

40 DAYS OF *prayer*

WEEK 4

REAWAKENING TO THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

The Church was purchased by Christ, initiated by Christ, and is under the ownership and leadership of Christ. He is in the position to tell us the purpose and function of the Church, and we are to submit to His ownership and headship. Think about Jesus' intent for the Church and how we are to live into that intent. Pray for an open heart.

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THE CHURCH WITH CHRIST AS ITS HEAD EPHESIANS 1:22-23

What is God doing?

Have you ever asked yourself that question? Sometimes I ask that because the things happening around me just don't make sense, but have you ever looked around your school, down your street, or at your job and asked, "God, what are you doing here right now?"

In Ephesians, Paul makes some powerful statements about what we have in Christ, specifically as His Church. In the Bible, the Church is described as a body with Christ as the head. While this might not seem like a big deal at first, the concept of the Church and Christ as her head brings some profound promises to us.

If we have Christ as our head, we don't rely on our strength but are held together under His perfect authority. As His Body, we are not alone. We are united together with brothers and sisters by His Spirit. He fills us with the fullness of His power—that same power that raised Christ from the dead! Our job is to be present to what Christ is already doing and join Him in that.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Pause for a moment to think about some ways that you have seen God already at work in you and around you. Ask God to show you how you might join Him in what He is already doing.
2. Think of a situation in your life right now that is hard to walk through or understand. Instead of asking God, "Why is this happening?" try asking God, "What are you doing? How are you helping me grow even as you help me through this?" Pray that He will reveal Himself to you.
3. Take some time to write down what you hear from the Lord, and rest in the promise that He is over all things.

» by Wendy Gierhart

THE CHURCH AS CHRIST'S BODY

EPHESIANS 1:22-23

We often think that the Bible is full of stories of heroes—David fighting Goliath, Moses parting the Red Sea, etc. We imagine ourselves as the main characters in these stories because we want to be heroes, too. But the truth is, when you read deeper into these stories, you see that these people were not really heroes but deeply flawed humans whom God used despite their weaknesses. The only true hero of the Bible who appears in the flesh is Jesus Christ.

Because of His victory, He was made head over all things for the benefit of the Church. Despite our human weakness, He invites us into His mission to restore all the beloved children into relationship with God the Father. We cannot accomplish this apart from Christ.

Just as we cannot accomplish the mission without Christ's leadership, we also cannot accomplish this mission without the community of the Body of Christ. Being a part of a community is messy and hard work, but 1 Corinthians 12:18–21 reveals that just as the human body needs every part to function, Christ's Body is made of many different parts, all necessary and all needed to accomplish the mission.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Ask God to show you any ways you have tried to be the hero and do things in your own strength apart from Him. How can you trust Christ and His leadership in those areas?
2. Ask God to reveal anything that is blocking you from engaging with the Body of Christ. Is there unforgiveness? A lack of trust? Do you feel insecure about what you have to offer the Body of Christ? How is God asking you to step out in faith?
3. What part do you think God is calling you to play in the Body of Christ? Ask God to show you how you can walk faithfully in that calling.

THE CHURCH AS GOD'S FAMILY

EPHESIANS 2:19

One hard thing I face from time to time is feeling like I don't belong. Sometimes I make up an idea in my mind that I am being left out. Maybe this is because some past hurts have caused me to think that way. Maybe it's the enemy causing me to feel lonely in an attempt to steal, kill, and destroy my joy. These thoughts can leave me feeling pretty bummed.

So I have to look at what God says about my belonging. I trust Him. I trust what He says. He has proven Himself faithful to deliver hope and peace to me when I seek Him and His Word.

There are many promises found in Ephesians 2:19. First, you are no longer strangers—you get to experience the gift of an intimate relationship in belonging to God. This promise reminds us that we are known and loved by God. Second, you are a fellow citizen with the saints—you get to experience the gift of heavenly citizenship. We belong to a group of people who God offers grace, mercy, and the right to approach Him with confidence. This promise reminds us that we represent God as His citizen on earth. Third, you are a member of God's household—You can experience all the gifts that come with belonging to the family of God.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. When you begin to feel lonely or like you don't belong, ask the Lord to remind you that you belong to Him and His family.
2. Pray that the Holy Spirit will remind you how much He loves you and wants you to live close to Him.
3. Tell the Lord how grateful you are to belong to Him. When others around you are feeling lonely or like they don't belong, ask the Father to give you words of comfort and compassion to point them to Him.

» by Seth Roush

THE CHURCH AS THE DWELLING OF GOD'S SPIRIT EPHESIANS 2:21-22

What do you think of when you think of “the Church?” Do you think of a building? A group of people? An institution or an organization? I think in order to grasp the meaning of these verses, we need to look at the historical context of God’s presence dwelling on earth. In the Old Testament, we see that God’s presence once dwelt in the tabernacle and then in the temple—actual buildings. You may be thinking, “Isn’t God’s home in heaven?” Well, the earthly temple was the place that overlapped with God’s heavenly home. However, in 586 BC, the temple was destroyed, and God’s presence no longer resided in a building on earth.

Fast forward to Jesus’ life here on earth. God’s presence then dwelt in our world in a new way. Jesus made many bold claims; one in which He said: “Destroy this temple, and in three days, I will raise it up” (John 2:19). The Jews were shocked to hear this, but Jesus was referring to the temple as His body.

After His Resurrection, Jesus promised God’s presence would come and dwell among His followers. Sure enough, communities throughout the ancient world sprung up and became a place where God ruled. Jesus’ death and Resurrection made a way for the Holy Spirit to dwell within God’s people. That’s us—the Church. By following Jesus, you become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Ask God to refresh you with His Spirit. Take a couple minutes to sit quietly and rest in His presence.
2. Praise God for sending the Holy Spirit to dwell in you and for being your Helper and Advocate.
3. Ask God to give you bold faith so that more people will come to know Him and join in the “building” of His followers.

THE CHURCH AS THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

EPHESIANS 5:32

It has been said that “conversation is the lifeblood of all relationships.” What does that mean? I think it means that talking matters.

In Ephesians, Paul says the Church is “married” to Jesus in the same way a husband and wife are married. Marriage is difficult to do well. The husband and wife must be cognitively, emotionally, physically, and spiritually present. Marriage calls them to love God first, with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength, and then to love their neighbor—their spouse—as themselves.

What does that have to do with prayer? Adults in healthy marriages talk regularly. Communication is the lifeline of cooperation and growth in commitment to one another. If they abandon meaningful, strategic, engaging conversation—even over the most boring tasks—they are destined to drift apart. A good friend of mine says, “Drifting takes no effort. It takes real grit to stay the course.” This is true in any relationship. We must stay engaged in communicating regularly!

How do we stay engaged in conversation with Jesus? Speak with Him about everything. Unity in marriage means talking continually all day. My wife and I text all day about what’s troubling us and what reminds us of each other. We do not have to go looking for something to talk about. Life gives us all we need!



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Unity with Jesus is the same but better. Ask Jesus to reveal to you ways in which you can become more unified with Him.
2. Unlike a husband or wife, Jesus is always present and available to listen to us in our weakness, brokenness, and daily experience. Spend some intentional time talking with Him today. Bring everything to Him and ask Him to truly take control of your life.
3. Jesus is our greatest confidant. Spend some time in prayer asking the Lord to bring peace to your heart when you spend time with Him.

THE CHURCH AS CHRIST'S AMBASSADORS OF RECONCILIATION 2 CORINTHIANS 5:19-20

The Church was purchased by Christ, initiated by Christ, and is under the ownership and leadership of Christ. Think about Jesus' intent for the Church and how we are to live into that intent. An ambassador is a respected official acting as a representative of a nation. Sent to a foreign land, the ambassador's role is to represent and reflect the person who sent him/her. Writing to the Corinthians, Paul talked about how his calling, or mission, was of an ambassador, and he urged all Christians to consider themselves ambassadors for Christ. The gospel of reconciliation was always at the heart of Paul's preaching: "For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel" (1 Cor. 1:17).

Our reconciliation with God is possible only because Christ went to the cross and received the punishment for our sin. When our Savior cried out, "It is finished," the barrier between sinful man and Holy God was removed, making all those who trust in Him "holy in His sight, without blemish, and free from accusation" (Col. 1:22). Our reconciliation is based on the salvation Jesus provides, and it is accepted by faith (see John 3:16, Ephesians 2:8-9).

Jesus' intent for the Church is for us to be God's ambassadors. We've been "approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel" (1 Thess. 2:4). As we go through this world, we represent God's Kingdom, and it is our responsibility to represent and reflect Christ to the world. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we must take the message of our God to the "ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8), urging men and women everywhere to be reconciled to God.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Ask God to give you opportunities to share the gospel with those around you. Pray that He will open your eyes to those opportunities.
2. Pray that God will ready the hearts of those around you who He has placed in your life to talk about the gospel.
3. Ask for His Spirit to fill you as you reflect and represent Christ to the world.

THE CHURCH AS THE PILLAR AND FOUNDATION OF THE TRUTH 1 TIMOTHY 3:15

Paul is writing this letter to Timothy because he is uncertain of his future. He wants Timothy to know his perspective of the healthy function of a Church. He refers to the Church as “God’s household”—the Church is a family. We are all sons and daughters of God. Paul wants all of God’s children to know how to approach His household, the Church.

Paul calls the Church “the church of the living God.” The “living God” was a name often associated with God the Father in the Old Testament. This is a reminder that we serve and worship a living God.

Paul also calls the Church “a pillar and foundation of the truth.” The Greek word that he uses here is “stylos,” which means a “pillar, column, prop, or support.” This Greek root word refers to something that steadies or stiffens or holds. The purpose of the Church is to support truth.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Have a time of prayer and reflect with God how you conduct yourself in His household.
2. Pause and take a moment of prayer with the living God you serve. Ask Him if there is an area where you can serve Him within the Body of Christ, the Church.
3. Reflect with God on how you can help your local church to be a pillar of truth in the community.

» by Nicole Moses