

WHAT IS CHURCH?

CIRCLE UP | VINCE GIORDANO

Question: What do I think of when I hear the word church?

When we misunderstand what Church is, we are missing out on the fullness of relationship with God.

MISUNDERSTANDINGS OF CHURCH

1 Church is a supermarket: individualistic/consumerism

a. we want what we like and will run to something else when we're offended, challenged, or disinterested

"Consumer Christianity places our needs and desires at the center of God's universe."
- Carrie Nieuwhof

→ The result is shallow faith that crumbles in the middle of crisis.

2 Church is a place to go: faith is compartmentalized

a. Leads to hypocritical living

We become one person at "church" and another person in other areas of our lives

3 Church is invisible: non-committal

a. Leads to a belief that church is optional

→ The local church is one of the primary ways God sharpens and shapes our faith

The New Testament uses the word *church* 114 times.

Ekklesia: "The called-out ones"

- Used in Ancient Greek, to address people called together for a specific purpose
- Used in the New Testament to refer to Church broadly, as well as local church

Church isn't something we consume, it isn't a place we go to, it's definitely not

invisible; it's the family of God in Christ Jesus. A family called out to believe and trust in Jesus, a family called out to belong to one another in Christ, and a family who is called out to become like Christ in His character and mission.

→ Like a three-legged stool, the Church believes, belongs, and becomes.

THE CHURCH IS CALLED TO BELIEVE

Ephesians 2:19-21

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, **built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone**, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

Historically, the cornerstone was the first stone put into place. The other stones were laid around it.

The apostles' work was based on the foundation that Jesus is our Savior. We are the Church when we believe and hold fast to the truth that Jesus is God—our promised Messiah.

→ **There are a lot of social gatherings. The Church also gathers, but it is built on the confession that Jesus is Lord.**

The Church doesn't just know Jesus is Messiah, the Church trusts Jesus is Messiah.

Question: Do I just show up at the gathering or do I actually believe Jesus is Lord?

Romans 10:9

If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

THE CHURCH IS CALLED TO BELONG

Ephesians 2:19

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

Many of us love the function of the Church, but do we love the very people who make up the Church?

Question: Am I connected and committed to the people of the Church?

We are family and citizens: we adhere to the commands and values of the Kingdom of God.

Our greatest command is love.

We belong when we:

- Outdo one another in showing honor—Romans 12:10
- Live in harmony with one another—Romans 12:16, 1 Peter 3:8
- Welcome one another—Romans 15:7
- Instruct one another—Romans 15:14
- Show hospitality to one another without grumbling—1 Peter 4:9
- Have the same care for one another—1 Corinthians 12:25
- Serve one another—Galatians 5:13
- Bear one another's burdens—Galatians 6:2

We encounter the Living God through one another. God speaks and cares through His Church.

→ The one another statements are directed first to those inside the Church. When we love one another this way, it witnesses to those outside the Church about Christ.

Question: Am I lacking in any of the one another statements?

THE CHURCH IS CALLED TO BECOME

Ephesians 2:19-21

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

We grow:

- in personal holiness and character of Jesus
- by reaching people who don't know Jesus

→ We grow as we go.

Church is a family called out by God in Christ Jesus. A family called out to believe and trust in Jesus, a family called out to belong to one another in Christ, and a family who is called out to become like Christ in His character and mission.

If we just believe, we're a consumer church.

If we just belong, we're part of a club—culture Christians not being changed.

If we just become, faith is all about self-improvement and work-based religion.

Question: Which leg of the stool is wobbly?

→ If you don't belong, it's time to commit and get connected.

→ If you aren't becoming, it's time to invest in others.

→ If you don't believe, it's time to take a step of faith.



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