



The Church

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Facilitator Notes

What four key truths about Christians are listed in Ephesians 2:19?

"...You are a member of God's very own family...and you belong in God's household with every other Christian." (Ephesians 2:19, LB)

Circle "member", "family", "belong", "household". These are four key truths. Out of this verse we gather some very important keys about the Bible and what the Bible says about the church.

How is the church a family?

It says "God's household". It doesn't say the church is like a family. It says the church is a family. It's a spiritual family. In fact, your spiritual family is going to outlast your physical family. The Bible says there isn't marriage in heaven but there are Christians in heaven. So we're all going to be related in heaven -- together -- and this family will actually outlast the blood family that you have here on earth. This is what Jesus was talking about when Jesus said...

Matthew 12:50 - *"For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."* (NIV)

To what are Christians a member?

Notice he says, *"You are a member of God's very own family."* That says it's God's will. It's not optional. Every Christian needs a church family.

- A Christian without a church family is like a person who says "I want to play NFL football but I don't want to be a part of any team." The fact is, we need each other to be strong in our Christian faith.

When the Bible uses the term "church," to what is it referring?

- First it's used to refer to every Christian who's ever lived throughout history. That's called the universal church.
- But the other way the word "church" is used is to refer to a local group, a specific place. Like the church at Corinth or Creekside Christian Fellowship.

It's only used four times in the Bible to refer to a general universal sense. Almost every time you see the word "church" in the Bible it's used to refer to a specific group of believers like we are here today.

Do all people who trust in Jesus as their Savior and Lord become members of a church?

The instant a person becomes a believer in Christ, they are automatically a part of the universal church of God. But

people don't become a part of a local church until they make that choice.

- It's like when you were born physically, you were automatically entered into the human race. You didn't have a choice. You became a part of the human race the moment you were born. But you didn't become a part of any local family until somebody chooses to take you home from the hospital.

Is it necessary for a Christian to associate him or herself with a local body of believers?

Yes. Notice that Ephesians 2:19 says, *"You belong in God's household with every other member of the church."* God has given us at least 30 instructions in the New Testament that you can't fulfill unless you choose to be a part of a local church. Being a part of a local church body is proof that we are saved:

1 John 3:14 - *We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death.* (NIV)

True believers are compelled to be with the ones they love and that means they become involved in a local church body.

Why do you think some people float around from church to church?

They have applied the consumer market mentality of our society to their spiritual life and don't understand that God has a purpose for them.

- The Bible says, if you're a Christian, it means you're apart of the body of Christ. You could be the hand, the ear, the eyes, the nose, the liver. What would you say if the liver said, "I think for one week I'll be a part of this body over here and the next week I'll be a part of that body over there and the week after that I'll be a part of this body over here..." Pretty soon what's going to happen is an unconnected liver shrivels up and dies. You need to be a part of a local church family.

What's the difference between being a Christian and being a member of a church family?

The difference is the word "commitment". I become a Christian by committing my life to Christ. I become a member of a church by committing myself to other Christians. I say, "That's going to be my church home where I'm going to give and be given to, where I'm going to serve and be served, where I'll love and be loved."

The Purpose of the Church

Why we exist as a church

The purpose of our church is summarized in a single sentence based on two key Scriptures:

“A great commitment to the Great Commandment and the great Commission will grow a great church!”

The Great Commandment is:

Jesus said, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart...soul...and mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and Prophets hang on these two commandments.” (Matthew 22:36-40 – NIV)

The Great Commission is:

Jesus said, “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” (Matthew 28:19-20 – NIV)

What does it mean to “love God with all your heart?”

This is “WORSHIP” – to celebrate God’s presence.

What does it mean to “love your neighbor as yourself?”

This is “MINISTRY” – to share God’s love with others.

What does it mean to “go...make disciples?”

This is “EVANGELISM” – to proclaim God’s Word.

What does it mean to “baptize them...?”

This means to “INCORPORATE INTO FELLOWSHIP” – those who are in God’s family.

What does it mean to “Teach them...all things?”

This is “DISCIPLESHIP” – to educate and equip God’s people.

1. Worship:

“Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.” (Matthew 4:10 – NIV)

What does it mean to worship God?

To worship God means to honor Him with great reverence, to be devoted to Him and regard Him with great, even extravagant respect...

Mark 12:30 – “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” (NIV)

What kind of worshipers does God want us to be?

“...The Father seeks worshipers...and His worshippers must worship Him in spirit and in truth.”

(John 4:23-24 – NIV)

God wants us to worship Him in spirit and truth... this means that we should honor Him from our inner self, starting with our very thoughts and with a correct understand of who He is.

What are some ways we may express our worship of God?

- Singing (Eph. 5:19)
- Commitment (Romans 12:1-2)
- Praying (Ps. 95:6)
- Hearing the Word (John 17:17)
- Giving (1 Cor. 16:1-2)
- Baptism (Romans 6:3-4)
- Meditating (Hab. 2:20)
- Lord’s Supper (1 Cor. 11:23-26)

2. Ministry:

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms. (1 Peter 4:10 – NIV)

What is ministry?

Ministry is what we do to serve one another in meeting needs.

What do the following Scripture passages have to say about why the church should be engaged in ministry?

“By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” (John 13:35 – NIV)

The church exists to demonstrate God’s love in the world. The sacrificial love of God is alien to the human experience so it stands out in the world and attracts people to Him.

Now God gives us many kinds of special abilities.. and there are different kinds of service to God (ministry)...

All of you together form the one Body of Christ and each of you is a separate and necessary part of it.

(1 Corinthians 12:4-5, 27 – LB)

God has equipped the people who make up the church with spiritual gifts that are intended to be used to benefit those in the church. Since we all have some gift, it is our responsibility to discover what that gift is and use it out of gratitude to the Giver of gifts

*But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood ...
[God] has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve
his God and Father...*

(1 Peter 2:9 and Revelation 1:6 – NIV)

In the biblical church, there are no special anointed officials that are our intermediaries to God. All believers are priests before God. Priests represent God to mankind and visa versa. We don't need anybody to stand between us and God anymore. Jesus Christ did that by His death and resurrection. Because of that we all have equal access to God.

Given that a key purpose of the Church is to be engaged in ministry, how should each Creekside member think of themselves?

Each Creekside member think of themselves as a minister... it is important to find out what your spiritual gifts are then begin applying them as part of the church to further the cause of Christ.

Given that a key purpose of the Church is to be engaged in ministry, what should each task needed at Creekside be considered?

Each task needed at Creekside be considered a ministry because God can use it to bring people to Him. We don't realize the impact we are having on others by simply being present and doing the little things that need doing.

3. Evangelism:

His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms..

(Ephesians 3:10 – NIV)

Can God save people without using the church?

Certainly, God can do anything. But God chooses to use the church to be His representative on earth so that we may be follow partakers with Him in the blessing that comes from people being saved...

"Anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. But who can ask Him to save them unless they believe in Him? And how can they believe in Him if they have never heard about Him? And how can they hear about Him unless someone tells him?"

(Romans 10:13-14 – LB)

Why must the Church never stop growing?

*The Lord...is patient, **not wanting anyone to perish**, but wants everyone to come to repentance.*

(2 Peter 3:9 – NIV)

The Church must never stop growing because God desires for all people to be saved. It is not His choice that anyone would spend eternity separated from Him. God would prefer for all people to turn to Him from their sin but He knows that most will not because He gave us a free will to make our own choices.

Why else must the Church never stop growing?

*"Go out into the country...and urge anyone you find to come in, **so that My House will be full.**"*

(Luke 14:23 – LB)

The Church must never stop growing because God has commanded us to urge people to join His family. God has a specific number of people in mind to fill His house for eternity and we are to work until that day is realized. The Scriptures say we should be, "*looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God*" (2 Peter 3:12 - NKJ).

Why else must the Church never stop growing?

*"Under Christ's control, the whole Body is nourished...and grows as **God wants it to grow.**"*

(Colossians 2:19 – GN)

The Church must never stop growing because this is the will of God and it is God who does all the heavy lifting in causing the church to grow...

[Jesus said:] "*I will build my church.*"

(Matthew 16:18 - NIV)

What are some common excuses people use to justify a church that is not growing?

Some unbiblical excuses for not growing the church are:

- "*God isn't interested in numbers.*" – This isn't in the Bible; indeed, God has said, "*even the very hairs of your head are all numbered*" (Matthew 10:30 – NIV).
- "*Our church wants quality not quantity.*" – This isn't in the Bible either; God wants quantity and quality.
- "*Large churches are impersonal*" – This isn't true either... while large church enable people to hide in plain sight, the present even more opportunities to interact on a personal level if a person chooses to.

What is the individual Christian's responsibility to evangelism?

Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. (Colossians 4:5 – NIV)

We should not leave evangelistic activities to the specially trained professionals in the church. God has equipped each of us to be a witness and has commanded us to be His representative in the world. In all of our contacts with people we should keep in mind that salvation hangs in the balance and so we should endeavor to make good use of our time from an eternal perspective.

How should individual Christians engage in personal evangelism?

But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect. (1 Peter 3:15 – NIV)

All Christians should be prepared to help others grow closer to Christ. You don't have to know the whole Bible, you don't have to have some witnessing plan memorized. All you need to do is tell somebody else, "This is what God did for me. I don't even understand it all, but my life is different because of Jesus Christ.

4. Fellowship:

so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. (Romans 12:5 – NIV)

What is fellowship?

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. (Acts 2:42 – NIV)

Fellowship is one of the things the early church did when they came together. It is getting to know one another and enjoying each other's company.

How do we have fellowship?

1 John 1:1-3 - ¹That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. ²The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. ³We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. (NIV)

We should share with each other what God had done in our life and what we have learned about Him. This encourages others in their own walk with Christ to seek to know Him closer as well...

Proverbs 27:17 - As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another. (NKJ)

So, fellowship at least has these three elements:

1. What we have seen
2. What we have done with the gospel
3. Hearing what others have seen in the Word
Tell of all his wonderful acts!
(Psalm 105:2 – NIV)

5. Discipleship:

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus (Philippians 2:5 – NIV)

How may we have the mind of Christ?

In order to have the mind of Christ, it is necessary to study what God has told us and discipline ourselves to look at things the from God's perspective.

Romans 12:2 - Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. (NIV)

The transformation of our thoughts from having a world view consistent with the conventional wisdom to an eternal perspective is an act of the will. We can either chose to align our thoughts with the masses who are rejecting God or with the Holy Spirit who is ready willing and able to teach us.

What is the responsibility of the church for discipleship?

"(God has given)...some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of ministry, so that the Body of Christ may be built up until we all...become mature...like Christ." (Ephesians 4:11-13 – LB)

Each of us have been given spiritual gifts that are to be used to help each other be more effective in fulfilling the purpose for which God intended for us. The church is to be the primary institution by which we learn from each other to equip us to do good works. Indeed we are commanded to:

"Grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 3:18)

The Lord's Supper

It's interesting that Jesus never asked His disciples to remember His birth, but He did instruct them to remember His death and resurrection. He gave the church two visible symbols called ordinances: Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Is it biblical to refer to Baptism and The Lord's Supper as sacraments?

We do not call Baptism and the Lord's Supper, sacraments. We don't call them that because the word sacrament means it saves you. We don't believe baptism saves you and we don't believe the Lord's Supper saves you. The Bible says they are symbols of your salvation, not things that make you saved. So technically they are not sacraments. We call Baptism and The Lord's Supper ordinances because they were ordained by God for Christians to remember Jesus' death.

What do the following Scripture passages have to say about the Lord's Supper?

"The Lord Jesus, on the night He was betrayed, took bread..." (1 Corinthians 11: 23 – LB)

The Lord's Supper is a simple act. The Bible says that the very first communion, the Lord Jesus, on the night that He was betrayed, took bread and broke it. He didn't have some big elaborate ceremony, wearing special costumes and vestments and burning incense and doing all kinds of fancy rituals. He took bread and He took wine and He gave it to the people. When we take the Lord's Supper at Creekside, we don't turn it into a big ritual, we just observe the elements.

"...and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; eat it in remembrance of me.'" (1 Corinthians 11: 24 – LB)

The Lord's Supper is a reminder. The whole purpose of the Lord's Supper is for us to remember what Jesus did on the cross for us.

"In the same way, He took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; drink it to remember me.'" (1 Corinthians 11: 25 – LB)

The Lord's Supper is a symbol. When Jesus said, "*this bread is My body*" and "*this cup is My blood*," He didn't mean that literally. When He said this, He hadn't even gone to the cross yet. He hadn't died yet. Obviously, He's talking about a symbol, not His actual blood. He hadn't even gone to the cross yet.

- If I were to pull my wallet out of my pocket and show you pictures and say, "This is my wife." You wouldn't think my wife was photographic paper with chemicals on

it. You know what I'm talking about. It represents my wife.

- Jesus once said "*I am the door*." Does that mean He's a piece of wood? He said, "*I am the bread of life*." Does that mean He's a loaf? No. He's giving symbolism.

"For whenever you eat the bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes back."
(1 Corinthians 11: 26 – LB)

The Lord's Supper is a statement of faith. When you take of the Lord's Supper, you're preaching a sermon. There's a forward look and a backward look. We look forward to the fact that Jesus is coming back and He says do this until He comes back. And we look back at the cross. Jesus didn't stay dead. He's coming back again.

Who should take the Lord's Supper?

"For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment upon himself." (2 Corinthians 11:29 – LB)

Only those who are already believers should partake of the Lord's Supper. When Jesus initiated the Lord's Supper, He didn't offer it to the 5,000 where He fed the loaves and fish. He only offered the Lord's Supper to His inner circle of disciples, those He chose to be the foundation for the church.

How should Christians prepare themselves for the Lord's Supper?

"Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A person ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup." (1 Corinthians 11:27-28 – LB)

Anytime we take the Lord's Supper should have a time of prayer and self examination before. We say, "God, is there anything in my life that's between me and You that I need to confess and get rid of before I take communion." The Bible says that we are to examine our self every time we take the Lord's Supper.

When and how often should we observe the Lord's Supper?

The Bible doesn't say. The Bible doesn't give a rule about how often. Anytime you hear of a frequency for the Lord's Supper, it's a man-made rule. It's not in the Bible. He instituted it on a Thursday night. And since it's a Supper it seems more appropriate to observe it in an evening service. It's not the Lord's breakfast. It's the Lord's Supper. It's more appropriate to take it in the evening. Acts 2 they took it in their homes.