

STUDY 2

BEING AN AUTHENTIC CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

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Serve God and Others.

When we come to Christ in faith, we don't come to Christ alone. We also come to His body—the church. We are brought into His body where we grow in Christ, serving God and those around us together.

Writer Bio

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A BIBLE STUDY ABOUT THE CHURCH-THE BODY OF CHRIST

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We stay in a world that if a person doesn't like the color of their eyes, they can get colored contacts. We stay in a world that if a person doesn't like their hair, they can just buy what they like. When it comes to fashion, if a person loves a high-end brand but can't afford it; they can purchase a knockoff (something that looks just like the real thing but isn't). Whether it's eyes, hair, purses, or clothing; they were not the real thing.

In a culture that pushes self-gratification; the church must do something different. Mark 8:34 says it best. "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" We must offer something far greater. We must offer Christ! We are called to be authentic! We have the real thing, Christ! He can't be duplicated for He is the only One. In a world full of brokenness, the church can't afford to be just another charitable organization.

Our culture typically treats the church as little more than an institution, a religious group, a voting block, or a tax-exempt non-profit organization. Sadly, there are entities that call themselves churches but they are churches in name only; from the beginning, God's intention for the church is to be something far richer and more vibrant.

As followers of Christ gather together, we are His church—His body—and as such, we serve God as we grow, minister, and do life together. By the end of this study, you will be able to identify characteristics of an authentic church - not the building but the people. A local body of Christ that is Built on Christ, Sharing Christ, Growing in Christ, Worshiping God, Serving in Christ and most importantly, Doing Life Together in Christ!

Is your church the real thing or just a knockoff? Choose today to be an authentic ambassador of Christ.

BUILT ON CHRIST

Leader pages on pp. 130-133

THE POINT:
EVERYTHING IN THE
CHURCH CENTERS ON
JESUS CHRIST.

1 PETER 2:1-12

¹ Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all slander. ² Like newborn infants, desire the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow up into your salvation,

³ if you have tasted that the Lord is good.

⁴ As you come to him, a living stone — rejected by people but chosen and honored by God — ⁵ you yourselves, as living stones, a spiritual house, are being built to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

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⁶ For it stands in Scripture: See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and honored cornerstone, and the one who believes in him will never be put to shame.

⁷ So honor will come to you who believe; but for the unbelieving, The stone that the builders rejected — this one has become the cornerstone,

⁸ and A stone to stumble over, and a rock to trip over. They stumble because they disobey the word; they were destined for this.

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⁹ **But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of the one who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.**

¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

¹¹ Dear friends, I urge you as strangers and exiles to abstain from sinful desires that wage war against the soul.

¹² Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles, so that when they slander you as evildoers, they will observe your good works and will glorify God on the day he visits.

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MEMORY VERSE

KEYWORDS

Rid yourselves (v. 1)—Those who have trusted in Christ must remove behaviors that cause problems with other members of God's family.

Cornerstone (v. 6)—The cornerstone functioned as the foundational part of the building. Christ is both the cornerstone and capstone, the foundation

and completion of the church. Paul used this same word picture in Ephesians 2:20.

Chosen race (v. 9)—Whereas in the Old Testament Israel was God's chosen people (Deut. 7:6), now in Christ the chosen race chosen people is made up of all believers.

HOW DO WE CENTER THE CHURCH ON CHRIST?

During the housing market craze many homebuyers were faced with bidding on homes that had multiple offers. In order to have an advantage and an attractive offer many bought homes without a home inspection. How sad it was when some found out that their home had foundation issues. As a child, we sang the song, "The Wise Man Built His House Upon a Rock." The song is based on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7:24-27. I didn't understand it at the time. It basically is stating that in this world, we will encounter many challenges. Our foundation determines how we persevere during those times. Just like a house with a bad foundation; a relationship not built upon The Rock will not last. Let's not end up like the homeowners who are faced with knowing that the foundation on which their home is built will not last. We can rest assured that if our foundation is built on the True Rock, Jesus Christ we will be able to endure. A church, it is imperative that all we do is centered around Christ. Though Satan may throw his fiery darts; as believers we can stand if our foundation is solid. The sure foundation for Christians is not just hearing the words of Christ but actually doing it. This way we know our foundation is solid.

Our Belief is Bedrock for the Church // 1 Peter 2:1-5

If you love an R & B music star's singing, you could join their fan club for just \$32.99 a year. Membership provides access to special fan club events, members-only content, meet and greet opportunities with the star, "and much more." Members get a fan club package with a t-shirt, welcome letter from the singer, and fan club playing cards. But don't expect joining the music star's fan club to change your life. It won't require you to make sacrifices or change your behavior. You don't need to stay in touch with the singer or make them the center of your life. After all, it's just a fan club. The level of commitment is just \$32.99 per year.

That's what makes being in a fan club fundamentally different from being in the church. Simply put, the church consists of Jesus followers. In social media today, with no commitment you can "follow" or "unfollow" someone with the click of a computer mouse. Following Jesus, on the other hand, is commitment: obeying His teachings, submitting to His authority, and imitating His example.



THE POINT: EVERYTHING IN THE CHURCH CENTERS ON JESUS CHRIST.

Peter addressed Jesus-followers in his first letter. They were refugees, scattered across what is now modern Turkey, driven from their homes by persecution for their faith. But Peter didn't coddle them with pity. He challenged them to live out the difficult commands of their Lord. Having instructed his readers to "love one another constantly" (1 Pet. 1:22), he further directed them to rid their lives of behaviors that are at war against love.

- **Malice:** the desire to harm another
- **Deceit:** outright lying, as well as deliberately misleading others
- **Hypocrisy:** being fake, as when your words and actions do not match your real motives
- **Envy:** wanting what belongs to someone else; comparison that leads to resentment
- **Slander:** destroying a person's reputation with lies or gossip

The phrase "rid yourselves of" is also translated "put away" or "put off." Other New Testament writers used the same language to advocate shedding the old life of sin the way people remove clothing (Rom. 13:12; Eph. 4:22,25; Col. 3:8; Jas 1:21). We come to Christ in repentance, turning away from sin toward Him. But the eradication of sin from our lives is an ongoing process. It demands deciding over and over to reject our selfish nature and imitate Christ. This is the process God uses to transform us to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29).

Switching imagery, Peter told his readers to act like newborn babies. Newborns generally double their weight in their first five months and triple it in their first year. Babies' astonishing growth rate depends upon milk that targets their specific nutritional needs. In Peter's metaphor, pure spiritual milk is the Word of God. Peter's readers had already "tasted" of God's goodness. But ongoing spiritual growth required continuous feeding on God's Word.

Peter shifted the image once more in verse 4. His readers had come to Christ, a "living stone," and now they were "living stones" being built into a spiritual house of worship. The house of God was no longer a temple made of limestone bricks. Since the death and resurrection of His Son, God now resides in His people. We are the church.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO BE UNITED WITH OTHER BELIEVERS IN A LOCAL CHURCH?



DIGGING DEEPER ALL FOR CHRIST

Solomon taught, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going" (Ecc. 9:10). With these words, the writer spoke about how saints should put great effort into the work given to them. The Apostle Paul conveyed this same sentiment in Colossians 3:23. He tells us in whatever we do, do it heartily for the Lord, and not for man. Ultimately, Christians are representing Him. So, whether we are reading, writing, studying, giving, worshiping, etc, we ought to do it all to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31). Take the writer Luke as an example. He was careful and precise in his writing of the Gospel according to Luke and the book of Acts. The reader is able to see the amount of detail he used in chronicling the life of Christ. He provided dates for events, genealogies, and illnesses. Being a doctor, he used all the gifts God gave him to "carefully investigate" and provide "an orderly sequence" to Theophilus.

Do the works of your hands represent Christ well?

Christ is the Cornerstone of the Church // 1 Peter 2:6-8

Legend tells of King Arthur who, flanked by his knights of the Round Table, led the idyllic kingdom of Camelot ages ago. Out of barbaric Medieval times, King Arthur is famous for initiating the round table for his knights. That way, there was no head-of-the-table, most-important-seat-in-the-house among them. Arthur and his knights convened at the famous round table so that none, not even the king himself, could claim precedence over the others. All were equal.

However, in the Kingdom of God, Jesus is preeminent among us. He is without peer, utterly unique, wholly set apart. He is the foundation of the church. Everything we are and do rests on Him. Continuing his imagery of the church made up of living stones, Peter explained Jesus's place among us as that of the cornerstone.

Historically, a cornerstone was the first stone laid in building construction. The cornerstone had to be measured carefully to ensure it was square because the rest of the structure was aligned with the cornerstone. Every other stone in a building was kept straight and true by lining up with the cornerstone.

Peter's reference to Jesus as our cornerstone harkens back to the Old Testament prophecy of Isaiah: "Therefore the Lord God said: 'Look, I have laid a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; the one who believes will be unshakable. And I will make justice the measuring line and righteousness the mason's level'" (Isa. 28:16-17a).

In Isaiah's time, the tested stone may have represented the law, the temple, the monarchy, Jerusalem, the saving work of Yahweh, or all these things. But after the coming of Christ, Peter understood the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy in the Messiah. He is the precious cornerstone set in Zion. Peter's readers would connect this image with the building of a temple, where the critical corner foundation stone was procured at great cost, and then carefully transported and laid in place. There it set the direction for all that was built upon it. Jesus is the immovable, unchangeable foundation.

What does that mean for us, the church? We may be about stellar teaching and preaching, moving praise and worship, our firm stance on social justice, acts of charity and service, mission-mindedness, and warm fellowship. But if we are not first, last, and foremost about Jesus Christ, we have lost our way. We've forgotten our reason for being.

Who Jesus is to us is what makes the church distinct from the world. To those who don't believe in Him, Jesus the cornerstone is a stumbling block. Their rejection of Jesus keeps them from finding the Father. But to those of us who believe, He is the center of our lives and the basis of all we do together.



HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE A CHURCH THAT HAS WANDERED FROM JESUS AS ITS FOUNDATION?

God is Glorified through the Church // 1 Peter 2:9-12

In 1 Peter 2:9-12, the author called Christians "a chosen race," recipients of God's grace and mercy who illustrate the depth of His love. We are the poster children showing the success of God's great plan of salvation. Peter called the believers he addressed:

- **A chosen race:** Believers in Jesus have become God's chosen people to represent Him to the world, just as the nation of Israel had been.

THE POINT: EVERYTHING IN THE CHURCH CENTERS ON JESUS CHRIST.

- **A royal priesthood:** Believers point people to God and show them how to be reconciled to Him.
- **A holy nation:** Believers are distinct from the world because we follow a different King.
- **God's people:** Believers belong to God's family; we live for Him and not for ourselves.

Peter's description points to God's intentionality in reaching us and His purpose for those He has rescued. He has set us apart for the specific task of advertising His mercy.

The thing is the message we proclaim loses its impact if our lives don't coincide with our words.

Sin that destroys our testimony isn't just the "big ones" that land people in jail or on the evening news. It's talking about Jesus's compassion, and then turning our backs on those in need. It's telling others about His gentleness, and then complaining and criticizing others. It's claiming Jesus is the most important thing in our lives, and then spending our time and money with different priorities. The world is watching. How we live before them can either draw them to Jesus or turn them away.

WHAT CAN WE DO TO BETTER DISTINGUISH OURSELVES FROM THE WORLD?

DID YOU KNOW?

The Bible is the inerrant Word of God. This means that there are no errors in Scripture. This is foundational for believers. It is imperative that we do not add or subtract from the Scripture. Revelation 22:18 states, "If anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book." It is important that our opinion is never inserted. The Bible is true. Psalm 19:7 lets us know that the instruction of the Lord is perfect, renewing one's life the testimony of the Lord is trustworthy, making the inexperienced wise. Proverbs 30:5 states that every Word of God is pure. It isn't necessary for us to add to His Word because it is complete. Second Timothy 3:16-17 lets us know that all Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Biblical Truth: As Christians, we can confidently stand on and proclaim God's Word because it is trustworthy.

Does your life reflect that you believe God's Word to be true?

LIVE IT

How will you respond to God's Word?

In the session, it stated that Jesus was the unexpected Messiah. This means that everyone didn't accept Him. This still applies today. Everyone will not accept His word. We show our acceptance by the way we respond. How will you respond to the text, God's truths? We need not only hear the Word of God but be a doer of His Word. Let's apply it this week as we Shine for Christ!

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- **Assess.** Think about who you are surrounding yourself with. Think about what your ears are listening to. Do these people have a relationship with the Savior?
- **Mission.** Make a mission statement that aligns with God's Word for your life. Our mission statement should directly align with the mission of Christ.
- **Summarize.** Write a summary regarding the reading from the session. Ask God to send opportunities for you to share His truth with others.

DAILY READINGS

1. THE CHURCH HAS LEFT THE BUILDING // ACTS 1:1-2:13

The Book of Acts details the dramatic arrival of the Holy Spirit descending like fire on the disciples, fifty days after Jesus' ascension. The Holy Spirit's indwelling empowered the disciples to be Jesus' witnesses to the ends of the earth marking the birth of the church. However, the early Christians did not "go to" church. Why? Because they *were* the church. They were the church in their homes, striving to love the Lord with all their heart, soul, and strength. They were the church in their community, seeking to love their neighbors as themselves. They were the church in their relationships, bearing with one another and forgiving one another.

The Lord's church is not made of brick and mortar, nor built by human hands. We are the church.

2. UPON THIS ROCK // MATTHEW 16:13-26

Those in the construction business know a strong foundation is essential to the strength, resilience and endurance of any building. The foundation holds up the building, while bearing the weight of its contents. It must be strong enough to stand against storms, floods, and violent winds, for it anchors the entire structure. In our reading today, Jesus and His disciples are entering Caesarea Philippi, known for their worship of the pagan fertility god, Pan. It is here Jesus challenges the disciple's faith with a question we too must answer, 'But who do you say that I am?' Peter's response was not a product of his intellect but was divinely revealed by the Father.

For the church is not built on a human foundation, but firmly on the Word of God.

3. SOLO CHRISTO // ACTS 4:12

The Latin phrase *Solos Christo*, Christ alone, is one of five 'solo' doctrines of the Protestant Reformation movement, led by Martin Luther in Europe during the 1500s. *Solo Christo* champions

three biblical truths. One, the necessity of Christ for salvation, "for there is salvation in no other name." Two, the sufficiency of Christ for salvation, "for we are complete in Him having all wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." And finally, the exclusivity of Christ for salvation, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life, no one comes to the Father but through me."

We are saved by grace through faith in Christ alone. Solo Christo!

4. NO OTHER GOSPEL // GALATIANS 1:6-9

In the book of Galatians, Paul learned a sect of legalistic Jews, Judaizers, had infiltrated the churches of Galatia. These Jewish Christians were intentionally distorting the gospel of grace by teaching that unless the new Gentile converts were circumcised according to the Mosaic Law, they could not be saved. This heresy caused the new converts to be confused, and the churches of Galatia to question Paul's apostleship, testimony and teaching. But Paul did not shrink back! He addressed each issue head on by establishing that no one is justified, declared righteous, and able to enter a right relationship with God, by anything they have done for themselves.

Only what God has done through Christ Jesus saves. There is no other gospel.

5. A STRONGER LOVE // JONAH 4:1-10

God commissioned Jonah to go tell the people of Nineveh, a great city in the Assyrian empire, that unless they repent of their sins in 40 days they would be destroyed. But because the Ninevites' wickedness, Jonah hated them and he wanted God to destroy them. Thankfully, God is faithful to His character. His love was stronger than Jonah's anger. His love is stronger than our anger. As a Christ follower, our heart's desire should align with God's; that ALL people would come to repentance and salvation.

The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and great in faithful love. - Psalm 145:8