

# Come Together

The Church: A Family, a Fellowship,  
and the Body of Christ!



# The Purpose Driven Life! (Rick Warren)

- ▶ #1 You Were Planned for God's Pleasure
- ▶ #2 You Were Formed for God's Family
- ▶ **Can you define what a Christian is without mentioning the church?**
- ▶ If you can, your definition just might not line up with the Bible's. (Mark Dever, 9 Marks Ministry)
- ▶ **Hebrews 2:10a** God is the One who made all things, and all things are for his glory. He wanted to have many children share his glory. NCV
- ▶ **1 John 3:1** See how very much our heavenly Father loves us, for he allows us to be called his children, and we really are!  
NLT

# God wants a family, and he created you to be a part of it.

- **Ephesians 1:5** 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. NLT
- God didn't need a family — he desired one, so he devised a plan to create us, bring us into his family, and share with us all he has. This gives God great pleasure.
- **James 1:18** And it was a happy day for him when he gave us our new lives through the truth of his Word, and we became, as it were, the first children in his new family. TLB

- ▶ When we place our faith in Jesus Christ, we are not just saved, we are adopted into the family of God! Your name is now **Christian!**
  - **Hebrews 2:10-12** God is the One who made all things, and all things are for his glory. He wanted to have many children share his glory, so he made the One who leads people to salvation perfect through suffering. 11 Jesus, who makes people holy, and those who are made holy are from the same family. So he is not ashamed to call them his brothers and sisters. NCV
- ▶ Consider Paul's response to God's eternal purpose for us together:
  - **Ephesians 3:14-16** When I think of the wisdom and scope of his plan, I fall down on my knees and pray to the Father of all the great family of God-some of them already in heaven and some down here on earth. TLB

# ▶ Life's Greatest Privilege

- Ephesians 2:19 Now **you are no longer strangers** to God and foreigners to heaven, but **you are members of God's very own family**, citizens of God's country, and you belong in God's household with every other Christian. TLB
- Again: **Hebrews 2:11-13** We who have been made holy by Jesus, now have the same Father he has. That is why Jesus is not ashamed to call us his brothers. 12 For he says in the book of Psalms, "I will talk to my brothers about God my Father, and together we will sing his praises." 13 At another time he said, "I will put my trust in God along with my brothers." And at still another time, "See, here am I and the children God gave me." TLB
- ▶ Being included in God's family is the highest honor and the greatest privilege you will ever receive. Nothing else comes close. Whenever you feel unimportant, unloved, or insecure, remember to whom you belong.

- ▶ In short, it's impossible to answer the question "What is a Christian?" without ending up in a conversation about the church; at least, in the Bible it is. (Mark Dever)

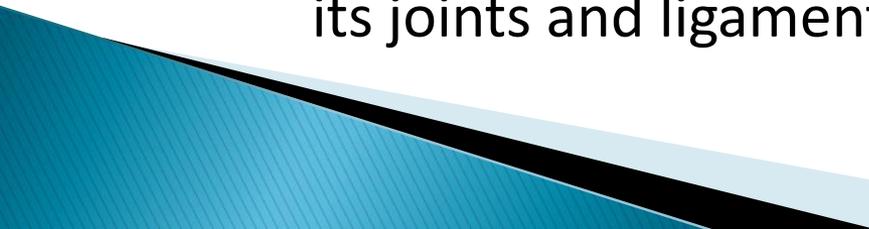
- ▶ **A Place of Belonging and Being!**

- ▶ **Ephesians 2:19** and you belong in God's household with every other Christian. TLB
- ▶ **1 Timothy 3:15** in case I'm delayed. I want you to know how people who are members of God's family must live. God's family is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth. GWT
- ▶ **WE ARE CALLED TO BELONG, NOT JUST BELIEVE.**

# The Importance of a Sense of Community to Health and Growth in the Rural or Small Town Church by Lee J. Smith

- *The divine rationale for the creation of a second person (Eve) was expressed when God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone.”*
- *It should not surprise us that the redemptive work of Christ not only made reconciliation between God and humans possible, it was also intended to restore human community between those who come to know Christ. All who believe in Christ are brought together in one body (Ephesians 2:11-22, 3:6).*
- *Community is an essential part of the Christian faith. Not only do believers gather together in communities, community is a characteristic of genuine Christianity*

- ▶ *As Robert Banks puts it, “He (Paul) does not view salvation as simply a transaction between the individual and God.... It is into a new community that this reconciliation with God in Christ brings them, however much they experience that event as an individual affair.” (Banks, Paul’s Idea, 17).*
- ▶ *This community to which the believer is joined is not only a heavenly organism, it is also an earthly social organization. In the New Testament new believers invariably are added to a tangible local assembly of believers. The New Testament knows of no such thing as a Christian who is unattached to a local church. (Acts 2:41-47).*

- Ephesians 2:21-22 We who believe are **carefully joined together** with Christ as parts of a beautiful, constantly growing temple for God. 22 And you also are **joined with him and with each other by the Spirit** and are part of this dwelling place of God. TLB
  - Ephesians 3:6 This is that secret: that through the Good News those who are not Jews will share with the Jews in God's blessing. **They belong to the same body, and they share together** in the promise that God made in Christ Jesus. NCV
  - Ephesians 4:16 **The whole body depends on Christ, and all the parts of the body are joined and held together. Each part does its own work to make the whole body grow and be strong with love.** NCV
  - Colossians 2:19 For he holds the whole body together with its joints and ligaments, and it grows as God nourishes it. NLT
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▶ We are not on your own anymore. While your relationship to Christ is personal, God never intends it to be private. In God's family you are connected to every other believer, and we will belong to each other for eternity.

- **Romans 12:5-6** In the same way, we are many, but in Christ we are all one body. Each one is a part of that body, and each part belongs to all the other parts. NCV

▶ **Universal – Local**

- Other than a few references to the universal church (such as Matthew 16:18 and many references in Ephesians), **most references to the church in the New Testament are to local churches**, as when Paul writes, "To the church of God in Corinth" or "To the churches in Galatia."

To Paul, being a “part of a fellowship” meant being a vital organ of a living body, an indispensable, interconnected part of the Body of Christ.

- **1 Corinthians 12:12-28**

- We need to recover and practice the biblical meaning of belonging. The church is a body, not a building; an organism, not an organization. For the organs of your body to fulfill their purpose, they must be connected to your body. The same is true for you as a part of Christ’s Body.

# BEING the Gospel

- ▶ You and I cannot demonstrate love or joy or peace or patience or kindness sitting all by ourselves on an island. No, we demonstrate it when the people we have committed to loving give us good reasons not to love them, but we do anyway.
  - ▶ Do we see it? It's right there—right in the midst of a group of sinners who have committed to loving one another—**that the gospel is displayed.**
  - ▶ Together we can display the gospel of Jesus Christ in a way we just can't by ourselves.
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# Experiencing Life Together - LIFE IS MEANT TO BE SHARED.

- ▶ Colossians 3:14-15 Most of all, let love guide your life, for then the whole church will stay together in perfect harmony. 15 Let the peace of heart that comes from Christ be always present in your hearts and lives, for this is your responsibility and privilege as members of his body. And always be thankful. TLB
- ▶ Psalms 133:1 How wonderful and pleasant it is when brothers live together in harmony!
- ▶ God intends for us to experience life together. The Bible calls this **shared experience fellowship**.
- ▶ Real fellowship is so much more than just showing up at services. **It is experiencing life together.**

- It includes unselfish loving, honest sharing, practical serving, sacrificial giving, sympathetic comforting, and all the other “**one another**” commands found in the New Testament.
- The Body of Christ, like your own body, is really a collection of many small cells. The life of the Body of Christ, like your body, is contained in the cells.





