

Lesson Two – “Questions that Keep People Away from Church”

“Is The Church Really Important for My Life?”

Question: *Before I began this study I had to ask myself a vital question: “Is the church really important to me? And if it is, then why is it that way?”*

- a. *My first answer was “Yes” the church is of vital importance to me.*
- b. *Then I started to list the reasons why the church is important to me.*
 - 1.) *She is important to Jesus and if the Church is important to my Lord the church had better be important to me.*
 - 2.) *The thoughts of all the Church gives to me came to mind.*
 - a.) *Security...*
 - b.) *Hope...*
 - c.) *Peace...*
 - d.) *A sense of belonging...*
 - e.) *Direction...*
 - f.) *Purpose...*
 - g.) *The reality of eternity...*
 - h.) *Victory...*
 - i.) *Healing...*
 - j.) *Power in life...*
 - k.) *Worship...*
 - l.) *A place to serve...*
 - m.) *A place where we are all equal...*
 - n.) *Freedom...*
 - o.) *Sanctuary...*
 - p.) *Stability...*
 - q.) *Foundational truth for life...*
 - r.) *God’s eternal care...*
 - s.) *God’s earthly provisions...*
 - t.) *The walls of division torn down...*
 - u.) *Family and community...*
 - v.) *Fellowship...*
 - w.) *Self-worth...*
 - x.) *Self-esteem...*
 - y.) *Personal Pride of a good kind...*
 - z.) *The mind of Christ...*

1. ***There were some questions that quickly came to my mind as I went on this search for reasons I am a part of the church, the body of Christ.***
 - a. ***Why doesn't everybody want to be a part of the body of Christ?***
 - b. ***What keeps people from coming to the body of Christ?***
 - c. ***Why does the body of Christ make it so hard for its members to be actively involved?***
 - d. ***What in my life hinders people from coming to the church?***
 - e. ***How can I help the church to be more effective in the world?***
 - f. ***Where does my family fit in my personal relationship with the church?***
 - g. ***How can I help my family to be more involved in the church?***
 - h. ***Why doesn't the world recognize the importance of the Church?***
 - i. ***Why are so many people working so hard to run down the church?***
 - j. ***Why aren't the members more supportive of the church?***
 - k. ***What would the world be like without the church?***
 - l. ***Where would I be if there was no church?***
 - m. ***What will the church of the next generation hold for my grand children?***
 - n. ***What can I do to strengthen the church for those who will follow after me?***
 - o. ***Where have I failed in living up to my personal responsibility in the church?***
 - p. ***Why don't I pray more for the church?***
 - q. ***If Jesus shed His precious blood to establish the church what have I sacrificed to make Her more like Him?***
2. ***Then it came to me, "if I have all of these questions what kinds of questions must people have who know nothing about the church?"***
3. ***I went to my library and looked at just a few of the books I have about the church, and I was amazed.***

The User Friendly Church
Three Cheers for the Church
The Church on Purpose
Signs of Life

Rediscovering the Church
The Purpose Driven Church
Planting Growing Churches
Re-digging the Wells
When God Builds a Church

4. **Multitudes of people are just as concerned about the church as you and me.**

The Apostle Paul says some very amazing things about the church in the Book of Ephesians. For instance:

*"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless."
 (Ephesians 5:25-27, NIV)*

5. **This next statement will neither surprise you nor shock you; "The world doesn't have a very good opinion of the church these days."**
6. **And it's no wonder when we see the things going on in the church today that shouldn't be happening.**
- a. **The things that happen in the Christian world that are bad give everyone who names Christ a black eye.**
 - b. **It doesn't matter what church body had the problem.**
 - c. **Do you think the immoral problems of the Catholic Church had an effect on all of the Christian world?**
 - d. **The exploits of the Television Evangelists made it tough on all who would preach the Gospel.**
 - e. **Then when we add in the things that happen in our own local bodies of believers it is no wonder the world is skeptical.**
7. **To the world the church, is the church, is the church, it doesn't matter the name on the bill board.**
8. **The world doesn't see the church in Denominational colors it just sees the church.**
9. **And when the church fails to be salt and light, the conscience of society, and the standard bearer for truth no wonder there is confusion.**
10. **The world is confused about our purpose because we are!**

- a. *We have become judgmental to a fault.*
- b. *We are sectarian in our attitudes toward other Christians.*
- c. *We seem to thrive on divisiveness and in-fighting.*
- d. *When our people are wounded we tend to pour on more salt instead of helping.*
- e. *Many bodies of Christ have become amazing graceless places.*
- f. *All too often our hatred fuels our refusal to forgive and forget.*
- g. *Then we wonder why we cannot get people excited about Jesus.*

11. I say all of this not because I am down on the church.

12. I say it so we can begin to realize why people would ask our question in the first place.

“Is the Church Really Important for my Life?”

1. The church is very important to Jesus because it is His body.

- a. *Anything that is important to Christ has to be important to those who would follow Him.*
- b. *Events that surround the church and turn off people cannot diminish the importance of the church.*
- c. *Because the world says the church is not important should be reasons why we know the church is important.*

1.) When the world is opposed to good we should realize just how important the good really is to our lives.

2.) When people call evil good and good evil we need to be very concerned.

3.) When we harden our hearts to the truth of God seeing clearly becomes difficult.

d. Scripture illustrates how Jesus felt about the church.

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

"Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it." (1 Corinthians 12:27, NIV)

"which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way."
(Ephesians 1:23, NIV)

"to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" **(Ephesians 4:12, NIV)**

" Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church." **(Colossians 1:24, NIV)**

"He has lost connection with the Head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow." **(Colossians 2:19, NIV)**

2. The church is very important to Jesus because He is the head of the church.

"And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church," **(Ephesians 1:22, NIV)**

"Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ." **(Ephesians 4:15, NIV)**

"For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior." **(Ephesians 5:23, NIV)**

"And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy." **(Colossians 1:18, NIV)**

- a. **Problems arise in the church when we forget who is in charge.**
- b. **When we strive to do things our own way we have problems.**
- c. **When church becomes a power issue we lose contact with the head.**
- d. **When we want to exact our own will we lose contact with the head.**

3. The church is important to Jesus because He purchased her with His own blood.

"Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood." **(Acts 20:28, NIV)**

"Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!" **(Romans 5:9, NIV)**

"How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!" (Hebrews 9:14, NIV)

"For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect." (1 Peter 1:18-19, NIV)

"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin." (1 John 1:7, NIV)

"and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood," (Revelation 1:5, NIV)

"I answered, "Sir, you know." And he said, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Revelation 7:14, NIV)

- a. Jesus shed His own blood so that we may be a part of His church.**
- b. Jesus shed His own blood to establish the church.**
- c. Jesus shed His own blood to illustrate how important the church must be to all who would follow Him.**

4. The church is so much more than just block, mortar, and stone sitting at a certain address.

" As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him— you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For in Scripture it says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame." Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone,"" (1 Peter 2:4-7, NIV)

- a. I think in an attempt to have the best of both worlds we have separated the sacred and the secular.**
- b. We will do the sacred one day a week for one hour.**
- c. Then we will do the secular the other six days of the week.**
- d. And we wonder why we are not getting anything out of our relationship with Jesus.**
- e. As members of the body of Christ we are "Living stones."**

- f. **We are being built into a “spiritual house.”**
- g. **The reason being is so that we may offer “spiritual sacrifices” that are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.**
- h. **This process is 24 hours a days, 7 days a week, 52 weeks a year until the Lord calls us home.**
- i. **We cannot afford to separate our spiritual lives from our daily lives.**
- j. **That is why the church is so important to everyone of us.**

Peter adds:

"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy." (1 Peter 2:9-10, NIV)

“The church is so much more than just block, mortar, and stone sitting at a certain location.”

5. Disillusioned people have tried to divorce the church from Jesus.

- a. **Many people who say they love Jesus want nothing to do with the church because of all the bad that has gone on in the name of the church.**
- b. **Just about every 10 years a new group will announce, “Jesus Yes,” but, “the church No.”**
- c. **Jesus came to establish the church.**

"“But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” Then he warned his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ." (Matthew 16:15-20, NIV)

- d. **Jesus shed His blood to make for Himself a bride spotless and beautiful and that is the church.**

- e. *How can we deny that which Jesus gave His life's blood to establish?*
- f. *Well the answer is we can't.*
- g. *There are lots of things about my body I would like to change: gray hair, shagging muscles, aching joints, but they all go with this time in my life.*
- h. *And life is very good.*
- i. *Just because there are things in the church that are less than what Christ intended we cannot get rid of the church.*

6. *The church is for everyone, but not everyone accepts the invitation to join.*

- a. *Have you ever felt like you just couldn't go some place because you felt like you just didn't belong?*
- b. *Many people feel like they don't belong in church when just the opposite is true.*
- c. *Maybe our lives have been less than holy – "How could Jesus want me?"*
- d. *Maybe we have willfully disobeyed God – "How could He have a place for me?"*
- e. *Please read of all the people Jesus preached too!*
- f. *Probably not the kind of list we would make for the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.*

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. (Isaiah 55:8, NIV)

"For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account." (Hebrews 4:12-13, NIV)

- g. *The ground at the foot of the cross is level and there is room for everyone who wants to come and find the Savior.*
- h. *The church is not a museum for saints; it is a hospital for sinners.*
- i. *There is room for sinners just like me and you.*

7. The church is the only body the gates of Hell will never prevail against.

- a. I have never met the first person who said, "I really want to be a loser."**
- b. I have met very people who were not conscious that there is more to life than just this life.**
- c. We are just like Job of old, "If a man dies will he live again?"**
- d. Jesus says, "Yes."**
- e. The only way we will be happy in eternity is when we stand in the white robes of the bride of Christ.**

" You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Galatians 3:26-29, NIV)

"Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life." (Revelation 21:27, NIV)

" Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." (Revelation 20:11-15, NIV)

8. There are some popular excuses for avoiding church that hinder our ability to become a part.

- a. "The church is full of hypocrites..."**
- b. "I am not good enough to go to church."**
- c. "You have no idea what the people at that church did to me."**
- d. "If they are a Christian I want no part of it."**

- e. ***“I don’t know enough to go to church.”***
- f. ***“I don’t have good enough clothes to go to church.”***
- g. ***“I won’t know anybody if I go to church.”***
- h. ***“I tried church one time and on was friendly to me.”***
- i. ***“I was made to go when I was a kid and I don’t like it any more.”***

" At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" He called a little child and had him stand among them. And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. "And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me." (Matthew 18:1-5, NIV)

9. Living attendance promotes spiritual growth for everyone.

- a. ***The evangelist Billy Sunday used to say, "Simply going to church will not make you a Christian any more than going to a garage will make you a car."***
- b. ***It is not about just going.***
- c. ***I have heard countless times, "I never get anything out of church."***
- d. ***Most of the time that happens because we never put anything in.***
- e. ***We make no investments in the eternal so we miss out on the eternal in the here and now.***
- f. ***This is an issue of faithfulness to Christ.***
- g. ***Why should the church be important to me?***

“Because the Church was important to Christ!”

“The only reason we will ever need.”