



What is the Church?

For many people the idea of church is about a building that they pass by each day on the way to work. For others it is a manmade institution that represents more about man's will than God's. However Scripture makes it clear that the real church of Jesus Christ has been brought into being by God Himself. The teaching of God's Word declares that the church is a living, breathing organism that is under the authority of God, to discharge the ministry of Jesus Himself. All those who belong to Christ belong to His Church.

Discuss - (In group / or small groups)

- Q1)** What do you like / dislike about being part of a church ?
- Q2)** Why do you think Jesus requires that we belong to His church?
- Q3)** What do you think the church should really be about in the world today ?

Fact 1 – The church is made up of the “Called Out” people of God.

Both in the Old Testament and the New we see that it is God's desire to set apart for Himself a people who will truly belong to Him. He is the one who reveals Himself to people and calls them out of the world to be part of His Kingdom people. These people have a special relationship with God, based upon a covenant that God Himself has established. They are His people, obey His commands, worship Him and fulfil His purposes here on earth. In response to this, God promises to bless His people and reveal Himself to them. In the Old Testament these called out people were primarily limited to the people of Israel. Now through faith in Christ and the New Covenant He has established, all people have the opportunity to come into a living relationship with God and become part of His church. Scripture on a number of occasions declares that we are a holy nation, a people who belong to God. The church is defined as the invisible church of Christ (Those who's names are written in the Lamb's book of life.) And the visible church, (all those who attend the gathering of the Saints.) Luke 10v 18 – 20, Matthew 13 v 24 – 30, Romans 8v 29 –30, Hebrews 12 v 22 – 24

Fact 2 - Jesus establishes and builds His church.

One of the important truths that is taught us in the bible is that the church has been established by Christ, is built upon Him and is built by and for Him. Far from being an institution made up by man, Jesus by His Holy Spirit is directing the affairs of the church and is releasing His power upon it. On the day of Pentecost we see how the church bursts into life by the giving of the Holy Spirit that the church might bear a powerful witness to Christ. The church has been established as a missionary body under the direction of the Holy Spirit. Jesus made it clear that on His authority the church would be established and it would be established to discharge His ministry in the world today as it bears witness to Him. Matthew 16 v 18 – 19, Mark 16 v 15 – 20

Point 3 – The Church is the dwelling place of God.

It is clear within the teaching of the Bible that the complete fullness of God cannot be contained by anything. He sustains, is in and is beyond all that He has created. However one of the important truths throughout Scripture is the idea that the One, True, living God is the one who dwells in the midst of His people. Both in the life of individual Christians and in the life of the church, we are told God inhabits His people and is knitting them together into a spiritual dwelling / a spiritual temple. The presence of God reveals to us something of His nature, His power, His love, His grace and His glory. We are called “Living Stones,” being built upon the cornerstone of Christ, making us into the Spiritual dwelling of Almighty God. The real church of Jesus Christ is not the external building of bricks and mortar that we meet in, but is the gathered assembly of God's Saints indwelt by His Spirit. 1 Peter 2 v 4 – 10

Point 4 – Different Images that are used in Scripture to represent the Church

A Body – On a number of occasions Scripture portrays the church as the body of Christ. Through baptism we become part of this body and by the Spirit are given a different function / calling to fulfil. Christ is seen as the head of the body who directs the affairs of His people / of His body.. We are the different parts of the body, all working together , in the function we have been given, to fulfil the purposes and will of Christ, the living head. Romans 12 v 4 – 8, 1 Corinthians 12 v 12 – 27

A family– As we have looked at before when we become a Christian we are spiritually Born Again. This spiritual birth is something that all true believers go through. This New Birth results in us becoming adopted children of God and co-heirs with

Christ to the Kingdom of God. It also means that in every sense we become brothers and sisters with all those who belong to Christ. We are given the command that we must love one another, build each other up and watch out for each other regarding sin. The love and forgiveness that we have received from God we are compelled to manifest to each other. Galatians 3 v 26 – Ch4 v 7, 1 John 3 v 1 – 3, 1 John 4 v 7 – 21

The Bride of Christ – The importance of Christ's relationship with the church cannot be overemphasised. Scripture declares that Jesus loves His church and it uses the language of intimacy, regarding Christ as the bridegroom and the church being His bride. There will come a day when the bride will be presented to Christ and therefore it is challenged to keep itself holy, uncompromised and without blemish. Ephesians 5 v 25– 27

