

The Glorious Church

Isaiah 2:2-3, NLT

In the last days, the mountain of the LORD's house will be the highest of all—the most important place on earth. It will be raised above the other hills, and people from all over the world will stream there to worship. 3 People from many nations will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of Jacob's God. There He will teach us His ways, and we will walk in His paths." For the LORD's teaching will go out from Zion; His word will go out from Jerusalem.

We are living in a day when there are a lot of wrong concepts about the church. There are those who say...

- The day of the church is over we need to examine other models for faith expression.
- You don't need the church, you only need Jesus.
- Any group of two or three believers is a church in God's mind; you don't need the institution of the church. There is a lie out there that a few people on the back patio having a burger makes up the church.

The idea of the church is diminished in peoples' minds so that there is no place for elders, five-fold ministry, world expansion etc.

We are living in a time when people are reacting to the church as a whole because of a bad experience that they have had or a leader or leadership team who they feel let them down.

We are living in a day where people have seen abuses within the historic church (the Catholic Church) and the tendency is to project their distain over the whole concept of church of the church. (Example of plane trip with Jay Leno)

In order to appreciate what God is doing and what God has yet to do in the church we need to allow our minds and hearts to be renewed by understanding what God sees when He sees the church.

The church has gotten a bad rap in recent times. The truth is that the Church of Jesus Christ is the greatest source of love, creativity, goodness, freedom and education in the history of mankind. It has produced some of the greatest minds, the greatest inventions, the greatest cultures and the greatest charitable works.

The answers for all of man's needs are in Christ and His church.

Science (exploration and scientific discovery)

Education (earliest universities all came out of Christianity by pastors and church leaders)

Medicine

Hospitals

Business

Finance

Marriage & Family

Morality & Ethics

Civil Rights

Democracy and Free Expression

Destruction of Poverty
Freedom from Addictions

The devil is attacking the church today because he understands that it is going to be the church that will step on his head at the end of the age (Rom. 16:20).

The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.

We need to see the Church the way God sees it: glorious, matchless, majestic, mighty, incomparable, unstoppable, victorious, powerful, having no equal, God's vehicle in the earth.

We do not need to apologize for the church. It is not just a good idea; it is a God-idea. Notice what Jesus said:

Matthew 16:18-20

And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

When you come to the church you come to something powerful...

Hebrew 12:18-19, 22-24

You have not come to a physical mountain, to a place of flaming fire, darkness, gloom, and whirlwind, as the Israelites did at Mount Sinai. 19 For they heard an awesome trumpet blast and a voice so terrible that they begged God to stop speaking.... 22 No, you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to countless thousands of angels in a joyful gathering. 23 You have come to the assembly of God's firstborn children, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God Himself, who is the judge over all things. You have come to the spirits of the righteous ones in heaven who have now been made perfect. 24 You have come to Jesus, the One who mediates the new covenant between God and people, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks of forgiveness instead of crying out for vengeance like the blood of Abel. – NLT

When you come to the church you unite with others...

1. To come into alignment with the Eternal Purpose of God.

Ephesians 3:8-11

*Though I am the least deserving of all God's people, He graciously gave me the privilege of telling the Gentiles about the endless treasures available to them in Christ. 9 I was chosen to explain to everyone this mysterious plan that God, the Creator of all things, had kept secret from the beginning. 10 God's purpose in all this was to **use the church** to display His wisdom in its rich variety to all the unseen rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. 11 This was **His eternal plan**, which He carried out through Christ Jesus our Lord.*

2. To make up the Family of God (Relationship).

Ephesians 1:3-6, NLT

*All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ. 4 Even before He made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in His eyes. 5 God decided in advance to **adopt us into His own family** by bringing us to Himself through Jesus Christ. This is what He wanted to do, and it gave Him great pleasure. 6 So we praise God for the glorious grace He has poured out on us who belong to His dear Son.*

3. To form the Body of Christ (Function/Ministry).

Ephesians 1:19-23, NLT

*I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe Him. This is the same mighty power 20 that raised Christ from the dead and seated Him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms. 21 Now He is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else—not only in this world but also in the world to come. 22 God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made Him head over all things for the benefit of the church. 23 And **the church is His body**; it is made full and complete by Christ, who fills all things everywhere with Himself.*

Ephesians 4:15-16

*Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, **who is the head of His body, the church**. He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.*

4. To form the Temple of God or a habitation of God by the Spirit (Communion/Priesthood).

Ephesians 2:19-22, NLT

*So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of **God's family**. 20 Together, we are His house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus Himself. 21 We are carefully joined together in Him, becoming **a holy temple for the Lord**. 22 Through Him you Gentiles are also being made part of this **dwelling** where God lives by His Spirit.*

5. To form a Bride for the only begotten Son of God.

Ephesians 5:29-33, NLT

*No one hates his own body but feeds and cares for it, just as Christ cares for the church. 30 And we are members of his body. 31 As the Scriptures say, "A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one." 32 This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way **Christ and the church are one**. 33 So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.*

6. To form the Army of God for world domination (Warfare/Dominion).

Ephesians 6:11-13, NLT

A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. 11 Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. 12 For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm.

You cannot be any of these things in isolation, on the back patio. All of these things involve a coming together, a joining arm in arm with others in a commitment to a mutual vision. These images highlight the importance of the individual members being in a committed relationship one to another.

1. The church is a FAMILY.

As a family, the church is made up of many brothers and sisters (Eph. 3:15; Gal. 6:10). Each member of that family has a responsibility to watch over and care for the other members of the family to see them fulfilled and growing in their relationship to the Heavenly Father.

Whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone, especially to our Christian brothers and sisters. Galatians 6:10, NLT

2. The church is a BODY.

As a body, the church is composed of individual members that are interlocked and vitally linked to each other to complete the ministry of Christ in the world today (Eph. 4:16; I Cor. 12:20, 27). As members of the body we must be in our place and functioning in harmony and peace with other members of the body if the local church is to fulfill its purpose and function effectively.

Under his direction, the whole body is fitted together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love. Ephesians 4:16, NLT

3. The church is a TEMPLE.

As a temple, the church is composed of living stones that are built together or “fitly joined” together (Eph. 2:19-22; I Pet. 2:5). As stones in a building, the individual members are to stand alongside of some stones, come under the authority of other stones and provide covering and protection for others. If any stone is out of place, the walls of the temple will be incomplete and vulnerable.

Ephesians 2:21-22, NLT

We who believe are carefully joined together, becoming a holy temple for the Lord. Through him you Gentiles are also joined together as part of this dwelling where God lives by his Spirit.

4. The church is an ARMY.

As the Army of God, the church is made up of good soldiers of Christ functioning under the leadership of their captain and chief leader—the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 6:10-13; II Tim. 2:3-4; Heb. 2:10). The church is involved in serious warfare against a common enemy (Eph. 6:12; I Tim. 1:18). It is critical in any war that the soldiers in the army are in harmony and fully committed to the well-being of their fellow soldiers. For soldiers to fight among themselves is to give the advantage to the enemy.

The church is a battleship not a cruise ship.

II Timothy 2:3-4, NLT

Endure suffering along with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. Soldiers don't get tied up in the affairs of civilian life, for then they cannot please the officer who enlisted them.

All of these aspects of the church must translate to the involvement of the believers on a local level with other believers in a specific local church. If God's purpose was merely to take care of me and mine and be my personal servant, I would not need the Body of Christ or the local church.

Those who were added to the Lord were added to the church or to the already existing body of believers in that locality.

Acts 2:41, NLT

*Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and **added to the church** that day—about 3,000 in all.*

Acts 2:47, NLT

*...all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord **added to their fellowship** those who were being saved.*

Acts 5:14, NLT

*And believers were increasingly **added to the Lord**, multitudes of both men and women,*

Local Church Commitment in Practical Terms

What does local church commitment mean in a practical sense? Joined together for purpose.

1. **Commitment** means that I will work through difficulties when they arise instead of running away from them.
2. **Commitment** means that I will blend my personal giftings and ministry goals with the vision of my local assembly.
3. **Commitment** means that I will give myself faithfully to the members of my local church in fellowship and service.
4. **Commitment** means that I will invest my time, talents and financial resources to see the vision of my local church become a reality.
5. **Commitment** means that I will faithfully gather with my brothers and sisters at the corporate assembly times.

6. **Commitment** means that I will take the preached word seriously and make every effort to put it into practice in my life.
7. **Commitment** means that I will only do those things that will edify and build up the saints to whom I am joined.
8. **Commitment** means that I will honor and respond to those who have oversight in my life as they speak into my life.
9. **Commitment** means that I will still support church leadership when policies do not keep to my opinions.
10. **Commitment** means that I will utilize personal resources to minister to the needs in the local church that God puts in front of me.

God is showing His Body the need for becoming committed to each other for the sake of the higher purpose and call. Every general commitment to Christ and His Church must manifest itself in a specific commitment to a place or a local assembly or it is no commitment at all. To say you are committed to what God is doing in a general way and then not identify with a local church in a specific way is to reject the very vehicle that God has chosen to extend His kingdom and purpose in the world today.

We need to see the Church the way God sees it: glorious, matchless, majestic, mighty, incomparable, unstoppable, victorious, powerful, having no equal, God's vehicle in the earth.