



We Believe - In God's Church

Key idea:

Christians believe in God's one Church, which is composed of all who believe in Jesus Christ, is set upon the foundation of Jesus Christ laid by the apostles, and is built through the ages by the work of the Spirit to be the dwelling place of God in the earth.

Key text:

Ephesians 2:19-22

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. ²¹ In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. ²² And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

Key points:

1. The Universal (or 'catholic') Church: The church is not any single denomination or organization, but "all those everywhere who call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ."
2. The Apostolic Foundation: The church is built on the foundation of the apostles' teaching, preserved for us in Scripture—not on human opinions or cultural trends.
3. The Holy Church: God has called us out of darkness into light, making us His holy people, separate from the world in both identity and moral conduct.
4. The One Church: Despite our differences, we are one body in Christ—unity, not uniformity. We are joined together by the Spirit as fellow citizens in God's household.
5. The Necessity of the Church: We cannot separate Christ from His church. God works through the church, and we need each other for spiritual growth and sanctification.

Discussion Questions:

1. What does it mean that the church is "catholic" (universal)? How does this challenge or expand your view of who belongs to God's people?
2. Read 1 Corinthians 1:2. How does Paul's description of the church in Corinth (despite all their problems) encourage you about the nature of God's church today?
3. In what ways do we sometimes confuse our local expression of church with THE church? ** What are the dangers of this mindset?
4. Bret said, "It doesn't really matter what I think or say. It matters what the Word of God says." Why is this such an important principle for the church? How does our culture resist this idea?
5. Read 2 Timothy 2:2. What does it mean to be "apostolic" in our generation? How are we responsible for passing on the deposit of faith?
6. Where do you see pressure (internal or external) to base your beliefs on "your truth" rather than God's unchanging truth?
7. The teaching explained that "holy" means both "set apart by God" AND "living in moral purity." Which aspect of holiness do you find easier to grasp? Which is more challenging to live out?
8. Read Ephesians 2:19. What does it mean that your primary identity is now "citizen of God's household" rather than your nationality, ethnicity, political party, or other group? How should this change the way you live?
9. Bret said, "If your moral lifestyle is not producing friction with the culture, you're not living as God calls." How do you respond to this statement? Where do you feel that friction in your own life?
10. Read Ephesians 4:1-6. Paul commands us to "make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit." Why does unity require effort? What threatens unity in the church?
11. The teaching mentioned that church unity is "unity, not uniformity." What's the difference? Why is this distinction important?
12. Ephesians 4:2 says we need to be "completely humble and gentle, patient, bearing with one another in love." ** How does this contrast with the way Christians often interact on social media or in public discourse? What needs to change?
13. Gandhi is reported to have said, "I like your Christ, but I don't like your Christians." Have you ever felt this way? Have others likely felt this way about you? What does this reveal about the church's witness?

14. Many people today say, "I can follow Jesus without the church." How does this teaching challenge that perspective? What would you say to someone who holds this view?

15. Bret acknowledged that the church has real problems and hypocrites. Why is withdrawing from church not the solution? What is God's purpose in calling us into community despite the messiness?

16. How has being part of the church challenged you, changed you, or helped you grow in ways you couldn't have on your own?

17. Is there something preventing me from being fully committed to a local church? Past hurts? Preferences? Disappointments?

18. Am I prioritizing my personal preferences over the unity of the church? Music style? Programs? Methods?

Practical Applications:

Choose 1-2 of these to commit to this week:

1. Practice Unity: Reach out to someone in the church who is different from you (different generation, background, preferences) and intentionally build relationship with them.

2. Guard Your Speech: Monitor how you speak about other believers (in person and online). Practice humility, gentleness, and patience in all discussions about church matters.

3. Embrace Membership: If you've been hesitant about formal church membership, take a step toward joining the Walking Together class or speaking with a pastor.

4. Study the Foundation: Read through one book of the New Testament this month, asking God to ground you more firmly in the apostolic teaching.

5. Pray for the Universal Church: Spend time this week praying for believers around the world, especially those facing persecution or hardship.

6. Examine Your Identity: Write down all the ways you typically identify yourself. Then prayerfully reorder them with "member of God's household" at the top.

7. Pursue Holiness: Identify one area where cultural pressure is influencing your moral decisions more than Scripture. Commit to aligning with God's Word in that area.
8. To study the Church more deeply, take a look at the teaching series [What is the Church](#) which was taught in the fall of 2020.
9. Listen to the new song "[This is the God We Love](#)" (which is based on the Nicene Creed).