

“The Need for Church”

Ephesians 4:1-6

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We are concluding our *FaceTime* series today, and I hope you have enjoyed walking through what it means to grow, be strengthened and develop the most important relationships in life. This morning we are going to tackle what it means and why it is important to have a relationship with the Church.

I’m calling the message: **The Need for Church**

I realize when I say the word “church”, it’s almost like saying mom or dad on Mother’s Day and Father’s Day. Depending upon your personal experience with the “church” or a “church”, that can VERY much determine your viewpoint on it.

If you’re like me, the word “church” conjures up nothing but good memories for me! One of my earliest memories as a child is getting in the old blue and brown station wagon we had as a family after church one evening – that thing had wood paneling!

I remember getting in there and on the way home singing with my dad, “I’ve got the joy, joy, joy, joy, down in my heart! Where?” Remember that song! Great memories when I think of church!

- I think about the summer camps, like the ones our students just got back from that I attended growing up and the fun I had with my friends. Camp is where I trusted Jesus as an 11 year-old boy...
- I think about preaching my first sermon as a 17 year old, and how awful it was, but how nice and kind the people were to me about it (Billy Graham)...
- I think about the church as being the place where Debbie and I got married and committed our life together to God and before family and friends and a faith community...
- I think about church as being the place where I dedicated my children, and to this day want them here to experience the community and love of brothers and sisters in Christ who share their values and faith and invest in them. It’s a place where they have an opportunity to serve and give back...

Now, I understand that the church is not brick and mortar. It’s not an organization like any other business in the community. It’s not like a country club where you pay membership dues and then get to have certain amenities.

The church is the people of God. In the New Testament the word “church” is translated as “ekklesia”, and it means “called out ones”. It’s why we call the study of the Church “ecclesiology”.

“Ekklesia” is a word that was used to describe a gathering of people. In the days of the New Testament it referred to a public assembly. People would be “called out” to the city in order to vote or pay taxes or discuss important civil matters.

Jesus uses this word in **Matt. 16:18** (after Peter’s great confession of faith) – **“And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church (notice the ownership...notice the promise to build and the promise to prevail), and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”**

New Testament writers take this word and they build on Jesus use of it to describe a people who have been “called out” by God and they gather together...they assemble together.

Now, we’re going to talk about what they are supposed to do WHEN they gather together here in just a few moments,, but first let me give you a working definition of the Church. We’ll let theologian Wayne Grudem add a little color to this definition of “ekklesia” for us.

Wayne Grudem in his book, **“Christian Beliefs”** defines the Church as **“the community of all true believers for all time. That is, the church is made up of all men and women who have been, are or ever will be true believers in Jesus.”**

Now, within this definition, we see two manifestations of the Church: The first is what I refer to as the **INVISIBLE Church** – these are our brothers and sisters in Christ that have gone on before us...as Grudem puts it – “all true believers for all time”.

The second manifestation of the Church is what I call the **VISIBLE Church**– this is the local body of believers that gather in biblical communities all over the world today.

Now, it’s important to understand that nearly every time the word “church” is used in the Bible it refers to a local, visible congregation. This is important because how many times have we heard this: “Well, I can believe in Jesus, but that doesn’t mean I have to go to church or be a part of a church!”

The Bible insinuates...it assumes that if you are a part of the INVISIBLE Church (and we’ll work out how you become a part of the church shortly), then you will also be a part of the VISIBLE Church.

You and I NEED the church. To quote an early church father, **Cyprian**...leader in the church of North Africa in the early to mid 200’s wrote: **“No one can have God for his Father, who does not have the Church for his mother.”**

He was obviously speaking of the universal, INVISIBLE church as the bride of Christ, but I believe this is true at the local VISIBLE church level. You and I...we need the church, and we

will grow best in our relationship with the Lord, in our faith and with others by giving ourselves to the church.

Illus. Three homes – spiritual, physical, church

We're going to look at multiple passages of scripture today regarding the "Church", but I want to launch from a passage that is found in the book of Ephesians.

Outside of the book of Acts, there is no greater place to look in all of the scripture than the book of Ephesians:

- to determine what the Church is...
- to see what the Church does...
- and to discover why we need the Church...

If you recall from our Acts series, the apostle Paul spent more time in Ephesus than he did any other city that he helped plant a church in...nearly three years!

He loved this church, invested heavily in this church, and he is writing this church from prison to encourage them, challenge them and remind them of all they have "in Christ" – it's very doctrinal in nature in the first three chapters. He then takes a turn and gets very practical with them over the last three chapters...he shares with them how their beliefs ought to affect their behavior, and writes to them about the practice and mission of the church.

This passage we are looking at today is a transitional statement of sorts between the first and last three chapters. Let's look at it:

Eph. 4:1-6 – "I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³ eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."

The "Church" is the called out people of God. And here, Paul is in his words "urging" the "Church" to walk in a manner worthy of their calling and he spells out this manner of life for us. He uses words like "humility, gentleness, patience...he encourages them to bear with one another in love and maintain the unity of the Spirit.

See, Paul KNEW this "called out people"...they were still people! Changed by the mercy and grace of Jesus, but from very different backgrounds and upbringings. In the "Church" you had both Jews and Gentiles. You had the uber religious and the uber pagan. They were saved, but as we talked about a few weeks ago, that old sin nature doesn't just go away!

The great thing about Jesus is, he allows us to come to him "Just as I am" as the old hymn goes. He loves me, and calls me to himself with ALL my baggage – THEN he cleans me up!

This is the promise he makes to you today. You don't have to have it all together to come to Jesus! NO!

You come to Jesus by faith. He takes you just the way you are, but he loves you too much for you to stay that way! And so, he saves you and he puts his Holy Spirit in you, and he gives you a spiritual family – this is the Church.

Now, we can't stay here long due to time, but it is important to point out this call for unity...it's actually a command to unity that we see here in the scripture. Unity is very important to Jesus...so important it was part of the final prayer he prayed for his disciples and ultimately me and you before he went to the cross.

John 17:11 – “And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.”

Jesus wants his church to resemble and reflect the unity he has within the Godhead (Father, Son and Holy Spirit). For this to happen though we have to put on humility and gentleness and patience...we have to bear with one another – then and only then will we maintain the unity of the Spirit.

Now, to the outside world, I have to believe that when the Church says they are for unity, it might draw a laugh. After all, for the visible church – i.e. the local body of believers that meet in local congregations all over the world – they come in many different shapes and sizes.

There are entire denominations based off how a church is governed, doctrines churches believe and emphasize, certain practices churches implement...you could look at it and say, “The church is maintaining unity? Yeah, right!?”

And while it's true within the visible church there are many differences on the periphery, surrounding what we sometimes call secondary or tertiary issues. However, for a church to really be a church (visible or invisible) there is GREAT unity surrounding that which really matters.

And what really matters? What is it that a church, in order to be a church has to have unity on? Well, look at (v. 4-6) in our Ephesians passage.

Ephesians 4:4-6 – “There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

THIS is what the true church is certain to be in unity about...if it's not, it may have church in its name, but it's not really a church. Any true church will hold to, embrace and have unity regarding
(v. 4-6). There is:

- one body...

- one Spirit...
- one hope...
- one Lord...
- one faith...
- one baptism...
- one God and Father of all and who is over all...

Here in this verse, we see that the Church described as a “body”. Paul gives us a larger discourse on this in:

1 Cor. 12:12-27 – For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. ¹⁴ For the body does not consist of one member but of many. ¹⁵ If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? ¹⁸ But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. ¹⁹ If all were a single member, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. ²¹ The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” ²² On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³ and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, ²⁴ which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, ²⁵ that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶ If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. ²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.”

What’s the Bible teaching here? That we need one another! There should be no lone-ranger Christians! If an organ of the body is to fulfill its purpose, it must be connected to the body! And the same is true for me and you!

If we somehow become disconnected from the body of believers, like an organ disconnected from the body you will shrivel up and die...that organ would be useless!

Illus. little toe - Surely you see the parallel! You as a member of the body, NEED the body! You may be thinking, “I’m just a little toe on the body, no one knows me or even needs me!” Question, Have you ever stubbed your toe? The body needs you, and you need the body!

Did you know...it’s possible – not likely or healthy, but it is possible to be a member of the invisible Church (saved and set apart – part of the Bride of Christ), but not a member of the visible church (a local body of believers)?

It's possible, but as stated before not encouraged! The first step that we often see when a person begins to struggle spiritually and decline spiritually is to become disconnected from a local body of believers!

This is why the writer of **Heb. 10:24-25** – **“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”**

The Church is a body...are you connected to the body? It's vital for your spiritual health and life and growth!

Paul says, that in the Church there is one Spirit. That's the Holy Spirit...the third person within the Godhead. Don't ask me to explain him! While I can't explain the Holy Spirit (He is God – he can communicate, act volitionally, be grieved – one God in three persons) – while I can't fully explain him, I love his work!

It's the Holy Spirit that brought you into the Invisible Church! You didn't come on your own!

John 16:7-8 – **“Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment**

It's the Holy Spirit that convicts of sin...it's the Holy Spirit that convinces us of truth. He is given to us at the moment of salvation. In fact, it's the Holy Spirit who seals our salvation and is proof of our salvation.

Earlier in Ephesians, Paul would write: **Eph. 1:13** – **“In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.”**

The Church is one body...God gives the Church his Holy Spirit. We're then told in Eph. 4 that the Church is called to “one hope”. What is that hope?

It's the hope of the resurrection! It's the hope of life with God forever! Think about how this hope makes us different and distinguishes us from anything else on earth!

This is the sole reason we exist! This is why we gather on the weekends! Sure, church should make you feel better...sometimes at least! Sometimes, it ought to make you feel awful so that you repent and get back in line with God!

The church should be a place where you develop friendships and find a place to serve. It can be fun and offer special events and opportunities for your family and children...but what makes the church the church is that our hope is “in Christ”.

And when we gather to worship, we gather to celebrate this truth...remind ourselves of this truth...when someone we love passes, we cling to this truth: The Church is all about the hope we have in Christ and this hope should fuel our mission!

We don't want anyone to live without this hope...to die without this hope. Look at the early church in the book of Acts.

- What propelled them to speak up...
- What drove them to travel and start other churches...
- What compelled them to give their very lives for the gospel?

It was this hope of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and our future resurrection with him!

It's so important that we see in this that the Church is NOT about simply meeting your needs! The Church is not about making sure we do everything according to your preferences (worship, programs, etc.)

The Church is about meeting together as one body...led by one Spirit...and putting our trust in the one hope that brings us together and that is the resurrection.

Paul says, we have "one Lord". His name is Jesus if any of you are wondering! If you are interested in knowing what Jesus's relationship with his Church is allow me give a brief synopsis, using just the book of Ephesians.

1. We are told in Eph. 1:22-23, 4:15 and 5:23 that Jesus is the "head of the church"...
2. In Eph. 2:20 he is called the "cornerstone of the Church"...
3. In Eph. 5:23, 26, 27 Jesus is called the "Savior and sanctifier of the Church"...
4. In Eph. 4:11-16 it is Christ that gives ministers to the Church...
5. In Eph. 5:25 we are told that Jesus loved the Church and gave himself for the Church...
6. In Eph. 2:21-22 and 4:15 we are told that members of Jesus' Church actually dwell and grow "in him"...
7. In Eph. 3 we are told that Christ, the wisdom of God is revealed through the Church...

If you want to know what makes a church a church" Jesus does!

- If he is not the head...
- If he is not calling the shots...
- If he is not the center and focus of attention...
- If he is not being worshipped...then it's NOT a Church!

Listen, we have brothers and sisters that are of different tribes. Some are Methodists, some are Catholics, some may be Pentecostal, Episcopalian, Anglican and so forth. We may even have some crazy cousins in the family somewhere and we may not agree on all the "minors" in scripture.

But, question we need to be able to answer in order to fellowship and "break bread" with them is this question: "Is Jesus Lord as defined within the confines of the Bible?"

If so, they are family...in the household of God and therefore brothers and sisters in Christ.

That means they have experienced what Paul mentions here as “one baptism”...this is Spirit baptism. This is what Jesus was referring to in his conversation with John the Baptist back in John 3. Do you remember?

John 3:3-8 – “Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?” Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

1 Cor. 12:13 – “For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.”

The invisible Church is made up of believers that have been baptized by the Holy Spirit of God. This is how you are birthed into the Church of Jesus Christ.

Hear this: I mentioned a few minutes ago that while it is unhealthy, it is possible to be a member of the invisible Church, but not a visible, local church. Did you know it is also possible for you to be a member of a visible church...a local body of believers, but not be a member of the invisible Church!

There is a great possibility that many are members of our church that think they have been baptized by the Spirit of God, but indeed have not!

And the only way we can know this or judge this is by the fruit of your life...only God knows your heart!

Local church membership does not save you! Only Christ coming into your heart...and at that exact moment the Spirit baptizes you into the Church...THIS is what saves you!

And so, I ask the question, have you been born again? Born from above? Born by the Spirit? This is what makes you a member of the Church of Jesus Christ.

This is also what makes water baptism so significant. It is an outward symbol of what the Spirit of Christ has already done inwardly in your life. You are immersed in the water just as the Spirit has immersed your life.

As a Baptist church, you are baptized into our fellowship. We require water baptism for membership in our church NOT because it saves you, but we believe it identifies you as part of God's family. And anyone who trusts in Christ ought to identify with him!

Your water baptism declares your faith, shows Christ's burial and resurrection, symbolizes you dying to sin and self and the old way of life and it announces your new life...your new birth in Christ! This is why we baptize!

It is the physical picture of deep spiritual truth...and in scripture water baptism usually took place in the same time frame of the Spirit baptism!

One gets saved (Spirit baptism) then they get identified with Christ's Church in (Water baptism).

We have one God (v. 6) who is "over all and through all and in all." What a God we serve!

Listen, to me: You need the Church. You need to worship with other believers...you need to be able to fellowship with other believers...you need to be able to grow and be held accountable by other believers. You need to exercise your spiritual gifts!

Romans 12:4-8 – "For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness."

Rick Warren, Pastor of Saddleback Church recently named his successor and stepped down from leadership. He was famous for taking apart Acts 2:42-26 and giving the five purposes of the Church.

Here is a major reason you need the Church. You can't fulfill these purposes apart from it. He writes in *The Purpose-Driven Church*:

- 1. Grow warmer through FELLOWSHIP**
- 2. Grow deeper through DISCIPLESHIP**
- 3. Grow stronger through WORSHIP**
- 4. Grow broader through MINISTRY**
- 5. Grow larger through EVANGELISM**

I'm telling you, I've seen the Church in action...I've seen it in action this week!

- At camp...
- In meeting needs of individuals in dire situations...
- Seen it encouraging...
- Holding up...
- Being there for people in loss...

I've seen it. And as our Executive Pastor Jeff Young often says, there is NOTHING like the Church when the Church is working right. Everyone of us here NEED the Church.

I wish I had time to go into more, but I simply don't. We're going to close this message out sharing in an ordinance that God established in his Church. He gave it to us to look back and remember his death and to look forward to his coming.

Paul wrote of this ordinance...this rite...this spiritual ritual...this act of worship that we are to participate in, in:

1 Cor. 11:23-26 – “For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread,²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”²⁵ In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.”

So, here is what we are going to do. I'm going to pray and our deacons and ushers will serve us the Lord's Supper. Anyone is welcome at the Lord's Supper provided you are member of the Universal Invisible Church – you've been baptized by the Spirit upon placing your faith and trust in Christ, then you are welcome at the table.

And if you haven't made that decision, I'm going to ask you to make it right now by calling on the name of the Lord. Put your faith and trust in him!

You don't have to be a member of this visible, local church to take part in the Supper, only a member of Christ's Church.

I'm then going to ask you to hold on to your elements, serve your neighbor the tray and we'll come back and take the supper in just a few minutes.

Let's pray.

Please Note: This document is not meant to be a published, cited, annotated research paper. It is simply a transcript of a spoken message, provided as a resource. Many commentaries, articles, and other sermon helps were likely studied and contributed to the forming of this message.