final Word

Is the church of God a useless, worn-out institution? It doesn't have to be. God has made all the provisions necessary for local churches to be vibrant, transformational groups of believers who live interdependent, authentic lives of ministry and mission, building bridges so that lost people can find hope in God. The Devil can't stop us; the pervasive culture around us can't stop us. We are the only ones who can cause the church to lose its place of importance by not acting like the body of Christ, the flock of God, the family of God, the building of God, and the bride of Christ.

I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it!

—Matthew 16:18



Discussion Questions

In our group discussion, we're going to look back at the questions we've asked about how the pictures of the church challenge us in a *personal* way.

1. *The church is the body of Christ:* every part of the body is important. (What part would *you* want to give up?) Do you feel like you're an important part of the body of Christ?
2. *The church is the flock of God:* what are the things that we can do that make sure that Jesus is the shepherd leading us, that we aren't trying to lead ourselves?
3. *The church is the family of God:* how does this help you to picture your responsibilities toward other believers?
4. *The church is the building of God:* how readily do you accept believers from other denominations and churches as being "real" Christians? Have you been trying to carry all of the weight of the Christian life on your shoulders? Do you need to see the importance of your place in God's building? Do you need to recognize your need to depend on others in the body of Christ?
5. *The church is the bride of Christ:* being the bride of Christ is a spiritual love affair. Is this a reality in your life? Or does the idea seem too sentimental? Is there submission in your heart to Jesus as your Bridegroom? Is your life ready to meet him? Are there some priorities you need to rearrange so that you can concentrate more on loving him?